CALHOUN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
POLICY STATEMENT 233

SUBJECT: FOIA POLICY

DATED APPROVED: June 18, 2015

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2015

REPLACES: New

Preamble: Statement of Principles

It is the policy of Calhoun County that all persons, except those incarcerated, consistent with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), are entitled to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those who represent them as public officials and employees. The people shall be informed so that they fully participate in the democratic process.

The County acknowledges that it has a legal obligation to disclose all nonexempt public records in its possession pursuant to a FOIA request. The County acknowledges that sometimes it is necessary to invoke the exemptions identified under FOIA in order to ensure the effective operation of government and to protect the privacy of individuals.

Calhoun County will protect the public's interest in disclosure, while balancing the requirement to withhold or redact portions of certain records. The County's policy is to disclose public records consistent with and in compliance with State law.

The County Board of Commissioners has established the following written procedures and guidelines to implement the FOIA and will create a written public summary of the specific procedures and guidelines relevant to the general public regarding how to submit written requests to the public body and explaining how to understand a public body's written responses, deposit requirements, fee calculations, and avenues for challenge and appeal. The written public summary will be written in a manner so as to be easily understood by the general public.

Section 1: General Policies

The County Board of Commissioners, acting pursuant to the authority at MCL 15.236, designates Corporation Counsel as the FOIA Coordinator. He or she is authorized to designate other County staff to act on his or her behalf to accept and process written requests for the County's public records and approve denials.

If a request for a public record is received by fax or email, the request is deemed to have been received on the following business day. If a request is sent by email and delivered to a County spam or junk-mail folder, the request is not deemed received until one day after the FOIA Coordinator first becomes aware of the request. The FOIA Coordinator shall note in the FOIA log both the date the request was delivered

to the spam or junk-mail folder and the date the FOIA Coordinator became aware of the request. **The FOIA Coordinator shall review County spam and junk-mail folders on a regular basis.**

The FOIA Coordinator may, in his or her discretion, implement administrative rules, consistent with State law and these Procedures and Guidelines to administer the acceptance and processing of FOIA requests.

The County is not obligated to create a new public record or make a compilation or summary of information which does not already exist. Neither the FOIA Coordinator nor other County staff are obligated to provide answers to questions contained in requests for public records or regarding the content of the records themselves.

The FOIA Coordinator shall keep a copy of all written requests for public records received by the County on file for a period of at least one year.

The County will make this Procedures and Guidelines document and the Written Public Summary publicly available without charge. If it does not, the County cannot require deposits or charge fees otherwise permitted under the FOIA until it is in compliance.

A copy of this Procedures and Guidelines document and the County's Written Public Summary must be publicly available by providing free copies both in the County's response to a written request and upon request by visitors at County offices. This Procedures and Guidelines document and the County's Written Public Summary will be maintained on the County's website at: www.calhouncountymi.gov, so a link to those documents will be provided in lieu of providing paper copies of those documents.

Section 2: Requesting a Public Record

No specific form to submit a request for a public record is required. However the FOIA Coordinator may make available a FOIA Request Form for use by the public.

Requests to inspect or obtain copies of public records prepared, owned, used, possessed or retained by the County may be submitted on the County's FOIA Request Form, in any other form of writing (letter, fax, email, etc.), or by verbal request. Verbal requests for records may be documented by the County on the County's FOIA Request Form. If a person makes a verbal, non-written request for information believed to be available on the County's website, where practicable and to the best ability of the employee receiving the request, shall be informed of the pertinent website address. A request must sufficiently describe a public record so as to enable County personnel to identify and find the requested public record.

Written requests for public records may be submitted in person or by mail to any County office. Requests may also be submitted electronically by fax and email. Upon their receipt, requests for public records shall be promptly forwarded to the FOIA Coordinator for processing.

A person may request that public records be provided on non-paper physical media, emailed or other otherwise provided to him or her in digital form in lieu of paper copies. The County will comply with the request only if it possesses the necessary technological capability to provide records in the requested non-paper physical media format.

A person may subscribe to future issues of public records that are created, issued or disseminated by Calhoun County on a regular basis. A subscription is valid for up to 6 months and may be renewed by the subscriber.

A person serving a sentence of imprisonment in a local, state or federal correctional facility is not entitled to submit a request for a public record. The FOIA Coordinator will deny all such requests.

Section 3: Processing a Request

Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the person making the request, the County will issue a response within 5 business days of receipt of a FOIA request. If a request is received by fax, email or other electronic transmission, the request is deemed to have been received on the following business day.

The County will respond to a request in one of the following ways:

- Grant the request.
- Issue a written notice denying the request.
- Grant the request in part and issue a written notice denying in part the request.
- Issue a notice indicating that due to the nature of the request the County needs an additional 10 business days to respond for a total of no more than 15 business days. Only one such extension is permitted.
- Issue a written notice indicating that the public record requested is available at no charge on the County's website.

When a request is granted:
If the request is granted, or granted in part, the FOIA Coordinator will require that payment be made in full for the allowable fees associated with responding to the request before the public record is made available.

The FOIA Coordinator shall provide a detailed itemization of the allowable costs incurred to process the request to the person making the request.

A copy of these Procedures and Guidelines and the Written Public Summary will be provided to the requestor free of charge with the response to a written request for public records*, provided however, that because these Procedures and Guidelines, and the Written Public Summary are maintained on the County's website at: www.calhouncountymi.gov, a link to the Procedures and Guidelines and the Written Public Summary will be provided in lieu of providing paper copies of those documents.

If the cost of processing a FOIA request is $50 or less, the requester will be notified of the amount due and where the documents can be obtained. If the cost of processing a FOIA request is expected to exceed $50 based on a good-faith calculation, or if the requestor has not paid in full for a previously granted request, the County will require a good-faith deposit pursuant to Section 4 of this policy before processing the request. In making the request for a good-faith deposit the FOIA Coordinator shall provide the requestor with a detailed itemization of the allowable costs estimated to be incurred by the County to process the request and also provide a best efforts estimate of a time frame it will take the County to provide the records to the requestor. The best efforts estimate shall be nonbinding on the

County, but will be made in good faith and will strive to be reasonably accurate, given the nature of the request in the particular instance, so as to provide the requested records in a manner based on the public policy expressed by Section 1 of the FOIA.

When a request is denied or denied in part:
If the request is denied or denied in part, the FOIA Coordinator will issue a Notice of Denial which shall provide in the applicable circumstance:

- An explanation as to why a requested public record is exempt from disclosure; or
- A certificate that the requested record does not exist under the name or description provided by the requestor, or another name reasonably known by the County; or
- An explanation or description of the public record or information within a public record that is separated or deleted from the public record; and
- An explanation of the person's right to submit an appeal of the denial to either the office of the Chair of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners (if the FOIA request is directed to the County) or to the County Elected Official if the request is directed to a County Elected Official or seek judicial review in the Calhoun County Circuit Court; and
- An explanation of the right to receive attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements as well actual or compensatory damages, and punitive damages of $1,000, should they prevail in Circuit Court.
- The Notice of Denial shall be signed by the FOIA Coordinator.

If a request does not sufficiently describe a public record, the FOIA Coordinator may, in lieu of issuing a Notice of Denial indicating that the request is deficient, seek clarification or amendment of the request by the person making the request. Any clarification or amendment will be considered a new request subject to the timelines described in this Section.

Requests to inspect public records:
The County shall provide reasonable facilities and opportunities for persons to examine and inspect public records during normal business hours. The FOIA Coordinator is authorized to promulgate rules regulating the manner in which records may be viewed so as to protect County records from loss, alteration, mutilation or destruction and to prevent excessive interference with normal County operations.

Requests for certified copies:
The FOIA Coordinator shall, upon written request, furnish a certified copy of a public record at no additional cost to the person requesting the public record.

Section 4: Fee Deposits

If the fee estimate is expected to exceed $50.00 based on a good-faith calculation, the requestor will be asked to provide a deposit not exceeding one-half of the total estimated fee.

If a request for public records is from a person who has not paid the County in full for copies of public records made in fulfillment of a previously granted written request, the FOIA Coordinator will require a deposit of 100% of the estimated processing fee before beginning to search for a public record for any subsequent written request by that person when all of the following conditions exist:

- The final fee for the prior written request is not more than 105% of the estimated fee;
- The public records made available contained the information sought in the prior written request and remain in the County's possession;
- The public records were made available to the individual, subject to payment, within the time frame estimated by the County to provide the records;
- Ninety (90) days have passed since the FOIA Coordinator notified the individual in writing that the public records were available for pickup or mailing;
- The individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to the County; and
- The FOIA Coordinator has calculated a detailed itemization that is the basis for the current written request's increased estimated fee deposit.

The FOIA Coordinator will not require an increased estimated fee deposit if any of the following apply:

- The person making the request is able to show proof of prior payment in full to the County;
- The County is subsequently paid in full for the applicable prior written request; or
- Three hundred sixty five (365) days have passed since the person made the request for which full payment was not remitted to the County.

Section 5: Calculation of Fees

A fee may be charged for the labor cost of copying/duplication.

A fee will ***not*** be charged for the labor cost of search, examination, review and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information ***unless*** failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the County because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the County specifically identifies the nature of the unreasonably high costs.

The following factors shall be used to determine an unreasonably high cost to the County:

- Volume of the public record requested
- Amount of time spent to search for, examine, review and separate exempt from non-exempt information in the record requested.
- Whether the public records are from more than one County department or whether various County offices are necessary to respond to the request.
- The available staffing to respond to the request.
- Any other similar factors identified by the FOIA Coordinator in responding to the particular request.

The Michigan FOIA statute permits the County to charge for the following costs associated with processing a request:

- Labor costs associated with copying or duplication, which includes making paper copies, making digital copies, or transferring digital public records to non-paper physical media or through the Internet.

- Labor costs associated with searching for, locating and examining a requested public record, when failure to charge a fee will result in unreasonably high costs to the County.
- Labor costs associated with a review of a record to separate and delete information exempt from disclosure, when failure to charge a fee will result in unreasonably high costs to the County.
- The cost of copying or duplication, not including labor, of paper copies of public records. This may include the cost for copies of records already on the County's website if you ask for the County to make copies.
- The cost of computer discs, computer tapes or other digital or similar media when the requester asks for records in non-paper physical media. This may include the cost for copies of records already on the County's website if you ask for the County to make copies.
- The cost to mail or send a public record to a requestor.

Labor costs will be calculated based on the following requirements:

- All labor costs will be estimated and charged in 15-minute increments, with all partial time increments rounded down. If the time involved is less than 15 minutes, there will be no charge.
- Labor costs will be charged at the hourly wage of the lowest-paid County employee capable of doing the work in the specific fee category, regardless of who actually performs work.
- Labor costs will also include a charge to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits.
- The County may add up to 50% to the applicable labor charge amount to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits, but in no case may it exceed the actual cost of fringe benefits.
- Overtime wages will not be included in labor costs unless agreed to by the requestor; overtime costs will not be used to calculate the fringe benefit cost.
- Contracted labor costs will be charged at the hourly rate of $48.90 (6 times the state minimum hourly wage).

The cost to provide records on non-paper physical media when so requested will be based on the following requirements:

- Computer disks, computer tapes or other digital or similar media will be at the actual and most reasonably economical cost for the non-paper media.
- This cost will only be assessed if the County has the technological capability necessary to provide the public record in the requested non-paper physical media format.
- The County will procure any non-paper media and will not accept media from the requestor in order to ensure integrity of the County's technology infrastructure.

The cost to provide paper copies of records will be based on the following requirements:

- Paper copies of public records made on standard letter (8 ½ x 11) or legal (8 ½ x 14) sized paper will not exceed $.10 per sheet of paper. Copies for non-standard sized sheets of paper will reflect the actual cost of reproduction.

- The County will provide records using double-sided printing, if it is cost-saving and available.

The cost to mail records to a requestor will be based on the following requirements:

- The actual cost to mail public records using a reasonably economical and justified means.
- The County may charge for the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation.
- No cost will be made for expedited shipping or insurance unless specified by the requestor.

If the FOIA Coordinator does not respond to a written request in a timely manner, the County must:

- Reduce the labor costs by 5% for each day the County exceeds the time permitted under FOIA up to a 50% maximum reduction, if ***any*** of the following applies:
    - The County's late response was willful and intentional,
    - The written request conveyed a request for information within the first 250 words of the body of a letter facsimile, email or email attachment, or
    - The written request included the words, characters, or abbreviations for "freedom of information," "information," "FOIA," "copy" or a recognizable misspelling of such, or legal code reference to MCL 15. 231, et seq. or 1976 Public Act 442 on the front of an envelope or in the subject line of an email, letter or facsimile cover page.

- Fully note the charge reduction in the Detailed Itemization of Costs Form.

Section 6: Waiver of Fees

The cost of the search for and copying of a public record may be waived or reduced if in the sole judgment of the FOIA Coordinator a waiver or reduced fee is in the public interest because it can be considered as primarily benefitting the general public. The County Board of Commissioners may identify specific records or types of records it deems should be made available for no charge or at a reduced cost.

Section 7: Discounted Fees

Indigence
The FOIA Coordinator will discount the first $20.00 of the processing fee for a request if the person requesting a public record submits an affidavit stating that they are:

- Indigent and receiving specific public assistance, or
- If not receiving public assistance, stating facts demonstrating an inability to pay because of indigence.

An individual is not eligible to receive the waiver if:

- The requestor has previously received discounted copies of public records from the County twice during the calendar year; or
- The requestor requests information in connection with other persons who are offering or providing payment to make the request.

An affidavit is sworn statement. The FOIA Coordinator may make a Fee Waiver Affidavit Form available for use by the public.

Nonprofit organization advocating for developmentally disabled or mentally ill individuals
The FOIA Coordinator will discount the first $20.00 of the processing fee for a request from:

- A nonprofit organization formally designated by the state to carry out activities under subtitle C of the federal developmental disabilities assistance and bill of rights act of 2000, Public Law 106-402, and the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness act, Public Law 99-319, or their successors, if the request meets all of the following requirements:
    - Is made directly on behalf of the organization or its clients.
    - Is made for a reason wholly consistent with the mission and provisions of those laws under section 931 of the mental health code, 1974 PA 258, MCL 330.1931.
    - Is accompanied by documentation of its designation by the state, if requested by the public body.

Section 8: Appeal of a Denial of a Public Record

When a requestor believes that all or a portion of a public record has not been disclosed or has been improperly exempted from disclosure, he or she may appeal to the County Board of Commissioners by filing an appeal of the denial with the office of the County Board Chair.

The appeal must be in writing, specifically state the word "appeal" and identify the reason or reasons the requestor is seeking a reversal of the denial. The County FOIA Appeal Form (To Appeal a Denial of Records), may be used.

The County Board of Commissioners is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled County Board of Commissioners meeting following submission of the written appeal.

Within 10 business days of receiving the appeal the County Board of Commissioners will respond in writing by:

- Reversing the disclosure denial;
- Upholding the disclosure denial; or
- Reverse the disclosure denial in part and uphold the disclosure denial in part; or
- Under unusual circumstances, issue a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the County Board of Commissioners shall respond to the written appeal. The County Board of Commissioners shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular written appeal.

If the County Board of Commissioners fails to respond to a written appeal, or if the County Board of Commissioners upholds all or a portion of the disclosure denial that is the subject of the written appeal,

the requesting person may seek judicial review of the nondisclosure by commencing a civil action in Circuit Court.

Whether or not a requestor submitted an appeal of a denial to the County Board, he or she may file a civil action in Calhoun County Circuit Court within 180 days after the County's final determination to deny the request.

If a court that determines a public record is not exempt from disclosure, it shall order the County to cease withholding or to produce all or a portion of a public record wrongfully withheld, regardless of the location of the public record. Failure to comply with an order of the court may be punished as contempt of court.

If a person asserting the right to inspect, copy, or receive a copy of all or a portion of a public record prevails in such an action, the court shall award reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. If the person or County prevails in part, the court may, in its discretion, award all or an appropriate portion of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements.

If the court determines that the County has arbitrarily and capriciously violated this act by refusal or delay in disclosing or providing copies of a public record, the court shall order the County to pay a civil fine of $1,000.00, which shall be deposited into the general fund of the state treasury. The court shall award, in addition to any actual or compensatory damages, punitive damages in the amount of $1,000.00 to the person seeking the right to inspect or receive a copy of a public record. The damages shall not be assessed against an individual, but shall be assessed against the next succeeding public body that is not an individual and that kept or maintained the public record as part of its public function.

Section 9: Appeal of an Excessive FOIA Processing Fee

"Fee" means the total fee or any component of the total fee calculated under section 4 of the FOIA, including any deposit.

If a requestor believes that the fee charged by the County to process a FOIA request exceeds the amount permitted by state law or under this policy, he or she must first appeal to the County Board of Commissioners by submitting a written appeal for a fee reduction to the office of the County Board Chair.

The appeal must be in writing, specifically state the word "appeal" and identify how the required fee exceeds the amount permitted. The County FOIA Appeal Form (To Appeal an Excess Fee) may be used.

The County Board of Commissioners is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled County Board of Commissioners meeting following submission of the written appeal.

Within 10 business days after receiving the appeal, the County Board of Commissioners will respond in writing by:

- Waiving the fee;

- Reducing the fee and issuing a written determination indicating the specific basis that supports the remaining fee;
- Upholding the fee and issuing a written determination indicating the specific basis that supports the required fee; or
- Issuing a notice detailing the reason or reasons for extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the County Board of Commissioners will respond to the written appeal. The County Board of Commissioners shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular written appeal.

Where the County Board of Commissioners reduces or upholds the fee, the determination must include a certification from the County Board of Commissioners that the statements in the determination are accurate and that the reduced fee amount complies with its publicly available procedures and guidelines and Section 4 of the FOIA.

Within 45 days after receiving notice of the County Board's determination of an appeal, the requesting person may commence a civil action in Calhoun County Circuit Court for a fee reduction.

If a civil action is commenced against the County for an excess fee, the County is not obligated to complete the processing of the written request for the public record at issue until the court resolves the fee dispute.

An action shall not be filed in circuit court unless ***one*** of the following applies:

- The County does not provide for appeals of fees,
- The County Board of Commissioners failed to respond to a written appeal as required, or
- The County Board of Commissioners issued a determination to a written appeal.

If a court determines that the County required a fee that exceeds the amount permitted under its publicly available procedures and guidelines or Section 4 of the FOIA, the court shall reduce the fee to a permissible amount. Failure to comply with an order of the court may be punished as contempt of court.

If the requesting person prevails in court by receiving a reduction of 50% or more of the total fee, the court may, in its discretion, award all or an appropriate portion of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. The award shall be assessed against the public body liable for damages.

If the court determines that the County has arbitrarily and capriciously violated the FOIA by charging an excessive fee, the court shall order the County to pay a civil fine of $500.00, which shall be deposited in the general fund of the state treasury. The court may also award, in addition to any actual or compensatory damages, punitive damages in the amount of $500.00 to the person seeking the fee reduction. The fine and any damages shall not be assessed against an individual, but shall be assessed against the next succeeding public body that is not an individual and that kept or maintained the public record as part of its public function.

Section 10: Conflict with Prior FOIA Policies and Procedures; Effective Date

To the extent that these Procedures and Guidelines conflict with previous FOIA policies promulgated by County Board of Commissioners or the County Administration these Procedures and Guidelines are controlling. To the extent that any administrative rule promulgated by the FOIA Coordinator subsequent to the adoption of this resolution is found to be in conflict with any previous policy promulgated by the County Board of Commissioners or the County Administration, the administrative rule promulgated by the FOIA Coordinator is controlling.

To the extent that any provision of these Procedures and Guidelines or any administrative rule promulgated by the FOIA Coordinator pertaining to the release of public records is found to be in conflict with any State statute, the applicable statute shall control. The FOIA Coordinator is authorized to modify this policy and all previous policies adopted by the County Board of Commissioners or the County Administration, and to adopt such administrative rules as he or she may deem necessary, to facilitate the legal review and processing of requests for public records made pursuant to Michigan's FOIA statute, provided that such modifications and rules are consistent with State law. The FOIA Coordinator shall inform the County Board of Commissioners of any change these Policies and Guidelines.

These FOIA Policies and Guidelines become effective July 1, 2015.

Section 11: Appendix of Calhoun County FOIA Forms

- Detailed Cost Itemization Form
- Written Public Summary

Calhoun County

Public Summary of FOIA Procedures and Guidelines

Consistent with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Public Act 442 of 1976, the following is the Written Public Summary of the County's FOIA Procedures and Guidelines relevant to the general public.

This is only a summary of the County's FOIA Procedures and Guidelines. For more details and information, copies of the County's FOIA Procedures and Guidelines are available at no charge at any County office and on the County's website: www.calhouncountymi.gov.

1. How do I submit a FOIA request to the County?

- A request must sufficiently describe a public record so as to enable the County to find it.
- Please include the words "FOIA" or "FOIA Request" in the request to assist the County in providing a prompt response.
- Requests to inspect or obtain copies of public records prepared, owned, used, possessed or retained by the County may be submitted on the County's FOIA Request Form, in any other form of writing (letter, fax, email, etc.), or by verbal request.
    - Any verbal request will be documented by the County on the County's FOIA Request Form.
    - No specific form to submit a written request is required. However a FOIA Request Form and other FOIA-related forms are available for your use and convenience on the County's website at www.calhouncountymi.gov, and at the Office of Corporation Counsel, 315 W. Green Street, Marshall, MI 49068.
- Written requests may be delivered to the County Building in person or by mail: Calhoun County Corporation Counsel, 315 W. Green Street, Marshall, MI 49068
- Requests may be faxed to: (269) 781-0140. To ensure a prompt response, faxed requests should contain the term "FOIA" or "FOIA Request" on the first/cover page.
- Requests may be emailed to: shuerta@calhouncountymi.gov or jdyer@calhouncountymi.gov
  To ensure a prompt response, email requests should contain the term "FOIA" or "FOIA Request" in the subject line.

2. What kind of response can I expect to my request?

- Within 5 business days after receiving a FOIA request the County will issue a response. If a request is received by fax or email, the request is deemed to have been received on the following business day. The County will respond to your request in one of the following ways:
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    - Grant the request,
    - Issue a written notice denying the request,
    - Grant the request in part and issue a written notice denying in part the request,
    - Issue a notice indicating that due to the nature of the request the County needs an additional 10 business days to respond, or
    - Issue a written notice indicating that the public record requested is available at no charge on the County's website

- If the request is granted, or granted in part, the County will ask that payment be made for the allowable fees associated with responding to the request before the public record is made available.

- If the cost of processing the request is expected to exceed $50, or if you have not paid for a previously granted request, the County will require a deposit before processing the request.

3. What are the County's deposit requirements?

- If the County has made a good faith calculation that the total fee for processing the request will exceed $50.00, the County will require that you provide a deposit in the amount of 50% of the total estimated fee. When the County requests the deposit, it will provide you a non-binding best efforts estimate of how long it will take to process the request after you have paid your deposit.

- If the County receives a request from a person who has not paid the County for copies of public records made in fulfillment of a previously granted written request, the County will require a deposit of 100% of the estimated processing fee before it begins to search for the public record for any subsequent written request when <u>all</u> of the following conditions exist:

    - The final fee for the prior written request is not more than 105% of the estimated fee;
    - The public records made available contained the information sought in the prior written request and remain in the County's possession;
    - The public records were made available to the individual, subject to payment, within the best effort time frame estimated by the County to provide the records;
    - Ninety (90) days have passed since the County notified the individual in writing that the public records were available for pickup or mailing;
    - The individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to the County; and
    - The County has calculated an estimated detailed itemization that is the basis for the current written request's increased fee deposit.

- The County will not require the 100% estimated fee deposit if any of the following apply:

    - The person making the request is able to show proof of prior payment in full to the County;
    - The County is subsequently paid in full for all applicable prior written requests; or

- Three hundred sixty five (365) days have passed since the person made the request for which full payment was not remitted to the County.

4. How does the County calculate FOIA processing fees?

The Michigan FOIA statute permits the County to charge for the following costs associated with processing a request:

- Labor costs associated with copying or duplication, which includes making paper copies, making digital copies, or transferring digital public records to non-paper physical media or through the Internet.

- Labor costs associated with searching for, locating and examining a requested public record, when failure to charge a fee will result in unreasonably high costs to the County.

- Labor costs associated with a review of a record to separate and delete information exempt from disclosure, when failure to charge a fee will result in unreasonably high costs to the County.

- The cost of copying or duplication, not including labor, of paper copies of public records. This may include the cost for copies of records already on the County's website if you ask for the County to make copies.

- The cost of computer discs, computer tapes or other digital or similar media when the requester asks for records in non-paper physical media. This may include the cost for copies of records already on the County's website if you ask for the County to make copies.

- The cost to mail or send a public record to a requestor.

Labor Costs

- All labor costs will be estimated and charged in 15-minute increments, with all partial time increments rounded down. If the time involved is less than 15 minutes, there will be no charge.

- Labor costs will be charged at the hourly wage of the lowest-paid County employee capable of doing the work in the specific fee category, regardless of who actually performs work.

- Labor costs will also include a charge to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits. County may add up to 50% to the applicable labor charge amount to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits, but in no case may it exceed the actual cost of fringe benefits.
- Overtime wages will not be included in labor costs unless agreed to by the requestor; overtime costs will not be used to calculate the fringe benefit cost.

- Contracted labor costs will be charged at the hourly rate of $48.90 (6 times the state minimum hourly wage)

A labor cost will not be charged for the search, examination, review and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the County. Costs are unreasonably high when they are excessive and beyond the normal or usual amount for those services compared to the County's usual FOIA requests, because of the nature of the request in the particular instance. The County must specifically identify the nature of the unreasonably high costs in writing.

Copying and Duplication

The County must use the most economical method for making copies of public records, including using double-sided printing, if cost-saving and available.

Non-paper Copies on Physical Media

- The cost for records provided on non-paper physical media, such as computer discs, computer tapes or other digital or similar media will be at the actual and most reasonably economical cost for the non-paper media.

- This cost will be charged only if the County has the technological capability necessary to provide the public record in the requested non-paper physical media format.

Paper Copies

- Paper copies of public records made on standard letter (8 ½ x 11) or legal (8 ½ x 14) sized paper will not exceed $.10 per sheet of paper.

- Copies for non-standard sized sheets will paper will reflect the actual cost of reproduction.

Mailing Costs

- The cost to mail public records will use a reasonably economical and justified means.

- The County may charge for the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation.

- No cost will be made for expedited shipping or insurance unless you request it.

Waiver of Fees

The cost of the search for and copying of a public record may be waived or reduced if in the sole judgment of the FOIA Coordinator a waiver or reduced fee is in the public interest because it can be considered as primarily benefitting the general public. The County Board of Commissioners may identify specific records or types of records it deems should be made available for no charge or at a reduced cost.

5. How do I qualify for an indigence discount on the fee?

The County will discount the first $20.00 of fees for a request if you submit an affidavit stating that you are:

- Indigent and receiving specific public assistance; or

- If not receiving public assistance, stating facts demonstrating an inability to pay because of indigence.

You are **not** eligible to receive the $20.00 discount if you:

- Have previously received discounted copies of public records from the County twice during the calendar year; or

- Are requesting information on behalf of other persons who are offering or providing payment to you to make the request.

An affidavit is sworn statement. For your convenience, the County has provided an Affidavit of Indigence for the waiver of FOIA fees on the back of the County FOIA Request Form, which is available on the County's website: www.calhouncountymi.gov.

6. May a nonprofit organization receive a discount on the fee?

A nonprofit organization advocating for developmentally disabled or mentally ill individuals that is formally designated by the state to carry out activities under subtitle C of the federal developmental disabilities assistance and bill of rights act of 2000, Public Law 106-402, and the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness act, Public Law 99-319, may receive a $20.00 discount if the request meets all of the following requirements in the Act:

- Is made directly on behalf of the organization or its clients.
- Is made for a reason wholly consistent with the mission and provisions of those laws under section 931 of the mental health code, 1974 PA 258, MCL 330.1931.
- Is accompanied by documentation of its designation by the state, if requested by the public body.

7. How may I challenge the denial of a public record or an excessive fee?

Appeal of a Denial of a Public Record
If you believe that all or a portion of a public record has not been disclosed or has been improperly exempted from disclosure, you may appeal to the County Board of Commissioners by filing a written appeal of the denial with the office of the County Chair of the Board of Commissioners.

The appeal must be in writing, specifically state the word "appeal," and identify the reason or reasons you are seeking a reversal of the denial. You may use the County FOIA Appeal Form (To Appeal a Denial of Records), which is available on the County's website: www.calhouncountymi.gov.

The County Board of Commissioners is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled County Commission meeting following submission of the written appeal. Within 10 business days of receiving the appeal the County Board of Commissioners will respond in writing by:

- Reversing the disclosure denial;
- Upholding the disclosure denial; or
- Reverse the disclosure denial in part and uphold the disclosure denial in part.

Whether or not you submitted an appeal of a denial to the County Board of Commissioners, you may file a civil action in the County Circuit Court within 180 days after the County's final determination to deny

your request. If you prevail in the civil action the court will award you reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements. If the court determines that the County acted arbitrarily and capriciously in refusing to disclose or provide a public record, the court shall award you damages in the amount of $1,000.

Appeal of an Excess FOIA Processing Fee

If you believe that the fee charged by the County to process your FOIA request exceeds the amount permitted by state law, you must first appeal to the County Board of Commissioners by filing a written appeal for a fee reduction to the office of the County Chair of the Board of Commissioners.

The appeal must specifically state the word "appeal" and identify how the required fee exceeds the amount permitted. You may use the County FOIA Appeal Form (To Appeal an Excess Fee), which is available at the County Building and on the County's website: www.calhouncountymi.gov.

The County Board of Commissioners is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled County Commission meeting following submission of the written appeal. Within 10 business days after receiving the appeal, the County Board of Commissioners will respond in writing by:

- Waiving the fee;
- Reducing the fee and issue a written determination indicating the specific basis that supports the remaining fee;
- Upholding the fee and issue a written determination indicating the specific basis that supports the required fee; or
- Issuing a notice detailing the reason or reasons for extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the County Board of Commissioners will respond to the written appeal.

Within 45 days after receiving notice of the County Board of Commissioner's determination of the processing fee appeal, you may commence a civil action in the County Circuit Court for a fee reduction. If you prevail in the civil action by receiving a reduction of 50% or more of the total fee, the court may award all or appropriate amount of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements. If the court determines that the County acted arbitrarily and capriciously by charging an excessive fee, court may also award you punitive damages in the amount of $500.

Adopted June 18, 2015, effective July 1, 2015

For each response: keep original and provide copies of both sides of each sheet, along with Public Summary, to requestor at no charge.

Calhoun County
315 W. Green Street
Marshall, MI 49068
Phone: (269) 781-0917

Freedom of Information Act Request Detailed Cost Itemization

Date: _____ Prepared for **Request No.:** _____ Date Request Received: _____

The following costs are being charged in compliance with Section 4 of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, MCL 15.234, according to the county's FOIA Policies and Guidelines.		
1. Labor Cost for Copying / Duplication This is the cost of labor directly associated with duplication of publication, including making paper copies, making digital copies, or transferring digital public records to be given to the requestor on non-paper physical media or through the Internet or other electronic means as stipulated by the requestor. This shall not be more than the hourly wage of the county's lowest-paid employee capable of necessary duplication or publication in this particular instance, regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. These costs will be estimated and charged in **15-minute time increments as set by the County Board of Commissioners**; all partial time increments must be rounded down. *If the number of minutes is less than one increment, there is no charge.* **Hourly Wage Charged: $_____** **Charge per increment:** **$_____** **OR** **Hourly Wage with Fringe Benefit Cost: $_____** **OR** Multiply the hourly wage by the percentage multiplier: _____% (*up to 50% of the hourly wage*) and add to the hourly wage for a total per hour rate. **Charge per increment:** **$_____** ☐ Overtime rate charged as stipulated by Requestor *(overtime is not used to calculate the fringe benefit cost)*	To figure the number of increments, take the *number of minutes:* ____, *divide by* _____ *-minute increments, and round down. Enter below:* **Number of increments** x _____ =	**1. Labor Cost** $_____

2. Labor Cost to Locate: This is the cost of labor directly associated with the necessary searching for, locating, and examining public records in conjunction with receiving and fulfilling a granted written request. **This fee is being charged because failure to do so will result in unreasonably high costs to the county that are excessive and beyond the normal or usual amount for those services compared to the county's usual FOIA requests, because of the nature of the request in this particular instance, specifically:**_____ _____ The county will not charge more than the hourly wage of its lowest-paid employee capable of searching for, locating, and examining the public records in this particular instance, regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. These costs will be estimated and charged in **____-minute time increments** ***(must be 15-minutes or more)***; all partial time increments must be rounded down. *If the number of minutes is less than 15, there is no charge.* **Hourly Wage Charged: $_____** **Charge per increment: $_____** **OR** **Hourly Wage with Fringe Benefit Cost: $_____** **OR** Multiply the hourly wage by the percentage multiplier: _____**%** (*up to 50% of the hourly wage*) and add to the hourly wage for a total per hour rate. **Charge per increment: $_____** ☐ Overtime rate charged as stipulated by Requestor *(overtime is not used to calculate the fringe benefit cost)*	To figure the number of increments, take the *number of minutes:* ____, *divide by* _____ *-minute increments, and round down. Enter below:* **Number of increments** x _____ =	**2. Labor Cost** **$_____**

3a. <u>Employee Labor</u> Cost for <u>Separating Exempt from Non-Exempt (Redacting)</u>: ***(Fill this out if using a county employee. If contracted, use No. 3b instead).*** The county will not charge for labor directly associated with redaction if it knows or has reason to know that it previously redacted the record in question and still has the redacted version in its possession. **This fee is being charged because failure to do so will result in unreasonably high costs to the county that are excessive and beyond the normal or usual amount for those services compared to the county's usual FOIA requests, because of the nature of the request in this particular instance,** **specifically:**_____ _____ _____ This is the cost of labor of a **county employee**, including necessary review, directly associated with separating and deleting exempt from nonexempt information. This shall not be more than the hourly wage of the **county's lowest-paid employee** capable of separating and deleting exempt from nonexempt information in this particular instance, regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. These costs will be estimated and charged in ____**-minute time increments** ***(must be 15-minutes or more)***; all partial time increments must be rounded down. *If the number of minutes is less than 15, there is no charge.* **Hourly Wage Charged: $**_____ **Charge per increment:** **$**_____ **<u>OR</u>** **Hourly Wage with Fringe Benefit Cost: $**_____ **<u>OR</u>** Multiply the hourly wage by the percentage multiplier: ____**%** (*up to 50% of the hourly wage*) and add to the hourly wage for a total per hour rate. **Charge per increment:** **$**_____ ☐ Overtime rate charged as stipulated by Requestor *(overtime is not used to calculate the fringe benefit cost)*	To figure the number of increments, take the *number of minutes:* ____, *divide by* _____ *-minute increments, and round down. Enter below:* **Number of increments** **x** _____ **=**	**3a. Labor Cost** **$**_____

3b. Contracted Labor Cost for Separating Exempt from Non-Exempt (Redacting): ***(Fill this out if using a contractor, such as the attorney. If using in-house employee, use No. 3a instead.)*** The county will not charge for labor directly associated with redaction if it knows or has reason to know that it previously redacted the record in question and still has the redacted version in its possession. **This fee is being charged because failure to do so will result in unreasonably high costs to the county that are excessive and beyond the normal or usual amount for those services compared to the county's usual FOIA requests, because of the nature of the request in this particular instance,** **specifically:**_____ _____ _____ As this county does not employ a person capable of separating exempt from non-exempt information in this particular instance, as determined by the FOIA Coordinator, this is the cost of labor of a **contractor** (i.e.: outside attorney), including necessary review, directly associated with separating and deleting exempt information from nonexempt information. This shall not exceed an amount equal to 6 times the state minimum hourly wage rate of _____ (*currently $8.15*). **Name of contracted person or firm:** _____ These costs will be estimated and charged in ____**-minute time increments** ***(must be 15-minutes or more)***; all partial time increments must be rounded down. *If the number of minutes is less than 15, there is no charge.* **Hourly Cost Charged: $**_____ **Charge per increment: $**_____	To figure the number of increments, take the *number of minutes:* ____, *divide by* _____ *-minute increments, and round down to:* ____ *increments. Enter below:* **Number of increments** **x** _____ **=**	**3b. Labor Cost** **$**_____
4. Copying / Duplication Cost: Copying costs may be charged if a copy of a public record is requested, or for the necessary copying of a record for inspection (*for example, to allow for blacking out exempt information, to protect old or delicate original records, or because the original record is a digital file or database not available for public inspection*). **No more than the actual cost of a sheet of paper, up to maximum 10 cents per sheet for:** • **Letter** (8 ½ x 11-inch, single and double-sided): _____ **cents per sheet** • **Legal** (8 ½ x 14-inch, single and double-sided): _____ **cents per sheet** **No more than the actual cost of a sheet of paper for other paper sizes:** • **Other paper sizes** (single and double-sided): _____ **cents / dollars per sheet** **Actual and most reasonably economical cost of non-paper physical digital media:** • ***Circle applicable:*** Disc / Tape / Drive / Other Digital Medium **Cost per Item:** _____ The cost of paper copies **must** be calculated as a total cost per sheet of paper. The fee **cannot exceed** 10 cents per sheet of paper for copies of public records made on 8-1/2- by 11-inch paper or 8-1/2- by 14-inch paper. A county **must** utilize the most economical means available for making copies of public records, including using double-sided printing, if cost saving and available.	**Number of Sheets:** **x** _____ **=** **x** _____ **=** **x** _____ **=** **No. of Items:** **x** _____ **=**	**Costs:** **$**_____ **$**_____ **$**_____ **$**_____ **4. Total Copy Cost** **$**_____

5. Mailing Cost: The county will charge the actual cost of mailing, if any, for sending records in a reasonably economical and justifiable manner. Delivery confirmation is not required. • The county ***may*** charge for the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation. • The county ***cannot*** charge more for expedited shipping or insurance unless specifically requested by the requestor.* **Actual Cost of Envelope or Packaging: $_____** **Actual Cost of Postage: $_____** per stamp **$_____** per pound **$_____** per package **Actual Cost (least expensive) Postal Delivery Confirmation: $_____** ***Expedited Shipping or Insurance as Requested: $_____** ☐ * Requestor has requested expedited shipping or insurance	**Number of Envelopes or Packages:** x _____ = x _____ = x _____ = x _____ = x _____ = x _____ =	**Costs:** $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ **5. Total Mailing Cost** $_____
6a. Copying/Duplicating Cost for Records Already on County's Website: If the public body has included the website address for a record in its written response to the requestor, and the requestor thereafter stipulates that the public record be provided to him or her in a paper format or non-paper physical digital media, the county will provide the public records in the specified format and may charge copying costs to provide those copies. **No more than the actual cost of a sheet of paper, up to maximum 10 cents per sheet for:** • **Letter** (8 ½ x 11-inch, single and double-sided): _____ **cents per sheet** • **Legal** (8 ½ x 14-inch, single and double-sided): _____ **cents per sheet** **No more than the actual cost of a sheet of paper for other paper sizes:** • **Other paper sizes** (single and double-sided): _____ **cents / dollars per sheet** **Actual and most reasonably economical cost of non-paper physical digital media:** • ***Circle applicable:*** Disc / Tape / Drive / Other Digital Medium **Cost per Item:** _____ ☐ **Requestor has stipulated that some / all of the requested records that are already available on the county's website be provided in a paper or non-paper physical digital medium.**	**Number of Sheets:** x _____ = x _____ = x _____ = **No. of Items:** x _____ =	**Costs:** $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ **6a. Web Copy Cost** $_____

6b. Labor Cost for Copying/Duplicating Records Already on County's Website: This shall not be more than the hourly wage of the county's lowest-paid employee capable of necessary duplication or publication in this particular instance, regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. These costs will be estimated and charged in ____**-minute time increments** *(i.e.: 15-minutes or more)*; all partial time increments must be rounded down. *If the number of minutes is less than 15, there is no charge.* **Hourly Wage Charged: $_____** **Charge per increment: $_____** **OR** **Hourly Wage with Fringe Benefit Cost: $_____** **OR** Multiply the hourly wage by the percentage multiplier: _____% and add to the hourly wage for a total per hour rate. **Charge per increment: $_____** The county may use a fringe benefit multiplier greater than the 50% limitation, not to exceed the actual costs of providing the information in the specified format. ☐ Overtime rate charged as stipulated by Requestor	To figure the number of increments, take the *number of minutes:* ____, *divide by* _____ *-minute increments, and round down. Enter below:* **Number of increments** x _____ =	**6b. Web Labor Cost** $_____
6c. Mailing Cost for Records Already on County's Website: **Actual Cost of Envelope or Packaging: $_____** **Actual Cost of Postage: $_____** per stamp / per pound / per package **Actual Cost (least expensive) Postal Delivery Confirmation: $_____** ***Expedited Shipping or Insurance as Requested: $_____** ☐ * Requestor has requested expedited shipping or insurance	**Number:** x _____ = x _____ = x _____ = x _____ =	**Costs:** $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ **6c. Web Mailing Cost** $_____
Subtotal Fees Before Waivers, Discounts or Deposits: ☐ Cost estimate ☐ Bill **Copying:** **Estimated Time Frame to Provide Records:** _____ *(days or date)* The time frame estimate is nonbinding upon the county, but the county is providing the estimate in good faith. Providing an estimated time frame does not relieve the county from any of the other requirements of this act. **Fees:**	**1. Labor Cost for** **2. Labor Cost to Locate:** **3a. Labor Cost to Redact:** **3b. Contract Labor Cost to Redact:** **4. Copying/Duplication Cost:** **5. Mailing Cost:** **6a. Copying/Duplication of Records on Website:** **6b. Labor Cost for Copying Records on Website:** **6c. Mailing Costs for Records on Website:** **Subtotal**	$_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____

Waiver: Public Interest A search for a public record may be conducted or copies of public records may be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge if the county determines that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because searching for or furnishing copies of the public record can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public. ☐ **All fees are waived** **OR** ☐ **All fees are reduced by:** _____%	**Subtotal Fees After Waiver:**	$_____
Discount: Indigence A public record search **must** be made and a copy of a public record **must** be furnished **without charge for the first $20.00 of the fee** for each request by an individual who is entitled to information under this act and who: **1)** Submits an affidavit stating that the individual is indigent and receiving specific public assistance, **OR** **2)** If not receiving public assistance, stating facts showing inability to pay the cost because of indigence. If a requestor is ineligible for the discount, the public body shall inform the requestor specifically of the reason for ineligibility in the public body's written response. An individual is ineligible for this fee reduction if **ANY** of the following apply: (i) The individual has previously received discounted copies of public records from the same public body twice during that calendar year, **OR** (ii) The individual requests the information in conjunction with outside parties who are offering or providing payment or other remuneration to the individual to make the request. A public body may require a statement by the requestor in the affidavit that the request is not being made in conjunction with outside parties in exchange for payment or other remuneration. ☐ **Eligible for Indigence Discount**	**Subtotal Fees After Discount (subtract $20):**	$_____
Discount: Nonprofit Organization A public record search **must** be made and a copy of a public record **must** be furnished **without charge for the first $20.00 of the fee** for each request by a nonprofit organization formally designated by the state to carry out activities under subtitle C of the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act, if the request meets **ALL** of the following requirements: (i) Is made directly on behalf of the organization or its clients. (ii) Is made for a reason wholly consistent with the mission and provisions of those laws under section 931 of the Michigan Mental Health Code, 1974 PA 258, MCL 330.1931. (iii) Is accompanied by documentation of its designation by the state, if requested by the county. ☐ **Eligible for Nonprofit Discount**	**Subtotal Fees After Discount (subtract $20):**	$_____
Deposit: Good Faith The county may require a good-faith deposit in either its initial response or a subsequent response before providing the public records to the requestor **if the entire fee estimate or charge authorized under this section exceeds $50.00**, based on a good-faith calculation of the total fee. The deposit cannot exceed 1/2 of the total estimated fee. **Percent of Deposit:** _____%	**Date Paid:** _____	**Deposit Amount Required:** $_____

Deposit: Increased Deposit Due to Previous FOIA Fees Not Paid In Full After a county has granted and fulfilled a written request from an individual under this act, if the county has not been paid in full the total amount of fees for the copies of public records that the county made available to the individual as a result of that written request, **the county may require an increased estimated fee deposit of up to 100% of the estimated fee before it begins a full public record search for any subsequent written request from that individual** if **ALL** of the following apply: (a) The final fee for the prior written request was not more than 105% of the estimated fee. (b) The public records made available contained the information being sought in the prior written request and are still in the county's possession. (c) The public records were made available to the individual, subject to payment, within the best effort estimated time frame given for the previous request. (d) Ninety (90) days have passed since the county notified the individual in writing that the public records were available for pickup or mailing. (e) The individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to the county. (f) The county calculates a detailed itemization, as required under MCL 15.234, that is the basis for the current written request's increased estimated fee deposit. A county **can no longer require an increased estimated fee deposit** from an individual if **ANY** of the following apply: (a) The individual is able to show proof of prior payment in full to the county, **OR** (b) The county is subsequently paid in full for the applicable prior written request, **OR** (c) Three hundred sixty-five (365) days have passed since the individual made the written request for which full payment was not remitted to the county.	**Date Paid:** _____	**Percent Deposit Required:** _____ **%** **Deposit Required:** **$**_____
Late Response Labor Costs Reduction If the county does not respond to a written request in a timely manner as required under MCL 15.235(2), the county **must** do the following: (a) **Reduce the charges for labor costs** otherwise permitted by 5% for each day the county exceeds the time permitted for a response to the request, **with a maximum 50% reduction**, if **EITHER** of the following applies: (i) The late response was willful and intentional, **OR** (ii) The written request included language that conveyed a request for information within the first 250 words of the body of a letter, facsimile, electronic mail, or electronic mail attachment, or specifically included the words, characters, or abbreviations for "freedom of information," "information," "FOIA," "copy", or a recognizable misspelling of such, or appropriate legal code reference for this act, on the front of an envelope, or in the subject line of an electronic mail, letter, or facsimile cover page.	**Number of Days Over Required Response Time:** _____ **Multiply by 5%** **= Total Percent Reduction:** _____	**Total Labor Costs** **$**_____ **Minus Reduction** **$**_____ **= Reduced Total Labor Costs** **$**_____
The Public Summary of the county's FOIA Procedures and Guidelines is available free of charge from: Website: www.calhouncountymi.gov Email: shuerta@calhouncountymi.gov or jdyer@calhouncountymi.gov Phone (269) 781-0917 Address: 315 West Green Street, Marshall, MI 49068 **Request Will Be Processed,** **But Balance Must Be Paid Before Copies May Be Picked Up, Delivered or Mailed**	**Date Paid:** _____	**Total Balance Due:** **$**_____