

Chief FOIA Officer's Report – National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)

February 7, 2011

NCPC submits this report in response to the request in the United States Department of Justice Office of Information Policy email of November 30, 2010. The report has been prepared by Anne Schuyler, Chief FOIA Officer, NCPC.

I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness.

NCPC is a small agency with 40 regular employees and Commissioners, 5 of them Special Government Employees (the others are ex officio members). As NCPC's Chief FOIA Officer, I am responsible for reading, reviewing, and responding to all FOIA requests. I have read and understand the President's FOIA memorandum and Attorney General's FOIA guidelines and carry them out as I respond to FOIA requests. Since the President's directive was issued.

I have not attended or conducted training related to the new FOIA Guidelines. Since 2007 NCPC has made no discretionary releases.

The total number of FOIA requests in FY 2009 was 8 and the total number of full releases was 8. The total number of requests in FY 2010 was 19 and the total number of full releases was 17. Two requests were withheld for fee related reason.

As of FY 2007 to the present, NCPC has only withheld documents that were responsive to two FOIA requests for fee related issues.

To ensure openness, NCPC updates its website at least 4 times each month to provide the latest information related to its plan review function.

II. Steps Taken to Ensure that NCPC has an Effective System for Responding to Requests.

NCPC's FOIA program has sufficient support from its IT staff. I worked closely with staff in the development of the agency's Open Government Plan.

NCPC's system for responding to requests is that the request is forwarded to the Chief FOIA officer, who reviews the request, assures that it is logged into NCPC's computer tracking system, then determines whether NCPC has any responsive documents and if so what they are. We have consistently responded within a few days of the request. Marcella Brown, NCPC's Information Resource Specialist, assists in tracking FOIA requests and is aware of the Presidential Directive and Justice Department Memorandum. Since we have so few requests (13 in FY 2007, 15 in FY 2008, 8 in FY 2009

and 19 in FY2010), and since the Chief FOIA Officer handles them, NCPC has adequate staff to respond to FOIA requests.

III. Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

NCPC has just developed and made publicly available an updated website. Staff has worked with the website developers to increase the emphasis on public participation and to make available both additional current documents and a greater number of historical agency documents. Examples of additional material provided since issuance of the new FIOA Guidelines include a list of Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements available at NCPC. Also on NCPC's Open Government website additional documents are available to include: Federal Capital Improvements Program FYs 2010-2015, a Commemorative Works Catalog; NCPC meeting Transcripts and NCPC's Library Catalog.

NCPC's webmaster routinely meets with staff to determine if there are additional planning documents that can be posted on the agency's website.

NCPC utilizes facebook to provide a public forum for discussion of NCPC's work with federal agencies, local government, and the general public. It is also used to disclose information quickly and in a more readily accessible manner. NCPC also participates in live chats with local blogs.

IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology.

1.) Does your agency currently receive requests electronically.

NCPC receives requests electronically. During FY 2010, of the 19 requests NCPC received, six were received electronically.

2.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency establishing a mechanism to receive requests electronically.

n/a

3.) Does your agency track requests electronically.

Yes.

4.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing a system to track requests electronically.

n/a

5.) Does your agency use technology to process requests.

No.

6.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing technology to process requests.

The number of requests to NCPC is so small that using an electronic system for responding is unnecessary and would not be cost-effective.

7.) Does your agency utilize technology to prepare you agency Annual FOIA Report.

No.

8.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing technology in preparing your Annual FOIA Report.

The number of requests to NCPC is so small that using an electronic system for responding is unnecessary and would not be cost-effective.

V. Steps Taken to Reduce Backlogs and Improve timeliness of Responding to Requests

1. NCPC has no backlog. We have responded to every request filed during FY 2007 through FY 2010 in a median of 4 or fewer days.

2. If there has not been a reduction in the backlog describe why that has occurred and what steps your agency is taking to bring about a reduction.

n/a

3. Describe the steps your agency is taking to improve timeliness in responding to requests and to administrative appeals.

Because NCPC has no problem with timeliness in responding to requests, and because NCPC has had no administrative appeals since FY 2006, we are not taking further steps to improve timeliness.

Spotlight on Success

To keep the public up to date on agency initiatives, NCPC initiated a Speaker Series designed to lead public discussion on planning priorities in the National Capital Region. The series, which is one of NCPC's newer methods of outreach, provides greater opportunities for the public to learn about the agency's activities. In FY 2010 the Speaker Series attracted high caliber speakers and near capacity crowds at each of the three sessions.