

Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)

Minutes of the March 3, 2026 Meeting

Location:

Alexandria Archives and Records Center

Time:

7:36pm - 8:09pm

Present:

Sean Ferguson (Archivist); Samuel Giovannucci, Kelsey Hamilton, Maoria Kirker. Quorum not established.

Excused Absence:

Karen Paul, John Conner

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:36pm.

Appointment of Secretary:

Maoria Kirker was appointed secretary.

Approval of Minutes:

The February 3, 2026 minutes were reviewed with no edits. The minutes could not be approved because there wasn't a quorum.

IT Project Updates:

- Microfiche Research Kiosk – Converting existing microfiche scanner into a public-access research station; hardest to approve due to public computer security concerns
 - This would be a huge benefit because it's a big time suck to have to do this work for researchers

- Question about what the security concerns are - related to networked computers and use of USBs to save the files
- Preservica – Digital archive software for long-term preservation of electronic records; a place for folks to send their records to as well; easiest for IT to approve due to its proprietary security features
- ArchiveSpace – Open-source software to publish finding aids publicly; under security review; Major benefit: Virginia institutions' finding aids are aggregated into a statewide database with 60+ institutions

Update on FOIA Process Request

- FOIA request with the city's attorneys updates
 - Last week hit the limit with how FOIA requests are submitted - received 5 very large, simultaneous FOIA requests for records on major city developments (1970–present), all on the same day; Sean worked until midnight to comply
 - Some issues include that other relevant city departments were not looped in despite holding relevant records
 - Short-term improvements have happened: other departments are being looped into requests, and requestors are being asked for more clarification upfront
 - Long-term request to exempt historical collections from the FOIA system is pending with the city attorney's office; follow-up by Sean is on hold until the Richmond legislative session ends

Other Project Updates

- Uptick in researchers - still funneled through FOIA system; seeing 2–3 researchers per week
- Storage - Sean wants to create a unified task force for storage space planning, including representatives from all museums storing items on-site (Apothecary Museum, Fort Ward, Lyceum, Gadsby's Tavern, Friendship Firehouse, Black History Division) - first meeting scheduled March 18
 - One goal is to make it easier to access - especially if can get a reading room at the archives and records center

Reviewing “Procedures for Destruction”

- Simplified the destruction sign-off process (reduced from 4 signatures to 1 binding electronic submission via the state portal)
- 3 boxes destroyed so far; hundreds more in the backlog
- Plan to implement a proactive destruction schedule for fiscal or calendar year, depending on the destruction schedule
- First monthly meeting with IT and city attorney on records management starts tomorrow, with AI and records management as the first topic
- Records creators vs. record holders

- Document helps to create clearer guidance on distinguishing primary record holders vs. convenience copy holders
- Core rule of thumb: the department whose primary mission aligns with the record type is the true record holder (e.g., HR for personnel records, City Manager's office for administrative regulations)

Update on Intern Project Processing Historic Deeds

- Intern indexing - have fine tuned the metadata schema
- Going through about 60 deeds/day using owner, date, and bounding streets (dropped modern address)
- Origin of the collection is unknown; TNES had no context on it
- Decision made to keep the collection in-house alongside other city records for cross-reference value (as opposed to only having records at courthouse, if even available there)

Selecting a Representative for the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC)

- Still looking for a representative - no one volunteered
- Question about having a rotating member, but the representative becomes a member of HARC so this isn't an option
- Will revisit at the April meeting

New Business

- No new business

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2026.

Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.