

Meeting of the Record Storage Advisory Committee, November 15, 2017 [amended 12/29/17]

Meeting opened, 11:03 a.m.

Present: Leslie Bracebridge (LB), Susan Millinger (SPM), Susie Mosher (SM), Linda Avis Scott (LAS). Absent, Buildings Committee Representative Jim Aaron, Savannah Ouellette and Becky Torres.

Guest: Linda Seidman, archivist retired from the Special Collections of UMass Amherst Library.

New Business:

Presentation by archivist Linda Seidman on what, in her experience, would be involved in storing documents in UMass's SCUA: Special Collections & University Archives.

Linda recommended that we should contact Danielle Kovacs, the Curator of Collections at dkovacs@library.umass.edu or 413-545-2784 with any questions we may have.

The handouts Linda brought for us are stored in a folder so marked in the bookcase in the hall near the water cooler, with the rest of the materials for RSAC. These handouts include SCUA's mission statement and history, several sample inventories of Shutesbury former residents' documents preserved in SCUA, and information on preservation grants.

What SCUA offers: proper storage conditions: including monitored air quality, constant temperature, archive-quality folders and boxes, steel shelving or cabinets, locked stacks, access and use under supervision.

It's possible that SCUA would inventory as well as index the materials. The type of materials SCUA accepts: unique items which are not accessed more than at most one or two times a year: materials you never look at unless someone asks a specific question about them. Seidman classified materials into: a) never or very rarely looked at; b) looked at to make comparisons: usually back 25 or 50 years; and c) documents in regular use. SCUA is interested in the first category. If we had questions about whether we were dealing with something unique, we should look in the UMass catalog to check.

SCUA is most interested in paper documents but does store a few other kinds of materials: Hadley (?) has stored documents on microfilms, for example. It does not accept family Bibles or any objects.

If we were proposing to send materials to SCUA, SCUA would want to know: the date range, from earliest to latest, of the documents; measurements of the quantity to be stored (in numbers of boxes, maps, etc.); format of the materials (large format materials would require special storage and thus are less desirable); types of materials (town meeting minutes, for example; or assessors' reports); condition of material. [Note: Moldy materials would require treatment before SCUA could accept them. We would need to get a grant to cover cleaning costs; SCUA might help us apply for a grant.]

In answering questions from the Committee, Linda pointed out that SCUA does contain large holdings of documents comparable to those Shutesbury has: examples include the Hampshire COG's documents from the 17th century to 1969. SCUA also has materials complementary to Shutesbury's town documents, such as Shutesbury residents Phineas Hemenway's daybook and Samuel Henry's financial records.

If there are materials that are not wanted among the materials sent to them, SCUA would return them to us.

Storage there would be on-going, in that about every ten years they would take additional documents of the kinds SCUA is holding to continue the series they have.

In inquiring whether SCUA would be interested in our holdings, we would need to carefully describe what we have. SCUA would probably send someone to look at what we have; if they accept our materials, they would probably come to collect them.

SM suggested that a necessary early step is evaluating the materials for preservation needs; Linda Seidman said that SCUA might provide advice about needed preservation.

Who would own these materials? Do they still belong to the town? LAS suggested we consult Abby Baines, a librarian who helped with the storage of materials for the 250th committee, for her perspective and experience. LAS also suggested we visit SCUA. LB encouraged contact with the State Archivist to see if it is possible for town records to be held by another body, such as SCUA.

The Committee thanked Linda Seidman for a full and informative presentation.

The minutes of October 25, 2017, were approved as read. Copies will be sent to Rachel Onuf, the Roving Archivist; the Select Board; the Historical Commission; the Buildings Committee; and Jim Aaron.

Old Business

Application for grant from Massachusetts SHRAB (the State Historical Records Advisory Board): Chair SM reported that there was a problem with our application for a grant from SHRAB because we followed the grant model available online, which turned out to be faulty.

Rachel Onuf also pointed out that we would need to purchase large archival folders to hold the maps (in groups) in the map cabinet for which we are requesting funding.

Note: it was reported that the Buildings Committee suggested that to save money, we look for a second-hand cabinet for flat files from architects who are no longer using theirs. The Committee repeated its need for archival-quality storage units and its need for the presence at its meetings of the appointed Buildings Committee representative.

Acquisition of a datalogger: Becky Torres found funding to buy a datalogger and it has arrived. There was discussion about where to set it up, and for how long. It was decided to set it up in the main room downstairs where the flat file will go for now.

New Business, part two

The second item on our agenda: Discussion of the proposals of the Strategic Plan of 2000/2001.

We were asked to prepare for this meeting by looking at consultant William T. Carroll's *Long-Range Historical Records Strategic Plan*, drawn up in 2000/2001 to identify what he sees as high priority items. The Committee's observations:

Carroll identified as important:

1. housing of records in archival-quality enclosures (folders, boxes, and shelving or cabinets);
2. separation of active from inactive records and permanent from non-permanent records;
3. stabilizing of temperature and humidity;
4. providing security for records
5. inventorying holdings

Carroll's suggestion 2: Separation of active from inactive and permanent from non-permanent records

The Committee discussed at some length the need to separate active and inactive permanent records and to separate permanent from non-permanent records. This is important in part because it is a way of easing the current crowded storage conditions. Ideally, probably each office needs to learn to separate permanent from non-permanent; to look at each document with a long-term lens. It is agreed that the Record Retention guide is not very helpful. Training might be necessary.

Ideally, the goal of each office should be to classify every document created by it according to how it should be stored. From the beginning of every record's existence, it should be labelled so that its final disposition is clear.

It will be easier to start with current records; once offices are familiar with this identification process, older documents will be easier to classify. The focus, therefore, should be on records in the current Town Hall.

LAS pointed out that often multiple copies of a document are created for current use, but only one copy will be needed of a permanent record. SM and LAS plan to develop a protocol for consolidation of completed ZBA and Planning Board cases. The final archived file will be stored in an archival-quality folder. Once the process is clear, archived records in Old Town Hall can be tackled to clear out redundant materials.

SM and LAS plan to initiate this identification of documents.

The Strategic Plan is a helpful source which adds extra support to the suggestions made by Rachel Onuf in her report of 2017.

FY19 Budget requests

The Finance Committee needs to get used to records storage requests, which will ordinarily be of two types:

- A) Annual Maintenance
- B) Capital Planning: items such as furniture for storage (such as shelving; cabinets)

SM suggested that the RSAC submit a FY 19 annual budget request for:

1. a box of 100 archival-quality file folders (cost \$39.05)
2. a package of six (6) record storage folder supporters (cost: \$10.75/each)
3. record storage boxes, also archival-quality: 5 or more (cost: \$7.20/each)
4. large archival quality folders for large records like maps (cost: 3 for \$20)
5. one ream of acid-free paper at this time (cost \$15.30)

We discussed using acid-free paper. It was pointed out that the records many offices receive will not be on acid-quality paper, yet will need to be saved; acid-quality paper would be a big expense if used in large quantity. It was suggested that we use acid-quality paper only in very special cases. Vital Records would be a good example of a special record needing acid-free paper

Also: perhaps we should request another data-logger, although we could instead ask to borrow one from the State. This decision was put off for now.

It was suggested that the Conservation Commission needs to buy LAS some archival quality boxes and file folders as soon as possible for its Clerk, LAS, to use.

Other information and suggestions

The State's Contribution to Document Abundance: It was pointed out that if we could convince the State to quit sending us bound copies of Massachusetts Reports, materials which we can now access on line, it could reduce the amount of material the Town has to store. [SM has written to the State about this.]

Historical Commission contributions: archivist Kristen Van Patten, a new member of the Commission, has offered to help answer our questions. The HC plans to start digitizing records. RSAC agreed it needs to include the HC in its minutes' email list.

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 20 beginning at 11 p.m. This meeting will follow the planned field trip to Templeton, to see records storage at a nearby site recommended by Rachel Onuf.

The field trip to Town Hall, Templeton is also December 20, leaving Town Hall promptly at 7:25 a.m.

On the agenda for the 11 a.m. meeting:

Discussion of what we saw and learned from the Town Clerk at Templeton Town Hall.

Further discussion of which recommendations of the 2000/2001 *Strategic Plan* the Committee should focus on.

Meeting adjourned, 12:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Millinger, secretary