

Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)
DRAFT Minutes of the January 25, 2021 Meeting
via Zoom

Present: Jackie Cohan (Archivist); Annette Morris (Records Manager); Cam Cook (as an observer due to technical difficulties); Lynn Jorden; Sean Ferguson; Monica St. Dennis; one 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: We did not approve the draft minutes of our November 16, 2020 meeting as our Chair was not present.

Interns: The Archives and Records Center would love to have interns, but there aren't a lot of activities that can be done entirely outside the office. We'd like to try for summer, but things are unpredictable with the pandemic and even that might be too soon. However, we don't want to say no because we don't want to fall off the internship radar for local colleges and universities.

Records Center Activities: The Archives and Records Center has been trying to get caught up on destruction of records that no longer be retained. We have been making progress; recently, we were able to clear a whole section of blueprints. Clearing these records will enable us to make room for the records currently being stored off-site. We're hoping to get all the planning and code enforcement boxes hopefully by spring—these are thing that get requested the most, so it's particularly advantageous to have these on sight. With new renovations, we might need to leave current space open so they can have it to maneuver. We're also started pulling older apartment blueprints, because of the large amount of FOIA requests related to those. The police department also came and purged their old records. We're glad to see people cooperating with us on records management. In order to focus more fully on this project, we've suspended the scanning project we were doing with Certificates of Occupancy so we don't have too many loose ends hanging for different projects.

Facility Renovations: The proposals have pretty much been completed, so now it's just a matter of getting it out for bids. We believe the earliest that project that start would be June 2021, though probably later. We met with people to talk about how to move records and other materials while renovations are occurring. About 20 years ago, there was a similar situation where items had to be moved, and we were able to get a locked trailer and move all the boxes there for a month or two when they were inaccessible. So for the Archives and Records Center, it doesn't seem like it would be too difficult to figure out a way to store records during the renovation process. We're talking about renting a trailer again, but currently we have a large space in which to store things, so that would likely be more for museum and archeological items rather than boxes.

The Archives and Records Center got new automated/motion-sensor lights in January 2021. They're much brighter as well as energy efficient. We also recently received upgrades to our WiFi.

Jackie Cohan put in a capital projects request to get the elevator replaced and updated because it's very old. We're waiting to hear whether that will happen. We also considered putting in a request for the fire escape, because the larger renovation project would not touch it. The contractor says it's sound, but we're not so sure about that—it's quite rusted and cracked and really looks like it needs to be replaced.

However, it's unlikely it would get done this year, so Jackie did not put in a request. We would love to see it get done in the next few years.

COVID-19 Pandemic Operations: We were asked by Community Services if they could use our loading dock to pack up supplies for COVID relief and then use our porch as a holding area for people to pick them up. There's already a lot of COVID relief-related activity around the building with the food bank. Community Services has come out and evaluated those areas of the building and they seem to like it. Our only concern would be access to confidential records, so we've asked them to remain in that specific area. Otherwise we're happy to help.

HARC Update:

- Some citizens are concerned that the skyrocketing cost of housing means it will be more financially beneficial for people to tear down houses in Del Rey, rather than renovating them. There is some division over whether citizens of Del Rey want it to become a historic district in order to head off this potential issue. So there may be a proposal for a historic district in Del Rey, depending on community buy-in.
- As of November, the Robinson Terminal demolition had started for river renew.
- Archeology is about to begin in the Jones Point Community Garden.
- There is an advocacy committee focusing on the Torpedo Factory, because of the Vibrancy and Stability Study. The study advises modernization of the building but does not consider the building's history, so the advocacy committee wants there to be more focus on that in the plan. HARC has submitted a letter to this effect to the City Council.
- Heritage Apartments are being renovated. This plan is going through the BAR; Advocacy Committee is working on a letter to them. There are a group of people in that neighborhood concerned about the fact that the Heritage Apartments would be replaced by larger, 7-story building, and are concerned about the impact on Old Town's aesthetic profile, although there are already high rises in Old Town.
- Freedom House 1st floor renovations were finished in November, and renovations are ongoing.
- There have been ongoing talks with regard to Liberty Gas Station and their renovations.
- HARC received a presentation on diversity & inclusion as it relates to historic preservation.
- There have been ongoing discussions about River Farm, a property next to Mount Vernon, which is up for sale. Some members of HARC believe they should write a letter to give input on what should be done with it, but other members point out that the property is in Fairfax County, and Fairfax County has bid on it. It was argued that Mount Vernon was still part of the Alexandria region.

New Business:

- a. **Vacancies** – There are 2 vacancies on the Commission, and they're being advertised by the City Council. These are vacancies for open seats, not currently occupied.

- b. **Website update:** We're planning to update the Archives and Records Center website with a short video or a records management manual, as well as some technical updates.

Next meeting - Our next meeting will be on February 22, 2021 via Zoom.

Adjourn: Lynn made a motion to adjourn at 8:07 PM; Monica seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Jordan