



The newspaper of the Upper Connecticut River Valley

Valley News

Mailing Address: Box 877 White River Jct., VT 05001-0877 • Plant Location: 24 Interchange Drive, W. Lebanon, NH 03784-2084 • Telephone: 603/298-8711 FAX: 603/298-0212

Maggie Cassidy
Editor
Valley News
P. O. Box 877
White River Junction, VT 05001
603 727 3220
mcassidy@vnews.com

Committee on Government Operations
Vermont Senate

28 January 2020

To the Committee:

I am writing today to express my opposition to any fees for the inspection of public records.

The foremost consideration that must be remembered at the beginning, middle and end of any conversation about public records inspections is simple: Public records belong to the public.

State agencies and municipalities play an important role as custodians, but that role is in service to facilitating access to what belongs to the people of Vermont.

Any argument that agencies should charge for inspection of public records has to put aside who owns those records, and I believe that is an error. As the *Valley News* has previously editorialized, "Any financial burden that disclosure imposes on taxpayers is easily outweighed by the public benefit of ready access to government records," not least of which includes faith in our leaders and institutions.

Fees are a deterrent to public access, and the cost of facilitating that access is simply the cost of doing business as a government agency. Is transparency for a fee really transparency?

Thank you for hearing my position.

Respectfully,

Maggie Cassidy
Editor, *Valley News*