

Ashland County Auditor's Office

Public Records Policy (O.R.C. 149.43)

Introduction:

It is the policy of the Office of the County Auditor, Ashland County, Ohio that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to more transparent government and sounder public policy. It is the policy of this Office to strictly adhere to the state's Public Records Act as well as other state and federal laws.

Ohio's Public Records Act imposes two primary obligations upon public offices:

1. Provide prompt inspection of public records (R.C. 149.43(B)(1)); and
2. Provide copies of public records with a reasonable period of time (R.C. 149.43 (B)(2))

The Public Records Act evolved from the principle that Ohio's citizens are entitled to access the records of their government. We agree that no advance that principle, the Public Records Act should be interpreted liberally in favor of disclosure.

Section 1. Public records

This office, 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 a public office that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of the Ashland County Auditor's Office are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

Section 1.1

It is the policy of the Ashland County Auditor's Office that, as required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying (See Section 4 for the e-mail record policy). Record retention schedules are to be updated regularly and posted prominently.

Section 2. Record requests

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

Section 2.1

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 public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the office 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 office keeps its records.

Section 2.2

The requester 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.

Section 2.3

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. 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.

Section 2.4

Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for records should be satisfied as soon as practical. All requests for public records must either be satisfied (see Section 2.4) or be acknowledged in writing by the Ashland County Auditor's Office in a reasonable amount of time 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:

Section 2.4a

An estimated time it will take to satisfy the request.

Section 2.4b

An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Section 2.4c

Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Section 2.5

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.

Section 3.1

The charge for paper copies is 10 cents per page.

Section 3.2

The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1.00 per disc.

Section 3.3

There is no charge for documents e-mailed.

Section 3.4

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the cost of the postage and mailing supplies. This office may require such requester to pay in advance the cost of postage or cost incurred for other supplies used mailing, delivery or transmission.

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 office. E-mail is to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats.

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