

MINERVA POLICE DEPARTMENT PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

Policy

It is the belief of the Minerva Police Department that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to a better government and better public policy. It is the policy of the Minerva Police Department to adhere to the State of Ohio Public Records Act to comply with requests for the release of public records.

Section 1: Public Records

This office, in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, defines records to include the following; any document – paper, electronic or other format - that is created or received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of a public office that documents the organization, function, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of the Minerva Police Department are public unless they are exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

Although there are legal exemptions to the release of protected information, all exemptions are to be construed in their narrowest sense and in favor of disclosure as required by law and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If the request is in writing, the explanation must also be in writing.

It is the policy of the Minerva Police Department as required by Ohio Law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are available for inspection and copying in accordance with the law.

Section 2: Public Records Requests

You may make public records requests to the Minerva Police Department twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (24/7) in person, by mail or over the phone.

While there is no “official” language required to make a public records request, the requestor must clearly state or identify the records and/or information being sought to allow the Minerva Police Department to identify, retrieve and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the custodian may contact the requester for clarification and explain how the records are organized and accessed so the requestor may revise their request.

The requestor does not have to put a request in writing and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record. The custodian may ask for a written request and may ask for the requestor’s identity and/or intended use of the information requested if (1) it would benefit the requestor by helping the public office identify, locate or deliver the records being sought and (2) the requestor is informed that a written request and the requestor’s identity and intended use of the information are not required.

For efficiency, the Minerva Police Department has a public record request form available. The requestor is not required to use this form or to put their request in writing. The Minerva Police Department does not limit or condition the availability of public records based on whether a written form is used or whether a request identifies him or herself.

Section 3: Inspection and Copies

Public Records are generally available for inspection and copies Monday – Friday 8:00am -4:00pm with the exception of holidays. We will provide prompt inspection of public records and copies of public records in 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. Most routine requests for records should be satisfied immediately if feasible to do so. If a request is deemed beyond “routine” such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the custodian will notify the requestor of an estimated number of business days it will take to complete the request and any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

If a request is ambiguous, overly broad or if the requestor has difficulty in making a request that we cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the request may be denied or the custodian may ask the requestor to narrow down their request by explaining to the requestor the manner in which records are kept and accessed and assist them in revising their request.

Any denial of public records requested will include an explanation, including legal authority. If only a portion of a record is exempt, then only that portion will be withheld or redacted and the rest released. The custodian shall notify the requestor of any redactions or make the redactions plainly visible.

If the records cannot be provided while you wait, we will contact you when the records are available.

Section 4: Cost for Public Records

The Minerva Police Department may charge for the actual cost of making copies of records. The Minerva Police Department requires payment for public record copies before being released or mailed to the requestor. There is no charge to inspect/view public records.

The Police Department’s current costs for public record copies are as follows:

- Incident/Arrest reports - \$.05 per page
- Accident Reports - \$5.00 per report
- CD/DVD of documents and/or video - \$2.00 per CD/DVD
- Color Photographs – Provided on 8 ½ x 11 paper - \$.10 per page
 - Photos provided as part of an accident report request are excluded from this charge.
- If an outside duplication service is requested (i.e. hard copies of photographs), all charges from the service are passed on to the requestor.

- Requestor may ask that records be mailed to them.
If the cost to mail the records exceeds the current standard envelope postage rate due to size or weight, the requestor may be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

Section 5: Managing Records

The records of the Minerva Mayors Court are subject to a record retention schedule.