

Publishing county commission minutes as a legal notice in weekly newspapers is a vital practice that upholds transparency, accountability, and public trust in government operations. Here's why this is essential:

1. Promotes Government Transparency

- Citizens have a right to know how their local government operates and makes decisions. Publishing minutes ensures that actions taken by the county commission are accessible and open for public review.
- By making this information readily available, the public can see how their tax dollars are being spent and what policies are being implemented.

2. Reaches a Wide Audience

- Weekly newspapers serve as an important source of information, particularly in rural and less connected communities where access to digital resources may be limited.
- Unlike government websites that may go unnoticed, newspapers are a trusted and widely read medium, ensuring that county commission minutes reach more residents.

3. Legal Compliance and Accountability

- Publishing minutes in a newspaper ensures compliance with open government laws and mandates that information is shared in a public and verifiable manner.
- This public record serves as a historical archive of government actions, which can be referenced by citizens, researchers, or legal entities when needed.

4. Ensures Public Participation

- When residents are informed about local government actions, they are more likely to engage in civic processes, attend public meetings, and provide input on policies that affect their lives.
- Publishing in a newspaper fosters inclusivity by ensuring all citizens, not just those with internet access, are informed. One of my concerns is that Walsh County has their fair share of elderly people. I know my mother-in-law reads the county minutes on a regular basis. She also doesn't have the internet at her home so she would have no ability to keep reading them. And I know she isn't alone in this area.

5. Builds Public Trust

- Transparency in government operations builds confidence among constituents. When citizens can see decisions documented and published, they are less likely to feel excluded or skeptical about government activities.
- Weekly newspapers offer an independent platform for disseminating information, reinforcing impartiality and trust.

6. Supports Local Media

- Publishing legal notices, such as commission minutes, helps sustain local newspapers, which are critical to maintaining an informed and engaged public.
- Weekly newspapers often act as watchdogs, holding local governments accountable, and their continued existence is tied to practices like publishing legal notices. There are times when the county doesn't send in the minutes, so we do have to call for them. At one time last year we ran three meetings (which would be 1 and half months) in one issue of The Walsh County Record. Just this past week we ran three legals from their Nov. 19, Dec. 3 and Dec 17 meetings. Who would make sure that the minutes would be posted on a regular basis?

7. Accessibility for All Generations

- While digital platforms are growing, a significant portion of the population, especially older generations, still relies on print media for news and information. The Grafton residents showed their reliability to newspapers this past year by voting 668-66 to publish the Grafton city minutes.
- Publishing minutes in newspapers ensures equity, allowing all citizens, regardless of technological proficiency, to stay informed. The Walsh County Record is online every Thursday afternoon, which includes the legals at no extra cost.

By publishing county commission minutes in weekly newspapers, legislatures uphold the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. This practice not only strengthens public trust but also ensures that government actions are accessible to all members of the community, regardless of digital access or literacy. Supporting this practice demonstrates a commitment to democracy, civic engagement, and informed governance.

Thank you for your time.

Jackie Thompson

Publisher-The Walsh County Record

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