

South Plainfield Borough

Borough Clerk's Office

2480 Plainfield Avenue

South Plainfield, NJ 07080

Telephone (908) 226-7606

Freddy Young

Via email – opra+request-92297-1871c019@requests.opramachine.com

June 25th, 2026

RE: OPRA request - Documents pertaining to limiting officer communication with elected officials

Dear Freddy Young,

As Custodian of Records, the Borough of South Plainfield (“Borough”) acknowledges receipt of your Open Public Records Act (“OPRA”) request dated June 13, 2026, and received by the Borough on June 15, 2026. The request was submitted pursuant to the Open Public Records Act, N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. The Township provides the following response within the time period prescribed by statute.

Request:

“Pursuant to the New Jersey Open Public Records Act (OPRA), I request copies of any current or former South Plainfield Police Department General Orders, Special Orders, Directives, Policies, Rules, Regulations, Memoranda, or other written guidance that govern, restrict, regulate, require approval for, or otherwise address communications between police officers and elected officials.

This request includes, but is not limited to, any written policy concerning communications between police officers and: The Mayor; Members of the Borough Council; Elected municipal officials; The Borough Administrator; Any elected or appointed governing body.”

The Borough responds as follows:

Your OPRA request is being denied as an invalid request being overly broad and overly burdensome, and failing to specify an identifiable governmental record. Please be advised that a request pursuant to OPRA must identify the records sought with specificity. Bart v. Passaic County Pub. Hous. Agency, 406 N.J. Super. 445, 451 (App. Div. 2009). OPRA requires that a request "reasonably identify" the government records sought and does not authorize "unbridled searches of an agency's property." Bent v. Twp. of Stafford Police Dep't, Custodian of Records, 381 N.J. Super. 30, 37 (App. Div. 2005). A proper OPRA request must "identify with reasonable

clarity those documents that are desired," and a requestor cannot satisfy this requirement by simply requesting all of an agency's documents on a general subject. Id.

OPRA "is not intended as a research tool litigants may use to force government officials to identify and siphon useful information." MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcohol Beverage Control, 375 N.J. Super. 534, 546 (App. Div. 2005). A custodian may reject a request that is overly broad or vague so as to prevent identification of the records sought. New Jersey Builders Ass'n v. New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing, 390 N.J. Super. 166, 172 (App. Div. 2007), cert. denied 190 N.J. 394 (2007). Moreover, the Appellate Division held in MAG Entertainment, LLC supra, 375 N.J. Super. at 549, that pursuant to New Jersey's Open Public Records Act (OPRA):

Agencies are required to disclose only 'identifiable' government records not otherwise exempt. Wholesale requests for general information to be analyzed, collated and compiled by the responding government agency are not encompassed therein. In short, OPRA does not countenance open-ended searches of an agency's files.

Your request seeks "any current or former" documents without specifying any time period whatsoever. This unbounded temporal scope requires the custodian to search through potentially decades of archived and stored records across multiple formats and storage locations. The absence of any date range transforms this request into an open-ended research project rather than a request for identifiable government records. The purpose of OPRA is to provide access to identifiable government records, not to require custodians to conduct research, compile information, or analyze files on behalf of requestors.

Based on the foregoing, your OPRA request is denied and the matter has been closed.

Amy Antonides

Amy Antonides, RMC/CMC/CMR

Municipal Clerk

(You have the right to challenge the decision by the Borough of South Plainfield and at your option you may either institute a proceeding in the Superior Court of New Jersey or file a complaint with the Government Records Council by completing the Denial of Access Complaint Form. You may contact the Government Records Council at 866-850-0511. All questions regarding complaints filed in Superior Court should be directed to the Middlesex County Court Clerk.)