



GEAUGA COUNTY AUDITOR

Policy: PUBLIC RECORDS	
Policy/Procedure No:	AUD1802
Effective Date	January 2, 2019
Date of Last Revision	December 12, 2018
Number of Pages	-4-
Reviewed by	<i>Kate Jacobs McClain</i>
Approved by	<i>[Signature]</i>

1.00 PURPOSE

To establish guidelines, set procedure, and ensure proper dissemination of public records in the custody of the Geauga County Auditor's Office.

2.00 POLICY

It is the policy of the Geauga County Auditor's Office that openness leads to better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the Geauga County Auditor's policy to adhere to Ohio's Public Records Act¹, and that proper documentation of all matters within the jurisdiction of the Office of the Auditor is maintained as provided by law.

3.00 PUBLIC RECORDS

3.01 DEFINITION

The Geauga County Auditor's 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 Geauga County Auditor's Office are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

¹ ORC 149.43

3.02 ELECTRONIC MAIL

Electronic mail ("e-mail") is simply one format for the creation and storage of a document. Documents in e-mail format are public records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of the public office. It is, therefore, the content, rather than the format, that defines whether a document is a public record. E-mail is to be treated in the same way as records in other formats and should follow the same retention schedules.

3.03 ORGANIZATION AND MAINTENANCE

It is the policy of the Geauga 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. Record retention schedules are available upon request.

4.00 PUBLIC RECORD REQUESTS & RESPONSES

4.01 PUBLIC RECORDS COORDINATOR

The Auditor's Office's Chief Compliance Officer is designated as the Office's Public Records Coordinator.

4.02 FORM OF REQUEST

Although no specific language is required to make a request, under Ohio law, a requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the Office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the Public Records Coordinator will 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.

4.03 METHOD OF RECORD REQUEST

A requester need not put a request in writing or provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested records. The identity of the requester or intended use should only be asked for purposes of contacting requester for clarification of the request or notification of the request's completion. Prior to asking a requestor for their identity or intended use, or to put a request in writing, the Public Records Coordinator will disclose to the requestor that a written request is not mandatory and that they may decline to reveal their identity or intended use.

4.04 GENERAL STANDARD

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours with the exception of holidays. Copies of public records will 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.

4.05 EXEMPTIONS

All exemptions to openness are to be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If the request for public records is in writing, the explanation of denial must also be in writing.

4.06 COSTS FOR PUBLIC RECORDS

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies as determined by the Public Records Coordinator.

4.07 RECORDS TRANSMITTAL

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them, in which case they will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies. The Geauga County Auditor may require payment in advance.

5.00 EDUCATION & TRAINING

The Geauga County Auditor's Office continues to update and address all education, training, disclosure, and policy requirements mandated by Ohio law. Further, the Public Records Coordinator will attend training in subject matters approved by the Ohio Attorney General relating to public records.
