



Cleveland City Council
Public Records Request Policy
December 2025

It is the mission and the policy of Cleveland City Council (“Council”) to fully comply with and abide by both the spirit and the letter of Ohio’s Public Records Act.

DEFINING PUBLIC RECORDS

A “record” is defined to include a paper or electronic document - including but not limited to email and text messages – that is created, received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of a public office like the Council and that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of that office.

A “public record” is a “record” that is being kept by this office at the time a public records request is made, subject to applicable exemptions from disclosure under Ohio or federal law. All public records must be organized and maintained in such a way that they can be made available for inspection and copying.

RESPONSE TIME

Depending on the nature of the record requested, public records are generally available for inspection during the normal operating hours of the Council offices, usually 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. The terms “prompt” and “reasonable” consider the volume of records requested, the proximity of the location where the records are stored, the necessity for any legal review and redaction, and other facts and circumstances of the records requested.

HANDLING REQUESTS

Requests for Council documents may be made directly to Council, through its website, or through the City’s public records portal “GovQA”

[https://clevelandoh.govqa.us/WEBAPP/rs/\(S\(ute22dubod1t1s1rwgdbiqot\)\)/support/home.aspx](https://clevelandoh.govqa.us/WEBAPP/rs/(S(ute22dubod1t1s1rwgdbiqot))/support/home.aspx) . Council may ask the requester to enter their request into GovQA to facilitate filling the request.

Specific language is not required to make a request for public records. However, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the office to identify, retrieve, and review the records.

The requester 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(s). However, the law does permit the office to ask for a written request, the requester's identity, and/or the intended use of the information requested, if (1) a written request or disclosure of identity or intended use would benefit the requester by enhancing the office's ability to identify, locate, or deliver the public records that have been requested; and (2) the requester is first told that a written request is not required and that the requester may decline to reveal the requester's identity or intended use.

In processing the request, the Council does not have an obligation to create new records, perform a search, or research for information in the office's records. An electronic record is deemed to exist so long as a computer is already programmed to produce the record through the office's standard use of sorting, filtering, or querying features. In processing a request for inspection of a public record, a Council employee may accompany the requester during inspection to make certain original records are not taken or altered.

A copy of the most recent edition of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Manual is available via the Attorney General's website <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Legal/Sunshine-Laws> for the purpose of keeping employees of the office and the public educated as to the office's obligations under Ohio's Public Records Act, Ohio's Open Meetings Act, records retention laws, and Personal Information Systems Act.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Records in the form of e-mail, text messaging, and instant messaging, including those sent and received via a hand-held communications device, are treated in the same fashion as records in other formats, such as paper or audiotape.

Public record content transmitted to or from private accounts or personal devices is subject to disclosure. All employees and representatives of this office are required to retain their e-mail records and other electronic records in accordance with Council's Records Retention Schedule.

DENIAL AND REDACTION OF RECORDS

If a requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request such that Council cannot reasonably identify the public records being requested, the request may be denied, but the office will provide the requester an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requester of the manner in which records are maintained and accessed by the office.

If Council withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, we will provide an explanation, including legal authority, for the denial(s). If the initial request was made in writing, the explanation must also be in writing. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions may be redacted, and the rest must be released. When making public records available for public inspection or copying, the office shall notify the requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

COPYING AND MAILING COSTS

Council may charge for the actual cost of making copies of records.

Depending on the medium requested, the requester may be required to pay in advance for the actual costs involved in providing copies. If a requester asks that documents be delivered to them, he or she may be charged the actual cost of postage, mailing supplies, and other actual costs of delivery. There is no charge for e-mailed documents.

MANAGING RECORDS

Council's records are subject to records retention schedules. The office's current schedules are available at www.clevelandcitycouncil.gov or from the office of the Clerk of Council, Room 216, Cleveland City Hall. These locations are readily available to the public as required by Ohio Revised Code §149.43(B)(2).