



State Records Committee

To: Montana Governor's Office

From: Ray Dagnall, State Records Committee Chair

Re: REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE

December 31st, 2020

History

In 1977, the Montana Legislature recognized the importance of preserving and properly disposing of public records. That year, it created the State Records Committee and assigned it the task of monitoring record retention and disposal. In most instances, no record may be disposed of without the approval of the committee.

State Records Committee Purpose

The State Records Committee serves as a resource for Executive Branch agencies and others by staying at the forefront of records management best practices. The statutorily prescribed duties of the State Records Committee are located in Mont. Code Ann. § 2-6-1108. It consists of an appointed representative from the following agencies: Department of Administration, Legislative Auditor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Montana Historical Society, Governor's Office, Clerk of Supreme Court, State Chief Information Officer, and five members representing executive branch agencies (five members from the executive branch agencies are to serve on a 2-year rotation) Mont. Code Ann. § 2-6-1107.

State Records Subcommittee Purpose

The subcommittee shall approve, modify, or disapprove the recommendations on retention schedules of all public records. It consists of a representative from each of the following agencies: Department of Administration, Legislative Auditor, the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, and the Montana Historical Society MONT. CODE ANN. § 2-6-1109.

State Records Committee Activities (March 2018 to present) Chair of the State Records Committee- Ray Dagnall:

- Since March of 2018, the State Record Committee had a lengthy discussion regarding a solution to the deficiencies of our State's record center. The facility that our State used as a record center was in terrible condition and did not provide an acceptable level of compliance to nationally known and adopted standards for paper/film/fiche storage. Initially, the chair of the committee viewed and toured potential facilities, but none were up to standard or they were cost prohibitive. The decision was made to create an RFP to identify potential private sector solutions to our circumstances. The committee provided a great deal of insight and expectation that assisted the chair in creating said RFP. A member of the committee sat with the chair and others on the RFP Evaluation Committee. A private solution was identified through this process and the chair negotiated a contract with successful vendor. The committee assisted throughout the contract negotiation process. With a contract in place, the Montana Secretary of State's office initiated the State Records Migration Project, moving records from the old facility into the new. The chair of the committee utilized the members of the committee's feedback to identify issues with the vendor's processes and performance. To date, the private vendor (iron Mt.) stores for and services over 100 State agencies/departments/divisions.
- The State Records Committee identified and agreed on changing two record types on the State's General Retention Schedule. The General Retention Schedule is a tool that State agencies can utilize to assign retention to commonly encountered record types. Many agencies also utilize the General Retention Schedule as a reference to create their own agency specific retention schedules. Changes to the State General Retention Schedule included loosening disposition standards for the routine correspondence record type. Another change resulted from 2019 legislation, which increased retention for State settlement records. Both changes passed via unanimous vote.
- The State Records Committee examined the feasibility of changing the standing requirements surrounding digital migration planning with the purpose of streamlining the process of allowance of State agencies to digitally duplicate paper/film/fiche records. State agencies are now required to submit a digital migration plan to the State Records Committee's Sub-committee before disposing of digitally duplicated records. Since agencies typically submit their disposition requests at the department/division/bureau level, several entities within the same agency were submitting migration plans. It was generally agreed upon that digital migration planning should take place at the agency level, umbrellaing all department/division/bureaus within. Members of the committee were urged to reach out to records managers and IT staff from their agencies to create

these digital migration plans. Once approved by the Sub-committee, the digital migration plans could supersede department/division/bureau level plans.

- On October 1, 2019, the five rotating seats on the committee changed agency representation, per MONT. CODE ANN. § 2-6-1107(4). Now the committee has representation from the Department of Livestock, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Department of Military Affairs, the Department of Health and Human Services, and Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.
- The committee discussed guidance and standards for email records management. It was decided that a Sub-committee would be created to begin the process of putting together a set of guidelines to be utilized by all State agencies. At the 2020 4th quarter meeting, the chair will create said Sub-committee/work group comprised of volunteers. Email records management policy/guideline/standard will begin in 2021. Another pertinent topic of discussion was social media. It was agreed upon that a policy/guideline/standard should be created for Social media platforms, as well. More will be discussed in upcoming meetings.
- At every State Records Committee meeting, the current chair invites guest speakers from agencies such as the State Library, the Department of Administration's Print and Mail Bureau, the State CIO's office, a member of NAGARA from DNRC, and SITSD's authority on Microsoft, The purpose of these presentations are to inform members of the committee about records management services, records management components in the technological tools, and resources that are available to our State.
- The committee has continued scrutinizing the records management forms that are used by agencies making requests of the State Record Committee's Sub committee. The committee has analyzed the form's usefulness and purposes. The overall idea behind these efforts is to simplify and streamline all records management processes. It is obvious that the committee cannot act as a compliance mechanism. We require buy in from all State actors to adopt our processes and part of that buy in is made possible by removing confusing and ineffective steps within.

Links to the audio minutes during this timeframe

2018 2nd Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20180626/-1/32213>

2018 3rd Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20180924/-1/32287>

2018 4th Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20181201/-1/33377>

2019 1st Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20190509/-1/37365>

2019 2nd Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20190719/-1/37113>

2019 3rd Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20191029/-1/37296>

2019 4th Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20191217/-1/37367>

2020 1st Qtr meeting-- <https://sosmt.gov/records/minutes/> (Zoom)

2020 2nd Qtr meeting-- <https://sosmt.gov/records/minutes/> (Zoom)

State Records Committee Activities (from Aug. 2016 to Mar. 2018) Chair of the State Records Committee- Joe Defilippis:

- In an effort to gather and disseminate information on all phases of records management per MONT. CODE ANN. § 2-6-1108(1), the Montana Secretary of State's office produced an online RIM Tool Kit that currently resides on the Montana Secretary of State's website. The address of said Tool Kit is <https://sosmt.gov/records/toolkit/>. Members of the State Records Committee contributed greatly to the content of this resource. The Montana Secretary of State's office pledged to offer training opportunities to state and local government agencies that requested guidance. These training opportunities did not manifest themselves into a formal classroom environment, rather a one-on-one approach with requestors. This pledge came at the urging of the members of the State Records Committee.
- Through the State Records Committee, the National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators (NAGARA) extended offers of membership, resources, and community to any State of Montana records stakeholders. NAGARA is not the only records management organization that operates at the national level, but they are the most relevant organization available at this level for the State of Montana. Several members of the State Records Committee are, or became, members of this organization and have participated in NAGARA's yearly conferences.
- Members of the State Records Committee recognized a need to update, add, or eliminate certain records management forms used in the processes of requesting disposition, creating/editing agency specific retention schedules, and records migration planning. These forms are utilized by the State Records Committee's Approval Sub-Committee.
- It was during this time that the State Records Committee came to the agreement that Montana should adopt the nation's records management industry standard and move away from paper/film/fiche records creation and storage. Filming was becoming more and more costly due to the increasing price of film and lack choices with equipment parts and repair. Due to the availability and advances in technology concerning digitization and the widespread creation of digital records, the Committee adopted this industry standard and all subsequent actions were to reflect this adoption. The Committee explored the feasibility of creating a mandate to have State of Montana agencies dedicate resources to the scanning of a back log of paper/film/fiche records. This

concept did not ever gain traction, but some pricing of scanning service vendors was gathered.

- Email records management policy and practice became an area of interest due to scrutiny from local media reports. The committee set forth with examining the email guidelines that were in place. In place, at the time, was a guideline issued by the State Records Committee in 2006, and some general guidance in the Montana Operating Manual. There was serious consideration for adopting a Capstone style email policy at the beginning of 2017. SITSD and Secretary of State's office had several informal brainstorming sessions analyzing the benefits of rolling out this type of policy, along with any potential downsides. Ultimately, the idea of the Capstone approach to email records management never took hold. Instead, SITSD implemented an archiving function available in Microsoft Exchange and the 2006 email guideline was updated. Reasons for not going with the Capstone approach were storage space/cost, discoverability, and a general lack of buy in from members of the committee and others in State government.
- On October 1, 2017, the five rotating seats on the committee changed agency representation per MONT. CODE ANN. § 2-6-1107(4). Now the committee had representation from the Department of Commerce, the State Board of Education, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Department of Labor and Industry.

Links to the audio minutes during this timeframe

2016 4th Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20161209/-1/15573>

2017 1st Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20170307/-1/13107>

2017 2nd Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20170622/-1/13108>

2017 3rd Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20171003/-1/13105>

2017 4th Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20171228/-1/13106>

2018 1st Qtr meeting-- <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20180327/-1/12955>

Improvements in Records Management in State Government

Since 2016, the State government of Montana has seen a sharp downturn in the amount of paper records that are created. Records are now more increasingly “born digital”. As result, the

approach that State government agencies take to manage records continue to evolve.. These changes have occurred gradually, yet effectively. Gone are the days of filing cabinets, hanging file folders, and boxes of records requiring storage in offsite warehouses. The improvements can be measured by the decreasing of “space” required to manage records. Digital records management has been identified as the new industry standard by federal organizations such as NARA and NAGARA. Montana State government has shown progress in aligning itself with these standards.

Due to the lengthy retention periods of a number of records produced by our State’s government, there exists a back log of paper and micro filmed records that still do require some type of storage. Historically the Montana Secretary of State’s Office has been tasked with coordinating these storage needs. Up until October of 2019, that took the form of the Montana Secretary of State’s Office renting a facility in Helena large enough to store the records that State agencies could not keep on premises. This practice started many, many years ago and, over time, the facility became old and decrepit. The Montana Secretary of State’s Office and the State Records Committee worked together to find a solution that allowed the varying State agencies a better off site storage solution. In the Spring of 2019, a solution was found through the State’s RFP process. All records stored in the old decrepit facility were migrated to a newer, state of the art facility provided by a private vendor. The contract negotiated with the vendor allowed the Montana Secretary of State’s Office to fulfill its duties provided by law and provided the effected State agencies all the security and access standards required for proper records management.

Due, in part, to the changes with offsite storage and the trend of digitally born records, a number of the records management processes utilized by the State were analyzed, streamlined, and, in some instances, removed. This improvement was measured by willingness of State agencies to follow the processes, less confusion, and reduced amount of time and resources dedicated to address said confusion. There has also been a measurable amount of “buy in” from the many State agencies of Montana now that processes aren’t as time consuming and confusing.

Opportunities for Further Improvement in Records Management in the Future

The world of records management changes as the world of technology changes. The State Records Committee has an opportunity to adapt best practices with these changes. Most notably are the concepts surrounding email, instant messaging, and social media platforms. Many State agencies are utilizing these platforms extensively, lacking guidelines on how to properly manage their records in these venues. An email records management work group, comprised of members of the State Records Committee is already in progress with a purpose to provide resource guidelines. Additionally, the State Records Committee and the Montana Secretary of State’s Office is eager to provide educational opportunities for all records

stakeholders throughout the State government. Rough drafts of a curriculum have been created. The opportunities that the State Records Committee have are putting these concepts into practice, sooner than later.

Several private vendors specialize in digital copying of paper and microfilm records. Through federal/national organizations, such as NAGARA, the State Records Committee members can serve as a liaison for vendors and the State agencies that possess a large paper/microfilm footprint in offsite storage. Often, budget constraints dissuade agencies from pursuing the digital copying of their back logged records. However, through constant communication with both parties, a solution could be reached.