

Right-to-Know Policy

Open Records Officer

The Township hereby designates Jean Tanner, Executive Assistant as the Township Open Records Officer.

The Open Records Officer may be reached at 100 Municipal Drive, Newtown, PA 18940, (O) (215) 968-2800 x. 233, (Fax) (215) 968-5368, (E-mail) ljt@twp.newtown.pa.us

General

All documents deemed public records shall be available for inspection, retrieval, and duplication at the Municipal Building during established business hours 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with the exception of weekends and holidays.

Requests

Requests shall be made in writing to the Township Open Records Officer on a form provided by the Township. (See attached form)

Fees

Paper copies shall be .25 cents per page per side. The certification of a record is \$1 per record. Specialized documents including, but not limited to, blue prints, color copies, and non-standard sized documents shall charged the actual cost of production. If mailing is requested, the cost of postage will be charged. The Township shall require prepayment if the total fees are estimated to exceed \$100.

Response

The Township shall make a good-faith effort to provide the requested public record(s) as promptly as possible. The Open Records Officer shall cooperate with those requesting records to review and/or duplicate original Township documents while taking reasonable measures to protect Township documents from the possibility of theft, damage, and/or modification.

The Open Records Officer shall review all written requests for access to public records. As soon as possible, but no later than five business days after receiving a written request to access public records, the Open Records Officer shall respond to such requests in writing consistent with Act 3 of 2008, the Right-to-Know Law.

If access to a record is denied, the response shall include a reason for denial as stipulated in Act 3 of 2008, the Right-to-Know Law.

Contact Information for Appeals

If a written request is denied or deemed denied, the requester may file an appeal in writing to Terry Mutchler, Executive Director, Office of Open Records, Commonwealth Keystone Building, 400 North Street, Plaza Level, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225, (O) (717) 346-9903.

Appeals of criminal records shall be made to the District Attorney of Bucks County, Detective LT. Robert M. Gorman, District Attorney's Office, 55 E. Court Street, 4th floor, Doylestown, PA 18901, (O) (215) 348-6354.

Appeals Process

The appeal shall be filed within 15 business days of the mailing date of the Township's response or within 15 business days of a deemed denial. The appeal shall state the grounds upon which the requester asserts the records is a public record and shall address any grounds stated by the Township for delaying or denying the request.

The above is for brevity and informational purposes only. The actual policy, passed by the Board of Supervisors, Resolution No. 2008-R-24, resolved the 17th day of December 2008, is attached.



NEWTOWN TOWNSHIP
100 MUNICIPAL DRIVE
NEWTOWN, PA 18940



STANDARD RIGHT-TO-KNOW REQUEST FORM

DATE REQUESTED:

REQUEST SUBMITTED BY: E-MAIL U.S. MAIL FAX IN-PERSON

NAME OF REQUESTOR : _____

STREET ADDRESS : _____

CITY/STATE/COUNTY (Required): _____

TELEPHONE (Optional): _____

RECORDS REQUESTED

**Provide as much specific detail as possible so the agency can identify the information.*

DO YOU WANT COPIES? YES or NO

DO YOU WANT TO INSPECT THE RECORDS? YES or NO

DO YOU WANT CERTIFIED COPIES OF RECORDS? YES or NO

RIGHT TO KNOW OFFICER:

DATE RECEIVED BY THE AGENCY:

AGENCY FIVE (5)-DAY RESPONSE DUE:

***Public bodies may fill anonymous verbal or written requests. If the requestor wishes to pursue the relief and remedies provided for in this Act, the request must be in writing. (Section 702.) Written requests need not include an explanation why information is sought or the intended use of the information unless otherwise required by law. (Section 703.)*

NEWTOWN TOWNSHIP

OPEN RECORDS POLICY

RESOLUTION NO. 2008-R-24

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has adopted a new Open Records Law, which will become effective January 1, 2009; and

WHEREAS, the Newtown Township is desirous of adopting a new Open Records Policy in compliance with the Pennsylvania Open Records Law.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the members of the Board of Supervisors of Newtown Township that Newtown Township herein adopts an Open Records Policy to read as follows:

I. PURPOSE:

The Board recognizes the importance of public records as the record of the Township's actions and the repository of information about the Township. The public has the right to access and procure copies of public records, with certain exceptions, subject to law, Township policy and administrative regulations.

II. DEFINITIONS:

Financial record - any account, voucher or contract dealing with the receipt or disbursement of funds or acquisition, use or disposal of services, supplies, materials, equipment or property; or the salary or other payments or expenses paid to an officer or employee, including the individual's name and title; and a financial audit report, excluding the audit's underlying work papers.

Public record - a record, including a financial record, that is not protected by a defined privilege or is not exempt from being disclosed under one of the exemptions in Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law or under other federal or State law or regulation, or judicial decree or order.

Record - information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that documents a Township transaction or activity and is created, received or retained pursuant to law or in connection with a Township transaction, business or activity, including: a document; paper; letter; map; book; tape; photograph; film or sound recording; information stored or maintained electronically; and data-processed or image-processed document.

Response - the Township's notice informing a requester of a granting of access to a record or Township's written notice to a requester granting, denying, or partially granting partially denying access to requested record.

Requester - a legal resident of the United States, or an agency, who requests access to a record.

III. LEGAL AUTHORITY:

The Township shall make the Township's public records available for access and duplication to requester, in accordance with law, Township policy and administrative regulations.

IV. DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY:

The Board of Supervisors herein designates the Assistant Township Manager, as the Open Records Officer, and the responsibilities of said Open Records Officers to be as follows:

1. Receive written requests for access to records submitted to the Township.
2. Review and respond to written requests in accordance with law, Township policy and administrative regulations.
3. Direct requests to other appropriate individuals at the Township.
4. Track the Township's progress in responding to requests.
5. Issue interim and final responses to submitted requests.
6. Maintain a log of all record requests and their Disposition.
7. Ensure the Township's staff is trained to perform assigned job functions relative to requests for access to records.

Upon receiving a request for access to a record, the Open Records Officer shall:

1. Note the date of receipt on the written request.
2. Compute and note on the written request the day on which the five-day period for response will expire.
3. Maintain an electronic or paper copy of the written request, including all documents submitted with the request, until the request has been fulfilled.
4. If the written request is denied, maintain the written request for thirty (30) days or, if an appeal is filed, until a final determination is issued or the appeal is deemed denied.

V. GUIDELINES:

Requesters may access and procure copies of the public records of the Township during the regular business hours of the administrative offices.

A requester's right of access does not include the right to remove a record from the control or supervision of the Open Records Officer.

The Township shall not limit the number of records requested.

When responding to a request for access, the Township is not required to create a record that does not exist nor to compile, maintain, format or organize a record in a manner which the Township does not currently use.

Information shall be made available to individuals with disabilities in an appropriate format, upon request and with sufficient advance notice.

The Township shall post at the administration office and on the Township's web site, the following information:

1. Contact information for the Open Records Officer.
2. Contact information for the State's Office of Open Records or other applicable appeals officer.
3. The form to be used to file a request, with a notation that the State Office of Open Records form may also be used even if the Township decides to create its own form.
4. Township policy, administrative regulations and procedures Governing requests for access to the Township's public Records.

Request For Access

A written request for access to a public record shall be submitted on the required form(s) and addressed to the Open Records Officer.

Written requests may be submitted to the Township in person, by mail, to designated facsimile machine, and to a designated e-mail address.

Each request must include the following information:

1. Identification or description of the requested record, in sufficient detail.
2. Medium in which the record is requested.
3. Name and address of the individual to receive Township's response.

The Township shall not require an explanation of the reason for the request or the intended use of the requested record, unless otherwise required by law.

Fees

Except for the duplication fee established by the State, the Township Supervisors shall approve, by Resolution, a list of reasonable fees relative to requests for public records. The Township shall maintain a list of applicable fees and disseminate the list to requesters.

No fee may be imposed for review of a record to determine whether the record is subject to access under law.

Prior to granting access, the Township may require prepayment of estimated fees when the fees required to fulfill the request are expected to exceed \$100.

The Open Records Officer may waive duplication fees when the requester duplicated the record or the Open Records Officer deems it is in the public interest to do so.

Response to Request.

Township employees shall be directed to immediately forward requests for access to public records to the Open Records Officer.

Upon receipt of a written request for access to a record, the Open Records Officer shall determine if the requested record is a public record and if the Township has possession, custody or control of that record.

The Open Records Officer shall respond as promptly as possible under the existing circumstances, and the initial response time shall not exceed five (5) business days from the date the written request is received by the Open Records Officer.

The initial response shall grant access to the requested record; deny access to the requested record; partially grant and partially deny access to the requested record; notify the requester of the need for an extension of time to fully respond; or request more detail from the requester to clearly identify the requested material.

If the Township fails to respond to a request within five (5) business days of receipt, the request for access shall be deemed denied.

Extension of Time.

If the Open Records Officer determines that an extension of time is required to respond to a request, in accordance with the factors stated in law, written notice shall be sent within five (5) business days of receipt of request. The notice shall indicate that the request for access is being reviewed, the reason that the review requires an extension, a reasonable date when the response is expected, and an estimate of applicable fees owed when the record becomes available.

One thirty (30) day extension for one (1) of the listed reasons does not require the consent of the requester. If the response is not given by the specified date, it shall be deemed denied on the day following that date.

A requester may consent in writing to an extension that exceeds thirty (30) days, in which case the request shall be deemed denied on the day following the date specified in the notice if the Open Records Officer has not provided a response by that date.

Granting of Request.

If the Open Records Officer determines that the request will be granted, the response shall inform the requester that access is granted and either include information on the regular business hours of the administration office, provide electronic access, or state where the requester may go to inspect the records or information electronically at a publicly accessible site. The response shall include a copy of the fee schedule in effect, a statement that prepayment of fees is required in a specified amount if access of the records will cost in excess of \$100, and the medium in which the records will be provided.

A public record shall be provided to the requester in the medium requested if it exists in that form; otherwise, it shall be provided in its existing medium. However, the Township is not required to permit use of its computers.

The Open Records Officer may respond to a records request by notifying the requester that the record is available through publicly accessible electronic means or that the Township shall provide access to inspect the record electronically. If the requester, within thirty (30) days following receipt of the Township's notice, submits a written request to have the record converted to paper, the Township shall provide access in printed form within five (5) days of receipt of the request for conversion to paper.

A public record that the Township does not possess but is possessed by a third party with whom the Township has contracted to perform a governmental function and which directly relates to that governmental function shall be considered a public record of the Township. When the Township contracts with such a third party, the Township shall require the contractor to agree in writing to comply with requests for such records and to provide the Township with the requested record in a timely manner to allow the Township to comply with law.

If the Open Records Officer determines that a public record contains information both subject to and not subject to access, the Open Records Officer shall grant access to the

information subject to access and deny access to the information not subject to access. The Open Records Officer shall redact from the record the information that is not subject to access. The Open Records Officer shall not deny access to a record if information is able to be redacted.

If the Open Records Officer responds to a requester that a copy of the requested record is available for delivery at the administration office and the requester does not retrieve the record within sixty (60) days of the Township's response, the Township shall dispose of the copy and retain any fees paid to date.

Notification to Third Parties.

When the Township produces a record that is not a public record in response to a request, the Open Records Officer shall notify any third party that provided the record to the Township, the person that is the subject of the record, and the requester.

— The Open Records Officer shall notify a third party of a record request if the requested record contains a trade secret or confidential proprietary information, in accordance with law and administrative regulations.

Denial Of Request.

If the Open Records Officer denies a request for access to a record, whether in whole or in part, a written response shall be sent within five (5) business days of receipt of the request. The response denying the request shall include the following:

1. Description of the record requested.
2. Specific reasons for denial, including a citation of supporting legal authority.
3. Name, title, business address, business telephone number, and signature of the Open Records Officer on whose authority the denial is issued.
4. Date of the response.
5. Procedure for the requester to appeal a denial of access.

The Open Records Officer may deny a request for access to a record if the requester has made repeated requests for that same record and repeated requests have placed an unreasonable burden on the Township.

The Open Records Officer may deny a request for access to a record when timely access is not possible due to a disaster, or when access may cause physical damage or irreparable harm to the record. To the extent possible, a record's content shall be made accessible even when the record is physically unavailable.

Information that is not subject to access and is redacted from a public record shall be deemed a denial.

If a written request for access to a record is denied or deemed denied, the requester may file an appeal with the State's Office of Open Records within fifteen (15) business days of the mailing date of the Open Records Officer's response or deemed denial.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION.

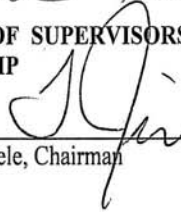
The Open Records Officer, in concert with the Township Manager, shall make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for the purpose of determining a fee schedule and adopting standard forms.

VII. EFFECT.

Any Resolution or Policy previously adopted by the Board related to the Open Records Law is hereby rescinded and in lieu thereof the Policy as set forth herein is adopted as the official Policy of the Township.

RESOLVED this 17th day of December, 2008.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF NEWTOWN TOWNSHIP

BY: 
Thomas Jirele, Chairman

By: _____
Robert Ciervo, Vice-Chairman

By: 
Michael Gallagher, Secretary/Treasurer

By: _____
Phillip Calabro, Member

By: 
Jerry Shenkman, Member

Attest:


Joseph Czajkowski, Manager