



Meeting Name: Town Council Meeting
Meeting Date: September 24, 2025
Prepared By: John Callaghan, Vice Mayor
Item Title: Discussion on Record Keeping

DISCUSSION:

I requested this Discussion item based on the report I gave to Council during our April 23 meeting (starting at 3:13 of the video) and my request during the July 25 meeting for a discussion to be scheduled. I believe better access to vital town records will enable the Council to make better policy decisions in the future. My specific concerns include:

- the lack of a formal town policy on recordkeeping,
- past records that do not exist or are not accessible, and
- records that do exist but are not readily accessible to the Council or general public.

Town Recordkeeping Policy

It appears that the Town Clerk's job description includes preserving all permanent Council and other Town records and setting up and maintaining a records retention and destruction system for the Municipal Center. However, it is not clear to me as to who, if anyone, is responsible for determining how long other town records that are not considered as "permanent" should be kept, and who is responsible for maintaining and preserving them.

Missing Records

It appears many vital Planning and Building Department records are not accessible. It's my understanding that Palm Beach County handled the town's Building Permitting up until 2005, and the City of Palm Beach Gardens handled it in 2006 and 2007. For example, staff has been unable to locate items such as the original plans for the Universe Boulevard stormwater drainage system, and financial records regarding responsibilities for maintenance of that system. Records such as these should be considered as "permanent" and never discarded.

Difficult Record Access

The town uses many different systems for maintaining and preserving records. Emails are kept in an online Gmail account. Building Department permits, plans, applications, fee records, and correspondence are kept electronically online at My Government Online (MGO) Connect since 2018. Some older building plans are on photo negatives that can only be viewed through a Microfiche reader or printed by a Microfiche printer. Council meeting minutes, agendas, etc. are on the town's Civic Plus website. Some other day to day records are kept on a Laserfiche "S" drive with each town department keeping their department records there. Some older Building plans have been scanned to the S drive as well. Financial records are kept on a separate system. Many records have not been scanned at all and only exist as paper files.

RECOMMENDATION:

A clear Town Recordkeeping Policy should be developed by the Town Manager and adopted by Council.

The newly budgeted administrative personnel should allow for the Town Clerk to assist in developing and implementing the Policy. This Policy should include a listing of all of categories of existing town records including responsibilities for maintaining, adding to, and preserving them. This Policy might include obtaining copies of as many of the missing records as practical from other governmental agencies. It could also include making more town records available to the Council and general public while preserving necessary confidential information.

Obtaining, scanning, and categorizing older records will entail considerable personnel manhours, and should be considered a longer-term, ongoing project. Volunteers might be considered to help, but space and logistical limitations make this approach problematic in the near term.