

**Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)**  
**Minutes of the April 17, 2017 Meeting**  
**Alexandria City Hall, Room 1102A**

**Present:** Jackie Cohan (Archivist), LiMin Fields, Barbie Keiser, John Hocker, Emily Earl, Monica St. Dennis, Jen Walsh

**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM.

**Appointment of Secretary:** Emily Earl appointed Secretary for the meeting.

**Minutes review, November 2016:** Minutes of the November 21, 2016 meeting are still missing. There is no group memory of who was appointed Secretary for that meeting.

**Minutes review, March 20, 2017:** One major edit: Emily Earl is her name, not Emily Traeger (her email address often causes confusion). Agreement that minutes were well written with lots of comprehensive background. Approved.

**Records Management Training for New City Employees:** Jackie is negotiating new records management training practices for new city employees. As it currently stands, there is only one training per year to introduce best records management practices. She would like to take this up to one training per month, because new city employees need orientation on a rolling basis.

**Q:** Should it be tailored to specific departments?

**A:** Yes and no. Could have a template for the basics that relays what must be done by law, best practices, and what choices are left to the individual departments/employees.

**Q:** Is there or should there be an FAQ?

**A:** There is an intranet for city employees, and there is a records management booklet. The booklet contains information about how to transfer records to records center, how to request records from the archives, and how to destroy records, among other info. Jackie says the website needs updating and the intranet could be better used for easy employee reference. Perhaps need to add basic retention rules to the booklet.

Suggestions:

- Record a WebEx (from Cisco, Jing, or Camtasia—free online tools to build a tutorial by talking over screen captures) to help with resources that they learned when attending orientation.
- Send out a welcome email to new employees where information on best practices and web links will sit in their [searchable] inbox for when the time comes that they need them.

**Future City Plans for Records Management/Retention:** In a meeting with the City Manager's Office, a person from the Office of Communications and Public Information who works with the city's FOIA requests proposed keeping all records forever, against the normal practices of destroying records after sometime between 6 months and 80 years, depending on the record. The person has proposed that the City consider approaching the State for exemption to the legal schedule of records management in order to keep everything forever. Jackie emphatically states that that is not \*management\* of records and requests some advice from the commission on how

to argue best practices with this person/idea. She specifically asked for zingers to take back to the next meeting with this person/the idea (to be held on April 21, 2017).

**Q:** Does the person mean to only keep all digital records?

**A:** They mean to keep everything forever. In accordance with the records management schedule, digital files are like any other record and must also be destroyed accordingly. Email is exactly like any other kind of record. For the Mayor and City Manager, they are permanent, but not for everyone else. Not everything is permanent, nor should be.

**Q:** Have there ever been other exemptions to this rule?

**A:** Schedule 19, local history. Ex: Jackie received an exemption for and has kept all records regarding construction of the Wilson Bridge.

Suggestions: What's his reason for keeping everything? That it is annoying work to destroy records? That citizens call to complain when records have been destroyed? That they are confused by and suspicious of the destruction? Find out the reasons and you might be better able to address them.

- The cost!
- The size!
- What kind of search tool could manage such a collection?
- How could there be enough staff to handle it all?
- FOIA would require them all to be discoverable.
- Anecdotally, 10-12 years ago, a search for ALL city council and mayoral emails cost \$110,000. (Has it gotten cheaper? More expensive?)
- If it is simplicity that the exemption request is after, perhaps it should be the policies that are made more clear/simple. It is a violation of state law if they just keep everything (without the exemption).
- Search and discovery is the problem.
- Point to specific laws.
- Don't want to be a laughing stock, losing records.
  - Ex: Arlington didn't fill their records management position immediately when the employee died, and the program quickly fell off and now they have no records management practices.
  - Ex: Years ago Barbie managed Pennsylvania Railroad records. She still gets calls in reference to them, though they are no longer under her purview, because no one else has the job.
- Identify the solution. Exemption on property records could be okay, perhaps. As is, only the certificate of occupancy is kept after construction, and exceptions with the State are often made for property records.

Jackie needs more ideas before Friday (4/21/17). Email her.

**Selection of chairperson:** LiMin Fields was unanimously voted Chairperson of the Commission.

**Selection of representative to the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC):** The HARC meets the third Tuesday of every month, and a representative is needed from the PRAC. The HARC is a 27-member commission, including one representative from the PRAC and one representative from the archaeology commission, and it is run by Lance Muhammed, head of Historic Alexandria. HARC used to have a bountiful stream of money.

**Q:** Is there any specific information that needs to be reported back and forth?

**A:** No.

Jen Walsh was unanimously voted representative from the City of Alexandria Public Records Advisory Commission to the Historic Alexandria Records Commission. She plans to attend the next meeting at the Lyceum, to be held the day after this meeting.

**New Business:** Barbie gave Jackie good information for getting interns. Jackie's interns fell off several years ago after a professor from George Mason came to the Center for a visit. Jackie was unsure if he had a bad opinion of the Center, but it was perhaps just a tendency for flakiness. Barbie will be meeting with a Dean from UMD soon and will put the bug about interns in their ear.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:02.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Emily Earl, Secretary**