

Chapter IIIA, § 3(2)

SEC. 3. DUTIES OF THE CITY SECRETARY.

The city secretary shall:

(1) attend all meetings of the city council and keep accurate records of all actions taken by the city council;

(2) oversee a records management program for the city that provides for the identification, maintenance, retention, security, electronic storage, microfilming, disposition, and preservation of city records and appoint a city records management officer to administer the program. The records management program shall include permanent retention of all written minutes and electronic recordings of all city boards and commissions, and those minutes and recordings should be made publicly available by posting them on a link on the city's website;

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Justification: Current practice allows the city secretary to adopt a records management program and gives the city secretary discretion insofar as the time period to retain those records. Recently, the city secretary elected to destroy all board and commission recordings older than 90 days, resulting in the loss of years of the City's history and rendering it impossible to revisit the details of what may have occurred at a particular hearing. Keeping such records is essential to the function of open and transparent government. The cost of retaining such records continues to decline. Further, any added costs (due to retention) can be offset by making these records available to the public online, which obviates the need for open records requests and personnel to handle such requests.

CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE (SEC) RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of the City Secretary's Office that this proposed change be categorized as a "policy" issue to be addressed by the City Council at a future date, with a possible change to the Dallas City Code, if desired. This is a determination that should be made by the City Council and not the general public as there is no ability to inform the public of the cost factors involved in implementing/maintaining a permanent on-line retention for all boards/commissions minutes/audio of public meetings.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

The City complies with retention requirements established by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC). Each department in turn condenses these requirements to develop its own retention schedule that contains only the specific record series they use. These schedules are reviewed in advance by the Records Management Officer to ensure the TSLAC minimum retention requirements are met, after which they are submitted for approval by the department director. The Dallas City Code requires the recommendation by the Records Management Policy Committee (RMPC), comprised of the City Manager, City Attorney, City Auditor and City Secretary, and approval by City Council on any record series for which a longer retention period than what is required by the State is sought by a City department. The resolution approving the longer retention period is then submitted to the TSLAC.

The TSLAC prescribed retention periods for the following two record series are as follows:

- Written minutes – Permanent
Minutes are submitted in hard copy form to the City Secretary's Office. The appropriate permanent file is prepared and the records permanently maintained. Not all board/commission minutes are placed online by the administrating department; and it is likely on the City Plan and Zoning Commission minutes are online at this time (2005-Present).

No open records requests for this record series were received by the City Secretary's Office in 2013. However, of the 14,000-15,000 open records requests received by the City's Public Information Office, it is estimated that only 31 were for this records series:

- Dallas Citizens Police Review Board : 5 (estimate)
 - City Plan and Zoning Commission: 10 (estimate)
 - Board of Adjustment: 10 (estimate)
 - Civil Service Board: 5 (estimate)
 - South Dallas/Fair Park Trust Fund Board: 1 (estimate)
- Audio recordings, if produced – Permanent only if written minutes are not prepared. If written minutes are prepared; audio recordings are only required to be retained for 90 days after approval of minutes.
The City Secretary's Office is not provided with audio records for board/commission public meetings. Departments responsible for the various boards/commissions have chosen to follow the 90-day retention rule. The department is responsible for destroying the audio file when eligible. Only records with a one-year or longer retention requirement require approval by the RMPC prior to destruction, with the destruction process administered by SEC.

- **Costs**

- City Secretary's Office – Addition of 1 Full-Time Coordinator III - \$55,751 (minimum annual salary plus city benefits). This amount would continue to increase in the event merit pay is approved by city council and cost of city-provided benefits increase. Current staffing levels do not provide for existing staff to perform the scope of work required to carry out the operations/support and maintenance.
- Communication & Information Service Department (CIS) – Addition of 1 Full-Time Programmer Analyst II - \$94,849 (Mid-point annual salary plus city benefits). This amount would continue to increase in the event merit pay is approved by city council and cost of city-provided benefits increase.
- Server Space – Unknown for cost of equipment (future)
- Migrate files as Technology changes – Unknown for cost of technological equipment (future)

Based on available information, for all the audio files of all the meetings, at a minimum, storage space is estimated to be at least 200GB per year. If approximated at 200GB per year, the ability is needed to house this data in an area that can be expanded every year by (amount unknown at this time) or create a set amount of 1TB to start, which would last 5 years, with an expansion of 1TB occurring in 5-year increments. The hosting site has little relevance to the amount of space needed, although it would have to be determined (City main page vs SEC website). As earlier noted, regular maintenance, security and technology changes have to be considered.

Other Issues

- Not all city offices/buildings where public meetings take place are equipped with an up-to-date recording system.
- Most all offices/buildings where public meetings take place would be required to purchase or borrow (from other departments) a cassette tape or digital recorder.
- Use of a standard recorder (with no microphones) does not provide for a clear audio recording.
- Conversion of audio recordings would need to be done by the CIS qualified programmer to ensure compatibility and upload to applicable website.

