

# PRAIRIE COUNTY PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY

## Purpose

This policy establishes procedures for providing public access to county records in compliance with Montana public information laws.

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## Public Access

All persons have the right to inspect and obtain copies of public records unless the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.

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## Records Custodian

The County Clerk & Recorder or designated staff member serves as the official custodian of public records and is responsible for processing requests. This does not apply to the Sheriff's Office as they are the custodian of all record requests from the Sheriff's Office due to Criminal Justice Information.

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## Request Submission

Requests may be submitted:

- In person
- By mail
- By email
- Using the county Public Records Request Form

Requests must reasonably identify the records sought.

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## Response Time

The county will respond to requests **as promptly as possible**. If additional time is required to locate or review records, the requester will be notified.

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## **Inspection of Records**

Inspection of records may occur during normal business hours at the county office unless other arrangements are made.

Original records may not leave county custody.

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## **Fees**

Reasonable fees may be charged for:

- Staff research time
- Copying costs
- Materials and postage
- Electronic storage media

Fees will reflect actual costs incurred by the county.

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## **Exemptions and Redactions**

Records may be withheld or redacted when disclosure could/would violate:

- Individual privacy rights
- Confidentiality laws
- Security protections
- Protected personal information

Each request will be reviewed using the **privacy balancing test** required under Montana law.

## FEE SCHEDULE

<b>Service</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Black & White Copies	\$0.25 per page
Color Copies	\$0.50 per page
Staff Research Time	\$25 per hour
Electronic Media (USB/CD)	\$10 each
Postage	Actual cost