

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Who cares?

We've published several articles and editorials about local boards that have violated the Colorado Open Meetings Law (COML) over the past few years. We've called out those boards for not following procedure.

One local reader asked us if the "average" citizen even understood why they should care about boards violating the law.

Why should you care if your elected officials are following the law?

Why should you care if they are holding meetings that have been properly noticed?

Why should you care if agendas are posted according to policy and in a timely manner?

Why should you care if your elected officials are "horse trading" in the hall before meetings?

Why should you care if boards follow the rules for executive sessions and do not make decisions secretly behind closed doors?

Why should you care if boards are discussing public matters while traveling in autos together?

Why should you care if board members are emailing a quorum of the board to discuss public business?

Why should you care if boards are voting in emails and by secret ballots?

Why should you care that boards are being polled for their opinion and input on public matters through emails and phone calls?

Why should you care if a board is splitting up into small groups to avoid the law and make decisions out of the public view?

Why should we care about open meetings in government?

First and foremost, because it is the law. It is legislative policy that formation of public policy is public business and may not be conducted in secret.

The COML's intent is simple: Prevent the public's business from being conducted in private. The purpose of the law is to ensure each and every citizen that the board, council or committee that represents the community does the public's business in the light of day.

Taxpayers are the owners of government and they have a right to know how it is being operated. Agendas posted timely allow citizens enough time to plan to attend a meeting about something they care about.

A lack of transparency only serves to erode trust. Public officials must be accountable to the public on all matters.

Some of the above methods manipulate the COML, and, legal or not, they violate the spirit of government of the people, by the people, for the people. The only way to have full faith and confidence in our elected officials is to know they are working ethically and on our behalf.

Why should you care if our three Archuleta County commissioners take the time to review board material in preparation for their regular meetings?

Not only should you care about the violations of the COML, but you should care about boards documenting meetings accurately. When you have two county commissioners who each make \$70,200 a year, and one commissioner who makes \$58,500 a year, shouldn't they be responsible for being prepared for meetings?

Not one, but all three commissioners missed that the July 11 special meeting at which the board gave direction to pursue a contract with Todd Starr to again become the county's in-house legal counsel had been incorrectly documented in the minutes they approved at their July 15 regular meeting.

The board unanimously approved the incorrect minutes as part of the consent agenda at its July 15 meeting, with those minutes failing to describe any discussion following the executive session.

Moving forward, our local boards need to get it right if they want to hold the public's confidence.

We all should care that they do all the public's business the right way.

Terri Lynn Oldham House

WHADDYA THINK?

Do you care how closely government boards follow the law?



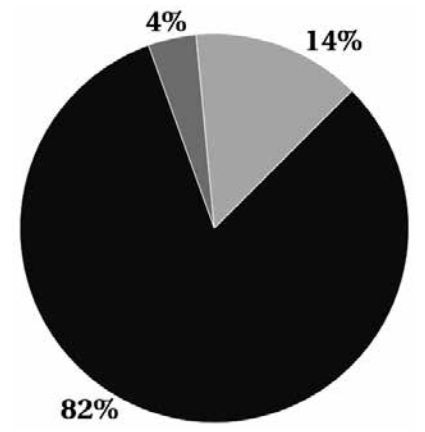
Gregoria Saucedo
"Yes. There is a reason why laws were written. It's just ethical to be respectful of our laws."



Raven Ayotte
"Honestly, I don't care anymore because they never do what they originally plan on."



Lilliana Hale
"I suppose."



Poll results (140 Votes)
Yes — 82 percent
No — 4 percent
I do not know — 14 percent

This week online: What Pirate sport are you most looking forward to this fall?
Vote at www.pagosasun.com

LOOKING BACK



From the July 2, 1970, Pagosa Springs SUN. **SUDDEN STOP** — This vehicle came to a sudden stop when it hit a tree after leaving the highway. The wreck took place last Thursday on the Piedra road about three miles above Highway 160 and was investigated by Patrol Officer Allen. There were no serious injuries and both occupants were wearing seat belts.

LEGACIES

By Shari Pierce

90 years ago

Taken from SUN files of August 5, 1927

The board of county commissioners met in monthly session Tuesday. At this time it was ordered that the county offices be removed by the 1st of September to the recently purchased court house, the former First National Bank building.

Lucille, 8-year-old daughter of Robt. Henry of Chromo is one of the star performers at the Monte Vista Stampede. This wonder girl daily thrills and entertains the vast crowd with daring and fancy trick riding on her horse, Gink.

Charlie Henderson intends to crowd Buck O'Neal for the fishing honors of the season. Sunday evening he landed a four-and-one-half-pound rainbow with a grasshopper near the pump house at the east edge of town.

75 years ago

Taken from SUN files of August 14, 1942

Jimmie Anderson, 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Anderson, shot and killed a brown bear Saturday on Williams Creek Sheep Range. The bear had been killing stock and Jimmie and his father, who is the government trapper here, had been on the trail of the marauder for several days. He's a mighty proud boy.

Preliminary instruction in the use of infantry weapons is occupying the time of former residents of this city who reported recently to Camp Roberts for 13 weeks of basic training. Pagosa Springs men recently assigned to the California Replacement Training Center include: Arthur S. Childers, Kinzer M. Snow, Max R. Martinez, Thomas W. Mee.

50 years ago

Taken from SUN files of August 10, 1967

This is County Fair week and there will be big doings this weekend. The exhibits at the County Fair are something that everyone should take the time to see. They are many and varied and all are interesting. The livestock and home ec exhibits are ones that any county of any size could be justly proud of.

One of the biggest events of the Fair each year that holds the most interest for the general public is the annual 4-H barbecue. It will be held Saturday night at the school grounds in town. Anyone missing this must be awfully busy.

It has often been remarked that men with great minds should be cultivated. There are others who should be plowed under.

25 years ago

Taken from SUN files of August 13, 1992

Eight deputies from the Archuleta County Sheriff Department raided a marijuana growing operation adjacent to the Aspen Springs subdivision Wednesday, arrested two men, and confiscated \$135,000 of the illegal weed. The operation first came to the attention of the department in late July, said Capt. Otis May. "We found out about the fields on July 27 and we immediately put them under surveillance. The suspects went to the plants yesterday (Tuesday): one went to the patches and the other stood guard. We decided to raid the patches on Wednesday because we feared they were going to harvest the crop. The marijuana patches were located in dense undergrowth, south of the Aspen Springs sales office."

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Date	High	Low	Precipitation	Type Depth Moisture		
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8/2	78	47	-	-	-	-
8/3	74	50	-	-	-	-
8/4	77	47	R	-	.11"	-
8/5	71	54	R	-	.34"	-
8/6	75	48	R	-	.02"	-
8/7	77	46	R	-	.11"	-
8/8	75	53	R	-	.05"	-

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