

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Anthony Sinchak,

Complainant

against

Docket #FIC 2016-0581

Commissioner, State of Connecticut,
Department of Correction; and
State of Connecticut, Department of
Correction,

Respondents

July 12, 2017

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on February 3, 2017, at which time the complainant and the respondents appeared, stipulated to certain facts, and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint. The complainant, who is incarcerated, appeared via teleconference, pursuant to the January 2004 memorandum of understanding between the Commission and the Department of Correction. See Docket No. CV 03-0826293, Anthony Sinchak v. FOIC et al, Superior Court, J.D. of Hartford at Hartford, Corrected Order dated January 27, 2004 (Sheldon, J.).

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. By letter of complaint filed August 15, 2016, the complainant appealed to the Commission, alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information (“FOI”) Act by failing to comply with his July 9, 2016 request for certain information.
3. It is found that the complainant made a July 9, 2016 request to the respondents for any and all information concerning the Department of Correction classification and designation of “disruptive groups.” In particular, the complainant sought specific documentation concerning the addition of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club to the list of “disruptive groups,” and the specific authority giving the respondents the authority to seize property or mail of members of “disruptive groups.”
4. It is found that a “disruptive group” is defined by the respondents as “a structured or unstructured group designated by the Director of Security, that meets one or more but not all of the necessary recommendation factors to be considered as a Security Risk Group and which

exhibits behavior that jeopardizes the safety of the public, staff or other inmate(s) and/or the security and order of the facility.”

5. It is found that the respondents acknowledged the request on July 20, 2016.
6. It is found that the respondents provided the complainant with a copy of Administrative Directive (“A.D.”) 6.14, “Security Risk Groups,” and A.D. 10.7, “Inmate Communications.”
7. It is found that the two A.D.s are partially responsive to portions of the complainant’s request.
8. It is found that the remaining record responsive to the complainant’s request is the respondents’ security risk group manual.
9. Section 1-200(5), G.S., defines “public records” as follows:

Public 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, ...whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.
10. Section 1-210(a), G.S., provides, in relevant part:

Except 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 (1) inspect such records promptly during regular office or business hours, (2) copy such records in accordance with subsection (g) of section 1-212, or (3) receive a copy of such records in accordance with section 1-212.
11. Section 1-212(a), G.S., provides in relevant part: “Any person applying in writing shall receive, promptly upon request, a plain or certified copy of any public record.”
12. It is concluded that the requested records are public records within the meaning of §§1-200(5), 1-210(a), and 1-212(a), G.S.
13. The respondents claimed that the withheld security risk group manual is exempt from disclosure pursuant to §1-210(b)(18), G.S., which provides that disclosure is not required of:

Records, the disclosure of which the Commissioner of Correction...has reasonable grounds to believe may result in a safety risk, including the risk of harm to any person or the risk of an escape from, or a disorder in, a correctional institution or

facility under the supervision of the Department of Correction...

Such records shall include, but are not limited to:

- (A) Security manuals, including emergency plans contained or referred to in such security manuals;
- (B) Engineering and architectural drawings of correctional institutions or facilities or Whiting Forensic Division facilities;
- (C) Operational specifications of security systems utilized by the Department of Correction at any correctional institution or facility or Whiting Forensic Division facilities, except that a general description of any such security system and the cost and quality of such system may be disclosed;
- (D) Training manuals prepared for correctional institutions and facilities or Whiting Forensic Division facilities that describe, in any manner, security procedures, emergency plans or security equipment;
- (E) Internal security audits of correctional institutions and facilities or Whiting Forensic Division facilities;
- (F) Minutes or recordings of staff meetings of the Department of Correction or Whiting Forensic Division facilities, or portions of such minutes or recordings, that contain or reveal information relating to security or other records otherwise exempt from disclosure under this subdivision;
- (G) Logs or other documents that contain information on the movement or assignment of inmates or staff at correctional institutions or facilities; and
- (H) Records that contain information on contacts between inmates, as defined in section 18-84, and law enforcement officers

14. The Commission has had a substantial line of cases holding that records concerning security risk groups are exempt from mandatory disclosure. See Docket #FIC 2015-189, Alston v. Department of Correction et al.; Docket #FIC 2013-541, Edwards v. Department of Correction; Docket #FIC 2010-284, Dorlette v. Department of Correction; Docket #FIC 2010-093, Barletta v. Department of Correction; and Docket #FIC 2010-047, Calderon v. Department of Correction.

15. It is found that, consistent with long-standing Commission precedent, the Commissioner of Correction has reasonable grounds to believe that disclosure of information concerning “disruptive groups” contained within the security risk group manual may result in a safety risk, and that the portions of the security risk group manual sought by the complainant are therefore exempt from disclosure pursuant to §1-210(b)(18), G.S.

16. It is therefore concluded that the respondents did not violate the FOI Act as alleged.

17. The complainant also contended that, as a result of the classification of the Outlaw Motorcycle Club as a “disruptive group,” he has been prevented from receiving mail from the Club or its members, and that he has no other contact with the outside world.

18. It is concluded, however, that this particular claim does not allege a violation of the FOI Act.

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 July 12, 2017.



Cynthia C. Cannata
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:

ANTHONY SINCHAK, #64249, Garner Correctional Institution, 50 Nunnawauk Road, Newtown, CT 06470

COMMISSIONER, STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION; AND STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION, c/o Attorney James Neil, 24 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109



Cynthia C. Cannata
Acting Clerk of the Commission