

**WOONSOCKET HOUSING AUTHORITY
ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS ACT
R.I. GENERAL LAWS SECTION 38-2-1 et seq.**

The Woonsocket Housing Authority (“WHA”) provides public records upon written request in the ordinary course of business. You may use our Public Records Request Form or not – so long as your *written request* specifies the record(s) you seek from us. You may include contact information, or you may request records anonymously.

The WHA offers three (3) ways to request public records from us: (1) Via email to: PublicRecords@woonsockethousing.org; (2) In person or (3) Via US Mail to: Public Records Request, Woonsocket Housing Authority, 679 Social Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895. The WHA’s IT department receives and responds to public records requests.

Pursuant to R.I. General Laws Section 38-2-3(d), the Woonsocket Housing Authority has established the following procedure for responding to requests for public records:

1. Response – If the records requested are public (as defined in RIGL 38-2-2) and are readily available, WHA will swiftly provide them. There are times when the records will not be available at the time you make the request and/or we require legal clarification as to whether they are public. Records we can release can either be mailed or emailed to you or you may pick them up on a designated date, whichever you choose.

The Access to Public Records Act grants a public body ten (10) business days to respond to your request per R.I. General Laws Section 38-2-7(a). The Act further provides that “for good cause, this limit may be extended ... up to an additional twenty (20) business days”. This provides for a total period not to exceed thirty (30) business days. We thank you in advance for your understanding if it is necessary, for good cause, to request this extension. Improper release of certain information could compromise the civil rights or personal safety of your fellow citizen(s), and we must review documents to prevent such harm.

2. Costs – The Access to Public Records Act offers you the opportunity to view and/or copy public records. The cost per page of written public documents is \$.15 for documents copied on business or legal-size paper. You may elect to obtain public records in any and all media in which we are capable of providing them. The Act permits a reasonable charge for search and retrieval of documents. After the first hour, the hourly cost for such a search and retrieval is Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00) per hour. If you request, we will provide a detailed itemization of the costs charged for search and retrieval. Multiple requests from any person or entity to the PHA within a thirty (30) day period shall be considered one request.

3. Public Records – A “public record” is defined as documents, papers, or other material regardless of physical form or characteristics made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency. A number of records are exempt from public disclosure by the Act.

4. Redaction – Although a document may constitute a public record, there may be some information contained in the document that may be redacted or deleted as it is exempt from disclosure. The Rhode Island Supreme Court stated that “in passing the APRA, the General Assembly intended to limit access

to certain documents in order to avoid disclosure of confidential information to protect individuals from invasion of their privacy”. “There is no public interest to be weighted in disclosure of nonpublic records”. A “balancing of interest arises only after a record has first been determined to be a public record”.

5. Exemptions – The Access to Public Records Act exempts some records from public disclosure. For a full list of these exemptions, please see R.I. General Laws Section 38-2-2(4)(A)(I) and (II)(B) through (AA).

6. Denial of Access – If the WHA denies your APRA request in whole or in part, within ten (10) business days it shall provide to you its specific reasons for the denial and specify the procedures for you to appeal the denial.

To appeal a denial, please contact Todd Boisvert, Executive Director, Woonsocket Housing Authority, 679 Social Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895 or via email at TBoisvert@WoonsocketHousing.org to request review of the determination to deny providing the records. The Executive Director is not directly involved in receiving or responding to public records requests, so he is an impartial arbiter of any denial of records requested. This final decision shall be made within ten (10) business days after you submit your written request to review the denial.

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