

**Public Records Advisory Commission
Minutes of the February 28, 2022 Meeting
In-person Meeting at the Records**

Present: Jackie Cohan (Archivist), Cam Cook, Allan Krinsman, Sean Ferguson

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm.

Appointment of Secretary: Sean Ferguson was appointed secretary.

Approval of Past Minutes: The January 2022 minutes were approved without changes.

Facilities renovation update: The bid for the facilities renovation has not yet been posted. The project will likely go out to bid in March or April. The scope and cost of the project has been reduced. The scope of the project includes renovating the elevator. Although the elevator works fine and is regularly inspected, it is 40 years old and has not been upgraded and sometimes oil leaks out into the elevator shaft. An inspector recently visited the center and determined that there are no sprinklers in the elevator shaft. The second floor will be renovated as well, focusing on the men's room. Windows may receive coverings, including in the stairwells. Landscaping and maintenance will remain in the project.

HARC has been asking for space and it was said that in the Witter Wheeler Master Plan has included the Center for space. It was unclear if this would be replacement space or additional space. It was also unclear where the space would be located.

Interns and other volunteers: The Center has received volunteer assistance from 14- 21 year-old kids from a school in Annandale for the past 15 years. They help twice a week. After a 2-year hiatus, the children have started to return to the Center. Their help involves shelving boxes and other tasks.

The Center has had two interns currently working with materials, including scanning City Council Records. Jackie Cohan believes that she may choose not to have 2 interns at a time in the future. Having 2 interns this cycle has made it somewhat difficult to ensure the interns always carry out projects exactly as requested.

Items to discuss with new city Manager, Jim Parajon, when he visits: The City Manager will visit the Center. Jackie Cohan requested feedback from the Committee on what to discuss during the visit. The following items were suggested:

- Re-Initiating records management training for City departments;
- Ensuring that during the proposed restructuring of the Office of Historic Alexandria that the Center retains the records manager and archivist positions
 - Other possible restructuring topics brought up included having a position to do FOIA research and point out to the City Manager that many other jurisdictions that have lost their programs ultimately had to reinstate them.

- Making sure non-permanent records are destroyed in a timely manner - an essential role of the Center - continues.

Temperature- and humanity-controlled archives room nearly out of space: After 15 years of use, the current room is running out of space. This raises the question of where more space will be acquired. This could include other places in the building, but the conditions for preservation are not ideal in those locations. Ideas for reducing space needs such as scanning, microfilming, and sending records to an offsite storage vendor were discussed, but none were deemed to be ideal for the Center.

Space limitations are also creating an issue with keeping all materials in a collection physically in one space on the shelf. While the Center's software ensures that all materials can still be located and identified as part of the same collection, it does make the physical retrieval of records dispersed among multiple locations inconvenient.

Davis and Ruffner Land Records Collection usage: The records of this mortgage title company, while not a municipal government entity, is kept by Alexandria, as well as other local jurisdictions because of its vast size. They are kept off-site. The Commission tried to divest itself of these records because of how expensive they are to store. However, the collection continues to be useful, including when research was done on the graves in Fort Ward. Originally, the Center's budget paid for the collection's storage, but 10 years ago, the Office of Historic Alexandria's budget started paying for their storage. In the last 2 weeks, Jackie Cohan has visited the collection twice, assisting the Office of Planning in research. Jackie Cohan has raised the possibility of scanning some of these records to improve ease of access during research or bringing the collection to Center.

New Business:

- **Current Commission vacancies:** The 2 positions remain vacant
- **Next meeting: March 21, 2022**

Adjournment: Meeting convened at 8:13pm