



Legislation Text

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Clerk 09/24/2009

A MOTION declaring county policy regarding access to public records.

WHEREAS, King County has made substantial improvements in recent years in its processing of public records requests, and

WHEREAS, King County is committed to further facilitating public records requests and improving the county's responsiveness to such requests, and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Auditor observed in a May 2008 report, "When entities provide guidance and information to the public for making public records request[s] on its Web site, this communicates a culture of openness to the public and reinforces the entity's commitment to accountability and transparency," and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Auditor further observed in the same report, "The use of information technology can assist entities in being more responsive to records requests and demonstrates transparency and accountability. Specifically, providing commonly requested public records on Web sites is[,] in our opinion, a best practice," and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Attorney General testified before the council's committee of the whole that coordination of public records responses by county agencies should be considered a best practice but not legally mandatory, and that the size and complexity of King County government would make it impracticable for the county to respond to all public records requests as if it were a single agency,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. It is county policy that county agencies should:

1. Provide on each of their web sites the maximum guidance and information to the public for making public records requests;
2. Provide access to commonly requested nonexempt public records on its website to the extent feasible and economical; and
3. In responding to public records requests:
 - a. notify the requestor in writing that they are responding on their own behalf, and not on behalf of other county agencies, which should be listed in the notice; and
 - b. if their public records officer believes that other county agencies could have responsive records, notify the requestor and provide the name, phone number, email address and office mailing address of the public records officer of each of those other agencies.

B. The policies in this motion are intended as guidance for best practices for county agencies, and shall not be interpreted to impose any legal obligation on agencies beyond those imposed by chapter 42.56 RCW and K.C.C. chapter 2.12.