

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Ralph Neunteufel,

Complainant

against

Docket # FIC 2025-0335

Zoning Officer, Land Use Department,
Town of Easton; Land Use Department,
Town of Easton; and Town of Easton,

Respondents

April 22, 2026

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on November 4, 2025, at which time the complainant and respondents appeared, stipulated to certain facts, and presented testimony, exhibits, and argument on the complaint.

After consideration of the entire record, the following facts are found and conclusions of law are reached:

1. The respondents are public agencies within the meaning of §1-200(1), G.S.
2. It is found that, by email dated April 24, 2025, the complainant requested that the respondents provide him with “copies of any and all communications between the Planning and Zoning Department and the Wetlands Department concerning the property known as 740 Stepney Rd or any part thereof.” (“April 24 request”). It is found that the complainant indicated in his request that he would like to receive responsive records in electronic format.
3. It is found that, by email dated April 28, 2025, the respondents acknowledged the complainant’s request and informed him that they had “gathered copies of all media material that [he] requested” and that such records were ready for the complainant to pick up upon proper payment for paper copies.¹
4. By complaint received and filed on May 7, 2025, the complainant appealed to the Commission, alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information (“FOI”) Act by failing to comply with his April 24, 2025, request, described in paragraph 2, above.
5. Section 1-200(5), G.S., provides:

¹ It is unclear from the administrative record whether, at the time of the hearing in this matter, the respondents had provided the complainant with electronic or hard copies of “all media material,” as described in paragraph 3, above.

“[p]ublic records or files” means any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, received or retained by a public agency, or to which a public agency is entitled to receive a copy by law or contract under section 1-218, whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, videotaped, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.

6. Section 1-210(a), G.S., provides in relevant part that:

[e]xcept as otherwise provided by any federal law or state statute, all records maintained or kept on file by any public agency, whether or not such records are required by any law or by any rule or regulation, shall be public records and every person shall have the right to ... (3) receive a copy of such records in accordance with section 1-212.

7. Section 1-212(a), G.S., provides in relevant part that “[a]ny person applying in writing shall receive, promptly upon request, a plain, facsimile, electronic or certified copy of any public record.”

8. It is concluded that the records described in paragraph 2, above, are public records within the meaning of §§1-200(5) and 1-210(a), G.S.

9. It is found that, by email dated May 19, 2025, the respondents disclosed to the complainant certain emails, with attachments, responsive to his April 24 request, free of charge.²

10. At the hearing on this matter, the complainant acknowledged that the respondents provided him with responsive records, as described in paragraph 9, above, but claimed that the respondents failed to conduct a thorough search for and provide him with all responsive records. Specifically, the complainant claimed that the respondents failed to provide him with responsive records relating to certain violations listed in an April 9, 2025, Notice of Code Violations.³

11. The respondents contended that they conducted a thorough search of all locations where responsive records could reasonably be located, and that they provided the complainant with all records responsive to his April 24 request.

12. With respect to the search for records responsive to the complainant’s April 24 request, the respondent Zoning Officer testified, and it is found, that the scope of the respondents’ search consisted only of a search of his emails.

13. It is found that the respondents failed to provide sufficient evidence regarding the nature and scope of their search, and therefore, failed to prove that they conducted a diligent and

² It is found that such disclosure does not include the records referenced in paragraph 3, above.

³ See Complainant’s Exhibit C.

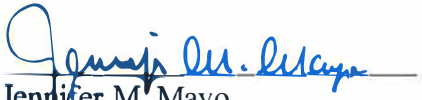
thorough search for records responsive to the April 24 request. Accordingly, it is found that the respondents failed to prove that they provided the complainant with all records responsive to his April 24 request.⁴

14. Accordingly, it is concluded that the respondents violated the disclosure provisions of §§1-210(a) and 1-212(a), G.S.

The following order by the Commission is hereby recommended on the basis of the record concerning the above-captioned complaint:

1. Within fourteen (14) days of the date of the Notice of Final Decision in this matter, the respondents shall undertake a search for all records responsive to the complainant's April 24, 2025, request. The respondents shall provide the complainant with a copy of such records, if any are located, and free of charge.
2. Within thirty (30) days of the date of the Notice of Final Decision, the respondents shall also provide an affidavit to the complainant and the Commission, prepared by a person with knowledge of the efforts taken, and detailing the scope and results of their search.
3. Henceforth, the respondents shall strictly comply with the disclosure provisions of §§1-210(a) and 1-212(a), G.S.

Approved by Order of the Freedom of Information Commission at its regular meeting of April 22, 2026.


Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

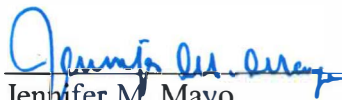
⁴ At the hearing on this matter, when asked whether he had reason to believe that there were any responsive records, other than what has already been provided, the respondents' witness testified that "short answer, no, long answer, yes" and that he had doubts about the adequacy and thoroughness of the respondents' search for records responsive to the complainant's April 24 request. Such uncertainty was due in part, to the large number of requests the respondents had received from the complainant around the time of such request.

PURSUANT TO SECTION 4-180(c), G.S., THE FOLLOWING ARE THE NAMES OF EACH PARTY AND THE MOST RECENT MAILING ADDRESS, PROVIDED TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION, OF THE PARTIES OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE.

THE PARTIES TO THIS CONTESTED CASE ARE:

RALPH NEUNTEUFEL, 15 Hayes Street, Easton, CT 06612

ZONING OFFICER, LAND USE DEPARTMENT, TOWN OF EASTON; LAND USE DEPARTMENT, TOWN OF EASTON; AND TOWN OF EASTON, 225 Center Road, Easton, CT 06612


Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

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