Records Management Policy

Implementation:

In order to manage the City’s records in an efficient manner, streamline the paper flow, provide for document archiving, minimize the temporary storage constraints, and remain in compliance with the Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56), the City of Wenatchee has implemented a Records Management Policy and Retention Schedule pursuant to Resolution ______________ adopted by the City Council on ______________.

GENERAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this program is to establish a citywide policy and standard procedures for managing records according to the provisions of RCW 40.14 (concerning the preservation and destruction of public records) and all other state and federal statutes and regulations which govern agency records keeping practices, including the systematic identification and disposal of obsolete records; transfer of historically valuable records to the State Archives system; removal of non-current records from active office storage; protection and security backup of records essential to agency authority and operations; disaster preparedness; insurance of records systems integrity and accessibility; and effective compliance with public disclosure compliance.

As public employees, we are all stewards of the City’s official records. Official records are comprised of a collection of documentation, including legislative, historic, legal, fiscal and administrative documents, as well as essential records. Records management entails administering various document formats such as correspondence, mail, emails, faxed material, historical reference, and with the technical age, electronic media.

Records management archiving is a conventional method of safeguarding history for the benefit of education, accessibility to research, and preservation of valuable fiscal, legal and administrative information. As records management for the City of Wenatchee includes a vast array of elements, each department will strive to ensure proper safekeeping and destruction pursuant to the criteria set forth herein.
Statutory references are legal citations setting forth the retention and destruction guidelines. These guidelines ensure that the records are maintained legally and efficiently. Records that are not appropriately maintained or improperly destroyed expose the City to potential liability.

It is the goal of the City to have a streamlined records management policy. A concerted effort will be made to adhere to the retention schedule and to destroy all appropriate records that are being stored in various facilities throughout the City, and prepare archival material for transfer to the State Archives. Preparation of archival material will include records indexing according to the State guidelines. All backlogged and inactive records will be archived or destroyed pursuant to the requirements in the retention schedule. When active files are determined to be inactive they will be processed by inventorying the record and documenting it for archival or destruction. This process will eliminate a large number of storage boxes and release space for other uses, as well as bring the records management program into full compliance.

**What is a Public Record?**

Chapter 40.14 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) contains regulations for the retention, preservation and lawful destruction of public records, and grants authority to Washington State Archives to preserve and protect public records. (Chapter 42.56 RCW defines public records for the purposes of public records requests.) Per RCW 40.14.010, public records are defined by three key criteria:

1. *“Made or received by any agency in the State of Washington”*

Public Records include both the records that an agency creates and those that it receives or collects. For example, when an agency solicits public comment on an issue, both the request for comment and information received in response are public records.

2. *“In connection with the transaction of public business”*

A record provides proof or evidence of agency business. Agency business includes not only the core functions of an agency, but also support functions, such as finance, human resources, and facility management.

3. *“Regardless of physical form or characteristic”*

If a record meets the two criteria above, then it is a public record, regardless of the format in which it is transmitted or received. This definition encompasses not only paper records, but also records that are created, received, and used in digital format, including emails, websites, databases, digital photos, blogs and tweets.
Per RCW 40.14.020, public records are the property of the State of Washington, and do not belong to the individuals who create or receive them. These records must be kept, managed and disposed of lawfully, in accordance with approved records retention schedules. Agencies need to be aware of what constitutes a public record in order to capture, manage, retain and dispose of them appropriately.

**Benefits of Managing Public Records**

An effective records management program:

1. **Enables the City to fulfill its mission**

   The public records of the City of Wenatchee form a critical element of the informational assets of the City. Having timely access to accurate information is central to the City being able to fulfill its mission.

2. **Promotes cost-effective use of agency resources**

   **Time** – City staff can work most productively when the right people are able to locate the right records at the right time. In addition, retaining records that document the agency’s actions and experiences helps prevent the wasting of time and resources during staff turnover.

   **Storage costs** – Through timely destruction of non-archival records (which have met their minimum retention period) and transfer of archival records to Washington State Archives, the City is able to make optimal use of the physical space within their facilities and the storage space on their servers.

   **IS costs** – In addition to reducing IS storage costs, the appropriate disposal/transfer of public records also reduces other IS costs associated with the time it takes to backup/restore data and to migrate records.

   **Litigation costs** – By being able to locate all necessary records in a timely manner during litigation, public records requests, and audits, agencies minimize their risks and associated costs.

3. **Promotes Open and Accountable Government**

   Public records are the evidence by which government agencies are able to demonstrate, whether during litigation, public records requests, or audits, that they took the right action at the right time for the right reasons.

   Demonstrating that public records are organized, controlled, and only disposed of as part of a managed program enhances the professionalism of the agency and the public’s confidence in the agency.
Records Management Officer: Roles and Responsibilities

The City Clerk is designated as the Records Management Officer for the City. The Records Management Officer will ensure the citywide records management program is followed as follows:

- Disposal of records that have reached the end of their retention period;
- Seeing that non-current records are stored appropriately;
- Transfer of historically valuable records to the State Archives;
- Essential records protection;
- Off-site security microfilm storage;
- Disaster preparedness for citywide records systems;
- Protection of public records integrity and access during information systems planning and design;
- Public disclosure;
- Represents the agency in its dealings with the State Archives and Local Records Committee;
- Educates and advises departments on records management procedures and practices;
- Compiles and distributes all program information, forms and materials;
- Provides technical assistance and oversees the work of records coordinators within the City.

Departments Affected

All departments of the City are affected.

Each department will work with the Records Management Officer to ensure that:

- Only active (referred to at least once per month) records are stored in valuable office space;
- Non-current records are shifted to storage on a regular basis;
- Historically valuable records are preserved and transferred to the State Archives;
- Records are destroyed at the end of the retention period specified on the retention schedule;
- Records essential to the City’s authority and operations are adequately protected from damage or loss;
- Records are protected from damage or loss in the event of a disaster;
- All information systems are preserved to protect the integrity and accessibility of the public records for the duration of their approved retention periods;
- Records are accessible for public inspection and their security is maintained according to the provisions of the Public Disclosure Act (RCW 42.17).
Essential Records Protection

Essential records will be maintained by ensuring a duplicate copy is scanned into the computer file system under the “W” directory (Document Retention), or a duplicate copy is maintained at an alternate location.

Disaster Prevention and Damaged Records Recovery Process

It is the policy of the City to ensure that its records are identified and protected as much as humanly possible from natural and man-made disasters. This policy applies to all employees who create, receive and maintain city records. The administrative procedures described below afford the City the most efficient and cost effective method for protecting City records and recovering records when disasters occur.

Avoid storing records in loose stacks on desks or on top of file cabinets, in a basement or an attic, near water pipes or air conditioning, or near a heat source.

Strive to store records in file cabinets or in file drawers inside desks. Be sure to store essential records or copies of essential records in an alternate location. Place record storage boxes on shelves off the floor. Properly label file cabinets and record storage boxes, and maintain and update inventories of records and record storage locations.

Properly labeling file cabinets and file storage boxes is essential for reporting disaster damage. In the event that records are damaged, City employees must assess the damage, perform recovery procedures, and when necessary report records that are unrecoverable to the City Clerk’s office. Actions necessary to recover documents can range from simply air-drying paper records to hiring restoration specialists for severely damaged records of various media types.

Damaged records must be documented. If records are damaged a Records Disaster Recovery Worksheet should be followed and a Damaged Records Assessment Report should be filled out. If records are unrecoverable an Authorization to Destroy Unrecoverable Damaged Records should be completed. These reports serve as permanent record, and would be utilized in any legal proceeding as evidence of damaged records.

Email Retention Policy

Email and email systems are intended to be a medium of communication. Email messages are subject to the guidelines provided in chapter 40.14 RCW for the preservation and destruction of public records; as such they are managed through records retention schedules. The retention requirements for email messages and attachments are the same as paper documents with identical content. The messages must be managed individually. Email messages that have no public record significance may be deleted as soon as the message has served its purpose. For emails that have public record significance, the official record copy of an email must be retained. If the
email is part of a chain of emails, only the last message in the chain must be saved assuming all prior messages are contained within the chain.

Any City employee who creates or receives an email message is responsible for the proper retention and disposition of that record. Email messages subject to retention must be retained in their electronic and native format until they meet their designated retention period. Printing and retaining a hard copy is not an acceptable substitute for the electronic message.

**Documenting Records Disposal**

Documentation of records destruction is required. A Public Records Destruction Log documents disposed records and is maintained at the City Clerk's office. This form serves as a permanent record, and would be utilized in any legal proceeding as evidence of proper destruction.

**Indexing/Archiving Records**

The City Clerk will create and maintain an index of inactive records of the City, which will state the name of the document, the location of the document, and the retention period.

**Records Retention Schedules**

All City departments should strive to follow the retention schedule guidelines as set forth by the State of Washington Secretary of State, Washington State Archives, found at:


(LGGRS 2.1 (general); LGGRS 5.1 (fire and public works); Law Enforcement Records Retention Schedules (police) – or as updated from time to time)
Reference:

State of Washington Secretary of State – Washington State Archives
Laws and Rules for Records Management:

Revised Code of Washington (RCW)

- 40.10 Essential Records
- 40.14 Preservation and Destruction of Public Records
- 40.16 Penal Provisions for the Intentional Destruction of Public Records
- 40.20 Reproduced Records
- 42.56 Public Records Act

Washington Administrative Code (WAC)

- 434-600 Promulgation
- 434-610 Definitions
- 434-615 Custody of Public Records
- 434-620 Powers and Duties (State Archivist)
- 434-624 Powers and Duties (State Records Committee)
- 434-626 Powers and Duties (State Agency Records Officers)
- 434-635 Local Records Disposition Authority
- 434-640 Methods of Records Disposal
- 434-660 Standards for Public Records
- 434-662 Preservation of Electronic Records
- 434-663 Imaging Systems (Standards)
- 434-670 Local Records Grants Programs
- 434-677 Security Microfilm (Standards)
- 434-690 Archives (Public Records Access)

State of Washington Secretary of State – Washington State Archives:

Basics of Records Management: Benefits of Managing Public Records
Basics of Public Records Management: What is a Public Record?

State of Washington Secretary of State – Division of Archives and Records Management

Essential Records Manual (Security Backup, Disaster Preparedness Response, and Recovery)