

Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)

Minutes of 15 April 2024 Meeting

Present:

Jackie Cohan (Archivist), Lynn Jordan (Chair), David Kovalik, Carl Rohde

Call to Order, Appointment of Secretary & Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM. Minutes from the 18 March 2024 meeting were approved.

Background and New Commission Member:

Ms. Cohan provided some background on ARC. Topics included ARC's role within the city, and the history and various uses of the current building, including expansions over the years. Fewer records are taken in for storage than previously, as departments are digitizing their own records. ARC is now taking in more permanent records and digitizing them. Off-site storage in Springfield is also used: approximately 2000 boxes in off-site storage has gradually been decreased to around 600 boxes today.

Other members briefly introduced themselves. New member Carl Rohde then introduced himself and Ms. Cohan offered Mr. Rohde a tour of the facility. Ms. Cohan described how the facility is open again to researchers but all public requests for records access by standard policy (e.g., FOIA requests) must go through the City Attorney. However, many sources of city data are still available to the public without requiring FOIA screening. Researchers at the facility are most commonly interning graduate students and other academics.

Facility Renovations:

The facility is soldiering on with a massive renovation that began last year. Improvements include a new HVAC, sprinkler system, and replacement of the external fire escape. The same renovation company will also soon be upgrading the elevator. Progress and complications were briefly discussed, including weak safety measures, poor quality workmanship, and the apparent lack of a foreman. Cleaning post-construction is not included in the contract. The new HVACs will minimally reduce the facility's usable storage space. Landscaping costs will come from ARC's budget.

Volunteers:

Announcement of a new volunteer to be serving at ARC. ARC's history of Volunteers was then briefly discussed. Last year, a policy to take only volunteers working on behalf of a university or another accountable program was informally adopted. An exception to this policy, the new volunteer comes highly credentialled, with a graduate degree from an excellent program at Georgia State along with aspirations for study at the NOVA historic preservation program.

ITS/City's Open Data Project/Public:

ARC is still working to offer digital records to the public online, specifically the minutes, the dockets, and the transcripts. Other city departments offer digital access to their documents. We have access to a massive records management database, but this can only be accessed by other city employees.

New Business:

None.

Next Meeting:

20 May 2024

Respectfully Submitted:

David Kovalik, 22 April 2024