

# HAMILTON PUBLIC RECORDS RELEASE POLICY

Openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the mission and intent of the City of Hamilton to at all times fully comply with and abide by both the spirit and the letter of Ohio's Public Records Act.

A "record" is defined to include the following: A document in any format – paper or electronic – that is created, received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of the City of Hamilton that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office.

A "public record" is a "record" that is being kept by this office at the time a public records request is made, subject to applicable exemptions from disclosure under Ohio or federal law. All public records must be organized and maintained in such a way that they can be made available for inspection and copying.

Public records are available for inspection during regular business hours. 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, the necessity for any legal review and redaction, and other facts and circumstances of the records requested.

No specific language is required to make a request for public records. However, the Requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the office to identify, retrieve, and review the records.

The Requester does not have to put a public records request in writing, and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record(s).

In processing the request, the City does not have an obligation to create new records or perform a search or research for information in the office's records. An electronic record is deemed to exist so long as a computer is already programmed to produce the record through the City's standard use of sorting, filtering, or querying features.

In processing a request for inspection of a public record, a City employee may be required to accompany the Requester during inspection to make certain original records are not taken or altered.

If the Requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request such that the City cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the request may be denied, but the City will then provide the Requester an opportunity to revise the request by informing the Requester of the manner in which records are maintained and accessed by the City.

If the City withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, the City will provide an explanation, including legal authority, for the denial(s). If the initial request was made in writing, the explanation will also be in writing. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions may be redacted and the rest will be released. When making public records available for public inspection or copying, the City shall notify the Requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

Charges for postage and/or copies are limited to the actual cost of postage and mailing supplies, or other actual costs of delivery and/or copying, if any. Cost of copying is \$.05 per page for standard copies. A Requester may be required to pay in advance for the actual costs involved in providing the copy. The Requester may choose whether to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium on which the public record is kept, or upon any other medium on which the office determines that the record can reasonably be duplicated as an integral part of the office's normal operations.