

Open Data Portal P.I.R.T. Update

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P.I.R.T. System Activity 2014 - 2016

PIRT Request Comparison

Completed Public Records Requests in FY14-15 = 712

Completed Public Records Requests in FY15-16 = 965

- The total number of requests increased 25 percent from FY14-15 to FY15-16

Average Completion Time

Average Number of Days to Complete Requests (FY14-15) = 5

Average Number of Days to Complete Requests (FY15-16) = 8.5

- The average number of days required to close requests increased by 35 percent

FY16-17 (October 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016)

Completed Public Records Requests = 237

(Includes requests prior to this timeframe, but closed during this timeframe)



P.I.R.T. System Enhancements

Outreach Meetings

Outreach meetings will be scheduled with PIRT users twice a year in an effort to maintain open dialogue and receive feedback about the PIRT process. Meetings took place in August and October of 2016.

Staffing

To respond to the current volume of PIRT requests and expedite closing requests, a full time PIRT Administrator position has been reinstated. The position will be supplemented with a roster position. Additional resources are also being dedicated from the Legal Department.

Batched Responses

PIRT requests that involve a large volume of emails, will be batched into smaller groups in an effort to release the information as it's being reviewed. This will increase customer service as the requestor will no longer have to wait for the entire set of emails to be reviewed prior to releasing the information.



PI.R.T. System Enhancements (2)

Search Terms

The PIRT Administrator will determine appropriate search terms and parameters to enhance efficiency. The Requestor will be advised of the search terms being used and will have an opportunity to modify the parameters, if necessary.

PIRT Policy Reminders

The City Manager will continue to make directors and employees aware of the PIRT Policy on a regular basis to ensure policy understanding, compliance, and process efficiency.

Quarterly Reports

The practice of preparing an annual report has been changed to a quarterly schedule, in an effort to track activity on a more regular basis.

The reports will be prepared according to the following schedule:

- **July – September**
- **October – December**
- **January – March**
- **April – June**

Open Data Portal

Council Emails – Review/Release Process

- The Open Data Portal will allow public viewing of “Talk to Council” emails and the emails generated from each Council member’s City email account
- Using the Open Data Portal will eliminate some PIRT requests and was an idea generated through our feedback sessions with users of the PIRT system
- Refer to the Flow Chart for the Review and Release process
- Each week, the emails in the “Approved for Release” folder will be published to the Open Data Portal, where it will remain available for public inspection for one year. The data will drop off in 30 day increments.
- Simultaneously, the actual email will be moved to the “Portal Archive” folder, where it will remain indefinitely.

Public Records Policy Changes

Section D – Retention and Disposition of Public Records

(Please refer to Handout)

Council emails and “Talk to Council” emails will be uploaded to the Open Data Portal each week, where they will remain available for public inspection for one year.

The data will drop off in 30 day increments, but will be stored and available upon request..

Public Records Policy Changes

Section E – Records Requests

1. Responding to a Record Request

After receipt of the PIRT request, the PIRT Administrator will determine the appropriate search term and search parameter. The PIRT Administrator will contact the requestor and discuss the PIRT and the search methodology. The appropriate search term and parameter will be recorded in the PIRT system.

The City of Greensboro may apply a search filter on PIRT e-mail requests. These “analytics” are designed to remove duplicative e-mails. The PIRT Administrator will provide the requestor the option of use of the “analytics” filter and the response will be recorded in the PIRT system. City employees will review identified e-mails or documents. Items privileged under the PIRT statutes or personnel items are considered exempt from disclosure under North Carolina 1727 Public Records Law. The number of these privileged or personnel e-mails will be disclosed as will the legal justification for not producing these e-mails. The PIRT Administrator will request Council communications or documents that may have not entered into the City services for appropriate PIRT requests.

Public Records Policy Changes

Section E – Records Requests

3. Charging for Producing Records

In most cases, public records are easily retrievable and provided electronically via e-mail at no cost to the City or requestor. Pursuant to NCGS section 132-6.2 (b), a special service charge can be applied “If the request is such as to require extensive use of information technology resources or extensive clerical or supervisory assistance, then the City may charge, in addition to the actual cost of duplication, a special service charge, which shall be reasonable and shall be based on the actual cost incurred for such extensive use of information technology resources or the labor costs of the personnel providing the services.”

Any searches exceeding 1000 emails may be subject to the service charge. The special service charge will be the hourly rate in accordance with the lowest paid person who would be conducting the work.

Need for Special Service Charge

Example of Burdensome Requests

- From **March 20, 2014 - April 20, 2016**, the City received **1,721** public records requests. Of these requests, 160 requests required an email search be conducted and reviewed.
- **These 160 requests resulted in 136,404 email hits returned for review.** Several of these email searches are very broad, such that the resources required to review these requests have become unduly burdensome.
- Of the 160 PIRT requests, **37 requests** produced search results that exceeded 1,000 email hits. One search exceeded 15,000 hits. These 37 PIRT requests resulted in **108,000** email hits... using nearly **80 percent** of the City's resources to review and process.
- The Special Service Charge is not being recommended as a deterrent for PIRT requests, but rather as a mechanism to streamline requests in the best interest of the Requestor and City
- Enacting a **Special Service Charge** in instances such as these, will allow the City to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars, while remaining in compliance with North Carolina Public Records Law. This practice is practiced by Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham , and other cities.

Staff Recommendation

Staff seeks consensus from Council to accept the proposed changes to the PIRT Policy.