

# **Hopefully the county will consider changing this process. Until then they stay in the DOG HOUSE for this one!**

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**July 11, 2008** I made an OPRA Request for 2007 and 2008 Salem County Check Registers and Hand Check Registers. The County responded to the request with a report titled super condensed check register. In plain speak, the Check registers I received did not show what the checks were written for! The county simply did not give all the information in the public record I requested.

I reported my concerns to the County Treasurer and asked for the FULL check registers. I added that I would like to have the Check Registers in Excel format. This makes the data actually usable for public review.

After meeting with the Salem County Treasurer to discuss my concerns, the Treasurer informed me that in consultation with Salem County Counsel E. Elaine Voyles, it was determined that for a sizable fee the County will redact anything confidential from the check records and comply with my OPRA request. However, the data would not be available in an Excel format because they need to react it. As the Treasurer explained the process, the county will need to first print the 19 months of check registers I requested and then have a staff member review the HUNDREDS of pages to black out line by line what is confidential. Only then can the pages be reviewed by the Treasurer, scanned and emailed to Salem County Watchdog as a PDF document. (Note: A PDF document is basically a picture of each page)

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**Any professional programmer will tell you how easy it is to add a field which designates a record as either public or private. But apparently government is incapable of such an advanced programming technique. Government mixes non-public records with public records then uses the excuse that they CAN'T give us the public records without charging an arm and leg to separate them.**

**The county should also send the records in Excel! The money & time the county will waste printing 19 months of pages, 100's of pages, for this check register flies in the face of reason. The county already stated they are able to send the check registers in Excel. Why not simply leave the information in Excel and just type an XXXXXXXX in the line of confidential information as they ALREADY do for confidential information in Closed Session Minutes? The hundreds of pages would never have to be printed, because we requested the document be emailed. WHY waste the taxpayer time and money?**

## **Sending the data in a PDF instead of an Excel format renders the data unusable to the public.**

Click on the link below to see the letter from County of Salem outlining the fees for the redacting of 19 months of the check register. The county is charging over \$200 to see the check register, a public document.

[LETTER](#)