



STATE OF INDIANA

MIKE BRAUN, Governor

**PUBLIC ACCESS COUNSELOR
JENNIFER RUBY**

Indiana Government Center South
402 West Washington Street, Room W470
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2745
Telephone: (317) 234-0906
Email: pac@opac.in.gov
Website: www.IN.gov/pac

August 6, 2026

Re: Complaint 25-FC-335
Jody Slabaugh (Complainant) v.
City of LaPorte (Respondent)

This advisory opinion is issued in response to the above-referenced complaint filed October 31, 2025.

A Notice of Complaint, along with a copy of the complaint, was sent to the Respondent on October 31, 2025, requesting a formal response by December 3, 2025. A formal response, submitted by Attorney Nicholas Otis of Newby Lewis Kaminski & Jones LLP on behalf of Respondent, was received by this office on December 3, 2025.

The complaint alleges that Respondent violated the Access to Public Records Act (APRA) by failing to provide copies of the requested records in the format requested.

ANALYSIS

The public policy of APRA states that “[p]roviding persons with information is an essential function of a representative government and an integral part of the routine duties of public officials and employees, whose duty it is to provide the information.” Indiana Code (IC) 5-14-3-1. Respondent is a public agency for purposes of APRA; and therefore, subject to the requirements. IC 5-14-3-2(q). As a result, unless an exception applies, any person has the right to inspect and copy Respondent’s public records during regular business hours. IC 5-14-3-3(a).

Complainant filed a records request under APRA on October 21, 2025, as follows:

This is a public records request made pursuant to the Indiana Access to Public Records Act (IC 5-14-3).

I am requesting electronic copies (PDF is acceptable) of the complete adopted Budget Form 1 for the City of LaPorte for the following 7 fiscal years:

2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025.

This request includes the full line-item detail for all departments, not just salaries. Specifically, these records must include all “Services & Charges” categories (professional services, communication/transportation, printing/advertising, repairs & maintenance, IT/MSP costs, and other services/charges) for the Mayor’s Office and Common Council.

I do not require printed copies — **electronic delivery by email or file link satisfies this request.**

Please acknowledge receipt of this request and produce the records within the statutory timeline.

On October 22, 2025, Respondent acknowledged the request and referred Complainant to the Gateway website for the information. Complainant objected and alleged that the City had failed to comply with APRA because the records were not produced in the format requested by the Complainant.

APRA provides that:

A public agency may provide enhanced access to public records through the computer gateway administered by the office of technology established by IC 4-13.1-2-1.

IC 5-14-3-3.6(f).

Respondent states that it provided the records requested, is not required to provide the records electronically, and therefore complied with APRA. Respondent cited *Opinions of the Public Access Counselor 16-FC-311 and 13-FC-195* in support of that position.

A media representative requested information regarding various hospitals under the pervue of the umbrella hospital (Hospital). The Hospital referred the requestor to a website for FSSA in order to access the information.

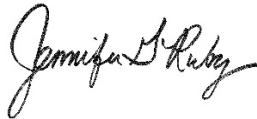
Alternatively, it could just answer the question, or point to source with the information, which it appears the Hospital did – the FSSA contractor website. So long as the source has that information readily available, the Hospital has fulfilled its request.

Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 20-FC-38.

We agree that the referral to the Gateway database was fulfillment of Complainant's APRA request and not a denial.

CONCLUSION

This office finds that the Respondent did not violate APRA as alleged in the complaint.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer G. Ruby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer G. Ruby
Public Access Counselor