

JEFFERSON METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY
PUBLIC RECORDS AND OPEN MEETING POLICY

Resolution 2026-006

Introduction

Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority (JMHA) acknowledges that it maintains many records that constitute public records under Ohio's Public Records Law. The records maintained by JMHA and the ability to access them are a means to provide trust between the public and JMHA. The purpose of this Public Records and Open Meeting Policy (Policy) is to set forth policies and procedures employed by JMHA for receiving and responding to requests for public records and to offer consistency in holding its public meetings in a way that is compliant with Ohio and, when applicable, federal law.

In accordance with the Ohio Revised code, this office defines records as any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, including an electronic record that is kept by JMHA and which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of JMHA.

JMHA has a designated employee, the Public Records Coordinator, who serves as the custodian of all records maintained by the office. This Public Records Policy is a part of the Policies and Procedures Manual of JMHA and is available to the public upon request.

JMHA records shall be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying in accordance with Ohio law.

Record Requests and Availability

All public records maintained by JMHA shall be promptly prepared and made available for inspection to any person during regular business hours by appointment.

The Requester is not required to put a records request in writing and does not have to provide his or her identity. The Requester does not have to provide the intended use of the requested public record. However, to assist with determination and clarity of the specific record requested, the Requester is asked to make the request for public records in writing whenever possible.

JMHA may require a written request or require the disclosure of the identity of the Requester or the intended use of the records requested only when such information would benefit the request by enhancing JMHA's ability to identify, locate or deliver the public record sought by the Requester. A Public Records Request Form is available for the use of the Requester.

Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested the proximity of the location where the records are stored, and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

JMHA shall notify the Requester of its receipt of the Requester's request within five (5) business days of its receipt and, within ten (10) business days of its receipt, send to the Requester an

estimate of the costs of fulfilling the request which shall be paid by the Requestor upon fulfillment of the Request or acceptance by JMHA of the fee waiver provided in this policy.

JMHA shall respond to public records requests within a reasonable period of time as required by Ohio law.

If a request cannot, for any reason, be immediately fulfilled, JMHA may provide:

A request for clarification;

An estimated time for production; and/or

An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Routine requests, including meeting minutes, budgets, salary information, forms, and applications, should be satisfied as promptly as possible.

Denial of Request for Access

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, which may include legal authority relied upon in denying the request.

If portions of a record are public and such portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the rest released.

Redaction means obscuring or deleting any information that is exempt from the duty to permit public inspection or copying.

JMHA is not required to create records or meet public records requests for records that do not exist.

If the Requestor makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request for copies or inspection of public records such that JMHA cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested:

1. JMHA may deny the request
2. JMHA shall provide the Requester with an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which records are maintained by JMHA in the ordinary course of business.

Exempt Records

Records whose release is prohibited or exempted by either state or federal law, or not considered public records shall not be subject to public inspection.

Examples of records that may be exempt include, but are not limited to:

- Social security numbers
- Medical records
- Trial or litigation records
- Certain confidential personnel information protected by law
- Juvenile records protected by law
- Security records and infrastructure records protected by law

- Attorney-client privileged communications
- Records prohibited from disclosure by state or federal law

Employees of JMHA shall consult legal counsel if they are unsure of whether the record requested should be withheld from disclosure. Under this circumstance, the Requester should be so notified that the request is under legal review.

Fees

Those seeking public records will be charged the following:

1. Black-and-white paper copies: \$0.05 per page
2. The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1 per disc
3. Electronic records sent by email: No charge
4. For video tapes, cassette tapes, or other forms of media, the fee shall be the actual reproduction cost.
5. Mailed requests shall include actual postage and mailing supply costs.
6. Pre-payment may be required before copies are produced.
7. Inspection of public records is free of charge.
8. JMHA may, at its discretion, waive or reduce copy fees when doing so is determined to be in the best interest of the agency or the public. Any request for a waiver or reduction of fees must be submitted on the JMHA Request for Waiver of Public Record Fees form and provided to the Public Records Coordinator for review and approval.

Electronic Requests and email

Documents in electronic mail format are records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of the office.

Electronic communications, including email, that document the functions or operations of JMHA may constitute public records and shall be retained and disclosed in accordance with applicable law and approved records retention schedules.

Records in private email accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure.

Employees are instructed to retain public business emails in accordance with JMHA policies and records retention schedules.

Records Retention

Records shall be maintained and disposed of in accordance with approved records retention schedules and applicable state and federal law.

Failure to Respond to a Public Records Request

JMHA recognizes the legal and non-legal consequences of failure to properly respond to a public records request.

If a person allegedly is aggrieved due to the inability to inspect a public record or due to the inability to receive a copy of the public record, the person shall be advised that they may contact legal counsel or pursue remedies available under Ohio Revised Code Section 149.43.

Public Records Training

Any person responsible for releasing public records on behalf of JMHA shall attend annual public records training approved by the Ohio Attorney General in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 149.43.

OPEN MEETING POLICY

All meetings of the Board of Commissioners of the Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority will be open to the public. All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22. The meeting schedule will be posted to the Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority webpage at www.jeffersonmha.org and/or local media publications. Meetings are generally held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 3:00 p.m. in the JFK Community Room, located at 815 N. 6th Ave., Steubenville, OH 43952, but such meetings are subject to being rescheduled at the direction of the Board upon notice of any changes being published in the same manner as the regular meeting schedule.

The minutes of regular and special meetings, with the exception of any executive session, will be promptly recorded and open to the public for inspection. Executive Sessions may be held at a Regular or Special Meeting. These meetings will be entered into and returned to regular session by a roll call vote of the Board. No action will be taken while in Executive Session. Any vote on any matter discussed within the Executive Session will be taken in Open or Public Session. Matters that can be discussed during Executive Session are specifically limited by the Ohio Revised Code. The minutes of the meeting must include a general description of the nature of the Executive Session discussion.

The Regular Meetings of the Board of Commissioners are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 3:00 p.m. Notice of any Special Meeting will be published on the Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority webpage, www.jeffersonmha.org and/or local media publications, at least 24 hours in advance. If an emergency meeting of the Board on a matter which requires immediate action is necessary, notice of such emergency meeting shall be published to the Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority webpage, www.jeffersonmha.org and/or local media publications, when it is determined that an emergency meeting shall be held.

Effective Date

This revised policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by the Board of Commissioners of Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority.