

SUMMARY OF GENESEE COUNTY FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Genesee County is a municipal entity organized pursuant to the laws of the State of Michigan. It is a public body as defined by the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), Act 442 of 1976.

Pursuant to Public Act 563 of 2014, the FOIA was amended with an effective date of July 1, 2015. In accordance with the amendments to the FOIA under Public Act 563 of 2014, the following written public summary of Genesee County's FOIA Policy and Procedures is provided.

1. Submitting a FOIA Request

- Requests to inspect or obtain copies of public records prepared, owned, used, possessed, or retained by Genesee County and its departments must be submitted in writing.
- No specific form to submit a written FOIA request is required. However, a FOIA Request Form is available for your convenience on the County's website at www.gc4me.com.
- A FOIA request must sufficiently describe a public record so as to enable the County to find it.
- Written requests may be made by mail addressed to the Board Chairperson, Genesee County Board of County Commissioners, 1101 Beach Street, Ste. 312, Flint, MI 48502. Requests may also be submitted via email to myoung@co.genesee.mi.us or cbell@co.genesee.mi.us.

Note: If you are serving a sentence of imprisonment in a local, state, or federal correctional facility, you are not entitled to submit a request for public records under the FOIA. MCL 15.232(c).

2. Responding to Requests

- Within 5 business days of receipt of a FOIA request, the County will issue a response. If a request is submitted by e-mail, the request is deemed to have been received on the following business day. E-mail requests delivered to the FOIA Coordinator's spam or junk-mail folder shall be deemed received one (1) business day after the FOIA Coordinator becomes aware of the e-mail request. Such dates shall be noted in any response provided.
- The County will respond to your request in one of the following ways:
 - Grant the request;
 - Deny the request, in writing;
 - Grant the request in part and issue a written notice denying the request in part;

- Issue a notice indicating the County requires an additional 10 business days to respond due to the nature of the request; or
- Issue a written notice indicating that the public record requested is available at no charge on the County's website.
- If a request is granted, or granted in part, the County will ask that payment be made for any permissible fees associated with responding to the request before the public record is made available. If the costs of processing and responding to the request are expected to exceed \$50.00, the County will require a good faith deposit prior to processing the request. Under certain circumstances, the County may require payment of any and all fees in advance prior to processing the request.

3. Fee Deposit Requirements

- If the County has made a good faith calculation the total fee for processing a FOIA request will exceed \$50.00, the County will require you to provide a deposit in the amount of 50% of the total estimated fee, a detailed itemization of which will be provided upon requesting the deposit. The County's request for a deposit will also include a non-binding best efforts estimate of how long it will take to process the request upon receipt of the required deposit.
- If the County receives a FOIA request from an individual or entity who has not paid the County for fees charged in connection with a previously granted FOIA request, the County will require a deposit of 100% of the estimated fee prior to processing the request when all of the following conditions exist:
 - The final fee for the prior FOIA request was not more than 105% of the estimated fee;
 - The public records made available contained the information sought in the prior written request and remain in the County's possession;
 - The public records were made available, subject to payment, within the time frame estimated by the County to provide the records;
 - 90 days have passed since the County notified the individual in writing that the records were available for pickup or mailing;
 - The individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to the County; and
 - The County has provided a detailed and itemized estimate that is the basis for the current request's increased deposit.
- The County will not require the estimated 100% deposit if any of the following apply:
 - The individual making the request is able to show proof of prior payment in full to the County;

- The County is subsequently paid in full for all applicable prior FOIA requests; or
- 365 days have passed since the request was made for which full payment was not remitted to the County.

4. Calculation of Fees

- A fee will not be charged for the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from non-exempt information unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the County because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the County identifies the nature of the unreasonably high costs.
- In accordance with the FOIA, the County may charge for the following six fee components when processing a FOIA request:
 - Labor costs associated with searching for, locating and examining a requested public record;
 - Labor costs associated with a review of a record to separate and delete exempt information from non-exempt information which is disclosed;
 - The costs of computer discs, computer tapes or other digital or similar media when the request asks for records in non-paper physical media;
 - The cost of duplication or publication, not including labor, of paper copies of public records;
 - Labor costs associated with duplication or publication, which includes making paper copies, making digital copies, or transferring digital public records to non-paper physical media or through the Internet; and
 - The actual cost of mailing or sending responsive public records to a requester.
- Labor Costs
 - All labor costs will be estimated and charged in 15 minute increments with all partial time increments rounded down.
 - Labor costs will be charged at the hourly wage of the lowest-paid employee capable of doing the work in the specific fee category, regardless of who actually performs the work.
 - If the County does not employ a person capable of separating and deleting exempt from non-exempt information, contracted labor costs will be charged at an hourly rate not exceeding an amount equal to 6 times the state established minimum hourly wage rate.
 - Labor costs will also include a charge to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits.
- Non-paper Physical Media
 - The cost for records provided on non-paper physical media, such as

computer discs, computer tapes, or other digital or similar media will be at the actual and most reasonably economical cost for the non-paper media.

- This cost will only be assessed if the County has the technological capability necessary to provide the public record in the requested non-paper physical media format.

- Paper Copies

- Paper copies of public records made on standard letter (8 ½ x 11) or legal (8 ½ x 14) sized paper will not exceed \$0.10 per sheet of paper. Copies for non-standard sized sheets will reflect the actual cost of reproduction.
- The County may provide records using double-sided printing, if doing so is convenient, cost-saving and available.

- Fee Exceptions

- The Fee schedule provided for by the FOIA does not apply to public records prepared under an act or statute specifically authorizing the sale of those public records to the public, or if the amount of the fee for providing a copy of the public record is otherwise specifically provided by an act or statute. MCL 15.234(10).
- Fees provided for by other statutes include, but are not limited to, records of the Treasurer, the Register of Deeds, the County Clerk, and records covered by the Enhanced Access to Records Act.

- Mailing Costs

- The cost to mail public records will use a reasonably economical and justified means.
- When appropriate under the circumstances, the County will charge for the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation.
- No cost will be made for expedited shipping or insurance unless requested.

5. Fee Reduction

- The County will waive the first \$20.00 of the processing fee for responding to a FOIA request if an affidavit is provided stating:
 - That the requester is indigent and receiving specific public assistance; or
 - If not receiving public assistance, stating specific facts demonstrating an inability to pay because of indigency.
- A requester is not eligible to receive a \$20.00 waiver if:
 - The requester has previously received discounted copies of public records from the County twice during the calendar year; or
 - The requester is requesting information on behalf of other persons who are offering or providing payment to the individual to make the request.

- The County will waive the fee for a nonprofit organization requesting public records meeting all of the following conditions:
 - The organization is designated by the State under federal law to carry out activities under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, Public Law 106-402, and the Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Act of 1986, Public Law 99-319, or their successors;
 - The request is made directly on behalf of the organization or its clients;
 - The request is made for a reason wholly consistent with the provisions of federal law under Section 931 of the Mental Health Code, 1974 PA 258 [MCL § 330.1931]; and
 - The request is accompanied by documentation of the organization's designation by the State.

6. Appeals

- Denials of all or a portion of a FOIA request may be appealed to the Board of County Commissioners. The appeal must be filed in writing, specifically state the word "appeal", and identify the reason or reasons that the denial is believed to be improper.
- Appeals received by the Board of County Commissioners are not considered received until the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Board following submission of a written appeal.
- Within 10 business days of receiving the appeal, the Board of County Commissioners shall do one of the following:
 - Reverse the disclosure denial;
 - Uphold the disclosure denial and provide a written notice of the same;
 - or
 - Reverse the disclosure denial in part and uphold the disclosure denial in part, and provide written notice of the same.
- Regardless of whether an appeal of a denial is submitted to the Board of County Commissioners, a civil action may be commenced in Genesee County Circuit Court within 180 days of the County's final determination to deny the FOIA request.
- If a requestor believes the fee charged by the County to process the FOIA request exceeds the amount permitted by state law, the requestor must first submit a written appeal of the fee charged to the Board of County Commissioners. The appeal must: be in writing; specifically state the word "appeal;" and identify the basis for contesting the fee charged.
- Within 10 business days after receiving the appeal, the Board of County

Commissioners will respond in writing in one of the following ways:

- Waive the fee;
 - Reduce the fee along with a written determination of the basis supporting the remaining fee;
 - Uphold the fee with a written determination indicating the basis for upholding the fee; or
 - Issue a notice extending the time to respond by not more than 10 business days.
- Within 45 days of receipt of the Board's determination on the appeal of the fee charged, the requestor may commence a civil action in the Genesee County Circuit Court for a fee reduction.

The foregoing is only a summary of Genesee County's FOIA Policy and Procedures, and is provided for informational purposes only as required by the FOIA. A copy of the County's full FOIA Policy and Procedures is available at the Genesee County website at: **www.gc4me.com**.

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