

# OUR VIEW: Fee increase for public records a bad idea

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There's not an organization around that isn't trying to find ways to make and save money.

Many agencies have come up with creative ways to save a dime, or a buck, but sometimes those efforts go too far.

The city of Moscow wants to increase fees for public records requests that exceed 100 pages or two hours of work. They say the person requesting records that exceed those parameters will be charged the hourly pay rate of the employee fulfilling the request, in addition to a 10-cents-per-page copy fee.

This is an idea that has gone too far.

There is nothing good about this plan. It may sound like an innocent way to track protect taxpayer dollars, but it represents a significant erosion of the public's right to keep track on the business done on the public's behalf.

The public is allowed to copy and review records. Meeting those requests can take time and, in the era of e-mail communications, those requests can result in thousands of pages of documentation.

This work can be tedious, and it can be a pain for the person assigned to follow up on the request. A pain, but it's their job.

The City Council should be concerned about serving the residents of Moscow. It should be making it easier to get information, not harder, and the council certainly shouldn't be party to a punitive measure mislabeled as a way to protect taxpayers.

The proposal before the council would make it more difficult and expensive for members of the public to access records they have every right to see. Given the limited number of instances cited to justify this proposed increase in cost, there is no legitimate reason for the council to approve these increases.

It's a slippery slope when someone in City Hall is given the bureaucratic tools to label a specific request to public information as somehow "excessive."

Our rights are sacred. We can't take them for granted and people shouldn't be so cavalier as to toss them around to save a buck.