



350 Hudson Ave, Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676-4799, Tel: 201-664-44256 Fax 201-664-8281
Office of the Township Clerk, Susan Witkowski

October 19, 2023/OR554

Kristen Sawyer

Via email: opra+request-53870-411c63d1@requests.opramachine.com

Ms. Sawyer,

The Twp. of Washington received your Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request on October 11, 2023. The official Records Custodian, Susan Witkowski received your OPRA request on October 11, 2023. As such, the seven (7) business day deadline to respond to your request is October 23, 2023. This response to your request is being provided to you on the 6th business day after the custodian's receipt of said request.

The table below identifies the records that being denied in whole or in part as well as the legal basis for each denial, as is required by N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6.

List of all records responsive to OPRA request (include the number of pages for each record).	List of all records provided, <u>with redactions</u> , or denied in their entirety.	If records are disclosed with redactions, give a general nature description of the redactions.	If records were denied in their entirety, give a general nature description of the record.	List the legal explanation and statutory citation for the denial of access to records in their <u>entirety</u> or <u>with redactions</u> .
N/A	N/A	Personal phone number and email address	N/A	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1(19)

* A list of OPRA's exemptions is attached to this response letter.

This OPRA is considered complete.

If your request for access to a government record has been denied or unfilled within the seven (7) business days required by law, you have a right to challenge the decision by the Township of Washington to deny access. 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 ("GRC") by completing the Denial of Access Complaint Form. You may contact the GRC by toll-free telephone at 866-850-0511, by mail at P.O. Box 819, Trenton, NJ, 08625, by e-mail at grc@dca.state.nj.us, or at their web site at www.state.nj.us/grc. The Council can also answer other questions about the law. All questions regarding complaints filed in Superior Court should be directed to the Court Clerk in your County.

Sincerely,

/s/ Susan Witkowski

Susan Witkowski, RMC

Township of Washington

201-664-4425, switkowski@twpofwashington.us

OR-554

-----Original Message-----

From: Kristen Sawyer <opra+request-53870-411c63d1@requests.opramachine.com>

Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 2:10 PM

To: Town Clerk <townclerk@twpofwashington.us>

Subject: OPRA request - Emails to town council

RECEIVED

OCT 11 2023

TOWNSHIP CLERK

Caution: External E-mail

Dear Washington Township (Bergen),

This is a request for public records made under OPRA and the common law right of access. I am not required to fill out an official form. Please acknowledge receipt of this message.

Records requested:

All emails to/from town council involving Doug/Douglas Cusato containing these terms:

"Library", "Book or Books", "LGBTQ or LGBT"

Yours faithfully,

Kristen Sawyer

Please deliver records electronically via email to the below UNIQUE address for all replies to this request:

opra+request-53870-411c63d1@requests.opramachine.com

Is townclerk@twpofwashington.us the wrong address for OPRA requests to Washington Township (Bergen)? If so, please contact us using this form:

https://opramachine.com/change_request/new?body=washington_township_bergen

Disclaimer: This message and any reply that you make will be published on the internet. Our privacy and copyright policies:

<https://opramachine.com/help/officers>

View this OPRA request & responses online:

https://opramachine.com/request/emails_to_town_council

Please note that in some cases publication of requests and responses will be delayed.

If you find this service useful as an OPRA custodian, please ask your web manager to link to us from your organisation's website.



350 Hudson Ave, Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676-4799, Tel: 201-664-44256 Fax 201-664-8281
Office of the Township Clerk, Susan Witkowski



October 12, 2023

Kristen Sawyer opra+request-53870-411c63d1@requests.opramachine.com

Dear Ms. Sawyer,

The Township of Washington received your Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request on October 10, 2023. The official Records Custodian, Susan Witkowski, received your OPRA request on October 11, 2023. As such, the seven (7) business day deadline to respond to your request is October 20, 2023. This response to your request is being provided to you on the 2nd business day after the custodian's receipt of said request.

Your OPRA request sought access to the following:

All emails to/from town council involving Doug/Douglas Cusato containing these terms:

"Library", "Book or Books", "LGBTQ or LGBT"

Currently, your request fails to identify with reasonable clarity the specific government records sought, as is required by Bent v. Stafford Police Department, 381 N.J.Super. 30, 37 (App. Div. 2005). At this time, we request clarification of your OPRA request as to the date range of such records. Please respond in writing and identify the specific date(s) of these government records sought so that we may process your request. Failure to provide written clarification of your request will result in the closure of this OPRA request.

If your request for access to a government record has been denied or unfilled within the seven (7) business days required by law, you have a right to challenge the decision by the Township of Washington to deny access. 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 (GRC) by completing the Denial of Access Complaint Form. You may contact the GRC by toll-free telephone at 866-850-0511, by mail at P.O. Box 819, Trenton, NJ, 08625, by e-mail at grc@dca.state.nj.us, or at their web site at www.state.nj.us/grc. The GRC can also answer other questions about the law. All questions regarding complaints filed in Superior Court should be directed to the Court Clerk in your County.

Sincerely,

Susan Witkowski, RMC
Records Custodian, Township of Washington
switkowski@twpofwashington.us

Susan Witkowski

From: Kristen Sawyer <opra+request-53870-411c63d1@requests.opramachine.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 15, 2023 11:20 PM
To: Susan Witkowski
Subject: Re: OR 544

Caution: External E-mail

Dear Susan Witkowski,

Thank you for your response. The dates I am requesting are from 6/2023 to present.

Yours sincerely,

Kristen Sawyer

-----Original Message-----

Ms. Sawyer,

This office is in receipt of your OPRA request as attached. Kindly refer to the attached letter asking for clarification of the dates being requested.

Thank you.

Sue

Susan Witkowski

From: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 1:18 PM
To: Elena Skinner;Cindy Mazanec;robert sliclen;Peter Calamari;Mary Ellen Stickel;Robert Sliclen;Clarence;Mary Ellen Stickel;Cindy Mazanec;Katie Fisher;Fred Voss
Subject: Heads up

Hello Everyone,

I hope this finds you all doing well. I just wanted to give you a heads up on two situations.

First, is that a book banning discussion is set to take place at the Board of Education meeting on June 15th.

There was something posted in a district parents' page (not the regular one, a very small one) and BOE member Doug Cusato made a comment that "history books and the library" (school? public? both? not specific) will be the target and that he hopes to have a "very busy few months" getting this going.

The HS librarian has gotten word and emails as well. She gave Allyssa a list of books that are being brought up specifically in NJ from her union, as well as two (so far) specifically that were brought to her attention district specific.

Nothing has yet been addressed to us as the Public Library directly. I will be meeting with Martha Urbel of the Westwood Library next week, and continue to partake in many workshops and trainings regarding book banning.

As of right now, we are doing what we always do - be inclusive! We have historically had displays for Pride month in June as well as Juneteenth. Patrons have always reacted favorably and can count on these displays being up again this month.

I will continue to keep you posted as the school situation progresses, and if anything should come across my desk before our next meeting.

Second, is that on Tuesday afternoon a FedEx truck backed up into the roof at the corner by my office.

I was at my desk at the time (talk about startling!) The situation is well in hand-it's not our first rodeo.

The police report should be in soon, the Borough Administrator was alerted and asked to start a JIF report - and since I already knew the agent I called him as well.

Still photos and video footage from our security cameras has been provided to all and my next steps are to gather the necessary three quotes (one is already in).

Wishing you all a nice (and drama free) weekend,
Laura

--

Laura Rifkin
Laura/She/Her/Hers
Library Director
Township of Washington Library

144 Woodfield Road
Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676
201.664.4586 ext. 201

Susan Witkowski

From: Douglas Cusato <cusato.douglas@wwrsd.org>
Sent: Sunday, September 10, 2023 5:38 PM
To: Peter Calamari
Subject: Sit down discussion

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Hello Pete,

Let's schedule sometime to meet and discuss a few topics in the community.

Let me know your availability this week.


Regards,

Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Peter Calamari
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 9:38 AM
To: Douglas Cusato
Subject: Re: Sit down discussion

Good Morning Doug,

Are you around during the day or are we looking at evenings or nights?

Pete

On 9/10/2023 5:38 PM, Douglas Cusato wrote:

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Hello Pete,

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Regards,

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Susan Witkowski

From: Douglas Cusato <cusato.douglas@wwrsd.org>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 9:45 AM
To: Peter Calamari
Subject: Re: Sit down discussion

Caution: External E-mail

I work from home and can be flexible during the morning /afternoons. Evenings and nights are difficult during the week with coaching and kids activities but Friday is probably the best. Weekend evenings are generally flexible.

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From: Mayor Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 9:38:05 AM
To: Douglas Cusato <cusato.douglas@wwrsd.org>
Subject: Re: Sit down discussion

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[REDACTED]

Regards,

Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Peter Calamari
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 4:33 PM
To: Douglas Cusato
Subject: Re: Sit down discussion

I have tomorrow available from 11:00 - 12:00. Does that work for you? Just curious if we are meeting in your role as a Board member or resident?

On 9/11/2023 9:45 AM, Douglas Cusato wrote:

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Susan Witkowski

From: Douglas Cusato <cusato.douglas@wwrsd.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 10:22 PM
To: Peter Calamari
Subject: Re: Sit down discussion

Caution: External E-mail

11-12 tomorrow is fine. I guess both.

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From: Mayor Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 4:33:11 PM
To: Douglas Cusato <cusato.douglas@wwrsd.org>
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[REDACTED]

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Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Peter Calamari
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 10:36 PM
To: Douglas Cusato
Subject: Re: Sit down discussion

Okay. See you then. The third floor conference room in town hall should be available.

On 9/12/2023 10:21 PM, Douglas Cusato wrote:

Caution: External E-mail

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Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

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[REDACTED]

Regards,

Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Douglas Cusato [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 6:17 PM
To: Peter Calamari
Subject: Library
Attachments: IMG_2076.jpeg; IMG_2073.jpeg; IMG_2070.jpeg; IMG_2071.jpeg

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Pete

We're you aware of this material in the library? There are CRT and sexualizing books that are specifically geared at the youth of our community and to be viewed and read without adults present.

Who came up with this idea and who was involved with the creation of this room and what budget was spent to outfit it?

Regards

Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Peter Calamari
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 6:28 PM
To: Laura Rifkin
Subject: Fwd: Library
Attachments: IMG_2076.jpeg; IMG_2073.jpeg; IMG_2070.jpeg; IMG_2071.jpeg

FYI. He's on the School Board.

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Library
Date: Fri, 29 Sep 2023 22:17:12 +0000
From: Douglas Cusato [REDACTED]
To: Mayor Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Pete

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Susan Witkowski

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To: Mayor Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>

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Regards

Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 6:38 PM
To: Cindy Mazanec; Mary Ellen Stickel; Clarence; Katie Fisher; Elena Skinner; Fred Voss; Joanne Greco; Peter Calamari; Robert Sliclen; robert sliclen
Subject: Book Banning

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Hello everyone,

What a great day to be a duck! I hope you are all doing well in this downpour.

I wanted to reach out and let you know that I have gotten word that Douglas Cusato (BOE member that began the book banning discussions at the school) reached out to a town council member to ask "why do we have antiracist and groomer books on display at our town library". He sent along pictures of our book displays in the teen room.

The council member this was sent to called me promptly. I do not know if other such messages were sent to the rest of the council. At this time I do not believe that the council member is responding to Mr Cusato as they didn't wish to engage in such rhetoric.

I thanked them for the call, and shared that
Should Mr Cusato persist, he can be rerouted to me at the library.

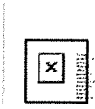
As a reminder- As per state law the town council does not have any authority over the Library collection.

Proper procedure for anyone objecting to materials is to fill out our objection form which is located on our website and return it for my review. I engage with the person filing and if needed it can be escalated to a board of trustee review.

No such form, email or phone call has reached me at this time. Should anything come in, the staff and I are prepared and will follow procedure.

I do not wish to alarm anyone at this time- simply wanted to share this development.

Best
Laura



--

Laura Rifkin

Laura/She/Her/Hers

Library Director

Township of Washington Library

144 Woodfield Road

Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676

201.664.4586 ext. 201

Susan Witkowski

From: KATIE FISHER [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 6:47 PM
To: Rifkin
Cc: Cindy Mazanec; Mary Ellen Stickel; Clarence; Elena Skinner; Fred Voss; Joanne Greco; Peter Calamari; Robert Sliclen; robert sliclen
Subject: Re: Book Banning

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Thanks for the update.
Happy weekend everyone.

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 29, 2023, at 6:38 PM, Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org> wrote:

Hello everyone,

What a great day to be a duck! I hope you are all doing well in this downpour.

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I do not wish to alarm anyone at this time- simply wanted to share this development.

Best

Laura

Susan Witkowski

From: Douglas Cusato [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, October 7, 2023 3:47 PM
To: Peter Calamari
Subject: Discussion

 **Caution:** External E-mail

Pete,

Let me know if you have time this week for a chat (12ish same place, etc...)

Monday and Tuesday are not possible for me.

Regards

Doug

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Susan Witkowski

From: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2023 12:06 PM
To: Desserie Morgan
Subject: Re: Book Banning emails

Caution: External E-mail

Hi Desserie,
No problem, is there a time and phone number you'd like me to reach out to?
Best
Laura

On Mon, Oct 2, 2023 at 11:51 AM Desserie Morgan <dmorgan@twpofwashington.us> wrote:
Hi Laura, I'd like to discuss the "no adults allowed" room. When you have a moment, please.
Thank you,
Desserie

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From: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Saturday, September 30, 2023 12:41:42 PM
To: Mark DiCarlo <mdicarlo@twpofwashington.us>; Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>; Tom Sears <tsears@twpofwashington.us>; Daisy Velez <dvelez@twpofwashington.us>; Desserie Morgan <dmorgan@twpofwashington.us>; Stacey Feeney <sfeeney@twpofwashington.us>; Ken Poller <KPLAW@aol.com>
Subject: Book Banning emails

Caution: External E-mail

Hello Everyone,
I hope this finds you and your families well.

I have recently gotten word from a few council members that Douglas Cusato has emailed them directly regarding the library and I wanted to reach out so that you all have any needed information.

As you may already know Douglas Cusato is a resident and BoE member that engaged in book banning discussions at the school a few months back.

My understanding is that he has now reached out to council members with concern over some items in our public library. As many of you already know, as a Municipal Library we adhere to all state library laws and regulations. In accordance with those laws, our collection development policy and our objection form can be found on our website.

There is a process that Mr Cusato can follow if he - or any resident- wishes to question any material. As per state law this is under the authority of the Library Board of Trustees and not the Town council to review. Should Mr Cusato persist, he can be rerouted to me at the library.

I do not wish to alarm or burden anyone at this time- simply wanted to share this development and proper steps so that any resident broaching any council member can be redirected properly.

Further, as always, I am happy to discuss the Libraries procedures with you or answer any questions you may have.

Many thanks for you time,
Laura

--

Laura Rifkin
Laura/She/Her/Hers
Library Director
Township of Washington Library
144 Woodfield Road
Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676
201.664.4586 ext. 201



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Laura Rifkin
Laura/She/Her/Hers
Library Director
Township of Washington Library
144 Woodfield Road
Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676
201.664.4586 ext. 201

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Subject: Re: Library

Caution: External E-mail

Thanks Pete.

I don't know if you plan to reply or already have but here are the answers to his questions in case you need them. Feel free to reach out anytime if you need any background info.

Best
Laura

The room was part of a state grant in 2001 that also awarded the community room and local history rooms.

Funding of materials or budget for library materials is done by the state mandated library funding.

As we are a Public Library, collection development (how items are chosen) is done in accordance with state law by state certified librarians who adhere to the American Library Association and State requirements. Any questions or concerns regarding Library operations or collection should be sent to the Library Director or Board of Trustees. All information - and objection forms- can be found on our website.

On Fri, Sep 29, 2023 at 8:55 PM Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us> wrote:

Begin forwarded message:

From: Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>
Date: September 29, 2023 at 6:28:19 PM EDT
To: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Subject: Fwd: Library

FYI. He's on the School Board.

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Library
Date: Fri, 29 Sep 2023 22:17:12 +0000
From: Douglas Cusato

To: Mayor Peter Calamari
<pcalamari@twpofwashington.us><<mailto:pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>>

Caution: External E-mail

Pete

We're you aware of this material in the library? There are CRT and sexualizing books that are specifically geared at the youth of our community and to be viewed and read without adults present.

Who came up with this idea and who was involved with the creation of this room and what budget was spent to outfit it?

Regards

Doug

Get Outlook for iOS<<https://aka.ms/o0ukef>>



--
Laura Rifkin
Laura/She/Her/Hers
Library Director
Township of Washington Library
144 Woodfield Road
Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676
201.664.4586 ext. 201

Susan Witkowski

From: Peter Calamari
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 8:55 PM
To: Laura Rifkin
Subject: Fwd: Library

Begin forwarded message:

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Caution: External E-mail

Pete

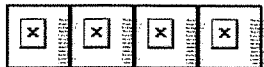
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Susan Witkowski

From: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 8:57 PM
To: Peter Calamari
Subject: Re: Library

Caution: External E-mail

Thank you!

On Fri, Sep 29, 2023 at 8:55 PM Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us> wrote:

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Regards

Doug

Get Outlook for iOS<<https://aka.ms/o0ukef>>

Susan Witkowski

From: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2023 8:37 AM
To: Mark DiCarlo
Subject: Re: Book Banning emails

Caution: External E-mail

Thanks Mark.

On Mon, Oct 2, 2023 at 6:56 AM Mark DiCarlo <mdicarlo@twpofwashington.us> wrote:

Thank you, Laura, I included Renata in case she receives and calls from the resident.

Mark

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Laura Rifkin <rifkin@washingtontwp.bccls.org>
Sent: Saturday, September 30, 2023 12:41:42 PM
To: Mark DiCarlo <mdicarlo@twpofwashington.us>; Peter Calamari <pcalamari@twpofwashington.us>; Tom Sears <tsears@twpofwashington.us>; Daisy Velez <dvelez@twpofwashington.us>; Desserie Morgan <dmorgan@twpofwashington.us>; Stacey Feeney <sfeeney@twpofwashington.us>; Ken Poller <KPLAW@aol.com>
Subject: Book Banning emails

Caution: External E-mail

Hello Everyone,

I hope this finds you and your families well.

I have recently gotten word from a few council members that Douglas Cusato has emailed them directly regarding the library and I wanted to reach out so that you all have any needed information.

As you may already know Douglas Cusato is a resident and BoE member that engaged in book banning discussions at the school a few months back.

My understanding is that he has now reached out to council members with concern over some items in our public library. As many of you already know, as a Municipal Library we adhere to all state library laws and regulations. In accordance with those laws, our collection development policy and our objection form can be found on our website.

There is a process that Mr Cusato can follow if he - or any resident- wishes to question any material. As per state law this is under the authority of the Library Board of Trustees and not the Town council to review. Should Mr Cusato persist, he can be rerouted to me at the library.

Proper procedure for anyone objecting to materials is to fill out our objection form which is located on our website and return it for my review.

No such form, email or phone call has reached me at this time. Should anything come in, the staff and I are prepared and will follow procedure.

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No such form, email or phone call has reached me at this time. Should anything come in, the staff and I are prepared and will follow procedure.

I do not wish to alarm or burden anyone at this time- simply wanted to share this development and proper steps so that any resident broaching any council member can be redirected properly.

Further, as always, I am happy to discuss the Libraries procedures with you or answer any questions you may have.

Many thanks for you time,
Laura

--

Laura Rifkin
Laura/She/Her/Hers
Library Director
Township of Washington Library
144 Woodfield Road
Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676
201.664.4586 ext. 201



--

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