



# Public Records Policy

City of Tacoma Public Records Office

May 14, 2025



## ● ● ● OBJECTIVE

The City's Public Records Office (PRO) has prepared an up-to date Public Records Policy to inform requesters of the City's protocols, requirements, expectations regarding the requesting and production of records.

This informational briefing is to inform PUB of the contents of the updated Policy, which includes specific deadlines for requesters and implements a fee for the production of electronic records.

# ● ● ● BACKGROUND

- The Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) (“PRA”) requires disclosure of all City of Tacoma (including TPU) records upon request from a member of the public (with certain exemptions).
- The Public Records Act directs public agencies to publish policies, rules and procedures regarding public records requests.

## ● ● ● BACKGROUND

- PRA broadly defines public records as all content “relating to the conduct of government or proprietary function” “prepared, owned, used, or retained” by the City.
- Number and complexity of records requests is ever increasing.
  - 4,029 in 2024
  - 1,607 year to date in 2025
- Majority of City’s records created and maintained electronically.

## ● ● ● BACKGROUND

- City has seen uptick in requests for broad categories of records.
  - Can generate hundreds, even thousands of responsive records needing review and processing by PRO staff prior to production to requester
- Policy will clarify to requesters that certain requirements and protocols apply to the processing of requests.
- Policy will provide PRO staff with clear authority to efficiently and consistently process requests.

# ● ● ● POLICY ELEMENTS

- Policy directs requesters to utilize City's on-line records request system, GovQA.
- Requests can be made other ways, but all requests will be moved to GovQA for correspondence and production of records.
  - Supports efficiency and consistency in communicating with requesters
  - Keeps all records of a request inside of the GovQA system

## ● ● ● POLICY ELEMENTS

- PRA authorizes charge for production of records, including electronic records.
- Policy informs requesters that there is a charge for the production of most records.
  - Currently only police body worn camera electronic records are subject to charge
  - Historically City charged for paper copies, but very few current requests for paper records
- Policy informs that request will not be processed if fee is not collected.

# ● ● ● POLICY ELEMENTS

- Policy informs that fees are stated in current Fee Schedule adopted by City Council.
- 2025-2026 Fee Schedule:
  - 15 cents per paper copy page
  - 10 cents per page scanned from paper
  - 10 cents per gigabyte for transmission of records in electronic format
  - 49 cents per minute of staff time for redaction of body worn camera records



# ● ● ● POLICY ELEMENTS

- PRA allows production of records to be satisfied in installments.
- PRA allows a deposit to be collected prior to processing voluminous or complex requests.
- Policy informs requesters that records, or installments will not be provided until the initial installment is retrieved within the stated time and any fees or deposits are provided.

# OUTCOMES

- Policy provides PRO staff with clear authority to close requests that have not been paid for or retrieved within the stated time.
  - Gives staff ability to close abandoned requests quickly and consistently
  - Results in staff ability to better and more efficiently serve the public by focusing on requests that are being actively pursued by the requester

## ●●● NEXT STEPS

- Informational briefing for City Council/GPFC May 20.
- Policy will be finalized after any TPU and GPFC feedback.
- Policy will be adopted by City Manager and Utility Director with future effective date.
- Notification to public via COT/TPU websites of Policy adoption.
- As of effective date of Policy fees will be assessed and protocols in Policy will be implemented.

... QUESTIONS?





## GENERAL GOVERNMENT FEE SCHEDULE SPECIAL AND MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

\* Previous legislative history follows at the end of this document

This fee schedule summarizes special fees not otherwise provided for by ordinances of the City of Tacoma or statutes of the State of Washington. Copies of records and documents requested by the public are provided at cost of reproduction. The furnishing of records and documents is subject to RCW Chapter 42.56.

Auhtorized by

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
1	City Attorney's Office	City of Tacoma 3 X 5 Flags		Single-Reverse \$50.00 Double-Sided Nylon (outdoor) \$125.00 Double-Sided Nylon with Gold Fringe (indoor) \$125.00	City Clerk
2	City Manager/Media and Communications/ Cable Communications and Franchise Services	Candidates' statements for Video Voters' Pamphlet	Candidates meeting Auditor's determination of indigence	\$100 studio taping \$50 teleprompter \$50 replay of Primary for General Election	CMO/Media and Communications
3	City Manager/Media and Communications/ Cable Communications and Franchise Services	<u>Platinum</u> – Exclusive Program Sponsor Monthly fee - 6 mo. min. Annual fee		\$1,000 \$12,000	Cable Communications and Franchise Services
		<u>Gold</u> – Exclusive Program Sponsor Monthly fee - 6 mo. min. Annual fee		\$300 \$3,600	
		<u>Silver</u> – Exclusive Program Sponsor Monthly fee - 3 mo. min. Annual fee		\$100 \$1,200	
4	City Manager/Media and Communications/ Cable Communications and Franchise Services	DVD or Blu-Ray (up to 2 hours) - may not be used for commercial use.		\$20 each	CMO/Media and Communications
		BETA and HD XDCAM Dubs/Stock Fee, plus shot fee charge for <b>non-profit/non-commercial use</b> :		BETA stock \$15 each + shot fee. HD XDCAM stock \$25 each + shot fee.	
		Shot fee		\$20	
		BETA and HD XDCAM Dubs/Stock Fee, plus shot fee for use in <b>for-profit productions</b> :		\$100 flat rate Rush rates (less than 72 hour turn around) assessed at 150% of scheduled rate (BETA and HD XDCAM Dubs plus clip or shot fee).	
		Library Research Fee		Hourly staff rate including benefits times number of research hours.	

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
5	Tacoma Venues & Events	Film production permit		Commercial Rate: \$100 Student Rate: \$50  All other fees required by Permitting Authority apply.	Tacoma Venues & Events
6	Tacoma Venues & Events	Non-profit; constitutionally protected **we do not conduct mailings for single block neighborhood block parties**		Base Permit Fee: \$50  Mailing Distribution Fee: \$75 per block for each city block or partial city block impacted by the event. First city block included in the Base Permit Fee.  Late Application Fee: 10% fee added to all applications received less than 60 days prior to the event.	Planning & Development Services - Fee to be transferred to TVE after Collection
7	Tacoma Venues & Events	Special Events - Commercial		Base Permit Fee: \$75  Mailing Distribution Fee: \$100 per block for each city block or partial city block impacted by the event. First city block included in the Base Permit Fee.  Late Application Fee: 10% fee added to all applications received less than 60 days prior to the event.	Planning & Development Services - Fee to be transferred to TVE after Collection
8	Hearing Examiner	Reproduction of Hearing Examiner's tapes/CDs		\$5/Tape \$5/CD	Hearing Examiner
9	Office of Equity and Human Rights	Crime Free Housing Program Landlord Training class for properties outside the City of Tacoma city limits		\$50	Office of Equity and Human Rights
10	Office of Equity and Human Rights	Equity 101 Training for Community Members	City of Tacoma Staff Members	\$100 per person	Office of Equity and Human Rights

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
11	Planning and Development Services	Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Land Use Regulatory Code Revisions	<p><b>A.</b> Fee is not applicable to City of Tacoma general government departments except for the utilities</p> <p><b>B.</b> Fee is not applicable to Neighborhood Councils or Business Districts with formal written approval submitted to the City by duly elected Board of Directors or community groups involved in ongoing, long-range, planning studies with the Planning and Development Services Department</p>	\$1,400 per application	Planning and Development Services
12	Planning and Development Services/Historic Preservation	Landmarks Commission Design Review	<p><b>A.</b> Fees shall be charged only once per project and once fees have been paid no other fees shall be charged for subsequent reviews of the same project during that duration, except for projects that fall under 'B'</p> <p><b>B.</b> New fees may be charged for subsequent applications for review if the previous application has been denied by a vote of the Landmarks Commission</p> <p><b>C.</b> General Government-funded City projects are exempt</p>	<p><b>Flat Fees:</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> Administrative Review Type 1: Permits that require historic preservation review but are appropriate for staff level review: \$60.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Design Review, Minor Projects: Projects under \$5,000 in project value: \$175.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Sliding Scale Fees:</p> <p>1 . Single Family: \$175 + \$25 per \$1000 of estimated project cost above \$5,000. Minimum fee per review is \$175 for residential. Maximum fee is \$500.</p> <p>2 . Commercial: under \$1 million in project value: \$30 per \$1,000, above \$5,000. Minimum fee is \$175. Maximum fee is \$2,000.</p> <p>3 . Major Commercial Projects (exceeding \$1 million in project value): \$3,000 + \$10 per additional \$10,000 of project value, to a maximum of \$4,000.</p>	Planning and Development Services
13	Planning and Development Services/Historic Preservation	Review fee for the demolition of properties listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places or contributing properties in local historic special review districts	<p><b>A.</b> Demolitions of garages and other accessory structures in the North Slope Historic Special Review District are exempt from demolition fees for garage demolitions</p> <p><b>B.</b> Demolition of noncontributing buildings and structures in local special review historic districts</p> <p><b>C.</b> General Government funded City Departments and agencies of the Federal</p>	\$1,500 per application	Planning and Development Services
14	Planning and Development Services/Historic Preservation	Review of nominations to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places	Nominations initiated by Neighborhood Councils or the City (including City Council Members)	\$100 flat fee	Planning and Development Services
15	Planning and Development Services/Historic Preservation	Review of Special Tax Valuation Applications		\$100 for single family projects; \$300 for commercial	Planning and Development Services
16	Planning and Development Services/Urban Design	Administrative Review	General Government-funded City projects are exempt	\$3,000	Planning and Development Services

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
17	Planning & Development Services/Urban Design	Board-Level Review	General Government-funded City projects are exempt	\$5,000	Planning and Development Services
18	Planning & Development Services/Urban Design	Voluntary Departure Review	General Government-funded City projects are exempt	\$3,000	Planning and Development Services
19	Police	Testimony of officer in civil court case	Discretionary waiver by Chief of Police for exceptional cases, [i.e., attorneys acting pro bono (without payment)]	Same as Item 22 with a two (2) hour minimum charge	TPD Budget & Finance
20	Police	Tacoma Police Range Use		<p>8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Monday – Friday): \$70/hour</p> <p>6 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Monday – Friday) and 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday &amp; Sunday: \$130/hour</p> <p>4-hour Minimum for all range reservations.</p> <p>\$280 Range Reservation Cancellation Fee if range reservation is cancelled within 14 days of the reservation.</p> <p>\$140 Range Reservation Cancellation Fee if range reservation is cancelled within 14 to 28 days of the reservation.</p>	TPD Budget & Finance



Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
21	Police	Civil interviews, on-duty, off-duty or first day off, one (1) hour minimum charge for all occurrences. If inter-views occur on or beyond an officer's second day off, there will be a two (2) hour minimum charge. First hour's fee must be paid in advance.	Discretionary waiver by Chief of Police for exceptional cases, [i.e., attorneys acting pro bono (without payment)]		TPD Budget & Finance
		Police Chief		\$180 (\$160 per additional hour)	
		Assistant Chief		\$169 (\$143 per additional hour)	
		Captain		\$135 (\$128 per additional hour)	
		Lieutenant		\$118 (\$113 per additional hour)	
		Sergeant		\$96 (\$92 per additional hour)	
		Detective		\$85 (\$81 per additional hour)	
		Police Officer Specialist		\$85 (\$81 per additional hour)	
		Police Officer		\$78 (\$73 per additional hour)	
		Forensic Supervisor		\$89 (\$77 per additional hour)	
		Forensic Specialist		\$77 (\$65 per additional hour)	
		Latent Print Examiner		\$85 (\$71 per additional hour)	
		Crime Scene Technician		\$77 (\$58 per additional hour)	
22	Police	Special Events, off-duty three (3) hour minimum	City-sponsored events that have such a provision in a written agreement; Events put on by the City		TPD Budget & Finance
		Police Officer		\$105/hour	
		Supervisor		\$120/hour	
		Commander		\$135/hour	
23	Public Works/ Facilities Management	Preparation of deeds and easements Management		\$1,000	Real Property Services
	Public Works/ Facilities Management	Release of easements		\$1,000	Real Property Services
	Public Works/ Facilities Management	Processing of permits to use City Real property		\$1,000	Real Property Services
	Various General Government Departments	Printed address labels on computer labels		\$.01/label	Various General Government Departments

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
24	City Manager/Public Records Office	Production of public records requested under the Washington State Public Records Act (Chapter 42.56 RCW)*	No fee will be charged if, in the determination of the Public Records Officer, the cost of processing and collecting the fee exceeds the authorized fee amount.	<p>A. \$0.15 per page for photocopies of public records, printed copies of electronic public records when requested by the person requesting records, or for the use by requester of City equipment to photocopy public records.</p> <p>B. \$ 0.10 per page for public records scanned into an electronic format or for the use by requester of City equipment to scan the records.</p> <p>C. \$0.05 per each four electronic files or attachment uploaded to email, cloud-based data storage service, or other means of electronic delivery.</p> <p>D. \$0.10 per gigabyte for the transmission of public records in an electronic format or for the use by requester of City equipment to send the records electronically. The City shall take reasonable steps to provide the records in the most efficient manner available to the City in its normal operations.</p> <p>E. The actual cost of any digital storage media or device provided by the City, the actual cost of any container or envelope used to mail the copies to the requestor, and the actual postage or delivery charge.</p> <p>F. The above fees may be combined to the extent that more than one type of charge applies to records produced in response to a particular request.</p>	Public Records Office
25	City Manager/Public Records Office	Production of public records requested under the Washington State Public Records Act (Chapter 42.56 RCW)* for Body Worn Camera Footage		The City intends to charge requestors at the rate of \$0.49 per minute of Public Disclosure Analysts time to redact body camera videos. The City Will Charge Redaction Costs Based on Actual Redaction Time. This amount does not include benefits paid to the Disclosure Analysts or other overhead costs.	Public Records Office
26	Fire	Above-ground Tank Permit		\$442 per tank	TFD
27	Fire	Underground Tank Installation Permit		\$442 per tank	TFD

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
28	Fire	Underground Tank Removal or Decommissioning		\$442 per site; \$225 for residential fuel tanks with capacity of less than 1,100 gallons	TFD
29	Fire	Liquid Petroleum Gas "LPG" Tank Permit		\$166 for tanks with 125-gallon capacity or less; \$375 for all other permanent and temporary installations above 125-gallon capacity	TFD
30	Fire	Assembly Permit-Annual		\$334	TFD
31	Fire	Assembly Temporary Special Event Permit		\$334 operating a fair, carnival, outdoor concert, festival, or other event with groups of 100 people or more gather	TFD
32	Fire	Bonfire Permit - outdoor fire with a fuel diameter greater than 3 feet and a height greater than 2 feet		\$166	TFD
33	Fire	Indoor and Outdoor Booth-Assembly Permit		Number of Booths: \$84 for 1-10; \$166 for 11-20; \$334 for 21-30; \$500 for 31-50; \$667 for 51 or more	TFD
34	Fire	LPG or Natural Gas Use in Assembly Occupancy-Temporary Use		\$209	TFD
35	Fire	LPG Outdoor Assembly-Temporary Use		Number of Users: \$84 for 1-10; \$166 for 11-20; \$334 for 21-30; \$500 for 31-50; \$667 for 51 or more	TFD
36	Fire	Open Flame in Assembly Permit - open flame entertainment, Fire Acts, etc.		\$334	TFD
37	Fire	Tents, Canopies, and Membrane Structures Permit - structures over 200 sq. ft. and canopies over 400 sq. ft.		\$334	TFD
38	Fire	Hazardous Materials Permit - Annual - storing, using, or handling in quantities greater than allowed in the IFC	A marine terminal with an Annual Marine Terminal Permit shall not pay this fee.	\$334 per hazardous material by UN Hazard Class	TFD
39	Fire	Hazardous Waste Facility Permit-Annual - storing, using, or handling		\$1,135	TFD
40	Fire	Special Hazardous Material Permit		\$500 per event	TFD
41	Fire	Application of Flammable Finishes Permit		\$334 annually	TFD
42	Fire	Pyrotechnic Display Permit		\$365 for initial fee; additional fees per hour if fire watch inspector exceeds two hours	TFD
43	Fire	Hot Work Permit - operations including brazing, torch cutting, grinding or electric welding		\$334	TFD
44	Fire	Roofing Operations Permit - open flame for torching down roofing materials or hot tar tanks or kettles		\$334	TFD
45	Fire	Marine Terminal Permit-Annual - Marine terminal that stores or handles one or more hazardous materials		\$3,337	TFD
46	Fire	Marine Fuel Transfer Permit-Annual		\$334	TFD
47	Fire	Shore to Ship Refueling Permit-Annual		\$418	TFD

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
48	Fire	Mobile Fueling Site Permit		\$334	TFD
49	Fire	Mobile Fueling Company Permit		\$334; Additional \$122 fee for companies requiring vehicle inspections outside the City of Tacoma	TFD
50	Fire	Advisory Inspection With Written Report		\$334	TFD
51	Fire	Advisory Inspection With No Written Report		\$166	TFD
52	Fire	Federal- or State-Mandated Inspection		\$122	TFD
53	Fire	Alternate Method Review Fee		\$418 for initial fee; additional fee when more than 4 hours of work is performed based on hourly rate of staff time and hours worked	TFD
54	Fire	Re-test Fee for Fire Protections System Acceptance Testing		\$283 per participating staff or the hourly rate of staff multiplied by the hours worked	TFD
55	Fire	Off Duty Hours Inspection Fee - performed outside regular business hours between 7 A.M. and 5 P.M. PST		\$333 per participating staff member four 2 hours or less; \$166 per participating staff member for each additional half-hour beyond 2 hours	TFD
56	Fire	Re-Inspection Fee - Performing an inspection after three inspections with noncompliance as the result		\$250	TFD
57	Fire	Late Fee for Annual Fire Protection System ("FPS") Confidence Test Reports		\$334 for initial fee past 60 days; \$122 for each additional month	TFD
58	Fire	Failure to Monitor an FPS		\$401	TFD
59	Fire	Fire Department Application Review Inspection Fee		\$166	TFD
60	Fire	Public Documents of the Fire Department		\$0.20 per page / \$0.40 per double-sided page	TFD
61	Fire	Nonpublic Records of the Fire Department		\$220 per incident report	TFD
62	Fire	Employee Fire Emergency Procedures Training		\$12 per person	TFD
63	Fire	Fire Safety and Evacuation Planning Training		\$30 per person	TFD
64	Fire	Civil Interview, Trial and Deposition, and Declaration/Affidavit/Statement Fee Schedule		Please see TMC 3.09.040.P	TFD
65	Fire	City's Contractor Fees for Third-Party Inspection, Testing, and maintenance		\$25 per occurrence	TFD's Contractor
66	Fire	Building Inspection Program Fees Occupancy Groups: 1 - Business, Mercantile, and Miscellaneous 2 - Assembly and Education 3 - Factory, Hazardous, Institutional, and Storage 4 - Residential  Base Inspection Fee by Building Area Square Feet			
				Occupancy Groups 1    2    3    4	
		0 – 1,500		\$ 54   \$122   \$181   \$ 54	TFD
		1,501 – 3,000		\$ 89   \$161   \$222   \$ 54	TFD
		3,001 – 5,000		\$128   \$198   \$261   \$ 54	TFD
		5,001 – 7,500		\$167   \$235   \$301   \$ 54	TFD

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
		7,501 – 10,000		\$204 \$273 \$340 \$ 54	TFD
		10,001 – 12,500		\$245 \$311 \$378 \$245	TFD
		12,501 – 15,000		\$282 \$347 \$417 \$245	TFD
		15,001 – 17,500		\$318 \$387 \$463 \$245	TFD
		17,501 – 20,000		\$355 \$425 \$500 \$245	TFD
		20,001 – 30,000		\$391 \$464 \$540 \$245	TFD
		30,001 – 40,000		\$431 \$502 \$580 \$431	TFD
		40,001 – 50,000		\$474 \$541 \$617 \$431	TFD
		50,001 – 60,000		\$510 \$579 \$656 \$431	TFD
		60,001 – 70,000		\$547 \$615 \$703 \$431	TFD
		70,001 – 100,000		\$585 \$650 \$741 \$431	TFD
		100,001 – 150,000		\$622 \$687 \$777 \$622	TFD
		150,001 – 200,000		\$665 \$732 \$819 \$622	TFD
		200,001 – 500,000		\$704 \$770 \$856 \$622	TFD
		500,001 – 1,000,000		\$746 \$816 \$907 \$622	TFD
		Over 1,000,000		\$792 \$865 \$962 \$622	TFD
		Additional Follow-Up Inspection Fees		\$215 per hour	TFD
		Inspection Fee Collection Procedure - delinquent accounts		Monthly fee of 1% per month of unpaid balance with a minimum of \$4	TFD
67	Fire	Non-emergent Lift Assistance at Licensed Care Facilities		\$850	TFD
68	Fire	False Alarm Fees - Penalty for signalling or transmitting a fire false alarm.		\$150 per each residential response \$250 per each commercial response	TFD
69	Fire	Patient Transport Rates		\$1,250 for Basic Life Support (BLS); \$1,570 for Advanced Life Support (ALS); \$25 per mile of transport	TFD
70	Community and Economic Development	Review of Multifamily Property Tax Exemption Applications		\$2000 for the first 4 units and \$200 for each additional unit up to a maximum for \$10,000	Community and Economic Development

\*The City finds that calculating the actual cost of copying, scanning, uploading and otherwise processing the records required to fulfill a public records request would be unduly burdensome including for the following reasons:

1. The City employs over 3000 employees. Because the City's methodology for satisfying public records requests includes each employee conducting a search for and processing responsive records that may be in their possession, and all employees earn different rates of pay, the Public Records Officer would have to determine and calculate the salaries of all involved employees in order to invoice for actual costs.
2. The City's Public Records Officer would be required to maintain a record of each employee who contributed to each part of a public records request and potentially charge different rates for different items in the same records production.
3. The City's Public Records Office has limited staff and the response time to fulfill records requests may be delayed if it is required to calculate the actual costs of processing records and to create customized invoices or billing statements reflecting different rates and charges.

**History of Legislation related to this document:**

Authorized by Resolution No. 41065 11/15/22  
Authorized by Resolution No. 40694 11/24/20  
Authorized by Resolution No. 4016611/20/18  
Authorized by Resolution No. 39587 11/22/16  
Authorized by Resolution No. 39075, 12/9/14  
Authorized by Resolution No. 38680, 06/11/13  
Authorized by Resolution No. 38588, 12/18/12  
Authorized by Amended Resolution No. 37970, 01/12/10  
Amended by Resolution No. 36804, 03/21/06  
Authorized by Resolution No. 36447, 03/08/05  
Authorized by Resolution No. 36384, 12/14/04

Ref. No.	Originating Department	Description of Service to be Furnished	Exemptions	Fee	Fee Collected By
Authorized by Resolution No. 36317, 10/12/04					
Amended by Resolution No. 35658, 10/15/02					
Amended by Resolution No. 34255, 12/15/98					
Amended by Resolution No. 33520, 10/22/96					
Amended by Resolution No. 32187, 5/11/93					
Amended by Resolution No. 32075, 2/2/93					
Amended by Resolution No. 31879, 9/18/92					
Amended by Resolution No. 31680, 3/17/92					



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# Policy: Requesting Public Records

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## **Purpose**

To inform the public of the City of Tacoma's public records request policy.

## **Background**

The City provides broad access to public records as required by law (Chapter 42.56 Revised Code of Washington, the Public Records Act) while exercising the discretion to withhold or redact records when the law exempts or prohibits production. Local governments are to adopt and enforce rules and procedures to provide requesters timely access to public records while protecting public records from damage and disorganization and avoiding excessive interference with other essential governmental functions.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to requests to inspect or obtain City records. City records are any records, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that are related to the conduct of City government or to the performance of any governmental or proprietary function and which are prepared, owned, used, or retained by the City. City records include records for City of Tacoma, Tacoma Public Utilities, and Tacoma Public Library.

This policy does not apply to Tacoma Municipal Court records.

## **Policy Statements**

This policy is to inform requesters of the established places, methods, and procedures to request and obtain City records.

### **1.0 Index of Records**

By adoption of this policy the City finds, as allowed by RCW 42.56.070, that the maintenance of an index of records is unduly burdensome. The City is made up of multiple, and complex, divisions, departments, and business units, each maintaining separate, diverse, and often multiple databases and record-keeping systems for the indexing of records and information, such that it is unduly burdensome to maintain a central index of records.

### **2.0 Designation of Public Records Officer**

The City is required to appoint a Public Records Officer to serve as a point of contact for members of the public in requesting disclosure of public records. The general contact information for the Public Records Officer appears in Appendix A to this Policy with more specific information appearing on City's website.

While the Public Records Officer serves as a point of contact for members of the public and is responsible for overseeing the City's compliance with the Public Records Act, other staff members in the City's Public Records Office and throughout the City are also responsible for processing public records requests.

### **3.0 Requesting Public Records**

The City has adopted an online system as the most reliable and efficient method for receiving, processing, and responding to public records requests. Requesters should submit requests for public records electronically using the system. Alternatively, requesters may submit formal requests for public records by contacting the City's Public Records Office in person during normal business hours, by telephone, by mail, or email.

All requests must include the requester's contact information and identify or describe the public record or records being requested with sufficient clarity for the City to locate the records. Requests submitted by methods other than use of the City's online system must provide reasonable notice to the City that the communication is intended as a request for public records.

The City's Public Records Office will convert requests received by methods other than use of the City's online system to a request in the City's online system and subsequently communicate with requesters and provide records using the online system. The City will assign a tracking number to each request, which will be used by the City and by the requester in all communications related to the request.

### **4.0 Charges and Deposits**

The City assesses a charge as authorized by Chapter 42.56 RCW for copies of public records and for uploading or transmission of electronic records. The City may also assess a charge for postage or delivery including the cost of any container, media, or envelope used to deliver the records to the requestor. Alternatively, the City may arrange with the requester to deliver the records to a third-party vendor for copying and the vendor shall be responsible for collecting payment for the records from the requester.

All charges will be in accordance with the City's then-current fee schedule. Charges will not exceed the amount necessary to reimburse the City for its actual costs related to the provision of the requested records. The City may require up to a 10% deposit of estimated costs be paid prior to producing records.

If the Public Records Office determines the cost of processing and collecting the charge for copying or uploading and transmitting the records exceeds the charge authorized by the fee schedule, the City may choose to waive the charge.

Deposits and copy or upload and transmission charges are payable online via the City's website, in person at the City's Customer Service Office or the Tacoma Public Utilities Building Lobby, or by check made payable to CITY TREASURER and sent by mail addressed to the Public Records Officer. The City will provide the requester with an invoice (or other notice) of the applicable charges when a deposit is required and when records (or installments of records) are available. Requesters paying in person or by mail should include the assigned request number on any checks and correspondence.

No charge will be assessed for making requested records available for inspection or viewing. The Public Records Office will communicate with a requester who wishes to inspect records to schedule a mutually convenient time at the Tacoma Municipal Building Customer Services Center or the Tacoma Public Utilities Building Lobby. All inspections shall be completed between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. A requester may take photographs of any records inspected. Any copies requested following an inspection will be provided after receipt of the appropriate charge. Requesters may not inspect records or portions of records that are exempt from production.



## **5.0 City Response**

### **5.1 Initial Response in Five Days**

The City will respond to a properly filed request for public records within 5 business days from the date of receipt by: providing the record or records requested; providing an internet address and link on the City's website to the specific record or records requested; acknowledging receipt of the request and providing a reasonable estimate of the time the City will require to respond to the request, including by seeking clarification; or denying the request.

### **5.2 Clarification**

The City may seek clarification or additional specificity from a requester. If, after 30 days from the City's request for clarification or additional specificity, the requester has not sufficiently clarified the request to allow the City to conduct a search for responsive records, the request may be deemed abandoned and closed by the City. In cases where only certain portions of the request require clarification and none is received, the City will provide records responsive to portions of the request that do not require clarification prior to closing the request. Alternatively, if the City attempts to obtain clarification, but none is provided, the City may interpret the request as one for records that directly and reasonably relate to the topic of the request and to conduct a search based on such reasonably broad interpretation. In such cases, the City will inform the requester of its interpretation at the time records are produced.

### **5.3 Third Party Notification**

The City may, and in certain cases must, notify persons named in a record or to whom a record specifically pertains that release of the record has been requested, so that person may determine whether to file a lawsuit to enjoin the City from the release of the record. The third party will be provided relevant information about the request including the identity of the requester so that the third party may name the requester as a party in any lawsuit to enjoin release of the record. If no lawsuit is filed by any notified persons, the City will proceed to process the request. If a lawsuit is filed by any notified persons and a court order is obtained, the City will delay processing the request and the City will cooperate with all parties to the lawsuit and comply with all court rulings and orders.

### **5.4 Installments**

The City may, at its discretion, provide records in installments. Public Records Office staff will notify the requester if a request will be completed in installments. The notification will include a reasonable estimate of the amount of time it will take to produce the first installment. The requester will be notified when the first installment is available and will be invoiced for the appropriate copying or upload or transmission charges, if any. The requester will have 30 days from notification of the availability of the installment to arrange to inspect records without charge or to pay the invoiced charges. Upon production of an installment, Public Records Office staff will advise the requester of when the next installment is estimated to be provided. If, after 30 days from notification of availability, the installment is not paid for, or arrangements are not made to inspect the installment, the request will be closed. If no charge is assessed for an installment or if payment for the installment has been received, but the installment is not viewed after 30 days from notification of availability, the request will be closed.

#### **5.4.1 Production of Installments Including Exempt Records**

For any installment produced that includes records that are exempt from production, a brief written explanation will be provided to identify the specific exemption authorizing the record or portion of the record to be withheld or redacted and to explain how the exemption applies. If only a portion of a record is exempt from disclosure, only the exempt portion will be redacted.

### **6.0 Completion of Requests**

#### **6.1 Inspection of Records**

When an inspection of requested records is complete and any requested copies of nonexempt records are provided, Public Records Office staff will notify the requester in writing the inspection is complete and that the request is closed.

#### **6.2 Production of Records**

When a production of records completes the request Public Records Office staff will notify the requester in writing that the request is complete and is closed. If the request has been satisfied in installments, the Public Records Office staff will notify the requester in writing that all installments have been provided and that the request is complete and is closed.

##### **6.2.1 Production of Records Including Exempt Records**

If any requested records in the production or final installment are exempt from production, a brief written explanation will be provided to identify the specific exemption authorizing the record or portion of the record to be withheld or redacted and to explain how the exemption applies. If only a portion of a record is exempt from disclosure, only the exempt portion will be redacted.

#### **6.3 Abandoned or Withdrawn Requests**

When a requester abandons a request by failing the obligation to inspect the records within 30 days after being notified the records are available for inspection, or failing to pay a deposit or charge within 30 days after being notified that a deposit or charge is due, or failing to view an installment of records in the City's online system with 30 days after being informed of the availability of the installment, the City will inform the requester in writing that the request has been closed. If the requester later informs the City that they are still seeking the requested records, the City will open a new request.

If, at any time during the process of records being produced, but before notification that the request is complete, a requester determines they longer need or want to continue to receive records, the requester should inform the Public Records Office that the request is withdrawn. The City will confirm to the requester in writing that a withdrawn request has been closed.

#### **6.4 Later Discovered Records**

If, after the City has informed the requester that it has provided all available records and has closed the request, the City becomes aware of additional responsive records existing at the time the request was open, it will inform the requester and provide the newly discovered records. The request will remain closed.

## **7.0 Requests for Commercial Purposes Prohibited**

The Public Records Act prohibits the City from providing a list of individuals to be used for commercial purposes. RCW 42.56.070(8). The City may require a requester to sign a declaration under penalty of perjury which describes the purpose and intended use of the request and states they will not use the requested list of individuals for a commercial purpose.

## **8.0 Customized Service Charges**

If the City determines that completing the request requires the use of information technology expertise to prepare data compilations or requires customized electronic access services not used for other City purposes, the City may, in consultation with the requester, collect the cost of such customizations from the requester.

## **9.0 No Duty to Create Records or Conduct Research**

The City is not obligated to create a new record to satisfy a request; however, the City may, in its discretion, create a new record to satisfy the request. A report, spreadsheet, or another similar document containing information compiled from an existing City system or database is not considered a new record and the requester's approval will not be sought prior to the City compiling and providing the responsive information as a report, spreadsheet, or another similar document. The City is not required to conduct research for a requester.

## **10.0 Review Process**

Any requester may file an appeal in writing by mail or by email or by in person delivery to the attention of the Public Records Officer within 2 business days of the date of written notice from the City to the requester that the request has been closed. That appeal must include a copy of the written notice from the City that the request has been closed. If such an appeal is filed, the Public Records Officer (or delegee) has 5 business days from receipt to respond to the requester, during which time the requester agrees no lawsuit will be filed. If, after 5 business days from receipt of an appeal, no response is provided to the requester by the Public Records Officer, the requester may file a lawsuit, if desired. This voluntary procedure provides the City an opportunity to potentially resolve any misunderstanding or dispute; relieving the requester and the City of the expense and delay associated with litigation. This appeal process is not mandatory and failure to utilize the process does not preclude a requester's right to bring a lawsuit under RCW 42.56.550.

## Appendix A: Contact Information

### Public Records Office

Email [publicdisclosure@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:publicdisclosure@cityoftacoma.org)

Phone 253-231-0240

Fax 253.502.8598

### Public Records Office Address

Tacoma Public Utilities

3628 South 35<sup>th</sup> Street

Tacoma, WA 98409

### Mailing Address

Tacoma Public Utilities

Public Records Office

PO Box 11007

Tacoma, WA 98411

### Customer Support Center Address

733 Market Street

Tacoma, WA 98402

DRAFT

## Appendix B: References

General Government Fee Schedule

Washington State Public Records Act - [RCW.42.56](#)

[Public Records Act – Model Rules Chapter 44-14 Washington Administrative Code](#)

## Version History and Approvals

Contact Info:	<b>Public Records Officer</b> Email <a href="mailto:publicdisclosure@cityoftacoma.org">publicdisclosure@cityoftacoma.org</a>
Policy History:	Request for Public Records - Administrative Policy #1.18, effective 02/01/06, rescinded/replaced. Public Records Policy 1.18, effective MM/DD/YYYY
Approval:	Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
	Jackie Flowers, Director of Utilities
Effective Date:	MM/DD/YYYY