

CITY OF BURNABY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS

RE: RECORDS MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council authorize staff to pursue a request for proposal for the services of a records management consultant to work with the City Clerk on development of a pilot project for a records management policy and program for the City.

REPORT

The Executive Committee of Council, at its meeting held on 1999 May 31, received and adopted the attached report outlining the current records management/archive functions performed by the City. The report also addressed the issue of developing a City-wide records management program including the establishment of policies for the retention, destruction and maintenance of City records, particularly as it relates to the establishment of a municipal archive facility at McGill Library.

Arising from discussion, the Executive Committee requested that Council obtain the services of a records management consultant to work with the City Clerk to develop a records management policy for the City. The Committee concluded by supporting a phased approach to a records management program beginning with a pilot implementation program in the City Clerk's Office.

Respectfully submitted,

D.R. Corrigan,  
Chair

D.G. Evans,  
Member

: COPY - CITY MANAGER  
- DEP.MGR.-CORP. SERV.  
- DIRECTOR FINANCE  
- DIR. PLNG. & BLDG.  
- CITY CLERK

C. Redman,  
Member

## CITY OF BURNABY

TO: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
CIVIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

FROM: CITY CLERK

SUBJECT: RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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1999 MAY 19

### RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information.

### REPORT

At the regular Council meeting held on 1999 March 08 Council received a report from the City Manager providing a survey of archival facilities and records management programs in other Municipalities. This report was subsequently referred to the Executive Committee, Civic Development Committee and the Community Heritage Commission.

At its meeting of 1999 March 25 the Civic Development Committee requested staff prepare a report outlining the current records management/archive functions performed by the City. This request arose from Council's adoption of the Civic Development Committee's recommendation to create archival space in the new McGill Library.

Subsequently, at its meeting of 1999 April 23 the Community Heritage Commission requested staff prepare a report regarding development of a city-wide records management program including the establishment of policies for the retention, destruction and maintenance of city records, particularly as it relates to the establishment of a municipal archive facility at McGill Library.

This report is an attempt to respond to these requests as the issues in essence are one and the same.

## **BACKGROUND**

Section 198 of the Municipal Act of B. C. states, in part, the officer assigned responsibility for corporate administration (City Clerk) is responsible for, among other powers, duties and functions:

- “(a) ensuring the accurate minutes of the meetings of the local government and its committees are prepared and that the minutes, bylaws and other records of the business of the local government and its committees are kept safe;
  
- (b) ensuring that access is provided to records of the local government as required by law or authorized by the local government.”

Within that statutory authority the Clerks Department has worked diligently to ensure records of this local government are secure, well maintained and accessible to those who require our assistance, whether that involves internal customers (council or staff) or external customers (the general public, media etc.).

In 1994 the Clerks Department, through the combined financial assistance of the Community Heritage Commission and the Provincial Government obtained the services of a records management consultant (hereafter referred to as Quartech) to conduct an inventory of the City's records and to recommend steps which could be taken to create and implement a records management program. The impetus behind this action was the impending adoption of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation by the Provincial Government.

To date the issue of public access to City records has been addressed. There is a process in place to respond to formal FOI requests and the Clerks Department endeavors to be as cooperative as possible to assist people in obtaining information within the confines of the legislation. However there is room for improvement with efficiencies and cost savings which could be realized through a more formalized records management system.

The Quartech recommendations related to the adoption of a records classification system, development of retention policies and the phased approach to ensure all city departments utilize the same system have not as yet been implemented.

## **CURRENT STATUS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Each department within the City of Burnaby maintains its own files and its own filing system. While this has proved to be a reasonably efficient, effective practice in

previous years the City, now approaching its 107<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, is experiencing the result of 107 years of growth resulting in 107 years of records to maintain.

Implementation of a records management program would allow staff to reduce records maintenance time, facilitate retrieval and save overhead costs. In particular the need to store official City records in a fire proof vault will grow decidedly more expensive as we continue to grow. In the absence of a records management program with attendant policies regarding retention, maintenance and archiving of records, we tend to err on the side of caution and keep everything.

From an archival perspective it is difficult to determine which records have archival value without an appropriate policy to define the criteria upon which the records may be evaluated.

The records currently earmarked for transfer to the McGill Library facility are not part of the records within City Hall. These are historical documents which have been previously stored at Simon Fraser University and are currently stored at the Burnaby Village Museum and are the designated records to form the initial "archive". In order to determine which additional records would appropriately be stored at McGill Library it is necessary to implement a records retention policy and establish criteria for evaluating the historical value and importance of the records currently contained in City Hall.

There is not a large volume of information currently at the Museum. There are Minute Books from 1892 -1984; Paper copies of bylaws from 1892 -1989 (many are already missing); Bylaw Number Assignment Books from 1892 -1945; Some Clerks Department files pre-dating the 1970's; and Original CD plans from approximately the 1970's to early 1990's. It is not known what criteria was used to move these records into storage other than the need to create more storage space at City Hall.

In the Clerks Department vault we have Minute Books from 1985 onward; Filmed Minutes from 1892 -1982 (these cannot be read as the film reader technology has changed in the intervening years); Microfiche copies of all Bylaws; Bylaw Number Assignment Books from 1945 -1999; Microfilmed Clerks Files from approximately the 1970's -1980's; Filmed Agenda coversheets and Minutes from 1973 -1990; List of Electors from 1961 -1990; and filmed Manager's Reports from 1964 -1979 (no paper copies). These records are in addition to our unfiled active files dating from the 1980's to the present date.

The establishment of a retention policy and appropriate evaluation criteria would allow us to determine which of this information has archival relevance and what should be transferred to an archive facility. The environment in the vault is not conducive to the long term survival of these films and documents.

## OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Staff have contacted other lower mainland municipalities to obtain information with respect to their records management practices and policies.

For the most part other lower mainland municipalities utilize customized forms of the Municipal Officers Association (M.O.A) Records Classification system complete with retention policies. While the majority of records are kept in a centralized location individual departments do keep some records. However the classification system and records management policies governing those records are determined by the Clerks Department.

The Burnaby Clerks Department currently uses a modified version of the MOA system without the retention policies, however other city departments use their own systems which are not based on the MOA system. Each individual department keeps their own records.

## CONCLUSION

Although City departments are properly maintaining their various filing systems, our continued growth dictates that without implementing records management policies and procedures storage costs will continue to increase, staff time devoted to retrieval will increase, we will eventually run out of physical space and will not be able to ensure the preservation of valuable historical as well as semi-active and current documents.

The primary benefits of implementing a records management program are the annual savings of overhead costs based on a reduction in the volume of records stored and a reduction in staff time spent searching for records, which in some departments could be a savings of up to an hour per day.

While some aspects of the Quartech report, particularly those dealing with FOI and POP, have been implemented the balance of the recommendations dealing with the establishment of records classification based on the MOA system, a retention policy and the phased implementation of the program across city departments have not yet been initiated.

Although our current filing systems have provided us with a reasonable standard for maintaining our records, it would be prudent to initiate development of a records management program in advance of possible future problems, particularly where our historically relevant records are concerned.

Given that the Civic Development Committee's involvement in records management is confined to the creation of the archival space at McGill Library and the Community Heritage Commission's involvement centers around concerns about the preservation of historical materials, not the mechanics of the records management process, it would appear the Executive Committee would be the appropriate body to

initiate any further steps with respect to implementing a records management system for the City of Burnaby.

Therefore staff suggest that should the Executive Committee wish to initiate the process it would be appropriate to recommend Council obtain the services of a records management consultant to work with the City Clerk to develop a records management policy for the City. A pilot project could begin with implementation of the MOA classification system in the Clerks Department, develop criteria for determining the archival relevance of records, develop semi-active records storage space, transfer semi-active records to storage, destroy unnecessary records in accordance with the developed records management policy and design and implement MOA based active records filing procedures in accordance with the records management policy.

Once the policies are in place and the system is up and running in the Clerks Department it would be a matter of a phased approach to implementation in other City departments. This would result in all historically relevant records being identified and preserved and all City departments operating with the same records classification system in accordance with a city-wide records management policy.

This report is provided for the information of the Executive Committee, Civic Development Committee and the Community Heritage Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debbie R. Comis', with a date '1.1.08' written to the right of the signature.

Debbie R. Comis,  
City Clerk