

Fairfield County, Ohio

Public Records Request Policy

Introduction

It is the policy of the Fairfield County Commissioners Office that openness leads to a better-informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy.

Public Records

This office, in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, defines records as including the following: any document – paper, electronic (including, but not limited to, e-mail), or other format – that is created or received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of a public office that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of the Fairfield County Commissioners are public unless they are exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

It is the policy of the Fairfield County Commissioners Office, as required by Ohio law, that records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying.

Records Requests

Each request for public records should be evaluated for a response using the following guidelines:

Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requestor must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the records custodian must contact the requestor for clarification, and should assist the requestor in revising the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which the office keeps its records.

The requestor does not have to put a records request in writing and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record. It is this office's general policy that this information is not to be requested. However, the records custodian may ask for a written request and may ask for the requester's identity and/or intended use of the information requested if 1) it would benefit the requestor by helping the public office identify, locate, or deliver the records being sought, and 2) the requestor is informed that a written request and the requestors identify and intended use of the information requested are not required.

Public records are to be available for inspection from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Public records must be made available for the inspection promptly. Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested; the proximity of the location where the cords are stored; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

Routine requests for records should be satisfied immediately if feasible to do so. Routine requests include, but are not limited to, meeting minutes (both in draft and final form), budgets, salary information, personnel rosters, etc.

All requests for public records must be acknowledged in writing by the public office within one business day following the office's receipt of the request. If a request is voluminous or will require research, the acknowledgement should include the following:

- An estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request.
- An estimated cost if copies are requested.
- Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, including legal authority, and the Prosecutor's Office should be consulted prior to denying any request. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the rest released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.

Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records may be charged only the actual costs of making copies. The charge for paper copies is \$0.05 per page or the amount required by law. The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1.00 per disk or the amount required by law. There is no charge for documents e-mailed. Requestors may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of postage and mailing supplies, in addition to the charges set under the costs for public records section. Charges may be waived for efficiency purposes.

E-mail

Documents in electronic mail format are records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of the Office.

Failure to Respond to a Public Records Request

The Fairfield County Commissioners Office recognizes the legal and non-legal consequences of failure to properly respond to a public records request.