Jan. 9, 2020

Julie Morgas Baca
County Manager
Bernalillo County
One Civic Plaza NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

sent by email manager@bernco.gov

RE: Electronic Payments for Copies of Public Records

Dear Manager Baca,

The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (FOG) is dedicated to ensuring access to public information in New Mexico, which includes assisting both records requestors and public entities regarding compliance with the New Mexico Inspection of Public Records Act (“IPRA”) and assisting those who have concerns about compliance with the Open Meetings Act (OMA).

FOG has received several complaints about the County, specifically the method of payments required for copies of public records. Why in the year 2020, does Bernalillo County allow a citizen to pay for a public record only by money order?

In a survey from Next Gen Personal Finance, almost 70 percent of Americans now use some type of electronic payment system to pay their bills. Approximately 8.2 billion bills—or 56 percent of all bills—are paid online via a biller, bank or third-party website. Even the Bernalillo County Treasurer collects property taxes via an electronic system. Yet anyone who wants a copy of a record must take cash, buy a money order and then take the money order to the County Clerk—an archaic system. A system that some might argue prohibits access to public information.

I believe that the County should remedy this situation immediately and hope it takes steps towards an electronic payment system to comply with the spirit of IPRA and to ensure the public’s trust.

Sincerely,

Melanie J. Majors
Executive Director

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