



The Board of Directors of Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority

Public Information Policy

1. Purpose:

To outline the policies, responsibilities, and procedures for providing access to public records held by the Board of Directors.

2. Corresponding Requirements:

South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Section 30-4-10 et seq. of the *South Carolina Code of Laws*, 1976, as amended.

3. General:

The Board of Directors of Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority (hereinafter "The Board") receives a substantial number of requests for information. The Board embraces the tenets set forth in the FOIA governing the public's right to access its records. The Board is committed to following both the letter and spirit of the FOIA. These guidelines are intended to complement, but do not replace, the requirements set forth under the FOIA.

4. Policies:

In order to ensure open access, accountability, and timely and appropriate response to the public, the following policies are adopted concerning requests for information:

Information Requests and Response to Request/Notification:

- a. All requests for information will be coordinated through the Director of Public Affairs.
- b. All requests for records, other than those which are routinely made available, shall be made in writing. No particular form is required; however, the completion of the form "Request for Public Information" is encouraged.
- c. A FOIA Log shall be maintained by the Director of Public Affairs, and all requests will be logged in and tracked regardless of where the files are located.
- d. Records not subject to disclosure under the FOIA will not be released without prior approval of the General Manager or by Court Order. For records that are questionable as to disclosure under the FOIA, legal counsel, and/or advice of the Director of Public Affairs shall be sought prior to the release of such records.
- e. For all written requests, the requestor must be notified of the determination as to whether or not the records are available and releasable, by mail or in person within fifteen (15) working days of the request unless otherwise specified.
- f. If the records are available and releasable, the requestor will be notified and instructed whom to contact to schedule a time and place where the records may be inspected or copied, and will be advised of any charges that may apply.
- g. In the event of an unavoidable delay in providing releasable information, the Director of Public Affairs shall ensure that written approval of the FOIA request is provided to the requestor within the required deadline, and that the requested information is forwarded immediately upon availability.
- h. Records held by The Board shall be made available in form and format used by The Board. Where practical and approved by the General Manager, public records subject to the FOIA shall be available to citizens for inspection and copying during Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority's normal business hours.

5. Fees:

- a. Section 30-4-30(b) provides for the establishment and collection of reasonable fees and for certain exemptions. These fees are subject to change. A current schedule of fees will be available from the Director of Public Affairs. Fees will include both the cost of reproduction and personnel costs for research and retrieval.
- b. Any individual making an FOIA request which will result in fees shall be notified in advance of the approximate cost for providing that information. Notification and acceptance of those charges shall be in accordance with The Board's Public Information Schedule of Fees.
- c. Payment in part or in full for an FOIA request may be required prior to the release of any records. Requests for payments in advance shall be made in writing.
- d. The Board reserves the right to waive fees. Fees and/or charges may be waived when a request will benefit the public's interest and requires a minimal and/or a reasonable amount of employee time and photocopying expense.

6. Public Records Exemptions:

The Board is responsible for protecting information defined as confidential or as otherwise exempt from public inspection and copying under the FOIA. Specific exemptions under the FOIA can be found in the *South Carolina Code of Laws, 30-4-40*.