

CITY OF CENTER LINE

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

It is the policy of the City of Center Line (the "City") that all persons consistent with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), are entitled to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those who represent them as public officials and employees. The person shall be informed so that they fully participate in the democratic process.

The City's policy with respect to FOIA requests is to comply with the State law in all respects and to respond to FOIA requests in a consistent, fair, and even-handed manner regardless of who makes such a request.

The City's acknowledges that it has a legal obligation to disclose all nonexempt public records in its possession pursuant to a FOIA request. The City acknowledges that sometimes it is necessary to invoke the exemptions identified under FOIA in order to ensure the effective operation of government and to protect the privacy of individuals.

The City of Center Line will protect the public's interest in disclosure, while balancing the requirement to withhold or redact portions of certain records. The City's policy is to disclose public records consistent with and in compliance with State law.

The FOIA was recently amended by Public Act 563 of 2014 ("PA 563"), with an effective date of July 1, 2015, and

The City of Center Line hereby adopts the following Procedures and Guidelines for the administration of FOIA requests and responses:

SECTION 1: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

- A. City Council acting pursuant to the authority at MCL 15.236 designates the City Manager as the FOIA Coordinator. He or she shall be the individual responsible for processing all FOIA requests received by the City and approving all denials under the FOIA in consultation with the City's legal counsel. He or she is authorized to designate other City staff to act on his or her behalf to accept and process written requests for the City's public records and approve denials.
- B. The FOIA Coordinator may, in his or her discretion, implement administrative rules, consistent with State law and these Procedures and Guidelines to administer the acceptance and processing of FOIA requests.
- C. The FOIA Coordinator shall keep a copy of all written requests for public records received by the City on file for a period of at least one year.
- D. The City is not obligated to create a new public record or make a compilation or summary of information which does not already exist. Neither the FOIA Coordinator nor other City staff

are obligated to provide answers to questions contained in requests for public records or regarding the content of the records themselves.

- E. The City will make these Procedures and Guidelines and the Written Public Summary publicly available without charge
- F. A copy of these Procedures and Guidelines and the City's Written Public Summary must be publicly available by providing free copies upon request by visitors at the City Clerk's Office.
- G. These Procedures and Guidelines and the City's Written Public Summary will be maintained on the City's website at: www.centerline.gov so a link to those documents will be provided in lieu of providing paper copies of those documents.

SECTION 2: FOIA REQUESTS

- A. A person requesting to inspect or obtain copies of public records prepared, owned, used, possessed or retained by City of Center Line must do so in writing. The request must sufficiently describe a public record so as to enable City personnel to identify and find the requested public record. No specific form to submit a request for a public record is required. However the FOIA Coordinator may make available a FOIA Request Form for use by the public.
- B. Written requests for public records may be submitted to the City of Center Line in person or by mail. Requests may also be submitted electronically by facsimile and e-mail. Requests that are received by City personnel shall be promptly forwarded to the FOIA Coordinator for processing.
- C. If a request for a public record is received by facsimile or e-mail, the request is deemed to have been received on the following business day. If a request is sent by e-mail and delivered to a spam or junk-mail folder, the request is not deemed received until 1 day after the FOIA Coordinator first becomes aware of the request. The FOIA Coordinator shall note both the date the request was delivered to the spam or junk-mail folder and the date the FOIA Coordinator became aware of the request.
- D. A person may request that public records be provided on non-paper physical media, electronically mailed or otherwise provided to him or her in lieu of paper copies. The City will comply with the request only if it possesses the necessary technological capability to provide records in the requested non-paper physical media format.
- E. A person who makes a verbal, non-written request for information believed to be available on the City's website, where practicable and to the best ability of the employee receiving the request, shall be informed of the pertinent website address.

- F. A person serving a sentence of imprisonment in a local, state or federal correctional facility is not entitled to submit a request for a public record. The FOIA Coordinator will deny all such requests.

SECTION 3: PROCESSING A FOIA REQUEST

A. Responding to the FOIA Request

- 1) Within 5 business days of receipt of a FOIA request the City will issue a response, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the person making the request. The City will respond to the request in one of the following ways:
 - Granting the request;
 - Issuing a written notice denying the request;
 - Granting the request in part and issue a written notice denying in part the request;
 - Issuing a notice indicating that due to the nature of the request the City needs an additional 10 business days to respond (only one such extension is permitted); or
 - Issuing a written notice indicating that the public record requested is available at no charge on the City's website.
- 2) If the request is granted, or granted in part, the FOIA Coordinator will require that payment be made in full for the allowable fees associated with responding to the request before the public record is made available. The FOIA Coordinator shall provide a detailed itemization of the allowable costs incurred to process the request to the person making the request. A copy of these Procedures and Guidelines shall be provided to the requestor with the response to a written request for public records, provided however, that if these Procedures and Guidelines, and its Written Public Summary are maintained on the City's website, then a website link to those documents may be provided in lieu of providing paper copies.
- 3) If the cost of processing a FOIA request is \$50.00 or less, the requester will be notified of the amount due and where the documents can be obtained.
- 4) If the estimated cost of processing a FOIA request is expected to exceed \$50.00, or if the requester has not fully paid for a previously granted request, the City will require a good-faith deposit before processing the request. In making the request for a good-faith deposit the FOIA Coordinator shall provide the requester with a detailed itemization of the allowable costs estimated to be incurred by the City to process the request and also provide a best efforts estimate of a time frame it will take the City to provide the records to the requester upon receipt of the required deposit. The best efforts estimate shall be nonbinding on the City, but will be made in good faith and will strive to be reasonably accurate, given the nature of the request in the particular instance, so as to provide the requested records in a manner based on the public policy expressed by Section 1 of the FOIA.
- 5) The City shall provide reasonable facilities and opportunities for persons to examine and inspect public records during normal business hours. The FOIA Coordinator is authorized

to promulgate rules regulating the manner in which records may be viewed so as to protect City records from loss, alteration, mutilation or destruction and to prevent excessive interference with normal business operations of the City.

- 6) The FOIA Coordinator shall, upon written request, furnish a certified copy of a public record to the person requesting the public record.

B. Denial of FOIA Request

- 1) If the request is denied or denied in part, the FOIA Coordinator will issue a written Notice of Denial which shall provide, as applicable:
 - An explanation why a requested public record is exempt from disclosure; or
 - A certificate that the requested record does not exist under the name or description provided by the requester, or another name reasonably known by the City; or
 - An explanation or description of the public record or information within a public record that is separated or deleted from the public record; and
 - An explanation of the person's right to submit an appeal of the denial to either City Council or seek judicial review in the Macomb County Circuit Court; and
 - An explanation of the right to receive attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements as well actual or compensatory damages, and punitive damages of up to \$1,000, should the requester prevail in Circuit Court.
 - The Notice of Denial shall be signed by the FOIA Coordinator.
- 2) If a request does not sufficiently describe a public record, the FOIA Coordinator may, in lieu of issuing a Notice of Denial indicating that the request is deficient, seek clarification or amendment of the request by the person making the request. Any clarification or amendment will be considered a new request subject to the timelines provided under the FOIA.

SECTION 4: DEPOSIT REQUIREMENTS

- A. If the fee estimate is expected to exceed \$50.00 based on a good-faith calculation by the FOIA Coordinator, the requester will be asked to provide a deposit not exceeding one-half of the total estimated fee.
- B. If a request for public records is from a person who has not fully paid the City for copies of public records made in fulfillment of a previously granted written request, the FOIA Coordinator will require a deposit of 100% of the estimated processing fee before beginning to search for a public record for any subsequent written request by that person when all of the following conditions exist:
 - 1) the final fee for the prior written request is not more than 105% of the estimated fee;
 - 2) the public records made available contained the information sought in the prior written request and remain in the City's possession;
 - 3) the public records were made available to the individual, subject to payment, within the time frame estimated by the City to provide the records;

- 4) 90 days have passed since the FOIA Coordinator notified the individual in writing that the public records were available for pickup or mailing;
- 5) the individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to the City; and
- 6) the FOIA Coordinator has calculated a detailed itemization that is the basis for the current written request's increased estimated fee deposit.

C. The FOIA Coordinator will not require an estimated 100% fee deposit if any of the following apply:

- 1) the person making the request is able to show proof of prior payment in full to the City;
- 2) the City is subsequently paid in full for the applicable prior written request; or
- 3) 365 days have passed since the person made the written request for which full payment was not remitted to the City.

SECTION 5: CALCULATION OF FEES

A. A fee will not be charged for the cost of search, examination, review and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the City because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the City specifically identifies the nature of the unreasonably high costs.

B. The following factors shall be used to determine an unreasonably high cost to the City:

- 1) The particular request incurs costs greater than incurred from the typical or usual request received by the City.
- 2) Volume of the public record requested
- 3) Amount of time spent to search for, examine, review and separate exempt from non-exempt information in the record requested.
- 4) The available staffing to respond to the request.
- 5) Any other similar factors identified by the FOIA Coordinator in responding to the particular request.

C. The City may charge for the following costs associated with processing a FOIA request:

- 1) Labor costs directly associated with searching for, locating and examining a requested public record.
- 2) Labor costs associated with a review of a record to separate and delete information exempt from disclosure of information which is disclosed.
- 3) The actual cost of computer discs, computer tapes or other digital or similar media.
- 4) The cost of duplication or publication, not including labor, of paper copies of public records.
- 5) The cost of labor associated with duplication or publication, including making paper copies, making digital copies or transferring digital public records to non-paper physical media or through the Internet or other electronic means.
- 6) The actual cost of mailing or sending a public record.

D. Labor costs will be calculated based on the following requirements:

- 1) All labor costs will be estimated and charged in 15 minute increments with all partial time increments rounded down.

- 2) The cost of labor directly associated with duplication, publication or transferring records to non-paper physical media can be charged in time increments of the public body's choosing with all partial increments rounded down.
 - 3) Labor costs will be charged at the hourly wage of the lowest-paid City employee capable of doing the work in the specific fee category, regardless of who actually performs work.
 - 4) If using contract or outside labor to separate and delete exempt material from non-exempt material, the public body must clearly note the name of person or firm who does the work and the labor cost may not exceed an amount 6 times the state minimum hourly wage.
 - 5) Labor costs will also include a charge to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits. The City may add up to 50% to the applicable labor charge amount to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits, but in no case may it exceed the actual cost of fringe benefits.
 - 6) Overtime wages will not be included in labor costs unless agreed to by the requestor; overtime costs will not be used to calculate the fringe benefit cost.
- E. The cost to provide records on non-paper physical media when so requested will be based on the following requirements:
- 1) Computer disks, computer tapes or other digital or similar media will be at the actual and most reasonably economical cost for the non-paper media.
 - 2) This cost will only be assessed if the City has the technological capability necessary to provide the public record in the requested non-paper physical media format.
 - 3) In order to ensure the integrity and security of the City's technological infrastructure, the City will procure any requested non-paper media and will not accept non-paper media from the requestor.
- F. The cost to provide paper copies of records will be based on the following requirements:
- 1) Paper copies of public records made on standard letter (8 ½ x 11) or legal (8 ½ x 14) sized paper will not exceed \$.10 per sheet of paper. Copies for non-standard sized sheets of paper will reflect the actual cost of reproduction.
 - 2) The City may provide records using double-sided printing, if available.
- G. The cost to mail records to a requester will be based on the following requirements:
- 1) The actual cost to mail public records using a reasonably economical and justified means.
 - 2) The City shall charge for the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation
 - 3) No cost will be made for expedited shipping or insurance unless requested.
- H. If the FOIA Coordinator does not respond to a written request in a timely manner, the following shall be required:
- 1) Reduce the labor costs by 5% for each day the City exceeds the time permitted under FOIA up to a 50% maximum reduction, if any of the following applies:
 - The late response was willful and intentional.
 - The written request, within the first 250 words of the body of a letter facsimile, e-mail or e-mail attachment conveyed a request for information.
 - The written request specifically included the words, characters, or abbreviations for "freedom of information", "information", "FOIA", "copy" or a recognizable misspelling of such, or legal code reference to MCL 15.231, et seq. or 1976 Public

Act 442 on the front of an envelope or in the subject line of an e-mail, letter or facsimile cover page.

- 2) Fully note the charge reduction in the Detailed Itemization of Costs Form.

SECTION 6: WAIVER OF FEES

- A. The cost of the search for and copying of a public record may be waived or reduced if in the sole judgment of the FOIA Coordinator a waiver or reduced fee is in the public interest because such can be considered as primarily benefitting the general public.
- B. The FOIA Coordinator will waive the first \$20.00 of the processing fee for a request if the person requesting a public record submits an affidavit stating that they are:
 - 1) indigent and receiving specific public assistance; or
 - 2) if not receiving public assistance stating facts demonstrating an inability to pay because of indigency.
- C. An individual is not eligible to receive the waiver if:
 - 1) the requester has previously received discounted copies of public records from the City twice during the calendar year; or
 - 2) the requester requests information in connection with other persons who are offering or providing payment to make the request.
- D. A nonprofit organization designated by the State 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 Individuals with Mental Illness Act, Public Law 99-319, or their successors, if the request meets all of the following requirements:
 - 1) is made directly on behalf of the organization or its clients;
 - 2) 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
 - 3) is accompanied by documentation of its designation by the State, if requested by the City.

SECTION 7: APPEAL OF A DENIAL OF A PUBLIC RECORD

- A. When a requester believes that all or a portion of a public record has not been disclosed or has been improperly exempted from disclosure, he or she may file an appeal of the denial with City Council. The appeal must be in writing, specifically state the word "appeal" and identify the reason or reasons the requester is seeking a reversal of the denial.
- B. City Council is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled meeting following the submission of the appeal.
- C. Within 10 business days of receiving the appeal City Council will respond in writing in one of the following ways:
 - 1) Reverse the disclosure denial;
 - 2) Uphold the disclosure denial;
 - 3) Reverse the disclosure denial in part and uphold the disclosure denial in part; or

- 4) Under unusual circumstances, issue a notice of extension for not more than 10 business days to respond to the appeal.
- D. Regardless of whether a requester submitted an appeal of a denial to City Council, he or she may file a civil action in Macomb County Circuit Court within 180 days after the City's final determination to deny the request.
 - E. If the court determines that the public record is not exempt from disclosure, the court will award the appellant reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements. If the court determines that the appellant prevails only in part, the court in its discretion may award all or an appropriate portion of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements.
 - F. If the court determines that the City arbitrarily and capriciously violated the FOIA by refusing or delaying the disclosure of copies of a public record, it shall award the appellant punitive damages in the \$1,000.

SECTION 8: APPEAL OF AN EXCESSIVE FOIA PROCESSING FEE

- A. If a requester believes that the fee charged by the City to process a FOIA request exceeds the amount permitted by state law, he or she must first submit a written appeal for a fee reduction to City Council. The appeal must be in writing, specifically state the word "appeal" and identify how the required fee exceeds the amount permitted.
- B. City Council is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled meeting following the submission of the appeal.
- C. Within 10 business days after receiving the appeal, City Council will respond in writing by:
 - 1) waiving the fee;
 - 2) reducing the fee with a written determination indicating the specific basis that supports the remaining fee, accompanied by a certification by City Council that the statements in the determination are accurate and the reduced fee amount complies with these Procedures and Guidelines and Section 4 of the FOIA;
 - 3) upholding the fee with a written determination indicating the specific basis under Section 4 of the FOIA that supports the required fee, accompanied by a certification by City Council that the statements in the determination are accurate and the fee amount complies with these Procedures and Guidelines and Section 4 of the FOIA; or
 - 4) issuing a notice detailing the reason or reasons for extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which City Council will respond to the written appeal.
- D. Within 45 days after receiving notice of City Council's determination of a fee appeal, a requester may commence a civil action in Macomb County Circuit Court for a fee reduction. If a civil action is filed appealing the fee, the City is not obligated to complete the processing of the request for the public record at issue until the Court resolves the fee dispute.
- E. If the court determines that the City required a fee that exceeds the amount permitted, it shall reduce the fee to a permissible amount. If the appellant in the civil action prevails by

receiving a reduction of 50% or more of the total fee, the court may award all or an appropriate amount of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements.

- F. If the court determines that City has acted arbitrarily and capriciously by charging an excessive fee, the court shall also award the appellant punitive damages in the amount of \$500.

**SECTION 9: CONFLICT WITH PRIOR FOIA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES;
EFFECTIVE DATE**

- A. To the extent that these Procedures and Guidelines conflict with previous FOIA policies promulgated by City Council, these Procedures and Guidelines shall supersede all prior policies and shall control. To the extent that any administrative rule promulgated by the FOIA Coordinator subsequent to the adoption of this resolution is found to be in conflict with any previous policy promulgated by the City Council or the City Administration, the administrative rule promulgated by the FOIA Coordinator is controlling.
- B. To the extent that any provision of these Procedures and Guidelines or any administrative rule promulgated by the FOIA Coordinator pertaining to the release of public records is found to be in conflict with any State statute, the applicable statute shall control. The FOIA Coordinator is authorized to modify this policy and all previous policies adopted by the City Council or the City Administration, and to adopt such administrative rules as he or she may deem necessary, to facilitate the legal review and processing of requests for public records made pursuant to Michigan's FOIA statute, provided that such modifications and rules are consistent with State City of Center Line FOIA Procedures and Guidelines law. The FOIA Coordinator shall inform City Council of any change these Policies and Guidelines
- C. These FOIA Procedures and Guidelines become effective July 1, 2015.