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

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

PURPOSE:

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g), every governmental entity subject to the Tennessee Public Records Act ("TPRA") (Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-501 et seq.), must establish a written public records policy properly adopted by the appropriate governing authority by July 1, 2017. The policy adopted shall not impose requirements on those requesting records that are more burdensome than state law and shall include:

- The process for requesting access to public records and any required form(s);
- The process for responding to requests, including redaction practices;
- A statement of any fees charged for copies of public records and the procedures for billing and payment; and
- The name or title and contact information of the individual or individuals designated as the Public Records Request Coordinator(s).

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-604(a)(4), the Office of Open Records Counsel ("OORC") is required to establish a model best practices and public records policy for use by a records custodian in compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503. The following Public Records Policy serves as guidance for records custodians and their respective governmental entities in developing a public records policy and fulfilling their duties under the TPRA. The OORC encourages and will provide assistance for governmental associations and groups to develop model public records policies tailored to their specific governmental entity subgroup.

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY FOR
GENERAL SESSIONS COURT CLERK'S OFFICE FOR ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(g), the following Public Records Policy for the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee is hereby adopted for the General Sessions Court for Robertson County, Tennessee 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 General Sessions Court for Robertson County, Tennessee are presumed to be open for inspection unless otherwise provided by law.

Personnel of the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee 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 open public records. However, the integrity and organization of public records, as well as the efficient and safe operation of the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee, shall be protected as provided by current law. Concerns about this Policy should be addressed to the Public Records Request Coordinator for General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee or to the Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel ("OORC").

This Policy is available for inspection and duplication in the Circuit Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee. [This Policy is posted online at www.robertsoncountytn.gov]. This Policy shall be reviewed annually.

This Policy shall be applied consistently throughout the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee and shall only apply to said department. Other local governmental offices and departments may have separate public records policies.

I. Definitions:

1. *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.

2. *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).

3. *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.

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

II. Requesting Access to Public Records

1. 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.

2. Requests for inspection only cannot be required to be made in writing. The PRRC should request a mailing [or email] address from the requestor for providing any written communication required under the TPRA.

3. Requests for inspection may be made orally or in writing [using the attached *Public Records Request Form*] Requests for inspection may be made in person or by mail at **General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee, 529 South Brown Street, Springfield, Tennessee 37172**. Requests for inspection may be made by phone at **615-382-2324** or by fax at **615-382-3113**. Requests for inspection may also be submitted by email.

4. Requests for copies, or requests for inspection and copies, shall be made in writing [using the attached *Public Records Request*]. Requests for copies may be made in person or by mail at **General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee, 529 South Brown Street, Springfield, Tennessee 37172**. Requests for copies may be made by fax at **615-382-3113**. Requests for copies may also be submitted by email to kristy.chowning@tncourts.gov and/or allison.watson@tncourts.gov.

5. 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.

6. Public notices and information are made available by visiting our webpage at www.robertsoncountytn.gov.

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 Governmental Entity 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. (Offer to assist in clarification)

iii. An exemption makes the record not subject to disclosure under the TPRA.

iv. The Governmental Entity is not the custodian of the requested records.

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.

e. If requested records are in the custody of a different governmental entity, and the PRRC knows the correct governmental entity, advise the requestor of the correct governmental entity and PRRC for that entity if known.

3. The designated PRRC(s) is(are):

a. Name and title: Kristy A. Chowning, Circuit Court Clerk and Allison Watson, Chief Administrator

b. Contact information:529 South Brown Street, Springfield, Tennessee 37172; Phone: 615-382-2324; Fax: 615-382-3113;

c. Email:kristy.chowning@tncourts.gov. or allison.watson@tncourts.gov.

4. [The PRRC(s) shall report to the governing authority on an annual basis about the Governmental Entity's compliance with the TPRA pursuant to this Policy and shall make recommendations, if any, for improvement or changes to this Policy.]

B. Records Custodian

1. Upon receiving a public records request, a records custodian shall promptly make the 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*, attached hereto, 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 using 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 Form* 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.

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

1. There shall be no charge for inspection of open public records.

2. The location for inspection of records within the offices of the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee should be determined by either the PRRC or the records custodian.

3. Under reasonable circumstances, the PRRC or a records custodian may require an appointment for inspection or may require inspection of records at an alternate location.

V. Copies of Records

1. A records custodian shall promptly respond to a public record request for copies in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.

2. Copies will be available for pickup at a location specified by the records custodian

3. Upon payment for postage, copies will be delivered to the requestor's home address by the United States Postal Service.

4. A requestor will not be allowed to make copies of records with personal equipment.

VI. Fees and Charges and Procedures for Billing and Payment

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

2. Records custodians shall provide requesters 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.

3. Fees and charges for copies are as follows (*if higher than the amounts authorized by the OORC Schedule of Reasonable Charges, documentation should be attached*):

    1. $0.50 per page for letter-and legal size black and white copies (T.C.A §8-21-401(i)4)

    2. $0.50 per page for letter- and legal-size color copies.

    3. Labor when time exceeds 1.00 hours.

    4. If an outside vendor is used, the actual costs are assessed by the vendor.

4. Payment is to be made by cash, money order/cashier's check, (payable to Robertson County General Sessions Court Clerk's Office) and/or credit/debit card (service charges will apply) and presented to the records custodian

5. Payment in advance will be required [when costs are estimated to exceed $100.00.]

I. Aggregation of Frequent and Multiple Requests

1. General Sessions Court Clerk's Office for Robertson County, Tennessee will not aggregate record requests in accordance with the Frequent and Multiple Request Policy promulgated by the OORC when more than (4) requests are received within a calendar month (either from a single individual or a group of individuals deemed working in concert).

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST FORM FOR GENERAL SESSIONS COURT CLERK'S OFFICE FOR ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

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.

To: Robertson County General Sessions Court
529 South Brown Street, Springfield, Tennessee 37172 Date: _____
Phone: (615)382-2324
Email: kristy.chowning@tncourts.gov. or allison.watson@tncourts.gov.

From: Requestor's Name and Contact Information (include an address, email, and phone number)

_____

_____

_____

Is the requestor a Tennessee citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Request: ☐ Inspection (The TPRA does not permit fees or require a written request for inspection only[1].)

☐ 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 to respond 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

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

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST RESPONSE FORM FOR
GENERAL SESSIONS COURT CLERK'S OFFICE FOR ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Requestor's Name and Contact Information: Date: _____

_____

_____

In response to your records request received on _____, 20____ [Date Request Received], our office is taking the action(s)[1] indicated below:

- ☐ The public record(s) responsive to your request will be made available for inspection:
  Location: **General Sessions Court Clerk's Office**; 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: _____.

The total cost to process your records request is $ _____

- ☐ 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 the Robertson County Circuit Court Clerk below:

Sincerely,

Kristy A. Chowning
422 W. Court Square, Suite 106,
Springfield, Tennessee 37172
Phone: (615)384-7864 /Email: kristy.chowning@tncourts.gov

[1] If all requested records do not have the same response, so indicate.