

PAUL R. CAMPBELL
City Archivist

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Mayor



Division of Archives and History

Memorandum

TO: ANNA STETSON, CITY CLERK
FROM: PAUL CAMPBELL, CITY ARCHIVIST *P.C.*
DATE: AUGUST 17, 2010
RE: JULY MONTHLY REPORT

I began full-time duties as City Archivist on July 6th. I am pleased to report that we have taken some form of action on 12 of the 17 recommendations made by the Special Commission to Study Archival Storage. Shortly after my arrival, we began a thorough review and revision of archives procedures. We revised conditions for use procedures, restricted patron access to collections, implemented accession and deaccession registers, and began a major reorganization of records under our care. Cataloging of collections, which had not taken place in nearly a decade, was begun once again. A locker was ordered and upon its arrival, patrons will be required to place all bags and briefcases there as a further precaution against theft.

With assistance from the IT Department, I was able to add two new computer terminals and work stations. One was put to immediate use with the arrival of a summer intern who began processing 19th century city council records and developing a finding aid to facilitate their use by researchers. I also anticipate the arrival of a temporary employee that would be put to use immediately in reducing the enormous backlog of deferred projects.

I was particularly concerned with the poor storage conditions of the collection of mayoral paintings and took two preliminary steps to avoid further damage to this irreplaceable resource. Virtually all the paintings (with two exceptions) have been relocated to gallery areas on the third and fourth floors. I also conducted research to identify experts in fine art conservation and, after consultation with those experienced in this area, contacted a fine arts restorer in Boston. He viewed the collection and has issued a preliminary conditions report. I am currently working on a plan to raise the necessary funds to clean and repair the paintings.

Conservation of paper records is another priority. The poor storage conditions here--water leakage, humidity, dirt and dust, as well as deferred maintenance of the collections make this a particularly daunting challenge. My plan is to develop an in-house

conservation capability within the archives to begin stabilizing some of our more fragile maps, atlases, books and photographs. In addition, we are now working with two bookbinders and have begun an accelerated program to repair damaged books, some of which date from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. I have also ordered an air purifier and a vacuum cleaner specifically suited to use in special libraries and archives.

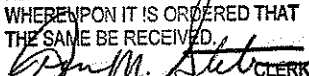
I have also been working with a volunteer who is an architectural historian on a large \$250,000-\$300,000 federal NHPRC grant to preserve, properly catalog and make available digitally our very important collection of maps, blueprints and plat plans. This will encompass both our collections and that of the City Engineers Office and Recorder of Deeds. In addition to re-establishing a cataloging program, I have, with the assistance of our intern and a volunteer, begun to develop a framework for a City Archives web site. This will allow us to offer our collections to a global audience and serve them in a much more efficient manner.

One major initiative is the centralization of the city's records management program. Here we are working on three separate initiatives; 1) review of all records currently being stored at the city's off-site facility in West Warwick; 2) review and destruction, where appropriate, of all non-permanent records in the City Hall basement and in storage areas within the City Archives; 3) conducting workshops in conjunction with the State Archives to educate departmental personnel on current records management procedures and practices with a view towards an integrated, efficiently run citywide records management program. I remain confident that the city can enjoy significant savings from reduced storage costs as well as time spent in searching for records.

While working on all the above-mentioned initiatives, the archives continues to serve the public and departments of city government on a daily basis. This past month a wide variety of patrons including architects, genealogists, lawyers, professors, graduate students to name a few made use of our collections. The archives enjoys an excellent reputation for patron service that predates my arrival and I am determined to continue to maintain that level of service. I want to take this opportunity to commend my staff Claire Bestwick, and Doyin Joseph for their support and their enthusiastic commitment to improve conditions here. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the invaluable assistance of the City Clerk in guiding the work of the Commission study and encouraging me to move aggressively with implementation of their recommendations.

IN CITY COUNCIL

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READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.
 CLERK