



## Virginia Local Government Law

# Virginia Freedom of Information Act: FOIA Advisory Council, Training and Resources

**By: Andrew McRoberts. Wednesday, August 3rd, 2011**

There are few things more basic to the practice of local government law than the [Virginia Freedom of Information Act](#). The Act can be easy to comply with in some respects, and yet can be complex in some details. Violations or suspected violations can hold political or even criminal penalties.

Fortunately, local government attorneys, public officials, and citizens have resources that can help with compliance with the Freedom of Information Act — the primary resource being the [Freedom of Information Act Advisory Council](#). The staff and attorneys of the Council field questions over the telephone, and issue [formal advisory opinions](#) that can guide compliance. The Council can even informally assist in resolving disputes involving the Virginia FOIA. I have often appreciated the backup the Council can provide to a local government attorney in a heated political environment.

Recently, I received a reminder of the annual training provided by the FOIA Advisory Council. Here are excerpts from the reminder I received on the Council's [2011 FOIA Workshops](#):

*It's that time of year again! The 2011 FOIA Workshops have been scheduled for September and October [2011]. Registration forms and additional information are available on the FOIA Council website at [http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/2011\\_workshops.htm](http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/2011_workshops.htm). .... The registration form should provide all of the relevant information, but if you have any questions or require additional information, please contact ... Maria Everett, or Darlene Jordan. Darlene may be contacted at [djordan@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:djordan@dls.virginia.gov) or 804.786.3591. [Maria may be contacted at [meverett@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:meverett@dls.virginia.gov) or 804.786.3591.]*

On its website, the FOIA Council provides links or mentions a [large number of other resources](#) for interpreting or applying the Virginia FOIA. One of the resources mentioned is the *Local Government Officials' Guide [to FOIA]* (\$5) available from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Charlottesville, VA 22903, a popular resource among local government practitioners and officials.

*As counsel to counties, cities and towns, local government entities and their officials throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, the attorneys of the [Sands Anderson PC Local Government Team](#)*

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*interpret FOIA issues regularly, and can provide a formal interpretation, assist with a FOIA problem, or litigate a FOIA case, if needed.*

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