
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

Prepared by:

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ILLINOIS FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

HOW TO MAKE A FOIA REQUEST:

I need information from the Waukegan Park District, but I am not quite sure where to start or what to request. What can I do?

If you would like to obtain information from the Waukegan Park District, you should begin by thinking through and writing down a list of the information you are seeking. Then prepare a letter to the FOIA officer:

Greg Petry

Executive Director

Waukegan Park District

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The Waukegan Park District requires that all FOIA requests be submitted in writing. Your letter should include your name, your address, the date and a daytime phone number so that the Waukegan Park District can contact you if they have any questions. Describe the information you are seeking with sufficient detail so that the Waukegan Park District can find the requested records. Providing as much information as possible in your request on the subject matter may expedite the Waukegan Park District's search process. You do not need to describe the document specifically and accurately by the same name the Waukegan Park District uses. The Waukegan Park District will accept requests by mail, personal delivery, fax, e-mail, or other means available. The Waukegan Park District may accept verbal FOIA requests, but is not required to do so by law. The Waukegan Park District also maintains a current list of all types or categories of records under its control, and it is available to aid persons in obtaining access to public records. This list is available for inspection and copying. Continue to scroll down to view a general list of records.

What should I include in the FOIA request?

On your written request, include your name, address, the date and a daytime phone number so that the Waukegan Park District can contact you if they have any questions. Provide as much information as possible on the subject matter. This will help expedite the search process.

Does the Waukegan Park District require that a FOIA request must be submitted on a certain form or in a certain format?

No. All requests must be submitted in writing. The park district also accepts requests by mail, personal delivery, fax, e-mail, or other means available.

What if I don't use the same name for a document that the Waukegan Park District uses? Can they deny my request for that reason?

No, the Waukegan Park District cannot deny the request just because you called the document by a different name. You do not need to describe the document specifically and accurately by the same name the Waukegan Park District uses. As long as the Waukegan Park District understands what you are requesting, they must release that information, even if you do not call it by the same name the Waukegan Park District uses.

How many days does the Waukegan Park District have to respond to my FOIA request?

A Waukegan Park District must respond to a FOIA request within 5 business days *after* it receives the request. Day 1 of the 5-day timeline is the first business day *after* the request is received by the Waukegan Park District. The date that the request was received by the Waukegan Park District does *not* count as "Day 1." That time period may be extended for an additional 5 business days from the date of the original due date if:

- The requested information is stored at a different location;
- The request requires the collection of a substantial number of documents;

- The request requires an extensive search;
- The requested records have not been located and require additional effort to find;
- The requested records need to be reviewed by staff who can determine whether they are exempt from FOIA;
- The requested records cannot be produced without unduly burdening the public body or interfering with its operations; or
- The request requires the Waukegan Park District to consult with another Park District who has substantial interest in the subject matter of the request. If additional time is needed, the Waukegan Park District must notify the requestor in writing within 5 business days after receipt of the request of the statutory reasons for the extension and when the requested information will be produced.

When does the 5 business day time period start?

On the first business day *after* the Waukegan Park District receives the request.

What is a “business day” or “working day”?

A “business day” or “working day” is a regular day of the week (Monday through Friday) when public offices and most businesses are open. Saturdays, Sundays and state holidays are not business days and cannot be counted in the 5 business day time period.

Can the Waukegan Park District charge for copies?

Yes, but the fees are limited. For black and white, letter or legal sized copies (8 ½ x 11 or 11 x 17), the first 50 pages are free, and any additional pages can cost no more than 15 cents a page. For color copies or abnormal size copies, the Waukegan Park District can charge the actual cost of copying.

Can I request the documents in electronic form?

Yes and the Waukegan Park District must provide you those electronic documents in your requested format, if that is feasible for the Waukegan Park District. Copies will be provided in PDF format. If that format is not available to the public body, they must provide the documents in the electronic format in which they are kept or on paper, at the option of the requestor.

What must the Waukegan Park District include in a denial?

The denial must be in writing, and reference a specific legal reason under FOIA to justify the non-disclosure. The Waukegan Park District has the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that the information is exempt from disclosure. The denial must also inform the requestor of the right to seek review of the issue by the Public Access Counselor (PAC) in the Attorney General’s office, with the PAC’s contact information, as well as the right to seek judicial review by filing a court case.

What can I do if the Waukegan Park District denies my request for information?

You can either file a Request for Review with the Attorney General’s PAC or file a lawsuit in court.