Jack Clifton

JOUR 402

Public Information Request Final Memo

December 12, 2023

**Part One: Detailed Accounting of Your Work on This Project (Worth 10 points)**

My agency was the Anne Arundel County Sheriff’s office. I took this class previously, and got the Baltimore County Sheriffs office and did not hear back, so I was nervous going in. I emailed the email account on the form when the project was assigned and followed up a few times in October, but I got no response. I called and was referred to an online form that I could fill out in order to get the documents I needed. This led me to my first problem: They wanted me to pay for the documents. I talked with my professor about solutions and was told to request a fee waiver and under the reasoning put the email that we sent at the beginning of the project. I filled out the form and got my first email back, but it was automated and just told me that they had gotten the form. After that I didn’t hear back, I emailed again but got no response and when I called I either couldn’t get through or was told to continue waiting on the response to the form. I felt stuck.

No response ever came and I started going in circles, calling every week or so to no avail, they didn’t have anything to give me. I stopped sending emails because they weren’t getting responses, and the phone calls stopped being helpful as well after a while.

**Part Two: What You Learned from This Project (Worth 10 points)**

This is the worst project I’ve done in college. I have to be doing something wrong. Across two semesters doing this project in 320 and 402 I haven’t even gotten an email response from any of my agencies. I’ve called, I’ve emailed, I promise you I tried but nobody has even responded to one email. It made me jaded about the field, like people hate journalists and don’t want to help us.

But other people did get results, which means that I did something wrong in not getting mine. Seeing people get information back immediately did make me feel a twinge of jealousy, but At some point after three unsuccessful tries you have to look inward and figure out what I did wrong. Should I have driven to the sheriff’s office? Should I have called more often? Was there something in the tone of my emails that was off-putting in a manner that would make people not want to respond? What could I have done better?

On the State of Maryland’s Guide to Requesting Access to Public Records it says “Fees may not be used to discourage requesters, and to this end, PIA fees are limited to standard charges for direct document search, review, and duplication. Also, the PIA specifies that requesters receive the first two hours of search and preparation time without charge.” I think that means that my fee waiver didn’t have anything to do with not getting information back, this project has left me with more questions than answers. Where did I go wrong?

I’m sorry I couldn’t be more helpful.

**Submission Instructions and Grading**

Follow these instructions precisely, or you will lose points.

* Due on Dec. 12, by 11:59 p.m.
* 10% late penalty for every 24 hours it’s late
* Write a double-spaced essay in a narrative format (not bullet points)
* Use 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins
* Respect the word limits, or you will be penalized.
* You will lose points for spelling and grammar mistakes. (This is a journalism class.)
* Please submit as a Word document via ELMS or via a shared Google doc **WITH PROPER SHARE SETTINGS.**

**YOU MUST ALSO SUBMIT TO J-ASSESSMENT. HERE’S HOW:**

You will need to submit your government transparency memo to a platform called J-Assessment (in addition to turning it in here, on Elms). J-Assessment is part of how we collect data and student work samples to keep the journalism school accredited, so this process is extremely important.

1. Go to <https://jassessment.umd.edu>. and log in with your normal university credentials (button is at top left).

2. You will see a button for this course. Select our course (Jour402) and the course section you are enrolled in.

3. Use the "choose file" button to upload a PDF of your memo. It's as simple as that!

For the identifying information for this assignment, please write the following information in

the upper left-hand corner of your first page—in single-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman

font. Write this under the page header, not inside of it.

Your Name (First and Last)

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Date (Month Day, Year)

Note: All university policies on academic integrity apply for this project. Fabrication of any data

or information for this project will be referred to the dean’s office for disciplinary action.