



LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Office of the City Attorney

100 North Appleton Street

Appleton, WI 54911

Phone: 920/832-6423

Fax: 920/832-5962

TO: Members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Christopher R. Behrens, Deputy City Attorney

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RE: Creation of a Master Records Retention Schedule and Corresponding Ordinance Amendment

The City of Appleton (and its many departments and personnel) are required to maintain records for specified periods of time to comply with the Wisconsin Open Records Law. Historically, various departments operated with their own policies describing some of the records they generated and the corresponding retention periods. The City Attorney's Office was frequently contacted for guidance regarding records that weren't addressed in these policies. Our office recognized that a comprehensive master records retention schedule would be a valuable resource to City departments and staff. This undertaking evolved into a two-year project requiring meetings with each department to review individual records schedules, a comprehensive review to determine additional records to be included in the master schedule as well as eliminating any redundancies. The ultimate goal being the creation of a user-friendly master records retention schedule. The end result is a schedule consisting of approximately 470 different types of records (including retention periods and disposition instructions). This project also required a two-part approval process from the Wisconsin Public Records Board with the final approval just being issued at the end of 2019.

The next step in this process requires an amendment to Sec. 2-1 of the Municipal Code. This amendment will formalize the adoption of the Master Records Retention and Disposition Schedule. (It should also be noted that the Police Department had already obtained state approval with regard to certain records it generates. Likewise, the Library also operates with a state-approved retention schedule specific to libraries. In both cases, the master schedule will supplement their respective schedules regarding records not covered by their individual schedules.)

As a final step in this process, and to formalize adoption of the General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, an amendment to the Municipal Code is required. The City Attorney's Office recommends as follows:

BE APPROVED that Sec. 2-1 of Chapter 2 of the Appleton Municipal Code relating to the destruction of public records be repealed and recreated to reflect the adoption of a general city records retention/disposition schedule.

City Law: A18-0034

James P. Walsh
City Attorney

Christopher R. Behrens
Deputy City Attorney

Amanda Abshire
Assistant City Attorney

Darrin M. Glad
Assistant City Attorney