Public Records Act – Procedures

The purpose of these rules is to establish the procedures the City of Walla Walla will follow to provide full access to public records. These procedures provide information to persons wishing to access public records of the City of Walla Walla and to City employees to assist members of the public in obtaining such access.

1. Public Records Officer:

The City Clerk has been designated as the City’s public records officer and may be contacted at:

City of Walla Walla
City Hall
15 North 3rd Avenue
Walla Walla WA  99362
(509) 527-4424 – voice
(509) 524-7933 - fax
publicrecords@wallawallawa.gov – e-mail

Due to the special requirements related to the release of criminal history record information (CHRI), requests for law enforcement records should be directed to:

Walla Walla Police Department
54 E. Moore Street
Walla Walla WA  99362
(509) 527-4434 – voice
(509) 524-7990 - fax
wwpdrecords@wallawallawa.gov – e-mail

The public records officer will oversee compliance with the Public Records Act, but another staff member may process the request. Therefore, these procedures may refer to the public records officer or designee. The public records officer will provide the fullest assistance to requestors; ensure that public records are protected from damage or disorganization; and prevent the fulfillment of public records requests from causing excessive interference with essential functions of the City of Walla Walla.

2. Requests for public records:

Requestors must give reasonable notice that a request is for public records. A request using the terms “public records,” “public disclosure,” “FOIA,” or “Freedom of Information Act” (terms commonly used for federal records) is reasonable notice to the City. The requested record must also be clearly identified so the City can locate it.

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A public records request form is available but is not mandatory. The form is available on-line at https://wallawallawa.gov under the “I want to” tab and “Find/Request a public record.” The written request should plainly state that it is a request for public records and include the following information:

1) Name and address of requestor.
2) Other contact information, including telephone number and an e-mail address (if available).
3) Identification of the public records sufficient for the public records officer or designee to reasonably identify and adequately locate the records.
4) The date of the request.
5) Whether the request is to inspect the records or have copies provided (either paper or electronic). (See Section 7 for applicable fees).

City staff receiving any request for public records should immediately forward the request to the public records officer. The request does not need to be made on the City’s form. No email requests shall be made except to the designated email address for the public records officer. Email requests will be deemed received on the date the email is opened and read and not the date the email is received on the City’s email system.

The public records officer, and/or designees, will maintain a log of requests as required by RCW 42.56.

Within five (5) days of receiving the public records request, the public records officer will provide an initial response. This initial response will do one of four things:

1) Provide the record;
2) Acknowledge that the City received the request and provide a reasonable estimate of the time necessary to fully respond;
3) Seek clarification of the request; or
4) Deny the request.

Notice to Third Parties. If a public record contains personal information that identifies an individual or organization other than the subject of the requested public record, the City may notify that individual or organization to allow the third party to seek relief pursuant to RCW 42.56.540. The City may take this into account when providing an estimate for when the records will be available. The City should also review any contracts with third parties that may contain special notice provisions. Nothing in this policy is intended to create any right to such notice.
The City will process non-routine record requests in the order allowing the most requests to be processed in the most efficient manner.

3. Inspection of records:

- After notification of availability, public records will be accessible for inspection and/or copying during the normal business hours of the City as designated in Walla Walla Municipal Code Section 2.45.010. (Currently, 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, of each week, except on legal holidays unless otherwise established by the city manager and confirmed by the city council.)

- The City shall provide space to inspect public records. The public shall not be allowed to inspect the City’s records in cabinets or vaults.

- The public may not remove any documents from the viewing area or disassemble or alter any document. To select a paper record for copying during an inspection, a requestor must flag the page or document by use of a nonpermanent method such as a removable adhesive note.

- A requestor shall indicate which documents he or she wishes the City to copy. Since copying facilities are located in “employee only” areas of City facilities, for security purposes and to avoid unreasonable disruption of operations, the City cannot offer these facilities for public use (except for the public copier at the library). City staff will make the requested copies or arrange for copying and the requestor will be charged in accordance with the City’s fees.

4. Failure to respond to a public records request:

If the City of Walla Walla does not respond in writing within five business days of the receipt of the request for records, the requestor should contact the public records officer to determine the reason for the failure to respond.

If within a thirty-day (30) period after notification of availability by the City, the requestor or a representative of the requestor fails to claim or review the records; fails to pay any required deposit; or fails to make other arrangements, the public records officer may close the request; have the assembled records re-filed; and indicate to the requestor that the request has been closed.

5. Providing records in installments:

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A public records request may cover a large number of records. The public records officer may determine that it would be practical to provide access for inspection and copying in installments. If, within thirty (30) days of being notified of availability, 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.

6. Procedure for review of denials of requests:

Any person objecting to an 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 identify the written statement by the public records officer or designee denying the request.

The public records officer shall give the petition for review of denial and any other relevant information to the Deputy City Manager. The Deputy City Manager will consider the petition and either affirm or reverse the denial within two business days following receipt of the petition, or within such other time as the City of Walla Walla and the requestor mutually agree to.

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

7. Fees:

The fees set forth in this section are default fees set pursuant to RCW 42.56.120. The City finds that calculating the actual cost of providing public records would be unduly burdensome given the limited staff resources and funding to dedicate to a comprehensive study to determine actual copying costs and that conducting such a study would interfere with the City's other essential agency functions.

No fee shall be charged for the inspection of Public Records.

The City may charge one or more of the following fees for copies of public records:

- Fifteen cents per page for photocopies of public records or printed copies of electronic public records when requested by the person requesting records, if the records exceed twenty pages;

- Ten cents per page for any paper documents that are scanned so they can be produced in electronic format, if the records exceed ten pages;

- Five cents per each four electronic files or attachments uploaded to email, cloud-based data storage service, or other means of electronic delivery;

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• Ten cents per gigabyte for the transmission of public records in an electronic format;

• The actual cost of any digital storage media or device provided by the City;

• Cost, including taxes, actually charged by any third-party vendor used to make copies;

• Postage and shipping costs, including the cost of any containers used in shipping;

• Up to a two dollar flat fee as an alternative to other authorized fees when the City reasonably estimates and documents that the costs allowed are clearly equal to or more than two dollars; and

• A customized service charge if the City estimates that the request would require the use of information technology expertise to prepare data compilations or provide customized electronic access services when such compilations or customized access services are not used for any other City purposes. The customized service charge may reimburse the City up to the actual cost of providing the services.

8. Disclaimer of Liability

Neither the City nor any officer, employee, official or custodian shall be liable, nor shall a cause of action exist, for any loss or damage based upon a release of Public Records if the person releasing the records acted in good faith in attempting to comply with this policy.

This policy is not intended to expand or restrict the rights of disclosure or privacy as they exist under state and federal law. Despite the use of any mandatory terms such as “shall,” nothing in this policy is intended to impose mandatory duties on the City beyond those imposed by state and federal law.

9. Exemptions:

The Public Records Act provides that a number of types of documents are exempt from public inspection and copying. These exemptions are listed in Chapter 42.56 RCW, including the prohibition of disclosing lists of individuals for commercial purposes. In addition, documents are exempt from disclosure if any “other statute” exempts or prohibits disclosure. The following are exemptions, outside the Public Records Act, that restrict the availability of some documents held by the City of Walla Walla.

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**Washington State Statutes**

RCW 2.64.111 Judicial conduct commission investigations of judges and initial proceedings

RCW 4.24.550 Information on sex offenders

RCW 4.24.601 and .611 Trade secrets and confidential research, development or commercial information re products or business methods

RCW 5.60.060 Privileged communications

RCW 5.60.070; RCW 7.07.070 Mediation records

RCW 7.68.140 Victims’ compensation claims

RCW 7.69A.030(4) Name, address and photograph of child victim or child witness

RCW 7.69A.050 Child victims and witnesses of certain crimes – protection of address

RCW 7.75.050 Records of Dispute Resolution Centers

RCW 9.02.100 Reproductive privacy

RCW 9.41.097(2) Mental health information re persons buying pistols or applying for CPLs

RCW 9.41.129 Concealed pistol license applications

RCW 9.73.230 Name of confidential informants in written report on wire tapping

RCW 9.51.050 Disclosing transaction of grand jury

RCW 9.51.060 Disclosure of grand jury deposition

RCW 9.73.090(1)(c) Prohibition on disclosure of law enforcement dash cam videos until final disposition of litigation

RCW 9A.44.138 Offender registration information given to high school or institution of higher education re an employee or student

RCW 9A.82.170 Financial institution records re criminal profiteering act

RCW 10.27.090 Grand jury testimony/evidence

RCW 10.27.160 Grand jury reports – release to public only by judicial order

RCW 10.52.100 Records identifying child victims of sexual assault

RCW 10.77.205 Information re victims, next of kin, or witnesses requesting notice of release of person found not guilty of a sex, violent, or felony harassment offense by reason of criminal insanity and the notice itself

RCW 10.52.100 Records identifying child victim of sexual assault

RCW 10.77.210 Records of persons committed for criminal insanity

RCW 10.97.040 Criminal history information released must include disposition, with some exceptions

RCW 10.97.050 Conviction and criminal history information

RCW 10.97.060 Deletion of certain criminal history record information, conditions

RCW 10.97.070 Disclosure of identity of suspect to victim

RCW 10.97.080 Inspection of criminal record by subject

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connection with an alternative public works transaction if data identified and reasons stated in writing.

RCW 39.10.470(3) Alternative public works – proposals submitted by design-build finalists until notification of highest scoring finalist is made.

RCW 42.23.070(4) Municipal officer disclosure of confidential information prohibited.

RCW 42.41.030(7) Identity of local government whistleblower.

RCW 42.41.045 Non-disclosure of protected information (whistleblower).

RCW 43.43.762 Contents of statewide criminal street gang database.

RCW 46.52.065 State toxicologist records relating to analyses of blood samples.

RCW 46.52.080 Traffic accident reports – confidentiality.

RCW 46.52.083 Traffic accident reports – available to interested parties.

RCW 46.52.120 Traffic crimes and infractions – confidential use by police and courts.

RCW 46.52.130(2) Abstract of driving record – limited disclosure.

RCW 48.62.101 Local government insurance/risk management liability reserve funds established to settle claims.

RCW 50.13.060 Access to employment security records by local government agencies.

RCW 50.13.100 Disclosure of confidential employment security records allowed if identifying information deleted or with consent.

RCW 51.28.070 Worker’s compensation records confidential–limited disclosure.

RCW 51.36.060 Physician information on injured workers.

RCW 60.70.040 No duty to disclose record of common law lien.

RCW 68.50.105 Autopsy reports – confidential – limited disclosure.

RCW 68.50.320 Dental identification records – available to law enforcement agencies.

Ch. 70.02 RCW Medical records – access and disclosure – entire chapter (information from HC providers).

RCW 70.05.170 Child mortality reviews by local health departments.

RCW 70.24.022 Public health agency information regarding sexually transmitted disease investigations – confidential.

RCW 70.24.024 Transcripts and records of hearings regarding sexually transmitted diseases.

RCW 70.28.020 Local health department TB records–confidential.

RCW 70.41.200 Hospital quality improvement committee records and accreditation reports.

RCW 70.48.100 Jail records and booking photos.

RCW 70.58.055 Birth certificates – certain information confidential.
RCW 70.58.104  Vital records, research confidentiality safeguards
RCW 70.94.205  Washington Clean Air Act – confidentiality of data.
RCW 70.96A.150  Registration and other records of alcohol and drug abuse treatment programs
RCW 70.123.075  Client records of domestic violence programs
RCW 70.125.065  Records of community sexual assault program and underserved populations provider in discovery
RCW 71.05.425  Notice of release or transfer of committed person after offense dismissal
RCW 71.05.445  Release of mental health information to Dept. of Corrections
RCW 71.05.620  Access to court records related to mental health cases under chapter 71.05 RCW
RCW 71.24.035(5)(g)  Mental health information system – state, county and regional support networks – confidentiality of client records
RCW 71.34.335  Mental health treatment of minors – records confidential
RCW 71A.14.070  Records regarding developmental disability–confidentiality
RCW 72.09.345  Notice to public about sex offenders – department of corrections access to information
RCW 72.09.585  Disclosure of inmate records to local agencies – confidentiality
RCW 73.04.030  Veterans discharge papers exemption (see related RCW 42.56.440)
RCW 74.04.060  Applicants and recipients of public assistance
RCW 74.04.520  Food stamp program confidentiality
RCW 74.13.075(5)  Juvenile’s status as a sexually aggressive youth and related info
RCW 74.13.280  Children in out-of-home placements – confidentiality
RCW 74.20.280  Child support enforcement – local agency cooperation, information
RCW 74.34.095  Abuse of vulnerable adults - confidentiality of investigations and reports
RCW 82.32.330  Disclosure of tax information
RCW 84.36.389  Confidential income data in property tax records held by assessor
RCW 84.40.020  Confidential income data supplied to assessor regarding real property

Selected Federal Confidentiality Statutes and Rules
18 USC § 2721 - 2725  Driver and License Plate Information
20 USC § 1232g  Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
23 USC § 409  Evidence of certain accident reports
42 USC 290dd-2  Confidentiality of Substance Abuse Records

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42 USC 654(26) State Plans for Child Support
42 USC 671(a)(8) State Plans for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance
42 USC 1396a(7) State Plans for Medical Assistance
7 CFR 272.1(c) Food Stamp Applicants and Recipients
34 CFR 361.38 State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs
42 CFR 431.300 - 307 Safeguarding Information on Applicants and Recipients of Medical Assistance
42 CFR 483.420 Client Protections for Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded
42 CFR 5106a Grants to States for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Treatment Programs
45CFR 160-164 HIPAA Privacy Rule
46CFR 40.321 USCG regulations regarding confidentiality