

Village of Sheffield Public Records Policy

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY OF THE VILLAGE OF SHEFFIELD

Introduction:

It is the policy of the Village of Sheffield (the "Village") that openness leads to a better-informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of the Village to strictly adhere to Ohio's Public Records Act. All exemptions to openness are to be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If the request is in writing, the explanation must also be in writing.

Section 1 Public Records

This office, in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, defines records as including the following: Any document - paper, electronic, or other format - that is created or received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of a public office that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of the Village are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

Section 1.1

It is the policy of the Village that, as required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying. Record retention schedules are to be updated regularly.

Section 2 Record Requests

Each request for public records should be evaluated for a response using the following guidelines:

Section 2.1

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 public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the records custodian 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 its records.

Section 2.2

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. It is this office's general policy that this information is not to be requested.

Section 2.3

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, which are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of 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.

Section 2.4

Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for records should be satisfied promptly if feasible. 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 in an electronic format that can be e-mailed or downloaded easily, these should be made as quickly as the equipment allows.

If more copies are requested, an appointment should be made with the requester when the copies or computer files can be picked up.

All requests for public records must be satisfied by the appropriate Village office promptly following the office's receipt of the request. If a request is deemed beyond "routine", such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the Village may notify the requester of the following:

Section 2.4a - An estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request.

Section 2.4b - An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Section 2.4c - Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Section 2.5

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, including legal authority. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted, and the remainder released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.

Section 2.6

The Village offices will transmit by United States mail no more than ten records requests per month, unless the person certifies to the Village's office in writing that the person does not intend to use or forward the requested records, or the information contained in them, for commercial purposes.

Section 3 Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies.

Section 3.1

The charge for paper copies is 5 cents per page.

Section 3.2

The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1 per disc. Requesters may ask that records be downloaded to a thumb drive provided by the Requester. The Village will not provide thumb drives.

Section 3.3

There is no charge for documents e-mailed.

Section 3.4

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

Section 3.5

The police department may charge requesters the actual cost, up to \$75 per hour of video footage (not to exceed \$750 total), to prepare body-worn or dashboard camera footage for inspection or production. The police department shall prepare an estimated total cost of the production within five days of the request. The full amount of the estimated cost shall be paid by the requester prior to the preparation of the footage for inspection or production.

Section 4 E-mail

Documents in electronic mail format are records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of the office. E-mail is to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and should follow the same retention schedules.

Section 4.1

Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of this office are instructed to retain their e-mails that relate to public business (see Section 1 Public Records) and to copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the office's records custodian.

Section 4.2

The records custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the public office, filing them in the appropriate way, retaining them per established schedules and making them available for inspection and copying in accordance with the Public Records Act.