

FOIA Library

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OFFICE OF
**STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATIONS AND
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

How we handle FOIA requests



We treat requesters with respect and impartiality regardless of the size or scope of the request.



We offer requesters the option to modify or refine requests to reduce costs.



AVAILABLE

We do not charge for records that are publicly available.



We do not charge for records that were previously released.



We conduct thorough and good faith searches of all relevant records.



Virginia FOIA Library examples



Newport News: FOIA Library containing records that were released in full. Partially redacted records are posted selectively. Requests referred to other agencies are included. Records from Ambulance, Fire, Human Services, Police, are not included in the Library.



Virginia Beach: Eight FOIA requests posted to Library.



Norfolk: No FOIA Library posted on website.

Amendments to ORD. 2025-210

Exempted agencies

1. Richmond Police Department
2. Richmond Fire Department
3. Department of Social Services
4. Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response

Additional exemptions

- Minor dependents of the requester are the subject of any materials produced
- Requests made by an attorney on behalf of a client shall be treated as a request made by the client

The city processes approximately **5,500 requests annually**.

Exempted agencies account for about **73% of FOIA requests** over the last three months.

Amendments to ORD. 2025-210

Office of Immigrant
and Refugee
Engagement?

Entirely exempt all of
these departments?

Parks & Rec?

Weaponized FOIAs?
("all records describing
how Ross hates Francine")

Additional changes

- Minor dependents of the requester are the subject of any materials provided
- Requests made by an attorney on behalf of a client shall be treated as a request made by the client

Adult dependents?

Spouses?



Some concerns with ORD. 2025-210

Limited records posted

Proposed exemptions cover almost three-quarters of all FOIA requests. **We expect more records will be added to the Library using the proposed rubric in ORD. 2025-240.**

Incomplete protections

Significant issues, including those involving children, can arise in FOIA requests for other departments not exempted by amendments (e.g. Parks and Recreation).

FOIA requests could be used to expose identities of Office of Immigration and Refugee Engagement clients.

Bad-faith requests

Weaponized FOIAs that are intended to embarrass staff or residents.

FOIA is complex

We regularly—sometimes daily!—encounter interesting and new FOIA scenarios.

It would be incredibly challenging to legislate a thoughtful rubric today that will serve us for years to come.

So...



**DO NOT MEDDLE IN THE
AFFAIRS OF ~~WIZARDS~~ FOIAs,
FOR THEY ARE SUBTLE AND
QUICK TO ~~ANGER~~ GET REAL
COMPLICATED.**

ORD. 2025-240

All requests for public records made pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Code of Virginia, §2.2-3700 et seq.) that meet **the guidelines of a published rubric** approved by the Chief Administrative Officer shall be made available to the FOIA Manager. The FOIA Manager shall ensure that **all requests for public records meeting the guidelines of the approved rubric**, including requests made of the City Council, Mayor, city departments, and city boards and commissions, are published on the city's website via a Freedom of Information Act Request Library.

Transparency for public good

To ensure consistency, transparency and compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA) while balancing privacy and security, this rubric sets out criteria for determining which records produced in response to FOIA requests will be posted to the City's public FOIA portal/library.

POST

Releasable responsive records (some will have legally determined redactions) that are:

1. requested by two or more requesters,
2. of public interest, and/or
3. central to government operational accountability.

DO NOT POST

1. Records with strong privacy, security, or confidential information that could endanger an individual's safety or compromise a minor.
2. Records where redaction is insufficient to protect from misuse.



Fiscal impact of ORD. 2025-240

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- FOIA Manager is already involved in most requests that are of public interest or central to government accountability.
- FOIA Manager is also responsible for requests from our media partners. Almost every repeat request is from a member of the media.
- Amended ORD. 2025-210 would still require one full-time FOIA Librarian to review requests before posting to FOIA Library.

Moving forward...

ORD. 2025-240 allows for a nuanced and thoughtful implementation that minimizes risk of unintended consequences, while likely allowing more records to be released to the public — and at lower cost.



Trust the FOIA experts.



Protect our residents and their privacy.



Require transparency and accountability from ALL departments.



Adopt a rubric that adapts to new situations.

Questions?

