

# Open government sessions set

*PATRICK HENRY ONCE SAID THAT LIBERTY IS NEVER SECURE AS LONG AS GOVERNMENT DOES BUSINESS IN SECRET.*

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(MARION COUNTY RECORD, by Susan Berg, Managing Editor) This summer, Kansas Attorney General Steve Six is hosting open government training for public officials, citizens, and media to help them to better understand Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) and Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA).

Six said these laws “hold elected officials accountable.”

Yes — indeed.

Someone from every single public entity in Marion County — county, cities, schools — should attend this training and other training when it becomes available.

Open government continues to be one of the most important duties elected officials have to their constituents.

Why?

Look at the mess these large banks are in with bailout money. If government is allowed to operate behind closed doors as these banks did, there would be more corruption or at least more opportunity.

Since I started covering meetings nearly six years ago, I have had conversations with elected officials.

They would ask, “Don’t you trust me?” Sure, I trust most officials but that is not the point.

The point is not allowing any officials — those who are trustworthy and those who are not — to be in tempting positions where they could do something illegal, immoral, or not in the best interest of the general public.

This newspaper has an awesome responsibility of informing the public of the workings of government. We report happenings at meetings, publish notices and ordinances, and ask the questions that need to be asked.

“Where is the money coming from for road repairs?”

“Who is responsible for the tree trimming on county roads?”

“When will my road be repaired?”

“Why was another employee hired?”

“What’s the benefit of having a new city sewer pond?”

Closed sessions (executive sessions) are allowed for specific reasons. However, we the public and this newspaper are entrusting our elected officials to not break the law by discussing open meeting topics in closed sessions.

I have attended some meetings that are so well choreographed and planned that it makes us wonder if decisions were made behind closed doors and the officials were only going through the motions in open session.

This newspaper tries to find answers to questions, which sometimes doesn’t make us popular but we believe every citizen has the right to know how their tax money is being spent, how elected officials are conducting business and themselves, and the condition or status of our communities.

We have elected these people and they should work for us — the public — not for glory, recognition, personal interests, or in some cases, large paychecks.

***Do you have an Open Government experience to share?  
E-mail it to [rqannon@kspress.com](mailto:rqannon@kspress.com)***