

# **Public Records Advisory Commission**

## **Annual Report**

### **July 2020 - June 2021**

#### Summary of Accomplishments

The mission of the Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC) states “The Records Advisory Commission provides advice and guidance to the City Records Administrator and Archivist on records management matters and implementation of the records program in the city. The commission is comprised of professional archivists, records managers, historians, research specialists, and citizens.” Within these guidelines the PRAC membership completed the following activities during its 2020-2021 year.

#### **PRAC Policy and Membership Accomplishments**

Membership remained steady throughout the year, although two commissioners’ terms expired this during this reporting period and neither reapplied. There are now three vacancies (one left over from 2019-2020) which have been posted on the Boards and Commissions web site. A Quorum was achieved at every meeting.

#### **PRAC Member Activities**

The internship and volunteer program, supported by PRAC, worked very well in the past, but because of the pandemic restrictions we could not have any interns or volunteers until June (despite numerous applications beginning in February 2021). An MLIS graduate student from the University of Maryland started her internship the first week of June 2021, scanning and OCRing City Council minutes, dockets, transcripts, and other important and special projects from 1958 through 1965 as well as describing in detail records of the Planning Commission. A volunteer who began volunteering at the Archives and Records Center in June 2021 also worked on the latter project.

## **Program or Legislative Accomplishments**

The Public Records and Advisory Commission assisted with determining what physical improvements would most benefit the facility and storage of records. The Archives and Records Center worked with the City's General Services Administration as well as a contractor hired by the City (Cole and Denny Architects) to plan renovations to the Records Center and bring the building up to ADA, professional archives and records management, energy/electrical efficiency, and fire suppression standards. During the renovations, the HVAC systems and sprinklers and roof will be replaced, window coverings installed, landscaping and vine removal carried out, and cracks to the exterior walls caulked. The first phase of the project—the replacement of all the 20-year-old flat roofs and replacement of damaged and missing tiles on the pitched roof plus repairs to the cupola—began in May 2020 and was completed in July 2020. During the period from July 2020 to June 2021, there were no more roof/ceiling leaks and water did not enter the elevator shaft via the cupola as before.

The second phase of the project saw the successful installation of 10,000-hour lighting (to decrease electrical usage and cost) and a room-by-room test conducted by General Services to determine where cracks to exterior walls exist. A General Services employee attended one of the Commission's meetings to explain the type of caulking to be used (it must not adversely affect archival records, museum collectibles and archaeological artifacts stored onsite), and a Commission member with expertise in preservation products provided input. The third phase of the project—HVAC, etc.—is slated to begin in late fall or early winter. It was also agreed that the purchase of data loggers to monitor environmental conditions routinely would benefit the collections.

The Commission assisted with efforts to establish an effective Records Management training process for Department Heads, departmental Records Officers, and all other City employees (during the 2019 fiscal year, the Commission assisted the Records Administrator and Archivist in developing three Records Management training modules to address each of the above constituents). At the end of February 2020, City Manager Mark Jinks sent a memo to the City's Department Heads to inform them that a new Records Management training process was soon to commence and that they would begin to receive training during the spring. Unfortunately, the pandemic precluded the training intended for the past year, but work did begin on a Records Retention document that will ultimately be posted to the employee intranet. Also discussed was recording a Records Management video for City employees, and the Records Administrator and Archivist did create instructions for Boards/Commissions.

The Commission also discussed improving Archives and Records Center operations, and after a 3-year hiatus in which staff could not destroy eligible records in accordance with Virginia state law, 2,169 boxes of obsolete records were destroyed during the fiscal year. And with the Commission's support of research activities, the Archives and Records Center carried out research on the history of Freedom House and hosted a project—funded by Planning and Zoning—to research mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century housing covenants.

### **Goals for 2021 – 2022**

The Commission will advise and assist in the implementation of the new Records Management training process, assuming there are no pandemic restrictions in place.

Work with the Records Administrator and Archivist to ensure the proper Records Destruction processes continue and to conform with other Virginia jurisdictions' practices.

Find opportunities to engage City Council, City staff and the public awareness of current Archive activities and both short-term and long-term Archive and Record Center personnel and financial needs.

Monitor Archives and Records Center renovations.

Continue to support the internship and volunteer program.

### **Leadership**

Rich Brune served as PRAC's chairperson until June 2021.

The role of secretary is rotated between the members monthly.

During the year, the Commission membership consisted of the following people:

Rich Brune, Monica St. Dennis, Cameron Cook, Lynn Jordan, and Sean Ferguson.

Jackie Cohan (Records Administrator and Archivist) acted as the staff liaison to the Public Records Advisory Commission during the 2020-2021 year.

**Attachment**

PRAC Annual Attendance Report 2020 - 2021