

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

OF

THE CITY OF MACEDONIA, OHIO

Effective September 30, 2007

Introduction:

It is the policy of the City of Macedonia that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of the City of Macedonia to strictly adhere to the state's Public Records Act. All exemptions to openness are to be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. To facilitate this policy and to oversee compliance with the ORC, Council appoints its Clerk as Records Custodian for all legislative-related records and requires the Mayor to designate and identify an employee in the Administration as Records Custodian and Coordinator for all administrative departments.

Section 1. Public records

This Community 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 City of Macedonia are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code. See ORC 149.43, attached as Appendix I.

Section 1.1

It is the policy of the City of Macedonia that, as required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying (See Section 4 for the e-mail record policy). Record retention schedules are to be updated regularly and posted prominently.

Section 2. Record requests

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

Section 2.1 - Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester 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 requester 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.

Section 2.2 - In order to enhance this Community's ability to comply with the requestor's intended request, the request may be suggested to be put in writing, the requestor identified, and the intended use explained. However, the requestor must be simultaneously advised that they do not have to put the records request in writing, and do not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record, if they choose not to.

Section 2.3 - Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Public records must be made available for 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 records are stored; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

Section 2.4 - Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. 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, forms and applications, personnel rosters, etc. If fewer than 20 pages of copies are requested or if the records are readily available in an electronic format that can be e-mailed or downloaded easily, these should be made as quickly as the equipment allows.

If more than 20 pages of copies are requested, an appointment should be made with the requester on a date when the copies or computer files can be reviewed and/or received.

All requests for public records must either be satisfied (see Section 2.4) or be acknowledged in writing within five business days following the office's receipt of the request. If a request is deemed significantly beyond "routine," such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the acknowledgement must include the following:

Section 2.4a – An estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request.

Section 2.4b – An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Section 2.4c – Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Section 2.5 - Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, including legal authority. 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.

Section 3. Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies, and will be required to pay same in advance.

Section 3.1- The charge for paper copies is 5 cents per page for requests exceeding 20 pages.

Section 3.2 - The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$2 per disc.

Section 3.3 - There is no charge for documents e-mailed.

Section 3.4 - Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies. If the documents are not able to be mailed due to size or volume as delineated by U. S. Mail regulations, the

requestor must arrange for pick up at the Municipal Center unless the requestor approves and pays for delivery via a private delivery service.

Section 4. 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. E-mail is to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and should follow the same retention schedules.

Section 4.1 – Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of this Community are instructed to retain their e-mails that relate to public business (see Section 1 Public Records) and to copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the office’s records custodian unless otherwise exempted under the ORC.

Section 4.2 – The records custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the public office, filing them in the appropriate way, retaining them per established schedules and making them available for inspection and copying in accordance with the Public Records Act.

Section 4.3 – Voice Mail is not a public record unless it is of such significance that an employee would normally retain it to document or verify a significant act on behalf of the public’s business, and is not otherwise documented elsewhere. In which event, the employee is recommended to transfer such voice mail to an email storage location, or have it transcribed for the appropriate event file, then erased.

Section 5. Failure to respond to a public records request

City of Macedonia recognizes the legal and non-legal consequences of failure to properly respond to a public records request. In addition to the distrust in government that failure to comply may cause, City of Macedonia’s failure to comply with a request may result in a court ordering the City of Macedonia to comply with the law and to pay the requestor’s attorneys fees and damages.