THE PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT

Rights of Requestors
You have the right to:
• Prompt access to information that is not confidential or otherwise protected;
• Receive treatment equal to all other requestors, including accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements;
• Receive certain kinds of information without exceptions, like the voting record of public officials, and other information;
• Receive a written statement of estimated charges, when charges will exceed $40, in advance of work being started and opportunity to modify the request in response to the itemized statement;
• Choose whether to inspect the requested information (most often at no charge), receive copies of the information or both;
• A waiver or reduction of charges if the governmental body determines that access to the information primarily benefits the general public;
• Receive a copy of the communication from the governmental body asking the Office of the Attorney General for a ruling on whether the information can be withheld under one of the accepted exceptions, or if the communication discloses the requested information, a redacted copy;
• Lodge a written complaint about overcharges for public information with the Office of the Attorney General. Complaints of other possible violations may be filed with the county or district attorney of the county where the governmental body, other than a state agency, is located. If the complaint is against the county or district attorney, the complaint must be filed with the Office of the Attorney General.

Responsibilities of Governmental Bodies
All governmental bodies responding to information requests have the responsibility to:
• Establish reasonable procedures for inspecting or copying public information and inform requestors of these procedures;
• Treat all requestors uniformly and shall give to the requestor all reasonable comfort and facility, including accommodation in accordance with ADA requirements;
• Be informed about open records laws and educate employees on the requirements of those laws;
• Inform requestors of the estimated charges greater than $40 and any changes in the estimates above 20 percent of the original estimate, and confirm that the requestor accepts the charges, or has amended the request, in writing before finalizing the request;
• Inform the requestor if the information cannot be provided promptly and set a date and time to provide it within a reasonable time;
• Request a ruling from the Office of the Attorney General regarding any information the governmental body wishes to withhold, and send a copy of the request for ruling, or a redacted copy, to the requestor;
• Segregate public information from information that may be withheld and provide that public information promptly;
• Make a good faith attempt to inform third parties when their proprietary information is being requested from the governmental body;
• Respond in writing to all written communications from the Office of the Attorney General regarding charges for the information. Respond to the Office of the Attorney General regarding complaints about violations of the Act.

Procedures to Obtain Information
✓ Submit a request by mail, e-mail, or in person, or any other appropriate method approved by the governmental body.
✓ Include enough description and detail about the information requested to enable the governmental body to accurately identify and locate the information requested.
✓ Cooperate with the governmental body’s reasonable efforts to clarify the type or amount of information requested.

A. Information to be released
• You may review it promptly, and if it cannot be produced within 10 working days the public information officer will notify you in writing of the reasonable date and time when it will be available.
• Keep all appointments to inspect records and to pick up copies. Failure to keep appointments may result in losing the opportunity to inspect the information at the time requested.

Cost of Records
• You must respond to any written estimate of charges within 10 days of the date the governmental body sent it or the request is considered automatically withdrawn.
• If estimated costs exceed $100.00 (or $50.00 if a governmental body has fewer than 16 full time employees) the governmental body may require a bond, prepayment or deposit.
• You may ask the governmental body to determine whether providing the information primarily benefits the general public, resulting in a waiver or reduction of charges.
• Make a timely payment for all mutually agreed charges. A governmental body can demand payment of overdue balances exceeding $100.00, or obtain a security deposit, before processing additional requests from you.

If you need special accommodation pursuant to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), please contact our ADA coordinator.
Belinda Lewis at 936-261-3581 or LaToya Douglas at 936-261-1744

For complaints regarding failure to release public information please contact your local County or District Attorney. Please ask and you will be provided with this information.
• You may also contact the Office of the Attorney General, Open Government Hotline, at 512-478-6736 or toll-free at 1-877-673-6839.
• For complaints regarding overcharges, please contact the Office of the Attorney General, Cost Hotline at 512-475-2497 or toll-free at 1-888-672-6787.

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