

Coventry

FIRST VISIT:

OCT. 21

School Committee Minutes:

- Readability: Good
- Thoroughness: Good
- Layout: Good
- Legal Compliance: Full

City/Town Council Minutes:

- Readability: NA
- Thoroughness: NA
- Layout: NA
- Legal Compliance: NA

Documents Not Received



Ninety percent of the requests were fulfilled in Coventry. All of the requests were fulfilled at the Town Clerk’s office and at the School Department. The Coventry Police accommodated the request to inspect the log, but refused the request to view arrest reports.

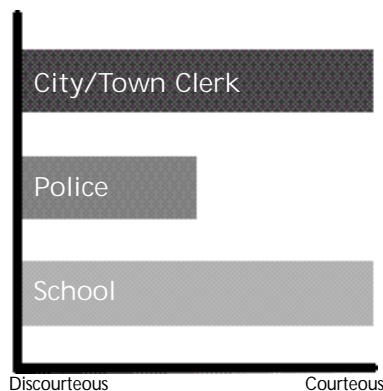
The town employees encountered in Coventry received very high ratings for their demeanor, except for the Police. Moreover, the “inquisitiveness” rate (asking for identification and/or reason for the request) was quite low.

There was recently a complaint about excessive copying charges for public records at the Tiogue Fire District in Coventry. The Fire District Council was sued by the Attorney General in November and March 1997 for violations of the Open Meetings Law and the Open Records Law (Aubrey Cohen, “Tiogue Fire District Opens Annual Meeting,” Providence Journal-Bulletin, September 9, 1997, p. C1) The Tiogue Fire District Council has since stopped the policy, and none of the departments in Coventry that were examined in this study charged more than the statutory limit.

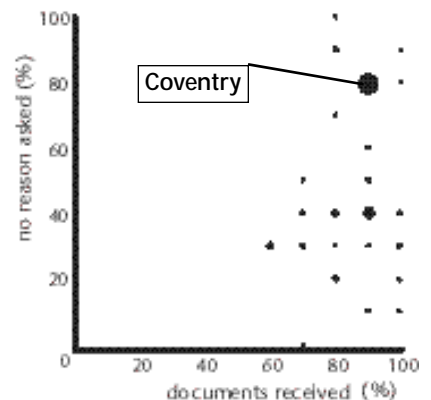
In short, the availability of public documents in Coventry was better than most other towns, but there is still room for improvement in the Police Department.

(Footnote on p. 70.)

How We Were Treated



Comparison: Cities/Towns



* Footnotes for Cities and Towns

Central Falls: The researchers received arrest reports from the Central Falls Police Department, but all of the personal information was redacted and therefore did not comply with the Open Records Law.

Coventry: The officer in charge insisted upon seeing a piece of identification from the researcher before any arrest records would be shown. As the researcher refused to present verification of her identity, the arrest reports were not obtained.

East Providence: The charge was not actually levied, but was clearly marked on a sign outside of the front window.

Johnston: The school department clerk said that a printed copy of the school contract was not available and even if it were, she would not provide copy because it would be too difficult to understand.

Providence: After being denied on four separate visits, arrest reports were ultimately granted to the researcher on the fifth visit. However, it is appropriate to deem this a refusal, especially in light of the considerable runaround, since the general protocol of the study dictated that three separate unsuccessful attempts should indicate a denial.

South Kingstown: The arrest reports were received by mail after the narrative was written.

Warwick: The officer on duty explained that arrest reports were not filed chronologically, so it would be difficult to retrieve the three most recent arrest reports. The officer did suggest that he would be willing to look up arrest reports if the researcher gave specific names.