

Public Records Policy

It is the policy of the Centerville-Washington Park District that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of the Park District to strictly adhere to the State of 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

The Centerville-Washington Park District, in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, defines records as including 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 Park District that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of this office. All records of the Park District are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

It is the policy of the Centerville-Washington Park District 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 and posted prominently.

Section 2. Record requests

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

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 Centerville-Washington Park District 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 requestor in revising the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which the Park District keeps its records.

The requester is not required 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.

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; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested. The requester may choose to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium upon which the Park District keeps the record, or upon any other medium upon which the Park District determines that it reasonably can be duplicated as an integral part of the normal operations of the Park District.

Each request will be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for records should be satisfied immediately if feasible to do so. Routine requests include, but are not limited to, meeting minutes, 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.

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. If a request is deemed significantly beyond "routine," such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the acknowledgement must include the following:

- An estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request.
- An estimated cost if copies are requested.
- A listing of any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

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 rest released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.

Section 3. Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies. The amount of the fee is included on the current fee schedule of the Centerville-Washington Park District. No fee is charged for e-mailed documents. Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. The Park District will charge the requester the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

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 Centerville-Washington Park District. E-mail is to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and follow the same retention schedules.

Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure and all employees or representatives of the Park District are instructed to retain their e-mails that relate to public business and to copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the Park District's records custodian.

The records custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the Centerville-Washington Park District, 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.

Section 5. Failure to respond to a public records request

The Centerville-Washington Park District recognizes the legal and non-legal consequences of failure to properly respond to a public records request. In addition to the distrust in government that failure to comply may cause, the Park District failure to comply with a request may result in a court ordering the Park District to comply with the law and to pay the requester's attorney's fees and damages.