CITY OF CHENEY

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

It is the policy of the City of Cheney, (the “City”) to release records of the City in compliance with the Public Records Act (the “Act”) and any other applicable provisions of federal or state law.

I. PURPOSE

The City is required by the Public Records Act (“PRA”), Chapter 42.56 RCW, to adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations to provide full public access to public records. This policy complies with the requirements of the PRA by providing for straight-forward, predictable practices for responding to and fulfilling requests for disclosure of public records in a manner consistent with the PRA.

This policy includes both statutory requirements and best practices. Except where these provisions are mandated by statute, any duties identified in this policy are discretionary and advisory only and shall not impose any affirmative duty on the City. The City reserves the right to apply, interpret, modify, or suspend this policy at any time.

This policy shall be available at the City Clerk’s Office and posted on the City’s Website.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Incorporation of Definitions

This policy incorporates the definitions in RCW 42.56.010 and any relevant definitions in RCW 42.17A.005.

B. Additional Definitions

1. “Act” refers to the Public Records Act, at Chapter 42.56 RCW.

2. “Bot Request” means a request for public records that the City reasonably believes was automatically generated by a computer program or script.

3. “City” refers to the City of Cheney.

4. “City Clerk’s Office” is defined in Section II.C of this Policy.

5. “Exemption” refers to any statute that allows or requires the City to withhold information or records in response to a PRA request.

6. “Policy” refers to this policy for the Public Records Act.
7. “Public Record” means 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. Records created or received by employees using privately owned devices only qualify as public records if the employee was acting within the scope of employment when the record was created or received, or when the record is subsequently used for a City purpose.

8. “Public Records Officer” or PRO is the person identified in Section III.A.1 of this Policy.

9. “PRA Request” means a request for Public Records made to the City pursuant to the Act.

10. “Requestor” means the person or entity that has made a Records Request to the City.

11. “Withholding” means non-disclosure of exempt records, either all or in part.

C. Organization of the City

The City Clerk’s Office is located at:

Cheney City Hall
609 2nd Street
Cheney, WA 99004

All Record Requests shall be inspected at the City Clerk’s Office. The City Clerk’s Office is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except legal holidays.

The City consists of the following departments: Finance/City Clerk, Administration/Mayor’s Office, Municipal Court, Police, Fire, Parks & Recreation, Public Works, and Light. Each department is supervised by a director or manager. The location of departments is available through the City Clerk’s Office or through the City’s website.

The Mayor is the chief administrative officer with governance through a seven member City Council.

III. GUIDELINES

A. Public Records Request

1. Public Records Officer.

The Deputy City Clerk shall serve as the Public Records Officer of the City of Cheney. All requests must be directed to the Public Records Officer. The Public Records Officer may be contacted in person at the City Clerk’s Office, via first class mail addressed to the Public Records Officer at the City Clerk’s Office, by phone at (509) 498-9209, or via email at publicrecords@cityofcheney.org.
The Public Records Officer shall:

(a) Be responsible for implementing the City’s process regarding disclosure of public records;

(b) Serve as the principal contact point with any Requestor who has made a Records Request to the City, unless the Public Records Officer has delegated these responsibilities to a specific staff member;

(c) Coordinate City staff in this regard, generally ensuring the compliance of the staff with public records disclosure requirements;

(d) Make the final decision in cooperation with the City Attorney regarding disclosure and application of exemptions;

(e) Maintain the agency’s indices, if any;

(f) Maintain a log of public records requests; and

(g) Undergo training required of Public Records Officers by Washington State law.

2. How to Make a PRA Request.

Public records may be inspected or copies of public records may be obtained by the public at the City Clerk’s Office upon compliance with the following procedures:

(a) All requests must be directed to the Public Records Officer. The City encourages that all requests be made in writing using the City’s Public Records Request form, which is available at the City Clerk’s Office and on the City’s website. Requests may be mailed, emailed, submitted through the City’s website using the online request form, or delivered in person to the City Clerk’s Office. In-person requests must be made during the City Clerk’s Office hours. The request should include the following information:

(i) An indication that the request is being made for access to a public record pursuant to the Public Records Act;

(ii) The requestor’s name, address, and convenient means of contact, such as email address, phone number, etc.;

(iii) The date of the request;

(iv) A description of the public record requested that includes sufficient details to allow the City to identify responsive records;
(v) Whether the Requestor wants to inspect records or wants copies. If the requestor wants copies, the requestor should indicate if they want the copies mailed, emailed, or if they want to pick them up;

(vi) Signature of the Requestor.

(b) The Washington Courts have recognized that oral request for public records can be problematic and therefore Requestors are strongly encouraged to make written requests using the City’s request form. When a Records Request is made orally, the Public Records Officer should confirm the request in writing in its initial response. Unless the requestor further clarifies the request within five (5) business days, the City will use the written confirmation to define the scope of the request. Any oral request must be made during the City Clerk’s Office hours.

(c) It is the requestor’s obligation to provide the City with fair notice that a Public Records Act request has been made. When a requestor does not use the City’s official request form, or when a requestor submits a request as part of other documents provided to the City for reasons other than making a PRA request, the requestor may not be providing fair notice to the City. To ensure fair notice is provided, requestors are encouraged to use the official forms, make requests through the Public Records Officer, and/or take other steps to clearly identify their request. For example, when a request is submitted with other documents not related to disclosure of public records, it shall be the responsibility of the requestor to provide reasonable notice that a public records request is included. This notice may be in the form of an entry on a cover or transmittal sheet.

B. Procedure for Response to Request

1. Initial Five-Day Response. The City shall respond promptly to PRA requests. Within five (5) business days of receiving a Records Request, the City shall acknowledge receipt of the request and take one or more of the following actions:

(a) Provide the records or provide notice that the records are available. If the record requested is available on the City’s website, the response may include a specific link to the document;

(b) Seek clarification or refinement of the request if needed to identify the record requested. When clarification or refinement is sought, the City will provide, to the greatest extent possible, a reasonable estimate of the time the City will require to respond to the request if it is not clarified;

(c) Indicate that the City does not have any responsive records;

(d) Indicate that any responsive records are exempt from disclosure; or

(e) Provide a reasonable estimate of when the request can be fulfilled. For large requests that will be filled in installments, the response will also indicate when the first installment will be made. When providing a reasonable estimate of time required to fulfill a public records request, the
Public Records Officer may take into account the time required to refine or clarify a request, locate or retrieve requested records, redact or withhold exempt records and create associated documentation, consult with appropriate staff or the City Attorney regarding potential exemptions, and notify third parties or other agencies of requests for records of a sensitive nature consistent with the provisions of RCW 42.56.540.

2. Large Requests. When receiving a request that appears to be broad in nature, the PRO may request clarification from the requestor to ensure that the appropriate records are identified and to determine if the request can be narrowed. Clarification shall focus on information needed to identify responsive records. Any information provided about the purpose of the request shall not be used as a basis for denying the request.

When appropriate, as part of the clarification process, the PRO may work with the requestor to find ways to narrow the request. When a requestor agrees to narrow a request, nothing prevents the requestor from later expanding the request back to its original scope.

When a Records Request is for a large volume of records, the City may elect to provide records on an installment basis. If a Requestor does not contact the Public Records Officer within thirty (30) days to arrange for the review of the first installment, the City may deem the request abandoned and stop fulfilling the remainder of the request.

3. Requests for “All Records.” A public records request must be for identifiable records. A request for all or substantially all records is not a valid request for identifiable records. A request for all records regarding a particular topic, person, or containing a specific keyword is a valid request.

4. Requests for List of Names. The PRA prohibits the City from producing a list of names to a requestor who intends to use the list for commercial purposes. When a requestor requests a list of names, the requestor should explain the intended use of the list and will be asked to sign a declaration providing that the list will not be used for commercial purposes. The Public Records Officer may do research to confirm that the request is not for commercial purposes.

5. Bot Requests. The City may deny a bot request if it is established that responding to the request would cause excessive interference with other essential functions.

6. 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.

7. Creating Records. A PRA request only applies to records that exist at the time of the request. The PRA does not apply to requests for information or require the City to create a new record. Requestors cannot make “standing” PRA requests.
8. **Failure to Respond.** If the City does not respond in writing within five (5) business days of receipt of the request for disclosure, the person seeking disclosure shall be entitled to:

(a) Consider the request denied; or

(b) Petition the Public Records Officer.

C. **City Actions After a Request is Received**

1. **Order of Response.** Fulfillment of requests shall be processed in the order that provides the timeliest response. Requests may be fulfilled in the order of receipt as long as easily fulfilled requests are not postponed behind larger or more complicated requests strictly because they were received later.

2. **Locating Responsive Records.** After receiving a request, the PRO shall determine what departments might have responsive records and whether it will be necessary to conduct electronic searches for records. The PRO will then coordinate with the appropriate Department Heads and other City staff as needed. City staff and officials will be prompt in searching for responsive records and providing them to the PRO in accordance with the timeline established by the PRO. If City employees or officials are using home computers, personal devices, or personal accounts to conduct City business, those devices and accounts also need to be searched by the employees or officials who are using them when those devices and accounts may have responsive records. If the City’s contractors performing City work have responsive public records as a consequence of the contract, they should also be notified of the records request. If Department Heads or other staff cannot provide the records by the date established by the PRO, a reasonable estimate of how long it will take to provide the records must be provided.

3. **Identifying Potentially Exempt Records.** The Public Records Officer is responsible for identifying records that are potentially exempt or contain potentially exempt information for all departments except the Police Department. The Director of Communications is responsible for identifying exemptions in the Police Department. The Public Records Officer and Director of Communications may work with the City Attorney to determine if any exemption applies.

D. **Exemptions**

1. **Exemptions.** The Public Records Act and other statutes exempt from or prohibit disclosure of certain public records. It is the policy of the City to provide prompt and helpful access to all public records in the City’s custody that state statutes do not exempt or prohibit from disclosure. Requested records may only be withheld or redacted consistent with statutory requirements, which shall be documented for the requestor in accordance with the requirements of RCW 42.56.210.

Some public records that are otherwise subject to disclosure may contain specific content that is exempt from disclosure. The presence of exempt information does not necessarily exempt an entire record from disclosure. Exempt portions of an otherwise disclosable record shall be
redacted prior to inspection or copying and such redactions shall be documented. The requestor shall be notified of the redaction in accordance with the requirements of RCW 42.56.210.

Appendix A contains a list of statutory exemptions and prohibitions that are not included in the Public Records Act. In addition, the following are summaries of common exemptions relied upon by the City. The City reserves the right to assert any exemptions permitted by law when the City determines non-disclosure serves the public interest and is not limited to the exemptions listed in Appendix A or below:

(a) Valuable formulae, designs, drawings, computer source code or object code, and research data obtained by any agency within five (5) years of the request for disclosure when disclosure would produce private gain and public loss;

(b) Personal information in files maintained for councilmembers and City employees to the extent that disclosure would violate their right to privacy, including but not limited to addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, driver’s license numbers, voluntary deductions, marriage status, information about dependents, and any garnishment deductions;

(c) Preliminary drafts, recommendations, and intra-agency memoranda in which opinions are expressed or policies formulated or recommended, except that a specific record shall not be exempt when publicly cited by the City in connection with any City action;

(d) All applications for public employment, including the names of applicants, resumes, and other related materials submitted with respect to an applicant;

(e) Medical records;

(f) Records in investigation files, including police and code enforcement investigations, to the extent that nondisclosure is essential for effective law enforcement or for the protection of any person’s right to privacy;

(g) Identifying information for victims or witnesses of crimes under certain circumstances;

(h) Records created in anticipation of litigation;

(i) Records reflecting communications between attorneys and City employees where legal advice is sought or received;

(j) Addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of utility customers; or

(k) Any record which is exempt from disclosure under state or federal law.

2. Withholding Logs and Redaction Logs. When records are withheld or redacted, the requestor shall be informed in writing the statutory citation for the exemption and a brief explanation of how the exemption applies. For withheld records, the City will also provide
basic identifying information for each withheld record including the type of record, the date the record was created, the author, and recipients, if any.

E. Charges for Copying Public Records

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.

1. Copies. The City will charge one or more of the following charges for copies:

   (a) 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 ten pages;

   (b) 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;

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

   (d) Ten cents per gigabyte for the transmission of public records in an electronic format;

   (e) The actual cost of any digital storage media or device provided by the City;

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

   (g) Postage and shipping costs, including the cost of any containers used in shipping;

   (h) 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

   (i) 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.
The Public Records Officer may elect to waive these fees. Fees will be waived when the expense of billing exceeds the cost of copying and postage. Fees will also be waived when the request is made by a federal, state, or local agency.

2. **Deposits.** Before copying any record, the City may require a deposit up to 10% of the estimated costs. When records are being produced on an installment basis, the City may charge for each installment. The decision not to request a deposit shall not serve to waive the City’s right to request a deposit for future requests. If an installment is not claimed and paid for within thirty (30) days of having been notified the records are available or if the Requestor has not contacted the PRO within this thirty (30) day period to make arrangements to pay for the records outside of this thirty (30) day period, the City is not obligated to fulfill the balance of the Records Request.

3. **Copies of Electronic Records.** Records available in electronic format that do not require redaction may be provided in native format unless the requestor specifically asks that they be provided in paper or other form. Electronic records that require redaction usually cannot be produced in a native format and will be converted to paper or PDF. When requested and deemed feasible, electronic records may be converted from one format to another provided such conversion is not unduly burdensome.

**F. Inspection of Records**

1. **Notice.** Once the Public Records Officer has collected all responsive records (or the first installment if the records are being produced on an installment basis), has reviewed the responsive records to remove exempt records, and has prepared an exemption log, the Public Records Officer shall notify the Requestor that the records are available.

2. **Response by Requestor.** If the Requestor does not contact the Public Records Officer to arrange for payment of the copies or for review of the records within thirty (30) days after the date of the notice, the City may consider the Records Request abandoned, unless the Requestor seeks an additional amount of time within thirty (30) days to review the records.

3. **Protection of Records.** In order for Public Records to be protected from damage or disorganization as required by the Act, the following procedures and practices are hereby instituted:

   (a) No Public Records shall be removed from the City Clerk’s Office without the Public Records Officer’s permission;

   (b) Inspection of any Public Records shall be conducted in the presence of the Public Records Officer or designated staff;

   (c) No public record may be marked, defaced, torn, damaged, destroyed, unreasonably disorganized or removed from its proper location or order by a member of the public;

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Public records maintained in a file jacket or binders, or in chronological order, may not be dismantled except for the purpose of copying, and then only by City staff; and

Public records of the City may be copied only on the copying machines of the City unless other arrangements are made by the Public Records Officer.

4. **Loss of Right to Inspect.** Inspection shall be denied and the records withdrawn by the Public Records Officer if the Requestor, when reviewing records, acts in a manner which will damage or substantially disorganize the records or interfere excessively with other essential functions of the City.

5. **Closing the File.** Once all copies of requested records have been provided to the Requestor, the Requestor has reviewed the requested records, or thirty (30) days have passed since the Requestor was notified that the records were available and the Requestor has failed to contact the Public Records Officer to arrange for the review of those records or for payment for copies, the Public Records Officer shall treat the request as closed.

G. **Administrative Review of Denial.** A Requestor may ask for review of a decision to withhold or redact exempt records by submitting a written petition to the Public Records Officer that includes a copy of the redaction or exemption log or detailed description of the City’s statement of withholding. The request for review and any relevant information shall be forwarded immediately to the City Attorney, who shall consider the petition and either reverse or affirm the denial within two days of the City’s receipt of the petition. The City and the Requestor may mutually agree to a longer period of time for consideration of a petition for review. If the withholding or redaction is affirmed, the decision shall be considered the City’s final action for the purposes of judicial review. If the decision to withhold or redact is reversed, the Public Records Officer shall proceed to make the subject records available to the requestor for inspection in accordance with the provisions of this policy and procedure.

H. **Index of Public Records**

For the reasons stated in Resolution D-960, incorporated herein by reference, the City finds that it would be unduly burdensome and would interfere with City operations to maintain an index of records. The City will make available for public disclosure all indices which may at a future time be developed for City use.

I. **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.
Appendix A

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
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
RCW 10.97.130  Information about victims of sexual assault under age eighteen
RCW 10.101.020(3)  Information given by an accused regarding determination for indigent defense
RCW 13.34.115  Court dependency proceedings
RCW 13.40.217  Juveniles adjudicated of sex offenses – release of information
RCW 13.50.010  Maintenance of and access to juvenile records
RCW 13.50.050  Juvenile offender records
RCW 13.50.100  Juvenile/children records not relating to offenses
RCW 13.60.020  Missing children or endangered person information
RCW 18.04.405  Confidentiality of information gained by CPA
RCW 18.19.060  Notification to clients by counselors
RCW 18.19.180  Confidential communications with counselors
RCW 19.215.020  Destruction of personal health and financial information
RCW 19.34.240(3)  Private digital signature keys
RCW 19.215.030  Compliance with federal rules
RCW 26.04.175  Name and address of domestic violence victim in marriage records
RCW 26.12.170  Reports of child abuse/neglect with courts
RCW 26.23.050  Child support orders
RCW 26.23.120  Child support records
RCW 26.26.041  Uniform Parentage Act – protection of participants
RCW 26.26.450  Confidentiality of genetic testing
RCW 26.33.330  Sealed court adoption records
RCW 26.33.340  Agency adoption records
RCW 26.33.343  Access to adoption records by confidential intermediary
RCW 26.33.380  Adoption – identity of birth parents confidential
RCW 26.44.010  Privacy of reports on child abuse and
RCW 26.44.031
Information related to reports of child abuse or neglect

RCW 26.44.125
Reports, reviews and hearings related to a review of abuse finding

RCW 27.53.070
Records identifying the location of archaeological sites

RCW 29A.08.720
Voter registration records – place of registration and any decision not to register to vote confidential

RCW 29A.08.710
Voter registration records – certain information exempt

RCW 35.102.145
Municipal business and occupation tax – local ordinance can protect return or tax information

RCW 36.28A.060(8)
Tactical and intelligence information provided to WASPC

RCW 39.10.470(2)
Alternative public works - trade secrets or other proprietary information submitted by bidder in 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
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