

# Giles County Public Records Request Policy

15 April 2026



## Overview

Giles County is committed to transparency and open government. In accordance with Tennessee law, public records are available for inspection and copying by Tennessee citizens unless otherwise provided by state law.

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## Before Submitting a Public Records Request

Most commonly requested records are already available online through Giles County's website. Before submitting a request, please check:

<https://www.gilescountytn.gov>

The website provides:

- County Commission agendas and minutes
- Budget and financial documents
- Policy documents
- Public notices
- Department reports and general information

Reviewing the website first is often the fastest way to obtain records without submitting a formal request.

If you are unable to locate what you need, we are happy to assist you through the public records request process.

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## What Is a Public Record?

Public records include documents, emails, maps, photographs, and other materials created or received in the course of official County business, regardless of format.

Materials that are purely personal in nature and not related to County business are not considered public records. Further, some records may be confidential under state law and will be redacted or withheld as required.

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## How to Request Records

**1. Determine Specific Needs:** Be as specific as possible. The County cannot create records or compile information that does not already exist.

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**2. Submit a Request:** You may request to **inspect** or **receive copies** of records.

- **Inspection of Records:**

- The Public Records Official will coordinate inspection requests by identifying the departments that maintain responsive records and facilitating access for the requestor.
- When practical, records will be made available for inspection at a mutually agreed-upon location and time. In most cases, inspection may occur at the office where the records are maintained, particularly when records are voluminous, not easily transported, or require departmental oversight.
- The County will work with the requestor to provide efficient and reasonable access to records while minimizing disruption to normal operations.

- **Copies of records:**

- Requests for copies should be made with sufficient detail to allow the County to locate responsive records and must be submitted in writing (see Appendix for form).
- Requests can typically be submitted:
  - In person
  - By mail
  - By email

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## 3. Proof of Tennessee Residency

The County requires [reasonable verification of Tennessee citizenship](#) to comply with state law. You will be asked to present:

- A Tennessee-issued photo ID, **or**
- Other documentation showing Tennessee residency

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## 4. County Response Time

The County will respond **within 7 business days** by:

- Providing the requested records
- Denying the request (with explanation)
- Providing an extended timeline for when records will be available

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## 5. Costs

- Inspection of public records is free
- Copies may involve reasonable costs in accordance with state guidelines
- The first hour of labor required to locate, review, and redact records is provided at no charge
- A cost estimate will be provided before any charges are incurred

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## Important Notes

- The County will redact confidential information as required by law
- Requests must be sufficiently detailed to locate records
- The County is not required to create records or compile information that does not already exist
- Outstanding copy fees must be resolved prior to fulfilling additional copy requests.

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## Questions or Complex Requests

This policy is a summary for convenience. For complete legal requirements, refer to:

- Tennessee Code Annotated § 10-7-503
- [Guidance from the Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel](#)

County staff are also available to assist with questions or to help refine your request. Please contact Liz Pate at [lpate@gilescountyttn.gov](mailto:lpate@gilescountyttn.gov).

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## Attachments:

1. Public records request form
2. Public records request response
3. Schedule of reasonable charges (dtd Jan 2017)

## 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 only<sup>i</sup>.)  
 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

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

**PUBLIC RECORD REQUEST RESPONSE FORM**

INSERT GOV. ENTITY NAME, ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_ (DATE)

Requestor's name and contact info

In response to your records request received on \_\_\_\_\_, our office is taking the action(s)<sup>1</sup> indicated below:

The public record(s) responsive to your request will be made available for inspection:

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies of public record(s) responsive to your request are:

Attached;

Available for pickup at the following location:

\_\_\_\_\_ ; or  
 Being delivered via:  USPS First-Class Mail  Electronically  Other:

Your request is denied on the following grounds:

Your request was not sufficiently detailed to enable identification of the specific requested record(s). You need to provide additional information to identify the requested record(s).

No such record(s) exists or this office does not maintain record(s) responsive to your request.

No proof of Tennessee citizenship was presented with your request. Your request will be reconsidered upon presentation of an adequate form of identification.

You are not a Tennessee citizen.

You have not paid the estimated copying/production fees.

The following state, federal, or other applicable law prohibits disclosure of the requested records:

It is not practicable for the records you requested to be made promptly available for inspection and/or copying because:

It has not yet been determined that records responsive to your request exist; or

The office is still in the process of retrieving, reviewing, and/or redacting the requested records.

The time reasonably necessary to produce the record(s) or information and/or to make a determination of a proper response to your request is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
If you have any additional questions regarding your record request, please contact

Records Custodian or Public Records Request Coordinator

<sup>1</sup> If all requested records do not have the same responses, so indicate.



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY  
OFFICE OF OPEN RECORDS COUNSEL**

**SCHEDULE OF REASONABLE CHARGES**

**PURPOSE:**

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-604(a)(1), the Office of Open Records Counsel (“OORC”) is required to establish a schedule of reasonable charges a records custodian may use as a guideline to charge citizens requesting copies of public records. Additionally, Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g) requires each governmental entity subject to the Tennessee Public Records Act (“TPRA”) to establish a written public records policy that includes a statement of any fees charged for copies of public records and the procedures for billing and payment. Accordingly, the following policy sets forth general guidelines for records custodians when assessing reasonable charges associated with record requests under the TPRA.

**POLICY:**

**I. General Considerations**

- A. Records custodians may not charge for inspection of public records except as provided by law.
- B. The following schedule of reasonable charges should not be interpreted as requiring records custodians to impose charges for copies of public records. Charges for copies of public records must be pursuant to a public records policy properly adopted by the governing authority of a governmental entity. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g) and § 10-7-506(a).
- C. Application of an adopted schedule of charges shall not be arbitrary. Additionally, excessive fees and other rules shall not be used to hinder access to public records.
- D. A records custodian may reduce or waive charges, in whole or in part, in accordance with the governmental entity’s public records policy.
- E. A records custodian may require payment for copies before producing copies of the records.
- F. The TPRA does not distinguish requests for inspection of records based on intended use, be it for research, personal, or commercial purposes. Likewise, this Schedule of Reasonable Charges does not make a distinction in the charges assessed based on the purpose of a record request. However, other statutory provisions, such as Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-506(c), enumerate fees that may be assessed when specific documents are requested for a specific use. Any distinctions made, or waiver of charges permitted, based upon the type of records requested should be expressly set forth and permitted in the adopted public records policy.

- G. Records custodians shall provide a requestor an estimate of reasonable costs to provide copies of requested records.

## **II. Per Page Copying Charges**

- A. For each standard 8½" x 11" or 8½" x 14" copy produced, a records custodian may assess a per page charge of up to 15 cents (\$0.15) for black and white copies and up to 50 cents (\$0.50) for color copies. If producing duplex (front and back) copies, a charge for two separate pages may be imposed for each single duplex copy.
- B. If the charge for color copies is higher than for black and white copies, and a public record is maintained in color but can be produced in black and white, the records custodian shall advise the requestor that the record can be produced in color if the requestor is willing to pay a charge higher than that of a black and white copy.
- C. If a governmental entity's actual costs are higher than those reflected above, or if the requested records are produced on a medium other than 8½" x 11" or 8½" x 14" paper, the governmental entity may develop its own charges. The governmental entity must establish a schedule of charges documenting "actual cost" and state the calculation and reasoning for its charges in a properly adopted policy. A governmental entity may charge less than those charges reflected above. Charges greater than 15 cents (\$0.15) for black and white copies and 50 cents (\$0.50) for color copies can be assessed or collected only when there is documented analysis of the fact that the higher charges represent the governmental entity's actual cost of producing such material, unless there exists another basis in law for such charges.

## **III. Additional Charges**

- A. When assessing a fee for items covered under this section, records custodians shall utilize the most economical and efficient method of producing the requested records.
- B. A records custodian may charge its actual out-of-pocket costs for flash drives or similar storage devices on which electronic copies are provided. When providing electronic records, a records custodian may charge per-page costs only when paper copies that did not already exist are required to be produced in responding to the request, such as when a record must be printed to be redacted.
- C. It is presumed copies of requested records will be provided in person to a requestor when the requestor returns to the records custodian's office to retrieve the records.
- D. If a requestor chooses not to personally retrieve records and the actual cost of delivering the copies, in addition to any other permitted charges, have been paid by the requestor or otherwise waived pursuant to the public records policy, then a records custodian is obligated to deliver the copies via USPS First-Class Mail. It is within the discretion of a records custodian to agree to deliver copies of records through other means, including electronically, and to assess the costs related to such delivery.
- E. If it is not practicable or feasible for the records custodian to produce copies internally, the records custodian may use an outside vendor and charge the costs to the requester.

- F. If a records custodian is assessed a charge to retrieve requested records from archives or any other entity having possession of requested records, the records custodian may recover from the requestor the costs assessed for retrieval.

#### **IV. Labor Charges**

- A. A records custodian shall utilize the most cost efficient method of producing requested records. Accordingly, a records custodian should strive to utilize current employees at the lowest practicable hourly wage to fulfill public records requests for copies.
- B. "Labor" is the time (in hours) reasonably necessary to produce requested records, including the time spent locating, retrieving, reviewing, redacting, and reproducing records.
- C. "Labor threshold" is the first (1<sup>st</sup>) hour of labor reasonably necessary to produce requested material(s). A governmental entity may adopt a higher labor threshold than one (1) hour. A records custodian is only permitted to charge for labor exceeding the labor threshold established by the governmental entity.
- D. "Hourly wage of an employee" is based upon the base salary of the employee and does not include benefits. If an employee is not paid on an hourly basis, the hourly wage shall be determined by dividing the employee's annual salary by the required hours to be worked per year. For example, an employee who is expected to work a 37.5 hour workweek and receives \$39,000 in salary on an annual basis will be deemed to be paid \$20 per hour.
- E. In calculating labor charges, a records custodian should determine the total amount of labor for each employee and subtract the labor threshold from the labor of the highest paid employee(s). The records custodian should then multiply the amount of labor for each employee by each employee's hourly wage to calculate the total amount of labor charges associated with the request.

#### Example:

The hourly wage of Employee A is \$15.00. The hourly wage of Employee B is \$20.00. Employee A spends two (2) hours on a request. Employee B spends two (2) hours on the same request. The labor threshold is established at one (1) hour. Since Employee B is the highest paid employee, the labor threshold will be applied to the time Employee B spent producing the request. For this request, \$50.00 could be charged for labor. This is calculated by taking the number of hours each employee spent producing the request, subtracting the threshold amount, multiplying that number by the employee's hourly wage, and then adding the amounts together (i.e. Employee A (2 x \$15.00) + Employee B (1 x \$20.00) = \$50.00).

*Submitted to ACOG: November 8, 2016.  
Effective: January 20, 2017*