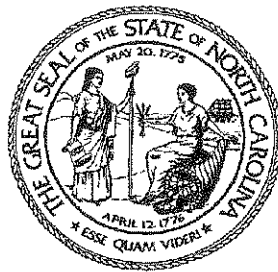
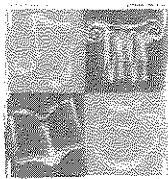


RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION SCHEDULE

MUNICIPAL



Issued By:



NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL
RESOURCES
WWW.NCCULTURE.COM

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
Division of Archives and Records
State Archives of North Carolina
Government Records Branch

September 10, 2012

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MUNICIPAL
Records Retention and Disposition Schedule

The records retention and disposition schedule and retention periods governing the records series listed herein are hereby approved. In accordance with the provision of Chapters 121 and 132 of the *General Statutes of North Carolina*, it is agreed that the records do not and will not have further use or value for official business, research, or reference purposes after the respective retention periods specified herein and are authorized to be destroyed or otherwise disposed of by the agency or official having custody of them without further reference to or approval of either party to this agreement. However, records subject to audit or those legally required for ongoing official proceedings must be retained until released from such audits or official proceedings, notwithstanding the instructions of this schedule. *Public records including electronic records not listed in this schedule are not authorized to be destroyed.*

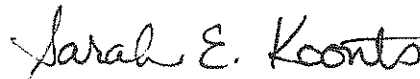
This local government agency and the Department of Cultural Resources agree that certain records series possess only brief administrative, fiscal, legal, research, and reference value. These records series have been designated by retention periods which allow these records to be destroyed when "*administrative value ends.*" The local government agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "*destroy when administrative value ends.*" If a municipality does not establish internal policies and retention periods, the municipality is not complying with the provisions of this retention schedule and is not authorized by the Department of Cultural Resources to destroy the records with the disposition instruction "*destroy when administrative value ends.*"

It is further agreed that these records may not be destroyed prior to the time periods stated; however, for sufficient reason they may be retained for longer periods. This schedule is to remain in effect from the date of approval until it is reviewed and updated.

APPROVAL RECOMMENDED

City/Town Clerk

Chief Administrative Officer/
City Manager



Sarah E. Koonts, Director
Division of Archives and Records

APPROVED

Mayor



Linda A. Carlisle, Secretary
Department of Cultural Resources

Municipality: _____

September 10, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ✓ According to G.S. §121-5 and G.S. §132-3, you may only destroy public records with the consent of the Department of Cultural Resources (DCR). The State Archives of North Carolina is the division of DCR charged with administering a records management program. This schedule is the primary way the State Archives of North Carolina gives its consent. Without approving this schedule, your municipality is obligated to obtain the State Archives of North Carolina's permission to destroy *any* record, no matter how insignificant.
- ✓ Each record series listed on this schedule has specific disposition instructions which will indicate how long that series must be kept in your offices. In some cases, the disposition instructions are simply "Retain in office permanently," which means that those records must be kept in your offices forever. In other cases, the retention period may be "destroy in office when administrative value ends." Administrative value is defined as, "the usefulness of records to support ancillary operations and the routine management of an organization." Your agency must establish and enforce internal policies by setting minimum retention periods for the records that the State Archives of North Carolina has scheduled with the disposition instructions, "destroy when administrative value ends."
- ✓ Email is a record as defined by G.S. §121-5 and G.S. §132. It is the content of the email that is critical when determining the retention period of a particular email, including attachments, not the media in which the records were created. Email should be retained in the same manner as its paper counterpart. It is important for all agency employees and officials to determine the appropriate record series for specific emails and retain them according to the disposition instructions.
- ✓ The State Archives of North Carolina recommends that all municipal employees and officials take our online tutorials in order to familiarize themselves with records management principles and practices. The State Archives of North Carolina's online tutorials include topics such as records management, utilizing the retention schedule, email management, and scanning guidelines.
- ✓ The State Archives of North Carolina provides microfilming of the minutes of major decision-making boards and commissions in a municipality. Once those records are filmed, we will store the silver negative (original) in our security vault.
- ✓ There is a nominal fee for filming and duplicating film. Contact the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality for the most current information.

MANAGING PUBLIC RECORDS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Q. *What is this “records retention and disposition schedule”?*

- A.** This document is a tool for the employees of municipal governments across the state to use when managing the records in their offices. It lists records commonly found in municipal offices, and gives an assessment of their value by indicating when (and if) those records should be destroyed. This schedule is also an agreement between your municipality and the State Archives of North Carolina.

This schedule serves as the inventory and schedule that the State Archives of North Carolina is directed by G.S. §121-5 (c) and G.S. §132-8 to provide. It supersedes all previous editions, including all amendments.

Q. *How do I get it approved?*

- A.** This schedule must be approved by the governing board of your town or city for use in your municipality. That approval should be made in a regular meeting and recorded as an action in the minutes. It may be done as part of the consent agenda, by resolution, or other action.
-

Q. *Do I have to have all of the records listed on this schedule?*

- A.** No. This is not a list of records you must have in your office.
-

Q. *What is the definition of “administrative value”?*

- A.** Administrative value is defined as, “the usefulness of records to support ancillary operations and the routine management of an organization.” Records having administrative value are generally considered useful or relevant to the activities that caused the record to be created and/or during an audit of those activities. Traditionally, records managers have seen “administrative value” as transitory. (From Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*)
-

Q. *What do I do with routing slips, fax cover sheets, reference copies, memory aides, reservations and confirmations, etc.?*

- A.** According to North Carolina General Statutes §121 and §132, every document, paper, letter, map, book, photograph, film, sound recording, magnetic or other tape, electronic data processing record, artifact, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristic, made or received in connection with the transaction of public business by any state, county, municipal agency, or other political subdivision of government is considered a public record and may not be disposed of, erased, or destroyed without specific guidance from the State Archives of North Carolina. The State Archives of North Carolina recognizes that many records exist that may have very short-term value to the creating agency. These records may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of when their reference value ends. However, all public employees should be familiar with specific records retention and disposition schedules and applicable guidelines for their office and the Public Records law (G.S. §132). When in doubt about whether a record has short-term value, or whether it has special significance or importance, retain the record in question.
-

Q. *Do the standards correspond to the organizational structure of my municipality?*

- A.** Standards are grouped together to make it easier for users to find records. You may find that the records groupings reflect the organizational structure of your municipality, or you may find that records are located in various standards depending on the content of the record. The intent of the schedule’s organization is to provide an easy reference guide for the records created in your municipality.
-

Q. *I can’t find some of my records on this schedule.*

- A.** Sometimes the records are listed in a different standard than how you organize them in your office. Be sure to check the Index and utilize the “search box” function on the PDF version of the schedule. If you still cannot locate your records on the schedule, then contact the Records Management Analyst assigned

to your municipality. We will work with you to amend this records schedule to include records so that you may destroy them appropriately.

Q. *What are public records?*

A. The *General Statutes of North Carolina*, Chapter §132, provides this definition of public records:

"Public record" or "public records" shall mean all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data-processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions. Agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions shall mean and include every public office, public officer or official (State or local, elected or appointed), institution, board, commission, bureau, council, department, authority or other unit of government of the State or of any county, unit, special district or other political subdivision of government.

Q. *Can anyone see my records?*

A. Yes, except as restricted by specific provisions in state or federal law. G.S. §132-6 instructs:

"Every custodian of public records shall permit any record in the custodian's custody to be inspected and examined at reasonable times and under reasonable supervision by any person, and shall, as promptly as possible, furnish copies thereof upon payment of any fees as may be prescribed by law. ... No person requesting to inspect and examine public records, or to obtain copies thereof, shall be required to disclose the purpose or motive for the request."

Q. *What about my confidential records?*

A. Not all government records are open to public inspection. Exceptions to the access requirements in G.S. §132-6 and the definition of public records in G.S. §132-1 are found throughout the General Statutes. You must be able to cite a specific provision in the General Statutes or federal law when you restrict or deny access to a particular record.

Q. *Do I have to make copies of drafts available to the public that haven't been approved?*

A. Yes, even if a report, permit, or other record has not been finalized. Any record that is not confidential by law must be copied when a request is received, whether it is "finished" or not.

Q. *What do I do with permanent records?*

A. Permanent records should be maintained in the office that created the records, forever. Permanent records must also have a security preservation duplicate, which is either a paper or microfilm copy.

Q. *What is historical value?*

A. Historical records document significant events, actions, decisions, conditions, relationships, and similar developments. These records have administrative, legal, fiscal, or evidential importance for the government or its citizens. Call the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality for further assistance.

Q. *I don't have any records.*

A. Nearly every position in government generates, receives, or uses records. Computer files of any kind, including drafts and email, are public records. Even if your records aren't the official or final version, your records are public records. Not all records have high historical, legal, or fiscal value, but they all must be retained or destroyed in accordance with the provisions of the appropriate records schedule.

Q. *May I store our unused records in the basement (attic, outdoor shed)?*

- A.** Public records are public property. While we encourage offices to find places to store records that do not take up too much valuable office space, the selected space should be dry, secured, and free from pests and mold. Your office must ensure that records stored away from your main office area are well protected from natural and man-made problems, while remaining readily available to your staff and the public.

Q. *Our old records are stored in the attic, basement or off-site building, etc. Do we have to let anyone who asks see them?*

- A.** Yes, as long as the records are not confidential by law. You should also be aware that confidentiality can expire.

Q. *Aren't all of our old records at the State Archives of North Carolina?*

- A.** Probably not. The State Archives of North Carolina collects only very specific types of records from municipal offices. Contact the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality for more information about which records are held or can be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent preservation.

Q. *I have found some really old records. What should I do with them?*

- A.** Call the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality. We will help you examine the records and assess their historical value.

Q. *Can I give my old records to the historical society or public library?*

- A.** Before you offer any record to a historical society, public library, or any other entity, you must contact the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality. Permanent records must be kept either in your offices or at the State Archives of North Carolina.

Q. *Whom can I call with questions?*

- A.** If you are located west of about Statesville, call our Western Office in Asheville at (828) 296-7230 extension 224. East of Statesville, all the way to the coast, call our Raleigh office at (919) 807-7350.

AUDITS, LITIGATION AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS

No record involved in a pending audit, legal or other official action may be destroyed before that audit or action is resolved.

We have used an asterisk (*) in the disposition instructions to mark records series that are commonly audited, litigated or may be subject to other official actions; however, any record has this potential. Records custodians are responsible for being aware of potential actions, and for preventing the destruction of any record that is, or may be reasonably expected to become, involved in an audit, legal or other official action.

Records used during routine audits may be destroyed when the governing body accepts the audit, if the records have completed the retention period listed in this schedule. If time remains in the retention period, the records must be maintained for the remainder of the period. The auditor's working papers must be kept according to the schedule. (See AUDITS: PERFORMANCE Item 7, page 2 and AUDITS: FINANCIAL Item 6, page 26.) Should a dispute arise over an audit, the records that were audited should be retained until that dispute is resolved.

The attorney representing the municipality should inform records custodians when legal matters are concluded and records will no longer be needed. Following the conclusion of any legal action, the records may be destroyed if they have met the retention period in the schedule. Otherwise, they should be kept for the remaining time period.

DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS

Q. *When can I destroy records?*

- A. Each record series listed on this schedule has specific disposition instructions that indicate how long that series must be kept in your offices. In some cases, the disposition instructions are “Retain in office permanently,” which means that those records must be kept in your offices forever. (See also the question below, “*How should I deal with my permanent records?*”)
-

Q. *How do I destroy records?*

- A. After your municipality has approved this records retention and disposition schedule, records should be destroyed in one of the following ways:
- a) burned, unless prohibited by local ordinance;
 - b) shredded, or torn up so as to destroy the record content of the documents or material concerned;
 - c) placed in acid vats so as to reduce the paper to pulp and to terminate the existence of the documents or materials concerned;
 - d) buried under such conditions that the record nature of the documents or materials will be terminated; or
 - e) sold as waste paper, provided that the purchaser agrees in writing that the documents or materials concerned will not be resold as documents or records.
- N.C. Administrative Code, Title 7, Chapter 4, Subchapter M, Section .0510

Confidential records should be destroyed in a secure manner so that the information contained in them cannot be used. We do not recommend the disposal in a landfill of records containing confidential information.

Q. *How can I destroy records if they are not listed on this schedule?*

- A. Contact the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality. Your analyst will discuss the nature of the records with you to determine if the records have historical value. If the records do have historical value, we will discuss the possibility of transferring the records to the State Archives of North Carolina to be preserved permanently.

If the records do not have historical value, we will ask you to complete a [Request for Disposal of Unscheduled Records](#) (located at the end of this schedule) if the records are not currently created. If the records are an active records series, your analyst will help you develop an amendment to this schedule so that you can continue to destroy the records appropriately.

Q. *I have some old records that aren't on this schedule, but that we don't use any more. How can I get them destroyed?*

- A. At the end of this schedule is a form called the [Request for Disposal of Unscheduled Records](#). Complete that form and submit it to us. We will get in touch with you, and make a determination about that destruction.
-

Q. *Do I have to tell anyone about the destruction?*

- A. We recommend that you report on your records retention activities to your Board of Commissioners on an annual basis. This report does not need to be detailed, but it is important that significant destructions be entered into the minutes of the Board.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS: EMAIL, BORN DIGITAL RECORDS, AND DIGITAL IMAGING

Q. *When can I delete my email?*

A. Email is a public record as defined by G.S. §121-5 and G.S. §132. Electronic mail is just as much a record as any traditional paper record, and must be treated in the same ways. **It is the content of each message that is important.** If a particular message would have been filed as a paper memo, it should still be filed (either in your email program or in your regular directory structure), and it should be retained the same length of time as its paper counterparts. ***It is inappropriate to destroy email simply because storage limits have been reached.*** Some examples of email messages that are public records and therefore covered by this policy include:

- Policies or directives;
- Final drafts or reports and recommendations;
- Correspondence and memoranda related to official business;
- Work schedules and assignments;
- Meeting agendas or minutes
- Any document or message that initiates, facilitates, authorizes, or completes a business transaction; and
- Messages that create a precedent, such as issuing instructions and advice.

From the Department of Cultural Resources E-Mail Policy (Revised July 2009), available at the State Archives of North Carolina website

Other publications will be particularly helpful in managing your email (available online at the State Archives of North Carolina website):

- *E-Mail as a Public Record in North Carolina: A Policy for Its Retention and Disposition*
- *Online E-mail Tutorial: Managing Your Inbox: E-mail as a Public Record*
- *Online Tutorial: Managing Public Records for Local Government Agencies*
- *Guidelines for E-mail as a Public Record in North Carolina: Tips and Tricks for Using Microsoft Exchange Software to Manage E-mail*

Q. *May I print my email to file it?*

A. We do not recommend printing email for preservation purposes. Important metadata is lost when Email is printed.

Q. *I use my personal email account for work. No one can see my personal email.*

A. The best practice is to avoid using personal resources, including private email accounts, for public business. G.S. §132-1 states that records “made or received pursuant to law or ordinance *in connection with the transaction of public business* by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions” are public records (emphasis added). The fact that public records reside in a personal email account is irrelevant.

Q. *We have an imaging system. Do we have to keep the paper?*

A. You may scan any record, including permanent records. You will need to get approval from our agency in order to destroy paper originals that have been digitized. Your office should follow the instructions in the *North Carolina Guidelines for Managing Public Records Produced by Information Technology Systems* to conduct the Self-Warranty process, develop an Electronic Records Policy, and complete a copy of the **Request for Disposal of Original Records Duplicated by Electronic Means**, (located at the end of this schedule). Then submit all three to us.

Permanent records must have a security preservation copy as defined by the State Archives of North Carolina's **Human-Readable Preservation Duplicate Policy** (G.S. §132-8.2):

Preservation duplicates shall be durable, accurate, complete and clear, and such duplicates made by a photographic, photostatic, microfilm, micro card, miniature photographic, or other process which accurately reproduces and forms a durable medium for so reproducing the original shall have the same force and effect for all purposes as the original record whether the original record is in existence or not. ... Such preservation duplicates shall be preserved in the place and manner of safekeeping prescribed by the Department of Cultural Resources.

The preservation security duplicate of permanent records must be either on paper or microfilm.

Non-permanent records may be retained in any format, and therefore you may be approved to destroy hard copy originals after proper imaging. You will have to take precautions with records that you must keep more than about 10 years. Computer systems do not have long life cycles. Each time you change computer systems, you will have to convert all records to the new system so that you can assure their preservation and provide access. Your office will still be required to conduct the Self-Warranty process, establish an Electronic Records Policy, and submit the Request for Disposal of Original Records Duplicated by Electronic Means form for our approval.

Q. *Computer storage is cheap. I'll just keep my computer records.*

A. The best practice is to destroy all records that have met their retention requirements at the same time, regardless of format.

Q. *What are the guidelines regarding the creation and handling of electronic public records?*

A. The following documents are available on the State Archives of North Carolina website:

- Best Practices for Cloud Computing: Records Management Considerations
- Best Practices for Electronic Communication Usage in North Carolina: Text and Instant Message
- Best Practices for Electronic Communication Usage in North Carolina: Guidelines for Implementing a Strategy for Text and Instant Messages
- Best Practices for File Naming
- Best Practices for Social Media Usage in North Carolina
- Guidelines for Digital Imaging Systems
- Metadata as a Public Record in North Carolina: Best Practices Guidelines for Its Retention and Disposition
- Security Backup Files as Public Records in North Carolina: Guidelines for Recycling, Destruction, Erasure, and Re-Use of Security Backup Files

MICROFILM

Q. *Why do you still use microfilm?*

- A. Microfilm is a legally acceptable replacement for original records, as outlined in G.S. §8-45 and §153A-436. Microfilm can be read with nothing more sophisticated than a magnifying glass. There is no software to keep current. Usually, deterioration in the film itself can be detected by visual inspection. Our office provides a publication, *Micrographics: Technical and Legal Procedures*, on our website. It explains the four groups of national standards for the production of archival quality microfilm:
- manufacture of raw film
 - filming methods
 - processing (developing) film
 - storage methods

That publication also provides sample forms, targets, and procedures that you or your vendor can use in producing film of your records.

Q. *What film services do you provide?*

- A. The State Archives of North Carolina provides microfilming of minutes of major decision-making boards and commissions in a municipality. Once those records are filmed, we will store the silver original in our security vault. There is a nominal fee for filming and duplicate film. Contact the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality for the most current information.
-

Q. *How do I get my minutes filmed?*

- A. We have two processes to film minutes. First, you can send photocopies of your approved minutes to us in the mail. Simply include a copy of the "*Certification of the Preparation of Minutes for Microfilming*" form (available online at the State Archives of North Carolina website) with each shipment. For more detailed instructions, contact the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality.

Alternatively, you can bring us your original books. We will film them and return them to you. This process is most useful when you have more minutes to film than you are willing to photocopy. It is important to remember that a representative of your office or ours must transport the original books in person so that the custody of the records is maintained. You should not mail or ship your original minutes. Call the analyst assigned to your municipality to make arrangements for an appointment for your books to be filmed. We will make every effort to expedite the filming so that your books will be returned to you as quickly as possible.

Q. *What if I need my books while they're being filmed?*

- A. Call the Raleigh Office at (919) 807-7350, and ask for the Records Management Analyst in charge of minutes.
-

Q. *Can I send you my minutes electronically?*

- A. Not at this time. We require originals or photocopies of the approved minutes, complete with signatures. We are currently working on standards and procedures for an electronic transfer system for minutes. Please contact the Records Management Analyst in charge of minutes microfilming for more information.
-

Q. *I have some old minutes that aren't signed. Can they still be filmed?*

- A. If the only copy you have available is unsigned, and you use it as the official copy, we will film it.

Q. *What if my books are destroyed after they have been filmed?*

- A.** Call the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality, who will help you make arrangements to purchase copies of the microfilm from our office. You can then send those reels to a vendor, who can either make new printed books, or scan the film to create a digital copy.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Q. *What should I do in case of fire or flood?*

- A.** Secure the area, and keep everyone out until fire or other safety professionals allow entry. Then, call our Raleigh office at (919) 807-7353 for the Head of the Government Records Branch or (919) 807-7339 for the State Archivist. If you're in the western part of the state, call our Asheville Office at (828) 296-7230 extension 224. On nights and weekends, call your local emergency management office.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE OR CLEAN ANY RECORDS.

Damaged records are extremely fragile and require careful handling. Our staff is trained in preliminary recovery techniques, documenting damage to your records, and authorizing destruction of damaged records. Professional vendors can handle your larger disasters.

Q. *What help do you give in case of an emergency?*

- A.** We will do everything we can to make a visit to you at the earliest opportunity to provide hands-on assistance. We can assist you in appraising the records that have been damaged so that precious resources (and especially time) are not spent on records with lesser value. We can provide lists of professional recovery vendors that you can contact to preserve your essential and permanent records.

Q. *What can I do to prepare for an emergency?*

- A.** We provide training to interested governments on disaster preparation. We discuss the roles of proper inventories, staff training, and advance contracts with recovery vendors. If you would like to have this workshop presented, just call the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality.

STAFF TRAINING

Q. *What types of workshops or training do you offer?*

- A.** We have a group of prepared workshops that we can offer at any time at various locations throughout the state. Contact your Records Management Analyst if you are interested in having one of the workshops presented to your agency. We will work with you directly to develop training suited to your specific needs. Our basic workshops are:
- **Managing Public Records in North Carolina** – our basic introduction to the Public Records law and records management;
 - **Scanning Public Records: Laying the Groundwork** – considerations and procedures to establish an imaging system;
 - **Email as a Public Record** – considerations, tips and tricks on managing, filing, and public access to your email;
 - **Disaster Preparedness and Recovery** – how to be prepared for disasters, and what will have to be done after a disaster happens.

Q. *Will you design a workshop especially for our office?*

A. Yes, we will. Let the Records Management Analyst assigned to your municipality know what type of training you need.

Q. *Do we have to come to Raleigh for workshops?*

A. No, we will come to your offices to present the workshops you need. We have no minimum audience requirement. We will also do presentations for professional associations, regional consortiums, and the public.

Q. *Is there a fee for workshops?*

A. Not at this time.

Q. *Are the workshops available in an online format?*

A. Not at this time. However, there are several online tutorials available on the State Archives of North Carolina website, including:

- **Managing Public Records for Local Agencies-** Our basic introduction to the Public Records law and records management.
- **Managing Your Inbox: Email as a Public Record-** Public employees increasingly rely on electronic mail (email) as a quick and useful communication tool for carrying out government business. However, email presents many challenges. This tutorial will help you learn how to properly manage, retain and dispose of your email.
- **Managing Electronic Public Records: Recognizing Perils and Avoiding Pitfalls-** More and more government employees use computers as they conduct their daily business. While computers are invaluable tools that store large amounts of data that can be easily searched, depending solely upon electronic records can be dangerous. In this tutorial you will learn some of the problems associated with electronic records and you will receive advice on how to protect those records.