

# FPD hosts educational workshop on Kansas Open Meeting statute

Thomas Jefferson observed that “a democratic society depends upon an informed and educated citizenry.”

To this end, every state has some form of open meetings laws, sometimes referred to as “Sunshine Laws,” that regulate — and require — government agencies, boards, commissions, and other public bodies to conduct meetings and decision-making processes transparently and openly. These laws are designed to ensure that government actions and deliberations are accessible to the public, promoting government accountability and preventing clandestine decision-making.

Because Open Meeting Act laws play a pivotal role in upholding the principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation in the functioning of local governments, the Fredonia Police Department recently organized a training class for officers, conducted by the Kansas Attorney General’s office.

Stacie Edens, the police department’s administrative assistant, coordinated the training session.

“In the last couple of years, we have had an increase of KORA, and, with a few of them, we have gotten a lot of push-back about what can and cannot be released,” Edens explained, noting that law enforcement does have several exemptions.

Before the departure of then-Chief Brad Pflueger, Edens said they had discussed checking into getting some training, as she said, “to prepare ourselves to handle (that) better.”

Failure to comply with KORA carries potential legal consequences, and while penalties and remedial



action vary by jurisdiction, as well as the severity of the violation, action can be taken that: invalidates decisions made during the violation; legal challenges, fines and penalties; and public censure or impeachment.

There is also a potential public relations impact: failing to comply with KORA can erode public trust and confidence, and may dictate that public officials undergo training and education about the open meetings laws to prevent future violations. This is one of the main aspects Edens considered in organizing a class.

“The better prepared our officers are really helps in these situations,” Edens noted. “So I started searching for some local classes and found on the AG’s office website that you could request a training class in your area for KORA.”

After submitting a request, Edens said she did not receive a reply for several months; however, in early May she was contacted by the AG’s office about a date for the class.

“The class was geared toward anyone who handles records and has to fulfill requests with additional information for law enforcement-specific requests,” Edens said. “I also attended a conference mid-May that had a breakout session on KORA and it was hinted at some changes that were coming July 1, 2025, so those changes were also covered.”

After sending out an open invitation throughout the state in mid-May, on June 10, a group of nearly 40 law enforcement officers and city clerks gathered to hear about KORA from Matt Bingesser, administrative council to Kansas Attorney

General Kris Kobach. Edens notes that attendees hailed from as far away as the Kansas City area, as well as neighboring counties.

The Kansas Open Meetings Act (KSA 75-4317, et seq.) recognizes “that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate” and declares the policy of the State of Kansas is one where “meetings for the conduct of governmental affairs and the transaction of governmental business be open to the public.”

While open meeting laws vary by state, all of them typically contain such considerations as: public

notice of meetings; availability to the public — with some exceptions such as personnel issues or litigation, which can be discussed in closed, or executive, sessions; a predetermined agenda; recording of minutes; accessible location; quorum and majority requirements; and allowance for public comment.

Exceptions, including the two aforementioned, also include real estate transactions, collective bargaining, security and safety concerns, student records, health and medical information, trade secrets, and other confidential information protected from public disclosure.

Join us to say  
**Happy Birthday**  
and  
**Happy Retirement**  
to  
**Jill Gorton**  
1-3 p.m. Sunday, July 6  
at the Severy Community Center

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Howard Mahan and Friends provided music at the recent “Red, White, and Blues” fundraiser for the Fredonia Arts Council. Originally from Fredonia, Mahan is an attorney in Lawrence and also plays with the band all over the midwest. The event raised more than \$2,700 for FAC.

## Wilson County plans three-day ‘birthday bash’ for July 4 weekend

Three days of fireworks in Wilson County gets started in Neodesha to celebrate America’s 249<sup>th</sup> birthday.

On July 3, Neodesha kicks off the 4th of July weekend with “Red, White and Boom” at Riverwalk Park. The celebration starts at 6:30 p.m. with a watermelon feed, ice cream social, music, face painting and kids’ games. There will also be a cornhole tournament. The fireworks display will start around dusk.

Fredonia’s community celebration, now in its third year, will be held Friday, July 4, at Rotary Park, on South 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

Activities, including Bingo, kids’ games, and Inflatable Races begin in the afternoon, and residents are invited to bring lawn chairs and settle in for food, fun, music and fireworks.

For those early risers, the Fredonia Arts Council is again sponsoring a color run/walk, which gets under way at 8 a.m. at the park’s gazebo.

A poker run starts at 11 a.m., with stops planned in Altoona, Cherryvale and Independence before ending at the Fredonia VFW Post 3018 on Harper Road.

The fireworks display starts at dusk.

**Altoona Days/Fireman’s Auxiliary 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration**

Starting July 4 at the Altoona City Park, registration for corn hole and volleyball begins at 5:30 p.m. Concessions, by the Altoona-Midway Middle School cheer squad, will be for sale from 5:30-10 p.m.

The tournaments start at 6 p.m. Corn hole offers a 50/50 prize, as well as first and second places; the co-ed volleyball tournament is for players in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up and will award first and second places. Registration for corn hole is \$20 for a two-person team; volleyball is \$40 for a six-player team.

On Saturday, July 5, an all-you-can-eat breakfast will be held from 7-10 a.m. at the Fire Station on Main Street. The parade starts at 1 p.m. with participants gathering at Harper’s by 12:30 p.m., all floats are welcome. Concessions will be available all day; games start at 2 p.m. at the park, and include an egg toss, balloon toss, plunger toss, nail driving, three-legged race, frozen and icy t-shirt contests.

A bean and cornbread supper will start at 6 p.m. A stryder race for kids 2-5 years old starts at 7 p.m. and the drawing for the weekend get-away raffle will be held at 8 p.m. followed by fireworks at dusk.

# Retirement Reception

in honor of **SHIRLEY SHAFER**  
Friday, June 27, 2-4 p.m.  
at Acrisure-Neodesha, 414 Main St.  
You will also be able to stop by the office on Monday, June 30 to wish her well on her last day!

## Happy Birthday, Sweet Land of Liberty!

We will be closed  
**Friday, July 4**  
and  
**Saturday, July 5**  
Enjoy celebrating America’s birthday!



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