

Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)
Minutes of the October 7, 2025 Meeting

Present: Sean Ferguson (Archivist); Lynn Jorden, John Connor, Karen Paul (member of the public)

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

Appointment of Secretary: Lynn Jorden was appointed secretary.

Minutes:

Introductions: PRAC members introduced themselves to Sean Ferguson, who stated as Archivist in June 2025; Sean did the same. Attendees talked about why they initially joined PRAC and what they hoped to see in the future. Karen Paul, a member of the public who joined the meeting, also joined in introductions as she was hoping to become a PRAC member in the near future.

Digitization Pilot Project: We received the results of our digitization pilot project, in which we sent 10 boxes to be digitized by an outside company. Sean has been pleased with the vendor and the end result, but it's clear that we will need to do more to prepare for a more large-scale project, such as ensuring that the contents and metadata of the boxes are standardized (for example, some records are in folders and others are not; older addresses are written in different ways), and ensuring that permits match the plans. However, the pilot project proved the skills of the vendor and the utility of the end result.

Preservation Needs Assessment: Over the summer, Sean put together a Preservation Needs Assessment and presented PRAC with his findings. Sean found that the ARC had achieved a great deal of important and impressive work in the past several years, and any future improvements would build on that great work. But there was some room for improvement, including an outdated and rigid staff structure, a need to refresh storage and housekeeping practices (including staying on top of pest control and landscaping), some obstacles for researchers, and no policies for electronic records. A larger vision for OHA in general was to have one research center that combined all City collections, with a whole new facility; in order to achieve this, we need to have a more unified archives and records management program.

Sean also determined 4 main objectives that he hopes to achieve:

- Update the center's policies, staff structure, and procedures, including: create a new archives and records center handbook; write a processing manual; make staff positions more flexible; update and expand the internship program, and identify grant opportunities.
- Reorganize and improve storage: designate one more room each for archaeology, museums and oral history; improve housekeeping and pest management; end offsite records storage, and systematically rehouse collections.
- Improve access to collections: upgrade the reading room; create professional finding aids; revise the City's FOIA policy for the archive (including changing the physical layout of the building to accommodate more researchers), and adopt new collection management software.

- Preserve electronic records in the City: update digitization practices (addressing oversized and AV collections too); conduct an electronic records survey of the city; renew records management relationships in partnership with ITS, and implement digital archives software.

PRAC Advocacy: The group discussed the role of PRAC and how we can be more helpful in advocating for ARC and for helping solve some of our longstanding problems. Most significantly, we discussed how we can help make a case for changing the City's FOIA policies to make collections much more accessible to researchers, and briefly discussed strategies, tactics and the appropriate timing.

New Business: None.

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4th.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Jorden