

City Clerk's Office Security Breach

On December 19, 2012, a city employee discovered a Social Security number in a liquor license application packet posted online through Legistar. Information Technology immediately shut down Legistar while the Clerk's Office searched its license applications and attachments for personally identifiable information. Seventeen offending documents were removed from the system that same day. These documents had been viewable online for up to six years.

Eight of the liquor license packets contained spreadsheets in which the corporation volunteered names of corporate officers, their titles, addresses, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers. These liquor license applications responded "see attached" in the section of the state form that requested the names, titles, and addresses of corporate officers.

Nine packets contained an old state form that asked for a date of birth, Social Security number, driver license number, place of birth, and home address. These forms were attached to Change of Agent and Change of Corporate Control applications, contrary to a longstanding office policy that such background check forms be routed to the Police Department only.

The Madison Police Department investigated whether any of the 50 individuals whose Social Security numbers were online had filed a report of suspected identity theft. None had filed such a report.

The City Attorney's Office helped the Clerk's Office prepare a notification to send to those impacted by this security breach. These letters were mailed January 23, and a press release was issued on January 24.

Revision to Liquor License Application Form

The City Clerk revised the liquor license application form to discourage applicants from volunteering personally identifiable information such as Social Security numbers. It appeared that the inadequate amount of space for each question on the state form was prompting corporations to submit spreadsheets containing personally identifiable information. To address this problem, the Clerk took the information requested on the state form and incorporated it into the city application form, providing more space for answering each question. Because the City Attorney's Office had indicated that home addresses should be treated as confidential, she changed the city form to ask for the city and state of residence—rather than the street address—for corporate officers. The home addresses of corporate officers are obtained through the background check forms.

The Clerk then instructed the office to never attach a document in Legistar without reading every single word in that document. Because liquor license applications are due so close to the deadline to submit Legistar files for introduction to the Common Council, she determined that it would be safest to attach the city application form and floor plans at the time a Legistar file is created, and to attach other documents after meeting the deadline for submitting Legistar files for introduction.

The Clerk's Office still needs to work with the City Attorney's Office and Alcohol Policy Coordinator to determine what operator license applicant information can be attached in Legistar, and how that should be handled. Operator license applications contain more personally identifiable information than any other type of license application.

ALRC Packets

The last minute preparation of the February ALRC packets was due to illness sweeping through the office at election time. Although the Clerk's Office needs to spend more time making sure attachments and packets do not contain any personally identifiable information, the extra safety precautions should not delay the preparation of ALRC packets.

Legistar Users Meeting

At the request of the Mayor's Office, the Legistar Team has organized a mandatory Legistar Users Meeting to review this issue.