

RICHARD E. CONSTABLE, III Commissioner

FINAL DECISION

December 18, 2012 Government Records Council Meeting

Deborah A. Tietze Complainant v. New Jersey Pinelands Commission Custodian of Record Complaint No. 2011-379

At the December 18, 2012 public meeting, the Government Records Council ("Council") considered the November 20, 2012 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:

- 1. Any records created as part of the Complainant's complaint are considered "[r]ecords of complaints and investigations undertaken pursuant to the Model Procedures in accordance with the State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Hostile Environments in the Workplace adopted by EO 106, whether open, closed or inactive" pursuant to EO 26. As such, Director Lyons' letter is confidential pursuant to EO 26. Thus, the Custodian has borne her burden of proof under <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6 that access to such record was lawfully denied.
- Because the Complainant's request is overly broad and would require the Custodian to conduct research in order to determine the records which may be responsive to the request, the Complainant's request for invoices, correspondence, telephone logs, emails and personnel file insertions is invalid under OPRA pursuant to <u>MAG</u> <u>Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control</u>, 375 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 534 (App. Div. 2005); <u>Bent v. Stafford Police Department</u>, 381 <u>N.J. Super</u>. 30 (App. Div. 2005) and <u>New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing</u>, 390 <u>N.J. Super</u>. 166, 180 (App. Div. 2007).
- 3. Because the Custodian certified in the Statement of Information that the record responsive to the Respondent's answer does not exist and also that the record responsive to the Commission's response did not exist at the time of the Complainant's OPRA request, and there is no evidence in the record to refute the Custodian's certification, the Custodian bore her burden of proof that she did not unlawfully deny the Complainant access to the requested records pursuant to Pusterhofer v. New Jersey Department of Education, GRC Complaint No. 2005-49 (July 2005). N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6.





KIM GUADAGNO Lt. Governor 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 18th Day of December, 2012

Robin Berg Tabakin, Chair Government Records Council

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

Denise Parkinson Vetti, Secretary Government Records Council

Decision Distribution Date: December 20, 2012

STATE OF NEW JERSEY GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director December 18, 2012 Council Meeting

Deborah A. Tietze¹ Complainant GRC Complaint No. 2011-379

v.

New Jersey Pinelands Commission² Custodian of Records

Records Relevant to Complaint: Any and all invoices, correspondence, telephone logs, e-mails, and personnel file insertions regarding the Complainant, including but not limited to: the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's ("DEP") Office of Equal Opportunity Director Pamela Lyons ("Director Lyons") findings of probable cause, the Respondent's answer to the verified complaint (DCR Docket No. EC-29JB-62322) and the Pinelands Commission's ("Commission") response to the Merit Systems Board's twenty (20) day letter.

Request Made: December 6, 2011 Response Made: December 13, 2011 Custodian: Paul Leakan GRC Complaint Filed: December 21, 2011³

Background

December 6, 2011

Complainant's Open Public Records Act ("OPRA") request. The Complainant requests the records relevant to this complaint listed above on an official OPRA request form. The Complainant states that she prefers to pick up the records responsive.

December 13, 2011

Custodian's response to the OPRA request. The Custodian responds in writing via letter to the Complainant's OPRA request on the fifth (5th) business day following receipt of such request. The Custodian states that there are no invoices responsive to the Complainant's request. The Custodian also states that the Complainant will have to contact the New Jersey Division of Law to obtain copies of these invoices. The Custodian denies the Complainant access to the e-mails and correspondence because said records are related to an underlying litigation matter and thus are confidential.

The Custodian states that he identified three (3) pages of records responsive to the Complainant's request regarding personnel file insertions.⁴ The Custodian denies the

¹ No legal representation listed on record.

² Represented by DAG Kristen Heinzerling, on behalf of the NJ Attorney General.

³ The GRC received the Denial of Access Complaint on said date.

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Complainant access to Director Lyons' letter because it is confidential. Lastly, the Custodian states that the Respondent's answer to the Verified Complaint (DCR Docket No. EC-29JB-62322) and the Commission's response to the Merit System Board's 20day letter have not been filed.

December 21, 2011

Denial of Access Complaint filed with the Government Records Council ("GRC") attaching a letter from the Custodian to the Complainant dated December 13, 2011.

The Complainant states that Director Lyons determined that the Commission violated the NJ State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace pursuant to N.J.A.C. 4A:7-3.1. The Complainant also states that Director Lyons' determination of probable cause was communicated in a letter to the Commission's Executive Director Nancy Wittenberg ("Director Wittenberg") on June 24, 2011. The Complainant further states that Director Wittenberg overruled Director Lyons' decision. The Complainant additionally states that she filed an appeal with the NJ Civil Service Commission Merit System Board to uphold Director Lyons' finding of probable cause.

The Complainant states she filed an OPRA request with the Commission on December 6, 2011 seeking a copy of Director Lyons' letter. The Complainant also states that the Custodian denied her access to said letter on December 13, 2011.

The Complainant does not agree to mediate this complaint.

December 27, 2011

Request for the Statement of Information ("SOI") sent to the Custodian.

January 3, 2012

Telephone call from the Custodian to the GRC. The Custodian requests a five (5) business day extension to complete the SOI.

January 3, 2012

E-mail from the GRC to the Custodian. The GRC grants the Custodian a five (5) business day extension until January 10, 2012 to complete the SOI.

January 10, 2012

Custodian's SOI with the following attachments:

- Complainant's OPRA request dated December 6, 2011
- Letter from the Custodian to the Complainant dated December 13, 2011.

The Custodian certifies that his search for the requested records included providing copies of the Complainant's request to the Commission's Senior Counselor, Stacey Roth ("Ms. Roth") and the Commission's Human Resources Specialist, Michelle Russell ("Ms. Russell"). The Custodian also certifies that Ms. Roth and Ms. Russell were the only two (2) individuals to have any records responsive to the request. The Custodian

⁴ The Custodian states that he will provide the Complainant with copies of these records upon payment of \$0.15.

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further certifies that Ms. Roth and Ms. Russell reviewed the Complainant's request and determined which records the Commission maintained and which records were releasable. The Custodian also certifies that no records responsive to the Complainant's request were destroyed in accordance with the Records Destruction Schedule established and approved by Records Management Services.

The Custodian certifies that he received the Complainant's OPRA request on December 6, 2011. The Custodian also certifies that he responded in writing on December 13, 2011.

The Custodian certifies that the Complainant requested a copy of Director Lyons' finding of probable cause. The Custodian further certifies that the record at issue is an investigatory report prepared by the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer of DEP, who conducted the investigation of the complaint filed by the Complainant in accordance with the NJ State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace. The Custodian argues that N.J.S.A. 47:1A-9.a. provides that "OPRA shall not abrogate any exemption of a public record or government record from public access...any other statute; resolution of either or both Houses of the Legislature; regulation promulgated under the authority of any statute or Executive Order of the Governor..." (Emphasis added). The Custodian also argues that Executive Order No. 26 (Gov. McGreevey, 2002) ("EO 26") provides that the following records shall not be considered to be government record subject to public access pursuant to N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1, et. seq. "a. Records of complaints and investigations undertaken pursuant to the Model Procedures for Internal Complaints Alleging Discrimination, Harassment, or Hostile Environments in the Workplace adopted by Executive Order No. 106 (Gov. Whitman, 1999) ("EO 106"), whether open, closed or inactive." The Custodian further argues that N.J.A.C. 4A:7-3.2 requires that written records pertaining to discrimination/harassment complaints received by a State agency be maintained as confidential records. Lastly, the Custodian argues that pursuant to Cargill v. NJ Department of Education, GRC Complaint No. 2009-256 (March 2011), the Council held that any record created as part of a discrimination complaint is considered confidential pursuant to EO 26.

The Custodian certifies that the Complainant also requested the Respondent's answer to the verified complaint (DCR Docket No. EC-29JB-62322) and the Commission's response to the Merit Systems Board's 20 day letter. The Custodian also certifies that the record responsive to the Respondent's answer does not exist. The Custodian further certifies that record responsive to the Commission's response did not exist at the time of the Complainant's OPRA request. The Custodian additionally certifies that the Complainant was sent a copy of the Commission's response at the same time it was filed with the Merit Systems Board on December 23, 2011.

<u>Analysis</u>

Whether the Custodian unlawfully denied access to Director Lyons' letter responsive to the Complainant's OPRA request?

OPRA provides that:

"...government records shall be readily accessible for inspection, copying, or examination by the citizens of this State, *with certain exceptions*..." (Emphasis added.) <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1.

Additionally, OPRA defines a government record as:

"... any paper, written or printed book, document, drawing, map, plan, photograph, microfilm, data processed or image processed document, information stored or maintained electronically or by sound-recording or in a similar device, or any copy thereof, that has been *made, maintained or kept on file* ... or *that has been received* in the course of his or its official business ..." (Emphasis added.) N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1.1.

(Include any provisions of OPRA between 47:1A-1.1. and 47:1A-6)

OPRA places the onus on the Custodian to prove that a denial of access is lawful. Specifically, OPRA states:

"...[t]he public agency shall have the burden of proving that the denial of access is authorized by law..." <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6.

OPRA provides that:

"[t]he provisions of this act ... shall not abrogate any exemption of a public record or government record from public access ... any other statute; resolution of either or both Houses of the Legislature; *regulation promulgated under the authority of any statute* or Executive Order of the Governor; *Executive Order of the Governor*; Rules of Court; any federal law; federal regulation; or federal order." (Emphasis added.) <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-9.a.

Additionally, Paragraph 4 of EO 26 provides in relevant part as follows:

"The following records shall not be considered to be government records subject to public access pursuant to [OPRA] ...: Records of complaints and investigations undertaken pursuant to the Model Procedures for Internal Complaints Alleging Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Environments in accordance with the State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Hostile Environments in the Workplace adopted by [EO 106], whether open, closed or inactive."⁵

The State's Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace states in pertinent part "[e]ach State agency shall maintain a written record of the discrimination/harassment

⁵ *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1, Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Work Environments in the Workplace; Complaint Procedure, and Appeals, was renamed Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace; Complaint Procedure, and Appeals, by R.2007 d.244, effective August 20, 2007. See: 39 *N.J.R.* 1340(a), 39 *N.J.R.* 3499(a).

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complaints received. Written records shall be maintained as confidential records to the extent practicable and appropriate." *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1(g)(4).

OPRA provides that government records made, maintained, kept on file, or received by a public agency in the course of its official business are subject to public access unless otherwise exempt. <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1.1. A custodian must release all records responsive to an OPRA request "with certain exceptions." <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1. Additionally, OPRA places the burden on a custodian to prove that a denial of access to records is lawful pursuant to <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6.

In the instant complaint the Complainant requested Director Lyons' finding of probable cause. The Custodian timely responded on December 13, 2011 in writing stating that Director Lyons' letter is confidential. The Custodian certified in the SOI that the Director Lyons' letter is an investigatory report prepared by the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer of DEP, who conducted the investigation filed by the Complainant in accordance with the NJ State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace.

The State's EEO/AA regulations can be found at *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-1 et seq. A State agency is charged with a duty to "appoint at least one person as the [EEO/AA] who shall report to the State agency head …" *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-2.3(b)(2). A State agency is also required to "[a]dopt and implement the [Model Procedures] …" *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-2.3(b)(8).

The State's Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace is set forth in *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1. and 3.2. Specifically, *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1. identifies those categories for which discrimination will not be tolerated to include "... race, ... sex/gender ... religion, ... sexual orientation ..." *Id.* at (a). The State's policy also prohibits "sexual (gender-based) harassment of any kind, including hostile work environment harassment, quid pro quo harassment, or same-sex categories ..." *Id.* at (c). Further, the State's policy provides that:

"(d) Any employee who believes that she or he has been subjected to any form of prohibited discrimination/harassment ... is encouraged to promptly report the incident(s) to a supervisor or directly to the State agency's [EEO/AA] Officer or to any person designated by the State agency to receive workplace discrimination complaints.

(g) Each State agency shall follow the State ... [Model Procedures] with regard to reporting, investigating, and where appropriate, remediating claims of discrimination/harassment. *See N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.2." *Id.*

The Model Procedures at *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.2. provide that each State agency is responsible for implementing a uniform procedure for reporting, investigation and appeals process consistent with the State's policy. This regulation also provides that:

"(a) All employees (and applicants for employment) have the right and are encouraged to immediately report suspected violations of the State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace, *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1.

(g) Each State agency shall maintain a written record of the discrimination/harassment complaints received. Written records shall be maintained as confidential records to the extent practicable and appropriate." *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.2.

A combined reading of the State's EEO/AA regulations found at *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-1 et seq. supports the conclusion that State employees filing a complaint as defined in *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1. do so in accordance with the Model Procedure provided in *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.2. Thus, employee complaints, based on any of the categories identified *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1. should be maintained as confidential records to the extent practicable.

The Custodian certified in the SOI that the Complainant filed a complaint in accordance with *N.J.A.C.* 4A:7-3.1. The evidence of record here supports the conclusion that Director Lyons' letter requested by the Complainant would fall under the Model Procedures. The Custodian also certified in the SOI that Director Lyon investigated this complaint and issued an investigatory report. The evidence of record thus supports the conclusion that the records at issue here are "[r]ecords of complaints and investigations undertaken pursuant to the Model Procedures in accordance with the State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Hostile Environments in the Workplace adopted by EO 106, whether open, closed or inactive" pursuant to EO 26.

Therefore, based on all of the foregoing evidence, any records created as part of the Complainant's complaint are considered "[r]ecords of complaints and investigations undertaken pursuant to the Model Procedures in accordance with the State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Hostile Environments in the Workplace adopted by EO 106, whether open, closed or inactive" pursuant to EO 26. As such, Director Lyons' letter is confidential pursuant to EO 26. Thus, the Custodian has borne her burden of proof under <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6 that access to such record was lawfully denied.

Whether the Complainant's request for any and all invoices, correspondence, telephone logs, e-mails and personnel file insertions is valid under OPRA?

The Custodian responded to this portion of Complainant's request stating that there are no invoices responsive to the Complainant's request. The Custodian denied the Complainant access to the requested e-mails, correspondence on the grounds that said records are related to an underlying litigation matter and thus are confidential. However, this portion of the Complainant's request is overly broad and would require the Custodian to conduct research in order to fulfill same. The Complainant's request is therefore invalid under OPRA.

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.

<u>Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control</u>, 375 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 534, 546 (App. Div. 2005). As the court noted in invalidating MAG's request under OPRA:

"Most significantly, the request failed to identify with any specificity or particularity the governmental records sought. MAG provided neither names nor any identifiers other than a broad generic description of a brand or type of case prosecuted by the agency in the past. Such an open-ended demand required the Division's records custodian to manually search through all of the agency's files, analyze, compile and collate the information contained therein, and identify for MAG the cases relative to its selective enforcement defense in the OAL litigation. Further, once the cases were identified, the records custodian would then be required to evaluate, sort out, and determine the documents to be produced and those otherwise exempted." *Id.* at 549.

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*.

In addition, in <u>Bent v. Stafford Police Department</u>, 381 <u>N.J. Super</u>. 30, 37 (App. Div. 2005),⁶ the Superior Court references <u>MAG</u> 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."⁷

Moreover, in <u>New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council on</u> <u>Affordable Housing</u>, 390 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 166, 180 (App. Div. 2007), the court enumerated the responsibilities of a custodian and a requestor as follows:

"OPRA identifies the responsibilities of the requestor and the agency relevant to the prompt access the law is designed to provide. The custodian, who is the person designated by the director of the agency, <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1.1, must adopt forms for requests, locate and redact documents, isolate exempt documents, assess fees and means of production, identify requests that require "extraordinary expenditure of time and effort" and warrant assessment of a "service charge," and, when unable to comply with a request, "indicate the specific basis." <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-5(a)-(j). The requestor must pay the costs of reproduction and submit the request with information that is essential to permit the custodian to comply with its obligations. <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-5(f), (g), (i). *Research is not among the custodian's responsibilities.*" (Emphasis added), <u>NJ Builders</u>, 390 <u>N.J. Super.</u> at 177.

⁶ Affirmed on appeal regarding <u>Bent v. Stafford Police Department</u>, GRC Case No. 2004-78 (October 2004).

⁷ As stated in <u>Bent</u>, *supra*.

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Under such rationale, the GRC has repeatedly found that blanket requests are not valid OPRA requests. In the matter of <u>Schuler v. Borough of Bloomsbury</u>, GRC Complaint No. 2007-151 (February 2009), the relevant part of the Complainant's request sought:

Item No. 2: "From the Borough Engineer's files: all engineering

documents for all developments or modifications to Block 25, Lot 28; Block 25, Lot 18; Block 23, Lot 1; Block 23, Lot 1.02.

• Item No. 3: From the Borough Engineer's files: all engineering documents for all developments or modifications to North St., to the south and east of Wilson St.

• Item No. 4: From the Borough Attorney's files: all documents related to the development or modification to Block 25, Lot 28; Block 25, Lot 18; Block 23, Lot 1; Block 23, Lot 1.02.

• Item No. 5: From the Borough Attorney's files: all documents related to the development or modification to North Street, to the south and east of Wilson St."

In reviewing the complainant's request, the Council found that "[b]ecause the Complainant's OPRA requests # 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 <u>MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control</u>, 375 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 534 (App. Div. 2005) and <u>Bent v. Stafford Police Department</u>, 381 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 30 (App. Div. 2005)."

The Complainant's request for invoices, correspondence, telephone logs, e-mails and personnel file insertions is broad and unclear. The Complainant fails to identify relevant dates or parties to correspondence, e-mails and telephone logs, fails to identify dates of invoices or what specific government records in the referenced personnel file the Complainant seeks. Further the Complainant subject description, "regarding the Complainant," is too vague and would require the Custodian to not merely search, but research, every document in the agency's possession regarding the Complainant. Thus, the Complainant's request is invalid under OPRA.

Therefore, because the Complainant's request is overly broad and would require the Custodian to conduct research in order to determine the records which may be responsive to the request, the Complainant's request for invoices, correspondence, telephone logs, e-mails and personnel file insertions is invalid under OPRA pursuant to <u>MAG</u>, *supra*, <u>Bent</u>, *supra* and <u>New Jersey Builders Association</u>, *supra*.

Whether the records responsive to the Respondent's answer to the verified complaint and the Commission's response to the Merit Systems Board's twenty (20) day letter exist?

The Custodian responded to the Complainant's OPRA request in writing stating that the Respondents answer and the Commission's response to the Merit Systems Board's twenty (20) day letter have not yet been filed at the time of the Complainant's request. The Custodian certified in the SOI that the record responsive to the

Respondent's answer does not exist. The Custodian also certified in the SOI that the record responsive to the Commission's response did not exist at the time of the Complainant's OPRA request. However, the Custodian certified that the Complainant was sent a copy of the Commission's response at the same time it was filed by the Merit Systems Board on December 23, 2011. The Complainant did not submit any evidence to refute the Custodian's certification.

In <u>Pusterhofer v. New Jersey Department of Education</u>, GRC Complaint No. 2005-49 (July 2005), the complainant sought telephone billing records showing a call made to him from the New Jersey Department of Education. The custodian responded stating that there was no record of any telephone calls made to the complainant. The custodian subsequently certified that no records responsive to the complainant's request existed. The complainant failed to submit any evidence to refute the custodian's certification. The GRC held that the custodian did not unlawfully deny access to the requested records because the custodian certified that no records responsive to the request existed.

Therefore, because the Custodian certified in the Statement of Information that the record responsive to the Respondent's answer does not exist and also that the record responsive to the Commission's response did not exist at the time of the Complainant's OPRA request, and there is no evidence in the record to refute the Custodian's certification, the Custodian bore her burden of proof that she did not unlawfully deny the Complainant access to the requested records pursuant to <u>Pusterhofer</u>, *supra*, and <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Executive Director respectfully recommends the Council find that:

- 1. Any records created as part of the Complainant's complaint are considered "[r]ecords of complaints and investigations undertaken pursuant to the Model Procedures in accordance with the State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Hostile Environments in the Workplace adopted by EO 106, whether open, closed or inactive" pursuant to EO 26. As such, Director Lyons' letter is confidential pursuant to EO 26. Thus, the Custodian has borne her burden of proof under <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6 that access to such record was lawfully denied.
- 2. Because the Complainant's request is overly broad and would require the Custodian to conduct research in order to determine the records which may be responsive to the request, the Complainant's request for invoices, correspondence, telephone logs, e-mails and personnel file insertions is invalid under OPRA pursuant to <u>MAG Entertainment, LLC v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control</u>, 375 N.J. Super. 534 (App. Div. 2005); <u>Bent v. Stafford Police Department</u>, 381 <u>N.J. Super</u>. 30 (App. Div. 2005) and <u>New Jersey Builders Association v. New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing</u>, 390 N.J. Super. 166, 180 (App. Div. 2007).

- 3. Because the Custodian certified in the Statement of Information that the record responsive to the Respondent's answer does not exist and also that the record responsive to the Commission's response did not exist at the time of the Complainant's OPRA request, and there is no evidence in the record to refute the Custodian's certification, the Custodian bore her burden of proof that she did not unlawfully deny the Complainant access to the requested records pursuant to <u>Pusterhofer v. New Jersey Department of Education</u>, GRC Complaint No. 2005-49 (July 2005). N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6.
- Prepared By: Harlynne Lack, Esq. Case Manager
- Approved By: Karyn Gordon, Esq. Acting Executive Director

November 20, 2012⁸

⁸ This complaint was prepared and scheduled for adjudication at the Council's November 27, 2012 meeting; however, said meeting was cancelled due to a lack of a quorum. Deborah A. Tietze v. New Jersey Pinelands Commission, 2011-379 – Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director 10