

City of Belton

Compliance with SC FOIA Requests

Chapter 4, Title 30, South Carolina Code of Laws

The City of Belton is committed to transparency of government action and operation, along with open access to public documents, as provided for in the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). As a result, the city strives to grant access to public documents and records quickly and, in most cases, at no cost as part of our “first in service” philosophy.

Written requests may be delivered via letter, facsimile, e-mail or other transmission means and should be precise and as specific as possible regarding details (names, dates, topics, etc.) to ensure an accurate response. An **FOIA Request Form** is provided for the public’s convenience, but use of the form is not required to make a written request under the FOIA. Submit written requests to City of Belton – City Administrator at: P. O. Box 828, Belton, SC 29627, info@cityofbeltonsc.com or 864-338-8369 (fax).

In general, the FOIA gives public bodies 10 working days, excluding weekends and legal holidays, to reply to written requests and make a determination about the release of documents and records. For documents and records that are more than 24 months old, the public body has 20 days to make an initial reply and determination about the records. If the request is granted, the information must be made available no later than 30 days from the date the determination was made or, in the case of documents older than 24 months, no later than 35 days from the date of the determination.

The FOIA, available on the City of Belton website at <http://cityofbeltonsc.com>, grants access to the information in the most convenient and practical manner for the requestor, if that also is most convenient for the public body. It does not require public bodies to make copies of documents or to create new records summarizing public records. The city may impose reasonable rules concerning time and place of access.

FOIA requests which are particularly voluminous or time-consuming may result in charges to the requestor to recover the cost of public resources spent in fulfilling the request. Such charges shall not exceed the actual cost of searching for and/or providing access to or copies of the requested documents. An estimate of the cost will be provided on request, and a deposit may be required, in keeping with limitations contained within the FOIA.

Schedule of FOIA charges:

- Search and retrieval of records... actual per hour dollar cost of staff time
- Black-and-white photocopies (8.5 x 11)... 10 cents per page
- Color photocopies (8.5 x 11)... 20 cents per page
- CD or DVD copy... \$5
- Large city map (3 x 10 feet, approximately)... \$20
- Small city map (1.5 x 5 feet, approximately)... \$10
- If oversized documents or large quantities are sent to a third party for copying, the requestor will be charged the actual dollar amount of the invoice for the work.

Certain public records do not require a written request to access them. These include:

- Minutes of meetings of public bodies for the past six months.
- All reports related to the nature, location and substance of a crime committed in the last 14 days.
- Documents identifying individuals confined to any jail or detention center in the past three months (excluding restricted juvenile records).

FOIA Policy for City Staff

The City Administrator supervises and is responsible for compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), engaging the City Attorney as needed. SC Code 30-4-30 (c) requires a response to FOIA requests within certain time frames, depending on the age of the information.

FOIA requests are logged in upon receipt and distributed to appropriate departments, with responses tracked via the attached form to ensure compliance with deadlines and requirements. Each department appoints an FOIA liaison who is responsible for receiving, assigning and responding to FOIA requests related to that department in a timely manner.

Departmental FOIA liaisons immediately alert the City Administrator to all requests and may seek advice and assistance, as needed. Liaisons also advise in advance if the response to a request will be especially voluminous or time-consuming, so that public expenses can be recovered. The Police Department FOIA liaison alerts and engages the City Attorney directly for review.

The City Administrator offers annual training with departmental FOIA liaisons to keep staff current on any change in state law or city policy. An “FOIA Request Form” has been created for the public’s convenience, but its use is not required to submit a valid written request under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.