

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY
FOR
THE CITY OF BRISTOL, TENNESSEE

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g), the following Public Records Policy for the City of Bristol, Tennessee (hereinafter, the “City”) was adopted by its City Council by Resolution Number 17-31, dated April 4, 2017, to provide economical and efficient access to public records as provided under the Tennessee Public Records Act (“TPRA”) in Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-501, et seq.

The TPRA provides that all state, county and municipal records shall, at all times during business hours, which for public hospitals shall be during the business hours of their administrative offices, be open for personal inspection by any citizen of this state, and those in charge of the records shall not refuse such right of inspection to any citizen, unless otherwise provided by state law. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(2)(A). Accordingly, the public records of the City are presumed to be open for inspection unless otherwise provided by law.

Personnel of the City shall timely and efficiently provide access and assistance to persons requesting to view or receive copies of public records. No provisions of this Policy shall be used to hinder access to open public records. However, the integrity and organization of public records, as well as the efficient and safe operation of the City, shall be protected as provided by current law. Concerns about this Policy should be addressed to the Public Records Request Coordinator for the City or to the Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel (“OORC”).

This Policy is available for inspection and duplication in the office of the City Recorder, in Room 203, City Hall, 801 Anderson Street, Bristol, Tennessee. This Policy is also posted online at www.bristoltn.org. This Policy shall be reviewed every two years, unless substantive changes in the TPRA or other applicable law require more frequent review.

This Policy shall be applied consistently throughout the various offices, departments, and/or divisions of the City except the following offices, departments, or divisions, which have separate public records policies:

- a. Bristol, Tennessee City Schools; and
- b. Bristol, Tennessee Essential Services.

I. Definitions:

- A. Records Custodian: The office, official or employee lawfully responsible for the direct custody and care of a public record. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(C). The records custodian is not necessarily the original preparer or receiver of the record.

B. Public Records: All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(A).

C. Public Records Request Coordinator: The individual, or individuals, designated in Section III, A.3 of this Policy who has, or have, the responsibility to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and are fulfilled in accordance with the TPRA. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(B). The Public Records Request Coordinator may also be a records custodian.

D. Requestor: A person seeking access to a public record, whether it is for inspection or duplication.

II. Requesting Access to Public Records

A. In general, public record requests shall be made to the Public Records Request Coordinator (“PRRC”) or his/her designee or via online submission in order to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and fulfilled in a timely manner.

1. Requests for police records should be directed to the Records division of the Bristol, Tennessee Police Department.

B. Requests for inspection only cannot be required to be made in writing. The PRRC should request a mailing or email address from the requestor for providing any written communication required under the TPRA. The PRRC may respond to requests using first class mail or email, as appropriate.

C. Requests for **inspection** only may be made orally or in writing using the Public Records Request Form (attached to this policy as Exhibit A) at City Hall at 801 Anderson Street, Bristol, Tennessee 37620 or by phone at 423-989-3407. The Public Records Request Form may also be submitted online at www.bristoltn.org.

D. Requests for **copies**, or requests for inspection and copies, shall be made in writing using the Public Records Request Form at City Hall, 801 Anderson Street, Bristol, Tennessee. The Public Records Request Form may also be submitted online at www.bristoltn.org.

E. Submission of the Public Records Request Form is not required in order to obtain copies of the following Records:

1. Building Permits may be obtained by visiting the Department of Community Development in the Ewell Easley Annex Building at 104 Eighth Street, Bristol TN.

2. Medical Records and Fire Reports may be obtained by contacting the Bristol Tennessee Fire Department at 423-989-5701. The Bristol Tennessee Fire Department requires a validly executed release or other written authorization in order to release confidential Public Records.

F. Proof of Tennessee citizenship by presentation of a valid Tennessee driver's license (or alternative acceptable form of ID) is required as a condition to inspect or receive copies of public records, except for the following Public Records:

1. Inspection of the routine press log produced by the Bristol, Tennessee Police Department.

2. Police incident reports or crash reports, if the requestor is the subject of such report (i.e., a suspect, complainant, or witness), or the authorized representative of such subject (for example, an attorney or insurance agent). Notwithstanding the foregoing, criminal records that are otherwise confidential will not be provided.

3. Requests for Building Permits.

G. Many records related to the activities of City Council and the City's Boards and Commissions are available for inspection and downloading free of charge on the City's website, www.bristoltn.org. City Council agendas, minutes, and copies of enacted resolutions and ordinances are available at this site. No proof of Tennessee citizenship is required to view or obtain copies of documents that are available to the public on the City's website.

III. Responding to Public Records Requests

A. Public Record Request Coordinator

1. The PRRC shall review public record requests and make an initial determination of the following:

a) If the requestor provided evidence of Tennessee citizenship;

- b) If the records requested are described with sufficient specificity to identify them; and
- c) If the Governmental Entity is the custodian of the records.

2. The PRRC shall acknowledge receipt of the request and take any of the following appropriate action(s):

- a) Advise the requestor of this Policy and the elections made regarding:
 - (1) Proof of Tennessee citizenship;
 - (2) Form(s) required for copies;
 - (3) Fees (and labor threshold and waivers, if applicable); and
 - (4) Aggregation of multiple or frequent requests.
- b) If appropriate, deny the request in writing, providing the appropriate ground such as one of the following:
 - (1) The requestor is not, or has not presented evidence of being, a Tennessee citizen (if proof of citizenship is required).
 - (2) The request lacks specificity, and the PRRC will assist in clarification if possible.
 - (3) An exemption makes the record not subject to disclosure under the TPRA. (Provide the exemption in written denial.)
 - (4) The Governmental Entity is not the custodian of the requested records.
 - (5) The records do not exist.
- c) If appropriate, contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.
- d) Forward the records request to the appropriate records custodian in the City.

e) If requested records are in the custody of a different governmental entity, and the PRRC knows the correct governmental entity, advise the requestor of the correct governmental entity and PRRC for that entity if known.

3. The designated PRRC(s) is the City Attorney. Contact information for the City Attorney is:

801 Anderson Street
P.O. Box 1189
Bristol, TN 37620
Telephone: 423-989-3407
Fax: 423-989-5506
dkiser@bristoltn.org

B. Records Custodian

1. Upon receiving a public records request, a records custodian shall promptly make requested public records available in accordance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503. If the records custodian is uncertain that an applicable exemption applies, the custodian may consult with the PRRC, counsel, or the OORC.

2. If it is not practicable to promptly provide requested records because additional time is necessary: to determine whether the requested records exist; to search for, retrieve, or otherwise gain access to records; to determine whether the records are open; to redact records; or for other similar reasons, then a records custodian shall, within seven (7) business days from the records custodian's receipt of the request, send the requestor a completed Public Records Request Response Form (attached to this policy as Exhibit A), based on the form developed by the OORC.

3. If a records custodian denies a public record request, he or she shall deny the request in writing as provided in Section III.A.2 using the Public Records Request Response Form.

4. If a records custodian reasonably determines production of records should be segmented because the records request is for a large volume of records, or additional time is necessary to prepare the records for access, the records custodian shall use the Public Records Request Response Form to notify the requestor that production of the records will be in segments and that a records production schedule will be provided as expeditiously as practicable. If appropriate, the records custodian should contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.

5. If a records custodian discovers records responsive to a records request were omitted, the records custodian should contact the requestor concerning the omission and produce the records as quickly as practicable.

C. Redaction

1. If a record contains confidential information or information that is not open for public inspection, the records custodian shall prepare a redacted copy prior to providing access. If questions arise concerning redaction, the records custodian should coordinate with the PRRC, counsel or other appropriate parties regarding review and redaction of records. The records custodian and the PRRC may also consult with the OORC.

2. Whenever a redacted record is provided, a records custodian should provide the requestor with the basis for redaction. The basis given for redaction shall be general in nature and not disclose confidential information.

IV. Inspection of Records

A. There shall be no charge for inspection of open public records, unless a charge is expressly permitted or required by applicable law.

B. The location for inspection of records within the offices of the City should be determined by either the PRRC or the records custodian.

C. Under reasonable circumstances, the PRRC or a records custodian may require an appointment for inspection or may require inspection of records at an alternate location.

V. Copies of Records

A. A records custodian shall promptly respond to a public record request for copies in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.

B. Copies will be available for pickup at a location specified by the records custodian.

C. Upon payment for postage, copies will be delivered to the requestor's home address by the United States Postal Service.

D. A requestor will not be allowed to make copies of records with personal equipment.

VI. Fees and Charges and Procedures for Billing and Payment

A. The City will follow the Schedule of Reasonable Charges (attached to this policy as Exhibit C) most recently issued by the Office of Open Records Counsel in determining fees and charges for providing copies of public records.

B. Fees and charges for copies of public records should not be used to hinder access to public records.

C. Records custodians shall provide requestors with an itemized estimate of the charges prior to producing copies of records, using the Estimate of Fees & Charges Form (attached to this policy as Exhibit D). The City requires prepayment of such charges prior to producing records, unless the fees are waived.

D. When fees for copies and labor do not exceed Five Dollars (\$5.00), the fees will be waived, except that fees associated with aggregated records requests will not be waived. When a governmental entity requests records, fees for copies and labor that do not exceed Twenty Dollars (\$20.00) will be waived.

E. Fees and charges for copies are as follows, unless provided otherwise in the most recently issued Schedule of Reasonable Charges:

1. \$0.15 per page for letter- and legal-size black and white copies.
2. \$0.50 per page for letter- and legal-size color copies.
3. If a record is available electronically, such as an audio or video recording, then the Requestor will be charged for the actual cost of the medium required to transfer the records to the Requestor, such as a USB Flash Drive or DVD.
4. Labor when time exceeds one (1) hour.
5. If an outside vendor is used, the actual costs assessed by the vendor.

F. Payment is to be made in cash, or by personal check, cashier's check or money order payable to the City of Bristol, Tennessee, presented to the City's Finance Department in Room 203.

VII. Aggregation of Frequent and Multiple Requests

A. The City will aggregate record requests in accordance with the Frequent and Multiple Request Policy promulgated by the OORC (attached to this policy as Exhibit E) when more than (4) requests are received by the City, or any of its departments, within a

calendar month (either from a single individual or a group of individuals deemed working in concert).

B. The PRRC is responsible for making the determination that a group of individuals are working in concert. The PRRC or the records custodian must inform the individuals that they have been deemed to be working in concert and that they have the right to appeal the decision to the OORC.



PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST FORM

Exhibit A

The Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) grants Tennessee citizens the right to access open public records that exist at the time of the request. The TPRA does not require records custodians to compile information or create or recreate records that do not exist.

To: Public Records Request Coordinator/Records Custodian
City of Bristol, Tennessee

From: _____ (Name)

_____ (Address)

_____ (Email/Phone)

_____ (Fax)

Is the requestor a Tennessee citizen? [] Yes [] No

If Yes, indicate what proof of citizenship was provided: _____

- Request: [] Inspection (The TPRA does not permit fees or require a written request for inspection only^1.)
[] Copy/Duplicate

If costs for copies are assessed, the requestor has a right to receive an estimate. Do you wish to waive your right to an estimate and agree to pay copying and duplication costs in an amount not to exceed \$ _____? If so, initial here: _____.

- Delivery preference: [] On-Site Pick-Up [] USPS First-Class Mail
[] Electronic [] Other: _____

Records Requested:

Provide a detailed description of the record(s) requested, including: (1) type of record; (2) timeframe or dates for the records sought; and (3) subject matter or key words related to the records. Under the TPRA, record requests must be sufficiently detailed to enable a governmental entity to identify the specific records sought. As such, your record request must provide enough detail to enable the records custodian responding to the request to identify the specific records you are seeking.

Signature of Requestor and Date Submitted

Signature of Public Records Request Coordinator and Date Received

^1 Note, Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-504(a)(20)(C) permits charging for redaction of private records of a utility.



PUBLIC RECORD REQUEST RESPONSE FORM
City of Bristol, Tennessee

Exhibit B

[DATE]

Name:
Address:
City, State & Zip:

Dear :

In response to your records request received on , our office is taking the action(s)2 indicated below:

- The public record(s) responsive to your request will be made available for inspection: Location: Date & Time:
Copies of public record(s) responsive to your request are: Attached; Available for pickup at the following location:
Being delivered via: USPS First-Class Mail Electronically Other:
Your request is denied on the following grounds: Your request was not sufficiently detailed to enable identification of the specific requested record(s). No such record(s) exists or this office does not maintain record(s) responsive to your request. No proof of Tennessee citizenship was presented with your request. You are not a Tennessee citizen. You have not paid the estimated copying/production fees. The following state, federal, or other applicable law prohibits disclosure of the requested records:
It is not practicable for the records you requested to be made promptly available for inspection and/or copying because: It has not yet been determined that records responsive to your request exist; or The office is still in the process of retrieving, reviewing, and/or redacting the requested records.

The time reasonably necessary to produce the record(s) or information and/or to make a determination of a proper response to your request is:

If you have any additional questions regarding your record request, please contact

Sincerely,

2 If all requested records do not have the same response, so indicate.



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
OFFICE OF OPEN RECORDS COUNSEL**

SCHEDULE OF REASONABLE CHARGES

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-604(a)(1), the Office of Open Records Counsel (“OORC”) is required to establish a schedule of reasonable charges a records custodian may use as a guideline to charge citizens requesting copies of public records. Additionally, Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g) requires each governmental entity subject to the Tennessee Public Records Act (“TPRA”) to establish a written public records policy that includes a statement of any fees charged for copies of public records and the procedures for billing and payment. Accordingly, the following policy sets forth general guidelines for records custodians when assessing reasonable charges associated with record requests under the TPRA.

POLICY:

I. General Considerations

- A. Records custodians may not charge for inspection of public records except as provided by law.
- B. The following schedule of reasonable charges should not be interpreted as requiring records custodians to impose charges for copies of public records. Charges for copies of public records must be pursuant to a public records policy properly adopted by the governing authority of a governmental entity. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g) and § 10-7-506(a).
- C. Application of an adopted schedule of charges shall not be arbitrary. Additionally, excessive fees and other rules shall not be used to hinder access to public records.
- D. A records custodian may reduce or waive charges, in whole or in part, in accordance with the governmental entity’s public records policy.
- E. A records custodian may require payment for copies before producing copies of the records.
- F. The TPRA does not distinguish requests for inspection of records based on intended use, be it for research, personal, or commercial purposes. Likewise, this Schedule of Reasonable Charges does not make a distinction in the charges assessed based on the purpose of a record request. However, other statutory provisions, such as Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-506(c), enumerate fees that may be assessed when specific documents are requested for a specific use. Any distinctions made, or waiver of charges permitted, based upon the type of records requested should be expressly set forth and permitted in the adopted public records policy.

- G. Records custodians shall provide a requestor an estimate of reasonable costs to provide copies of requested records.

II. Per Page Copying Charges

- A. For each standard 8½" x 11" or 8½" x 14" copy produced, a records custodian may assess a per page charge of up to 15 cents (\$0.15) for black and white copies and up to 50 cents (\$0.50) for color copies. If producing duplex (front and back) copies, a charge for two separate pages may be imposed for each single duplex copy.
- B. If the charge for color copies is higher than for black and white copies, and a public record is maintained in color but can be produced in black and white, the records custodian shall advise the requestor that the record can be produced in color if the requestor is willing to pay a charge higher than that of a black and white copy.
- C. If a governmental entity's actual costs are higher than those reflected above, or if the requested records are produced on a medium other than 8½" x 11" or 8½" x 14" paper, the governmental entity may develop its own charges. The governmental entity must establish a schedule of charges documenting "actual cost" and state the calculation and reasoning for its charges in a properly adopted policy. A governmental entity may charge less than those charges reflected above. Charges greater than 15 cents (\$0.15) for black and white copies and 50 cents (\$0.50) for color copies can be assessed or collected only when there is documented analysis of the fact that the higher charges represent the governmental entity's actual cost of producing such material, unless there exists another basis in law for such charges.

III. Additional Charges

- A. When assessing a fee for items covered under this section, records custodians shall utilize the most economical and efficient method of producing the requested records.
- B. A records custodian may charge its actual out-of-pocket costs for flash drives or similar storage devices on which electronic copies are provided. When providing electronic records, a records custodian may charge per-page costs only when paper copies that did not already exist are required to be produced in responding to the request, such as when a record must be printed to be redacted.
- C. It is presumed copies of requested records will be provided in person to a requestor when the requestor returns to the records custodian's office to retrieve the records.
- D. If a requestor chooses not to personally retrieve records and the actual cost of delivering the copies, in addition to any other permitted charges, have been paid by the requestor or otherwise waived pursuant to the public records policy, then a records custodian is obligated to deliver the copies via USPS First-Class Mail. It is within the discretion of a records custodian to agree to deliver copies of records through other means, including electronically, and to assess the costs related to such delivery.
- E. If it is not practicable or feasible for the records custodian to produce copies internally, the records custodian may use an outside vendor and charge the costs to the requester.

- F. If a records custodian is assessed a charge to retrieve requested records from archives or any other entity having possession of requested records, the records custodian may recover from the requestor the costs assessed for retrieval.

IV. Labor Charges

- A. A records custodian shall utilize the most cost efficient method of producing requested records. Accordingly, a records custodian should strive to utilize current employees at the lowest practicable hourly wage to fulfill public records requests for copies.
- B. "Labor" is the time (in hours) reasonably necessary to produce requested records, including the time spent locating, retrieving, reviewing, redacting, and reproducing records.
- C. "Labor threshold" is the first (1st) hour of labor reasonably necessary to produce requested material(s). A governmental entity may adopt a higher labor threshold than one (1) hour. A records custodian is only permitted to charge for labor exceeding the labor threshold established by the governmental entity.
- D. "Hourly wage of an employee" is based upon the base salary of the employee and does not include benefits. If an employee is not paid on an hourly basis, the hourly wage shall be determined by dividing the employee's annual salary by the required hours to be worked per year. For example, an employee who is expected to work a 37.5 hour workweek and receives \$39,000 in salary on an annual basis will be deemed to be paid \$20 per hour.
- E. In calculating labor charges, a records custodian should determine the total amount of labor for each employee and subtract the labor threshold from the labor of the highest paid employee(s). The records custodian should then multiply the amount of labor for each employee by each employee's hourly wage to calculate the total amount of labor charges associated with the request.

Example:

The hourly wage of Employee A is \$15.00. The hourly wage of Employee B is \$20.00. Employee A spends two (2) hours on a request. Employee B spends two (2) hours on the same request. The labor threshold is established at one (1) hour. Since Employee B is the highest paid employee, the labor threshold will be applied to the time Employee B spent producing the request. For this request, \$50.00 could be charged for labor. This is calculated by taking the number of hours each employee spent producing the request, subtracting the threshold amount, multiplying that number by the employee's hourly wage, and then adding the amounts together (i.e. Employee A (2 x \$15.00) + Employee B (1 x \$20.00) = \$50.00).

*Submitted to ACOG: November 8, 2016.
Effective: January 20, 2017*

EXHIBIT D

Records Response Form – Estimate of Charges



**PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST
ESTIMATE OF FEES & CHARGES
City of Bristol, Tennessee**

[DATE]

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip: _____

Via Fax/Email: _____

Dear _____:

In response to your request for copies of records received by this office on _____, we wish to notify you of the fees and charges that will be payable prior to the copies being provided.

The fees for obtaining these copies:

Are waived, because they do not exceed \$5.00 (\$20.00 for governmental entities); OR

total _____, based on the following charges:

- o \$.15 x _____ black & white copies = \$ _____
- o \$.50 x _____ color copies = \$ _____
- o Labor at \$ _____ per hour for _____ hour(s) (for time exceeding the first hour) = \$ _____
- o Other actual costs to fulfill request: \$ _____. Provide an explanation of these charges: _____

These fees must be paid to the City of Bristol by cash, check or money order prior to delivery of your records. Payment may be submitted to the Finance Department in person or by mail at City Hall, Room 203, 801 Anderson Street, Bristol, Tennessee 37620. Please provide a copy of this Estimate of Fees and Charges with your payment.

If you have any additional questions regarding your record request, please contact

_____.

Sincerely,



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
OFFICE OF OPEN RECORDS COUNSEL**

REASONABLE CHARGES FOR FREQUENT AND MULTIPLE REQUESTS

PURPOSE:

Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-604(a)(2) requires the Office of Open Records Counsel (“OORC”) to establish a policy related to reasonable charges a records custodian may charge for frequent and multiple requests for public records pursuant to the Tennessee Public Records Act (“TPRA”), Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-501, et seq. Accordingly, the following policy sets forth guidelines for assessing reasonable charges associated with the aggregation of multiple and frequent record requests by allowing records custodians to charge for labor and costs that may otherwise be waived when responding to a single record request.

It is within the discretion of each governmental entity to charge for frequent and multiple record requests. Any decision to charge should be consistent with the Schedule of Reasonable Charges promulgated by the OORC and reflected in the governmental entity’s public records policy.

POLICY:

I. Aggregation Policy

- A. Aggregation, as well as excessive fees and other rules, shall not be used to hinder access to public records. A records custodian may reduce or waive, in whole or in part, any charge in accordance with the governing entity’s public records policy.
- B. A governmental entity may include in its public records policy a rule whereby multiple or frequent records requests are aggregated for purposes of calculating charges for copies or duplicates of public records.
- C. A governmental entity may aggregate multiple public record requests made by a single requestor. A governmental entity may also aggregate public record requests made by multiple requestors, if the public records request coordinator determines the requestors are acting in concert with each other or as the agents of another person, entity, or organization.
- D. A governmental entity’s public record policy shall indicate the number of requests within a calendar month that will trigger aggregation; that amount must be no lower than four (4) requests. This amount is the aggregation threshold.
- E. A governmental entity’s public record policy shall specify the level at which records requests will be aggregated, whether for the entire governmental entity or by agency, department, office, or otherwise.

II. Charges for Aggregated Requests

- A. Once a records custodian reaches the aggregation threshold, the records custodian is no longer required to deduct the labor threshold set forth in the Schedule of Reasonable Charges or any other minimum charge per request threshold that would ordinarily be waived.
- B. When the aggregation threshold is met, a records custodian choosing to aggregate requests must inform the requestor(s) of the determination to aggregate and of the right of the requestor(s) to appeal the records custodian's decision to aggregate to the OORC.
- C. Requests for current records that are routinely released and readily accessible, such as agendas or meeting minutes, are exempt from this policy.
- D. Disputes regarding aggregation shall be brought to the OORC.

Submitted to ACOG: November 8, 2016
Effective: January 20, 2017