

Westerly

FIRST TWO VISITS:

OCT. 27

NOV. 18

“ The majority of people I dealt with in Westerly were helpful and nice. The only problem was with the police department. We were told the log, and arrest and brutality reports were not available to the public. ”

School Committee Minutes:

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

City/Town Council Minutes:

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

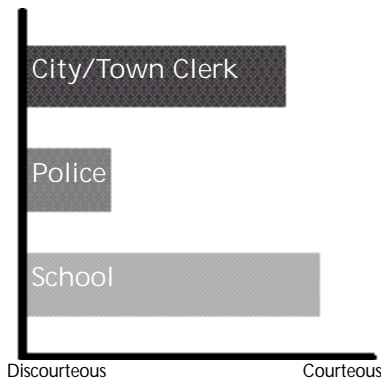
Documents Not Received



Westerly denied access to 20 percent of the documents requested. The demeanor of the town employees varied among the three divisions of government studied. As in many towns, the Police were the least compliant and courteous. The Westerly Police Department’s demeanor rating is one of the four lowest in the state. They did not comply with either of the requests made - two clear violations of the Open Records Law. The School Department and the Town Clerk, on the other hand, complied with all of the requests.

There has been recent controversy surrounding police brutality in Westerly. In October 1996, some residents filed reports with the American Civil Liberties Union claiming the Westerly Police Department did not accept complaints against the Police. The ACLU suit came after several residents accused the Police of harassment, and in some cases, assault, and were turned away by the Police when they tried to file complaints. Police Chief Eugene Trombino has since implemented a new policy regarding police complaints, but it is unclear if it is working. The Westerly Police were advised by the Town Solicitor that they were not obligated to release the number of complaints filed so there is no measure to determine if the public has been able to file complaints without problems. By denying access to the police log and arrest reports, they suggest that conditions have not improved greatly since the new policy began. Apparently, the Attorney General’s letter of three years ago, reminding all police departments of their obligations under the Open Records Law, has made little or no difference in Westerly or other police departments which denied access to these records.

How We Were Treated



Comparison: Cities/Towns

