



BALTIMORE CITY ARCHIVES
2615 Mathews Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

September 4, 2020

The Honorable Brandon Scott, President
and Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street, Suite 400\
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear President Scott and Members of the City Council:

I am writing you to ask for favorable consideration and your full support of the Council Bill 20-0496 entitled, "An Ordinance concerning Records Management – Modernizing, Correcting, and Conforming." Various portions of the existing City Code are simply obsolete and require updating.

The Code revision is needed since the City Archives has been unable to operate in full compliance with the current law. For example, the seven member Records Committee (Article 1 § 11-2) ceased to function sometime during the 1990s. Composed of various City Department heads, the City Solicitor, and the Director of the Peale Museum (defunct since 1997), the group was charged with reviewing retention schedules. But this arrangement soon proved unwieldy. The Committee rarely met and was soon abandoned.

The Code revision will build upon the good efforts of the past decade to reinvigorate the City Archives and the City Records Management Program. Our goals were, and still remain, to enhance public accessibility to the archival holdings, expand the Baltimore City Records Program, and to educate the records managers of City departments. To that end, we have a fully functioning search room that has hosted hundreds of public and private sector researchers, along with an occasional class from a local university. From a Records Management Program perspective, we have performed dozens of appraisal visits and held training workshops from which 115 City department-level records managers benefited.

The Code revision will underscore the City's commitment to modernizing its records management functions. Proper management of records is the key to efficient governance. It is the duty, as required by the current City Code (Article 1 § 11-5), for each executive department to thoughtfully implement its own record management program and appoint a departmental level records manager. It is the responsibility of each executive department of the City to develop a continuing program for the economical and efficient management

of its records, ensuring that documents of permanent legal or historical value are transferred to the City Archives.

Fostering a better knowledge of, and an appreciation for, the City's complex and diverse story leads to a better understanding of our present and helps to guide us all to a better future. I wholeheartedly endorse this bill and encourage its swift passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert W. Schoeberlein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert W. Schoeberlein, Ph.D.
Acting City Archivist