

**Public Records Advisory Commission
Annual Report
July 2021 – June 2022**

Summary of Accomplishments

The mission of the Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC) includes providing 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 2021/22 year.

PRAC Policy and Membership Accomplishments

- Example: Allan Krinsman was appointed to PRAC in September 2021. We still have 2 vacancies and members have reached out to their networks to seek applicants. Sean Ferguson replaced Monica St. Dennis as PRAC’s representative to HARC. A quorum was achieved at every meeting.

PRAC Member Activities

- Monica St. Dennis was our HARC representative for most of the year, with Sean Ferguson replacing her in May 2022.

Program and/or Legislative Accomplishments

- **Renovations:** The planned renovation of the Archives & Records Center has been in the works for several years. While stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made some progress. In spring of 2022, a new project manager was assigned and a bid solicitation was publicly posted in June 2022. The renovations will include an overhaul of the sprinkler system, new HVAC systems, and elevator repair, with possible painting and landscaping. The fire escape will be a separate project. The alarm system was recently upgraded.
- **Digitization:** Archives has and is working on digitizing many permanent records to make them more easily accessible. During FY 2022, Archives has digitized 66,369 pages of documents, far exceeding FY 2021’s 8,972 pages.
- **Internships & volunteers:** Archives has continued to have success in recruiting interns, often students studying library science. The biggest projects for these interns have been scanning and indexing City Council minutes, dockets and transcripts spanning the 20th century, as well as Planning Commission reports. Having these documents digitized will greatly ease access for researchers. Archives has also hosted volunteers and high school students interested in records management.

- **Records management training:** Archives held several one-on-one records management training meetings with City agencies.
- **FOIAs:** After a 5-year hiatus during which the Archives and Records Center was not permitted to provide access to researchers from the public because of FOIA/confidentiality concerns, an agreement was reached with the City Attorney's Office outlining the parameters for such researchers. Since then, several researchers have visited the Archives and Records Center.

Goals for 2022-2023

- **Renovations:** We hope to see progress made on facility renovations, especially given the condition of the restrooms, the elevator, and the fire escape.
- **FOIAs:** We will continue to develop policies for fulfilling FOIA requests that could cut back on the time and labor necessary to fulfill them. Letting researchers back into the facility to research on their own, rather than requiring them to fill out FOIA requests, was one step towards this goal. We also are considering the possibility of creating a staff role to handle FOIA requests.
- **Records management training:** Although Archives trained some departments one-on-one, we were unable to provide a City-wide records training in 2021-2022. Archives hopes to achieve that within the next year.
- **Administrative regulations:** We hope to finally update the administrative regulations around records management, which was originally written over 30 years ago. We plan on working with the City Attorney's office to facilitate this update.
- **Staff changes:** Archives will likely be dealing with staff retirements in the coming year. It will be vitally important to ensure that current staff's expansive knowledge and expertise is passed on to new staff members, and that process should begin as soon as possible. All relevant City stakeholders should have plans ready to execute in the event of staff departures, as FOIA request handling is mandated by law. If the Office of Historic Alexandria is restructured, PRAC will ensure that the importance of Archives & Records Management and having experienced staff to run it is well-understood.
- **Physical space:** Archives is running out of space for permanent storage and will be evaluating solutions, including providing temperature and humidity controls and mobile shelving to other rooms at the facility or acquiring additional space elsewhere. As a whole, OHA needs more space for overall storage, both for permanent records and museum collections.

Leadership

- Officers for the 2021-2022 year were elected at the September 2021 meeting. Lynn Jordan was appointed new chairperson of the Committee following the resignation of Rich Brune. Our leadership for the 2022-2023 year will be selected at our September 2022 meeting.
- Allan Krinsman was our only new member this year; his term is September 2021 through September 2023.
- During the course of the year, membership included the following individuals:
 - Cameron Cook
 - Lynn Jordan
 - Monica St. Dennis
 - Allan Krinsman
 - Sean Ferguson
- Jackie Cohan acted as the staff liaison to PRAC during the course of the 2021/2022 year.