

Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)  
Minutes of the March 20, 2023 Meeting  
Archives & Records Center, 801 S. Payne St.

**Present:** Jackie Cohan (Archivist); Cam Cook; Lynn Jorden; Sean Ferguson; Allan Krinsman and Dennis McDonald

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:27 PM.

**Appointment of Secretary:** Allan Krinsman was appointed secretary.

**Minutes:** The minutes of February 27, 2023 meeting were approved unanimously with no corrections or additions.

**Facility improvement update:** Jackie provided an update on recent developments with respect to facility improvement plans and expressed her desire for a master key system and push code electronic doors.

**Interns/volunteers:** Jackie talked about the status of interns and her requests for volunteers. She explained her workload and said she is hoping to get a graduate student in time for the summer. She expressed concern about training a successor when she leaves her position at the Archives.

**Strategic Vision Statement for the Archives & Records Management Program:** The members had a broad discussion about the possible means to guide the direction of the Archives and Records Management program to increase collaborate with other City departments and commissions, and provide open, easily accessible, and free data.

In connection with that discussion, Dennis said he received a draft policy from a city IT commission regarding open data and government transparency. The policy was generic and lacked specific definitions of terms such as "open" and "free". He noted that the federal government has developed initiatives to make government data accessible to the public, and some states have been successful in making data available in areas such as health, science, and technology. Maryland was one of the earliest states. Efforts to make data accessible at the city level can be hindered by politics and lack of cooperation between departments. There may be areas where the interests of the IT commission and PRAC overlap.

Jackie discussed the outdated administrative regulation for the Archives department and how efforts have been made continuously to try to update it. She mentioned how it was last updated in 2013 with the help of the city attorney's office. She also talked about the relationship her department has with the IT department in regards to electronic records and how the IT department is mainly managing it. The lack of staff capacity is a factor for her department, and taking responsibility over electronic records may be a lot of work for her department.

The members discussed potentially inviting an Alexandria city attorney to meet with the PRAC. They discussed the IT situation and the distribution of archiving and records management in the city. It was noted that different departments operate differently, and managing records may require setting boundaries and minimizing legal liability. They also discussed public access and the need for oversight. Dennis

emphasized the importance of understanding the current state of records management and developing a rational plan to satisfy objectives.

The discussion turned to the program's future and how to gather the necessary information to develop a plan. The members discussed speaking with the head of different departments to gain a better understanding of archiving responsibilities. They also considered having a conversation with people instead of just preparing and sending a set of questions to them. Consideration was given to inviting the head of the historical department to the next meeting. The members also talked about the competing responsibilities of being both the record center and the city archive and how they are separate but related functions. They also discussed the means by which the department can serve as a center for both records and history.

Other related matters were also discussed, including how contracts used to be kept in paper copies but now they are mostly electronic, and how the city decided to keep the Torpedo Factory artist association on permanently after it had great success. Jackie mentioned attending conferences such as the Society of American Archivists and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA), and her experiences with them.

**Upcoming staffing needs:** Jackie discussed the current staffing situation and the need for someone skilled in reference management and the status of hiring someone for a possible future vacancy. The members discussed the challenges of hiring someone due to high salaries and living costs in the Washington metro area.

Jacked talked about the need to move boxes out of certain rooms because of upcoming construction, and the possibility of using laborers to do so. She also discussed the challenges of managing records and transferring certain of them to different parts of the building with limited staff.

**HARC Report:** Sean said the city council is creating a list of street names that need to be renamed, and it is setting up a separate group to identify which streets should be prioritized for renaming. There are practical considerations for changing street names, such as updating deeds and titles. It appears that the city needs to come up with approximately 70 names for 30 streets. Many of the recommended names made by the subcommittee have included minorities, and he said it will be interesting to see whether the range of possible names will be expanded. There are public meetings that anyone can join virtually or in person to discuss the street name changes. The minutes and agendas for all the commissions are posted on the city website for anyone interested in attending meetings.

**New Business:** There are two current Commission vacancies.

**Next meeting:** Our next meeting will be on April 17, 2023, in person.

**Adjourn:** Cam made a motion to adjourn at 8:43 PM; Sean seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Krinsman