

WAC 44-14-040 Processing of public records requests—General.

(1) **Providing "fullest assistance."** The (name of agency) is charged by statute with adopting rules which provide for how it will "provide full access to public records," "protect records from damage or disorganization," "prevent excessive interference with other essential functions of the agency," provide "fullest assistance" to requestors, and provide the "most timely possible action" on public records requests. The public records officer or designee will process requests in the order allowing the most requests to be processed in the most efficient manner.

(2) Upon receipt of a request, the (name of agency) will assign it a tracking number and log it in.

(3) The public records officer or designee will evaluate the request according to the nature of the request, volume, and availability of requested records.

(4) **Acknowledging receipt of request.** Following the initial evaluation of the request under (3) of this subsection, and within five business days¹ of receipt of the request, the public records officer will do one or more of the following:

(a) Make the records available for inspection or copying including:

(i) If copies are available on the (name of agency's) internet web site, provide an internet address and link on the web site to specific records requested;

(ii) If copies are requested and payment of a deposit for the copies, if any, is made or other terms of payment are agreed upon, send the copies to the requestor;

(b) Acknowledge receipt of the request and provide a reasonable estimate of when records or an installment of records will be available (the public records officer or designee may revise the estimate of when records will be available); or

(c) Acknowledge receipt of the request and ask the requestor to provide clarification for a request that is unclear, and provide, to the greatest extent possible, a reasonable estimate of time the (name of agency) will require to respond to the request if it is not clarified.

(i) Such clarification may be requested and provided by telephone, and memorialized in writing;

(ii) If the requestor fails to respond to a request for clarification and the entire request is unclear, the (name of agency) need not respond to it. The (name of agency) will respond to those portions of a request that are clear; or

(d) Deny the request.

(5) **Consequences of failure to respond.** If the (name of agency) does not respond in writing within five business days of receipt of the request for disclosure, the requestor should contact the public records officer to determine the reason for the failure to respond.

(6) **Protecting rights of others.** In the event that the requested records contain information that may affect rights of others and may be exempt from disclosure, the public records officer may, prior to providing the records, give notice to such others whose rights may be affected by the disclosure. Such notice should be given so as to make it possible for those other persons to contact the requestor and ask him or her to revise the request, or, if necessary, seek an order from a court to prevent or limit the disclosure. The notice to the affected persons will include a copy of the request.

(7) **Records exempt from disclosure.** Some records are exempt from disclosure, in whole or in part. If the (name of agency) believes that a record is exempt from disclosure and should be withheld, the public records officer will state the specific exemption and provide a brief written explanation of why the record or a portion of the record is being withheld. If only a portion of a record is exempt from disclosure, but the remainder is not exempt, the public records officer will redact the exempt portions, provide the nonexempt portions, and indicate to the requestor why portions of the record are being redacted.

(8) **Inspection of records.**

(a) Consistent with other demands, the (name of agency) shall promptly provide space to inspect public records. No member of the public may remove a document from the viewing area or disassemble or alter any document. The requestor shall indicate which documents he or she wishes the agency to copy.

(b) The requestor must claim or review the assembled records within thirty days of the (name of agency's) notification to him or her that the records are available for inspection or copying. The agency will notify the requestor in writing of this requirement and inform the requestor that he or she should contact the agency to make arrangements to claim or review the records. If the requestor or a representative of the requestor fails to claim or review the records within the thirty-day period or make other arrangements, the (name of agency) may close the request and refile the assembled records. Other public records requests can be processed ahead of a subsequent request by the same person for the same or almost identical records, which can be processed as a new request.

(9) **Providing copies of records.** After inspection is complete, the public records officer or designee shall make the requested copies or arrange for copying. Where (name of agency) charges for copies, the requestor must pay for the copies.

(10) **Providing records in installments.** When the request is for a large number of records, the public records officer or designee will provide access for inspection and copying in installments, if he or she reasonably determines that it would be practical to provide the records in that way. If, within thirty days, the requestor fails to inspect the entire set of records or one or more of the installments, the public records officer or designee may stop searching for the remaining records and close the request.

(11) **Completion of inspection.** When the inspection of the requested records is complete and all requested copies are provided, the public records officer or designee will indicate that the (name of agency) has completed a reasonable search for the requested records and made any located nonexempt records available for inspection.

(12) **Closing withdrawn or abandoned request.** When the requestor either withdraws the request, or fails to clarify an entirely unclear request, or fails to fulfill his or her obligations to inspect the records, pay the deposit, pay the required fees for an installment, or make final payment for the requested copies, the public records officer will close the request and, unless the agency has already indicated in previous correspondence that the request would be closed under the above circumstances, indicate to the requestor that the (name of agency) has closed the request.

(13) **Later discovered documents.** If, after the (name of agency) has informed the requestor that it has provided all available records, the (name of agency) becomes aware of additional responsive documents existing at the time of the request, it will promptly inform the re-

questor of the additional documents and provide them on an expedited basis.

Note: ¹In calculating the five business days, the following are not counted: The day the agency receives the request, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. RCW 1.12.040. See also WAC 44-14-03006.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.56.570. WSR 18-06-051, § 44-14-040, filed 3/2/18, effective 4/2/18. Statutory Authority: 2005 c 483 § 4, RCW 42.17.348. WSR 06-04-079, § 44-14-040, filed 1/31/06, effective 3/3/06.]