

Public Records Request Policy

Purpose

To establish procedures for receiving, processing, and fulfilling public records requests in accordance with the Louisiana Public Records Act (La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.). Statutes providing for public access to records shall be interpreted liberally to extend, not restrict, access to public records.

Custodian of Public Records

The Town Clerk is designated as the official Custodian of Public Records for the Town of Abita Springs. All requests for public records shall be directed to the Custodian at Town Hall during regular business hours.

Submitting a Public Records Request

Requests may be made:

- In person at the Town Hall Annex,
- In writing (by mail or hand delivery), or
- Electronically through the Town's website or by email.

Requests may be made verbally or by telephone.

Definition of Public Records

Public records include any documentary materials, data, or information—regardless of form—produced, received, or maintained by the Town in the course of conducting public business. Examples include documents, correspondence, reports, emails, and other tangible or electronic records.

Records exempt from disclosure include, but are not limited to:

- Confidential or privileged information protected by law,
- Personnel or medical records,
- Certain law enforcement and investigative materials.

The Custodian may consult with legal counsel to determine whether requested materials must be redacted or withheld in accordance with exemptions provided by law.

Contents of a Public Records Request

To assist the Town in processing a request, requesters are encouraged to provide:

- contact information, a clear description of the records requested, relevant dates or time periods if known, and the preferred format for receiving copies. The Custodian may request information necessary to verify age and identity as permitted by law and may ask the requester to clarify or specify the records sought if the Custodian cannot determine what records are being requested.

Response Time

The Custodian shall respond within three (3) business days, excluding holidays, as required by La. R.S. 44:32. The response may include:

- Acknowledgment: Notice that the request has been received, with an estimate of costs and a projected completion timeline.
- Release: Provision of the requested records, if immediately available.
- Denial: Written explanation

Commented [KF1]: You have 3 business days, not 5, to respond. Records should be produced within that time if immediately available. If they are not, you send the initial response letter within that timeframe.

If additional time is required to locate or review the records, the Custodian shall notify the requester in writing of the estimated completion date.

Inspection of Records

Public records are available for inspection at Town Hall during normal business hours (Monday–Friday, excluding holidays).

To ensure availability, please schedule in-person inspections in advance.

Fees and Payment

Fees for reproduction and certification of public records shall be assessed in accordance with La. R.S. 44:32(C) and the Town’s approved fee schedule, as follows:

Type of Record or Service

Copies (paper or electronic) \$0.50 per page
Certified copies \$20.00 per certification
Accident/Incident Reports \$7.00 per incident
Postage (if applicable) Actual mailing cost

Estimates and Deposits:

- The Custodian shall review the request and provide a cost estimate.
- The Town may require advance payment or a deposit before retrieving, reviewing, or reproducing the requested records.
- The requester must confirm acceptance of the estimated cost in writing before processing begins.

Payment:

Payment must be made in full prior to release of any copies or certified documents. Acceptable payment methods include cash, check, or money order payable to the Town of Abita Springs.

No postage or handling fees will be charged for records transmitted electronically.

Retention and Documentation

All public records requests and responses shall be documented and retained.

Notice: Information submitted to the Town, including information contained in public records requests, may itself become a public record subject to disclosure under Louisiana law, unless an exemption applies in accordance with the records retention schedule.