

Benzonia Public Library Policy Manual

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Procedures and Guidelines

A. Appointment of FOIA Coordinator.

In accordance with section 6 of the FOIA, MCL 15.236, Benzonia Public Library has appointed the Library Director as the Library's FOIA Coordinator and the President of the Library Board as alternate FOIA Coordinator.

The FOIA Coordinator shall report action taken on FOIA requests at the next scheduled meeting of the Benzonia Library Board.

B. Submission of FOIA Request.

FOIA requests to Benzonia Public Library can be sent by email or mail to:

Email: benzonialibrary@gmail.com

Benzonia Public Library

Attn: FOIA Coordinator

P.O. Box 445

Benzonia, MI 49616-0445

Requests should include a name, phone, fax number (optional), and mailing address.

C. Immediately Forward FOIA Request.

Any employee of the Library who receives a written request for a public record must immediately forward that request to the FOIA Coordinator. If a Library employee receives an emailed request for a public record that is delivered to a spam or junk-mail folder, the employee must record the date and time the written request is delivered to the spam or junk-mail folder and date and time the employee first becomes aware of the written request. The employee must forward those dates and times to the FOIA Coordinator with the text of the request.

D. Request Response Time.

The Library must respond to FOIA requests within 5 business days after receipt of the request. The Library may extend the time for responding by an additional 10 business days by notifying the requesting person in writing of the reason for the extension and the new due date. [MCL 15.235(2) (d) and (6)]. Due to the short statutory time period within which the Library must issue a written notice in response to the FOIA request, it is imperative that there be no delay in complying with the Library procedures and guidelines.

Written requests made by fax, electronic mail or other electronic transmission are not considered to be received by the FOIA Coordinator until 1 business day after the electronic transmission is made.

E. Response to a FOIA Request.

Only the Library's FOIA Coordinator or Alternate FOIA Coordinator will respond to FOIA requests. The Library will provide copies of these procedures and guidelines and a summary of these procedures and guidelines with each written response, or provide a link to an online version of these documents. If a request is denied, in full or in part, the Library will provide the requester with an explanation of the basis of the denial under the FOIA, and give notice to the requester of his or her remedial rights. [MCL 15.235(4)]

F. Assessment of Fees for a FOIA Request.

The FOIA permits the Library to charge a fee for the search, retrieval, examination, review, and separation and deletion of exempt from nonexempt material, but only if the failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the Library because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the Library specifically identifies the nature of these unreasonably high costs. [MCL 15.234(1) and (3)]

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1. Fees will be uniform and not dependent upon the identity of the requesting person.
2. Fees will be itemized using the attached detailed itemization form and will include:
 - A. Labor costs for the search, location, and examination of public records will be calculated using the hourly wage of the Library's lowest paid employee capable of conducting the search, location, and examination, whether or not that employee is available or actually performs the labor. Such labor costs shall be estimated and charged in increments of 15 minutes with all partial increments rounded down. The hourly wage will be based on the Library's payroll records for the applicable fiscal year. Labor costs shall also include up to 50% of the hourly wage to partially cover the cost of fringe benefits, not to exceed the actual cost of fringe benefits.
 - B. Labor costs for the review of public records and separation and deletion of exempt from nonexempt material will be calculated using the hourly wage of the Library's lowest paid employee capable of conducting the review and separation and deletion of exempt from nonexempt material, whether or not that employee is available or actually performs the labor. Such labor costs shall be estimated and charged in increments of 15 minutes with all partial increments rounded down. The hourly wage will be based on the Library's payroll records for the applicable fiscal year. Labor costs shall also include up to 50% of the hourly wage to partially cover the cost of fringe benefits, not to exceed the actual cost of fringe benefits.
 - C. Non-paper physical media costs will be calculated using the actual and most reasonably economical cost of computer discs, flash drives, and other digital and similar media provided by the Library.
 - D. Duplication and publication costs will be calculated using the actual total incremental cost of necessary duplication or publication of a public record, not including labor. The actual and incremental cost, calculated per sheet, shall be charged and will not exceed 10 cents per sheet of paper for letter or legal size paper. The Library shall use the most economical means available for making copies, including the use of double-sided printing, if cost-saving and available. The Library will not charge a fee for duplication costs of less than \$1.00.
 - E. Labor costs for the duplication or publication of public records, including making paper copies, making digital copies, or transferring digital public records to be produced on non-paper physical media or through electronic means, will be calculated using the hourly wage of the Library's lowest paid employee capable of duplicating or publishing the public records, whether or not that employee is available or actually performs the labor. Such labor costs shall be estimated and charged in increments of 15 minutes with all partial increments rounded down. The hourly wage will be based on the Library's payroll records for the applicable fiscal year. Labor costs shall also include up to 50% of the hourly wage to partially cover the cost of fringe benefits, not to exceed the actual cost of fringe benefits.
 - F. Actual costs of mailing using a reasonably economical and justifiable manner.
3. No Library employee shall agree to work overtime or include overtime wages in the labor costs described in these procedures and guidelines.
4. If a requester submits an affidavit of indigency, the first \$20.00 of a fee will be waived. A requesting person must include a statement that the request is not being made in conjunction with outside parties in exchange for payment or other remuneration. Other than \$20.00 for cases of indigency, no Library employee shall waive a fee or any part of a fee without authorization from the FOIA Coordinator.
5. Labor costs for monitoring an inspection of original records will be calculated using the hourly wage of the Library's lowest paid employee capable of monitoring the inspection. Labor

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costs for monitoring an inspection will not be charged for the first hour. The hourly wage will be based on the Library's payroll records for the applicable fiscal year. Note: Section 3(3) of the FOIA, MCL 15.233(3), provides, in pertinent part, that "[a] public body shall protect public records from loss, unauthorized alteration, mutilation, or destruction."

6. If a statute authorizes the sale or production of public records to the public for a specified fee or if a fee for production of public records is otherwise set by statute, the Library will charge the statutory fee in lieu of a fee calculated using the guidelines set forth above.

7. The Library will not charge a fee for the search, retrieval, examination, review, and separation and deletion of exempt from nonexempt material that will take less than one hour. If the search, retrieval, examination, review, and separation and deletion of exempt from nonexempt material will take more than one hour, a fee will be charged in accordance with this procedure pursuant to section 4 of the FOIA, MCL 15.234. The hourly wage will be based on the Library's payroll records for the applicable fiscal year.

8. If the FOIA Coordinator knows or has reason to know that all or a part of the requested information is available on the Library's website, the Library shall notify the requestor in its written response and shall include the website address in that response. The FOIA Coordinator shall separate the requested public records available on the website from those that are not available, and shall inform the requestor of the additional charge to receive copies of what is not available on the website.

G. Deposit Requirements.

If the Library estimates a fee to process a FOIA request greater than \$50.00, the Library will require a good-faith deposit from the requestor before providing the public records to the requestor. The deposit shall not exceed 1/2 of the total estimated fee. Any written notice containing a notice of a deposit shall also contain a best efforts estimate by the Library regarding the time frame after a deposit is received that it will take the Library to provide the public records to the requestor. The time frame estimate is not binding upon the Library, but the Library shall provide the estimate in good faith and strive to be reasonably accurate and to provide the public records in a manner based on this State's public policy under section 1 of the FOIA, MCL 15.231, and the nature of the request in the particular instance.

If the requestor has made a previous request under FOIA for which the Library has not been paid in full the total amount for copies of records requested, the Library may require, under conditions set forth in MCL 15.234(11), a deposit of up to 100% of the estimated fee before it begins a full public record search for any subsequent written request from that individual.

H. Appeals of Fees and Disclosure Determinations.

If the Library charges what the requestor believes to be an excessive fee or denies all or part of a request, the requestor may submit to the Benzonia Public Library Board, as the governing body of the Library, a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the basis for which the fee should be reduced or the nondisclosure determination should be reversed. The Library Board shall designate the FOIA Coordinator to receive the written appeal and to immediately notify the president of the Library Board of its receipt.

I. Review of Fees and Disclosure Determinations

Under section 10(3) of the FOIA, MCL 15.240(3), the Library Board is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Library Board following submission of the written appeal. Should the Library Board decide to consult with the Library's legal counsel on the appeal, it must comply with the time periods set forth in the FOIA

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for written responses as well as the provisions of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 *et seq.*

J. Further Appeals Concerning Fee Reductions or Disclosure Determinations

A requestor may, within 180 days after the Library's final determination to deny a request, commence a civil action in the circuit court to compel disclosure. Under section 10(4) of the FOIA, MCL 15.240(4), the "circuit court of the county in which the public record or an office of the public body is located has venue over the action." Actions involving fee reductions must be filed within 45 days after receiving the notice of a required fee or the determination of an appeal to the Library Board.

Adopted: August 12, 2015