



**TOWN OF ADDISON**  
**OPEN RECORDS POLICY**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish internal guidelines in accordance with Texas Government Code 552.001, et seq., as amended, (the Texas Public Information Act) (the "Act"), to ensure that all records in the possession of and pertaining to the operation of the Town of Addison, Texas ("City") are available to the public through a systematic and centralized process and as required by law.

**DEFINITIONS**

- **City Secretary's Office**- The office of the City Secretary of the Town of Addison, Texas, which shall include the City Secretary and any employees within this office.
- **Department**- The department(s) to whom a public information request is forwarded or the department(s) that has information responsive to a request for public information. The term department shall refer to the liaison(s) as defined in this policy, and any other employee so designated or responsible for responding to public information requests.
- **Department Head**- The individual in charge of a department within the City as determined by the City Manager.
- **Liaison**- The person(s) in each department designated by the department head as responsible for responding to, processing and filling requests for public information.
- **Manipulation**- The process of modifying, reordering, or decoding information with human intervention.
- **Public Information**- the definition of "public information" as set forth in the Act, as amended.
- **Public Information Requests**- All written Requests for public information fall under the provisions of the Act. This includes any correspondence, standard form

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document, facsimile, email communication, or other writing that requests information. The City has a portal that can be used to Request public information, but USAGE OF THE PORTAL IS NOT REQUIRED. It is the City's policy to request that a Requestor submit a Request for public information in writing via the City's designated portal on the City's website.

- Requestor- any person, group, association, corporation or other assembly of individuals who make a request for public information pursuant to the Act.
- Requests- All requests for information, as defined under the Act, with the exception of open record requests that are received by the Police Department, Fire Department and/or Municipal Court. In the event a request overlaps between departments (ie. City Secretary and Fire Department), the City Secretary shall assume the leadership of accepting and responding to the request.
- Standard/ Nonstandard Copies-
  - Standard Copies- Printed impressions on paper that measures up to 8 ½ by 14 inches. Each side of a piece of paper on which an impress is made is counted as a copy.
  - Nonstandard Copies- Copies of information made available to a Requestor in any format other than a standard copy. This includes, but is not limited to, microfiches, microfilm, diskettes, magnetic tapes, videocassettes, and paper copies larger 8 ½ by 14 inches.

### GENERAL

The City regularly receives Requests for access to public information. The City shall evaluate each Request in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Act. The timeline for the release of information is dependent upon the information requested, and whether or not it falls within a mandatory or permissive exception provided by the Act. The purpose of this policy is to provide general guidance on the open records process in the Town.

In handling Requests for public information, the City must comply with the requirements of the Act. Any written Request for public information in the state of Texas, routine or otherwise, must be handled in accordance with the Act and other state and federal statutes. Charges associated with the copying of information fall under the provisions of the Act, specifically those sections of the Code that set maximum charges for the copying of information, and the Texas Administrative Code. These charges must be used in assessing fees for compiling and copying public information, except to the extent that other law provides for charges for specific kinds of public information.

The fee schedule provided in the Texas Administrative Code must be followed when responding to a Requestor and assessing costs.

The Act does not require the creation of new information. Departments should only

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provide information that responds to the Request and that exists at the time the Request is received. If a Department does not have information that responds to a Request, the Department shall notify the City Secretary's Office, which shall notify the Requestor, in writing.

The Act prohibits the City from inquiring why a Requestor is requesting certain information or how the information will be used. City staff may only make inquiries to a Requestor for the following reasons:

1. To establish proper identification, if needed;
2. To clarify a Request that is unclear; and/or
3. In cases where a large amount of information has been requested, to discuss how the scope of a Request may be narrowed.

### CITY SECRETARY

The City Charter designates the City Secretary as the Town Records Management Officer for the City and all Requests for public records should be addressed to the City Secretary. The City Secretary shall be the City's authority for releasing records in accordance with the Act, with the exception of Fire Department, Municipal Court and Police Records.

The Request must sufficiently identify the record desired by name (if known) of record, date of record, and address/location of record. The City, however, must make a good faith effort to advise the Requestor of the kinds of records available to assist him in clarifying his Request. Should the type of record being requested not be a record maintained by the City, the City has no obligation to create a record or records to satisfy the request.

### DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The City Secretary's Office is the point of contact and the distribution point for all Requests. Departments shall forward all Requests received to the City Secretary's office within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.

The Department Head is responsible for providing coordination between the City Secretary's Office and staff in his or her office to ensure that provisions of this Policy are followed. Department Heads are responsible for responding as requested by the City Secretary's Office or City Attorney regarding Requests for departmental public information.

Department Heads shall appoint one (1) or more departmental liaison(s) that will be responsible for responding to, processing and fulfilling Requests, and working with the City Secretary's Office or City Attorney in handling Requests. The Department Head shall also ensure that if the departmental liaison(s) is unavailable, at least one (1) staff member with knowledge of the public information process and all Requests that are

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submitted to the Department, is available to process the Request and/or work with the City Secretary's Office and City Attorney in handling Requests.

Departments are responsible for organizing and maintaining both active and inactive information in a manner that maximizes the ready availability of the information in accordance with state laws.

Departments are responsible for providing all responsive documentation to the City Secretary's Office within four (4) days of the Request date, unless requested sooner. Revisions of this time period may be made by the City Secretary and/or City Attorney, upon Request and demonstration of necessity.

Departments are responsible for estimating, justifying, and reporting all charges associated with compiling and copying information.

Departments shall examine all information to determine which information is responsive to the Request and forward such information to the City Secretary's Office.

CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE

The City Secretary's Office logs in and carries out the initial distribution of all Requests to relevant Department Heads and/or appointed liaisons and also forwards a copy to the City Attorney.

The City Secretary's Office is responsible for contacting the Requestor to confirm receipt and to indicate the initial status of distribution efforts, if known.

The City Secretary's Office will provide advice to Departments on costs associated with providing copies of, or access to, public information. The City Secretary's Office shall be responsible for drafting all cost estimate letters in association with Requests.

The City Secretary's Office will provide copies or access to public information in response to standard Requests in accordance with the Act.

The City Secretary's Office is responsible for advising and informing the City Manager's Office on Requests as requested by the City Manager.

The City Secretary's Office shall coordinate the response to all Requests, with the assistance of the City Attorney. The City Secretary's Office ~~will~~shall not provide access or copies to the Requestor pursuant to the Public Information Act. —until the In accordance with the Act, the City Secretary will forward those requests that are required to be reviewed for release by the Attorney General to the City Attorney. The City Attorney will send a request for a ruling to the Texas Attorney General for those requests meeting the exception requirements. —City Attorney has reviewed the information and determined if the information can be released.

### CITY ATTORNEY

The City Attorney is responsible for assisting in the compliance of this policy, the Act and the direction of City Council.

The City Attorney reviews all Requests forwarded by the City Secretary's Office ~~and other Departments~~ to determine whether any portion of the requested information may fall under an exception pursuant to the Act.

In order to determine whether information is confidential or excepted from disclosure under the law, the City Secretary's Office shall provide the City Attorney with a copy of the requested information before the information is released to the Requestor. The City Attorney shall notify the Requestor, relevant Departments, and the City Secretary's Office upon determination that the requested information is subject to exception from disclosure or release. The City Attorney shall oversee the redaction of information determined to be confidential or otherwise excepted from public disclosure.

In accordance with the Act and if necessary, the City Attorney will send a Request for a ruling to the Texas Attorney General. The City Secretary's Office will be copied on all correspondence with the Attorney General's Office.

### PRACTICE

All Requests shall be submitted in writing regardless of the source, and shall be submitted to the City Secretary's Office. The Requestor may submit his Request in letter form, by electronic mail, by facsimile, or by completing the Request through the open records request online portal. All Requests that are not submitted through the online portal should be forwarded immediately to the City Secretary's Office for review and distribution.

The City Secretary's Office shall distribute the Request to the appropriate Departments, which shall confirm receipt of the Request within one (1) business day. A copy of the information responsive to the Request shall be provided to the City Secretary's Office within four (4) business days of receipt of the Request by the City, unless requested sooner.

All responsive information maintained by the City at the time of a Request must be provided to the City Secretary's Office. After review by the City Secretary's Office and the City Attorney, if applicable, all information, which is not otherwise excepted from required public disclosure, shall be released. The difficulty or inconvenience involved in making this information available is not a factor in determining whether or not information shall be released. The availability and volume of information requested, however, are highly relevant to what constitutes a reasonable period of time. For more voluminous Requests, the task of compilation may be greater.

Requests shall be handled promptly and timely, taking into account the order in which

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they are received and the information requested. When the time necessary for compilation or provision of requested information will exceed ten (10) business days from the date of the standard Request, the City Secretary's Office shall certify in writing to the Requestor the approximate date when the information will be available, copying the City Attorney and City Attorney's designee for Requests.

All original Requests for Disclosure of Public Records, along with any documentation and/or rulings, shall be maintained by the Department receiving the Request (City Secretary, Emergency Response, Fire, and Police) for file, records retention, and reference purposes in accordance with the Texas State Library and Archives Retention Schedule.

### Electronic Data

If responsive information exists in an electronic or magnetic medium, the Requestor may Request a copy either on paper or in an electronic medium, such as on diskette or magnetic tape. City staff shall provide a suitable copy in the requested medium if:

- 1) the City has the technological ability to produce a copy of the requested information in the requested medium;
- 2) the City is not required to purchase any software or hardware to accommodate the Request; and
- 3) provision of a copy of the information in the requested medium will not violate the terms of any copyright agreement between the City and a third party.

If City staff is unable to comply with a Request to produce a copy of information in a requested medium for any of the reasons described above, City staff shall provide a paper copy of the requested information or a copy in another medium that is acceptable to the Requestor. City staff is not required to copy information to a diskette or other material provided by the Requestor, but may use City supplies and charge the Requestor.

### Manipulation of Data

If City staff determines that responding to a Request will require programming or manipulation of data and that compliance with the Request is not feasible or will result in substantial interference with ongoing operations, the City Secretary's Office shall provide to the Requestor a written statement that must include:

- 1) a statement that the information is not available in the requested form;
- 2) a description of the form in which the information is available;
- 3) a description of any contract or services that would be required to provide the

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information in the requested form;

- 4) a statement of the estimated cost of providing the information in the requested form, in accordance with charges outlined in the Act; and
- 5) a statement of the anticipated time required to provide the information in the requested form.

The City Secretary's Office shall provide the written statement to the Requestor in accordance with the Act.

After providing the written statement to the Requestor, staff has no further obligation to provide the information in the requested form or in the form in which it is available unless, within thirty (30) days, the Requestor states in writing to the staff that the Requestor:

- 1) wants staff to provide the information in the requested form according to the cost and time parameters set out in the statement or according to other terms to which the Requestor and staff agree; or
- 2) wants the information in the form in which it is available.

If the Requestor does not make a timely written statement as provided in this section, the Request is considered to be withdrawn.

The City Secretary's Office shall maintain a file containing all written statements issued under this section in a readily accessible location for one (1) year after a final decision on the Request has been made.

Staff shall consult with the Information Technology Department prior to providing the written statement described above, as well as a "suitable copy" described in Electronic Data, if Information Technology has service responsibility for the electronic records keeping systems from which the information is being requested.

#### Request for Inspection and Delivery

For both convenience and security, all information requested shall be located by Department staff, inspected by the Requestor, and copied by Department staff.

City staff shall not remove or allow to be removed from City offices any original copies of public information. Inspections of public information shall take place on-site in City facilities. Departments shall provide facilities and accommodations to accomplish such inspections.

Persons requesting access to public information must complete examination of the information within ten (10) business days from the date material is made available to

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them. This period may be extended an additional ten (10) business days provided the Requestor, during the initial period, files a written request for additional time. If the Requestor does not complete the examination within ten (10) business days after the information is made available, and does not file a Request for additional time, the Request is considered withdrawn. An additional ten (10) business days may be granted if, within the additional period, the Requestor files another written Request for additional time. This examination period may be interrupted if the information is needed for use by the City. This period of interruption is not included in the time period during which persons may examine information.

Copies of materials requested will be sent to the Requestor in the manner in which it was received. It may be mailed to the Requestor by first class United States mail, provided that the Requestor has paid all costs associated with copying, as well as postage costs, in advance.

Destruction of public information shall take place on a regular and systematic basis according to approved records retention and disposition schedules, City Code provisions and state law. No information shall be destroyed, however, including information whose retention minimum has expired, after a Request for that information or notification of such a pending Request has been received.

Repetitious Requests

If City staff determines that a Requestor has made a duplicate Request (an identical Request to one that has previously been answered by the City), the City Secretary's Office shall certify to the Requestor that copies of all or part of the requested information were previously furnished or made available to the Requestor. The certification must include:

- 1) a description of the information for which copies have been previously furnished or made available to the Requestor;
- 2) the date the governmental body received the Requestor's original Request for that information;
- 3) the date the governmental body previously furnished copies or made the information available to the Requestor;
- 4) a certification that no subsequent additions, deletions, or corrections have been made to that information; and
- 5) the name, title, and signature of the officer for public information or the officer's agent making the certification.

A charge may not be imposed for making a certification under this section.



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This section does not apply to information that was not previously copied or made available to the Requestor upon payment, including information for which copies were not furnished or made available because the information was redacted from other information that was furnished or made available or because the information did not yet exist at the time of an earlier Request.

When mailing copies of sensitive information, certified mail should be used when an appropriate mailing address is provided.

FEES

Fees for disclosure of public records shall be determined as outlined by the guidelines established by the Texas Building and Procurement Commission (formerly General Services Commission (GSC)) rules (Texas Administrative Code, Sections 111.61 - 111.63) as summarized in Exhibit A.

Departments shall keep records of labor involved in compiling all Requests for information so that proper charges can be assessed.

The City Secretary ~~with the help of the City Attorney~~ should provide a Requestor with a written estimate of costs anticipated for information that will require manipulation, programming, personnel time, or other cost categories over and above simple paper copies.

As a general rule, there is no charge for inspection of public information if a copy is not requested. The following are exceptions to this rule, for which fees may be charged:

- 1) In the case of paper records on which a page or pages contain confidential information that must be edited or redacted before the information can be made available, departments may charge only for the cost of a copy of the page from which information must be redacted.
- 2) In the case of information in an electronic medium that is not available directly online to a Requestor and that will require programming or manipulation of data to comply with a Request, departments may impose charges for access to the information. The City Secretary's Office shall provide an estimate of related charges to the Requestor before assembling the information.
- 3) In the case of information in an electronic form on a computer owned or leased by the City to which the public has direct access through a computer network or other means and that will require processing, programming, or manipulation on the City-owned or leased computer before it can be electronically copied, departments may impose associated charges.

When mailing copies of material requested, fees charged shall be collected before materials are sent. The City Secretary's Office may notify Requestors of exact charges

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by telephone, correspondence, or by calculating charges on the Public Information Request form and forwarding it as an invoice. All facsimile and mailing costs, including certified mail charges, shall be included as part of total copying charges assessed.

When charges for copying are projected with certainty to exceed \$100, a deposit shall be charged, and a receipt for this amount shall be given when the deposit is received.

Sales tax may not be added to the charges for copying public information.

Mailing charges may be assessed.

### WAIVER

The City reserves the right to waive fees for the cost of a copy or copies requested by a city official, city employee or other governing entities (local, state, or federal).

### TRAINING

The City Secretary's Office, in conjunction with the City Attorney, shall provide training and guidance to all Departments and Liaisons on the legal requirements, costs, and procedures associated with responding to Requests for public information.

All staff members designated as a Liaison for public information, or a backup to the Liaison in his or her absence, shall be required to attend the training at least once within a two-year period. If a new staff member is designated as a Liaison, or the backup to the Liaison, that person shall attend the next available training session.

The City Secretary's Office is the official designee of the City to satisfy the training requirements of Section 552.012 of the Texas Government Code, as amended.

### REFERENCES

- Public Information Act, Chapter 552, Texas Government Code, as amended.
- Cost Regulations, as set forth in § 552.261 - .274, Texas Government Code and Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 70.
- Addison Code of Ordinances, Article V. Records Management.