

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.S.B. 1504  
By: Middleton  
Natural Resources  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The bill sponsor has informed the committee that the Gulf Coast Authority was created by the Texas Legislature in 1969 to restore Galveston Bay, that over the years the legislature expanded the authority's mission to protect the waters of the state, and that the authority supports both municipal and industrial customers and facilitates economic development through its ability to provide safe, reliable, cost-effective, and compliant treatment services. The bill sponsor has also informed the committee that the authority's board of directors is composed of nine members appointed from the counties within the authority's original jurisdiction, which are Harris, Galveston, and Chambers Counties, but that with extensive population growth, congestion, and unpredictable coastal weather situations over the last few decades, it has become challenging for board members to travel to attend authority meetings, with some members having to travel over 65 miles and sometimes having to make a two-hour commute one-way to attend these meetings. C.S.S.B. 1504 seeks to address this issue by authorizing the directors of the board to hold an open or closed meeting by telephone conference call, videoconference, or other similar telecommunication method, subject to certain conditions.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.S.B. 1504 amends Chapter 409, Acts of the 61st Legislature, Regular Session, 1969, to replace the provision that requires the board of directors of the Gulf Coast Authority to meet at least once each month and that authorizes the board to meet at any other time provided in its bylaws with a provision that requires the board to meet regularly as necessary.

C.S.S.B. 1504 authorizes the directors of the board to hold an open or closed meeting by telephone conference call, videoconference, or other similar telecommunication method as provided by the bill's provisions. The bill authorizes the board to use such a method for purposes of establishing a quorum, for voting, or for any other meeting purpose. The bill sets out the following conditions that must be met for a meeting of the directors to be held by such a method:

- the director presiding over the meeting is physically present at the location of the meeting that is open to the public specified in the notice of the meeting during the open portions of the meeting; and
- a video and audio feed of the directors participating in the portions of the meeting required to be open must be visible and audible to the public at the meeting location.

The bill requires a director who participates in a meeting by such a method to be considered absent from any portion of the meeting during which audio or video communication with the director is lost or disconnected. The bill subjects a meeting held by such a method to the notice requirements applicable to other board meetings.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025.

### **COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.S.B. 1504 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the engrossed authorized the authority's board to hold an open or closed meeting by telephone conference call, videoconference, or other similar telecommunication method, the substitute authorizes the directors of the board to hold such a meeting by such a method as provided by the substitute's provisions.

The substitute includes provisions that were not in the engrossed doing the following:

- setting out the following conditions that must be met for a meeting of the directors to be held by telephone conference call, videoconference, or other similar telecommunication method:
  - the director presiding over the meeting is physically present at the location of the meeting that is open to the public specified in the notice of the meeting during the open portions of the meeting; and
  - a video and audio feed of the directors participating in the portions of the meeting required to be open must be visible and audible to the public at the meeting location; and
- requiring a director who participates in a meeting by such a method to be considered absent from any portion of the meeting during which audio or video communication with the director is lost or disconnected.

The substitute omits the provisions from the engrossed that did the following:

- required the notice of a meeting to be held by telephone conference call, videoconference, or other similar telecommunication method to include the following:
  - a toll-free telephone number that members of the public may use to hear and, if applicable, speak at the meeting;
  - free-of-charge access information for any audiovisual or audio-only feeds; and
  - instructions for a member of the public to speak at the meeting from a remote location;
- required a meeting held by such a method to be recorded, required the recording to be made available to the public, and required the board to maintain a copy of the recording for at least one year after the hearing date; and
- required the board, if it prepares an agenda packet or other materials that would have been distributed to members of the public at a face-to-face meeting, to make the packet or other materials available electronically.