

Public Records Advisory Commission
Minutes of the June 27, 2022 Meeting
Alexandria Archives and Records Center, 801 S. Payne Street

Present: Jackie Cohan (Archivist), Lynn Jordan, Cam Cook, Sean Ferguson and Allan Krinsman.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Appointment of Secretary: Allan Krinsman was appointed secretary.

Approval of Past Minutes: The minutes of the May 16, 2022 meeting were approved without amendments.

Update on Facility Renovations: A bid solicitation was recently posted publicly. There is an upcoming site visit as part of a pre-bid meeting. The work will include a complete overhaul of the sprinkler system to bring it up to code. New HVAC systems throughout the building will also be included. There may also be some painting of outside items. Still a bit uncertain whether landscaping will be included. Work on the fire escape is going to be separate and probably part of the next capital project because it is a necessary repair. The elevator repair will also be funded. There has been turnover in the city employees with responsibilities for managing the renovations.

Update on Volunteers and Interns:

- Two high school volunteers assisted at the center for a short period of time as part of a “senior experience” internship. Assignments included scanning city annual reports that started in about 2003 and continued until about 2003. The scanning is part of an on-going project.
- For future interns, Jackie expressed a preference for volunteers who are affiliated with some kind of program so that they will be accountable to somebody. At some point this requirement may become part of the volunteer application form.
- As of now, it’s unlikely that there will be any volunteers from the University of Maryland assisting at the center this summer.
- Several police department recruits were at the center for a few weeks. They helped separate and remove non-public information about felonies that appear in the official records kept at the center. Years covered included 1985 to 1987.

New policy developing on research and FOIAs:

- Work is proceeding on developing a new policy on research and FOIA requests for the first time in five years.
- This arose in connection with an outside request from a graduate student who wanted to do research on racial conflict in Alexandria. The person has been given access to materials in the city records that are non-confidential.
- Confidential materials appear in certain materials such as city council records and transcripts, and creating controls is necessary to avoid giving access to confidential information.

- One recent extensive FOIA request concerned apartments in the Samuel Madden Homes that are to be torn down and replaced with a new development. Personal and confidential information needed to be excluded from the response to the request.

Alarm system (security alarm) update: The alarm system was recently upgraded. There have been recurring problems with the alarms. Various systems will be unified and codes are expected to be assigned for every room.

Records Management training: Update was given on progress made on plans to conduct future records management training. An emphasis will be placed on the logistics of transferring records to the center. Transferring records will also touch a bit on retention policies. Some questions on retention policies have been directed to, and answered by, the city attorneys.

HARC report: Sean Ferguson gave a detailed report on the HARC meetings that he has attended to date. Some of the topics he described included:

- the new oral historian program.
- the HARC discussions about the planning commission proposal to provide additional developments with 'bonus height' in exchange for affordable housing.
- proposals to adjust the membership composition of HARC.
- the Alexandria community remembrance project

New business:

- We continue to have two vacancies on the commission.
- Hiring of a new Records Center Clerk is planned.
- Records Manager/Records Center Supervisor retiring.
- The next meeting will be on September 19, 2022.

Adjournment: The commission adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Krinsman, secretary