

## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO LIBRARY INFORMATION AND RECORDS POLICY**

### **PURPOSE:**

The people's right to obtain appropriate information about the government's operations and decisions is basic to our society. This policy provides information concerning the procedures by which records may be obtained from the Library.

### **POLICY:**

The Board of Trustees directs Library personnel to furnish to the public the information and records required by the Freedom of Information Law, as well as records otherwise available by law.

#### **1) Designation of Records Access Officer**

- a) The Board of Trustees of the Albany Public Library is responsible for insuring compliance with the regulations herein, and designates the following person as records access officer:

Public Information Officer  
Albany Public Library  
161 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12210

The records access officer is responsible for insuring appropriate Library response to public requests for access to records. The records access officer shall insure that agency personnel:

- i) Maintain an up-to-date subject matter list.
- ii) Assist persons seeking records to identify the records sought, if necessary, and when appropriate, indicate the manner in which the records are filed, retrieved or generated to assist persons in reasonably describing records.
- iii) Contact persons seeking records when a request is voluminous or when locating the records involves substantial effort, so that personnel may ascertain the nature of records of primary interest and attempt to reasonably reduce the volume of records requested.
- iv) Upon locating the records, take one of the following actions:
  - (1) Make records available for inspection; or,
  - (2) Deny access to the records in whole or in part and explain in writing the reasons therefor.
- v) Upon request for copies of records:
  - (1) Make a copy available upon payment or offer to pay established fees, if any; or,
  - (2) Permit the requester to copy those records under the supervision of Library personnel.
- vi) Upon request, certify that a record is a true copy; and
- vii) Upon failure to locate records, certify that:
  - (1) The Library is not the custodian for such records, or

(2) The records of which the Library is a custodian cannot be found after diligent search.

**2) Location**

Records shall be available for public inspection and copying at:

Albany Public Library  
161 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12210

**3) Hours for Public Inspection**

Requests for public access to records shall be accepted and records produced during all hours in which the Library's administrative department is regularly open for business. Currently, these hours are: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**4) Requests for Public Access to Records**

- a) The Library will require that all request for access to records will be in writing, except that an oral request may be allowed when records are readily available.
- b) If records are maintained on the internet, the requester shall be informed that the records are accessible via the internet and in printed form either on paper or other information storage medium.
- c) Upon receipt of a request, a response shall be given within five business days by:
  - i) informing a person requesting records that the request or portion of the request does not reasonably describe the records sought, including direction, to the extent possible, that would enable that person to request records reasonably described;
  - ii) granting or denying access to records in whole or in part;
  - iii) acknowledging the receipt of a request in writing, including an approximate date when the request will be granted or denied in whole or in part, which shall be reasonable under the circumstances of the request and shall not be more than twenty business days after the date of the acknowledgment, or if it is known that circumstances prevent disclosure within twenty business days from the date of such acknowledgment, providing a statement in writing indicating the reason for inability to grant the request within that time and a date certain, within a reasonable period under the circumstances of the request, when the request will be granted in whole or in part; or
  - iv) if the receipt of request was acknowledged in writing and included an approximate date when the request would be granted in whole or in part within twenty business days of such acknowledgment, but circumstances prevent disclosure within that time, providing a statement in writing within twenty business days of such acknowledgment specifying the reason for the inability to do so and a date certain, within a reasonable period under the circumstances of the request, when the request will be granted in whole or in part.
- d) In determining a reasonable time for granting or denying a request under the circumstances of a request, personnel shall consider the volume of a request, the ease or difficulty in locating, retrieving or generating records, the complexity of the request, the need to review records to determine the extent to which they must be disclosed, the number of requests received by the Library, and similar factors that bear on the ability to grant access to records promptly and within a reasonable time.

- e) A failure to comply with the time limitations described herein shall constitute a denial of a request and may be appealed. Such failure shall include situations in which an officer or employee:
  - i) fails to grant access to the records sought, fails to deny access in writing, or fails to acknowledge the receipt of a request within five business days of the receipt of a request;
  - ii) acknowledges the receipt of a request within five business days but fails to furnish an approximate date when the request will be granted or denied in whole or in part;
  - iii) furnishes an acknowledgment of the receipt of a request within five business days but sets an approximate date for granting or denying access in whole or in part that is unreasonable under the circumstances of the request;
  - iv) fails to respond to a request within a reasonable time after the approximate date given or within twenty business days after the date of the acknowledgment of the receipt of a request;
  - v) determines to grant a request in whole or in part within twenty business days of the acknowledgment of the receipt of a request, but fails to do so, unless the agency provides the reason for its inability to do so in writing and a date certain within which the request will be granted in whole or in part;
  - vi) does not grant a request in whole or in part within twenty business days of the acknowledgment of the receipt of a request and fails to provide the reason in writing explaining the inability to do so and a date certain by which the request will be granted in whole or in part; or
  - vii) responds to a request, stating that more than twenty business days is needed to grant or deny the request in whole or in part and provides a date certain within which that will be accomplished, but such date is unreasonable under the circumstances of the request.

#### **5) Subject Matter List**

- a) The Records Access Officer shall maintain a reasonably detailed current list by subject matter of all records in the Library's possession, whether or not records are available pursuant to Public Officers Law § 87 (2).
- b) The subject matter list shall be sufficiently detailed to permit identification of the category of the record sought.
- c) The subject matter list shall be updated annually. The most recent update shall appear on the first page of the subject matter list.

#### **6) Denial of Access to Records**

- a) Denial of access to records shall be in writing stating the reason therefor and advising the requester of the right to appeal to the Executive Director.
- b) If requested records are not provided promptly, such failure shall also be deemed a denial of access.
- c) The following person or persons or body shall decide appeals regarding denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Law:
  - Executive Director
  - Albany Public Library
  - 161 Washington Avenue
  - Albany, New York 12210
  - ATTN: FOIL Appeal

Any person denied access to records may appeal within thirty days of a denial.

- d) The time for deciding an appeal by the Board of Trustees shall commence upon receipt of a written appeal identifying:
  - i) the date and location of requests for records;
  - ii) a description, to the extent possible, of the records that were denied; and
  - iii) the name and return address of the person denied access.
- e) A failure to decide an appeal within ten business days of its receipt by granting access to the records sought or fully explaining the reasons for further denial in writing shall constitute a denial of the appeal.
- f) The person or body designated to determine appeals shall transmit to the Committee on Open Government copies of all appeals upon receipt of appeals. Such copies shall be addressed to:
  - Committee on Open Government
  - Department of State
  - One Commerce Plaza – 99 Washington Avenue
  - Albany, New York 12231
- g) The records access officer shall inform the appellant and the Committee on Open Government of the Library's determination in writing within ten business days of receipt of an appeal. The determination shall be transmitted to the Committee on Open Government in the same manner as set forth above.

## **7) Fees**

- a) There shall be no fee charged for:
  - i) inspection of records;
  - ii) search for records; or
  - iii) any certification of records.
- b) The following fees for copies will be charged:
  - i) the fee for copying records shall be 25 cents per page for photocopies not exceeding 9 by 14 inches;
  - ii) the fee for copies of records exceeding 9 by 14 inches shall be the greater of 25 cents per page or the actual cost of such photocopy to the Library.
  - iii) the Library has the authority to redact portions of a paper record and does so prior to disclosure of the record by making a photocopy from which the proper redactions are made.
- c) The fee the Library may charge for a copy of any other record is based on the actual cost of reproduction and may include only the following:
  - i) an amount equal to the hourly salary attributed to the lowest paid employee who has the necessary skill required to prepare a copy of the requested record, but only when more than two hours of the employee's time is necessary to do so; and

- ii) the actual cost of the storage devices or media provided to the person making the request in complying with such request; or
  - iii) the actual cost to the Library of engaging an outside professional service to prepare a copy of a record, but only when an agency's information technology equipment is inadequate to prepare a copy, and if such service is used to prepare the copy.
- d) When the Library has the ability to retrieve or extract a record or data maintained in a computer storage system with reasonable effort, or when doing so requires less employee time than engaging in manual retrieval or redactions from non-electronic records, the Library shall retrieve or extract such record or data electronically. In such case, the Library will charge a fee in accordance with paragraphs (c)(i) and (ii) of this section.
  - e) The Library shall inform a person requesting a record of the estimated cost of preparing a copy of the record if more than two hours of an agency employee's time is needed, or if it is necessary to retain an outside professional service to prepare a copy of the record.
  - f) The Library may require that the fee for copying or reproducing a record be paid in advance of the preparation of such copy.
  - g) The Library may waive a fee in whole or in part when making copies of records available.

**8) Public Notice**

A notice containing the title or name and business address of the records access officer and appeals person or body and the location where records can be seen or copied shall be posted in a conspicuous location in all library locations.

Inquiries regarding this policy or requests for a printed copy should be directed to: Executive Director, Albany Public Library, 161 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York, 12210, (518) 427-4300

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

The Public Information Officer is responsible for administration of this policy.

**PROCEDURE:**

As stated above

**APPROVED/REVIEWED:**

Adopted: June 2008  
 Amended: March 2015  
 March 2017  
 November 2021