Report of the Chief FOIA Officer
Federal Open Market Committee

March 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Report of the Chief FOIA Officer
Federal Open Market Committee

Pursuant to the Guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports to the Department of Justice, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) submits this Report regarding steps taken in support of Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines, issued March 19, 2009. Matthew M. Luecke, Chief FOIA Officer of the FOMC, has directed and participated in a comprehensive review of FOMC FOIA operations. The results of that review are set forth in the report below, in accordance with the template provided by the Department of Justice.

Part I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

Notice of Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines was promptly distributed by the Chief FOIA Officer to all FOIA Service Center and relevant legal staff in March and April 2009. The FOIA Service Center Manager also attended the formal training session offered by the Department of Justice on March 26, 2009. The guidelines and training underscored the need for openness regarding federal agency policymaking, and provided further impetus for transparency initiatives already underway in the FOMC Secretariat.

The amount of FOMC information that has been made available publicly has expanded substantially. In 2006, the agency's public website provided access to four types of FOMC documents from a relatively limited number of years. Information that was not available on the website was given out only when requested. The website now, however, provides access to eleven major document series (including FOMC minutes, statements, transcripts, Beige Books, Bluebooks, and Greenbooks) for a much-expanded number of years. Tracking information suggests that large numbers of people have accessed the new information on the site. (See Part 3 below for additional detail.)

The numbers of full grants, partial grants/partial denials, and full denials have remained relatively constant; the number of full grants was significantly higher than the number of full denials in FY 2009.

The recent numbers of full grants and partial grants/partial denials are shown below:

	Full Grants	Partial Grants / Partial Denials
FY 2008	7	3
FY 2009	7	0
FY 2010 (to date)	6	1

In FY 2009, three of the agency's seven full grants were discretionary disclosures of a substantive (200+ page) FOMC report. Though this report was likely covered under Exemption 5 of the FOIA, agency FOIA personnel were able to release it in full to the public.

Part II. Steps Taken to Ensure Agency has an Effective System for Responding to Requests

To ensure effective IT support for FOIA services, the FOIA Service Center has (A) employed staff formally trained in information systems and information management, and (B) secured dedicated IT support from the agency's IT Division.

(A) Beginning in FY 2009, the FOMC FOIA Service Center was assigned two (part-time) qualified information professionals in addition to the Chief FOIA Officer in order to ensure that incoming FOIA requests are handled promptly and thoroughly. Staff members bring valuable expertise to their work in the Service Center, including a mastery of agency subject matter and formal training in Computer Information Systems, Records Management, and Library Science. Processing complex requests and reporting on FOIA activity often involve additional consultation with legal and/or IT staff members, with whom FOIA Service Center staff have strong working relationships.

(B) The FOMC FOIA Service Center receives IT support secured by the FOMC Secretariat for its ongoing information and database needs. In addition to the general, high-quality help desk support provided to all agency personnel, one full-time IT resource has been allocated to systems analysis and programming for FOMC document repositories. Search and storage capabilities in these repositories have enabled the FOIA Service Center to respond effectively and efficiently to information requests. Moreover, agency IT staff have acquired and are maintaining an optical character recognition (OCR) server platform on behalf of the FOMC Secretariat, ensuring that scanned documents can be rendered text-searchable rapidly and with a high degree of accuracy.

Part III. Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

The FOMC Secretariat has worked extensively in recent years to increase proactive disclosures of FOMC information through its public website. The cornerstone of this initiative has been a multi-year digitization effort, which has significantly added to the number of historical FOMC documents available to the public online. In FY 2009, approximately 27,000 pages text-searchable pages of recent and historical Committee material (an increase of approximately 50%).

Additionally, basic and advanced search tools were added to the website to promote self-service information search and retrieval for members of the public. The advanced

search interface allows users to take advantage of keyword and Boolean searching, as well as to narrow their searches to the document series and meeting date ranges of interest. Recent usage reports demonstrate that members of the public are benefitting from the search tool introduced on the Committee's page in early 2009; since that time, the search engine has produced documents in response to more than 20,000 searches.

In total, more than 80,000 pages can now be searched through the FOMC's historical website, which is also accessible from the FOMC FOIA electronic reading room. It is anticipated that this large amount of readily-searchable electronic information will obviate the need for many formal FOIA requests.

Part IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

The FOMC FOIA Service Center has taken every opportunity to utilize technology in its operations. More detailed information is provided in the question/response section below:

1.) Does your agency currently receive requests electronically? Yes

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? Yes

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

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

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

Part V. Steps Taken to Reduce Backlogs and Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests

The FOMC FOIA Service Center had no backlogged requests or administrative appeals in FY 2009.

The Committee's FOIA staff makes every effort to respond to incoming FOIA requests in a timely fashion. During FY 2009, the FOIA Service Center trained one additional staff member on FOIA-related tasks in order to improve the Center's ability to receive, log, and process information queries from the public.

In addition, the digitization initiative described above allows staff members to perform speedy and comprehensive reviews of documents. In FY 2009, the FOIA Service Center was therefore able to respond to all simple requests in 5 days or less, and to all complex requests in less than 70 days.