

Municipal Transparency:

An Analysis of Formal Administrative Components and Intervening Factors

Access 2006

Virginia Coalition for Open Government

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Suzanne J. Piotrowski, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

School of Public Affairs and Administration

Rutgers University-Newark

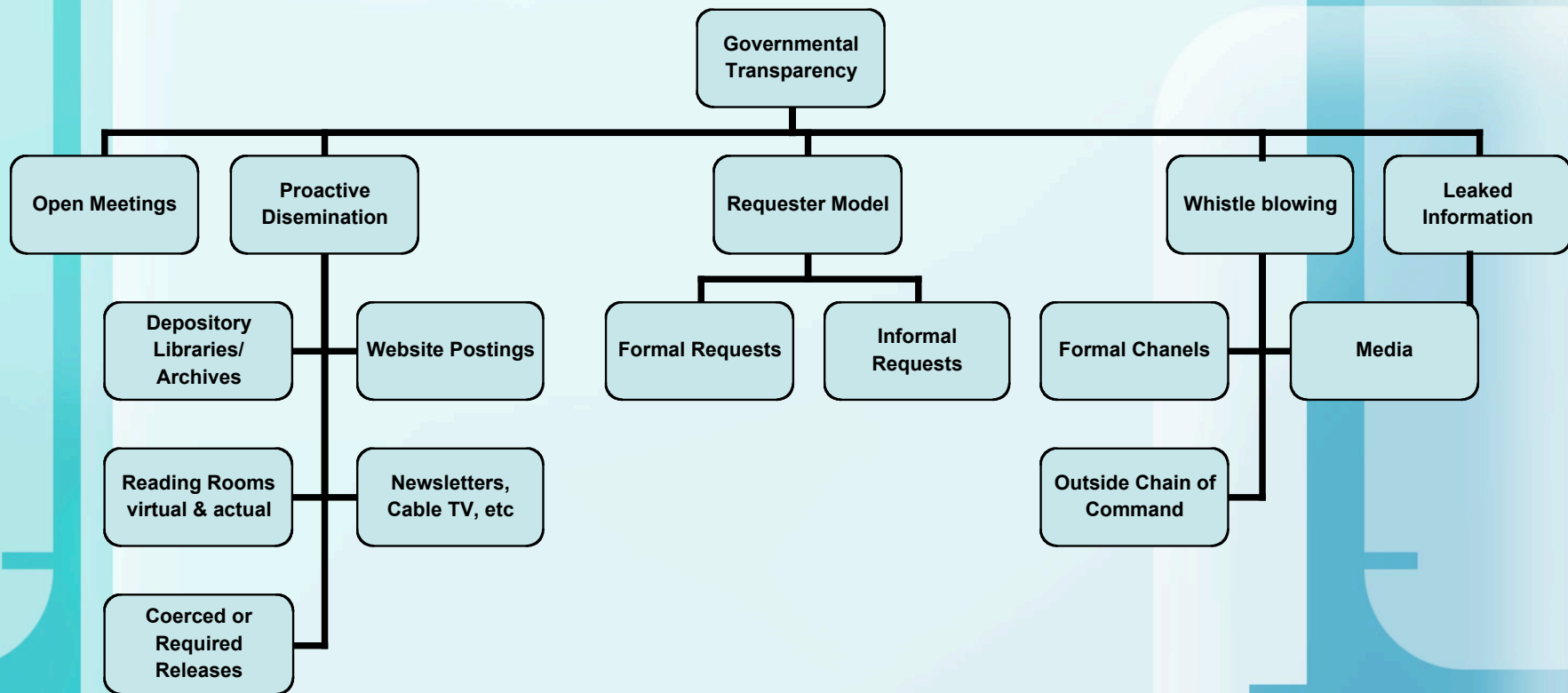
Governmental Transparency

- **Transparency is the ability to find out what is going on inside of government through various mechanisms.**

Five Avenues of Access to Government Information

- **Open meetings**
- **Proactive dissemination**
- **Requester model**
- **Whistle blowing**
- **Leaked information**

Avenues of Access to Government Information



Case

- **State of New Jersey**
- **566 municipalities**
- **Open Public Records Act**
- **Sunshine Law—Open Public Meetings Act**

Level of Analysis

- **Municipal:**
 - **Towns, townships, cities, boroughs, etc.**
 - **Not state or county level of government.**
- **Individuals' perceptions of the components of municipal transparency.**

Research Design

- **Soaking and poking**
- **Interviews with individuals from:**
 - **Good government groups**
 - **Journalist**
 - **Local Governments-city administrators, clerks, municipal attorney**

Preliminary Findings

- **Formal Administrative Components**
- **Intervening Factors**

Proactive Dissemination of Information

- **Websites are top conduits for municipal transparency.**
- **Newsletters and Cable TV shows**
- **Too much information hides real issues**

Open Meetings

- **Public comment sessions**
- **Public debate**
- **Notice of meetings**
- **Agendas and minutes**
- **Time of meeting**
- **Executive sessions**
- **Facilities**
- **Taping of meetings**
- **Robert's rules of order**

Document and Material Requests

- **Informal and formal requests**
- **Form of response**
- **Fees**
- **Response times**

Document Management

- **Document retention schedules**
- **Document Storage**

Intervening Factors

- **Administrative Culture**
- **The Gadfly Factor**
- **Local Media**
- **Organizational Resources**
- **Political Competition**

Next Steps

- **Wrap up qualitative data gathering.**
- **Mail survey in January 2007 to all 566 New Jersey local governments.**
- **Development of Municipal Transparency Index**

Municipal Transparency

Suzanne J. Piotrowski, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Public Affairs and Administration
Rutgers University-Newark
spiotrow@rutgers.edu