

Request for Guidance Regarding FOIL Submission Portal Requirements

Transparent Law Enforcement

Submitted to the New York Committee on Open Government

Jan 29, 2026

Dear Committee on Open Government,

I am writing to request guidance regarding the use of online FOIL submission portals by several municipalities in Monroe County, New York, and whether certain required fields and certifications imposed by these systems are consistent with the Freedom of Information Law.

As part of a broader review of municipal FOIL intake practices, I examined the publicly available FOIL submission methods used by multiple municipalities. During this review, I observed that some online portals require requesters to provide personal identifying information, declare a purpose or organizational affiliation, or certify intended downstream use of records as a condition of submitting a FOIL request.

For clarity and accuracy, the examples discussed below identify specific municipalities and reflect the submission requirements presented to requesters at the time of review. These examples are representative of broader patterns observed and are provided to illustrate common categories of submission barriers.

Summary of Examples Reviewed

Town of Henrietta

The Town of Henrietta utilizes an online FOIL submission portal. In the submission interface reviewed, contact information fields such as address, city, state, and ZIP code are present but not marked as required, and no purpose-based, affiliation-based, or intended-use declarations appear to be required as a condition of submission. The form requires a description of the requested records but does not require the requester to provide a physical address, telephone number, or purpose classification in order to submit a request.

City of Rochester

The City of Rochester utilizes an online FOIL submission portal that requires requesters to provide personal identifying information, including a physical address and related address fields (city, state, ZIP code), as mandatory fields prior to submission. The interface reviewed also includes additional required fields related to record or incident categorization that are not necessary to establish the validity of a FOIL request.

Town of Brighton

The Town of Brighton's FOIL request form requires requesters to provide a name, physical address, telephone number, and email address as mandatory fields in order to submit a request. These fields are presented as required conditions of submission, rather than optional contact information.

Town of Penfield

The Town of Penfield's online FOIL submission form, in addition to requiring personal identifying and contact information, further requires requesters to:

- Select at least one mandatory “reason for request” classification (e.g., individual, academic, news media, private corporation);
- Designate whether the request is commercial or non-commercial in nature; and
- Certify whether the requested records will or will not be used for solicitation or fundraising purposes.

These selections are required in order to submit the request and are not presented as optional or explanatory fields.

Screenshots of the relevant submission interfaces are included as appendices to illustrate the specific fields presented as mandatory prior to submission. Where submission requirements are distributed across multiple pages of a form, multiple screenshots are included to accurately reflect all conditions imposed prior to submission.

Request for Guidance

I respectfully request COOG's guidance on whether requiring any of the following as a condition of submitting a FOIL request is consistent with the Freedom of Information Law:

1. A requester's personal identifying information, including a physical address or telephone number, as a condition of submission;
2. A declaration of the requester's purpose, organizational affiliation, or media status;
3. A required classification of a request as commercial or non-commercial; and
4. A certification regarding the requester's intended downstream use of records, such as solicitation or fundraising.

I am seeking guidance only, not enforcement action. Any clarification COOG can provide regarding these practices would be helpful both to requesters and to municipalities seeking to align their FOIL submission processes with statutory requirements.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cadhla McBride
Transparent Law Enforcement
admin@transparentlawenforcement.com

Appendix A – Henrietta

JF Freedom Of Information Request X +

https://henriettany.justfoia.com/Forms/Launch/d705cbd6-1396-49b7-939e-8d86c5a87deb

Town of Henrietta

Freedom Of Information Request

475 Calkins Rd - Rochester, NY 14623
Phone: (585) 359-7040

Please identify the records you are interested in as clearly as possible.

The Freedom of Information Law requires that we must respond to a request within five (5) business days of receipt of a request. If your request is approved, we will get that information to you as soon as possible depending upon the volume of documents requested and time involved locating the material, but it will be within twenty (20) business days from the approval, unless we notify you otherwise.

If any portion of the request is denied, you will be informed of the reason in writing and provided with the contact information to whom an appeal should be directed.

Requests for any court or police records should be directed to those entities directly. (Monroe County Sheriff's Office or Henrietta Town Court)

Name of Requestor
John Doe

Email
johndoe@example.com

Phone
####-####-####

Your contact Address
123 Example Drive

City
Naples

State
Florida

Zip
11111

Description of Request (Be as specific as possible, including name, address, and/or department specific)*

Appendix B – Rochester

JustFOIA Freedom of Information Requests +

https://rochesterny.justfoia.com/Forms/Launch/d705cbd6-1396-49b7-939e-8d86c5a87deb

FOIL Requests

Rochester City Hall
30 Church St.
Rochester, NY 14614

Name of Requestor*
John Doe

Email
johndoe@example.com

Phone
####-####-####

Address*
123 Example Drive

City*

State*

Zip*

Firm or Organization

Fax

Primary Record/Incident Type:*
Police ▼

What date or date range did this happen:

What time or time range did this happen:

Property or incident address associated with the record:*

Additional References: (such as, local code number, insurance claim number, police/fire report number, accident

Appendix C – Brighton

Form Center - Freedom of Information Request

https://www.brightonny.gov/FormCenter/Town-Clerk-4/Freedom-of-Information-Request-43

Document Center

- Employment
- Green Brighton
- Leaf and Yard Debris Collection
- Legal Notices
- Minutes & Agendas
- Notify Me
- Monroe Ave GIGP
- Staff Directory
- Streaming Video
- Town Board Committees
- Town Board Meeting Schedule
- Town Code
- Voter Information

 **Office of the Town Clerk**
Town Clerk / Receiver of Taxes – Daniel Aman, RMC

Dear Applicant:

Please identify the records you are requesting as completely as possible.

The Freedom of Information law requires an agency to acknowledge receipt of a request within five (5) business days and if possible, produce the information within twenty (20) business days. If a request will take longer to fulfill, the agency is required to advise the requestor and provide an estimated date the information will be available. We will make every attempt to fulfill requests as quickly as possible.

If any portion of the request is denied, you will be informed of the reason in writing and provided with information on how to file an appeal.

Thank You,

Daniel Aman Town Clerk / Records Access Officer

Requester's Name:*

Requester's Address:*

City:* **State:*** **Zip Code:***

Phone Number:*

Email Address:*

Requested Records:*

Please identify the records you are requesting as completely as possible. Do not submit Social Security Numbers via this form.

Appendix D1 / D2 – Penfield

Penfield, NY X Revize Online Forms X +

<https://penfield.rja.revize.com/forms/1693>



FOIL Request Form Submission
Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests submitted via the Town's website are regularly acknowledged by a Town Clerk's Office staff member within **five business days**.

To make a successful request, complete each required field then click the SUBMIT button.

Contact Information

* First Name: _____ * Last Name: _____

* Email: _____

Organization / Affiliation: _____

* Address: _____

Address Line 2: _____

* Postal Office Name: _____ * Postal Zip: _____

City or Town _____

* Phone 1: _____ Phone 2: _____

Request

Records Requested From:

Animal Control
Assessor
Building
Business Development

* Short title of requested records: _____

Penfield, NY X Revize Online Forms X +

https://penfield.rja.revize.com/forms/1693

* FOIL Request / Description of records sought:

Please provide a clear description of the record(s) sought. Personal, private, sensitive, financial, medical, or health-related information should not be put into the "Description" field below, and should instead be uploaded in a separate document.

Upload Document(s) in support of your FOIL request:

No file selected.
We accept common file types such as: Documents, PDFs, Spreadsheets, Images, etc

* Requested Response Format:

-- Select an Option --

Identify how you would like to receive the materials requested.

* Fee Limit (\$)

I understand that I will be notified if the fees exceed this amount prior to my request being filled.

* Reason for request

I am an individual seeking information for personal use
 I am affiliated with an educational or non-commercial scientific institution, and this request is made for a scholarly or scientific purpose
 I am a representative of, or affiliated with, the news media and this request is made as part of a news gathering effort
 I am affiliated with a private corporation and am seeking information for use in the company's business for commercial purpose
 I am affiliated with a private corporation and am seeking information for use in the company's business for non-commercial purpose

You must choose at least one option

Disclosure

* The information requested:

Will be used for solicitation and/or fundraising purposes.
 Will NOT be used for solicitation and/or fundraising purposes.

You must choose at least one option

● Confirm your request and email address before clicking the submit button
● After you click the SUBMIT button, this window will close and an automated email with a summary of your request will be sent to the email provided within this form. The email will be sent from noreply@penfield.org. Please check your email inbox, spam, and junk folders. Emails are typically sent within 60 minutes.
● If you do not receive the automated email receipt within 60 minutes or have a need to make a correction to your request, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at (585) 340-8629.

I'm not a robot 