

# **Jackson County Auditor's office**

## **Public Records Request Policy**

The records request policy establishes office procedures for responding to requests for public records. This policy supersedes any and all previous records request policies.

### **Mission statement**

It is the policy of the Jackson County Auditor's office openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to a better government and better public policy. Consistent with the premise that government at all levels exists first and foremost to serve the interest of the people, it is the mission and intent of the Auditor's office to at all times fully comply with and abide by both the spirit and letter of the Ohio's Public Records Act and Open Meetings Act.

### **Defining Public Records**

All records of the Office of the Jackson County Auditor are public unless they are specifically exempt from the disclosure under Ohio Revised Code. All records must be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying.

Public records are designed to include 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 the Office of the Auditor that documents the organization, function, policies, decisions, operations, or other activities of the office.

### **Response Timeframe**

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of holidays. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of the 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.

Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for the 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 these should be made as quickly as possible.

All requests for public records must either be satisfied or be acknowledged in writing within three business days following the office's receipt of the request.

### **Handling Requests**

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 office to identify, retrieve, and review the records.

If it is not clear what records are being sought, the office must contact the requester for clarification, and should assist the requester in revising the request by informing the requester of the manner in which the office keeps the records.

The requester does not have to put a records request in writing, and does not have to provide his /her identity or the intended use of the requested public record. It is this office's general policy that this information is not to be requested.

In processing the request for inspection of a record, an office employee must 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 Law s manual is available to all employees of the office for the purpose of keeping employees educated as to the office's obligation under the public record's law.

### **Denial or Redaction of a request**

If the requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request for public records, the request may be denied, but the denial must 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.

Any denial of a public record requested, must include an explanation, including legal authority. If the initial request was made in writing, the explanation must also be in writing.

If the portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the rest released. All redactions shall be plainly visible. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by supporting explanation, including legal authority.

### **Copying and mailing costs**

Those seeking public records may be charged only the actual cost of making copies, not labor:

- The charge for paper copies is .10 cents per page.
- The charge for data downloads varies on the requested information and is set by our software company.

A requester may be required to pay in advance for the costs involved in providing the copy or download.

The requester may choose whether to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium, in which the public record is kept, or any other medium on which the record can be duplicated.

If the requester asks that the documents be mailed to them, they will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

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Revised: July 25, 2019

