

Policy Title	Records Retention Policy
Purpose	To establish general procedures and record schedules for the preservation of Cleveland Metroparks records of enduring administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical value; to achieve economy and efficiency in the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of these records in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. The records schedules are the instruments that enable administrators who oversee records generation to purge their files regularly and systematically without financial or legal jeopardy. If, on the other hand, records are created, maintained, or disposed of in a haphazard manner, the same records may become a legal liability, waste valuable space, increase operating costs, and squander staff time.
Department/Division(s)	All Departments
Approval Date	May 22, 2026
Review Date	May 2031

I. BACKGROUND OF CLEVELAND METROPARKS RECORDS COMMISSION AND THE OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A. Role Cleveland Metroparks Records Commission

1. Sections 121.211, 149.011, 149.31, 149.34, and 149.44, and of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) require that all state agencies, "including ...any political subdivision or agency of a political subdivision," formulate an active continuing program for the effective management of the records of the state agency.
2. ORC §149.412, creates in each special taxing district that is a public office as defined in Section 149.011 of the ORC, including Cleveland Metroparks, a special taxing district records commission. Under these provisions, Cleveland Metroparks records commission (Records Commission) must be created and composed of, at a minimum, the chairperson, a fiscal representative, and a legal representative.
3. Responsibilities and Functions of Records Commission Include:
 - a. Provide oversight and guidance for the program;
 - b. Meet at least once every twelve (12) months and upon call of the chairperson;
 - c. Solicit review and update of RC-2 Schedule annually;
 - d. Review and execute all RC-1 Applications, RC-2 Schedules, RC-3 Certificate and Internal Records Disposal Forms (IRD), and
 - e. Procure necessary approvals from Ohio History Connection and Ohio Auditor of State in accordance with ORC §149.412.

B. Role of Ohio History Connection (OHC)

1. Ohio History Connection (OHC) is designated by ORC §149.31 as the archives administrator for the State of Ohio, including its political subdivisions such as Cleveland Metroparks. Among other rights and responsibilities, OHC has the first right to review proposed records destruction schedules and, for historical purposes, to preclude destruction of those local records that OHC determines to have continuing historical value to the State of Ohio and its citizens (ORC §149.412). OHC functions as the state archives administration. In this role, OHC administers

the OHC State Archives, Local Government Records Program (LGRP) and provides assistance State-wide with development of records management programs by local governments.

2. Forms: Records shall be retained, then disposed of, through the process mandated by ORC §149.412 and administered by OHC, utilizing the following forms:
 - a. **Form RC-1 “Application for One-Time Disposal of Obsolete Records:** This RC-1 Application is approved from time to time by the Records Commission and used to request authorization to dispose of obsolete records series or records series no longer being created. Approval of a particular RC-1 Application does not represent continuing authority to destroy records.
 - b. **Form RC-2 “Records Retention Schedule”:** In effect, the RC-2 Schedule constitutes the active inventory of Cleveland Metroparks records. Once a proposed RC-2 Schedule has been approved by the Records Commission, OHC, and Ohio Auditor of State, that RC-2 Schedule is in effect and should be followed. The Records Commission at any time may review any RC-2 Schedule that previously has been approved and, for good cause, may revise that RC-2 Schedule for resubmission to, and approval by, all parties.
 - c. **Form RC-3 “Certificate of Records Disposal”:** For only those records series so indicated on the Records Retention Schedule, the Records Commission must approve and submit an original RC-3 Certificate to OHC at least fifteen (15) days before a disposal takes place. During the period prior to the proposed disposal, OHC has the opportunity to select for its custody those public records that OHC considers to be of continuing historical value. (See Instructions – Form RC-3)
 - d. **FORM IRD “Internal Records Disposal”:** Cleveland Metroparks Records Commission form created to record records that are permitted to be destroyed without further authorization from OHC or Ohio Auditor of State.
 - e. **Records Revision Form:** Cleveland Metroparks Records Commission created form to request revisions to the Form RC-2.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. “Record” is defined as: "any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, including electronic record as defined in ORC §1306.01, created or received by or coming under the jurisdiction of any public office of the state or its political subdivisions, which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or any other activities of the office.” ORC §149.011(G).
- B. “Record series,” as defined by OHC, is a sequence of records systematically classified and filed as group of records created for a specific activity or function.
- C. “Office of Record” is the location where the record required to be retained for a particular period under the RC-2 Schedule resides, even though copies of the record may be located elsewhere. For example, the locations of unique items such as maps, old drawings, old photos etc. constitute the Offices of Record for such items although one or more copies of those items may be maintained elsewhere.
- D. “Duplicate” or “secondary copies” and “stock of obsolete forms or pamphlets” are not considered to be official records. Duplicate files and stock of obsolete forms or pamphlets should be destroyed when they cease to be useful and should not be kept longer than the record required to be retained at the office of record.

III. RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION PROGRAM

A. Designation of Staff and Records

Commission Members: The Chief Executive Officer shall designate the members of the Records Commission which shall include at a minimum of a Chairperson, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Legal & Ethics Officer in accordance with ORC §149.412. In addition, the Records Commission shall appoint the Paralegal & Records Manager as Secretary and appoint Chief Information Officer, and Police Records Administrator as Commissioner members.

1. Records Liaisons: Due to the number of Cleveland Metroparks locations, this records program must be organized to allow each department to track the retention period of the records for which that department is the Office of Record.
 - a. Each Chief shall designate an individual(s) to serve as the Records Liaisons to the Records Commission for each division within that Department.
 - b. Each Chief shall also designate a Primary Records Liaison to the whole Department.
 - c. The Chief of each Department shall coordinate their Department's compliance with the provisions of this Policy with the assistance of Primary Records Liaison.

B. Schedule of Retention and Disposition

1. The Cleveland Metroparks' most current "Schedule of Records Retention and Disposition" (Attached RC-2 Schedule) has been approved by the Cleveland Metroparks Records Commission, the Ohio History Connection and the Ohio Auditor of the State. The RC-2 schedule can be found on Cleveland Metroparks intranet and website.
2. The Chiefs and Records Liaisons shall schedule, retain and dispose of the listed records for the periods specified on the attached, respective RC-2 schedule for each Department.
3. Annual Review: At least annually on or before March 31st, Primary Records Liaisons shall review the existing RC-2 Schedule to determine if it needs updated.
 - a. Records Liaisons must complete a Records Revision Form to identify additional records series proposed to be added to the RC-2 Schedule, and then submit the completed Records Revision Form to the respective Primary Records Liaison. Each Primary Records Liaison shall consolidate all proposals and then submit the completed Records Revision Forms to the Records Commission. The Records Commission will consider the Records Revision Forms and decide whether to revise the RC-2 Schedule at that time or defer revisions to the following year. Any changes approved by the Records Commission shall also be submitted for review and approval by OHC and the Ohio Auditor of State.
4. Annual Disposal: At least annually on or before October 1st, each Records Liaison shall review its records and determine which records can and should be disposed according to the following processes:
 - a. *For records listed on the RC-2 Schedule*: Complete the Internal Records Disposal Form and submit to the Primary Records Liaison for compilation and submission to the Records Commission.
 1. Records may be destroyed once they are included on the Internal Records Disposal Form by the Primary Records Liaison, using disposal methods suitable to the type and volume of records to be disposed by shredding, burning, or selling the same under contract for pulp, consistent with the recycling philosophy of Cleveland Metroparks.

b. *For records listed on the RC-2 Schedule for which Column 6 is checked:*

1. The Primary Records Liaison must complete the RC-3 certificate for submission to the Records Commission Chairperson. Records Commission will consider the RC-3 Certificate, and, if appropriate, revise and approve the RC-3 Certificate, then submit the approved RC-3 Certificate to OHC for approval.

- c. *For records NOT listed on the RC-2 Schedule and need a one-time disposal:* The Primary Liaison shall complete the RC-1 Application and submit to the Records Commission Chairperson. Records Commission will consider the RC-1 Application, and, if appropriate, revise and approve the RC-1 Application, then submit the approved RC-1 Application to OHC for approval.

IV. SPECIAL TOPICS FOR RECORDS RETENTION

A. Storage

1. Prior to any records being placed into storage, the Records Liaison shall ensure that the record's scheduled destruction date shall be placed on the file and storage box. This will aid in the timely and orderly destruction of records in storage.
2. Each Primary Records Liaison shall be responsible for ensuring that all records placed in storage are reviewed in the yearly disposition process delineated in this Policy.

B. Litigation

1. Upon receiving actual notice of litigation, or in the event that an employee reasonably anticipates litigation, all employees shall suspend the destruction of public records related to said litigation or anticipated litigation pursuant to this Policy and shall comply with all "litigation hold" directives for those public records to ensure the preservation of relevant documents. If an employee is uncertain whether the documents they are charged with retaining pursuant to this Policy are the subject of litigation, that employee shall contact the Primary Records Liaison who shall communicate with the Legal Department.

C. Multiple Copies of Records

1. Cleveland Metroparks is not required to maintain multiple copies of the same record.
2. Prior to disposal of any record, Cleveland Metroparks staff shall check with the Office of Record as noted in the RC-2 Schedule. If that the designated Department is missing that record, the Cleveland Metroparks staff person in possession of that record will provide that Department with the record. If the Designated Department possesses that record, the Cleveland Metroparks staff person may dispose of the record on their own.

D. Electronically Stored Records (ESR)

1. Electronically stored information includes "any designated documents or electronically stored information –writings, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, sound recordings, images, and other data or data compilations-stored in any medium from which information can be obtained either directly or, if necessary, after translation into a reasonably usable form.

2. Records that are stored electronically shall be stored in their native formats which are capable of being read with technology available or that is available to the Cleveland Metroparks staff and capable of being accessed and/or reproduced for the public records requests.

3. Cleveland Metroparks staff shall work with the Information Technology Services Department under the direction of the Chief Information Officer to ensure that ESR can be accessed and supported around such areas as:

- a. Native file formats
- b. Maintain passwords, passphrases, encryption, and other security methods are available to the ITS department in order to make certain ESR records are accessible.
- c. Users maintain proper protocols and procedures to store their ESR records in appropriate locations to ensure they are backed up and maintained. Note: The backup of data is not considered records retention and its sole purpose is disaster recovery in the event of data loss.

4. **Email/Text/Chat/Messaging Application/Electronic Applications:**

a. Purpose and Type Determines if it is an Official Record: An email/text/chat/messaging app/electronic applications may be considered to be an official record or document created or received by a public office. The record's status as an "email/text/chats/messaging application/electronic application does not determine how long the record must be retained. The **purpose and type** of email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic application must be evaluated to determine how it is classified on the RC-2 Schedule. This is true of any communication regardless of form or characteristic.

- i. a. ***Personal correspondence:*** Any **email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic** not received or created in the course of business. For example, "Let's do lunch" (not a business lunch) or "Can I catch a ride home?" type of note.
- ii. ***Non-State Publications:*** Publications, promotional material from vendors, and similar materials that are "publicly available" to anyone, are not official records unless specifically incorporated into other official records. In the electronic world, this includes listserve messages (other than those you post in your official capacity), unsolicited promotional material ("spam"), files copied or downloaded from Internet sites, etc. These items may be immediately deleted, or maintained in a "Non-Record" mailbox and deleted later, just as you might trash the unwanted publication or promotional flyer. However, for example, if you justify the purchase of a "Zippo Filing System" by incorporating the reviews you saved (from the "Files R Us Listserve") in your proposal to your boss, those listserve messages become official records and must be retained in accordance with the retention schedule for purchasing proposals.

b. Categorizing, Storing and Disposing email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic applications that ARE RECORDS:

- i. Cleveland Metroparks employees shall be responsible for classifying, storing or disposing email/text/chat/messaging app/electronic applications, based upon the following:

(a) **Transitory Messages** –Much of the communication via email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic applications has a very limited administrative value. For instance, an e-mail message notifying employees of an upcoming meeting would only have value until the meeting has been attended or the employee receiving the message has marked the date and time in his/her calendar. Transient messages do not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction or become a receipt. The informal tone of transitory messages might be compared to a communication that might take place during a telephone conversation or conversation in an office hallway. (i.e. telephone messages and other limited documents which serve to convey information of temporary importance in lieu of oral communication)

(i) **Retention/Disposal:** Delete when no longer of administrative value.

(b) **Intermediate Retention Messages-** Email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic applications that have more significant administrative, legal and/or fiscal value but are not scheduled as transient or permanent should be categorized under other appropriate record series.

(i) These emails/texts/chat/messaging application/electronic applications should be saved via an approved method on the Cleveland Metroparks network, an authorized partner, or printed out to ensure their retention and accessibility. For instance, a text message that has intermediate retention value should be saved in another format (e.g., PDF, JPG) to an appropriate network drive.

(ii) **Retention/Disposal:** Retain 3 years, then delete. Chief Information Officer shall implement a system to manage 3-year disposal period for all staff emails.

(c) **Permanent Retention Messages-** Email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic applications that have significant administrative, legal and/or fiscal value and are scheduled as permanent.

(i) **Retention/Disposal:** Permanent retention email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic applications shall be saved permanently through an approved method on the Cleveland Metroparks network, an authorized partner, or printed out to ensure their retention and accessibility.

c. Deletion Upon Reading: No email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic application that may contain Intermediate and Permanent Retention messages shall be set to "delete upon reading," but shall allow sufficient time for staff to properly categorize, track and store any email/text/chat/messaging application/electronic application that is a record.

E. Social Media

1. Defined: Media for social interaction using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques.

These internet-based applications allow for the creation and exchange of user generated content. Through social media, individuals or collaborators create, organize, edit, comment and or share content online. Social media is designed to support rapid interactive communications.

2. Department Chiefs in consultation with the CIO shall determine whether the social media content is a record and whether that record is “transitory,” intermediate,” or “permanent” as defined in Paragraph D of this Policy.
(Similar to email/text/chat/messaging application/e-other, the Cleveland Metroparks must look beyond the electronic social medium and analyze the content to determine if the information posted on social media accounts are considered “records” as defined above.)
3. Disposal/Retention: If the social media content is a public record, it must be preserved in accordance with the RC-2 (e.g., if “permanent,” print of screen shot of the record, etc.). For those records which are not “permanent”, deletion will occur not later than two (2) years after record created in a manner determined by the CIO.

G. Personally-Owned Devices

All records created, received, and/or maintained on personally owned devices on behalf of Cleveland Metroparks shall be maintained in accordance with Cleveland Metroparks Schedule of Records Retention (RC-2). All information that falls under the “records” definition supplied above would be subject to disclosure and must be retained in accordance with the RC-2 schedule. Please refer to Cleveland Metroparks Employee Handbook for more information.

H. Historical Records

No record over 50 years old shall be destroyed without the prior approval of the State Archives of Ohio.

References:

ORC §§ 121.211, 149.011, 149.30, 149.31, 149.34, 149.38, 149.40, 149.412, and 149.44,.

Ohio Attorney General’s Office, Ohio Sunshine Laws: An Open Government Resource Manual, 2026.

Ohio Historical Society: Ohio Local Government Records Program – Managing Electronic Mail: Guidelines for State of Ohio Local Government, October 2000.

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Ohio Electronic Records Committee: Social Media: The Records Management Challenge

Approved:



Gregory L. Healdley, Chairperson, Records Commission

5.22.26

Date

