

SPOKANE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT NO.3
RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO PUBLIC
RECORDS/DISCLOSURE REQUESTS

The Public Records Act, as amended, (Chapter 42.56 RCW) ("Act") requires the District to make identifiable, non-exempt public records available for inspection and copying upon request, and to publish rules of procedure to inform the public how access to public records will be accomplished. The following Rules of Procedure ("Rules") for responding to public records/disclosure requests are hereby established:

1. Purpose:

- a. The purpose of these Rules is to establish the procedures that the District will follow to provide full access to public records. These Rules provide information to persons wishing to request access to public records of the District and establish processes for both requestors and District staff that are designed to assist members of the public in obtaining such access.
- b. The purpose of the Act is to provide the public full access to information concerning the conduct of government, while balancing individual's privacy rights and the desirability of the efficient administration of government. In carrying out its responsibilities under the Act, the District will be guided by the provisions of the Act describing its purposes and interpretation.

2. Contact Information:

- a. The District is a municipal corporation of the State of Washington. The District's Business Office is located at: 1225 N. Yardley Street, Spokane Valley, Washington 99212.
- b. Any person wishing to inspect District public records, or seeking assistance in making such a request, should contact the Public Records Officer of the District:

Spokane County Water District No. 3
Attention: Public Records Officer
1225 N. Yardley Street
Spokane, WA 99212-7001
Phone: 509-536-0121
Facsimile: 509-534-3760

3. Public Records Officer:

- a. The Public Records Officer shall oversee compliance with the Act and these Rules, but other District staff members may also process requests. Therefore, in these Rules, the Public Records Officer includes any designee of the Public Records Officer. The Public Records Officer is assigned to the General

Manger position by Resolution 2026-04

4. Availability and Access to Public Records:

- a. Public records shall be available for inspection and copying during the District's normal business hours: From standard time to daylight savings time Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays observed by the District. From daylight savings time to standard time Monday through Thursday 6:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In the event standard time or daylight savings time ends, the (4-10) schedule will be from the first Monday in March to the first Friday in November, excluding holidays observed by the District.
- b. District public records must be inspected at the address listed in Section 2 (b) above, unless another location is designated for a particular request by the Public Records Officer.

5. District's Organization of Public Records:

- a. Due to the small number of District staff, maintaining a central index of the District's records is unduly burdensome, costly and would interfere with District operations due to the number and complexity of records generated as a result of the wide range of the District's activities.
- b. The District shall maintain its records in a reasonably organized manner. The District shall take reasonable actions to protect records from damage and disorganization. A requestor shall not take District public records from the District's office, or from a location designated by the Public Records Officer, without the written permission of the Public Records Officer.

6. Format of Request:

- a. Any person wishing to inspect or copy public records of the District shall make the request in writing by letter, facsimile or email addressed to the Public Records Officer, and include the following information:
 - i. Name of requestor,
 - ii. Address of requestor,
 - iii. Other contact information, including telephone number and any e-mail address,
 - iv. Identification of the public records adequate for the Public Records Officer to locate the records, and
 - v. The date and time of the request.
- b. The Public Records Officer may accept, but shall not be required to accept, requests for public records that contain the

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above information by telephone or in person. If the Public Records Officer accepts such a request, the officer shall confirm receipt of the information and the substance of the request in writing.

- c. The Public Records Officer may require that the District's request form be used.
- d. A requestor need not state the purpose of the request. However, in an effort to clarify or prioritize a request and provide responsive documents, the Public Records Officer may inquire about the nature and scope of the request. If the request is for a list of individuals, the Public Records Officer may ask the requestor if they intend to use the records for a commercial purpose. The District is prohibited by statute from disclosing lists of individuals for commercial purposes. (RCW 42.56.070(9)).
- e. A requestor must provide the District with reasonable notice that the request being made is for public records. If a request is contained in a larger document unrelated to a public records request, the requestor should point out the public records request by labeling the front page of the document as containing a public records request or otherwise calling the request to the attention of the Public Records Officer to facilitate timely response to the request.
- f. Copies: If the requestor wishes to have copies of the records made instead of simply inspecting them, the requestor should so indicate and make arrangements to pay for copies of the records or to pay a deposit as required by the District.

7. Responding to Requests:

These rules identify how the District will provide full access to public records, protect public records from damage or disorganization, prevent excessive interference with other essential functions of the District, provide fullest assistance to requestors and provide the timeliest possible action on public records requests. All assistance necessary to help requestors locate particular responsive records shall be provided by the Public Records Officer, provided that the giving of such assistance does not unreasonably disrupt the daily operations of the District.

- a. The Public Records Officer will process requests in the order allowing the most requests to be processed in the most efficient manner.
- b. Within five (5) business days of receipt of the request for public records, the Public Records Officer will do one or more of the following:

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- i. Provide the records available for inspection or copying,
 - ii. Provide an internet address and link on a website to the specific records requested,
 - iii. Acknowledge receipt of the request and provide a reasonable estimate of time the District will require to respond to the request, or
 - iv. Deny the request.
- c. If the request is unclear or does not sufficiently identify the requested records, the District may ask the requestor to clarify what information the requestor is seeking. Such clarification may be requested and provided by telephone. The Public Records Officer may revise the estimate of when records will be available. If the requestor fails to clarify the request, the District need not respond to it.
- d. If the District does not respond in writing within five (5) business days of receipt of the request for disclosure, the requestor should contact the Public Records Officer to determine the reason for the failure to respond.
- e. If the requested records contain information that may affect the rights of others and may be exempt from disclosure, the Public Records Officer may, prior to providing the records, give notice to such others whose rights may be affected by the disclosure. Such notice should be given, if reasonably possible, so as to make it possible for those other persons to contact the requestor and ask him or her to revise the request, or if necessary, seek an order from a court to prevent or limit the disclosure. The notice to the affected persons shall include a copy of the request.
- f. Some records are exempt from disclosure, in whole or in part. If the District believes that a record is exempt from disclosure and should be withheld, the Public Records Officer will state the specific exemption and provide a brief explanation of why the record or a portion of the record is being withheld. If only a portion of a record is exempt from disclosure, but the remainder is not exempt, the Public Records Officer will redact the exempt portions, provide the non-exempt portions and indicate to the requestor why portions of the record are being redacted.
- g. The District shall promptly provide space to inspect public records. No member of the public may remove public records from the viewing area or disassemble or alter any public record. The requestor shall indicate which records they wish to have copied using a mutually agreed upon non-permanent method of marking the desired record.

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- h. The requestor must claim or review the assembled records within thirty (30) days of the District notification to the requestor that the records are available for inspection or copying. The District will notify the requestor in writing of this requirement and that the requestor must contact the District to make arrangements to claim or review the records. If the requestor or a representative of the requestor fails to claim or review the records within the thirty-day period or make other arrangements, the District may close the requests and re-file the assembled records. Other public records requests can be processed ahead of a subsequent request by the same person for the same or almost identical records, which can be processed as a new request.
- i. After inspection is complete, the Public Records Officer shall make the requested copies or arrange for copying. If the request is for a large number of public records, the Public Records Officer shall provide access for inspection and copying in installments, if the Public Records Officer reasonably determines that it would be practical to provide the records in that manner. If, within thirty (30) days, the requestor fails to inspect the entire set of records or one or more of the installments, the Public Records Officer shall no longer be obligated to fulfill the balance of the request and shall stop searching for the remaining records and close the request.
- j. When the inspection of the requested records is complete and all requested copies are provided, the Public Records Officer shall indicate that the District has completed a diligent search for the requested records and made any located non-exempt records available for inspection.
- k. If, after the District has informed the requestor that it has provided all available records, the District becomes aware of additional public records existing at the time of the request that are responsive to the request, it shall promptly inform the requestor of the additional public records and make them available for inspection on an expedited basis.
- l. When the requestor either withdraws the request or fails to fulfill the requestor's obligations to inspect the records or pay the deposit or final payment for the requested copies, the Public Records Officer shall close the request and indicate to the requestor that the District has closed the request.
- m. The District, and its officials and employees are not liable for loss or damage based on release of public record if the District official or employee acted in good faith in attempting to comply with the Act.

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- n. The District is not obligated to create a new record to satisfy a records request; however, the District may, in its discretion, create such a new record to fulfill the request where it may be easier for the District to create a record responsive to the request than to collect and make available voluminous records that contain small pieces of information responsive to the request.
- o. The District is not obligated to hold current records requests open to respond to requests for District public records that may be created in the future. If a public record is created or comes into the possession of the District after a request is received by the District, it is not responsive to the request and will not be provided. A new request must be made to obtain later-created public records.
- p. The process for requesting electronic public records is the same as for requesting paper public records. When a requestor requests records in an electronic format, the Public Records Officer shall provide the non-exempt records or portions of such records that are reasonably locatable in an electronic format that is used by the District and is generally commercially available or in a format that is reasonably translatable from the format in which the District keeps the record.

8. Exemptions:

The Act provides that a number of categories of public records are exempt from public inspection and copying. In addition, the Act provides that certain public records may be exempt from disclosure if any other statute or law exempts or prohibits disclosure. For informational purposes only, the District has set forth a list of exemptions below. This list is not inclusive or exhaustive of all exemptions. The District's failure to list an exemption below shall not affect the efficacy of any exemption. RCW 42.56.070(2). Requestors should be aware that the following exemptions may restrict the availability of inspection or copying of some public records or portions thereof:

- a. **Personal information:** Personal information in files maintained for employees and appointed or elected officials of the District to the extent disclosure would violate their right to privacy; and financial information including credit card numbers, debit card numbers, electronic check numbers, card expiration dates and bank or other financial account numbers. (RCW 42.56.230.)
- b. **Employment and licensing:** Applications for public employment and related materials submitted with respect to an applicant; examination information (test questions, scoring keys and other data used to administer a license, employment or

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academic examination); and personal contact information in files maintained for District employees or volunteer and their dependents (address, telephone number, email address, social security number, emergency contacts and date of birth. (RCW 42.56.250).

- c. **Real estate appraisals:** Real estate appraisals made for or by the District relative to the acquisition or sale of property until the project is abandoned or sold, except disclosure may not be denied for more than three years after the appraisal. (RCW 42.56.260).
- d. **Financial, commercial and proprietary information:** Valuable formulae, designs, drawings, computer source code or object code, and research data obtained by the District within five years of the request for disclosure when disclosure would produce private gain and public loss. (RCW 42.56.270).
- e. **Preliminary drafts, notes, recommendations and interagency memorandums:** Records in which opinions are expressed or policies formulated or recommended except if the opinion or policy is implemented or the record is publicly cited in connection with District action. (RCW 42.56.280).
- f. **Work product:** Records which are relevant to a controversy to which the District is a party but which records would not be available to another party under the rules of pretrial discovery for Superior Courts. (RCW 42.56.290).
- g. **Public utilities information:** Records filed with the utilities and transportation commission or attorney general under RCW 80.04.095 and records containing the residential addresses and residential telephone numbers of District customers. (RCW 42.56.330).
- h. **Security:** Records assembled or prepared to prevent, mitigate or respond to terrorist acts, the disclosure of which would have a substantial likelihood of threatening public safety; specific and unique vulnerability assessments or emergency response plans and records containing information regarding the infrastructure and security of computer and telecommunications networks. (RCW 42.56.420).
- i. **Attorney-client privileged information:** Records reflecting communications transmitted in confidence between the District and its attorney for the purposes of legal advice. (RCW 5.60.060(2)(a)).
- j. **Medical records:** Medical records in employee personnel files. (RCW 70.02).

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- k. **Trade secrets:** Records containing trade secrets of businesses the District regulates. (RCW 19.108).
- l. Confidential information: Municipal officer disclosure of confidential information. (RCW 42.23.070).
- m. **Archeological sites:** records identifying location of archeological sites (RCW 27.53.070).
- n. **Whistleblower:** Identity of local government whistleblower and protected information (RCW 42.41).

9. Fees:

- a. There shall be no fee for inspecting public records of the District.
- b. The charge for standard (8-½" x 11" and 8-½" x 14") black-and-white photocopies shall be charged per fee schedule.
- c. The District will periodically update and post a fee schedule for the copying of other non-standard public records or those in other formats or media.
- d. If the District has to pay an off-site vendor for copying public records in non-standard formats, including but not limited to photographs, blueprints or tape recordings, the requestor shall pay the actual costs of such duplication.
- e. The District shall also charge actual costs of long distance facsimile transmission and/or mailing, including postage and the cost of the shipping container.
- f. If the Public Records Officer determines it is reasonable to send a request to an off-site vendor for copying, the District may:
 - i. Arrange for the requestor to pay the vendor directly for copies made; or
 - ii. Charge the requestor the actual amount charged by the off-site vendor to the District for the copies made.
- g. Where the request is for a certified copy of public records, an additional charge of five dollars (\$5.00) may be applied to cover the additional expense and time required for certification.
- h. Deposit: Before beginning to make the copies, the Public Records Officer may require a deposit of up to ten percent (10%) of the estimated cost of copying all the public records selected by the requestor. The Public Records Officer may also require the payment of the remainder of the costs before providing all the records, or the payment of the costs of copying an installment before providing that installment. The District shall not charge sales tax when it makes copies of public

records, unless required by law to do so.

- i. The requestor shall pay for copies of public records by cash, check or money order made payable to the District.

10. Records Retention:

- a. The District shall retain its records in accordance with retention schedules approved by the State Local Records Committee.
- b. Public records may not be destroyed per retention schedule if a public records request or actual or anticipated litigation is pending.

11. Denial of Records Request:

- a. Promptly after initial denial or partial denial of a records request, the requestor may petition in writing (including e-mail) to the Public Records Officer for a review of that decision. The petition shall include a copy of or reasonably identify the written statement by the Public Records Officer denying the request.
- b. The Public Records Officer shall promptly provide the petition and any other relevant information to the District's attorney.
- c. The District's attorney shall promptly consider the petition and provide the requestor a written determination of whether the record is exempt.
- d. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to establish an attorney-client relationship between the District's attorney and the requestor.
- e. The requestor may obtain court review of denials of public records requests pursuant to RCW 42.56.550 after the initial denial, regardless of any internal administrative appeal.