

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Bryant Abbott,

Complainant

against

Docket #FIC 2025-0415

Director, Department of Health & Social
Services, City of Bridgeport; Department of
Health & Social Services, City of
Bridgeport; and City of Bridgeport,

Respondents

May 13, 2026

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on November 5, 2025, at which time the complainant and the respondents appeared, stipulated to certain facts, and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint.

After the contested case hearing on this matter, by order of the undersigned hearing officer, the complainant and the respondents submitted after-filed exhibits, which have been admitted into evidence, without objection, and marked as follows: Complainant's Exhibit G (after-filed): Printout of the Complainant's records request made via GovQA, dated April 25, 2025; and Respondents' Exhibit 1 (after-filed): Affidavit of Dr. Elizabeth Rivera-Rodriguez, dated January 13, 2026.

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 request made via the respondents' public records request portal, GovQA ("GovQA"), and dated April 25, 2025, the complainant requested copies of the following records: "[a]ny and all records, communications, documentation, and/reports relating to, or stemming from, the explosion which occurred at the Tradebe Treatment Facility on December 29, 2023, 50 Cross Street, Bridgeport, [CT]."¹
3. It is found that, by message sent via GovQA, dated April 25, 2025, the respondents acknowledged the request described in paragraph 2, above.

¹ The Commission notes that the complainant made similar requests to approximately eight separate public agencies within the respondent City of Bridgeport regarding the Tradebe Treatment Facility explosion.

4. It is found that, by letter dated May 20, 2025, the complainant renewed his request described in paragraph 2, above.

5. By complaint, dated May 26, 2025 and filed May 27, 2025, the complainant appealed to this Commission, alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information (“FOI”) Act by failing to provide the records described in paragraph 2, above. The complainant also alleged other violations of the FOI Act that are not at issue in this matter and, therefore, need not be further addressed herein.

6. Section 1-200(5), G.S., provides:

“[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 1-218, whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, videotaped, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.

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

[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.

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

9. It is concluded that the requested records, to the extent they exist and are maintained by the respondents, are public records within the meaning of §§1-200(5) and 1-210(a), G.S.

10. It is found that, by email dated October 8, 2025, counsel for the respondents, as part of a coordinated response to the complainant’s requests, described in paragraph 2 and footnote 1, above, provided the complainant with a copy of a responsive press release that had been sent to all employees of the respondent City of Bridgeport.

11. At the hearing on this matter, the respondents’ witness, Special Projects Coordinator for the respondent Department of Health & Social Services (“DHSS”), Maria Agueda, testified, and it is found, that she was the person primarily responsible for responding to the complainant’s request described in paragraph 2, above, and that she conducted the search for responsive records. Ms. Agueda testified, and it is found, that she searched all locations where responsive

electronic records and hardcopies of records would be located within DHSS, except for the emails of the Director of DHSS, Dr. Elizabeth Rivera-Rodriguez. Ms. Agueda also testified, and it is found, that Dr. Rivera-Rodriguez informed Ms. Agueda that she did not have any responsive emails. Ms. Agueda further testified, and it is found, that, in conducting her search for records, she learned that the respondent City of Bridgeport's response to the explosion described in paragraph 2, above, was immediately taken over by the Bridgeport Fire Department and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and that DHSS had no role in responding to such incident.

12. It is found that, in Respondents' Exhibit 1 (after-filed), Dr. Rivera-Rodriguez attested that she searched her emails using specific search terms and did not locate any records responsive to the request described in paragraph 2, above.

13. Based upon the foregoing, it is found that the respondents conducted a diligent and thorough search for records responsive to the request described in paragraph 2, above.

14. It is therefore concluded that the respondents did not violate the FOI Act, as alleged by the complainant.

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

1. The complaint is dismissed.

Approved by Order of the Freedom of Information Commission at its regular meeting of May 13, 2026.

/S/ Jennifer M. Mayo
Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

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:

BRYANT ABBOTT, 34 Chatham Drive, Trumbull, CT 06611

DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES, CITY OF BRIDGEPORT; DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES, CITY OF BRIDGEPORT; AND CITY OF BRIDGEPORT, c/o Attorney Karen L Miller, Bridgeport City Attorney Office, 999 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604

/S/ Jennifer M. Mayo
Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

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