

May 2024

FOG Light

Join us for a Town Hall

You are invited to participate in a town hall focused on the state's budgeting process, and ask – Would modernizing the New Mexico Legislature make the budgeting process more transparent? It's set for Tuesday, June 18, 2024.

The town hall will be held at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, 4100 Dripping Springs Road in Las Cruces, with registration at 6:30 p.m. and the session to begin at 7 p.m. FOG is hosting the event to acquaint the public with the budget making process for the New Mexico Legislature.

The free town hall is an opportunity for the public to understand the complex budgeting process, provide input and gather feedback about the process and hear discussions on the modernization of the body. Legislative Finance Council representatives will provide a budget overview and several legislators are confirmed as panel members. Another town hall will be held in northern New Mexico later in the summer.

FOG will use some of the questions and responses from the survey it conducted as part of the grant as a starting point for the panel.

The Thornburg Foundation is sponsoring the event. Participation is free. Please register [here](#).

Dixon Awards

FOG is looking for a few good people to honor with the 2024 William S. Dixon First Amendment Freedom Award. Please start thinking about who you might nominate. Is it someone who has used the state's Open Meetings Act or the Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) to shine a light on government mismanagement? Or a local official who took steps to do the right thing? Or a parent who wanted information?

Your nominee could be a journalist who demands transparency from public servants and government entities. Or, an educator, attorney, citizen or healthcare worker who has encouraged greater public transparency during the previous 12 months.

Past Dixon Award winners range from average citizens standing up for open government in their communities to elected officials who have carried the flag for open meetings and open government – quite an impressive group.

Nominations may come from any discipline, including but not limited to: business, law, education, government, media, health and citizen advocacy.

FOG will begin taking nominations at the website nmfog.org on June 15. To request a nomination form, go to info@nmfog.org.

The deadline for nominations is July 24, 2024.

The 2024 Dixon Awards Luncheon is scheduled for Oct. 15, 2024, at the Sandia Golf Club.

Advocate

A large part of FOG's mission is advocating on behalf of the public's right to know. In the past few weeks, FOG has contacted several agencies in an effort to ensure compliance with the Inspection of Public Records Act and the Open Meetings Act.

- FOG asked the Department of Justice to look at issues in Mora County where requests for public records were ignored by Mora County officials or the Records Custodian did not follow proper procedure. The DOJ has reached out to FOG for additional information.
- FOG contacted the Department of Public Service questioning why it provided an incorrect response to a request for records concerning an internal audit of the dates when officers attended court and a report detailing State Police Officers who missed court dates.
- In addition, FOG sent a letter to Village of Bosque Farms officials, pointing out potential OMA violations with agenda items. FOG related it believed the agenda's listing of items to discuss in an executive session did not fit under OMA exceptions. The Village removed the items and discussion of such was not held at their recent meeting.
- FOG also reached out to the Farmington records custodian about limitations they imposed that were outside of the requirements of IPRA. They immediately responded to the requestor to remedy the situation.

CLE

The 2024 CLE will be held on Nov. 1, 2024, at the New Mexico Bar Association offices. The session will be available online as well as in person.

FOG Hotline

- Are draft documents public?
- Do meeting minutes have to be made available to the public within a specific timeframe?
- Must the school board issue an agenda with specific information?

The answer to all three questions is yes and these are just a few of the examples of calls that come to FOG through the hotline. There are many reasons FOG gets calls. Citizens, journalists and public officials find that FOG is available to help and backs their concerns. Day in, day out FOG is doing the work of keeping the government open. Call us at 505-764-3750.

Mid-Year Donation Request

FOG can advocate, educate and litigate on behalf of the public because of your generous contributions. If you have not contributed to FOG in 2024, please donate today. Your donations are a tangible investment in promoting democracy. And right now, FOG like many 501(c) 3 organizations, desperately needs you. It is easy to donate. You can mail a check to our street address or donate online. Many supporters have a payment plan and automatically contribute each month. Your participation is essential – it helps us do this important work – work that gets results. Please donate today.

In Memoriam

FOG sends our deepest condolences to the family of former FOG Board Member John Moses who died May 21. A mentor to many including FOG President Jessica Onsurez and El Paso Times Editor Tim Archuleta, John was the quintessential journalist. He was the former editor of the Farmington Daily Times and executive editor of the Corpus Christi Caller Times when he died.

“John is being remembered by his family and colleagues for his dedication to his family and profession after he died Tuesday, May 21, following a battle with cancer. In November 2023, He was diagnosed with stage 4 esophageal cancer. Gale Moses, his wife, said she is glad he is out of his pain and hopes he will be remembered as a dedicated professional journalist and a wonderful family man. The two were married for 33 years and have a daughter and four grandchildren. John spent the past three decades managing newsrooms in California, Alaska, New Mexico and Wyoming.”

Outreach

FOG participated in a presentation to a group of international visitors from the Republic of the Congo, who are working on open government, transparency, and accountability. The meeting was a project of Global Ties. They included Newton Tembo MBUSA, Deputy Director, Ministry of Public Service; Kym Kabeya MUKOKA, Technical Advisor to the National Electoral Commission Executive Secretary; Damas Kabeya NGOYI, Public Relation Officer, DRC Government; Madeleine Sabangu NIKOMBA, Governor of TShopo Province, DRC Government.

Open-government questions? Call 505-764-3750