

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *ps*

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE PUBLIC RECORDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

ISSUE: Receipt of the Annual Report from the Public Records Advisory Commission.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council receive the report of the Public Records Advisory Commission and thank the Commission for their efforts on behalf of the City.

DISCUSSION: The Public Records Advisory Commission has prepared a report detailing the activities of the Commission from July 2003 through June 2004. During this period, the Commission held 9 regularly scheduled meetings to discuss archives and records management issues. The Commission worked on the following projects during this 12-month period:

1. Public Records Management Program: *The Commission supports the creation of a pamphlet explaining the Archives & Records Center's functions, services for City agencies and members of the public, and archival research collection (to be distributed to City agencies, City Council, and area libraries).*

During the year, the Commission assisted the Records Administrator & Archivist in writing the pamphlet, which is to be printed and distributed in fall 2004.

The Commission also continues to support the adoption of the draft of Administrative Regulation 1-9 (Public Records Management Program).

A.R. 1-9 has been reviewed and discussed by department heads and is expected to be implemented in early 2005.

2. E-mail. *The Commission recommends a concerted training effort in conjunction with ITS to educate City staff with regard to retaining e-mail that is defined, according to state guidelines on the records of local jurisdictions, as an official record.*

In March 2004, Bill Cole, Director of ITS, and Jean Federico, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, attended a Commission meeting. ITS's long-term storage plans for e-mail and the number of e-mails generated per week were discussed. In April 2004, Jean Federico and Jackie Cohan (Records Administrator & Archivist) met with Bill Cole and

ITS staff to discuss e-mail training for City employees that emphasizes how few e-mails actually constitute an official record and that most should be deleted. ITS staff will work with staff in the Office of Historic Alexandria to develop a training program in 2005.

3. Resources. *The Commission encourages more collaborative projects with the Alexandria Library's Special Collections Branch and other record holders to increase public access to important, historical research collections.*

Over the last three years, Special Collections has had 16 boxes of Real Estate Property Record Cards held by the Archives & Records Center scanned, and only 3 boxes remain until the project is complete.

The Commission also supports the acquisition of additional archival staff through volunteers and grant monies to process archival material.

During the winter of 2004, two graduate students from George Mason University fulfilled course work by processing 10,000 Police Department arrest cards from 1927-1935 and 10 cubic feet of records created by the Alexandria Tourist Council. The Archives & Records Management Program will continue to use graduate students from both George Mason University and the University of Maryland.

The Commission feels that additional and better storage is needed to handle City records for which there is no space.

The FY 2005 Approved Capital Improvement Plan allots \$15,000 for a mobile shelving/storage study and the possible relocation of the heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning unit to increase storage space.

4. Preserve America.

To aid in the City's efforts to achieve *Preserve America* recognition, the Commission wrote a letter to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

5. Activity of PRAC Members on Additional Commissions and Committees.

Mr. Clarence Henley resigned as PRAC's representative to the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) and was replaced by Mr. Charles Ziegler. PRAC continues to support the activities of HARC in order to promote cooperation and mutual support among organizations committed to the preservation and improved access to historic documents.

6. Commission Membership.

One new member was appointed by City Council.

ATTACHMENT: Report of the Public Records Advisory Commission.

STAFF:

Jean Taylor Federico, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria

Jackie Cohan, Records Administrator & Archivist

Rose Williams Boyd, FOIA Officer

Public Records Advisory Commission

Annual Report to the City Council July 2003 – June 2004

The purpose of the Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC) is to provide advice and guidance on records management activities, including appropriate public access, and on the implementation of the records management program in the city. The Commission consists of seven citizen members appointed by the city council, each with a term of two years. Membership is composed, to the extent possible, of professional archivists, records managers, historians and research specialists. The Commission held nine regularly scheduled meetings at City Hall and the Archives & Records Center during the period covered by this report. Each meeting had an agenda and was open to the public.

At the June 2004 meeting, PRAC discussed the fact that the City Council was reviewing the status of Boards and Commissions. PRAC unanimously decided that: (1) its mission is an ongoing one, and thus not completed; (2) its mission statement adequately describes its functions and responsibilities; (3) PRAC should not be combined with any other group.

Office of Historic Alexandria

Jean Taylor Federico, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria, attended the March 18, 2004, PRAC meeting to brief the Commission on her office's activities, including its move to Lloyd House.

Public Records Management Program

The Commission assisted Jackie Cohan, City Archivist and Records Manager, in the creation of a pamphlet about the city's public records management program. Ms. Cohan continued to keep PRAC informed on the status to proposed changes in the Public Information/Records Management Administrative Regulations.

E-mail

Bill Cole, Director of ITS for the City of Alexandria, attended the March 18, 2004, PRAC meeting to discuss the City's E-mail policy. The Commission recommends a concerted educational effort under the leadership of Jackie Cohan, using multiple approaches, to educate city staff on records management with regard to e-mail.

Resources

While the Commission is pleased by the service of students and other volunteers at the Archives and Records Center this year, the members continue to be concerned about adequate staffing levels for archival services. Available resources remain a limiting factor in improving access to archives and increasing public awareness and use of existing material. Additional and better storage is needed to handle city records. Additional staff

is needed to complete the accession of archival material and to provide appropriate finding aids and to facilitate use of both archival and record material. PRAC has been encouraging increasing cooperation and partnerships with other records holders, particularly the Alexandria Library as a means of leveraging available resources.

Preserve America

In January, 2004, PRAC wrote a letter to the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in support of the designation of the City of Alexandria, Virginia as a *Preserve America* Community. The Council gave the designation to the city.

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC)

Charles Ziegler served as PRAC's representative on this body. The Commission members are keenly interested in the activities of HARC because it provides an important opportunity for cooperation and mutual support among organizations interested in preserving historic documents and improving public access to information in those documents and other records.

Commission Membership

The Commission had one vacancy during the past fiscal year. A new member, Sanford Horn, joined PRAC during this reporting period. During this year, the following citizens served:

Martha Crawley (elected chair on October 16, 2003)

Alice Fierstein
Clarence Henley
Sanford Horn
Mark St. Mary
Charles Ziegler

Respectfully submitted:



Martha Crawley, Chair