



CITY OF ATLANTA

KEISHA LANCE BOTTOMS
MAYOR

55 TRINITY AVENUE, S.W., SUITE 2400
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-0300
TEL (404) 330-6100

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Council President Felicia Moore and City Councilmembers
55 Trinity Avenue, S.W.
Suite 2900
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Re: Establishment of Requirements and Protocols for Compliance with the Georgia Open Records Act.

Dear President Moore and Members of the Council:

In the spirit of my announcement last week about the City's new "Open Checkbook" online application to allow citizens and other interested parties to see the City's financial records, I am pleased to announce a comprehensive plan to implement best in class policies, protocols, and procedures for transparency and compliance with the Georgia Open Records Act ("GORA") in the City of Atlanta.

I have directed the immediate development and implementation of a Citywide Open Records Compliance Policy ("Policy"). An important part of this new Policy will be a City Open Records Response Protocol ("Protocol"), including a checklist for use by employees when responding to requests for public records. Such a checklist will create consistency across departments, clearly establish the expected elements of an adequate response and provide a mechanism for monitoring accountability. Additionally, the Policy will include the creation of an internal reporting and tracking system for requests and responses.

Once the Citywide Policy and Protocol are finalized, a comprehensive communication and training program will be implemented to inform and educate all employees of their responsibilities and the requirement for mandatory training for all new employees and mandatory annual training for existing employees.

I will direct the creation of a City web page dedicated to Open Records that will provide easy access to information by citizens, media, and employees. The website will include:

- Internal GORA compliance training materials.
- Online form for submitting a request for records.
- Frequently asked questions related to requesting and receiving records.

- List of designated record custodians and, if applicable, links to individual departments.
- Citywide Policy and Protocol.
- Link to the website for the Georgia Attorney General's Office.
- City record retention schedule.
- Ability for public to create an account through which a citizen could submit a record request, receive information about that request and track the progress of the City's response.
- Link to a hotline to report an alleged violation of the GORA.

Finally, I will be bringing before Council an ordinance to amend the Atlanta City Code. This ordinance will focus specifically on transparency and will mandate certain actions related to compliance with the GORA. The ordinance will include the following elements:

- Designation of an Official Record Custodian for the City, including the requirement that such individual be provided with enforcement authority.
- Designation of the head of each department or similar entity as the official custodian of that entity's records.
- Requirement for the creation and maintenance of dedicated City Open Records website.
- Requirement for a dedicated GORA phone number and email address for each custodian.
- Requirement that GORA compliance processes should be reviewed regularly in conjunction with the Policy.
- Requirement that all employees be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or termination in conformance with the Code, for failure to conform to the Policy, as well as a requirement that violations of the Policy may also be referred to the appropriate authorities for criminal and/or civil prosecution.
- Requirement that all employees, particularly members of my Cabinet and the City Council and their staff as well as all new employees, receive mandatory training every twelve (12) months.
- Requirement that a hotline be provided for employees and individuals to express concerns about non-compliance with Open Records requirements.

Thank you for your partnership on this important matter.

Sincerely,


Keisha Lance Bottoms