

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

Town of Mount Carmel, Tennessee

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g), the following Public Records Policy for the Town of Mount Carmel, Tennessee is hereby adopted by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to provide economical and efficient access to public records as provided under the Tennessee Public Records Act ("TPRA") in Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-501, et seq.

The TPRA provides that all state, county and municipal records shall, at all times during business hours be open for personal inspection by any citizen of this state, and those in charge of the records shall not refuse such right of inspection to any citizen, unless otherwise provided by state law. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(2)(A). Accordingly, the public records of the Town of Mount Carmel are presumed to be open for inspection unless otherwise provided by law.

Personnel of the Town of Mount Carmel shall timely and efficiently provide access and assistance to persons requesting to view or receive copies of public records. No provisions of this Policy shall be used to hinder access to public records. However, the integrity and organization of public records, as well as the efficient and safe operation of the Town of Mount Carmel, shall be protected as provided by current law. Concerns about this Policy should be addressed to the Public Records Request Coordinator for the Town of Mount Carmel or to the Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel ("OORC").

This Policy is available for inspection and duplication in the office of the City Recorder. Additionally, this Policy is posted online at www.mountcarmeltn.gov. This Policy shall be reviewed periodically as needed.

This Policy shall be applied consistently throughout the various offices, departments, and/or divisions of the Town of Mount Carmel.

I. Definitions

- A. Records Custodian: The office, official or employee lawfully responsible for the direct custody and care of a public record. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(C). The records custodian is not necessarily the original preparer or receiver of the record.
- B. Public Records: All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(A).
- C. Public Records Request Coordinator: The individual, or individuals, designated in Section III, A.3 of this Policy who has, or have, the responsibility to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and are fulfilled in

accordance with the TPRA. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1)(B). The Public Records Request Coordinator may also be a records custodian.

- D. Requestor: A person seeking access to a public record, whether it is for inspection or duplication.

II. Requesting Access to Public Records

- A. Public record requests shall be made to the Public Records Request Coordinator ("PRRC") or his/her designee, or via online submission, in order to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and fulfilled in a timely manner.
- B. Requests for inspection only cannot be required to be made in writing. The PRRC will request a mailing or email address from the requestor for providing any written communication required under the TPRA.
- C. Requests for inspection may be made orally or in writing on Form A at Town of Mount Carmel City Hall, 100 Main Street East, Mount Carmel, Tennessee 37645, by phone at (423) 357-7311, or by email to the office of the City Recorder, or by email to cityhall@mountcarmeltn.gov.
- D. Requests for copies, or requests for inspection and copies, shall be made in writing on Form A in person or by mail at Town of Mount Carmel City Hall, 100 Main Street East, Mount Carmel, Tennessee 37645, or by email to the office of the City Recorder, or by email to cityhall@mountcarmeltn.gov.
- E. Proof of Tennessee citizenship by presentation of a valid Tennessee driver's license or alternative acceptable form of ID is required as a condition to inspect or receive copies of public records.

III. Responding to Public Records Requests

- A. Public Record Request Coordinator
 - 1. The PRRC shall review public record requests and make an initial determination of the following:
 - a. If the requestor provided evidence of Tennessee citizenship;
 - b. If the records requested are described with sufficient specificity to identify them; and
 - c. If the town is the custodian of the records.

2. The PRRC shall acknowledge receipt of the request and take any of the following appropriate action(s):
 - a. Advise the requestor of this Policy and the elections made regarding:
 - i. Proof of Tennessee citizenship;
 - ii. Form(s) required for copies;
 - iii. Fees (and labor threshold and waivers, if applicable); and
 - iv. Aggregation of multiple or frequent requests.
 - b. If appropriate, deny the request in writing, providing the appropriate ground such as one of the following:
 - i. The requestor is not, or has not presented evidence of being, a Tennessee citizen;
 - ii. The request lacks specificity;
 - iii. An exemption makes the record not subject to disclosure under the TPRA;
 - iv. The town is not the custodian of the requested records; or
 - v. The records do not exist.
 - c. If appropriate, contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.
 - d. Forward the records request to the appropriate records custodian in the Town of Mount Carmel.
3. The designated PRRCs are:
 - a. Name or title: Administrative Services Specialist(s)
 - b. Contact information: Town of Mount Carmel City Hall, 100 Main Street East, Mount Carmel, Tennessee 37645, (423) 357-7311, cityhall@mountcarmeltn.gov.

B. Records Custodian

1. Upon receiving a public records request, a records custodian shall promptly make requested public records available in accordance with Tenn. Code Ann.

§ 10-7-503. If the records custodian is uncertain that an applicable exemption applies, the custodian may consult with the PRRC, counsel, or the OORC.

2. If not practicable to promptly provide requested records because additional time is necessary to determine whether the requested records exist; to search for, retrieve, or otherwise gain access to records; to determine whether the records are open; to redact records; or for other similar reasons, then a records custodian shall, within seven (7) business days from the records custodian's receipt of the request, send the requestor a completed Public Records Request Response Form, based on the form developed by the OORC.
3. If a records custodian denies a public record request, he or she shall deny the request in writing as provided in Section III.A.2.b and may use the Public Records Request Response Form.
4. If a records custodian reasonably determines production of records should be segmented because the records request is for a large volume of records, or additional time is necessary to prepare the records for access, the records custodian shall use the Public Records Request Response to notify the requestor that production of the records will be in segments and that a records production schedule will be provided as expeditiously as practicable. If appropriate, the records custodian should contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.
5. If a records custodian discovers records responsive to a records request were omitted, the records custodian should contact the requestor concerning the omission and produce the records as quickly as practicable.
6. The designated Records Custodian is:
 - a. Name or title: City Recorder
 - b. Contact information: Town of Mount Carmel City Hall, 100 Main Street East, Mount Carmel, Tennessee 37645, (423) 357-7311, cityhall@mountcarmeltn.gov.

C. Redaction

1. If a record contains confidential information or information that is not open for public inspection, the records custodian shall prepare a redacted copy prior to providing access. If questions arise concerning redaction, the records custodian should coordinate with counsel or other appropriate parties regarding review and redaction of records. The records custodian and the PRRC may also consult with the OORC.

2. Whenever a redacted record is provided, a records custodian should provide the requestor with the basis for redaction. The basis given for redaction shall be general in nature and not disclose confidential information.

IV. Inspection of Records

- A. There shall be no charge for inspection of public records
- B. The location for inspection of records within the offices of the Town of Mount Carmel shall be determined by either the PRRC or the records custodian.
- C. When a reasonable basis exists, the PRRC or a records custodian may require an appointment for inspection.

V. Copies of Records

- A. A records custodian shall promptly respond to a public record request for copies in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.
- B. Copies will be available for pickup at Town of Mount Carmel City Hall.
- C. Upon payment for postage, copies will be delivered to the requestor's home address by the United States Postal Service.
- D. Copies may also be sent to the requestor via email.
- E. A requestor will not be allowed to make copies of records with personal equipment, except to scan or photograph records with a mobile device. Requestors may purchase storage devices from the town upon which the records will be downloaded.

VI. Fees and Charges and Procedures for Billing and Payment

Fees and charges for copies of public records should not be used to hinder access to public records.

- A. Records custodians shall provide requestor(s) with an itemized estimate of the charges prior to producing copies of records and may require pre-payment of such charges before producing requested records.
- B. When fees for copies and labor do not exceed \$10.00, the fees may be waived. Requests for waivers for fees above \$10.00 must be presented to the PRRC, who is authorized to determine if such waiver is in the best interest of Town of Mount Carmel and for the public good. Fees associated with aggregated records requests will not be waived.

C. Fees and charges for copies are as follows:

1. \$0.15 per page for letter- and legal-size black and white copies.
2. \$0.50 per page for letter- and legal-size color copies.
3. The actual cost of any other medium upon which a record/information is being produced.
4. Labor when time exceeds one hour.
5. If an outside vendor is used, the actual costs assessed by the vendor.

D. Payment is to be made in cash, by personal check, or by credit card payable to the town and presented to the City Recorder.

E. Payment in advance will be required when costs are estimated to exceed \$10.00.

F. Aggregation of Frequent and Multiple Requests

1. The Town of Mount Carmel will aggregate record requests in accordance with the Frequent and Multiple Request Policy promulgated by the OORC

VII. Severability

If a part of this policy is invalid, all valid parts that are severable from the invalid part remain in effect. If a part of this policy is invalid in one or more of its applications, the part remains in effect in all valid applications that are severable from the invalid applications.

VIII. Effective date

This policy shall become effective upon passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Passed on: March 27, 2025

SIGNED:


John Gibson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Tyler Williams, City Recorder

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


Allen Coup, City Attorney

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST FORM

The Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) grants Tennessee citizens the right to access open public records that exist at the time of the request. The TPRA does not require records custodians to compile information or create or recreate records that do not exist.

(Governmental Entity Name and Name and Contact Information for the Public Records Request Coordinator)

To:

(Insert Requestor's Name and Contact Information (include an address for any TPRA required written response))

From:

Is the requestor a Tennessee citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Request: ☐ Inspection (The TPRA does not permit fees or require a written request for inspection onlyⁱ.)
☐ Copy/Duplicate

If costs for copies are assessed, the requestor has a right to receive an estimate. Do you wish to waive your right to an estimate and agree to pay copying and duplication costs in an amount not to exceed \$ _____? If so, initial here: _____.

Delivery preference: ☐ On-Site Pick-Up ☐ USPS First-Class Mail
☐ Electronic ☐ Other: _____

Records Requested:

Provide a detailed description of the record(s) requested, including: (1) type of record; (2) timeframe or dates for the records sought; and (3) subject matter or key words related to the records. Under the TPRA, record requests must be sufficiently detailed to enable a governmental entity to identify the specific records sought. As such, your record request must provide enough detail to enable the records custodian responding to the request to identify the specific records you are seeking.

Signature of Requestor and Date Submitted

Signature of Public Records Request Coordinator and Date Received

Print Form

Reset Form

ⁱ Note, Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-504(a)(20)(C) permits charging for redaction of private records of a utility.