

RESOLUTION NO. 38-2020
RESOLUTION CALLING FOR STUDY COMMISSION
TO REVIEW THE OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Councilmember Leckstein introduced and offered for adoption the following Resolution; seconded by Councilmember Keeler:

WHEREAS, the Borough of Sea Bright strongly believes in and supports open transparent government, and that citizens and residents have the right to be informed about the workings of government in order to best participate in a democracy; and

WHEREAS, on January 8, 2002 then Acting Governor DiFrancesco signed into law the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) which mandates that government records shall be available, with limited exceptions, for public access and simplifying the procedures for requesting such specific records; and

WHEREAS, the intent of the law was to provide the public with easy access to government records with an uncomplicated process for obtaining the records and eliminating bureaucratic red tape; and

WHEREAS, over the course of 18 years OPRA has been a positive light, but it has also been fraught with abuse and misuse, and has become an unanticipated financial cost to the taxpayers of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Sea Bright has labored under a well-intended law that has spiraled out of control, due to the volume and nature of requests, the cost to taxpayers in responding to the requests, and the potential liability in having to pay disproportionate prevailing party attorney's fees should the requests turn into litigated matters, as well as the liability in determining which documents shall be released, with or without redaction, while attempting to maintain individual privacy; and

WHEREAS, it is not only the volume of OPRA requests that challenge our resources, but it is also the cost associated with reviewing, retrieving, and processing the OPRA request(s) by public entity personnel and counsel and possibly defending our action(s) before the Government Records Council or in Superior Court; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Sea Bright received and responded to 145 OPRA requests in 2017, 126 OPRA requests in 2018, and 133 OPRA request in 2019; and

WHEREAS, due to the often conflicting case law and Government Record Council decisions, as well as the unique characteristics of OPRA request, the Borough of Sea Bright must often times rely on the municipal attorney to review certain OPRA requests, resulting in additional fees; and

WHEREAS, with limited exceptions OPRA has not been amended to address the clear and apparent advancement in technology that has changed the way government records are created, stored, and/or transmitted; the various interpretive decisions; privacy concerns; abuse for commercial gain; and/or the ever increasing cost to taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, as the current law approaches its twentieth (20th) anniversary it has outgrown its original intended use and has become ripe for comprehensive review and reform;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the governing body of the Borough of Sea Bright appeals to the legislature to form a Commission comprised of Mayors, Municipal Clerks,

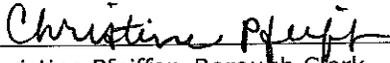
Municipal Managers, Attorneys, Police Chiefs, open government advocates, privacy experts, members of the media, citizens and other appropriate stakeholders, to review and examine the effects of OPRA on local government and the needs to be fulfilled by the law, and use the Commission's findings to perform a comprehensive reform of OPRA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to Senator Declan O'Scanlon, Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso, Assemblywoman Amy H. Handlin, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Senate President Stephen Sweeney, Senator Weinberg, Executive Director of the Government Records Council, the Governor of the State of New Jersey, the Municipal Clerks Association of New Jersey and New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

Roll Call:	Birdsall,	Catalano,	Keeler,	Leckstein,	Rooney,	Schwartz
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Asbent

January 21, 2020

I, Christine Pfeiffer, Borough Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a Resolution adopted by the Borough of Sea Bright, County of Monmouth, State of New Jersey at a Council Meeting held January 21, 2020.



Christine Pfeiffer, Borough Clerk

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Your State Senator and Assembly Representatives
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Hon. Phil Murphy
Governor, State of New Jersey
State House
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Hon. Stephen Sweeney
Senate President
Senate District 3
935 Kings Highway
Suite 400
West Deptford, NJ 08086
sensweeney@njleg.org

Hon. Craig Coughlin
Assembly Speaker
Assembly District 19
569 Rahway Avenue
Woodbridge, NJ 07095
asmcoughlin@njleg.org

Hon. Loretta Weinberg
Senator, District 37
545 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, NJ 07666
senweinberg@njleg.org

Frank F. Caruso
Executive Director
Government Records Council
PO Box 819
Trenton, NJ 08625-0819
Frank.Caruso@dca.state.nj.us

MCANJ
88 Inskip Ave
Ocean Grove, NJ 07756
executivedirector@NJClerts.org

NJLM
222 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
lbuckelew@njlm.org