

Archive Considerations

An Overview of Previous Discussion Points

Previous Discussions

- ▶ This is the third iteration of the same question and consideration
- ▶ During each of the previous requested considerations, the factors supporting an archive from the committee and the council discussion points relatively consistent
- ▶ A very comprehensive review of this subject which included a visioning session and a request for a capital contribution from Fanshawe Pioneer Village was held in 2013

Key Considerations

Use of County Tax Dollars

- ▶ Mandatory Services
- ▶ Investments in Mandatory Services
- ▶ Local Services
- ▶ Discretionary Programs
 - ▶ “Nice To Do”

Nice To Do Projects

- ▶ In my view, the Archive and Museum Project falls into this category
- ▶ The list of potential nice to do projects is much longer than I have space for in this presentation and it greatly exceeds any amount of tax dollars that could sustainably be raised

Shared History Challenge

- ▶ Much of our history is shared with the City of London
- ▶ Many of our foundational communities are now within the boundaries of the City of London
- ▶ The first iteration of the archive discussion focussed on a joint development project between the City and the County
- ▶ Ultimately, the worthiness of expending funds on an archive in both the City and County ended these discussions early in the process
- ▶ There was slightly greater than zero interest at the City at the time

Which Middlesex?

- ▶ Multiple versions of Middlesex County over the past two centuries
- ▶ Large portions of the County have a history that is either City of London, Huron, Norfolk or Elgin based
- ▶ This version of Middlesex was created in 1993

How Will the Municipalities and Clerks Benefit?

The Middlesex County Archivist would be able to help clerks create a Records Management Policy, if required, and ensure that the Retention Schedule is being followed. The County Archivist would also be able to work with the Municipal Clerks to transfer permanent records to the Archives and make them easily accessible through the Arrangement and Description of the records. The County Archivist would be able to assist with the MFIPPA and/or Freedom of Information requests through quicker retrieval of information but only if the records are located in the Archives. It also gives easier access to the area public or researchers who need access to the records.

While some municipalities are transferring records to Laserfiche or other electronic databases, the hard copy of original records could be sent to the Middlesex County Archives. Sometimes it is essential to go back to the original copy to verify information. The original records would then be available and stores off-site in an environmentally controlled (EC) facility. The longevity of the records would be extended. It would also make the records more accessible for researchers if they are available at the Archives. It would be beneficial to adopt the Archives as an extension of the Records Management process by providing the Archives' staff with access to Laserfiche. This would increase service to constituents and the public in general. One of the main benefits for Municipal staff is the removal of records from municipal offices or facilities to free up space. Placing these records in a centralized Middlesex County Archives with EC conditions, appropriate shelving, and staff who are trained to take care of records and retrieval in a timely fashion, would make the records accessible.

A Middlesex County Archives would eliminate the cost to lower-tier municipalities and Middlesex County by having records stored in a centralized area. The benefit of the EC storage would ensure the security, retention and preservation of permanent records, as legislated by the Municipal Act 2001. S.O. 2001. Chapter 25.

Municipal Benefit?

A Municipal Organizational Requirement?

- ▶ I have heard a considerable amount about the municipal need for an archive in the email reports and presentation from the committee
- ▶ At the County level, there is absolutely zero need for an archive to protect municipal records
- ▶ The legislation for municipalities related to records retention is very clear
- ▶ I am confident that all municipalities already have record retention programs
- ▶ I am not aware of any municipalities struggling with storage of municipal records
 - ▶ In fact there are a number of anecdotal stories of excess storage capacity as a result of digitization
- ▶ I am not aware of any municipalities that have not headed toward highly searchable digitization

Municipal Staff are Asking for This?

- ▶ I am not aware of one municipality that applied for municipal modernization funding to address this perceived local issue
- ▶ I do not recall one meeting of local CAOs where this item was raised as a priority issue
- ▶ This quote from a local CAO sums up the vast majority sentiment from local CAOs that I have talked to about this issue
 - ▶ “A costly endeavour in the opposite direction of where the entire world is going”

Localized or County Wide?

- ▶ Geographically, Middlesex County is very large
- ▶ Centralized public access facilities are difficult to promote and maintain while at the same time creating reduced accessibility challenges
- ▶ Efficiency of a large singular facility is questionable at best

Everyone Else is Doing It

- ▶ Our closest historical partner, the City of London is not
- ▶ The County of Middlesex most certainly does not simply do what other counties do in many, many areas
 - ▶ There is a reason that our tax rate is approximately half of our neighbouring counties
- ▶ There is one County archive all were developed well before the advancement of digitization and record retention legislation

A Desire For A Purpose Built Building

- ▶ Artifact storage as well?
- ▶ Accessibility
- ▶ Original documents vs electronic storage

Strong Local Facilities

- ▶ Local Archive and Museum facilities in place in a number of municipalities
 - ▶ There is nothing stopping a municipality that is passionate about this issue from addressing this issue locally
 - ▶ As well, the County has invested significant funds in the past to support municipal history preservation through the Infrastructure Fund
- ▶ Local Municipal records management
- ▶ Extension of a records management policy
- ▶ Records should be retained in local municipalities
- ▶ What local history is should be decided locally