



## Office of the City Auditor Policies and Procedures

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**Number:** 5.1.2**Title:** Release of Information

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[Helen Niesner]

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### I. Policy

The City Auditor is the official Public Information Officer for the Office of the City Auditor and serves as caretaker of all departmental records and audit working papers. Until it is published in a released audit report, all information passing through this office and prepared by this office concerning auditees is to be treated as confidential unless otherwise indicated by the City Auditor.

- A. All audit problems, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are to be discussed only with authorized representatives of the auditees and related parties, until these findings are officially released in a published audit report.
- B. All unreleased copies of audit reports and related written communications shall contain the word "DRAFT" prominently displayed prior to submitting the report to the Audit Committee or sending the communication to its addressee.

### II. Purpose

This policy describes guidelines for releasing audit findings or other information which has been developed from audit work to persons outside the department and the City of Austin. This policy is to ensure that information released has received proper review and complies with confidentiality restrictions.

### III. Definitions

**Texas Open Records Act** - Audit findings, working papers, and internal memoranda, as well as other documentary information which may come to the attention of Office of the City Auditor employees in the course of City business are subject to the Texas Open Records Act (Article 6252-17a, V.T.C.S.). An important exception to the Open Records Act is draft

copies of audit reports before they have been officially transmitted to parties outside the department.

#### **IV. Procedures**

- A. All written Open Records requests, including those from members of the news media, will be submitted to the City Auditor for consultation with the Office's Law Department advisor. If an Open Records request is determined by the Law Department to meet the conditions of the Act, the City Auditor will authorize fulfillment of the request.
  - 1. Routine requests for copies of Audit Reports may be filled by administrative staff and a record of such will be maintained.
- B. Any requests for information which has not been published in a released audit report will be transmitted to the City Auditor for review and approval. This includes requests from members of the news media for information about ongoing audits or investigations. The City Auditor or designee will supervise any interviews or press conferences held with members of the media.
- C. The administrative section of this department is responsible for developing adequate procedures to comply with the Open Records Act. In the case of documents ascertained to be archived, a request for retrieval shall require no more than 10 days, unless a valid reason prevents timely compliance. Provision of copies shall be reimbursed to the Office of the City Auditor, using the Texas State Purchasing and General Services Commission fee schedule guidelines 111.62.

#### **V. Responsibilities**

**All OCA staff** are responsible for reading and becoming familiar with the Texas Open Records Act.