



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** James Kauffman, Public Records Officer  
Martha Lantz, Deputy City Attorney  
**COPY:** Government Performance & Finance Committee (GPFC)  
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**PRESENTER:** James Kauffman, Public Records Office; Martha Lantz, Deputy City Attorney  
**SUBJECT:** Public Records Policy  
**DATE:** May 20, 2025

**PRESENTATION TYPE:**  
Informational Briefing

**SUMMARY:**

The Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) directs the City to publish its policies, rules, and procedures regarding public records requests. The Public Records Office has prepared an up-to-date Public Records Policy ("Policy"), which incorporates current elements of the Public Records Act and instructs and informs those who request public records from the City of the City's protocols, requirements, and expectations regarding such requests. In addition, the Policy clarifies the processes and tools available for City staff to manage and efficiently complete requests for records.

While the Policy is intended to be an outward facing advisory and directive to the public, the policy document follows citywide policy conventions, and is intended to be approved by the City Manager and Utilities Director.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Public Records Act defines public records as those "relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by" the City of Tacoma. All public records are subject to disclosure, with various exemptions allowing that certain items contained in the records (such as personally identifying information) may be redacted or withheld from release.

The number and complexity of public records requests received by the City has continued to increase. In addition, the City's public records are now primarily created, maintained, and



produced in electronic form. The City utilizes an on-line records request system (GovQA), which allows for the production of electronic records to be managed through the GovQA portal. The Policy informs requesters that while they can make their initial request other ways, the City will use GovQA exclusively to manage subsequent communications and production of electronic records.

The Public Records Act allows public agencies to charge for the production of records, including those in electronic format. The Policy will inform the public that such statutorily authorized charges, which are currently being assessed only on requests for paper records and for police body worn cameras, will, as of the effective date of the policy, be assessed by the City for all types of records requests, utilizing the fee schedule previously adopted by the City Council.

The Policy also informs of the City's ability to produce records in installments and collect a deposit before beginning to process certain types of complex or voluminous requests and clearly advises that if a fee or deposit is assessed but not received by the City within the stated time frame, the request will be closed. Similarly, a request will be closed if clarification is requested, but not provided within the stated time frame. For records produced in installments, the requester must retrieve the installment within a stated time frame, or the request will be closed, and no further records provided. These and the other approaches outlined in the policy are in alignment with other local government practices.

**ISSUE:**

Members of the public who request the City's records need to be clearly informed as to the City's stated and applied protocols for receipt of requests, the assessment of authorized fees, and of other expectations and requirements related to the submission of a records request and the receipt of responsive public records. Application of the protocols and expectations that are stated in the Policy to all requests provides City staff the tools and ability to better serve the public by consistently managing and efficiently completing requests for records.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

This is an information briefing only. There are no alternatives presented.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.