



News Release



**For Immediate Release:
February 2, 2015**

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Rowlett Ranks #4 out of 113 Agencies in Transparency Study

ROWLETT, TX – The City of Rowlett was ranked #4 in the Dallas Morning News “How Transparent is your Community” study, earning an “A” rating. In a year-long audit of open government compliance, Dallas Morning News reporters sent out and tracked 565 requests to 113 area cities, towns, county governments and school districts to determine how well they followed state laws guaranteeing access to information about how taxpayer money is spent and whether they followed best practices, such as those developed by the state Comptroller, in 2014.

More than one in five local government entities assessed scored a "D" or an "F" grade.

Rowlett was among the best in the Transparency 2015 ratings, earning an “A” rating. The City ranked as excellent in request best practices, excellent in request compliance, excellent in web customer service and excellent in online meeting notices.

“Serving as ambassadors for the City of Rowlett and its City Council, we strive to improve citizens' access to local government by providing accurate and timely information through the production and diligent care of the City's official records,” says Laura Hallmark, Rowlett City Secretary. “Being recognized in this manner is a great honor and confirmation of our commitment to being a citizen-centered organization.”

The first portion of The Dallas Morning News' study consisted of audits of the public entities' websites, paying attention to user-friendliness and adherence to basic requirements under the Texas Open Meetings Act, the companion law to the Public Information Act.

The Open Meetings Act stipulates that, with few exceptions, a public entity that maintains a website must “concurrently post” notice of — and the agenda for — meetings on its website.

Points were assessed for benchmarks met by each agency, including providing direct email addresses or phone numbers for its public officials; an “open government portal” offering

information about the Public Information Act and an open records request form to send to the agency; timely posted agendas, minutes and meeting audio or video; updated financial information; and ordinances or school policies.

In the second portion of the study, a battery of five types of open records requests was sent to each of 113 public entities surveyed — cities and towns, county governments and school districts. Three primary factors were examined: response time, cost and whether the information was provided in the format requested.

“Ensuring that Rowlett citizens have all the information possible right at their fingertips is a key component of the City Council’s commitment to providing an open and transparent City government,” says Mayor Todd Gottel. “The #4 ranking and A rating comes as no surprise to me, it is yet another testament to the exemplary financial stewardship provided by the City of Rowlett staff.”

Rowlett citizens may view the City’s checkbook, budget, monthly reports and other financial documents, as well as make public information and other service requests, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week at www.rowlett.com. Visit today!

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