



South Russell Village – Public Records Policy

Introduction:

It is the policy of South Russell Village that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of South Russell Village to strictly adhere to the state’s Public Records Act. All exemptions to openness are to be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If the request is in writing, the explanation must also be in writing.

Section 1. Public records

For the purposes of this Policy, the Terms “public records” shall have the meaning set forth in the Ohio Revised Code Chapter 149.

Section 1.1

It is the policy of South Russell Village, as required by Ohio law; records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying.

Section 2. Record requests

Each request for public records should be evaluated for a response using the following guidelines:

Section 2.1

Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the records custodian must contact the requester for clarification, and should assist the requestor in revising the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which the office keeps its records.

Section 2.2

A public record request may be made in writing or verbally, and the identity of the requester and/or the intended use of the information or documents requested need not be disclosed. However, South Russell Village may ask that the request for public records be in writing, may ask for the requester's identity, and/or may inquire about the intended use of information or documents if such inquiry would benefit the requester by enhancing the ability of the office to identify, locate, or deliver the public records sought and if South Russell Village informs the requester that a written request, disclosure of identity and/or intended use is not mandatory.

Section 2.3

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested; the proximity of the location where the records are stored; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

Section 2.4

Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for records should be satisfied immediately if feasible to do so. If fewer than 20 pages of copies are requested or if the records are readily available in an electronic format that can be e-mailed or downloaded easily, these should be made as quickly as the equipment allows.

If a request is deemed significantly beyond "routine," such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the acknowledgement must include the following:

Section 2.4a – An estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request.

Section 2.4b – An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Section 2.4c – Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Section 2.5

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, including legal authority. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the rest released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.

Section 3. Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies.

Section 3.1 The charge for paper copies over 25 pages is 5 cents per page.

Section 3.2 The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1 per disc.

Section 3.3 There is no charge for documents e-mailed.

Section 3.4 Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

Section 3.5 The charge for downloaded computer files to a USB drive is the current USB cost.

Section 4. E-mail

Documents in electronic mail format are records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of the office. E-mail is to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and should follow the same retention schedules.

Section 4.1

Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of this office are instructed to retain their e-mails that relate to public business (see Section 1 Public Records) and to copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the office's records custodian.

Section 4.2

The records custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the public office, filing them in the appropriate way, retaining them per established schedules and making them available for inspection and copying in accordance with the Public Records Act.

Section 5.0 Compliance with Ohio Revised Code Requirements

With any public records request, the Village of South Russell reserves the right to consult with legal counsel prior to the release of such public records.

Section 6.0 Miscellaneous

This policy shall be placed in South Russell Village's employee handbook.

As required by House Bill 9, a poster summarizing the main points of this Policy shall be developed and prominently displayed in each department at or near the place where the public is invited and would likely present a public records request.