

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
WASHINGTON, SC**

SUPERIOR COURT

THE NEW ENGLAND FIRST	)	
AMENDMENT COALITION and WILLIAM	)	
SOARES,	)	
	)	
Plaintiffs,	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	Civil Action No. _____
TOWN OF NARRAGANSETT POLICE	)	
DEPARTMENT,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	
	)	
	)	

COMPLAINT

This is an action to compel the Town of Narragansett Police Department (“NPD”) to release public records that are in its possession and improperly withheld under the Access to Public Records Act (“APRA”) relating to the suspicious 2021 death of Narragansett resident Liliana Turano-Morris. Plaintiffs The New England First Amendment Coalition (“NEFAC”) and William Soares (“Soares”) (collectively, “Plaintiffs”) seek disclosure of these records, a civil fine for the “knowing and willful” violation of the APRA, and other appropriate relief.

More than five years after Liliana Turano-Morris was found dead in her Narragansett home from a gunshot wound to the head, neither the public nor her family know whether the NPD did any investigation into her death, what any investigation into her death found, or why it took until 2024 for basic forensic work to be done. That is not for lack of trying. Plaintiffs have asked the NPD to release that case file, to which the NPD has categorically and flatly refused. Rather than identify what, if anything, in the case file may actually be exempt under the APRA, or making any

attempt to redact any exempt information as the law requires, the NPD invoked essentially the entire universe of APRA exemptions at once – citing subsections (A) through (Y) of R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4) – before settling on two grounds: that the file relates to a criminal investigation, and that releasing it would invade Ms. Turano-Morris’s personal privacy.

Both justifications misconstrue the law and neither withstands scrutiny. Rhode Island law has long recognized that the right to privacy does not outlive the individual. The NPD cannot invoke the privacy of a decedent to keep the public in the dark about how she died. As for the law-enforcement exemption, it is not a blank check for a department to lock away an entire case file wholesale. It requires a department to identify, record by record, what is exempt and why, and to release whatever can reasonably be segregated from any properly withheld material. The NPD did none of that. It offered only a blanket refusal.

This is exactly the kind of governmental opacity that the APRA exists to prevent. The public – not just Ms. Turano-Morris’s family, but every Rhode Islander who depends on local police to investigate and to account for how they do so – has a right to know how the NPD handled Ms. Turano-Morris’s death. Plaintiffs bring this action to compel the NPD to comply with the law and finally open its files to the public it serves.

PARTIES

1. NEFAC is a Massachusetts non-profit corporation dedicated to advancing the public’s right to know and to promoting government transparency and freedom of the press throughout New England, including Rhode Island.

2. William Soares is a resident of Rhode Island and is the son of Liliana Turano-Morris.

3. The Town of Narragansett Police Department is an “agency” and “public body” within the meaning of APRA, R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(1), and it is the public body that maintains the records responsive to Plaintiffs’ APRA Request.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. This Court has jurisdiction to hear this dispute under R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 38-2-8(b), 38-2-9, and 9-30-1.

5. Venue is proper before this Court pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-8(b) because the records responsive to the APRA Request are maintained by the NPD in Narragansett, Rhode Island, which is located within Washington County.

FACTS

6. On April 13, 2021, Liliana Turano-Morris was found dead in her home at 144 Central Street, Narragansett, Rhode Island.

7. She was found by her husband in their bedroom slumped over on a bench at the foot of their bed. Her husband’s handgun was next to her. It was clear that three bullets had been fired: one that, upon information and belief, was lodged high up in the wall near the cathedral ceilings of the bedroom; one that had grazed and splintered the leg of a chair, which was recovered from the residence and taken into evidence; and one fired into Ms. Turano-Morris’s head. Investigators since described the fatal shot’s trajectory as entering behind her right ear and exiting below her left ear, and have characterized the other shots as having “sprayed around the room.”

8. The Rhode Island Office of the State Medical Examiners (“ME”) ruled the death to be suicide. No full autopsy was performed at the time of death. There was no suicide note, and no indication from her family whatsoever as to why she would commit suicide. She had a seemingly happy life. She had a fulfilling career as a hairdresser and was in the process of building a new

hair salon in Westerly. She was close with Mr. Soares, her only child. She had spoken to her son the night before and told him that she had plans to take the following day off. She had a doctor's appointment and plans to meet a friend for lunch. She had texted her son on the morning of her death asking his advice on the new COVID-19 vaccines.

9. A death certificate reflecting her self-inflicted death was filed on April 23, 2021. Upon information and belief, that death certificate has never been amended.

10. The suicide ruling and resulting death certificate followed within ten days of Ms. Turano-Morris's death, upon information and belief without a full autopsy or any of the forensic work – bullet-trajectory analysis, gunshot-residue testing, or DNA testing – that would not be performed until three years later, in 2024.

11. In or around May 2024, upon information and belief, an informant within the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institution came forward purporting to have new information about Ms. Turano-Morris's death.

12. In response, upon information and belief, the NPD launched an investigation into Ms. Turano-Morris's death, with participation from the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office ("AGO").

13. The investigation revealed the apparent gaps in whatever was done in 2021, bearing on the reliability of the initial suicide determination, including (1) that no bullet-trajectory or forensic-reconstruction analysis was performed until 2024, (2) that gunshot-residue swabs collected in 2021 were not tested until 2024, (3) that the firearm recovered from the scene was not tested for DNA until 2024, three years after Ms. Turano-Morris's death, and (4) that no blood-spatter analysis was performed, notwithstanding investigators' later observation that the scene contained an unusually small amount of blood. Upon information and belief, investigators

also did not obtain nearby security-camera footage – including footage from a camera situated on the only road providing access to Ms. Turano-Morris’s home – or cellular-tower records from the date of Ms. Turano-Morris’s death that could have corroborated or refuted accounts of who was present at the scene.

14. The results of the 2024 investigation cast significant doubt on the original 2021 determination that Ms. Turano-Morris’s death was self-inflicted. According to NPD Detective Wass, the ME’s Office reviewed bullet trajectory modeling and “advised that the trajectory is not normal for a reported suicide” and that it was “odd for a woman to use a firearm and not to leave a note.”

15. Mr. Soares was informed by Detective Wass and an Assistant Attorney General assigned to the investigation that as a result of these new findings, the manner of death had been reclassified from “suicide” to “not consistent with suicide.”

16. Upon information and belief, the investigation was substantially inactive by early 2025, and no criminal charges have been filed against any individual in connection with Ms. Turano-Morris’s death, nor has the death certificate been amended.

17. Notwithstanding the 2024 investigation, neither the NPD, the AGO, nor the ME has released any written investigative report, forensic report, or other document reflecting the findings, conclusions, or current status of the 2024 review.

18. Beginning in 2024, Mr. Soares submitted a series of APRA requests to the NPD, AGO, and the Rhode Island Department of Health/ME, seeking records concerning the investigation into his mother’s death. Each of those requests was denied, citing law-enforcement and privacy exemptions substantially similar to those the NPD invoked in its July 22, 2026 denial

of the APRA Request at issue in this action. *The NPD did not produce a single document to Mr. Soares, and to date has not produced a single document.*

19. The case file is also of substantial public interest. In January 2026, Audiochuck LLC, a media company that produces investigative journalism concerning matters of public interest, submitted its own APRA request to the NPD seeking the same case file at issue in this action. The NPD flatly denied that request on grounds substantially similar to those it later invoked in denying the APRA Request, and on March 2, 2026, the NPD denied Audiochuck's administrative appeal of that denial.

20. On July 13, 2026, Plaintiffs submitted their APRA request (the "APRA Request") to the NPD seeking "all records relating to the April 13, 2021 death of Liliana Turano-Morris that occurred at 144 Central Street, Narragansett, Rhode Island, including but not limited to all documents, reports, notes, photographs, audio recordings, videos, witness statements, forensic reports, dispatch records, search warrants, subpoenas, correspondence with any other agency including the Attorney General's Office, and any other records maintained by the department relating to the death." A true and correct copy of the APRA Request is attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

21. The APRA Request further specified that it sought "the entire case file, including all records relating to the initial investigation in 2021, as well as any reopened or reexamined investigation in 2024."

22. The NPD responded to the APRA Request with a written denial dated July 22, 2026. A true and correct copy of the NPD's denial is attached hereto as **Exhibit B**.

23. In its denial, the NPD stated that "[t]he records referenced in your request are exempt from public disclosure pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4)(A)-(Y)," and that

“[s]pecifically, subsection (D) exempts records maintained by law enforcement agencies for criminal law enforcement purposes, as well as all other records relating to the detection and investigation of crime, including those maintained on any individual or compiled during a criminal investigation.” The NPD did not provide any information whatsoever to support this exemption, including whether an investigation had been conducted, whether it was concluded, or how disclosure of the requested records could prejudice any investigation.

24. The NPD further asserted that the requested records “are not public to the extent that disclosure could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, as outlined in § 38-2-2(4)(D)(c).” The NPD did not specify whose privacy was at issue or articulate how the requested records could constitute an invasion of privacy.

25. The NPD’s denial did not identify any specific document, or any category of documents, within the case file that it contends is exempt; did not explain why any particular record could not be produced with exempt material, if any, redacted; and did not distinguish among the many different types of records encompassed by the APRA Request, including dispatch records and correspondence with the AGO, which are not inherently exempt from disclosure under APRA.

26. Defendant’s denial of public access, unless vacated, will immediately and irreparably abrogate the rights guaranteed to the Plaintiffs and the public at large under APRA.

27. Plaintiffs have no adequate remedy other than this action.

COUNT I
VIOLATION OF APRA – WRONGFUL DENIAL OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS
(R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 38-2-1, *et seq.*)

28. Plaintiffs repeat and reallege each and every allegation above as if fully set forth herein.

29. R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-3(a) provides that “all records maintained or kept on file by any public body ... shall be public records and every person or entity shall have the right to inspect and/or copy those records,” unless a specific statutory exemption applies.

30. Exemptions to APRA’s disclosure mandate are to be narrowly construed in favor of disclosure, and the burden rests with the public body to demonstrate that a requested record is properly exempt. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-10.

31. The NPD’s reliance on the personal-privacy exemption set forth in R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4)(D)(c) is unavailing because the right to privacy is personal to the individual and does not survive that individual’s death. Because Ms. Turano-Morris’s privacy interest in the requested records did not survive her death, it cannot form a lawful basis for withholding the case file concerning her death. The NPD has not identified any other individual whose privacy interests were at issue.

32. To the extent the NPD’s denial rests on the law-enforcement exemption set forth in R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4)(D), that exemption does not permit a public body to withhold records *unless* they fall within one of the enumerated categories in R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4)(D) (a) through (f). These exemptions allow an agency to withhold law enforcement records *only when* they would prejudice an investigation, impact a right to fair trial, disclose the identity of a confidential source, or the like. The NPD cannot withhold an entire case file without identifying which specific records, or categories of records, are exempt and why, and without producing any reasonably segregable, non-exempt portions of the responsive records.

33. The NPD’s blanket denial of the APRA Request, without any particularized showing as to any individual record or category of records, fails to satisfy the NPD’s burden under APRA and constitutes a wrongful withholding of public records.

34. The NPD's denial of the APRA Request constitutes a failure to perform a duty enjoined upon it by law and was affected by an error of law, in violation of APRA's disclosure requirements.

35. The NPD's failure to produce responsive records was knowing, willful, and reckless.

36. Unless the NPD's denial is vacated and the NPD is compelled to produce the records responsive to the APRA Request, Plaintiffs and the public will suffer irreparable harm to their statutory right under APRA to access public records concerning a matter of substantial public interest. Moreover, the NPD's disclosure of the records at issue, which relate both to a public agency's operations and public safety, is in the public interest. The NPD has not identified any reason whatsoever that any harm would be engendered by disclosure.

COUNT II
DECLARATORY JUDGMENT
(R.I. Gen. Laws § 9-30-1 *et seq.*; R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-8(b))

37. Plaintiffs repeat and reallege each and every allegation above as if fully set forth herein.

38. An actual, justiciable controversy exists between Plaintiffs and Defendant concerning Plaintiffs' right, under APRA, to inspect and copy the records responsive to the APRA Request, and Defendant's obligation to produce those records.

39. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaration that the records responsive to the APRA Request are public records subject to disclosure under APRA, that no exemption set forth in R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4) justifies withholding those records in their entirety, and that Defendant's denial of the APRA Request violated APRA.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully request that the Court:

- a) Enter judgment declaring that the NPD has violated the Access to Public Records Act, R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 38-2-1 *et seq.*, by unlawfully denying the APRA Request in its entirety;
- b) Enjoin the NPD from continuing to withhold the records responsive to the APRA Request and order the NPD to produce all such records to Plaintiffs forthwith;
- c) In the alternative, and to the extent the Court determines that any portion of the responsive records may be exempt, order the NPD to submit the withheld records for in camera review pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-9(b) to determine which, if any, portions are properly exempt, and order production of all remaining, reasonably segregable, non-exempt portions;
- d) Find that the NPD knowingly and willfully, or in the alternative recklessly, violated APRA, and impose a civil fine against the NPD pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-9(d);
- e) Award Plaintiffs their reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in this action pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-9(d);
- f) Grant such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

THE NEW ENGLAND FIRST AMENDMENT
COALITION and WILLIAM SOARES,

By their attorneys,

Dated: August 5, 2026

/s/ Mackenzie C. McBurney
HINCKLEY, ALLEN & SNYDER LLP
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Alexa T. Millinger (*pro hac vice forthcoming*)
20 Church Street, 18th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103
Telephone: (860) 725-6200
amillinger@hinckleyallen.com

EXHIBIT A



20 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103

p: 860-725-6200 f: 860-278-3802
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ALEXA MILLINGER
(860) 670-0315
amillinger@hinckleyallen.com

July 13, 2026

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL adrugan@narragansetttri.gov
AND ALSO SUBMITTED THROUGH ELECTRONIC PORTAL**

Alexis Drugan, Records Clerk
Narragansett Police Department
40 Caswell Street
Narragansett, RI

Dear Ms. Drugan:

I represent the New England First Amendment Coalition (“NEFAC”) and William Soares (“Soares”). On behalf of NEFAC and Soares, I write to make a formal request under the Rhode Island Access to Public Records Act, §38-2-1 *et seq.* I am requesting an opportunity to inspect or obtain copies of public records described as follows:

All records relating to the April 13, 2021 death of Liliana Turano-Morris that occurred at 144 Central Street, Narragansett, Rhode Island, including but not limited to all documents, reports, notes, photographs, audio recordings, videos, witness statements, forensic reports, dispatch records, search warrants, subpoenas, correspondence with any other agency including the Attorney General’s Office, and any other records maintained by the department relating to the death. For the avoidance of doubt, this request includes the entire case file, including all records relating to the initial investigation in 2021, as well as any reopened or reexamined investigation in 2024.

If there are any fees for searching or copying these records, please inform me in advance with an estimate of the cost. However, I would also like to request a waiver of all fees in that the disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest. This information is not being sought for commercial purposes.

The Rhode Island Access to Public Records Act requires a response time within ten business days. If access to the records I am requesting will take longer than this amount of time, please contact me with information about when I might expect copies or the ability to inspect the requested records.

Alexis Drugan, Records Clerk

July 13, 2026

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If you deny any or all of this request, please cite each specific exemption you feel justifies the refusal to release the information and notify me of the appeal procedures available to me under the law.

Very Truly Yours,



Alexa T. Millinger

ATM/st

EXHIBIT B

**TOWN OF NARRAGANSETT
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**40 Caswell Street • Narragansett, RI 02882 • Chief Kyle Rekas
Tel. (401) 789-1091 • TDD (401) 782-0661 • Fax (401) 789-8819**

July 22, 2026

amillinger@hincklyallen.com

Alexa Millinger
20 Church Street
Hartford, Connecticut, 06103

Re: Access to Public Records Request – July 13, 2025, Records

Dear Ms. Millinger:

The Narragansett Police Department acknowledges receipt of your records request for: **“all records relating to the April 13, 2021 death of Liliana Turano-Morris that occurred at 144 Central Street, Narragansett, Rhode Island, including but not limited to all documents, reports, notes, photographs, audio recordings, videos, witness statements, forensic reports, dispatch records, search warrants, subpoenas, correspondence with any other agency including the Attorney General’s Office, and any other records maintained by the department relating to the death. For the avoidance of doubt, this request includes the entire case file, including all records relating to the initial investigation in 2021, as well as any reopened or reexamined investigation in 2024.”**

The records referenced in your request are exempt from public disclosure pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-2(4)(A)–(Y). Specifically, subsection (D) exempts records maintained by law enforcement agencies for criminal law enforcement purposes, as well as all other records relating to the detection and investigation of crime, including those maintained on any individual or compiled during a criminal investigation. These records are not public to the extent that disclosure **could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy**, as outlined in § 38-2-2(4)(D)(c).

In accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-8, you may appeal this decision to: Chief Kyle Rekas Narragansett Police Department, 40 Caswell Street Narragansett, RI 02882. You may also file a complaint with the Rhode Island Department of the Attorney General, 150 South Main Street, Providence, RI 02903, or with the Rhode Island Superior Court in the county where the records are maintained. Additional information regarding the Access to Public Records Act is available on the Attorney General’s website at www.riag.ri.gov.

Thank you for your interest in ensuring that government remains open and accountable to the public.

Respectfully,



Lieutenant Ryan F. McGovern
Prosecution Division
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