

Article II Public Access

§ 45-2 Purpose and scope.

A. The people's right to know the process of government decisionmaking and the documents and statistics leading to determinations is basic to our society. Access to such information should not be thwarted by shrouding it with the cloak of secrecy ~~or~~for confidentiality.

B. This article provide information concerning the procedures by which records may be obtained.

C. Personnel shall furnish to the public the information and records required by the Freedom of Information Law, ~~§ 17~~, as well as records otherwise available by law.

D. Any conflicts among laws governing public access to records shall be construed in favor of the widest possible availability of public records.

§ 45-3 Designation and duties of records access officer.

A. The New Lebanon Town Board is responsible for insuring compliance with the regulations herein ~~and designates.~~ The records access officer of the Town of New Lebanon shall be the Town Clerk as the records access officer, 14755 N.Y. Route 22, New Lebanon, New York, 12125, townclerk@townofnewlebanon.com.

B. The records access officer is responsible for insuring appropriate agency response to public requests for access to records. The designation of a records access officer shall not be construed to prohibit officials who have in the past been authorized to make records or information available to the public from continuing to do so.

C. The records access officer shall insure that the Town:

(1) Maintain an up-to-date subject matter list.

(2) Assist persons seeking records to identify the records sought, if necessary, and, when appropriate, indicate the manner in which the records are filed, retrieved or generated to assist persons in reasonably describing records.

(3) Contact persons seeking records when a request is voluminous or when locating the records involves substantial effort so that personnel may ascertain the nature of records of primary interest and attempt to reasonably reduce the volume of records requested.

(4) Upon locating the records, take one of the following actions:

(a) Make records available for inspection; or

(b) Deny access to the records, in whole or in part, and explain, in writing, the reasons therefor.

(5) Upon request for copies of records:

(a) Make a copy available upon payment or offer to pay ~~established~~applicable fees, if any, in accordance with § 45-9; or

(b) Permit the requester to copy those records.

(6) Upon request, certify that a record is a true copy; and

(7) Upon failure to locate records, certify that:

(a) The Town of New Lebanon is not the custodian for such records; or

(b) The records of which the Town of New Lebanon is a custodian cannot be found after diligent search.

§ 45-4 Location of records.

Records shall be available for public inspection and copying at:

The New Lebanon Town Hall

14755 Route 22

New Lebanon, New York 12125

§ 45-5 Hours for public inspection.

Requests for public access to records shall be accepted and records produced during all hours the Town Clerk's office is regularly open for business.

§ 45-6 Requests for access.

A. A written request may be required, but oral requests may be accepted when records are readily available.

B. If records are maintained on the Internet, the requester shall be informed that the records are accessible via the Internet and in printed form either on paper or other information storage medium.

C. A response shall be given within five business days of receipt of a request by:

(1) Informing a person requesting records that the request or portion of the request does not reasonably describe the records sought, including direction, to the extent possible, that would enable that person to request records reasonably described;

(2) Granting or denying access to records in whole or in part;

(3) Acknowledging the receipt of a request, in writing, including an approximate date when the request will be granted or denied, in whole or in part, which shall be reasonable under the circumstances of the

request and shall not be more than 20 business days after the date of the acknowledgment, or if it is known that circumstances prevent disclosure within 20 business days from the date of such acknowledgment, providing a statement, in writing, indicating the reason for inability to grant the request within that time and a date certain, within a reasonable period under the circumstances of the request, when the request will be granted in whole or in part; or

(4) If the receipt of request was acknowledged, in writing, and included an approximate date when the request would be granted, in whole or in part, within 20 business days of such acknowledgment, but circumstances prevent disclosure within that time, providing a statement, in writing, within 20 business days of such acknowledgment specifying the reason for the inability to do so and a date certain, within a reasonable period under the circumstances of the request, when the request will be granted in whole or in part.

D. In determining a reasonable time for granting or denying a request under the circumstances of a request, personnel shall consider the volume of a request, the ease or difficulty in locating, retrieving or generating records, the complexity of the request, the need to review records to determine the extent to which they must be disclosed, the number of requests received by the agency, and similar factors that bear on the ability to grant access to records promptly and within a reasonable time.

E. A failure to comply with the time limitations described herein shall constitute a denial of a request that may be appealed. Such failure shall include situations in which an officer or employee:

(1) Fails to grant access to the records sought, deny access, in writing, or acknowledge the receipt of a request within five business days of the receipt of a request;

(2) Acknowledges the receipt of a request within five business days but fails to furnish an approximate date when the request will be granted or denied in whole or in part;

(3) Furnishes an acknowledgment of the receipt of a request within five business days with an approximate date for granting or denying access, in whole or in part, that is unreasonable under the circumstances of the request;

(4) Fails to respond to a request within a reasonable time after the approximate date given or within 20 business days after the date of the acknowledgment of the receipt of a request;

(5) Determines to grant a request, in whole or in part, within 20 business days of the acknowledgment of the receipt of a request, but fails to do so, unless the agency provides the reason for its inability to do so, in writing, and a date certain within which the request will be granted in whole or in part;

(6) Does not grant a request, in whole or in part, within 20 business days of the acknowledgment of the receipt of a request and fails to provide the reason, in writing, explaining the inability to do so and a date certain by which the request will be granted in whole or in part; or

(7) Responds to a request, stating that more than 20 business days is needed to grant or deny the request, in whole or in part, and provides a date certain within which that will be accomplished, but such date is unreasonable under the circumstances of the request.

§ 45-7 Subject matter list.

A. The records access officer shall maintain a reasonably detailed current list by subject matter of all records in ~~its~~the Town's possession, whether or not records are available pursuant to Subdivision 2 of § 87 of the Public Officers Law.

B. The subject matter list shall be sufficiently detailed to permit identification of the category of the record sought.

C. The subject matter list shall be updated annually. The most recent update shall appear on the first page of the subject matter list.

§ 45-8 Denial of access; appeals.

A. Denial of access to records shall be in writing stating the reason therefor and advising the requester of the right to appeal to the individual or body established to determine appeals, which shall be identified by name, title, business address and business phone number.

B. If ~~requested records are not provided promptly,~~the Town fails to respond to a request as required ~~in~~by § 45-6 of this article, such failure shall ~~also~~be deemed a denial of access.

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C. Any person denied access to records may appeal within 30 days of a denial.

D. The Town of New Lebanon Town Supervisor, 14755 Route 22, New Lebanon, New York 12125, shall determine appeals regarding denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Law.

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E. The time for deciding an appeal by the individual or body designated to determine appeals shall commence upon receipt of a written appeal identifying:

(1) The date and location of requests for records;

(2) A description, to the extent possible, of the records that were denied; and

(3) The name and return address of the person denied access appellant.

F. A failure to determine an appeal within 10 business days of its receipt by granting access to the records sought or fully explaining the reasons for further denial, in writing, shall constitute a denial of the appeal.

G. The person or body designated to determine appeals shall transmit to the Committee on Open Government, in accordance with its published guidance, copies of all appeals ~~upon receipt of appeals.~~ Such copies shall be addressed to: Committee on Open Government, Department of State, 1 Commerce Plaza, 99 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12231, or to such other address as may be set forth in the published guidance of the Committee on Open Government.

Committee on Open Government/Department of State
1 Commerce Plaza
99 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12231

H. The person or body designated to determine appeals shall inform the appellant and the Committee on Open Government of its determination, in writing, within 10 business days of receipt of an appeal. The determination shall be transmitted to the Committee on Open Government in the same manner as set forth Subdivision F of this section is provided above for transmission of appeals.

§ 45-9 Fees.

~~A. There shall be no fee charged for:~~

~~(1) Inspection of records;~~

~~(2) Search for records; or~~

~~(3) Any certification pursuant to this article.~~

~~B. Copies of fewer than 10, regular-sized documents may be provided without charging a fee.~~

~~C. Fees for copies may be charged, provided that:~~

~~(1) The fee for copying records shall not exceed \$0.25 per page for photocopies not exceeding nine inches by 14 inches.~~

~~(2) The fee for copies of records that cannot be copied at the New Lebanon Town Hall because of the size or quality of the records or the volume to be copied shall be the actual reproduction costs incurred by the Town.~~

A person requesting records shall be responsible to pay to the Town of New Lebanon in advance of being provided access to such records all applicable fees associated with such request, which for purposes of this section are hereby established as the maximum amount allowed under Article 6 of the N.Y. Public Officers Law and regulations promulgated thereto (or any successor provisions thereto), as may be amended from time to time.

§ 45-10 Public notice.

A notice containing the title or name and business address of the records access officers and appeals person or body and the location where records can be seen or copied shall be posted in a conspicuous location wherever records are kept and/or published in a local newspaper of general circulation.

§ 45-11 Severability.

If any provision of this article or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is adjudged invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such judgment shall not affect or impair the validity of the other provisions of this article or the application thereof to other persons and circumstances.