CHAPTER 19

GENERAL DUTIES OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

SUBCHAPTER I

OFFICIAL OATHS AND BONDS

19.01 Oaths and bonds. (1) FORM OF OATH. Every official oath required by article IV, section 28, of the constitution or by any statute shall be in writing, subscribed and sworn to and except as provided otherwise by s. 757.02 and SCR 40.15, shall be in substantially the following form:

STATE OF WISCONSIN,

County of ....

I, the undersigned, who have been elected (or appointed) to the office of ...., but have not yet entered upon the duties thereof, swear (or affirm) that I will support the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the state of Wisconsin, and will faithfully discharge the duties of said office to the best of my ability. So help me God.

....,

Subscribed and sworn to before me this .... day of ...., ... (year)

....(Signature).....,

(1m) FORM OF ORAL OATH. If it is desired to administer the official oath orally in addition to the written oath prescribed above, it shall be in substantially the following form:

I, ..., swear (or affirm) that I will support the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the state of Wisconsin, and will faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of the office of .... to the best of my ability. So help me God.

(2) FORM OF BOND. (a) Every official bond required of any public officer shall be in substantially the following form:

We, the undersigned, jointly and severally, undertake and agree that ...., who has been elected (or appointed) to the office of ...., will faithfully discharge the duties of the office according to law, and will pay to the parties entitled to receive the same, such damages, not exceeding in the aggregate .... dollars, as may be suffered by them in consequence of the failure of .... to discharge the duties of the office.

Dated ...., ... (year)

....(Principal).....,

....(Surety).....,

(b) Any further or additional official bond lawfully required of any public officer shall be in the same form and it shall not affect or impair any official bond previously given by the officer for the same or any other official term. Where such bond is in excess of the sum of $25,000, the officer may give 2 or more bonds.

(2m) EFFECT OF GIVING BOND. Any bond purportedly given as an official bond by a public officer, of whom an official bond is required, shall be deemed to be an official bond and shall be deemed as to both principal and surety to contain all the conditions and provisions required in sub. (2), regardless of its form or wording, and any provisions restricting liability to less than that provided in sub. (2) shall be void.

(3) OFFICIAL DUTIES DEFINED. The official duties referred to in subs. (1) and (2) include performance to the best of his or her ability by the officer taking the oath or giving the bond of every official act required, and the nonperformance of every act forbidden,

by law to be performed by the officer; also, similar performance and nonperformance of every act required of or forbidden to the officer in any other office which he or she may lawfully hold or exercise by virtue of incumbency of the office named in the official oath or bond. The duties mentioned in any such oath or bond include the faithful performance by all persons appointed or employed by the officer either in his or her principal or subsidiary office, of their respective duties and trusts therein.

(4) WHERE FILED. (a) Official oaths and bonds of the following public officials shall be filed in the office of the secretary of state:

1. All members and officers of the legislature.
2. The governor.
3. The lieutenant governor.
4. The state superintendent.
5. The justices, reporter and clerk of the supreme court.
6. The judges of the court of appeals.
7. The judges and reporters of the circuit courts.
8. All notaries public.
9. Every officer, except the secretary of state, state treasurer, district attorney and attorney general, whose compensation is paid in whole or in part out of the state treasury, including every member or appointee of a board or commission whose compensation is so paid.
10. Every deputy or assistant of an officer who files with the secretary of state.

(b) Official oaths and bonds of the following public officials shall be filed in the office of the governor:

1. The secretary of state.
2. The state treasurer.
3. The attorney general.

(bn) Official oaths and bonds of all district attorneys shall be filed with the secretary of administration.

(c) Official oaths and bonds of the following public officials shall be filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit court for any county in which the official serves:

1. All circuit and supplemental court commissioners.
3. All municipal judges.
4. All judges or judicial officers, not included in subds. 1. and 3., elected or appointed for that county, or whose jurisdiction is limited to that county.

(d) Official oaths and bonds of all elected or appointed county officers, other than those enumerated in par. (c), and of all officers whose compensation is paid out of the county treasury shall be filed in the office of the county clerk of any county in which the officer serves.

(dm) Official oaths and bonds of members of the governing board, and the superintendent and other officers of any joint county school, county hospital, county sanatorium, county asylum or other joint county institution shall be filed in the office of the county clerk of the county in which the buildings of the institution that the official serves are located.

(e) Official oaths and bonds of all elected or appointed town officers shall be filed in the office of the town clerk for the town in which the officer serves, except that oaths and bonds of town clerks shall be filed in the office of the town treasurer.

(f) Official oaths and bonds of all elected or appointed city officers shall be filed in the office of the city clerk for the city in which the officer serves, except that oaths and bonds of city clerks shall be filed in the office of the city treasurer.

(g) Official oaths and bonds of all elected or appointed village officers shall be filed in the office of the village clerk for the village in which the officer serves, except that oaths and bonds of village clerks shall be filed in the office of the village treasurer.

(h) The official oath and bond of any officer of a school district or of an incorporated school board shall be filed with the clerk of the school district or the clerk of the incorporated school board for or on which the official serves.

(j) Official oaths and bonds of the members of a technical college district shall be filed with the secretary for the technical college district for which the member serves.

(4m) APPROVAL AND NOTICE. Bonds specified in sub. (4) (c), (d) and (dm) and bonds of any county employee required by statute or county ordinance to be bonded shall be approved by the district attorney as to amount, form and execution before the bonds are accepted for filing. The clerk of the circuit court and the county clerk respectively shall notify in writing the county board or chairperson within 5 days after the entry upon the term of office of a judicial or county officer specified in sub. (4) (c), (d) and (dm) or after a county employee required to be bonded has begun employment. The notice shall state whether or not the required bond has been furnished and shall be published with the proceedings of the county board.

(5) TIME OF FILING. Every public officer required to file an official oath or an official bond shall file the same before entering upon the duties of the office; and when both are required, both shall be filed at the same time.

(6) CONTINUANCE OF OBLIGATION. Every such bond continues in force and is applicable to official conduct during the incumbency of the officer filing the same and until the officer's successor is duly qualified and installed.

(7) INTERPRETATION. This section shall not be construed as requiring any particular officer to furnish or file either an official oath or an official bond. It is applicable to such officers only as are elsewhere in these statutes or by the constitution or by special, private or local law required to furnish such an oath or bond. Provided, however, that whether otherwise required by law or not, an oath of office shall be filed by every member of any board or commission appointed by the governor, and by every administrative officer so appointed, also by every secretary and other chief executive officer appointed by such board or commission.

(8) PREMIUM ON BOND ALLOWED AS EXPENSE. The state and any county, town, village, city or school district may pay the cost of any official bond furnished by an officer or employee thereof pursuant to law or any rules or regulations requiring the same if said officer or employee shall furnish a bond with a licensed surety company as surety, said cost not to exceed the current rate of premium per year. The cost of any such bond to the state shall be charged to the proper expense appropriation.

History: 1971 c. 154; 1977 c. 29 s. 1649; 1977 c. 187 ss. 26, 135; 1977 c. 305 s. 64; 1977 c. 449; Sup. Ct. Order, eff. 1–1–80; 1979 c. 110 s. 60 (13); 1983 a. 6, 192; 1983 a. 538 s. 271; 1989 a. 31; 1991 a. 39, 316; 1993 a. 399; 1997 a. 250; 1999 a. 32, 83; 2001 a. 61; 2007 a. 96.

19.015 Actions by the state, municipality or district. Whenever the state or any county, town, city, village, school district or technical college district is entitled to recover any damages, money, penalty or forfeiture on any official bond, the attorney general, county chairperson, town chairperson, mayor, village president, school board president or technical college district board chairperson, respectively, shall prosecute or cause to be prosecuted all necessary actions in the name of the state, or the municipality, against the officer giving the bond and the sureties for the recovery of the damages, money, penalty or forfeiture.

History: 1971 c. 154; 1983 a. 192; 1989 a. 56; 1993 a. 399.

19.02 Actions by individuals. Any person injured by the act, neglect or default of any officer, except the state officers, the officer's deputies or other persons which constitutes a breach of the condition of the official bond of the officer, may maintain an action in that person's name against the officer and the officer's sureties upon such bond for the recovery of any damages the person may have sustained by reason thereof, without leave and without any assignment of any such bond.

History: 1991 a. 316.

19.03 Security for costs; notice of action. (1) Every person commencing an action against any officer and sureties upon

an official bond, except the obligee named therein, shall give security for costs by an undertaking as prescribed in s. 814.28 (3), and a copy thereof shall be served upon the defendants at the time of the service of the summons. In all such actions if final judgment is rendered against the plaintiff the same may be entered against the plaintiff and the sureties to such undertaking for all the lawful costs and disbursements of the defendants in such action, by whatever court awarded.

(2) The plaintiff in any such action shall, within 10 days after the service of the summons therein, deliver a notice of the commencement of such action to the officer who has the legal custody of such official bond, who shall file the same in his or her office in connection with such bond.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 Wis. 2d 585, 773 (1975); 1975 c. 218; 1991 a. 316.

19.04 Other actions on same bond. No action brought upon an official bond shall be barred or dismissed by reason merely that any former action shall have been prosecuted on such bond, but any payment of damages made or collected from the sureties or any of them on any judgment in an action previously begun by any party on such bond shall be applied as a total or partial discharge of the penal sum of such bond, and such defense or partial defense may be pleaded by answer or supplemental answer as may be proper. The verdict and judgment in every such action shall be for no more than the actual damages sustained or damages, penalty or forfeiture awarded, besides costs. The court may, when it shall be necessary for the protection of such sureties, stay execution on any judgment rendered in such actions until the final determination of any actions so previously commenced and until the final determination of any other action commenced before judgment entered in any such action.

19.05 Execution; lien of judgment. (1) Whenever a judgment is rendered against any officer and the officer's sureties on the officer's official bond in any court other than the circuit court of the county in which the officer's official bond is filed, no execution for the collection of the judgment shall issue from the other court unless the plaintiff, the plaintiff's agent or the plaintiff's attorney shall make and file with the court an affidavit showing each of the following:

(a) That no other judgment has been rendered in any court in an action upon the officer's bond against the sureties of the bond that remains in whole or in part unpaid.

(b) That no other action upon the officer's bond against the sureties was pending and undetermined in any other court at the time of the entry of the judgment.

(2) A transcript of a judgment described in sub. (1) may be entered in the judgment and lien docket in other counties, shall constitute a lien, and may be enforced, in all respects the same as if it were an ordinary judgment, for the recovery of money, except as provided otherwise in sub. (1).

History: 1991 a. 316; 1995 a. 224.

19.06 Sureties, how relieved. Whenever several judgments shall be recovered against the sureties on any official bond in actions which shall have been commenced before the date of the entry of the last of such judgments the aggregate of which, exclusive of costs, shall exceed the sum for which such sureties remain liable at the time of the commencement of such actions, they may discharge themselves from all further liability upon such judgments by paying into court the sum for which they are then liable, together with the costs recovered on such judgments; or the court may, upon motion supported by affidavit, order that no execution for more than a proportional share of such judgments shall be issued thereon against the property of such sureties or either of them and that upon payment or collection of such proportional share they shall be discharged from the judgment or judgments upon which such proportional share shall be paid or collected. When the money is paid into court by the sureties as above specified the same, exclusive of the costs so paid in, shall be distributed by an order of the court to the several plaintiffs in such judgments in proportion to the amount of their respective judgments. But every judgment shall have precedence of payment over all judgments in other actions commenced after the date of the recovery of such judgment.

History: 1979 c. 110 s. 60 (11).

19.07 Bonds of public officers and employees. (1) CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES; BLANKET BONDS. (a) The surety bond of any civil service employee of a city, village, town or county may be canceled in the manner provided by sub. (3).

(b) Any number of officers, department heads or employees may be combined in a schedule or blanket bond, where such bond is to be filed in the same place, and in the event such bond is executed by a corporate surety company, payment of the premium therefor is to be made from the same fund or appropriation prescribed in s. 19.01.

(2) CONTINUATION OF OBLIGATION. Unless canceled pursuant to this section, every such bond shall continue in full force and effect.

(3) CANCELLATION OF BOND. (a) Any city, village, town or county by their respective governing body may cancel such bond or bonds of any one employee or any number of employees by giving written notice to the surety by registered mail, such cancellation to be effective 15 days after receipt of such notice.

(b) When a surety, either personal or corporate, on such bond, shall desire to be released from such bond, the surety may give notice in writing that the surety desires to be released by giving written notice by registered mail, to the clerk of the respective city, village, town or county, and such cancellation shall be permitted if approved by the governing body thereof, such cancellation to be effective 15 days after receipt of such notice. This section shall not be construed to operate as a release of the sureties for liabilities incurred previous to the expiration of the 15 days' notice.

(c) Whenever a surety bond is canceled in the manner provided by this section, a proportional refund shall be made of the premium paid thereon.

History: 1979 c. 110 s. 60 (11); 1991 a. 316; 1993 a. 246.

19.10 Oaths. Each of the officers enumerated in s. 8.25 (4) (a) or (5) shall take and subscribe the oath of office prescribed by article IV, section 28, of the constitution, as follows: The governor and lieutenant governor, before entering upon the duties of office; the secretary of state, treasurer, attorney general, state superintendent and each district attorney, within 20 days after receiving notice of election and before entering upon the duties of office.

History: 1983 a. 192; 1989 a. 31; 1991 a. 39.

19.11 Official bonds. (1) The secretary of state, treasurer and attorney general shall each furnish a bond to the state, at the time each takes and subscribes the oath of office required of that officer, conditioned for the faithful discharge of the duties of the office, and the officer's duties as a member of the board of commissioners of public lands, and in the investment of the funds arising therefrom. The bond of each of said officers shall be further conditioned for the faithful performance by all persons appointed or employed by the officer in his or her office of their duties and trusts therein, and for the delivery over to the officer's successor in office, or to any person authorized by law to receive the same, of all moneys, books, records, deeds, bonds, securities and other property and effects of whatsoever nature belonging to the officer's offices.

(2) Each of said bonds shall be subject to the approval of the governor and shall be guaranteed by resident freeholders of this state, or by a surety company as provided in s. 632.17 (2). The amount of each such bond, and the number of sureties thereon if guaranteed by resident freeholders, shall be as follows: secretary of state, $25,000, with sufficient sureties; treasurer, $100,000, with not less than 6 sureties; and the attorney general, $10,000, with not less than 3 sureties.

(3) The attorney general shall renew the bond required under this section in a larger amount and with additional security, and the

treasurer shall give an additional bond, when required by the governor.

(4) The governor shall require the treasurer to give additional bond, within such time, in such reasonable amount not exceeding the funds in the treasury, and with such security as the governor shall direct and approve, whenever the funds in the treasury exceed the amount of the treasurer's bond; or whenever the governor deems the treasurer's bond insufficient by reason of the insolvency, death or removal from the state of any of the sureties, or from any other cause.

History: 1975 c. 375 s. 44; 1991 a. 316.

19.12 Bond premiums payable from public funds. Any public officer required by law to give a suretyship obligation may pay the lawful premium for the execution of the obligation out of any moneys available for the payment of expenses of the office or department, unless payment is otherwise provided for or is prohibited by law.

History: 1977 c. 339.

SUBCHAPTER II

PUBLIC RECORDS AND PROPERTY

19.21 Custody and delivery of official property and records. (1) Each and every officer of the state, or of any county, town, city, village, school district, or other municipality or district, is the legal custodian of and shall safely keep and preserve all property and things received from the officer's predecessor or other persons and required by law to be filed, deposited, or kept in the officer's office, or which are in the lawful possession or control of the officer or the officer's deputies, or to the possession or control of which the officer or the officer's deputies may be lawfully entitled, as such officers.

(2) Upon the expiration of each such officer's term of office, or whenever the office becomes vacant, the officer, or on the officer's death the officer's legal representative, shall on demand deliver to the officer's successor all such property and things then in the officer's custody, and the officer's successor shall receipt therefor to said officer, who shall file said receipt, as the case may be, in the office of the secretary of state, county clerk, town clerk, city clerk, village clerk, school district clerk, or clerk or other secretarial officer of the municipality or district, respectively; but if a vacancy occurs before such successor is qualified, such property and things shall be delivered to and be receipted for by such secretary or clerk, respectively, on behalf of the successor, to be delivered to such successor upon the latter's receipt.

(3) Any person who violates this section shall, in addition to any other liability or penalty, civil or criminal, forfeit not less than $25 nor more than $2,000; such forfeiture to be enforced by a civil action on behalf of, and the proceeds to be paid into the treasury of the state, municipality, or district, as the case may be.

(4) (a) Any city council, village board or town board may provide by ordinance for the destruction of obsolete public records. Prior to the destruction at least 60 days' notice in writing of such destruction shall be given the historical society which shall preserve any such records it determines to be of historical interest. The historical society may, upon application, waive such notice. No assessment roll containing forest crop acreage may be destroyed without prior approval of the secretary of revenue. This paragraph does not apply to school records of a 1st class city school district.

(b) The period of time any town, city or village public record is kept before destruction shall be as prescribed by ordinance unless a specific period of time is provided by statute. The period prescribed in the ordinance may not be less than 2 years with respect to water stubs, receipts of current billings and customer's ledgers of any municipal utility, and 7 years for other records unless a shorter period has been fixed by the public records board under s. 16.61 (3) (e) and except as provided under sub. (7). This paragraph does not apply to school records of a 1st class city school district.

(c) Any local governmental unit or agency may provide for the keeping and preservation of public records kept by that governmental unit through the use of microfilm or another reproductive device, optical imaging or electronic formatting. A local governmental unit or agency shall make such provision by ordinance or resolution. Any such action by a subunit of a local governmental unit or agency shall be in conformity with the action of the unit or agency of which it is a part. Any photographic reproduction of a record authorized to be reproduced under this paragraph is deemed an original record for all purposes if it meets the applicable standards established in ss. 16.61 (7) and 16.612. This paragraph does not apply to public records kept by counties electing to be governed by ch. 228.

(cm) Paragraph (c) does not apply to court records kept by a clerk of circuit court and subject to SCR chapter 72.

(5) (a) Any county having a population of 500,000 or more may provide by ordinance for the destruction of obsolete public records, except for court records subject to SCR chapter 72.

(b) Any county having a population of less than 500,000 may provide by ordinance for the destruction of obsolete public records, subject to s. 59.52 (4) (b) and (c), except for court records governed by SCR chapter 72.

(c) The period of time any public record shall be kept before destruction shall be determined by ordinance except that in all counties the specific period of time expressed within s. 7.23 or 59.52 (4) (a) or any other law requiring a specific retention period shall apply. The period of time prescribed in the ordinance for the destruction of all records not governed by s. 7.23 or 59.52 (4) (a) or any other law prescribing a specific retention period may not be less than 7 years, unless a shorter period is fixed by the public records board under s. 16.61 (3) (e).

(d) 1. Except as provided in subd. 2., prior to any destruction of records under this subsection, except those specified within s. 59.52 (4) (a), at least 60 days' notice of such destruction shall be given in writing, to the historical society, which may preserve any records it determines to be of historical interest. Notice is not required for any records for which destruction has previously been approved by the historical society or in which the society has indicated that it has no interest for historical purposes. Records which have a confidential character while in the possession of the original custodian shall retain such confidential character after transfer to the historical society unless the director of the historical society, with the concurrence of the original custodian, determines that such records shall be made accessible to the public under such proper and reasonable rules as the historical society promulgates.

2. Subdivision 1. does not apply to patient health care records, as defined in s. 146.81 (4), that are in the custody or control of a local health department, as defined in s. 250.01 (4).

(e) The county board of any county may provide, by ordinance, a program for the keeping, preservation, retention and disposition of public records including the establishment of a committee on public records and may institute a records management service for the county and may appropriate funds to accomplish such purposes.

(f) District attorney records are state records and are subject to s. 978.07.

(6) A school district may provide for the destruction of obsolete school records. Prior to any such destruction, at least 60 days' notice in writing of such destruction shall be given to the historical society, which shall preserve any records it determines to be of historical interest. The historical society may, upon application, waive the notice. The period of time a school district record shall be kept before destruction shall be not less than 7 years, unless a shorter period is fixed by the public records board under s. 16.61

(3) (e) and except as provided under sub. (7). This section does not apply to pupil records under s. 118.125.

(7) Notwithstanding any minimum period of time for retention set under s. 16.61 (3) (e), any taped recording of a meeting, as defined in s. 19.82 (2), by any governmental body, as defined under s. 19.82 (1), of a city, village, town or school district may be destroyed no sooner than 90 days after the minutes have been approved and published if the purpose of the recording was to make minutes of the meeting.

(8) Any metropolitan sewerage commission created under ss. 200.21 to 200.65 may provide for the destruction of obsolete commission records. No record of the metropolitan sewerage district may be destroyed except by action of the commission specifically authorizing the destruction of that record. Prior to any destruction of records under this subsection, the commission shall give at least 60 days' prior notice of the proposed destruction to the state historical society, which may preserve records it determines to be of historical interest. Upon the application of the commission, the state historical society may waive this notice. Except as provided under sub. (7), the commission may only destroy a record under this subsection after 7 years elapse from the date of the record's creation, unless a shorter period is fixed by the public records board under s. 16.61 (3) (e).

History: 1971 c. 215; 1975 c. 41 s. 52; 1977 c. 202; 1979 c. 35, 221; 1981 c. 191, 282, 335; 1981 c. 350 s. 13; 1981 c. 391; 1983 a. 532; 1985 a. 180 ss. 22, 30m; 1985 a. 225; 1985 a. 332 s. 251 (1); Sup. Ct. Order, 136 Wis. 2d xi (1987); 1987 a. 147 ss. 20, 25; 1989 a. 248; 1991 a. 39, 185, 316; 1993 a. 27, 60, 172; 1995 a. 27, 201; 1999 a. 150 s. 672.

Sub. (1) provides that a police chief, as an officer of a municipality, is the legal custodian of all records of that officer's department. Town of LaGrange v. Auchinleck, 216 Wis. 2d 84, 573 N.W.2d 232 (Ct. App. 1997), 96–3313.

This section relates to records retention and is not a part of the public records law. An agency's alleged failure to keep sought–after records may not be attacked under the public records law. Gehl v. Connors, 2007 WI App 238, 306 Wis. 2d 247, 742 N.W.2d 530, 06–2455.

Under sub. (1), district attorneys must indefinitely preserve papers of a documentary nature evidencing activities of prosecutor's office. 68 Atty. Gen. 17.

A county with a population under 500,000 may by ordinance under s. 19.21 (6), [now s. 19.21 (5)] provide for the destruction of obsolete case records maintained by the county social services agency under s. 48.59 (1). 70 Atty. Gen. 196.

A VTAE (technical college) district is a "school district" under s. 19.21 (7) [now s. 19.21 (6)]. 71 Atty. Gen. 9.

19.22 Proceedings to compel the delivery of official property. (1) If any public officer refuses or neglects to deliver to his or her successor any official property or things as required in s. 19.21, or if the property or things shall come to the hands of any other person who refuses or neglects, on demand, to deliver them to the successor in the office, the successor may make complaint to any circuit judge for the county where the person refusing or neglecting resides. If the judge is satisfied by the oath of the complainant and other testimony as may be offered that the property or things are withheld, the judge shall grant an order directing the person so refusing to show cause, within some short and reasonable time, why the person should not be compelled to deliver the property or things.

(2) At the time appointed, or at any other time to which the matter may be adjourned, upon due proof of service of the order issued under sub. (1), if the person complained against makes affidavit before the judge that the person has delivered to the person's successor all of the official property and things in the person's custody or possession pertaining to the office, within the person's knowledge, the person complained against shall be discharged and all further proceedings in the matter before the judge shall cease.

(3) If the person complained against does not make such affidavit the matter shall proceed as follows:

(a) The judge shall inquire further into the matters set forth in the complaint, and if it appears that any such property or things are withheld by the person complained against the judge shall by warrant commit the person complained against to the county jail, there to remain until the delivery of such property and things to the complainant or until the person complained against be otherwise discharged according to law.

(b) If required by the complainant the judge shall also issue a warrant, directed to the sheriff or any constable of the county, commanding the sheriff or constable in the daytime to search such places as shall be designated in such warrant for such official property and things as were in the custody of the officer whose term of office expired or whose office became vacant, or of which the officer was the legal custodian, and seize and bring them before the judge issuing such warrant.

(c) When any such property or things are brought before the judge by virtue of such warrant, the judge shall inquire whether the same pertain to such office, and if it thereupon appears that the property or things pertain thereto the judge shall order the delivery of the property or things to the complainant.

History: 1977 c. 449; 1991 a. 316; 1993 a. 213.

19.23 Transfer of records or materials to historical society. (1) Any public records, in any state office, that are not required for current use may, in the discretion of the public records board, be transferred into the custody of the historical society, as provided in s. 16.61.

(2) The proper officer of any county, city, village, town, school district or other local governmental unit, may under s. 44.09 (1) offer title and transfer custody to the historical society of any records deemed by the society to be of permanent historical importance.

(3) The proper officer of any court may, on order of the judge of that court, transfer to the historical society title to such court records as have been photographed or microphotographed or which have been on file for at least 75 years, and which are deemed by the society to be of permanent historical value.

(4) Any other articles or materials which are of historic value and are not required for current use may, in the discretion of the department or agency where such articles or materials are located, be transferred into the custody of the historical society as trustee for the state, and shall thereupon become part of the permanent collections of said society.

History: 1975 c. 41 s. 52; 1981 c. 350 s. 13; 1985 a. 180 s. 30m; 1987 a. 147 s. 25; 1991 a. 226; 1995 a. 27.

19.24 Refusal to deliver money, etc., to successor. Any public officer whatever, in this state, who shall, at the expiration of the officer's term of office, refuse or willfully neglect to deliver, on demand, to the officer's successor in office, after such successor shall have been duly qualified and be entitled to said office according to law, all moneys, records, books, papers or other property belonging to the office and in the officer's hands or under the officer's control by virtue thereof, shall be imprisoned not more than 6 months or fined not more than $100.

History: 1991 a. 316.

19.25 State officers may require searches, etc., without fees. The secretary of state, treasurer and attorney general, respectively, are authorized to require searches in the respective offices of each other and in the offices of the clerk of the supreme court, of the court of appeals, of the circuit courts, of the registers of deeds for any papers, records or documents necessary to the discharge of the duties of their respective offices, and to require copies thereof and extracts therefrom without the payment of any fee or charge whatever.

History: 1977 c. 187, 449.

19.31 Declaration of policy. In recognition of the fact that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate, it is declared to be the public policy of this state that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those officers and employees who represent them. Further, providing persons with such information is declared to be an essential function of a representative government and an integral part of the routine duties of officers and employees whose responsibility it is to provide such information. To that end, ss. 19.32 to 19.37 shall be construed in every instance with a presumption of complete public access, con-

sistent with the conduct of governmental business. The denial of public access generally is contrary to the public interest, and only in an exceptional case may access be denied.

History: 1981 c. 335, 391.

An agency cannot promulgate an administrative rule that creates an exception to the open records law. Chavala v. Bubolz, 204 Wis. 2d 82, 552 N.W.2d 892 (Ct. App. 1996), 95–3120.

Although the requester referred to the federal freedom information act, a letter that clearly described open records and had all the earmarkings of an open records request was in fact an open records request and triggered, at minimum, a duty to respond. ECO, Inc. v. City of Elkhorn, 2002 WI App 302, 259 Wis. 2d 276, 655 N.W.2d 510, 02–0216.

The public records law addresses the duty to disclose records; it does not address the duty to retain records. An agency's alleged failure to keep sought–after records may not be attacked under the public records law. Section 19.21 relates to records retention and is not a part of the public records law. Gehl v. Connors, 2007 WI App 238, 306 Wis. 2d 247, 742 N.W.2d 530, 06–2455.

The Wisconsin public records law. 67 MLR 65 (1983).

Municipal responsibility under the Wisconsin revised public records law. Maloney. WBB Jan. 1983.

The public records law and the Wisconsin department of revenue. Boykoff. WBB Dec. 1983.

The Wis. open records act: an update on issues. Trubek and Foley. WBB Aug. 1986.

Toward a More Open and Accountable Government: A Call For Optimal Disclosure Under the Wisconsin Open Records Law. Roang. 1994 WLR 719.

Wisconsin's Public–Records Law: Preserving the Presumption of Complete Public Access in the Age of Electronic Records. Holcomb & Isaac. 2008 WLR 515.

19.32 Definitions. As used in ss. 19.33 to 19.39:

(1) "Authority" means any of the following having custody of a record: a state or local office, elected official, agency, board, commission, committee, council, department or public body corporate and politic created by constitution, law, ordinance, rule or order; a governmental or quasi–governmental corporation except for the Bradley center sports and entertainment corporation; a local exposition district under subch. II of ch. 229; a long–term care district under s. 46.2895; any court of law; the assembly or senate; a nonprofit corporation which receives more than 50% of its funds from a county or a municipality, as defined in s. 59.001 (3), and which provides services related to public health or safety to the county or municipality; or a formally constituted subunit of any of the foregoing.

(1b) "Committed person" means a person who is committed under ch. 51, 971, 975 or 980 and who is placed in an inpatient treatment facility, during the period that the person's placement in the inpatient treatment facility continues.

(1bg) "Employee" means any individual who is employed by an authority, other than an individual holding local public office or a state public office, or any individual who is employed by an employer other than an authority.

(1c) "Incarcerated person" means a person who is incarcerated in a penal facility or who is placed on probation and given confinement under s. 973.09 (4) as a condition of placement, during the period of confinement for which the person has been sentenced.

(1d) "Inpatient treatment facility" means any of the following:

(a) A mental health institute, as defined in s. 51.01 (12).

(c) A facility or unit for the institutional care of sexually violent persons specified under s. 980.065.

(d) The Milwaukee County mental health complex established under s. 51.08.

(1de) "Local governmental unit" has the meaning given in s. 19.42 (7u).

(1dm) "Local public office" has the meaning given in s. 19.42 (7w), and also includes any appointive office or position of a local governmental unit in which an individual serves as the head of a department, agency, or division of the local governmental unit, but does not include any office or position filled by a municipal employee, as defined in s. 111.70 (1) (i).

(1e) "Penal facility" means a state prison under s. 302.01, county jail, county house of correction or other state, county or municipal correctional or detention facility.

(1m) "Person authorized by the individual" means the parent, guardian, as defined in s. 48.02 (8), or legal custodian, as defined in s. 48.02 (11), of a child, as defined in s. 48.02 (2), the guardian of an individual adjudicated incompetent in this state, the personal representative or spouse of an individual who is deceased, or any person authorized, in writing, by the individual to exercise the rights granted under this section.

(1r) "Personally identifiable information" has the meaning specified in s. 19.62 (5).

(2) "Record" means any material on which written, drawn, printed, spoken, visual or electromagnetic information is recorded or preserved, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which has been created or is being kept by an authority. "Record" includes, but is not limited to, handwritten, typed or printed pages, maps, charts, photographs, films, recordings, tapes (including computer tapes), computer printouts and optical disks. "Record" does not include drafts, notes, preliminary computations and like materials prepared for the originator's personal use or prepared by the originator in the name of a person for whom the originator is working; materials which are purely the personal property of the custodian and have no relation to his or her office; materials to which access is limited by copyright, patent or bequest; and published materials in the possession of an authority other than a public library which are available for sale, or which are available for inspection at a public library.

(2g) "Record subject" means an individual about whom personally identifiable information is contained in a record.

(3) "Requester" means any person who requests inspection or copies of a record, except a committed or incarcerated person, unless the person requests inspection or copies of a record that contains specific references to that person or his or her minor children for whom he or she has not been denied physical placement under ch. 767, and the record is otherwise accessible to the person by law.

(4) "State public office" has the meaning given in s. 19.42 (13), but does not include a position identified in s. 20.923 (6) (f) to (gm).

History: 1981 c. 335; 1985 a. 26, 29, 332; 1987 a. 305; 1991 a. 39, 1991 a. 269 ss. 26pd, 33b; 1993 a. 215, 263, 491; 1995 a. 158; 1997 a. 79, 94; 1999 a. 9; 2001 a. 16; 2003 a. 47; 2005 a. 387; 2007 a. 20.

NOTE: 2003 Wis. Act 47, which affects this section, contains extensive explanatory notes.

A study commissioned by the corporation counsel and used in various ways was not a "draft" under sub. (2), although it was not in final form. A document prepared other than for the originator's personal use, although in preliminary form or marked "draft," is a record. Fox v. Bock, 149 Wis. 2d 403, 438 N.W.2d 589 (1989).

A settlement agreement containing a pledge of confidentiality and kept in the possession of a school district's attorney was a public record subject to public access. Journal/Sentinel v. Shorewood School Bd. 186 Wis. 2d 443, 521 N.W.2d 165 (Ct. App. 1994).

Individuals confined as sexually violent persons under ch. 980 are not "incarcerated" under sub. (1c). Klein v. Wisconsin Resource Center, 218 Wis. 2d 487, 582 N.W.2d 44 (Ct. App. 1998), 97–0679.

A nonprofit corporation that receives 50% of its funds from a municipality or county is an authority under sub. (1) regardless of the source from which the municipality or county obtained those funds. Cavey v. Walrath, 229 Wis. 2d 105, 598 N.W.2d 240 (Ct. App. 1999), 98–0072.

A person aggrieved by a request made under the open records law has standing to raise a challenge that the requested materials are not records because they fall within the exception for copyrighted material under sub. (2). Under the facts of this case, the language of sub. (2), when viewed in light of the fair use exception to copyright infringement, applied so that the disputed materials were records within the statutory definition. Zellner v. Cedarburg School District, 2007 WI 53, 300 Wis. 2d 290, 731 N.W.2d 240, 06–1143.

"Record" in sub. (2) and s. 19.35 (5) does not include identical copies of otherwise available records. A copy that is not different in some meaningful way from an original, regardless of the form of the original, is an identical copy. If a copy differs in some significant way for purposes of responding to an open records request, then it is not truly an identical copy, but instead a different record. Stone v. Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin, 2007 WI App 223, 305 Wis. 2d 679, 741 N.W.2d 774, 06–2537.

A municipality's independent contractor assessor was not an authority under sub. (1) and was not a proper recipient of an open records request. In this case, only the municipalities themselves were the "authorities" for purposes of the open records law. Accordingly, only the municipalities were proper recipients of the relevant open records requests. WIREdata, Inc. v. Village of Sussex, 2008 WI 69, ___ Wis. 2d ___, ___ N.W.2d ___, 05–1473.

A corporation is a quasi–governmental if, based on the totality of circumstances, it resembles a governmental corporation in function, effect, or status, requiring a case–by–case analysis. Here, a primary consideration was that the body is was funded exclusively by public tax dollars or interest thereon. Additionally, its office

was located in the municipal building, it was listed on the city website, the city provided it with clerical support and office supplies, all its assets revert to the city if it ceases to exist, its books are open for city inspection, the mayor and another city official are directors, and it had no clients other than the city. State v. Beaver Dam Area Development Corporation, 2008 WI 90, ___ Wis. 2d ___, ___ N.W.2d ___,06–0662.

"Records" must have some relation to the functions of the agency. 72 Atty. Gen. 99.

The treatment of drafts under the public records law is discussed. 77 Atty. Gen. 100.

Applying Open Records Policy to Wisconsin District Attorneys: Can Charging Guidelines Promote Public Awareness? Mayer. 1996 WLR 295.

19.33 Legal custodians. (1) An elected official is the legal custodian of his or her records and the records of his or her office, but the official may designate an employee of his or her staff to act as the legal custodian.

(2) The chairperson of a committee of elected officials, or the designee of the chairperson, is the legal custodian of the records of the committee.

(3) The cochairpersons of a joint committee of elected officials, or the designee of the cochairpersons, are the legal custodians of the records of the joint committee.

(4) Every authority not specified in subs. (1) to (3) shall designate in writing one or more positions occupied by an officer or employee of the authority or the unit of government of which it is a part as a legal custodian to fulfill its duties under this subchapter. In the absence of a designation the authority's highest ranking officer and the chief administrative officer, if any, are the legal custodians for the authority. The legal custodian shall be vested by the authority with full legal power to render decisions and carry out the duties of the authority under this subchapter. Each authority shall provide the name of the legal custodian and a description of the nature of his or her duties under this subchapter to all employees of the authority entrusted with records subject to the legal custodian's supervision.

(5) Notwithstanding sub. (4), if an authority specified in sub. (4) or the members of such an authority are appointed by another authority, the appointing authority may designate a legal custodian for records of the authority or members of the authority appointed by the appointing authority, except that if such an authority is attached for administrative purposes to another authority, the authority performing administrative duties shall designate the legal custodian for the authority for whom administrative duties are performed.

(6) The legal custodian of records maintained in a publicly owned or leased building or the authority appointing the legal custodian shall designate one or more deputies to act as legal custodian of such records in his or her absence or as otherwise required to respond to requests as provided in s. 19.35 (4). This subsection does not apply to members of the legislature or to members of any local governmental body.

(7) The designation of a legal custodian does not affect the powers and duties of an authority under this subchapter.

(8) No elected official of a legislative body has a duty to act as or designate a legal custodian under sub. (4) for the records of any committee of the body unless the official is the highest ranking officer or chief administrative officer of the committee or is designated the legal custodian of the committee's records by rule or by law.

History: 1981 c. 335.

The right to privacy law, s. 895.50, [now s. 995.50] does not affect the duties of a custodian of public records under s. 19.21, 1977 stats. 68 Atty. Gen. 68.

19.34 Procedural information. (1) Each authority shall adopt, prominently display and make available for inspection and copying at its offices, for the guidance of the public, a notice containing a description of its organization and the established times and places at which, the legal custodian under s. 19.33 from whom, and the methods whereby, the public may obtain information and access to records in its custody, make requests for records, or obtain copies of records, and the costs thereof. The notice shall also separately identify each position of the authority that constitutes a local public office or a state public office. This subsection does not apply to members of the legislature or to members of any local governmental body.

(2) (a) Each authority which maintains regular office hours at the location where records in the custody of the authority are kept shall permit access to the records of the authority at all times during those office hours, unless otherwise specifically authorized by law.

(b) Each authority which does not maintain regular office hours at the location where records in the custody of the authority are kept shall:

1. Permit access to its records upon at least 48 hours' written or oral notice of intent to inspect or copy a record; or

2. Establish a period of at least 2 consecutive hours per week during which access to the records of the authority is permitted. In such case, the authority may require 24 hours' advance written or oral notice of intent to inspect or copy a record.

(c) An authority imposing a notice requirement under par. (b) shall include a statement of the requirement in its notice under sub. (1), if the authority is required to adopt a notice under that subsection.

(d) If a record of an authority is occasionally taken to a location other than the location where records of the authority are regularly kept, and the record may be inspected at the place at which records of the authority are regularly kept upon one business day's notice, the authority or legal custodian of the record need not provide access to the record at the occasional location.

History: 1981 c. 335; 2003 a. 47.

NOTE: 2003 Wis. Act 47, which affects this section, contains extensive explanatory notes.

19.345 Time computation. In ss. 19.33 to 19.39, when a time period is provided for performing an act, whether the period is expressed in hours or days, the whole of Saturday, Sunday, and any legal holiday, from midnight to midnight, shall be excluded in computing the period.

History: 2003 a. 47.

NOTE: 2003 Wis. Act 47, which creates this section, contains extensive explanatory notes.

19.35 Access to records; fees. (1) RIGHT TO INSPECTION. (a) Except as otherwise provided by law, any requester has a right to inspect any record. Substantive common law principles construing the right to inspect, copy or receive copies of records shall remain in effect. The exemptions to the requirement of a governmental body to meet in open session under s. 19.85 are indicative of public policy, but may be used as grounds for denying public access to a record only if the authority or legal custodian under s. 19.33 makes a specific demonstration that there is a need to restrict public access at the time that the request to inspect or copy the record is made.

(am) In addition to any right under par. (a), any requester who is an individual or person authorized by the individual, has a right to inspect any record containing personally identifiable information pertaining to the individual that is maintained by an authority and to make or receive a copy of any such information. The right to inspect or copy a record under this paragraph does not apply to any of the following:

1. Any record containing personally identifiable information that is collected or maintained in connection with a complaint, investigation or other circumstances that may lead to an enforcement action, administrative proceeding, arbitration proceeding or court proceeding, or any such record that is collected or maintained in connection with such an action or proceeding.

2. Any record containing personally identifiable information that, if disclosed, would do any of the following:

a. Endanger an individual's life or safety.

b. Identify a confidential informant.

c. Endanger the security, including the security of the population or staff, of any state prison under s. 302.01, jail, as defined in s. 165.85 (2) (bg), juvenile correctional facility, as defined in s.