

RESPONDING TO PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS BEST PRACTICES

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August 22, 2016

- Verbal requests: write down what the requestor asked for.
- Written requests: review the request carefully – What exactly is being requested?
- Due diligence: does the record exist?
- Due diligence: how many responsive records are there, where are they located, how long will it take to fulfill the request?
- Verbal, in-person requests (e.g., requests to review parking citation) – keep log of what records are reviewed, and when they are reviewed.
- Keep track of redactions (e.g., keep highlighted copy of record).
- Even if producing all records requested, if a written request is received, send a cover letter with the requested documents – include date, description of records requested, and invoice amount, if any.
- Keep copy of records sent along with original request, response, and invoice.
- If the request is unusual, consult your public records supervisor or attorney.
- If a request is overly broad, attempt a narrowing before denying outright.
- Reproduction costs: must relate back to something real: (e.g., actual cost of photocopying (ink, paper, employee time); actual cost of CD, DVD, or thumb drive; actual cost of employee time to reproduce records electronically).
- Keep careful track of employee time spent along with description of task.
- If location fees or reproduction fees are high, communicate this to the requestor before fulfilling the request.
- Use common sense.