

ORDINANCE NO. 1465

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GIG HARBOR, WASHINGTON, RELATING TO PUBLIC RECORDS; AMENDING CHAPTER 2.52 OF THE GIG HARBOR MUNICIPAL CODE TO ESTABLISH POLICIES FOR PROCESSING LARGE OR COMPLEX PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS ALONG WITH MINOR HOUSEKEEPING AMENDMENTS TO REFLECT CURRENT PRACTICES AND INTERPRETATION UNDER CHAPTER 42.56 RCW (THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT); PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Chapter 42.56 of the Revised Code of Washington is known as the Public Records Act (PRA); and

WHEREAS, the stated intent of the PRA is to provide full public access to public records pertaining to the conduct of government, respect individuals' privacy rights, protect public records from damage or disorganization, and to prevent excessive interference with other essential functions of the government agency holding the records; and

WHEREAS, other "essential city functions" are determined by state law and by the City Council and include, but are not limited to, providing public safety, financial stability, dependable infrastructure, emergency services, economic development, parks, recreation and open space, and the administrative systems necessary to provide effective government services; and

WHEREAS, the PRA generally requires that each state and local agency shall make available for public inspection and copying all public records, unless the record falls within the specific exemptions of the PRA or other statute which exempts or prohibits disclosure of specific information or records; and

WHEREAS, RCW 42.56.100, requires local agencies to "adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations... consistent with the [PRA's] intent" as described above; and

WHEREAS, RCW 42.56.100 also requires that such rules and regulations "shall provide for the fullest assistance to inquirers and the most timely possible action on requests for information;" and

WHEREAS, the Washington Attorney General issued "Model Rules" concerning public records compliance, to advise state and local agencies about "best practices" for complying with the PRA; and

WHEREAS, to prevent excessive interference with the other essential functions of the City, it is necessary to determine a reasonable level of effort to devote to responding to requests for public records commensurate with the available resources and staffing;

NOW THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Gig Harbor, Washington, do ordain as follows:


Section 1. Gig Harbor Municipal Code Amended. Chapter 2.52 of the GHMC is hereby amended to read as set forth on Exhibit A, attached to this ordinance and incorporated by reference.

Section 2. Severability. If any part of this Ordinance is held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portion of this Ordinance.

Section 3. Correction of Errors. The City Clerk and codifiers of the ordinance are authorized to make necessary corrections to this ordinance including, but not limited to, the correction of scrivener/clerical errors, references, ordinance numbering, section/subsection numbers and any references thereto.

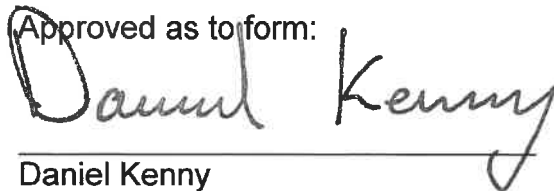
Section 4. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall take effect and be in full force five (5) days after passage and publication of an approved summary consisting of the title.

ADOPTED by the Council of the City of Gig Harbor at a regular meeting thereof, held this 27th day of September, 2021.



Kit Kuhn
Mayor

Approved as to form:



Daniel Kenny
City Attorney

Attest:



Joshua Stecker
Interim City Clerk

PUBLICATION DATE: 9/30/21

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/5/21

EXHIBIT A

Chapter 2.52 DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

Sections:

- 2.52.010 Authority and purpose.
- 2.52.020 Scope of coverage of Public Records Act and definitions.
- 2.52.030 Nonliability for disclosure.
- 2.52.040 Public records officer – Contact information.
- 2.52.050 Availability of public records.
- 2.52.060 Retention of records.
- 2.52.070 Processing of public records requests – General.
- 2.52.080 Obligations of requestors.
- 2.52.090 Exemptions.
- 2.52.100 Costs of providing copies of public records.
- 2.52.110 Review of denials of public records.

2.52.010 Authority and purpose.

A. RCW 42.56.070(1) requires each agency to make available for inspection and copying nonexempt “public records” in accordance with published rules. RCW 42.56.070(2) requires each agency to set forth “for informational purposes” every law, in addition to the Public Records Act, that exempts or prohibits the disclosure of public records held by that agency. In addition, the Act requires that the city adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations to provide full public access to public records, to protect public records from damage or disorganization, and to prevent excessive interference with other essential functions of the city.

B. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the procedures the city of Gig Harbor will follow in order to provide full access to public records. These rules provide information to persons wishing to request access to public records of the city and establish processes for both requestors and city of Gig Harbor staff that are designed to best assist members of the public in obtaining such access.

2.52.020 Scope of coverage of Public Records Act and definitions.

A. The Act applies to an “agency.” “Agency” includes all state agencies and all local agencies. “Local agency” includes every county, city, town, municipal corporation, quasi-municipal corporation, or special purpose district, or any office, department, division, bureau, board, commission, or agency thereof, or other local public agency.

B. Court files and judges’ files are not subject to the Act. These rules do not address access to court records.

C. “Public Record” Defined. “Public record” includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by the city regardless of

physical form or characteristics. This definition does not include records that are not otherwise required to be retained by the city and are held by volunteers who do not serve in an administrative capacity, have not been appointed by the city to a board, commission, or internship, and do not have a supervisory role or delegated city authority.

D. "Writing" Defined. A "writing" means handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, and every other means of recording any form of communication or representation including, but not limited to, letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combination thereof, and all papers, maps, magnetic or paper tapes, photographic films and prints, motion picture, film and video recordings, magnetic or punched cards, discs, drums, diskettes, sound recordings, and other documents including existing data compilations from which information may be obtained or translated.

2.52.030 Nonliability for disclosure.

RCW 42.56.060 provides: "No public agency, public official, public employee, or custodian shall be liable, nor shall a cause of action exist, for any loss or damage based upon the release of a public record if the public agency, public official, public employee, or custodian acted in good faith in attempting to comply" with the Act.

2.52.040 Public records officer – Contact information.

A. Any person wishing to request access to public records of the city or seeking assistance in making such a request should contact the public records officer of the city. The city public records officer is the city clerk of the city of Gig Harbor., located at:

3510 Grandview Street, Gig Harbor, WA 98335

(253) 851-8136

(253) 851-8267 fax

Information is also available at the city of Gig Harbor's website at www.cityofgigharbor.net.

B. The public records officer will oversee compliance with the Act, but another city staff member may process the request. Therefore, these rules will refer to the public records officer "or designee."

C. Public records requests are an essential function of the city clerk's office. The city finds it reasonable to dedicate no more than eight (8) hours per week responding to public records requests. It shall be within the discretion of the public records officer to exceed such limitation if necessary for compliance with law.

⊕D. The city is required by RCW 42.56.040 to publish its public record policies, organizational information and methods for requestors to obtain public records. These

rules will be available in the Gig Harbor Municipal Code and on the city's official website.

2.52.050 Availability of public records.

A. Hours for Inspection of Records. Public records are available for inspection and copying during normal business hours of the city, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding legal holidays. Records must be inspected at the offices of the city.

B. Records Index. The city finds that maintaining an index providing identifying information as to records issued, adopted, or promulgated by the city is unduly burdensome and would interfere with agency operations. The requirement would unduly burden or interfere with the city of Gig Harbor's operations in the following ways: the magnitude and diversity of four city departments, with an even greater number of divisions/subdivisions, has resulted in the creation and use of as many different computer systems. The diversity in programs and information-retaining systems would be extremely difficult, if not physically impossible, to compile into a single index. The performance of the city's overall mission does not allow for the addition to, or the revision or reassignment of, duties for existing personnel so that a current index may be developed and maintained without additionally required staff, and anticipated city revenue does not allow for additional staff members for the sole purpose of creating and maintaining such an all-inclusive index.

C. Organization of Records. The city will maintain its records in a reasonably organized manner. The city will take reasonable actions to protect records from damage and disorganization. A requestor shall not take city records from city premises. A variety of records are available on the city website at www.cityofgigharbor.net. Requestors are encouraged to view the documents available on the website prior to submitting a records request.

D. Making a Request for Public Records.

1. Any person wishing to inspect or copy public records of the city should make the request in writing on the city's request form, or by letter, delivery, or email addressed to the public records officer and including the following information:

- a. Name of requestor;
- b. Mailing address of requestor;
- c. Other contact information, including telephone number and any email address;
- d. Identification of the public records adequate for the public records officer or designee to locate the records; and
- e. The date and time of day of the request.

2. If the requestor wishes to have copies of the records made instead of simply inspecting them, he or she should so indicate and make arrangements to pay for copies of the records or any required deposit and/or postage to mail such records.

The city will assess fees for providing copies of public records pursuant to the fee schedule adopted by resolution.

3. A form is available for use by requestors at the office of the public records officer and on-line at www.cityofgigharbor.net. Oral requests are accepted, but are problematic because an oral request does not memorialize the exact records sought and therefore prevents a requestor or agency from later proving what was included in the request. In addition, a requestor must provide the agency with reasonable notice that the request is for the disclosure of public records, and oral requests, especially to agency staff other than the public records officer or designee, may not provide the agency with the required reasonable notice. Therefore, requestors are encouraged to provide written requests. If the city receives an oral request, the city staff person receiving it should immediately reduce it to writing and then verify in writing with the requestor that it correctly memorializes the request.

4. The city may ask a requestor to prioritize the records he or she is requesting so that the city is able to provide the most important records first. The city is not required to ask for prioritization, and the requestor is not required to provide it.

5. The city cannot require the requestor to disclose the purpose of the request, with two exceptions. First, if the request is for a list of individuals, the city will ask the requestor if he or she intends to use the records for a commercial purpose (a profit-expecting activity). The city's request for public records form includes a statement that the city is not authorized to provide public records consisting of a list of individuals for commercial use (a profit-expecting activity), and there is a blank for the requestor's signature under penalty of perjury. This is to acknowledge that the requestor understands the prohibition on the use of such lists, but the requestor is not required to sign in order to obtain the records.

Second, the city may seek information sufficient to allow it to determine if another statute prohibits or allows disclosure. For example, some statutes allow an agency to disclose a record only to a person having particular qualifications or for particular purposes. In such cases, the city is authorized to require that the requestor provide sufficient information in writing under penalty of perjury to allow the city to reasonably determine if the record is disclosable to the requestor.

2.52.060 Retention of records.

A. The city is not required to retain every record it ever created or used. The state and local records committees approve a general retention schedule for state and local agency records that applies to records that are common to most agencies. Individual agencies seek approval from the state or local records committee for retention schedules that are specific to their agency, or that, because of particular needs of the agency, must be kept longer than provided in the general records retention schedule. The retention schedules for state and local agencies are available at www.secstate.wa.gov/archives/gs.aspx on the Washington Secretary of State's website.

B. The city has a retention policy in which employees save retainable records and delete nonretainable records. The lawful destruction of public records is governed by retention schedules.

C. An agency is prohibited from destroying a public record, even if it is about to be lawfully destroyed under a retention schedule, if a public records request has been made for that record. Additional retention requirements might apply if the records may be relevant to actual or anticipated litigation. The agency is required to retain the record until the record request has been resolved.

2.52.070 Processing of public records requests – General.

A. The public records officer or designee will process requests in the order allowing the most requests to be processed in the most efficient manner.

B. Within five business days of receipt of the request, the public records officer will do one or more of the following:

1. Provide the record;
2. Provide an internet address and link on the city's website to the specific records requested, except that if the requester notifies the city that he or she cannot access the records through the internet, then the city will provide access to copies or allow the requester to view the records using a city computer;
3. Acknowledge that the city has received the request and provide a reasonable estimate of when records will be available;
4. Acknowledge that the city has received the request and ask for clarification for a request that is unclear, and providing, to the greatest extent possible, a reasonable estimate of the time the city will require to process the request; or
5. Deny the request. Denials must be accompanied by a written statement of the specific reasons for denial.

C. Consequences of Failure to Respond. If the city does not respond within five business days of receipt of the request for disclosure, the requestor should consider contacting the public records officer to determine the reason for the failure to respond.

D. Protecting Rights of Others. In the event that the requested records contain information that may affect rights of others and may be exempt from disclosure, the public records officer may, prior to providing the records, give notice to such others whose rights may be affected by the disclosure. Such notice should be given so as to make it possible for those other persons to contact the requestor and ask him or her to revise the request, or, if necessary, seek an order from a court to prevent or limit the disclosure. The notice to the affected persons will include a copy of the request.

E. Records Exempt from Disclosure. Some records are exempt from disclosure, in whole or in part. If the city believes that a record is exempt from disclosure and should be withheld, the public records officer will state the specific exemption and provide a brief explanation of why the record or a portion of the record is being withheld. If only a portion of a record is exempt from disclosure, but the remainder is not exempt, the

public records officer will redact the exempt portions, provide the nonexempt portions, and indicate to the requestor why portions of the record are being redacted, except to the extent otherwise provided by law.

F. Inspection of Records.

1. Consistent with other demands, the city shall promptly provide space to inspect public records. No member of the public may remove a document from the viewing area or disassemble or alter any document. The requestor shall indicate which documents he or she wishes the agency to copy.
2. The requestor must claim or review the assembled records within 30 days of the city's notification to him or her that the records are available for inspection or copying. The city will notify the requestor by telephone, e-mail or in writing of this requirement and inform the requestor that he or she should contact the agency to make arrangements to claim or review the records. If the requestor or a representative of the requestor fails to claim or review the records within the 30-day period or make other arrangements, the city may close the request and re-file the assembled records.

G. Providing Copies of Records. After inspection is complete, the public records officer or designee shall make the requested copies or arrange for copying.

~~H. Providing Records in Installments. When the request is for a large number of records, the public records officer or designee will provide access for inspection and copying in installments, if he or she reasonably determines that it would be practical to provide the records in that way. If, within 30 days, the requestor fails to inspect the entire set of records or one or more of the installments, the public records officer or designee may stop searching for the remaining records and close the request.~~ When a public records request is for a large volume of records, the public records officer may elect to provide records on an installment basis if he or she reasonably determines that it would be practical to provide the records in that way. If a requester does not contact the public records officer to arrange for the review of any installment within thirty (30) days of being notified that the records are available for review, the city may deem the request abandoned, stop fulfilling the remainder of the request, and close the request. The city may fulfill smaller requests received after a large request prior to fulfilling the large request. The public records officer will process requests in the order allowing the most requests to be processed in the most efficient manner.

I. Completion of Inspection. When the inspection of the requested records is complete and all requested copies are provided, the public records officer or designee will indicate that the city has completed a diligent search for the requested records and made any located nonexempt records available for inspection.

J. Closing Withdrawn or Abandoned Request. When the requestor either withdraws the request or fails to fulfill his or her obligations to inspect the records or pay the deposit or final payment for the requested copies, the public records officer will close the request and indicate to the requestor that the city has closed the request.

K. Later Discovered Documents. The city has no obligation to search for records responsive to a closed request. If the city discovers responsive records after a request has been closed, the city should provide the later-discovered records to the requestor.

L. No Duty to Create Records. The city is not obligated to create a new record in order to satisfy a record request.

M. Searching for Records. The city must conduct an objectively reasonable search for responsive records. Such a search usually begins with the public records officers for the city deciding where the records are likely to be and who is likely to know where they are. The records officer should also e-mail staff members selected as most likely to have responsive records. Staff are required to promptly respond to inquiries regarding responsive records from the records officer.

N. Request Log. The city will maintain a log of all public records requests submitted to and processed by the city. The log will include at least the following information: the identity of the requestor, if known; the date the request was received; the text of the original request; a description of the records redacted or withheld and the reasons for redacting or withholding; and the date of the final disposition of the request.

O. Multiple requests by the same requestor. In order to provide the fullest assistance to all records requestors and to prevent excessive interference with other essential functions of the City, if the same requestor (or their representative) has submitted multiple unrelated requests determined to be Large or Complex requests, the public records officer may process the requests one at a time and in the order received, in order to allow the public records officer to also process other requestors' later-received requests. The city shall endeavor to provide all requestors, and their representatives, with equal assistance and attention, to the extent reasonably and feasibly possible.

2.52.080 Obligations of requestors.

A. Reasonable Notice That Request Is for Public Records. A requestor must give an agency reasonable notice that the request is being made pursuant to the Act.

B. Identifiable Record. A requestor must request an "identifiable record" or "class of records" before an agency must respond to it. An "identifiable record" is one that agency staff can reasonably locate. Public records requests are not interrogatories. An agency is not required to conduct legal research for a requestor. When an agency receives a request for records "relating to" or similar request, it should seek clarification of the request from the requestor.

C. "Overbroad" Requests. An agency cannot deny a request for identifiable public records based solely on the basis that the request is overbroad. However, if such a request is not for identifiable records or otherwise is not proper, the request can still be denied. A request for all or substantially all records prepared, owned, used, or retained

by the city is not a valid request for identifiable records. A request for all records regarding a particular topic or containing a particular keyword is a valid request.

D. "Bot" Requests. The city may deny a bot request that is one of multiple requests from the same requestor to the city within a 24-hour period if the city establishes that responding to the multiple requests would cause excessive interference with other essential functions of the city. For purposes of this subsection, "bot request" means a request for public records that the city reasonably believes was automatically generated by a computer program or script.

E. Documenting Compliance. The city may number-stamp or number-label paper records provided to a requestor to document which records were provided. The city may also keep a copy of the numbered records so either the agency or requestor can later determine which records were or were not provided. If memorializing which specific documents were offered for inspection is impractical, the city may document which records were provided for inspection by making an index or list of the files or records made available for inspection.

2.52.090 Exemptions.

The Public Records Act provides that a number of types of documents are exempt from public inspection and copying. In addition, documents are exempt from disclosure if any "other statute" exempts or prohibits disclosure. The city must describe why each withheld record or redacted portion of a record is exempt from disclosure. Requestors should be aware of exemptions, outside the Public Records Act, that restrict the availability of some documents held by the city of Gig Harbor for inspection and copying. The most current list of statutory exemptions and prohibitions from public disclosure adopted by the city is available at www.atg.wa.gov/sunshine-committee#Exemptions www.mrsc.org/publications/PRA06.pdf, and is hereby incorporated herein by reference. ~~At the time the ordinance codified in this chapter was adopted, this list of statutory exemptions was as set forth in Exhibit A, attached to the ordinance codified in this chapter and incorporated herein by this reference.~~ A copy of the most recent list of statutory exemptions will be provided by the city public records officer upon request.

2.52.100 Costs of providing copies of public records.

A. Inspecting Public Records. There is no fee for inspecting public records.

B. Costs for Obtaining Copies of Records.

1. The cost for photocopying, scanning or otherwise producing public records shall be established by fee schedule adopted by city resolution.

2. When providing electronic records, the City's practice is to make the records available using a link to an on-line file sharing folder. Upon written request, the City may consider providing electronic records via an alternative form of media (CD, DVD, flash drive), if such alternative is available to the City. In such instances, the City may charge the requestor the actual cost of the media requested.

23. The city may also charge actual costs of mailing, including the cost of the shipping container.

34. As an alternative to any fees imposed in the city's fee schedule, the city may charge a flat fee of \$2.00 if it reasonably estimates that the total fees otherwise incurred would exceed \$2.00. For a request processed in installments, this flat fee covers the cost of all installments.

C. Customized Service Charge. In addition to the fees set forth in the city's fee schedule, the city may charge a customized service charge if the city reasonably estimates that responding to the request will require special information technology expertise to prepare data compilations or provide customized electronic access services; provided, that the information technology expertise will not provide a service that the city would also use for other purposes. This charge cannot exceed the actual cost to the city of the services, and the city must provide a notice to the requestor before imposing that charge that explains the reasons for the charge, the specific services provided, and the estimated amount of the charge. The notice must also give the requestor an opportunity to modify his or her request to avoid the charge.

D. Estimate of Charges. Before incurring any charges associated with a request, a requestor may ask and the city will provide an estimate of total applicable charges before any charges incurred. The city will provide the requestor an opportunity to revise his or her request in order to avoid or reduce applicable charges.

E. Payment. Payment may be made by cash, check, debit, credit, or money order to the city.

F. Other Statutes. Other statutes govern charges for particular kinds of records including, but not limited to, RCW 46.52.085 (charges for traffic accident reports), RCW 10.97.100 (copies of criminal histories), RCW 3.62.060 and 3.62.065 (charges for certain records of municipal courts).

G. Fee Waiver. The city has the discretion to waive charges associated with requests. For administrative convenience, many agencies waive copying charges for small requests.

H. Deposit. Before beginning to make the copies, the public records officer or designee may require a deposit of up to 10 percent of the estimated costs of producing all the records selected by the requestor, including any copying, scanning, transmission and customized service charge. The public records officer or designee may also require the payment of the remainder of the copying costs before providing all the records, or the payment of the costs of copying an installment before providing that installment. Any unused deposit must be refunded to the requestor. When copying is completed, the city can require the payment of the remainder of the copying charges before providing the records.

2.52.110 Review of denials of public records.

A. Petition for Internal Administrative Review of Denial of Access. Any person who objects to the initial denial or partial denial of a records request may petition in writing (including e-mail) to the public records officer for a review of that decision. The petition shall include a copy of or reasonably identify the written statement by the public records officer ~~or designee~~ denying the request.

B. Consideration of Petition for Review. The public records officer shall promptly provide the petition and any other relevant information to the city attorney to conduct the review. That person will immediately consider the petition and either affirm or reverse the denial within two business days following the city's receipt of the petition, or within such other time as agreed to by the city and the requestor.

C. Judicial Review. Any person may obtain court review of denials of public records requests pursuant to RCW 42.56.550 at the conclusion of two business days after the initial denial regardless of any internal administrative appeal.