

## Minutes of the Government Records Council August 25, 2020 Public Meeting – Open Session

#### I. Public Session:

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:34 p.m. by Mr. Steven Ritardi via Microsoft Teams.

### • Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and recited the pledge of allegiance in salute to the American flag.

#### Meeting Notice

Mr. Ritardi read the following Open Public Meetings Act statement:

"This meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act. Notices of this meeting were faxed to the Newark Star Ledger, Trenton Times, Courier-Post (Cherry Hill), and the Secretary of State on August 20, 2020."

#### • Roll Call

Ms. Bordzoe called the roll:

Present: Robin Berg Tabakin, Esq. (Chairwoman), Salma Chand, Esq. (designee of Department of Education Interim Commissioner Kevin Dehmer), Gina Trish (designee of Department of Community Affairs Commissioner, Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver), and Steven Ritardi, Esq., Public Member

GRC Staff in Attendance: Frank F. Caruso (Executive Director), Rosemond Bordzoe (Secretary), John Stewart (Mediator), Samuel Rosado (Staff Attorney), and Deputy Attorney General Debra Allen.

#### **II.** Executive Director's Report:

#### **GRC** Arrivals and Departures

• On August 19, 2020, Ms. Gina Trish was appointed by Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver to serve as her permanent designee on the Council. The GRC would like to welcome Ms. Trish to the Council and looks forward to working with her in the future.

• Effective August 21, 2020, Mr. Brandon Garcia has resigned from the GRC to pursue other endeavors. The GRC wishes Mr. Garcia the best of luck in these endeavors.

#### **OPRA Trainings**

- Upcoming trainings are currently on hold pending notification of either an alternate training method or a future rescheduled date.
- The GRC has discussed some options with DCAIT regarding its annual seminar and believes it viable to hold same remotely this year. Once the details of the outreach have been confirmed, the GRC will post attendance information to its website.

#### **Current Statistics**

- Since OPRA's inception in July 2002, the GRC has received 5,505 Denial of Access Complaints. That averages about 306 annual complaints per 18 program years. So far in the current program year (FY2021), the GRC has received 34 Denial of Access Complaints.
- 379 of the 5,505 complaints remain open and active (6.9%). Of those open cases:
  - o 2 complaints are on appeal with the Appellate Division (0.5%);
  - o 18 complaints are currently in mediation (4.7%);
  - o 5 complaints are proposed for the Office of Administrative Law (1.3%);
  - o 28 complaints await adjudication by the Office of Administrative Law (7.4%);
  - o 78 complaints are tentatively scheduled for adjudication at an upcoming GRC meeting, which includes the current meeting (20.6%);
  - o 248 complaints are work in progress (65.4%); and
  - $\circ$  0 complaints are being held in abevance (0.0%).
- The GRC notes that it has seen a steady decline in the number of "Work in Progress" cases, signaling that staff continues to decrease its backlog.
- Since Program Year 2004, the GRC has received and responded to 32,641 total inquiries, averaging about 1,920 annual inquiries per 17 tracked program years (the GRC did not track inquiries in the agency's first year). So far in the current program year (FY2021), the GRC has received 253 inquiries (6.8 inquiries per workday).

#### **III.** Closed Session: None

#### **IV.** Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings:

#### July 28, 2020 Open Session Meeting Minutes

Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to approve the draft open session minutes of the July 28, 2020 meeting. Ms. Chand made a motion, which was seconded by Ms. Berg Tabakin. The motion passed by a unanimous vote, with Ms. Trish abstaining.

## V. New Business - Cases Scheduled for Adjudication

Mr. Ritardi stated that an "Administrative Complaint Disposition" means a decision by the Council as to whether to accept or reject the Executive Director's recommendation of dismissal based on jurisdictional, procedural, or other defects of the complaint. The reason for the Administrative Disposition is under each complaint below:

- A. Administrative Disposition Adjudications with Recusals (Consent Agenda): None
- B. Administrative Disposition Adjudications with no Recusals (Consent Agenda):
  - 1. <u>Dimel Hickman v. NJ Department of Corrections</u> (2020-135)
    - No Records Responsive to the Request Exist.

Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the recommendations as written for the above Administrative Complaint Disposition. Ms. Berg Tabakin made a motion, which was seconded by Ms. Chand. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

- C. Administrative Disposition of Uncontested, Voluntary Withdrawals by Complainant (No Adjudication of the Council is Required):
  - 1. Allan O. Pelcak, Jr. v. Bergen County Sheriff's Office (2020-76)
    - Complaint Voluntarily Withdrawn.
  - 2. <u>David Jarashow, Esq. (o/b/o Dontae Hathaway) v. NJ Department of Health, Division of Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories & Emergency Preparedness (2020-86)</u>
    - Complaint Settled in Mediation.
  - 3. Jonathan M. DeJoseph v. Borough of Hillsdale (Bergen) (2020-115)
    - Complaint Settled in Mediation.

## VI. New Business - Cases Scheduled for Individual Complaint Adjudication

### A. Individual Complaint Adjudications with Recusals:

Mr. Caruso noted that Mr. Ritardi would be muted for Agenda item Nos. 1 through 7 to ensure his non-participation in these items from which he was recused. Mr. Caruso confirmed to the public that Mr. Ritardi was muted prior to addressing the below agenda item.

A brief summary of the Executive Director's recommended action is under each complaint:

## 1. Yolanda Dentley v. Township of Irvington (Essex) (2018-251) (SR Recusal)

- The Custodian complied with the Council's June 30, 2020 Interim Order.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

#### 2. <u>David Weiner v. County of Essex</u> (2019-1) (SR Recusal)

- The Complainant's request was invalid because it required research. <u>MAG Entm't, LLC v. Div. of ABC</u>, 375 N.J. Super. 534, 549 (App. Div. 2005); <u>Lagerkvist v. Office of the Governor</u>, 443 N.J. Super. 230, 236-237 (App. Div. 2015).
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trishi seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

## 3. Louis Shockley v. City of Newark (Essex) (2019-10) (SR Recusal)

- The Custodian's insufficient search resulted in an unlawful denial of access.
   N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; Schneble v. N.J. Dep't of Envlt. Protection, GRC Complaint No. 2007-220 (April 2008). However, the Council need not order disclosure of responsive records because the Custodian did so on February 22, 2019.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

# 4. Rashaun Barkley v. Essex County Prosecutor's Office (2019-15) (SR Recusal)

- The GRC must conduct an *in camera* review of the jury list containing handwritten notes. <u>Paff v. N.J. Dep't of Labor, Bd. of Review</u>, 379 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 346 (App. Div. 2005).
- The knowing and willful analysis is deferred.
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and

recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

#### 5. <u>Jennifer Nevilles v. County of Hudson</u> (2019-23) (SR Recusal)

- Ms. Fernandez's failure to forward the subject OPRA request resulted in a violation of N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(h). Werner v. N.J. Dep't of Treasury, Div. of Revenue, GRC Complaint No. 2009-95 (April 2010). However, the Council need not order disclosure because the Complainant received the responsive records on February 11, 2019.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

## 6. <u>Jose Correa v. NJ Office of the Attorney General</u> (2019-89) (SR Recusal)

- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request because no records exist. <a href="Pusterhofer v. N.J. Dep't of Educ.">Pusterhofer v. N.J. Dep't of Educ.</a>, GRC Complaint No. 2005-49 (July 2005).
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

#### 7. James Lopez v. City of Newark (Essex) (2019-217) (SR Recusal)

- The Custodian's failure to timely respond within the extended time frame resulted in a "deemed" denial of access. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(g); N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(i); Kohn v. Twp. of Livingston Library (Essex), GRC Complaint No. 2007-124 (March 2008).
- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request because no records exist. Pusterhofer, GRC 2005-49.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Ms. Berg Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Ms. Berg Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote; Mr. Ritardi recused.

Mr. Caruso notified the public that Mr. Ritardi would return to the meeting by unmuting himself. Mr. Ritardi rejoined the meeting at that time.

#### \*\*\* Ms. Berg Tabakin exited the meeting at 1:49 p.m. after voting on the recusals. \*\*\*

#### B. Individual Complaint Adjudications with no Recusals:

# 1. Rotimi Owoh, Esq. (o/b/o African American Data & Research Institute) v. City of Asbury Park (Monmouth) (2018-211)

- The Custodian's failure to timely respond resulted in a "deemed" denial of access. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(g); N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(i).
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- The Complainant is not a prevailing party entitled to an award of attorney's fees. <u>Teeters v. DYFS</u>, 387 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 423 (App. Div. 2006); <u>Mason v. City of Hoboken and City Clerk of the City of Hoboken</u>, 196 <u>N.J.</u> 51 (2008).
- Mr. Ritardi Tabakin called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 2. Jessica Bishop v. County of Salem (2018-214)

- The Custodian failed to comply with the Council's June 30, 2020 Interim Order.
- The Council's Order is enforceable in Superior Court. N.J. Court Rules, R. 4:67-6; N.J.A.C. 5:105-2.9(c).
- The Custodian's actions may have been knowing and willful. Thus, this complaint should be referred to the Office of Administrative Law ("OAL") for a knowing and willful hearing.
- The Complainant is a prevailing party entitled to an award of attorney's fees. <u>Teeters</u>, 387 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 423; <u>Mason</u>, 196 <u>N.J.</u> 51. For administrative ease, the OAL should determine the total fee amount.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 3. Laura Harris v. Borough of Waldwick (Bergen) (2018-241)

- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the requested investigative report under the personnel exemption. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; N.J.S.A. 47:1A-10; Merino v. Borough of Ho-Ho-Kus, GRC Complaint No. 2003-110 (March 2004); McGee v. Twp. of East Amwell (Hunterdon), GRC Complaint No. 2007-305 (March 2011).
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## 4. <u>U'Bay Lumumba v. NJ Department of Corrections</u> (2018-261)

- The Custodian complied with the Council's July 28, 2020 Interim Order.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi Tabakin called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

# 5. Rotimi Owoh, Esq. (o/b/o African American Data & Research Institute and Baffi Simmons) v. Borough of Alpha (Warren) (2018-283)

- The Custodian unlawfully denied access to responsive records, which were being held by the Township of Phillipsburg pursuant to a shared services agreement. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; Michalak v. Borough of Helmetta (Middlesex), GRC Complaint No. 2010-220 (Interim Order dated January 31, 2012). The Custodian must obtain and disclose responsive records to the Complainant.
- The knowing and willful and prevailing party analyses are deferred.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 6. Randall and Lynda Burns v. Cape May County Sheriff's Office (2018-299)

- The Custodian complied with the Council's July 28, 2020 Interim Order.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 7. Patrick Trainor v. NJ Office of the Governor (2018-304)

- The Council should table this complaint for additional review.
- Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to have this matter tabled. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## 8. <u>Judson Moore v. Commercial Township (Cumberland)</u> (2018-309)

- The GRC must conduct an *in camera* review of the redacted meeting minutes responsive to the Complainant's OPRA request item No. 1. <u>Paff</u>, 379 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 346.
- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the requested employee statements related to a grievance. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1.1; Keyser v. Morris Sch. Dist. (Morris), GRC Complaint No. 2015-189 (January 2017).
- The knowing and willful analysis is deferred.

 Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## 9. <u>Jennifer Dericks (o/b/o TAPintoSparta.net) v. Sparta Township Police</u> Department (Sussex) (2019-8)

- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the responsive police report under the juvenile record exemption. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; N.J.S.A. 47:1A-9(a); N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-60(a); Rivera v. Cliffside Park Police Dep't (Bergen), GRC Complaint No. 2010-275 (Interim Order dated April 25, 2012).
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## 10. <u>Rotimi Owoh, Esq. (o/b/o African American Data & Research Institute) v.</u> Logan Township Police Department (Gloucester) (2019-17)

- The original Custodian's failure to timely respond resulted in a "deemed" denial of access. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(g); N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(i). However, the Council need not order disclosure because the Custodian did so on April 2, 2019.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- The Complainant is not a prevailing party entitled to an award of attorney's fees. <u>Teeters</u>, 387 N.J. Super. 423; <u>Mason</u>, 196 N.J. 51.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

# 11. Rotimi Owoh, Esq. (o/b/o African American Data & Research Institute) v. East Greenwich Township (Gloucester) (2019-19)

- The Custodian did not unlawfully deny access to the Complainant's OPRA request because it was never received. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; Martinez v. Morris Cnty. Prosecutor's Office, GRC Complaint No. 2014-2 (September 2014).
- The Complainant is not a prevailing party entitled to an award of attorney's fees. <u>Teeters</u>, 387 <u>N.J. Super.</u> 423; <u>Mason</u>, 196 <u>N.J.</u> 51.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Chand made a motion and Ms. Trish seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## 12. Steven Schrager v. Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office (2019-31)

- The Custodian complied with the Council's July 28, 2020 Interim Order.
- There is no knowing and willful violation.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

### 13. Eric Jones v. Plainfield Public School District (Union) (2019-45)

- The Complainant's January 29, 2019 OPRA request was invalid because it failed to identify specific records. MAG, 375 N.J. Super. at 546.
- The GRC must conduct an *in camera* review of the Tenure Charge document. Paff, 379 N.J. Super. 346.
- The knowing and willful and prevailing party analyses are deferred.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## 14. Kaitlynn M. Giordano v. Lodi Police Department (Bergen) (2019-56)

- The Custodian shall disclose the responsive arrest report containing the arrestee's date of birth. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; Barkley v. Essex Cnty. Prosecutor's Office, GRC Complaint No. 2013-244 (Interim Order dated April 29, 2014). The Custodian shall also disclose the vehicle plate number and vehicle information or provide a certification stating the specific lawful basis for denying same.
- The GRC must conduct an *in camera* review of the responsive "Drinking and Driving" Report. <u>Paff</u>, 379 N.J. Super. 346.
- The knowing and willful analysis is deferred.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 15. Damon Williams v. NJ State Police (2019-58)

- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request item Nos. 1, 2, and 4 under <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1.1, <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-9(a), and Executive Order No. 69 (Gov. Whitman 1997). <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-6.
- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request item No. 3 because no records exist. Pusterhofer, GRC 2005-49.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms.

Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 16. Carlos Aborresco v. Cape May County Correctional Facility (2019-63)

- The Custodian's failure to submit a Statement of Information resulted in a violation of N.J.A.C. 5:105-2.4(a).
- The Custodian's failure to timely respond resulted in a "deemed" denial of access. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(g); N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(i).
- The Custodian may have unlawfully denied access to the requested records.
   N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6. Thus, the Custodian must either perform a search and disclose all records that exist or certify if no additional records were located.
- The knowing and willful analysis is deferred.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### 17. Doreen Frega v. Township of Lacey (Ocean) (2019-71)

- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request under the juvenile record exemption. N.J.S.A. 47:1A-6; N.J.S.A. 47:1A-9(a); N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-60(a); Gabardi v. Voorhees Twp. Police Dep't (Camden), GRC Complaint No. 2008-259 (December 2009).
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

# 18. <u>Rotimi Owoh, Esq. (o/b/o African American Data & Research) v. High Bridge Borough (Hunterdon)</u> (2019-75)

- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request because no records exist. <u>Pusterhofer</u>, GRC 2005-49.
- The Complainant is not a prevailing party entitled to an award of attorney's fees. Teeters, 387 N.J. Super. 423; Mason, 196 N.J. 51.
- Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

# 19. <u>Jason Allen Jones v. Roselle Board of Education</u> (Union) (2019-80)

- The Custodian timely responded to the Complainant's OPRA request.
- The Custodian lawfully denied access to the Complainant's OPRA request because no records exist. Pusterhofer, GRC 2005-49.

 Mr. Ritardi called for any discussion on the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Hearing none, Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to accept the Executive Director's findings and recommendations as written. Ms. Trish made a motion and Ms. Chand seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

## VI. Court Decisions of GRC Complaints on Appeal: None

## VII. Complaints Adjudicated in NJ Superior Court & NJ Supreme Court:

• Mills v. State, 2020 N.J. Super. Unpub. LEXIS 1545 (App. Div. 2020): Plaintiff appeals from the trial court ruling which awarded a fraction of his requested attorney's fees as a partially prevailing party. Plaintiff asserted that he prevailed fully since he obtained a small number of records under OPRA but far more under the common law right of access. The Appellate Division disagreed, holding that OPRA's fee award provision was reserved for successes under OPRA, and did not authorize an award under the common law. Affirmed in part and remanded for the court to address Plaintiff's request for costs.

#### **VIII.** Public Comment:

- Mr. Louis Shockley (GRC Complaint No. 2019-10): Mr. Shockley thanked the Council for notifying him of this meeting, noting that it was his first time attending a GRC meeting. Mr. Shockley stated that he hoped his complaint would result in additional review, especially because timeliness violations have become normal. Mr. Shockley noted that he also had trouble understanding how to overcome an agency's assertion that no records exist where they are required to retain them. Mr. Shockley finally asked that the Council ensure that government agencies are adhering to OPRA.
- Ms. Doreen Frega (GRC Complaint No. 2014-71): Ms. Frega asked whether she would be able to access records of a crime when the two (2) individuals involved, who were juveniles at the time, had become adults. Ms. Frega asserted that she believed another case on this month's agenda regarding juvenile records resulted in disclosure. Ms. Frega asked if the GRC could look further into her case based on the forgoing. Mr. Caruso responded recommending that she submit an inquiry to the GRC via telephone or e-mail regarding her concerns and questions.

#### IX. Adjournment:

Mr. Ritardi called for a motion to end the Council meeting. Mr. Palombi made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Ritardi. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Ritardi, Esq., Acting Chair

Date Approved: September 29, 2020