

# **Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)**

## **Minutes of the February 26, 2024 Meeting**

### **Present:**

Jackie Cohan (Archivist); Lynn Jordan (Chair); Cam Cook; Dennis McDonald; David Kovalik.

### **Call to Order, Appointment of Secretary & Minutes:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM. Minutes from the January 27, 2024, meeting were approved. Dennis McDonald was appointed Secretary.

### **New Commission Member:**

David Kovalik introduced himself. Ms. Cohan provided some background on ARC and offered Mr. Kovalik a tour of the facility. Ms. Cohan described how most users of the facility's services are city employees and that many city records are, by standard practice, not kept permanently but destroyed. She also said that the facility was once more open to researchers but that all public requests for records access by standard policy (e.g., FOIA requests) must go through the City Attorney. She also noted there are many sources of city data that are available to the public without requiring FOIA screening. Also discussed: FOIA request fees.

### **Facility renovations:**

The facility is still undergoing an upgrade that began last year. Some delays so far may be related to the contractor never having had a job this big before, or to the lack of a full-time supervisor on-site.

### **"Dashboard" retention:**

Discussions have been held with the city's Office of Performance about retention of copies of the city's online "dashboards" that display a mix of data related to city operations (<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Performance>). It has been decided not to retain copies of the constantly changing dashboards. Published documents or reports referenced by the dashboard displays may, however, be retained.

### **ARC Databases:**

It does not appear that SharePoint software will be appropriate for providing public access to selected ARC records. The current "Content Manager" software system, which supports ARC's processing and retention of city records, does have a web browser interface that might be

linked to ARC city website pages. This option will be investigated, perhaps with a high value subset of digitized documents that have already been made available to the public (e.g., the city's annual reports and city council minutes). Use of this option may be an attractive option given that the city's "open data" planning efforts, which are coordinated by the IT Commission, appear to be on hold.

**Project Grant Opportunity:**

McDonald reported on efforts to work with the city's IT commission on development of an "open data" policy for the city. These efforts appear to be on hold given other IT commission priorities. McDonald has proposed using AI support to help develop the city's open data policy ([open\\_data\\_access\\_planning\\_01.pdf](#)) and is investigating possible state level interest in an AI-supported open data demonstration project, given possible official state support for AI pilot projects (<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2024/january/name-1019979-en.html> ).

**Next Meeting:**

March 18, 2024

**Respectfully submitted:**

Dennis D. McDonald, 2/28/2024