

February 2, 2003

Mayor John F. Street
Room 215
City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: Records Commissioner Joan Decker's Failure to Provide Public Records

Dear Mr. Mayor:

I've been asking Commissioner Decker for certain public records for three months now:

1. Financial Disclosure Reports for City Officials
2. Monthly updates of Real Estate transactions

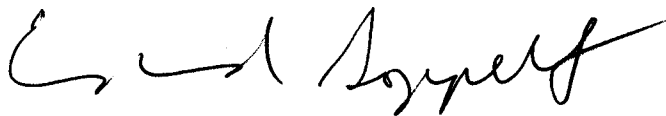
It's been my experience that City agencies routinely ignore requests for public records and when this doesn't work resort to a grab bag of tricks and deceitful behavior (see attached letter to Commissioner Decker).

I am currently suing the City for the release of these important public records. When I discussed my experience with a good friend of yours, she told me that you did not create the current system. Fair enough, but things change.

There is a newly strengthened Right to Know law and I believe you must act now to reign in Department Heads like Commissioner Decker whose behavior dishonors your Administration. Otherwise, you run the risk that your political enemies will use your Administration's handling of public records against you in the upcoming campaign.

I would be willing to meet with Phil Goldsmith, who I know from his days at Fairmount Park, sometime next week. I am open to any reasonable suggestion you may have about how to resolve the current situation. If you're interested in finding a mutually acceptable solution, please get back to me by February 7, 2003.

Sincerely,



Edmund Goppelt

Attached: 2/2/03 Letter to Commissioner Joan Decker

hallwatch.org

Ed Goppelt, Webmaster

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February 2, 2003

Ms. Joan Decker
Commissioner, Records Department
City Hall, Rm. 156
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: PhilaDox Application Form & Price List

Dear Ms. Decker:

Thank you for your letter of January 30, 2003 in response to my Right to Know Act request of January 25, 2003.

You should be able to send me a simple application form and price list without having to spend a month consulting with the Law Dept. I refer here to your PhilaDox service which title companies and law firms use to look up title information on their web browsers. I expect to receive these documents from you by February 7, 2003.

I find certain aspects of our dealings troubling. For example, I believe there is evidence that:

You play favorites. On two occasions, you have attempted to charge me more than you do others. **1.** You told me I would have to pay \$400 for Real Estate Data, but provide the same information—which I estimate costs you \$1.74 to produce—to for-profit companies for \$275. **2.** Ambulance chasers can look at accident reports for free, but you want to charge me \$17 per hour to examine financial disclosure reports for City officials.

You have misled me. You imply that the only form in which you could supply the Real Estate Data was on magnetic tape, an archaic storage format. When I looked into it, I found that you supply your other customers with these records both on CD and via ftp.

You are stalling my requests. You could have easily sent me a PhilaDox application form. Instead you chose to refer this routine request to the Law Dept.

When I am having problems with officials, I prefer to work things out privately if possible. However, to date you have rebuffed my efforts to meet or speak with you. For this reason, I will be bringing this matter to your superior's attention.

Sincerely,



Edmund Goppelt

Cc: Mayor John F. Street