

PUBLIC RECORDS ADVISORY COMMISSION  
Minutes of the  
MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2023 7:30 PM

DISCUSSION ITEMS

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

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm

**Appointment of Secretary:** Sean Ferguson was appointed secretary.

**Minutes:** Sean Ferguson moved to approve the May 15 and April 24 minutes. Alan Krisman seconded the motion. Dennis McDonald raised a question regarding the notes of the May 15 meeting. Dennis indicated that he did not recall that in the discussion it was stated that IT does not appear to deal with FOIA issues as HARC. Lynn clarified that they did not need to fulfill them and clarified that Lynn, the notetaker, was recording what had been stated by Gretchen. The meetings were unanimously approved.

**Facility improvements updates:** The renovations have begun. A men's room is being converted into a storage room. The pit has been completed. A moisture blocking paint has been applied as well as particle board. The window in the shred room was covered. Jackie Cohan provided printed photos. New sprinklers have been installed downstairs. Additional sealants have been applied on other windows as well. Ceiling tiles on the first floor will be replaced. To protect paper records, boxes are being covered in plastic. Museum staff are also coordinating the protection of their materials.

**Digitization accomplished by Archives staff over the last fiscal year (starting July 1, 2022) and FOIA and research statistics:** Last year, FY2022, 144 research request. 97 FOIA, 44 city staff, and 3 were Alex 311 requests. Jackie conducted 2,994 searches and it took 468 hours. 180 request this year. 100 FOIA, 64 from city, and 3 Alex 311. 3,314 record searches done in 415 hours. Jackie Cohan believes the increase in efficiency is due to the higher number of materials scanned. 58,000 pages digitized last year. The year prior was over 66,000 pages. 3,500 of this year's were

council records due to having only one graduate student. Council records have been digitized through 1971.

**Meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup> with ITS staff James Bryant to discuss electronic records and the replacement of ALEXNET (intranet for City staff) and other records-related activities:** The city is envisioning providing electronic records for city employees via an intranet. No timeline is known. James Bryant wanted to know what had been digitized and if it could be made more available to staff.

A researcher wanted to see City council finding aids.

Dennis McDonald suggested that indexing of city records, tied in with this ALEXNET project could be a good project for a grant.

Dennis McDonald asked if there was a steering committee across agencies and suggested Archives investigate.

The City's municipal code addressing the Archives and Records center is out of date and should be updated. It indicates that PRAC must approve destruction of records, which is no longer City practice.

Alexandria will visit the Lee Center to discuss Recreation's records for disposition.

**Strategic Vision Statement to guide the direction of the City's Archives and Records Management Program for the future/collaboration with other City departments and commissions on providing open, easily accessible, and free data:** Dennis McDonald explained that the Strategic Vision should address the role Archives and Records Center should play in the City, highlighting how the Center consults/advises/trains other departments.

Sean Ferguson pointed out that Dennis McDonald had prepared documents relating to the Strategic Vision for the rest of PRAC to review and add to.

Dennis McDonald pointed out that NIH and other research funding agencies are adopting new rules requiring recipients of federal research funding to make data publicly available.

Sean Ferguson added that for grants associated with

historical records, the Archives and Records Center would have to remove barriers to access, such as FOIA requirements, to be competitive for funding.

Sean Ferguson suggested making some indexes of materials available online, and Jackie Cohan added that she had made a list of materials she wanted to make available.

Sean Ferguson added that he plans to review the materials Dennis made before the September meeting.

**HARC Report:** Sean Ferguson gave the HARC report. He added that Archaeology Commission is developing a letter to city council stating that they should prioritize improved storage in future budgets. PRAC will review the letter before it is signed.

The Town of Potomac was nominated as an endangered neighborhood by Preservation Virginia. A person gave a presentation to HARC about the status of the neighborhood and requested HARC speak to City Council about it. HARC plans to write a letter asking the City Council pointing out the nominated status.

The final names for the street naming project will be collected in a meeting in August. It will go before City Council in September.

Gretchen gave an update to HARC on the renovation plans for Freedom House.

**New Business:**

- a. Next meeting: September 18, 2023
- b. Retirement of City Attorney at the end of the year

**Meeting closed:** The meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:31pm.