

## “Closed Doors, Missing Records, and a Lawsuit: Matthews Faces Its Transparency Reckoning”

**Neighbors, I want to share something important that affects every resident of Matthews — regardless of politics, background, or which neighborhood we call home.**

Two major documents have now come to light:

1. A **public-records lawsuit** filed in Mecklenburg County Superior Court, and
2. The Town’s own **Internal Investigation Report** dated October 13, 2025.

Taken together, they paint a troubling picture of how our local government handles transparency, public records, and accountability.

This isn’t about personalities. It’s about **process, trust**, and whether our Town is following the law.

### **1. The lawsuit shows a pattern of delayed, denied, or heavily-redacted public records**

According to the Verified Complaint, residents submitted multiple public-records requests over many months — for closed-session minutes, draft notes, retreat materials, and documents about how a public street was removed from the Town’s system.

Instead of providing the records “as promptly as possible,” as required by North Carolina law, the Town:

- Delayed responses for months
- Claimed minutes “did not exist” or were “under review”
- Released documents with nearly everything blacked out
- Held a closed session to discuss a public-records request — something state law does **not** allow
- Tried to “close” a public-records request, which is not a legal mechanism in North Carolina

This isn’t speculation. These statements come directly from the lawsuit and the Town’s own written responses.

### **2. The Town’s internal investigation confirms the very records they refuse to release actually exist**

The Internal Investigation Report repeatedly references and quotes from the **April 15, 2024 closed-session minutes** — the same minutes the Town has refused to release to the public, even in redacted form.

The report states:

“There were extensive discussions on this lawsuit during the closed session held on April 15, 2024.”

It also confirms:

“Clerk Canapinno records all meetings, including the closed sessions... After preparing the minutes, she deletes the audio recordings.”

This means:

- The minutes **exist**
- They were **reviewed**
- They were **used as evidence**
- And the Town is still refusing to release them

If the Town can use these minutes internally to support an investigation, why can't residents see the non-confidential portions?

### **3. The investigation contains contradictions and assumptions that raise even more questions**

The report misstates dates, relies on hearsay, and draws conclusions without evidence. For example:

- It references a closed session on April 17, 2024 — a meeting that **never happened**.
- It admits investigators have **no direct evidence** of any leak.
- It treats voluntary non-participation in interviews as suspicious, even though participation was optional.
- It discloses closed-session content while simultaneously insisting such content must remain confidential.

When an internal report contradicts itself, it undermines confidence in the process.

### **4. Transparency is not optional — it's the law**

North Carolina's Public Records Act is clear:

- Public records belong to the people
- Agencies must provide them promptly
- Closed-session minutes must be released once confidentiality is no longer required
- Even when confidentiality applies, **non-exempt portions must be released**

The Town of Matthews is not exempt from these rules.

### **5. Why this matters for all of us**

This isn't about one person or one issue. It's about whether our local government is operating with honesty, transparency, and respect for the public's right to know.

When records are withheld, delayed, or selectively disclosed, it erodes trust.

When internal investigations rely on documents the public is denied, it raises red flags.

When the Town uses closed-session minutes internally but refuses to release them publicly, it undermines confidence in the process.

Matthews deserves better than secrecy and selective transparency.

## **6. What residents should expect going forward**

Regardless of how anyone feels about the lawsuit or the investigation, we should all agree on one thing:

**Government works best when it operates in the open.**

The people of Matthews deserve:

- Clear answers
- Lawful handling of public records
- Accurate information
- Fair processes
- Transparency from Town Hall

This is not a partisan issue. It's a community issue.

And it's time for Matthews to live up to the standards the law — and the public — require.

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