

# Providence

FIRST TWO VISITS:

OCT. 22

DEC. 3

“ The Providence Police Department was generally helpful, although the clerk at the front desk was not very knowledgeable. She also questioned my identity and the real reason that I wanted to see the log. Also, she asked what school I was from. On the first visit, the front desk clerk informed me that the log was not a matter of public record, but after another officer came out and inquired as to what I was looking for, I was told to call the chief of the records department and he would let me know if I could see the record. I called the chief later that day and was told to come back in the next morning. I received access to the police log with no problem whatsoever and no questions asked about my name or a reason. The clerk in the records office was courteous and helpful.

The clerk in charge of distributing the records for the School Department was out sick when I first arrived at the superintendent’s office and I was told that no one else could provide me with such information. When I arrived on my second visit, she was courteous and made copies of the minutes and agendas, although she took care to remove some of the names and addresses from the minutes and agendas, stating that they were private. She was efficient and provided all information requested.

The Tax Assessor did not know of any tax delinquency list. She told me that I would need a specific name and address and that she would look up that property for me to see if it was delinquent. I then asked if I could just see the form that prints out for tax delinquent residents. She found one on the desk and was more than happy to let me look at it and take notes. ”

### School Committee Minutes:

- Readability: Average
- Thoroughness: Poor
- Layout: Poor

### City/Town Council Minutes:

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

### Documents Not Received

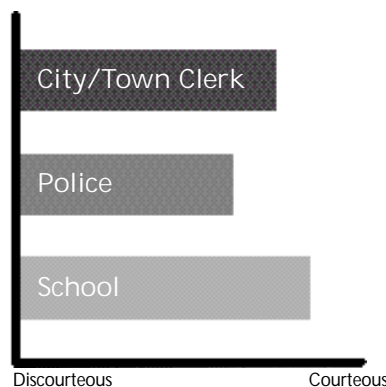


The City Clerk’s office and the School Department in Providence provided 100 percent of the indexed items. None of these requests required more than a single visit, and the employees encountered were generally courteous. The only difference between the two is that the School Department employees were fairly inquisitive - requesting identification in four of the five encounters and a reason for the request every time. In contrast, the City Clerks were completely discreet and unobtrusive. They did not ever ask for identification nor for a reason for the request. They complied promptly and without incident.

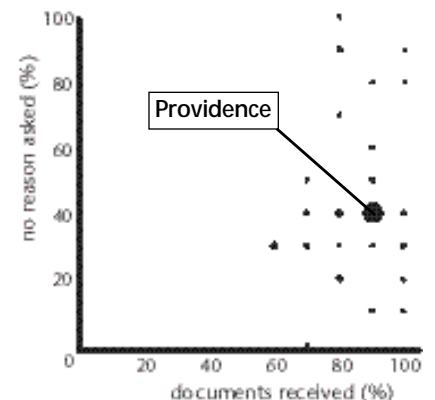
The experience with the Providence Police was more complicated. The log was provided much in the manner above: courteously and without questions. Providence is also the jurisdiction in which DARE v. Gannon was decided. Although the decision was stayed on appeal, it strongly suggests that the Providence Police Department’s policy on police records is overly restrictive. The brutality reports requested in Providence were not provided.

(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.