

# Trend toward openness in Rabun encouraging

The city of Clayton will host an informational meeting on water issues April 16 following the conclusion of their regular council meeting at around 5 p.m.

For anyone interested in learning about water issues in the city, whether above the surface or below, this meeting is expected to provide a wealth of information on water issues as they impact city residents.

We commend city officials for their foresight in putting together this town hall meeting in order to keep residents informed.

There seems to be a growing trend toward more openness in local government recently. Some might say the ill will generated by the Service Delivery Strategy fiasco has forced local officials to adopt a more open approach to governing.

Some local officials would argue they have been transparent all along.

Undoubtedly, increased scrutiny and demands for public accountability from ordinary citizens and groups such as the Rabun County Coalition for Good Government also play a role.

Decipher it any way you will, but whatever the reason, now that local government officials have started down the path of more open and accessible government, it will be difficult for them to retreat.

Not that they should ever want to keep the public from knowing about the public's own business.

Sometimes we elect people to office who seem to forget they are but temporary custodians of the people's business. The people are the reason government exists, and they have both the right and a certain amount of civic duty to be fully informed on any and all actions taken on their behalf.

Mountain politics notoriously have a history replete with back-door deals and good ol' boy politics.

It's a reputation largely earned and one very few people would want to see perpetuated.

If that kind of government truly has no place in Rabun County in the 21st century, our local officials must work extra hard to ensure all their actions are open and accessible to everyday citizens.

That does not mean that local governmental bodies should give up their right to conduct the public's business through orderly meetings. It doesn't mean that every meeting should turn into a four-hour round robin debate on every issue.

It does mean that our elected officials should make it a high priority to operate in the sunshine, with full transparency, on behalf of the citizens they serve.

And we are happy to report that in Rabun County recently, there appears to be a growing new spirit of openness and cooperation long overdue.

Congratulations to our hard-working public servants who don't want to govern from the shadows.

Welcome to the sunshine. Doesn't it feel wonderful?