

Wayne County Municipal Court

Public Records Request Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Wayne County Municipal Court to at all times fully comply with and abide by the rules and regulations of the State of Ohio's Public Records Act. The Court believes openness leads to a more informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy.

DEFINING PUBLIC RECORDS

A "record" is defined to include the following: A document in any format – paper, electronic (including, but not limited to, business e-mail) – that is created, received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of the Wayne County Municipal Court that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the court.

A "public record" is a "record" that is being kept by the court 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 TIMEFRAME

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours. 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, the necessity for any legal review and redaction, and other facts and circumstances of the records requested.

It is the Court's goal that all requests for public records should be acknowledged in writing or, if feasible, satisfied within seven (7) business days following the Court's receipt of the request.

HANDLING REQUESTS

No specific language is required to make a request for public records. However, the requestor must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the court to identify, retrieve, and review the records.

The requestor 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). It is this Court's general policy that this information is not to be requested. However, the law does permit the Court to ask for a written request, the requestor's identity, and/or the intended use of the information requested, but only if (1) a written request or disclosure of identity or intended use would benefit the requester by enhancing the court'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 Court does not have an obligation to create new records or 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 Court's standard use of sorting, filtering, or querying features. Although not required by law, the Court will consider generating new records when it makes sense and is practical under the circumstances.

In processing a request for inspection of a public record, an office 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 Ohio Attorney General's website (www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook) for the purpose of keeping employees of the Court and the public educated as to the Court's obligations under Ohio's Public Records Act, Ohio Open Meetings Act, records retention laws, and the 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 to be 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 or representatives of this office are required to retain their e-mail records and other electronic records in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

DENIAL AND REDACTION OF RECORDS

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

If the Court withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, it must 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 Court shall notify the requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

COPYING AND MAILING COSTS

Those seeking public records may be charged only the actual cost of making copies, packaging and postage costs, not labor. The charge for paper copies is \$.10 per page with a \$.10 minimum. The charge for electronic files downloaded to a flash drive is \$2.50 per flash drive.

A requester may be required to pay in advance for the actual costs involved in providing the copy. The requester may choose whether to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium on

which the public record is kept, or upon any other medium on which the office determines that the record can reasonably be duplicated as an integral part of the court's normal operations. If a requester asks that documents be delivered to them, he or she may be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies, or other actual costs of delivery. There is no charge for e-mailed documents.

MANAGING RECORDS

The Wayne County Municipal Courts' records are subject to records retention schedules. The court's current schedules are posted on the Wayne County Municipal Court website, a location readily available to the public as required by Ohio Revised Code § 149.43(B)(2).