

Meeting of the Record Storage Advisory Committee, December 20 2017 corrected version

Meeting opened, 11:04 a.m.

Present: Leslie Bracebridge (LB), Susan Millinger (SPM), Susie Mosher (SM), Savannah Ouellette (SO), Linda Avis Scott (LAS) and Becky Torres (BT), who had to leave part way through the meeting. Absent, Buildings Committee Representative Jim Aaron.

Minutes of November 15: The minutes were discussed and several amendments were approved: primarily the inclusion of LB's suggestion that the State should be contacted to find out whether town documents can be held by any organization beside the Town itself. In addition, the secretary was instructed not to include any information that was not available during the meeting. The minutes were passed as amended.

Procedural suggestions of the Chair:

-Volunteer efforts by any committee member to research an issue are welcomed. (S)he should check first with the committee to ensure there is no duplication of effort and that all members know what is happening.

-That the meeting should end with action plans.

Old Business:

1. Materials and supplies for record storage: recent developments

-Re the datalogger. Its present whereabouts (the large room in the basement) were clarified, and concerns about its security were aired. Perhaps it should be put inside the flat file: SM will check to see if that is possible.

-Re the flat file. It has arrived and been assembled; it is currently in the large room in the basement. SM will look into finding a town body to pay the balance (\$161.16) remaining after the SHRAB grant covered most of the expense.

LAS asked the Conservation Commission to purchase 20 large folders for the flat file, folders in which groups of maps can be organized. The Commission agreed to pay the approximate cost of \$117. LAS expects these to arrive later on Dec. 20th.

-Re other needed materials: In the future, RSAC will need to discuss the acquisition of archival-quality boxes and regular-sized folders. LB brought over some folders from the Old Town Hall to try out.

2. The question of archiving town documents in UMass's Special Collections & University Archives (SCUA).

After the Oct 25th meeting, SM contacted Danielle Kovacs, the Curator of Collections at SCUA to ask who would own these materials if they were archived at SCUA. Would they still belong to the town? Kovacs' reply: "The Special Collections can only accept materials that are given to us outright, not those placed on deposit where ownership of the physical property is retained by the

donor. Depositing materials used to be more common several decades ago, but most repositories have stopped accepting them for a variety of reasons.”

SM also contacted Dr. John Warner, the State Archivist, for his view on the question of storage at SCUA. He recommended against this, stating that Town records should remain in the custody of the town. The Chair concluded that this indicated the Town could not use the SCUA option; however, perhaps the Historical Commission has materials they could relinquish to SCUA.

LB requested a copy of the above communications be attached to the minutes. See the attachment.

-Materials in Old Town Hall which may be expendable: LB commented that while she was Town Clerk, some of the old law books now in the Old Town Hall were assessed and were found to be valuable. LB raised the question of whether these might be sold to provide some money for Record Storage expenses.

3. Budget Request proposed by the Chair at meeting of November 15.

Discussion of several issues related to this budget request ensued.

-Should archival-quality materials be included in the budgets of individual offices, or should there be one Town Hall request and purchase? One point to consider is that it is often cheaper to buy in bulk; moreover, some items are only available in substantial quantities.

-The Finance Committee needs to know that there should be one line for Records Storage materials that every office uses.

-BT was asked whether we should use the existing Office Supplies line; BT suggested an Archival Supply line to enable the tracking of purchases. It would also be easier to explain the existence of a new line than sudden increases in an old line.

-Should we use Hollinger, or University Products? LB used University to support a local business. LAS said Hollinger will permit the ordering of small quantities; she will see whether University Products does also.

-LAS pointed out that we need a total budget request. Total: \$105 (not including the folder supports, which have been donated, as mentioned above.) SM wanted to establish a ball-park ANNUAL appropriation to cover permanent record storage costs for all departments.

-Discussion about how large the budget request should be. SM’s budget request included a cover letter pointing out that expenses are still unknown. *[Note: this letter is included as an attachment.]* This letter, and the budget, could still be amended. Some committee members think we should make a larger request. This discussion will continue at our next meeting.

One complication is the difference between expenses for archival-quality materials for permanent records to be generated each year (expenses for a year’s worth of permanent records) *and* the expenses of properly storing documents from preceding years, that is, the backlog of documents. It might be, for example, that every year each office asks for the storage needs of that year’s permanent records *AND* for the needs of a certain amount (say a year or two) of previous

years' permanent records. In addition, there is the cost of the TIME needed for this storage, particularly of older records. To get a better sense of likely annual costs, LAS is going to reexamine the budget after determining what departments generate permanent records, and what they will need to archive them.

(This brings up the whole issue of helping departments distinguish between permanent and non-permanent records, and the further question of where to store non-permanent records.)

The question of centralization of record storage vs storage by individual departments ("local storage") underlies this discussion, and led to a report on the field trip to the Town Clerk's Office, Templeton Town Hall.

New Business:

Report on Field Trip to Templeton:

LB, SM and SPM were able to drive to Templeton on the early morning of December 20 and meet the Templeton Town Clerk for a guided tour of her Archives and a question and answer session. SM reported on the group's findings (with photos) with occasional comments from the others on the field trip.

Templeton has a population of approximately 7,400 people, which make its experience quite different from that of Shutesbury, with about 1800. Templeton also has a different history, in that the Town offices fairly recently moved from their older, smaller building to an unused former school building that was renovated. The different departments now have very spacious offices, so they have room to store their own records in their offices. In addition, the various offices had a history of individual storage of their records, because the Town Clerk was housed separately, a good distance away, in Baldwinville. In moving to the new Town Hall, the current Clerk requested archival storage attached to her office. To get it, she had to overcome significant opposition from part of Town leadership, which wanted the archives to be in the basement. The Clerk persisted, with the support of the Historical Commission and the Community Preservation Commission. The annex containing the archives was built in 2014. Note that the picture of the exterior revealed that the building has temperature control.

The CPC ultimately paid the bulk of the cost for the 10'x 12' metal shell (\$120,000) and the exterior brick surround, which makes this annex resemble the rest of the building (\$40,000.) Pictures showed exterior and interior views of the annex, which opens into a short hallway directly opening into the Town Clerk's office. Pictures also showed the metal shelving (some of which slides on tracks) and the vault door, both of which came from the former archives in Baldwinville. The Clerk has an on-going project of rebinding older records.

The visitors were impressed by how much space the vault has, but it helps that most minutes are stored elsewhere. A few non-permanent items are temporarily stored there (ballots, for example).

SM pointed out that the example of Templeton shows that different situations can lead Town Clerks and Record Storage to a variety of solutions.

-Subsequent discussion led to some speculation about possibilities for Shutesbury. Following the Templeton example, for example, Shutesbury could add on an annex (or two, to be architecturally balanced) off the north end of the current Town Hall in which an exterior which fit the rest of the building could contain a metal shell for an archive.

A discussion about process arose. SM feels we are at a stage to create a grid listing the needs of record storage on one axis, and then listing all the various space options on another axis. Some record storage needs were then mentioned: permanent vs non-permanent storage; environmental needs; archival quality materials. This led to a lengthy discussion of decision-making by the committee.

Action Plans:

LAS will work on the budget request.

SM will check with Gregor about possible placement of datalogger inside the new flat file.

SM will check with the Town Clerks of both Wendell, Barre and Munson to schedule further field trips, since it was agreed that the trip to Templeton was quite informative. Committee members were asked about the days and times they would be available: SO's best days are Tues and Wed, not too early. LB is available Wed, Thurs and Fri, with Wed am preferable.

General action for the committee members: write down what you know to this point about record storage, and what questions you have, with a list of any possibilities for record storage, permanent and non-permanent.

Let SM know if there is anything you would like to add to the agenda when it comes out.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 24 beginning at 11 p.m.

Meeting adjourned, 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Millinger, secretary

Attachments:

-Correspondence with Special Collections at UMass and with John Warner, Archivist of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Includes Technical Bulletin 3, Records Security

-Draft letter to Capital Planning Committee from S Mosher