



State & Local Records News

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State and Local Government Records Commissions approve RDAs, publications

On January 25, 2006, the **State Records Commission** approved a new records disposition authority (RDA) for the Department of Homeland Security, as well as a revised RDA for the Alabama State Licensing Board for General Contractors. The commission also reviewed annual RDA implementation reports from 26 state agencies, 27 state-funded colleges, and 13 state-funded universities.

At its meeting on the 25th, the **Local Government Records Commission** approved revised RDAs for Alabama racing commissions and the Jefferson Rehabilitation and Health Center. In addition, members reviewed a summary of annual reports from 24 local health care authorities or public hospitals. However, at the request of the Alabama Hospital Association, a revision of the RDA for health care authorities was held over for the April meeting.

Both records commissions also approved three revised ADAH publications: "Guidelines for Maintaining Permanent or Long-Term Records on Digital Imaging Systems," "Guidelines for the Preservation and Transfer of Agency Website Records," and "Guidelines for Taking Formal Meeting Minutes." All three leaflets will be placed on the ADAH website. They may also be obtained from the Government Records Division by calling (334)

242-4452, or sending e-mail to records@archives.alabama.gov.

The commissions' next meetings are set for **Wednesday, April 26, 2006**. The State Records Commission will begin at 10:00 a.m., and the Local Government Records Commission at 1:30 p.m. Both meetings will be held in the Milo B. Howard Auditorium at ADAH.

Record-keeping requirements of the Open Meetings Act for state and local agencies

The Open meetings Act of 2005 (Code of Alabama, Section 36-25A-1 through 36-25A-11) requires that governmental bodies with statewide jurisdiction must submit notices of their meetings to the Office of the Secretary of State for posting on the Secretary of State's Internet website. Upon receipt of the meeting notice, the Office of the Secretary of State will send an e-mail to the governmental body as an acknowledgment. Printouts of these e-mails should be preserved for compliance review for three years.

At its quarterly meeting on January 25, the State Records Commission approved the disposition of this new record series (Printouts of

Acknowledgment from the Secretary of State Relating to Notices of Meetings Posted by State Agencies) as an addition to all state agency records disposition authorities (RDAs). Every state agency should therefore add the following disposition requirement to its RDA:

Printouts of Acknowledgment from the Secretary of State Relating to Notices of Meetings Posted by State Agencies.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

Under the Open Meetings Act, agencies of local government are also required to provide prior notice of their meetings. Municipalities, school boards, and other governmental bodies must post meeting notices “on a bulletin board at a place convenient to the public.” They must also, “if practicable,” provide special notice to the news media, or members of the public, who have requested it and agree to bear the cost.

Individual meeting notices may be transmitted “using electronic mail, telephone, facsimile, the United States Postal Service, or any other method reasonably likely to provide the requested notice.”

County commissions are not required to comply with the procedures of the Open Meetings Act, so long as they provide notice of meetings “in conformance with Section 11-3-8, Code of Alabama 1975.”

Counties, municipalities, and other governmental bodies “with less than statewide jurisdiction” may also submit notice of meetings for posting on the Secretary of State’s website; but they are not required to do so. However, their RDAs already require them to **retain copies of posted meeting notices for two years following audit**, in order to demonstrate compliance with Alabama’s open meetings law.

Agencies with questions about the new law should call state records archivist Richard Wang at (334)353-4605, or local records archivist Tom Turley at (334)353-4607. E-mail inquiries may be

directed to the ADAH Government Records Division at records@archives.alabama.gov.

Four more counties complete loose records projects

Since our last issue, four more Alabama counties have received free microfilm of unbound historical (or “loose”) records, prepared by local volunteers and filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU).

On December 13, local records archivist Tom Turley delivered 74 rolls of Russell County estates (1833-1946) and marriage licenses (1873-1935) to Probate Judge Albert Howard at a county commission meeting. Volunteers Phyllis East and Bill Page received certificates of appreciation for preparing the loose records to be filmed. Paulette Colbert received a certificate for providing computer support to the project.

Probate Judge Floyd Hambrick accepted Jackson County’s 114 rolls of microfilm on January 24. This project included estates (1850-1930), marriages (1913-1934), and chancery court files (1850-1900). Eighteen volunteers were recognized for their records preparation efforts: Lena Cagle, Bob and Barbara Crossley, Robert Dean, Rubye Hahn, Brad Howland, Ralph Mackey, Marland and Elizabeth Mountain, John Neely, Mae Willow Prince, Walter Proctor, William Roy Reed, Betty Roberts, Thelma Snodgrass, Jen Stewart, and Jay and Frances Worley. Donna Haislip of the probate office served as coordinator.

*Jackson County probate officials and volunteers
at loose records microfilm presentation*

On February 13, 2006, Choctaw and Greene Counties received copies of their film. Choctaw County's project produced 57 rolls of birth records, estates, guardianships, marriages, divorces, and Confederate pension files (ca. 1850-1940). Volunteers recognized at the presentation were Ann Gay (who coordinated the project, along



with the late Sarah Mzingo), Pete Allen, Jo Ann Copeland, Alice Edwards, Frances Houlditch, Jean Kelly, Alma Roberts, J.D. Tindle, Lanelle Turner, and Cindy Tyson.

*Probate judge Michael Armistead, ADAH archivist
Tom Turley, and Choctaw County volunteers*

Attending Greene County's microfilm presentation were probate judge Earlean Isaac and local volunteers Jan Bullock and Jane Doughty. Diana Liverman and GSU volunteers Elsdon and Juanita Howard also assisted in preparing estate files (1820-1915) that produced 142 rolls of microfilm.

Thirty-eight Alabama counties have now completed filming their historical loose records. Bibb County is the latest, and Jefferson County's huge project should be finished soon.



City of Valley has new archives

On November 10, 2005, the City of Valley dedicated a newly renovated building for its municipal archives, which has been in existence since 1995.

River View School, home of the new Valley Archives

The city's first record center was the renovated Shawmut Post Office. Its new facility is housed in River View Elementary School, a Georgian brick structure built in 1928 and fully restored for full-time use as an art center and archives. The archives room features metal shelving for historical records, climate control, fire protection with a sprinkler system, and security alarms.

Mayor Arnold Leak; City Clerk Martha Cato; and Mrs. Annie Hawkins, former head of the city's historical commission, were among dignitaries present at the ribbon cutting. Valley, which has one of the most active preservation programs in the state, has already renovated some 25 historic buildings within its city limits. Its latest project is a huge one: the restoration of Langdale Mill.



Morgan County Archivist Susan Bzdell dies

Susan Bzdell, Morgan County's long-time archivist, died unexpectedly on December 17, 2005. After beginning her archival career as assistant archivist in Limestone County, Susan had served in Decatur since 1995. Here she administered an excellent facility, built an outstanding historical and genealogical collection, and authored several books on local history.

Susan will be greatly missed by her fellow archivists in Alabama, most of whom she knew, and many of whom she had advised or helped to train. She was always willing to share her time and expertise, either at workshops and the "local archives roundtable" sponsored by ADAH, or on-site at her archives or those of other counties and municipalities.

Susan's groundbreaking work in Morgan County had a tremendous impact. Her energy, enthusiasm, and ability to "get things done" were an example to us all. ADAH extends its condolences to Susan's family, friends and co-workers.

The Morgan County Commission has named Edna Earle James as interim archivist until a permanent successor can be found. Ms. James is a retired schoolteacher and president of the Morgan County Genealogical Society.

John Durden to succeed Chris Davidson as ADAH Records Center supervisor

In mid-February, ADAH hired John Durden to replace Chris Davidson as supervisor of the State Records Center. John comes to us from the Department of Human Resources, where he was employed as mailroom distribution supervisor. Previously, he served as plant manager in Montgomery for Elias Industries, Inc. John attended Troy State University and represents Tap South on the Montgomery Chamber of

Commerce. He will begin his new duties at the record center on March 6.

Chris, an ADAH staff member since 1996, resigned to become full-time records officer for the state Department of Transportation. Although Chris began his work at DOT last year, he had continued to supervise the records center on a part-time basis until a replacement for him could be found. We are grateful for Chris's decade of service to ADAH, and we look forward to continuing to work with him in his new position.