

Commission of Fine Arts
2020 Chief FOIA Officer Report
Frederick Lindstrom, Assistant Secretary, serving as Chief FOIA Officer
Reporting Period: March 1, 2019 through February 1, 2020

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.

The CFA received less than ten FOIA requests. These were primarily simple requests completed within twenty work days and less than \$100.00 in copying fees was collected.

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, no exemptions were invoked when disclosing responsive documents. 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>.

The most significant event in 2019 was the updating of the agency FOIA regulations and their publication in the Federal Register. These may be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/06/14/2019-11775/freedom-of-information-act-regulations>

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

The overall number of requests has not significantly increased, but more are arriving through the National FOIA Portal at FOIA.gov. These requests tend to be very general and informal in nature and are often not directly related to the agency or its mission. Nonetheless, the agency continues to deem all incoming FOIA requests as a priority within the workload of the agency's staff whose assignments include FOIA activities. The number of requests remains manageable within the current system of response.

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.

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 recent site redevelopment has facilitated the availability of more graphical materials. 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.

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. 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

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