

From: [Michele Eldridge](#)
To: [Public Records Task Force](#)
Subject: Public comments for the Task Force Meeting of May 9, 2016
Date: Monday, May 09, 2016 2:29:38 PM
Attachments: [image003.jpg](#)
[City of Harrisburg - Testimony for Public Records Law Reform Task Force Hearing..pdf](#)

Good Afternoon!

I'm planning on attending the meeting this afternoon at the University of Oregon starting at 4:30 today, but unfortunately, I must leave at 5:00 due to other board meetings this evening in my community. I'm sure that this location will certainly engender a packed house. As such, I am submitting public testimony for the task force, since I'm uncertain that I will have time to testify.

Thank you for giving everyone an opportunity to testify, and for taking this issue as a public forum to different areas throughout the state. I think it's fantastic that you are attempting to modify the public records law, and certainly appreciate that it's a formidable task!

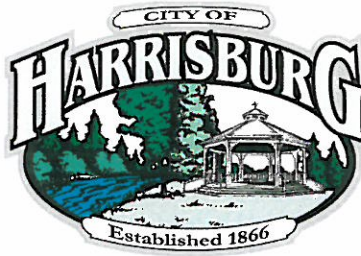
I hope that the forum goes well for all.



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May 9, 2016

Comments for the Public Records Law Reform Task Force Hearing in Eugene on May 9th, 2016.

As the City Recorder/Assistant City Administrator for the City of Harrisburg, I very much appreciate that the Oregon Attorney General and staff are attempting to modify the current public records laws, and in particular the many exemptions that apply to public records. I am also the President of the Oregon Association of Municipal Recorders, which is also known as OAMR. We are generally the front line staff in our cities that respond to public records requests.

As an organization, and certainly for my City, we are committed to transparency in government, and to upholding the laws of the state of Oregon. Most of the cities in Oregon are considered small; Harrisburg has a population of 3645. In my City, we have only 13 full-time employees; I am generally the only employee who responds to public records requests. While I manage public disclosure requests, on occasion, our City Administrator also responds when needed. We both have many other responsibilities; plus our office has limited staff resources. On occasion, we need to ask our City Attorney, who we use on a contracted basis, for an interpretation of an exemption. This becomes quite expensive to the City, at \$150 an hour. In addition, a too restrictive response time for public disclosure requests could also penalize a City our size, if a request is received by staff when they are on vacation.

Some of the requests we receive are from sources outside the state, and many are outside our jurisdictional boundaries, resulting in public disclosure that's generally not serving the citizens of our community. We generally don't charge fees if we are able to obtain answers, and convey them to the requestor within 30 minutes; we emphasize electronic transmission wherever possible. We notify requestors of any potential research that will result in additional time and fees. Restricting our ability to recover the full costs of research in fulfilling public disclosure requests will lower the value of the services we can provide to the citizens of Harrisburg. In addition, I'd like to point out that many of the smaller cities in Oregon have limited budgets, and lack the ability to purchase software that helps to organize and rapidly expedite public records for disclosure requests. I hope that the task force will keep this in mind as they further review public disclosure laws.

We appreciate that the task force is taking the time to analyze the public records law and will fully consider how the law relates to state and local government entities; while still providing transparency in the public sector, and determining how best the law can ultimately serve the citizens of Oregon.

Best Regards;

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michele Eldridge". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michele Eldridge, CMC
City of Harrisburg ~ President, Oregon Association of Municipal Recorders

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