

## Commission of Fine Arts

### 2018 Chief FOIA Officer Report

Frederick Lindstrom, Assistant Secretary, serving as Chief FOIA Officer

Reporting Period: March 1, 2017 through February 1, 2018

#### Introduction

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) is an independent federal agency charged with giving expert advice to the President, Congress and the heads of departments and agencies of the Federal and District of Columbia governments on matters of design and aesthetics, as they affect the Federal interest and preserve the dignity of the nation's capital. The Commission consists of seven "well qualified judges of the fine arts" who are appointed by the President. It provides advice to the U. S. Mint on the design of coins and medals, and approves the site and design of national memorials in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act or the American Battle Monuments Act, whichever applies. Within the District of Columbia community, the Commission advises on design matters affecting the Historic District of Georgetown, under the Old Georgetown Act, as well as other private sector areas adjacent to federal interests, under the Shipstead-Luce Act. The work of the Commission is supported by a staff of twelve full-time employees.

#### I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

The Commission of Fine Arts routinely and promptly responds to requests from concerned citizens and interested parties to review a wide variety of agency documents, regardless of whether these materials are requested under the FOIA or as a regular research request. Generally, requested material is delivered in full; information is withheld only if it meets the criteria of an exemption. Within this reporting period, partial disclosures were made under Exemption 6 to protect personal privacy. Records created as a result of the fulfillment of the agency's mission are promptly made available on the agency website at <https://www.cfa.gov/records-research/record-cfa-actions>.

#### II. Steps Taken to Ensure an Effective System is in Place for Responding to Requests

The FOIA Public Liaison was allocated significant time during this reporting period to review FOIA mandates and guidance. As a result, the agency's FOIA regulations have been re-drafted to include elements of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016. A draft will be submitted to the Federal Register for public comment and codification in the second quarter on FY2018.

Building upon the re-drafting of the regulations, the agency has adopted the procedures outlined therein when processing FOIA requests. Each request is assigned a tracking number, classified as simple, normal, complex or voluminous and processed within the time frames stated in the current version of the regulations. In the interest of effectively and efficiently responding to FOIA requests, the agency has made it a practice to deem all incoming FOIA requests as a priority within the workload of the agency's staff whose assignments include FOIA requests.

#### III. Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

Apart from adhering to the agency's stringent schedule of posting official records of its actions to its website, there have been no additional or extraordinary efforts to proactively disclose records during this reporting period. Information on projects of significant public interest, such as any given high-profile buildings or national memorials, are already routinely made available on the agency's website. With a

redevelopment of the website in progress, the CFA anticipates being able to add more graphical information in the near future.

#### IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

The agency makes every effort to post official records of its actions to its website in a timely manner. The website was designed with the objective of making its content more accessible and user-friendly, and a redevelopment, currently in progress, will expand upon that accessibility. Most communications in response to FOIA requests are conducted electronically, mainly through email. Unless specifically requested otherwise, responsive documents are generally delivered to FOIA requestors electronically.

The agency is participating in the National FOIA Portal and has established [foia@cfa.gov](mailto:foia@cfa.gov) specifically for FOIA requesters. Updating the agency's FOIA page on its website with more detailed guidance and descriptive language of the agency's FOIA processes is a goal for the coming year.

#### V. Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reducing any Backlogs

At this reporting, the agency receives a low volume of FOIA requests; a total of six were received in FY2017. Nonetheless, as stated above in part II, FOIA requests are given priority within the workflow of the office. As a result, all requests, whether classified as simple or complex, were filled within the time frames stated in the regulations; in some cases, requests were filled ahead of schedule.

#### Points of Contact

Frederick Lindstrom

Assistant Secretary

Chief FOIA Officer

Commission of Fine Arts

401 F Street, NW, Suite 312

Washington, DC 20001

(202) 504-2200

[flindstrom@cfa.gov](mailto:flindstrom@cfa.gov)

Susan Raposa

Technical Information Specialist

FOIA Public Liaison

Commission of Fine Arts

401 F Street, NW, Suite 312

Washington, DC 20001

(202) 504-2200

[sraposa@cfa.gov](mailto:sraposa@cfa.gov)