

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE January 4, 2019

Honorable Members of the Government Performance & Financial Management Committee:
TO Jennifer S. Gates (Chair), Scott Griggs (Vice Chair), Sandy Greyson, Lee M. Kleinman, Philip
T. Kingston, Tennell Atkins, Kevin Felder

SUBJECT **Open Records Request Center Update**

On Monday, January 7, 2019, you will be provided an update on the Open Records Request Center. The presentation is attached for your review.

Please let me know if you need additional information.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Billerae Johnson', written over the typed name and title.

Billerae Johnson
City Secretary

[Attachment]

C: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
T. C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney(I)
Carol A. Smith, City Auditor(I)
Judge Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Directors and Assistant Directors

Kimberly Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager
Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager
Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager
Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager
Nadia Chandler Hardy, Assistant City Manager

Open Records Request Center Update

**Government Performance & Financial Management
Committee**

January 7, 2019

**Bilierae Johnson, City Secretary
City Secretary's Office**



Presentation Overview

- Background on Open Records Request(s)
- Initial identified challenges
- Improvements to identified challenges
- Historical and statistical data
- Continued improvements
- Questions



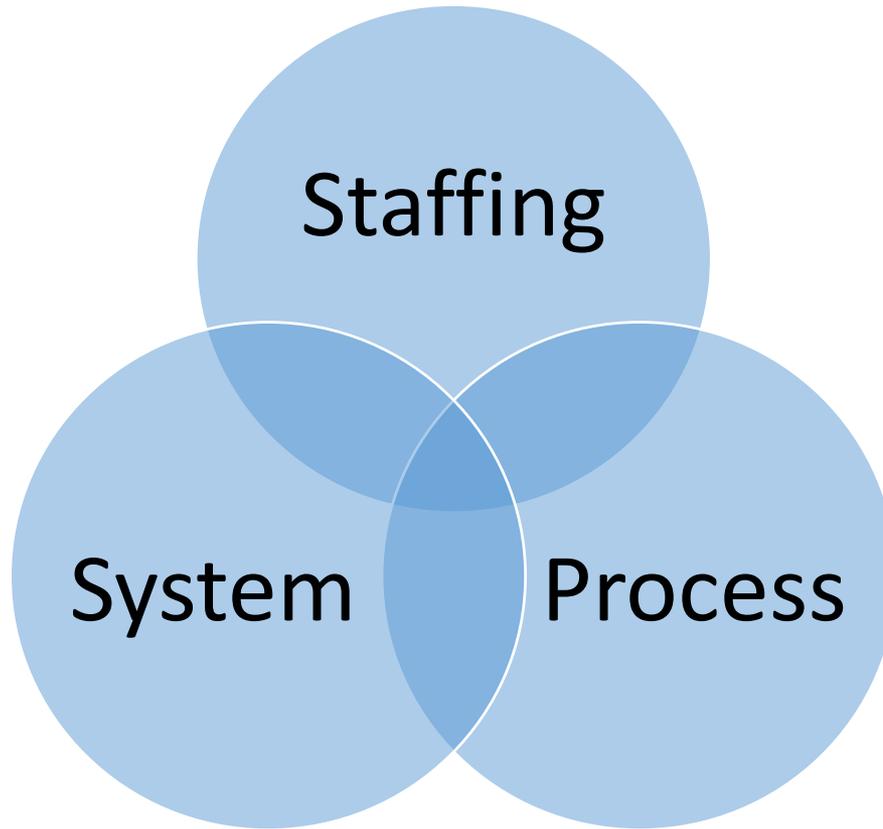
Background: Open Records Request(s)

The Dallas City Council, on October 11, 2017 via Resolution 17-1608, transferred oversight responsibility for the City's Open Records Request (ORR) from the City Manager to the City Secretary

- Oversight for all ORRs with exception of DPD
- Each department or managing services division has an Open Records Coordinator
- Five departmental dedicated FTEs
- Two city departments assist the Open Records Request Center (ORC)
 - City Attorney's Office
 - Communication & Information Systems

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Initial Challenges Identified:



Initial Identified Challenges: STAFFING

- Receipt and dissemination of ORRs to department is limited to two dedicated staff (housed in PIO); resulting incompletion of requests assigned to departments or overlooked (non-responded) requests
- No back-up staff when either one of the two dedicated staff was out-of-office; resulting in 50% of work operations being halted
- Entry level staff served as ORR Coordinator; resulting in unfamiliarity of departmental records

Initial Identified Challenges : SYSTEM

- Lack of an electronic document management system
- GovQA Web System (implemented in 2016)
 - Not utilized by all departments
 - Inactive features
 - Lack of training
- Documents redacted by hand

Open Records Center

Open Records Center

HOME

SUBMIT A REQUEST

VIEW FAQs

VIEW MY REQUESTS

OPEN RECORDS SEARCH

FAQs [See All FAQs](#)

What will the charges be?

How long will a Public Information Act Request take?

Why does the City Attorney's Office receive a copy of my request?

How do I make a request?

How do I request Lien Pay-Off Statements?

Login

If you have used this service previously, please log in. If this is your first online request, please create an account and provide as much contact information as possible. You will be able to track the progress of your request by logging in to your account.

Login

Email Address*

Password*

Submit

If you don't know or have forgotten your password, click here.

First time users, please click below:
[Create Account](#)

By logging in, you agree to GovQA's [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#).

Initial Identified Challenges: PROCESS

- No Standard Operating Procedure to process ORRs
- Two dedicated FTEs responsible for oversight of all ORRs with exception of DPD
- A centralized inbox was used to house all phases of a request; including a new request, a responsive record(s), clarification, cost estimate and any communication(s) from internal and external customers.
- Relied on a color coded system to manage and track requests

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Initial Identified Challenges: PROCESS (cont'd)

- No direct communication
 - All communication(s) on a request was sent to the centralized inbox and not to a designated coordinator
- Siloed interdepartmental coordination
- High profile requests received priority
 - Routine requests only received a response when the requestor called or emailed for follow-up; which resulted in varying response times

Initial Identified Challenges: PROCESS_(cont'd)

- Public unaware of various methods to request records/documents
- Review of requested emails were handled by only one staff member
- No system-generated cost estimate invoice existed; requesters were sent a manually computed 'cost letter' of charges
- Cash, checks or money orders were only accepted in-person or by mail.



Improvements to Identified Challenges: STAFFING (cont'd)

- 5 FTEs in the Open Records Center; resulting in better monitoring and response of open records requests
- Implemented back-up plan when a staff member is out of the office; resulting in no work operations being halted
- Higher level staff (coordinators, manager and executive) serves as ORR Coordinator; resulting in better knowledge of departmental records

Other Department Assistance:

- City Attorney's Office
- Communication & Information System

Improvements to Identified Challenges: STAFFING (cont'd)

Administrative Support
Open Records Intake (GovQA, Mail, In-Person, Email, Fax)
 Filing/Indexing/Retention
 Payment Notification
 Accounts Payables

Open Records Manager

- Convention and Event Services
- Court & Detention Services - Courts
- Court & Detention Services - Marshal's Office
- Dallas Water Utilities
- Fair Housing & Human Rights
- Judiciary
- Communication and Information Services
- Office of Business Diversity
- Office of Homeless Solutions
- Office of Community Care
- Planning & Urban Design
- Public Works
- Aviation / Transportation Regulation
- GovQA System Support
- Administrative duties
- *Provide assistance to assign departments**

Open Records Coordinator

- Employees' Retirement
- Building Services
- Library
- Office of Cultural Affairs
- Office of Emergency Management
- Office of Environmental Quality
- Office of Strategic Partnership & Government Affairs
- Office of Fleet Management
- Environmental Site Assessments
- Property Condition Assessments
- Bond Office
- Office of Procurement Services
- *Provide assistance to assign departments**

Open Records Coordinator

- City Attorney's Office
- City Auditor's Office
- City Controller's Office
- City Manager's Office
- City Secretary's Office
- Civil Service
- Council Office
- Human Resources
- Office of Strategic Partnerships & Government Affairs
- Mayor's Office
- Office of Budget
- Office of Ethics & Compliance
- Public Affairs and Outreach
- Risk Management
- Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs
- Office of Economic Development
- Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization
- Park & Recreation
- Transportation
- *Provide assistance to assign departments**

Open Records Coordinator

- Code Compliance
- 311
- Dallas Animal Services
- DFD (Fire Dispatch - ESA) Initial Response
- DFR (Financial Services) Initial Response
- DFR (Fire Prevention) Initial Response
- DFR (Training and Maintenance) Initial Response
- DFR (Unknown) Initial Response
- DFR (Arson)
- DFR (Communications)
- DFR (Internal Affairs) Initial Response
- Sanitation Services
- Sustainable Development and Construction (Building Inspection)
- *Provide assistance to assign departments**



Improvements to Identified Challenges: SYSTEM

- Require all coordinators to utilize the GovQA system
 - Acknowledge of receipt of request
 - Date/time stamped notes of status on all requests, including completion
 - System generated reminders of request deadlines
 - Tracking of an ORR to ensure accountability
- Open Records Request Coordinators Training
 - 1st ORR training: April 3rd, 6th – 88 attendees
 - 2nd ORR training: November 7th – 107 attendees
 - In conjunction with the Attorney General's Office
 - Conducted 7 individual department trainings
- Developed training and reference materials

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City of Dallas

Improvements to Identified Challenges: PROCESS

- Developed ORR Standard Operating Procedures
 - Including roles and responsibilities, indexing procedures, Internal Controls, retention and cash handling (receivables and payables)

Note:

Initial draft of ORR Standard Operating Procedures were reviewed and edited by the City Attorney's Office

ORR Standard Operating Procedures are currently being reviewed by the City Auditor's Office (audit of Open Records Request Center in progress)

Improvements to Identified Challenges: PROCESS (cont'd)

- ORC staff assigns request(s) to applicable departments and requires an acknowledgement of receipt within 48 hours
 - New requests
 - Liaison between requester and city staff
 - Correspondence with internal and external customers
- Departmental coordinators must enter all status information on their request(s) into GovQA
 - Clarifications
 - Time Extensions
 - Scheduling of Inspections
 - Cost Estimates and Invoices
- Departmental coordinators must upload all releasable responsive records into GovQA
- ORC staff performs a quality control check on all responsive records and releases to the customer and public (when applicable)
 - Manage requests to ensure compliance with the Public Information Act including meeting all deadlines set forth by the State of Texas
- ORC is a liaison between city staff and City Attorney's Office. The ORC is mostly responsible for sending correspondence to the Attorney General's Office and notifying of intention to request a ruling to withhold records
- Custodians of emails are responsible for reviewing their own emails for responsive, non-responsive, and possible exemptions from disclosure (when applicable)
 - Provide training and guidance to all departmental coordinators on compliance, costs, and procedures associated with responding to requests for public information.

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Historical and Statistical Data

- Top 5 Departments with ORRs
 - Dallas Fire Rescue
 - Arson Reports
 - Fire Inspections
 - Sprinkler Plan/Permits
 - Dispatch Reports
 - List of Burned Structures
 - Code Compliance
 - General Code Inspection Records
 - Multi-tenant Inspections
 - Health Inspections
 - Environmental Assessments
 - Property Assessments
 - Sustainable Development and Construction
 - Variance information
 - Building Code Violations/Permits
 - Environmental Assessments
 - Property Assessments
 - Office of Environment Quality
 - Environmental Assessments
 - Dallas Water Utilities (includes former Trinity Watershed Management Department)
 - Water Disconnect Report
 - Historical Bill Information

Historical and Statistical Data (cont'd)

Time Period	Requests
January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2018	11,522
January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017	10,570
January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016 (switched from Motorola to GovQA Oct. 2016)	11,108 (est.)

Number of Request(s) Closed <u>w/in</u> 10 Days	Number / (%)	*Number of Request(s) Closed <u>after</u> 10 Days	Number / (%)
2018	8,247 (71.58%)	2018	3,275 (28.42%)
2017	5,836 (55.21%)	2017	4,734 (44.79%)
2016	3,695 (33.26%)	2016	7,413 (66.74%)

*Average Days Request(s) Open	Days
2018	11.51
2017	21.04
2016	27.58

*Includes ORRs that were sent to the State Attorney General's Office for a ruling/opinion, clarifications, time-extensions, and waiting for payments.

Continued Improvements

- Transparency Reports *(implemented February 2018)*
 - Mayor/City Council – weekly report of significant requests
 - City Manager’s Office - weekly report of all requests for the period
- Publication of Released Request(s) *(implemented August 2018)*
 - Request(s) responses that do not contain confidential or information exempt from disclosure
- Launch “For the Record” *(February 2019)*
 - Periodic educational announcements to city staff and departmental coordinators regarding the Public Information Act (PIA) and the City’s open records process
- Launch Live Chat *(March 2019)*
 - Customer service initiative to provide online assistance on how to locate and access published city records and documents **(Pilot days/times: Tuesday–Friday, 9am-1pm)**
- Release automated redactions (GovQA) feature *(March 2019)*
 - Technological tool to make the redaction of confidential information less time consuming and labor intensive

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Questions



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