

JON S. CORZINE

Governor

CHARLES A. RICHMAN Acting Commissioner

#### FINAL DECISION

### September 30, 2009 Government Records Council Meeting

Katherine Watt Complainant v. Complaint No. 2007-246

v.
Borough of North Plainfield (Somerset)
Custodian of Record

At the September 30, 2009 public meeting, the Government Records Council ("Council") considered the September 23, 2009 Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director and all related documentation submitted by the parties. The Council voted unanimously to adopt the entirety of said findings and recommendations. The Council, therefore, finds that because the Complainant's May 16, 2007, September 13, 2007 and September 25, 2007 OPRA requests are overly broad because they fail to specify identifiable government records and require the Custodian to conduct research in order to determine the records which may be responsive to the requests, the Complainant's three (3) OPRA requests are invalid under OPRA. MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 375 N.J.Super. 534 (App. Div. 2005), Bent v. Stafford Police Department, 381 N.J.Super. 30 (App. Div. 2005), and New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council of Affordable Housing, 390 N.J. Super. 166 (App. Div. 2007).

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey within forty-five (45) days. Information about the appeals process can be obtained from the Appellate Division Clerk's Office, Hughes Justice Complex, 25 W. Market St., PO Box 006, Trenton, NJ 08625-0006. Proper service of submissions pursuant to any appeal is to be made to the Council in care of the Executive Director at the State of New Jersey Government Records Council, 101 South Broad Street, PO Box 819, Trenton, NJ 08625-0819.

Final Decision Rendered by the Government Records Council On The 30<sup>th</sup> Day of September, 2009



Robin Berg Tabakin, Chair Government Records Council

I attest the foregoing is a true and accurate record of the Government Records Council.

Janice L. Kovach, Secretary Government Records Council

**Decision Distribution Date: October 7, 2009** 

### STATE OF NEW JERSEY GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

# Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director September 30, 2009 Council Meeting

Katherine Watt<sup>1</sup>
Complainant

GRC Complaint No. 2007-246

v.

Borough of North Plainfield (Somerset)<sup>2</sup> Custodian of Records

### **Records Relevant to Complaint:**

#### May 16, 2007 OPRA request:

- 1. Review of public and executive session meeting minutes related to Villa Maria discussion and decisions by Mayor, Borough Council, Planning Board, and Zoning Board.
- 2. Copies of ordinances or resolutions related to Villa Maria discussion and decisions by Mayor, Borough Council, Planning Board, and Zoning Board.
- 3. Reports and correspondence related to Villa Maria discussion and decisions between Mayor, Borough Council, Somerset County Freeholders, developers, Order of the Holy Child Jesus (landowners), Planning Board, and Zoning Board.<sup>3</sup>

### September 13, 2007 OPRA request:

Regarding Villa Maria property, documents showing:

- 1. When was property eligible for return to property tax rolls?
- 2. When was property returned to tax rolls?
- 3. How much property tax is being collected?
- 4. How much back taxes are potentially owed?
- 5. Why a delay, if any, in adding property to tax rolls?

#### September 25, 2007 OPRA request:

Correspondence, reports and other documents related to past negotiations with the landowners, current environmental issues requiring resolution in any comprehensive plan for the Villa Maria development (i.e., asbestos, oil tanks, etc.), tax records and other background materials relevant to the topic of creating a community-supported solution to Villa Maria.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> No legal representation listed on record.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Represented by Philip George, Esq., of Eric M. Bernstein & Associates, LLC (Warren, NJ).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Complainant includes a time period from the date that Villa Maria became available for sale and the Borough became involved in the development planning of the property.

**Request Made:** May 16, 2007, September 13, 2007 and September 25, 2007 **Response Made:** May 23, 2007, September 21, 2007 and September 28, 2007

**Custodian:** Gloria Pflueger

**GRC Complaint Filed:** October 12, 2007<sup>4</sup>

#### **Background**

## May 16, 2007

Complainant's first (1<sup>st</sup>) Open Public Records Act ("OPRA") request. The Complainant requests the records relevant to this complaint listed above on an official OPRA request form.<sup>5</sup>

## May 23, 2007

Custodian Counsel's response to the OPRA request with the following attachments:

- Excerpt from the North Plainfield Master Plan Revaluation Report.
- Ordinance No. 05-22.
- Ordinance No. 06-01.

On behalf of the Custodian, Counsel responds in writing to the Complainant's first (1<sup>st</sup>) OPRA request on the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) business day following receipt of such request. Counsel states that the Complainant's request is broad and unclear. Counsel states that the Custodian has no obligation under OPRA to research, collate or assemble records in response to an OPRA request. Counsel further states that the request does not contain a definable time frame. Counsel states the following:

#### May 16, 2007 OPRA request Item No. 1:

Counsel states that public session meeting minutes are available for inspection during normal business hours and can be copied at the enumerated OPRA rates. Counsel states that executive session meeting minutes are not available for inspection or copying because they may contain legal advice pertaining to the acquisition of real estate and litigation, which is exempt from disclosure under OPRA. Counsel states that no discussions or decisions of the Mayor and Council exist outside of the meeting minutes. Counsel states that the Planning Board and Zoning Board are autonomous agencies and can be contact through each Board's secretary.

# May 16, 2007 OPRA request No. 2:

Counsel states that two (2) ordinances which may concern Villa Maria are available for inspection during normal business hours and can be copied at the enumerated OPRA rates. Counsel reiterates that no discussions or decisions of the Mayor

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The GRC received the Denial of Access Complaint on said date.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The evidence of record shows that this request was submitted to the Custodian on May 16, 2007, as opposed to the Complainant's assertion that the OPRA request was submitted "on or about May 13, 2007." Katherine Watt v. Borough of North Plainfield (Somerset), 2007-246 – Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director

and Council exist outside the meeting minutes and that the Complainant will have to contact the Planning and Zoning Boards separately.

### May 16, 2007 OPRA request No. 3:

Counsel states that records of the Council are available for inspection during normal business hours and can be copied at the enumerated OPRA rates. Counsel states that the Complainant's request for "reports and correspondence" does not identify the specific records being sought. Counsel states that the requested records may be located in a number of offices and may be exempt from disclosure as attorney client privileged or another privilege. Counsel requests two (2) additional weeks to prepare a response to this request item.

Additionally, Counsel states that the Custodian will have to examine numerous files in order to redact confidential material and is therefore, entitled to a reasonable fee for the redaction and production of the requested records for inspection. Counsel avers that he will have to redact the records because the Custodian does not have the expertise or training to determine the confidentiality or privileges of the records. Counsel states that the cost of \$95.00 an hour for three (3) hours of attorney time which must be paid in advance pursuant to OPRA, as well as \$38.50 per hour for supervision during the inspection will be charged to the Complainant. Counsel states that a minimum one (1) hour deposit for inspection must be paid in advance and that preparation of the responsive records will not begin until such deposit has been received.

Further, Counsel notes that some correspondence may be exempt from disclosure under OPRA because it concerns legal advice, litigation or other matters. Counsel avers that although the Planning and Zoning Boards are separate entities, the Borough is in possession of a portion of the North Plainfield Master Plan Revaluation Report from August, 2001. Counsel states that the relevant section is attached at a copying cost of \$14.50. Counsel finally notes that "Developers" and "Order of Holy Child Jesus" are not public entities.

#### **September 13, 2007**

Complainant's second (2<sup>nd</sup>) OPRA request. The Complainant requests the records relevant to this complaint listed above on an official OPRA request form.

# **September 19, 2007**

The Custodian provides a handwritten list of responses prepared by Mr. David Hollod ("Mr. Hollod"), Business Administrator, to the questions posed in the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request.

### **September 21, 2007**

Custodian Counsel's response to the OPRA request. On behalf of the Custodian, Counsel responds in writing to the Complainant's second (2<sup>nd</sup>) OPRA request on the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) business day following receipt of such request. Counsel states that the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request has been forwarded to his office for a response. Counsel states that no records responsive to the Complainant's request exist because the Villa Maria is not yet on the tax roll. Additionally, Counsel avers that the

Complainant's OPRA request is invalid because it poses a series of questions and is not a request for identifiable government records.<sup>6</sup>

### **September 25, 2007**

Complainant's letter request to Mr. Hollod. The Complainant requests the records relevant to this complaint listed above in a letter that refers to OPRA.

# **September 28, 2007**<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Hollod's response to the letter request. Mr. Hollod responds verbally to the Complainant's letter request on the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) business day following receipt of such request. Mr. Hollod states that no records responsive exist because public officials did not discuss the issues or correspond regarding the Villa Maria in any forum other than at Council meetings and Planning Board meetings.

#### October 1, 2007

Letter from the Complainant to Mayor, Council and Mr. Hollod. The Complainant states that she sent a letter requesting records relevant to her September 25, 2007 OPRA request to Mr. Hollod. The Complainant acknowledges that Mr. Hollod responded verbally on September 28, 2007, stating that no records responsive exist because public officials did not discuss the issues or correspond regarding the Villa Maria in any forum other than at Council meetings and Planning Board meetings. The Complainant asserts that she is currently exploring whether Mr. Hollod's statement is true.

#### October 12, 2007

Denial of Access Complaint filed with the Government Records Council ("GRC") with the following attachments:

- Letter from the Custodian's Counsel to the Complainant dated May 23, 2007.
- Complainant's OPRA request dated September 13, 2007.
- Handwritten list of responses from Mr. Hollod to the Complainant, undated.
- Letter from the Complainant to Mr. Hollod dated September 25, 2007.
- Letter from the Complainant to Mayor, Council and Mr. Hollod dated October 1, 2007.

The Complainant states that her three (3) OPRA requests were for records pertaining to a number of issues regarding the Villa Maria property, including several lawsuits, environmental issues, witnessed private discussions, delinquent tax records and a possible option to buy contract. The Complainant contends that many of these issues must have produced many documents. The Complainant states that she was requesting the following in her three (3) OPRA requests:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The Complainant contends that she did not receive this correspondence until she received the Statement of Information, which was forwarded to the Complainant by the GRC on November 13, 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Mr. Hollod's response was memorialized in an October 1, 2007 letter from the Complainant to Mayor, Council and Mr. Hollod.

- 1. Borough copy of the option-to-buy contract between the Villa Maria nuns and developer Robert McNerney.
- 2. Executive session meeting minutes related to the Borough's Villa Maria-related litigation.
- 3. Correspondence, notes, drafts, etc., between Borough officials and/or attorneys, Villa Maria nuns' attorneys and developer's attorneys on the Age Restricted Condominium ("ARC") ordinance.
- 4. Environmental studies and/or reports related to the ecology and/or toxicity of Villa Maria buildings and grounds.
- 5. Borough copies of Counsel's notes, drafts and final settlement agreements etc., for the settlement of the nuns' 2003 lawsuit regarding affordable housing.
- 6. Other records that the Complainant may not know exists, but that are in the Borough's files and are related to the terms, conditions, restrictions or other limitations or requirements for the Villa Maria development.

The Complainant contends that although Counsel offered only three (3) records, he failed to specifically state that no other records responsive exist, as Mr. Hollod did in response to the Complainant's September 25, 2007 letter request. The Complainant avers that Counsel initially attempted to argue that the Complainant's May 16, 2007 OPRA request was broad and unclear, but subsequently stated that there were many possible records responsive that may be located in a number of offices that could also concern legal advice, acquisition of real estate and litigation, which is exempt from disclosure pursuant to OPRA.

The Complainant contends that she could not make OPRA requests with greater specificity due to the secrecy with which the Borough handled the Villa Maria matter. The Complainant argues that if records responsive to her three (3) OPRA requests exist, then they should be disclosed as public records, but if no records responsive exist, then the Borough has failed to properly maintain and make available such records.

#### October 15, 2007

Offer of Mediation sent to both parties.

#### October 16, 2007

The Complainant agrees to mediate this complaint. The Custodian did not respond to the Offer of Mediation.

#### October 25, 2007

Request for the Statement of Information sent to the Custodian.

#### **November 7, 2007**

Letter from GRC to the Custodian. The GRC sends a letter to the Custodian indicating that the GRC provided the Custodian with a request for a Statement of Information on October 25, 2007 and to date has not received a response. Further, the GRC states that if the Statement of Information is not submitted within three (3) business days, the GRC will adjudicate this complaint based solely on the information provided by the Complainant.

#### **November 9, 2007**

Custodian's Statement of Information ("SOI") with the following attachments:

- Complainant's first (1<sup>st</sup>) OPRA request dated May 16, 2007.
- Letter from the Custodian's Counsel to the Complainant dated May 23, 2007 (attaching an excerpt from the North Plainfield Master Plan Revaluation Report, Ordinance No. 05-22 and Ordinance No. 06-01).
- Complainant's second (2<sup>nd</sup>) OPRA request dated September 13, 2007.
- Letter from the Custodian's Counsel to the Complainant dated September 21, 2007.

Custodian's Counsel states that the Complainant was interested in obtaining records relating to a property known as Villa Maria, which has been the subject of ongoing litigation against the Borough. Counsel states that he responded to the Complainant's requests as follows:

### May 16, 2007 OPRA request Item No. 1:

Counsel states that the Complainant requested meeting minutes related to discussions and decisions by Mayor, Council, Planning and Zoning Boards. Counsel states that he responded in writing on May 23, 2007, granting access to all public session minutes. Counsel asserts that he denied access to executive session minutes regarding Villa Maria because they contain communications between the Borough and Counsel which are exempt from disclosure as attorney-client privileged material pursuant to N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1.1. Counsel contends that a discussion of pending litigation between the Borough and its attorney is clearly within the attorney-client privilege exemption. Counsel further states that he advised the Complainant to contact the Planning and Zoning Boards separately because they are autonomous agencies and the Custodian does not maintain their records.

### May 16, 2007 OPRA request Item No. 2:

Counsel states that the Complainant requested copies of all ordinances and resolutions concerning Villa Maria. Counsel states that the Complainant was provided with copies of the two (2) relevant ordinances on May 23, 2007.

### May 16, 2007 OPRA request Item No. 3:

Counsel states that the Complainant requested reports and correspondence related to discussions and decisions made by the Mayor, Council, Planning and Zoning Boards, Somerset County Freeholders, developers and the Order of Holy Child Jesus regarding Villa Maria. Counsel states that he denied access to this request item on May 23, 2007 for several reasons. Counsel argues that the request item is broad and unclear and would have required the Custodian to research her files in order to fulfill the Complainant's request. Counsel argues that the Custodian has no such obligation under OPRA.

Further, Counsel contends that some of the records responsive are exempt from disclosure as attorney-client privileged material because the records were created as part of pending litigation. Counsel asserts that the records are also inter-agency or intraagency advisory, consultative or deliberative material ("ACD"). Counsel also asserts that the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Somerset County Freeholders, developers and the Order of Holy Child Jesus are separate, autonomous agencies or are not public agencies under the control of the Borough.

Counsel states that the Complainant was provided with an excerpt from the North Plainfield Master Plan Revaluation Report, which references the Villa Maria. Counsel states that this report was the only record subject to disclosure and in the possession of the Borough.

### September 13, 2007 OPRA request:

Counsel states that the Complainant's request was for "documents showing" answers to a list of five (5) separate questions regarding the Villa Maria.

Counsel states that he responded to the Complainant on September 21, 2007, stating that no records responsive exist. Additionally, Counsel states that he advised the Complainant that the request is invalid because the OPRA request seeks information and not identifiable government records and cites to Russomano v. Township of Edison, GRC Complaint No. 2002-86 (July 2003) and Cottrell v. Township of Washington, GRC Complaint No. 2005-248 (May 2006). Counsel asserts that the Complainant may submit a new OPRA request for specific government records.

### September 25, 2007 OPRA request:

Counsel contends that the Complainant's September 25, 2007 letter to Mr. Hollod does not constitute a valid OPRA request. Further, Counsel argues that the letter was not addressed to the Custodian; therefore, she never received the Complainant's letter.

Counsel states that the Complainant identified several categories of records which were denied in the Denial of Access Complaint. Counsel argues that the records identified by the Complainant in the Denial of Access Complaint do not match the records requested in either the Complainant's May 16, 2007 or September 13, 2007 OPRA request, with the exception of the executive session meeting minutes. Counsel argues that the Borough responds as follows:

- 1. No option-to-buy contract is made, maintained, or kept on file in the course of the Borough's official business.
- 2. See Counsel's May 23, 2007 letter denying access to executive session meeting minutes.
- 3. Correspondence, notes, drafts, etc., between Borough officials and attorneys regarding the Villa Maria is clearly subject to attorney-client privilege and involves pending litigation.

- 4. No environmental studies and or reports related to Villa Maria are made, maintained, or kept on file in the course of the Borough's official business.
- 5. Borough attorney's notes, drafts, settlements, etc., are clearly subject to attorney-client privilege and pending litigation exceptions to disclosure.
- 6. Request for other records which may exist is overly broad and unclear and would require the Custodian to research, analyze and compile records in order to fulfill the Complainant's request, which she is not obligated to do under OPRA.

#### **November 13, 2007**

E-mail from the Complainant to the GRC. The Complainant asserts that she did not receive Counsel's September 21, 2007 letter responding to her September 13, 2007 OPRA request until she received the SOI. The Complainant asserts that the only response she received to the OPRA request was Mr. Hollod's written list of responses to the Complainant's five (5) questions. The Complainant contends that Mr. Hollod's list, which seems to indicate that Villa Maria is on the tax rolls, contradicts Counsel's September 21, 2007 response.

#### **November 14, 2007**

E-mail from the Custodian's Counsel to the GRC. Counsel states that the September 21, 2007 letter was sent via mail to the Complainant. Counsel states that he will forward another copy of the letter to the Complainant.

#### July 24, 2008

E-mail from the GRC to the Custodian's Counsel. The GRC requests that the Custodian advise whether Planning Board and Zoning Board have a designated custodian of record. Additionally, the GRC requests that the Custodian certify to the following:

1. Whether the Custodian responded to the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request?

The GRC requests that the certification be provided by no later than July 31, 2008.

#### July 31, 2008

E-mail from the Custodian's Counsel to the GRC. Counsel states that the Planning and Zoning Boards can be contacted through Ms. Dawn Gaebel ("Ms. Gaebel"), Board Secretary, located at the Municipal Building. Counsel states that he is not sure if Ms. Gaebel was designated custodian of record by any formal action other than the municipal land use law.

#### July 31, 2008

E-mail from the GRC to the Custodian's Counsel. The GRC states that Counsel has not submitted the Custodian's certification, as requested on July 24, 2008. The GRC requests that the Custodian certify to the following:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Counsel attaches the documents previously provided with the SOI.

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- 1. Whether the Custodian responded to the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request?
- 2. What was the method of delivery used to send Counsel's September 21, 2007 letter response to the Complainant?
- 3. Whether the Custodian provided the handwritten list created by Mr. Hollod and, if so, on what date was the list provided?

The GRC requests that the certification be provided by no later than August 4, 2008.

### July 31, 2008

E-mail from the Custodian's Counsel to the GRC. Counsel states that he will respond to the GRC's request for a certification on August 6, 2008, upon Counsel's return from vacation.

Additionally, Counsel states that his September 21, 2007 letter response was sent to the Complainant by regular mail to the Complainant's last known address. Counsel further states that no records responsive to the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request were provided because the request was invalid.

### August 4, 2008

Legal certification from the Custodian's Counsel with the following attachments:

- Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request.
- Letter from the Custodian's Counsel to the Complainant dated September 21, 2007.

Counsel certifies that his office received the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request on the morning of September 14, 2008. Counsel certifies that the subject matter of the request pertains to two (2) litigation matters currently involving the Borough.

Additionally, Counsel certifies that the Complainant requested tax information, but that he advised that the Villa Maria property is owned by a tax-exempt religious organization and no property tax is paid to the Borough; therefore, no records responsive exist in a letter to the Complainant dated September 21, 2007 and sent via U.S. mail.<sup>9</sup>

#### August 18, 2008

Legal certification from the Custodian attaching the handwritten list of responses from Mr. Hollod to the Complainant with no date.

The Custodian certifies that she provided Mr. Hollod's handwritten list to the Complainant on September 19, 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Counsel also certifies that all mail is metered in-house and deposited at the United States Post Office in Warren, New Jersey.

#### **Analysis**

Whether the Complainant's May 16, 2007, September 13, 2007 and September 25, 2007 OPRA requests are invalid OPRA requests?

The Complainant's May 16, 2007 and September 25, 2007 OPRA request sought various types of documents related to the Villa Maria property for an unspecified date range. 10 The Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request sought documents which show "when, how much and why" related to property taxes on the Villa Maria property.

The New Jersey Superior Court has held that "[w]hile OPRA provides an alternative means of access to government documents not otherwise exempted from its reach, it is not intended as a research tool litigants may use to force government officials to identify and siphon useful information. Rather, OPRA simply operates to make identifiable government records 'readily accessible for inspection, copying, or examination.' N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1." (Emphasis added.) MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 375 N.J.Super. 534, 546 (App. Div. 2005). The Court further held that "[u]nder OPRA, agencies are required to disclose only 'identifiable' government records not otherwise exempt ... In short, OPRA does not countenance open-ended searches of an agency's files." (Emphasis added.) *Id.* at 549.

Further, in Bent v. Stafford Police Department, 381 N.J. Super. 30, 37 (App. Div. 2005). 11 the Superior Court references MAG in that the Court held that a requestor must specifically describe the document sought because OPRA operates to make identifiable government records "accessible." "As such, a proper request under OPRA must identify with reasonable clarity those documents that are desired, and a party cannot satisfy this requirement by simply requesting all of an agency's documents."<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, in New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council of Affordable Housing, 390 N.J. Super. 166, 180 (App. Div. 2007) the court cited MAG by stating that "...when a request is 'complex' because it fails to specifically identify the documents sought, then that request is not 'encompassed' by OPRA..."

Furthermore, in Schuler v. Borough of Bloomsbury, GRC Complaint No. 2007-151 (March 2008) the Council held that "[b]ecause the Complainant's OPRA requests [No.] 2-5 are not requests for identifiable government records, the requests are invalid and the Custodian has not unlawfully denied access to the requested records pursuant to MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 375 N.J.Super. 534 (App. Div. 2005) and Bent v. Stafford Police Department, 381 N.J.Super. 30 (App. Div. 2005)."

The Complainant in this matter failed to identify specific government records being sought. The Complainant's May 16, 2007 and September 25, 2007 OPRA requests

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The GRC notes that the Complainant's September 25, 2007 request was a letter request in which the Complainant refers to OPRA.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Affirmed on appeal regarding Bent v. Stafford Police Department, GRC Case No. 2004-78 (October 2004).

for minutes, ordinances, reports, correspondence and other documents relating to the Villa Maria property would have forced the Custodian to search all of her records to identify those responsive to the Complainant's requests. Additionally, the Complainant's September 13, 2007 OPRA request for documents pertaining to a series of questions fails to identify little more than the subject of the records being sought.

Therefore, because the Complainant's May 16, 2007, September 13, 2007 and September 25, 2007 OPRA requests are overly broad because they fail to specify identifiable government records and require the Custodian to conduct research in order to determine the records which may be responsive to the requests, the Complainant's three (3) OPRA requests are invalid under OPRA. MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 375 N.J.Super. 534 (App. Div. 2005), Bent v. Stafford Police Department, 381 N.J.Super. 30 (App. Div. 2005), and New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council of Affordable Housing, 390 N.J. Super. 166 (App. Div. 2007).

Additionally, the Complainant contends that she never received Counsel's September 21, 2007 letter; however, Counsel certified that the letter was sent via U.S. mail to the Complainant and there is no credible evidence to refute Counsel's certification. Therefore, there has been no violation of OPRA.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Executive Director respectfully recommends the Council find that because the Complainant's May 16, 2007, September 13, 2007 and September 25, 2007 OPRA requests are overly broad because they fail to specify identifiable government records and require the Custodian to conduct research in order to determine the records which may be responsive to the requests, the Complainant's three (3) OPRA requests are invalid under OPRA. MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 375 N.J.Super. 534 (App. Div. 2005), Bent v. Stafford Police Department, 381 N.J.Super. 30 (App. Div. 2005), and New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council of Affordable Housing, 390 N.J. Super. 166 (App. Div. 2007).

Prepared By: Frank F. Caruso Case Manager

Approved By: Catherine Starghill, Esq. Executive Director

September 23, 2009