



FINAL DETERMINATION

IN THE MATTER OF :
 :
J. CHADWICK SCHNEE AND :
EWU MEDIA, LLC, :
Requester :
 : **Docket No: AP 2026-3579**
v. :
 :
BETHEL PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT, :
Respondent :

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On July 13, 2026, J. Chadwick Schnee, Esq., on behalf of EWU Media, LLC (collectively “Requester”), submitted a request (“Request”) to the Bethel Park Police Department (“Department”) pursuant to the Right-to-Know Law (“RTKL”), 65 P.S. §§ 67.101 *et seq.*, stating the following:

Request: Pursuant to the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law. I am requesting access to and copies of the following public records held by the Bethel Park Police Department regarding the 2019 incident involving suspect John Matthew Chapman (DOB approx. 1979/1980) and victim [redacted]:

1. The initial non-investigative police blotter log and/or incident report regarding the welfare check conducted at the victim's Timberidge Drive residence in November 2019.
2. The initial criminal complaint, public charging documents, arrest log details, and booking photograph (mugshot) for John Matthew Chapman filed on or about November 15, 2019 (Charges included Kidnapping, Obstruction, and Criminal Use of a Communication Facility).

3. The Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) log sheets and 911 dispatch records generated for the initial welfare check and missing person report.
4. Non-investigative administrative communications, emails, and logistical documentation from November 1, 2019, through March 31, 2020 between Bethel Park PD administration and outside agencies (specifically the FBI and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, NV) regarding the identification of the victim and the extradition/transfer of custody of John Chapman.

Please note that I am strictly seeking public administrative, blotter, dispatch, and arrest logs, which are subject to public access, and am not seeking protected criminal investigative materials or work product. If any portions of these records are deemed exempt, please redact those specific parts and provide the remaining public portions of the records.

On August 19, 2026, following a thirty-day extension, 65 P.S. §67.902(b), the Department granted the Request in part and denied the Request in part. Item 2 of the Request was granted as being publicly available via the Pennsylvania Unified Judicial Systems (“UJS”) portal, but the arrest records were denied pursuant to Section 708(b)(17) of the RTKL and the Criminal History Record Information Act (“CHRIA”). 65 P.S. 67.708(b)(17); 18 Pa. C.S. § 9106(c)(4). The Department granted access in part to Item 3 of the Request by providing the 20191114M9337 Dispatch Supplement Narrative 11/14/2019, subject to redactions. Item 4 of the Request was denied as exempt under Section 708(b)(16), Section 708(b)(1) and Section 708(b)(10) of the RTKL. 65 P.S. § 67.708(b)(16); 65 P.S. § 67.708(b)(1); 65 P.S. § 708(b)(10).

On August 28, 2026, the Requester filed an appeal with the Office of Open Records (“OOR”), challenging the denial and stating grounds for disclosure. The Requester limited his appeal to Request Items 2, 3, and 4.¹ The OOR invited both parties to supplement the record and

¹ With respect to Item 4, the Requester specifically limited the appeal as to the Department’s withholding of records regarding the extradition/custody transfer of Mr. Chapman.

directed the Department to notify the OOR if any third parties have a direct interest in this appeal. 65 P.S. § 67.1101(c).

On September 18, 2026, the Department submitted a position statement reiterating its reasons for denial and arguing that the appeal should be denied. In support of its position, the Department submitted the attestation of Lieutenant Joelle Dixon (“Dixon Attestation”).

LEGAL ANALYSIS

The Department is a local agency subject to the RTKL. 65 P.S. § 67.302. The OOR is authorized to hear appeals for all Commonwealth and local agencies. *See* 65 P.S. § 67.503(a). However, the OOR does not have jurisdiction to hear appeals related to criminal investigative records held by local law enforcement agencies. *See* 65 P.S. § 67.503(d)(2).

Item 3 of the Request seeks records that may relate to a criminal investigation under Section 708(b)(16). 65 P.S. § 67.708(b)(16). The Department argues that it provided all public information from the Dispatch Record to the Requester with criminal investigative information redacted. In support of the Department’s position, the Dixon Attestation states that the prosecution of Mr. Chapman remains an open, active and ongoing criminal prosecution, as his previous conviction was vacated upon appeal by the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Dixon Attestation, ¶18. The case has been remanded for a new trial. *Id.* Lt. Dixon attests that the Dispatch Record contains not only time-response information, but also investigative information. *Id.* at ¶19. The redacted information includes the name of the informant/witness who contacted the Department and the information provided; observations of responding Department police officers; notes of the Department officers detailing their witness interviews; investigative steps taken by Department police officers to locate the victim and investigate Mr. Chapman, and; descriptions of evidence. *Id.* at ¶20.

The Requester states that the document contains two timestamps and a single date visible. Lt. Dixon attests that the limited time-response information was provided to the Requester and is adequate to assess the timeliness of the Department's response. *Id.* at ¶29. Based upon the evidence provided by the Department, and because the information redacted in the document may be exempt under Section 708(b)(16), this portion of the Request (Item 3) is transferred to the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office. 65 P.S. § 67.708(b)(16); 65 P.S. § 67.503(d)(2).

With respect to Item 4 of the Request, the Requester appealed the denial of inter-agency communications regarding the extradition/transfer of custody of Mr. Chapman, arguing that logistical extradition coordination does not constitute a public safety threat or pre-decisional policy deliberation. Lt. Dixon attests that with respect to the Request for communications between the Department and other law enforcement agencies relating to the extradition/transfer of custody of Mr. Chapman, these were all accomplished by telephone. *Id.* at ¶44. Lt. Dixon further attests that the Department does not possess any responsive written or electronic correspondence between the Department and other law enforcement agencies related to the extradition/transfer of custody of Mr. Chapman. *Id.* at ¶43. Therefore, the Department met its burden of proving that records related to the extradition/transfer of custody do not exist in the possession, custody or control of the Department. *Hodges v. Pa. Dep't of Health*, 29 A.3d 1190, 1192 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2011).

Finally, with respect to Item 2 of the Request the Department advised the Requester in its initial response that the Request for the criminal complaint and public charging documents was granted as such information is publicly available via Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System ("UJS") portal at <https://ujportal.pacourts.us/>. The Requester argued on appeal that this was a misinterpretation of the Department's duties under Section 704 of the RTKL. 65 P.S. § 67.704. Section 704 states that an agency may make its records available through any publicly accessible

electronic means. *Id.* Section 704(b)(1) states that “an agency may respond to a request by notifying the requester that the record is available through publicly accessible electronic means or that the agency will provide access to inspect the record electronically. 65 P.S. § 67.704(b)(1). The Requester argues that this is only in relation to records that are available on that specific agency’s own website and that direction to the UJS portal is misdirected. However, Section 704 contains no limitation as to the “publicly accessible electronic means”.

In this instance, there is no evidence that the Requester could not access the UJS portal and obtain the public records. Because directing a requester to a website satisfies an agency’s obligations under Section 704 of the RTKL, the Department’s response is permissible under Section 704 of the RTKL. 65 P.S. 67.704(b)(1); *see Bender v. Allegheny County*, OOR Dkt. 2023-0618, 2023 PA O.O.R.D. LEXIS 914; *see also Garland v. Pa. Public Utility Comm’n*, OOR Dkt. AP 2023-0463, 2023 PA O.O.R.D. LEXIS 601; *see also Garland v. Pa. Dep’t of State*, OOR Dkt. AP 2023-0323, 2023 PA O.O.R.D. 408.

Item 2 of the Request also seeks a booking photograph, i.e. mugshot, of John Chapman. Lt. Dixon attests that the Department is not in possession, custody or control of a “booking photograph” for John Chapman, thus meeting the Department’s burden of proof. *Hodges*, 29 A.3d at 1192.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the appeal is **denied in part** and **transferred in part** to the Appeals Officer for the Allegheny District Attorney’s Office. This Final Determination is binding on all parties. Within thirty days of the mailing date of this Final Determination, any party may appeal or petition for review to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. 65 P.S. § 67.1302(a). All parties must be served with notice of the appeal. The OOR also shall be served

notice and have an opportunity to respond according to court rules as per 65 P.S. § 67.1303, but as the quasi-judicial tribunal adjudicating this matter, the OOR is not a proper party to any appeal and should not be named as a party.² All documents or communications following the issuance of this Final Determination shall be sent to oor-postfd@pa.gov. This Final Determination shall be placed on the website at: <http://openrecords.pa.gov>.

FINAL DETERMINATION ISSUED AND MAILED: September 22, 2026

/s/ Meryl M. Peterman

MERYL M. PETERMAN, ESQ.
APPEALS OFFICER

Sent via OOR E-file appeal portal to:

J. Chadwick Schnee, Esq.
Margaret M. Cooney, Esq.
Lt. Joelle Dixon

Sent via email to:

Appeals Officer for the Allegheny County DA's
Office

² *Padgett v. Pa. State Police*, 73 A.3d 644, 648 n.5 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2013).