CITY OF
RIVERSIDE

FINAL REPORT

Performance Assessment and Financial Expenditure Review of the City Clerk's Office

JULY 28, 2023

ARROYO
ASSOCIATES, INC

Management Consultants

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Photo: Ken Lund

Executive Summary

Introduction

The City of Riverside's (City) City Clerk's Office (CCO or Department) plays an important role in the City's government administration, serving a rapidly growing urban center with over 300,000 residents. A Performance Assessment and a Financial Expenditures Review of the CCO has been conducted based on a review of the City's delivery of services, through a functional analysis affecting the business of the Department. The functions of the CCO for the City include the following key activities:

- Manage the preparation, distribution and archiving of agendas and minutes for the City Council and its standing committees;

- Manage the preparation, distribution and archiving of agendas and minutes for most of the City's boards and commissions;

- Manage the compiling, archiving and updating of the City's records including historical records, contracts, legal documentation, and other City documentation;

- Process applications and maintain rosters for voluntary service on City advisory boards and commissions;

- File the Conflict of Interest Statements for the City elected and appointed officials;

- Respond to public records requests;

- Provide election services including the management of local candidate application process and ballot measures along with managing redistricting services; and

- Administer a U.S. Passport Services acceptance facility.

The goal of the Performance Assessment was to evaluate effectiveness of current operations and propose possible enhancements and streamlining of these services to the Department's customer base. This includes, but is not limited to the City Council, City boards/commissions/committees, residents, businesses, and the City government clientele. Specifically, Arroyo Associates, Inc. conducted an assessment that included the following activities:

- Reviewing current operations, policies, procedures and practices for consistency and compliance with governing laws and policies.

- Reviewing current operations, policies, procedures and practices for efficiency and effectiveness.

- Reviewing current use of management systems and technology and make recommendations for improvements and enhanced efficiency.

- Analyzing benchmarks of other City Clerk offices of similar function and size, smart practices (e.g., best practices that are suited for the particularities of the City), and other performance indicators of program and service effectiveness on related tasks.

- Reviewing the organization structure and making recommendations for enhanced efficiency including the potential for consolidation of functions, effectives of staffing levels, and succession planning.

Simultaneously, we also conducted a Financial Expenditure Review covering Fiscal Years ending June 30, 2022, 2021, and 2020. We reviewed specific non-personnel expenditure transactions and assessed compliance with relevant City policies for purchasing and contracting.

Methodology

We utilized four discrete, complementary methodologies that led to our findings, observations, and recommendations. Below is a brief overview of each activity, along with its purpose and benefits.

- **Personal Interviews.** We conducted in-person interviews with the City Clerk's Office staff and 18 stakeholders that have regular interaction with the City Clerk's Office. Included in this group were staff members of certain City departments, the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tem, three City board and commission members, and a resident of the City of Riverside.

- **In-Office Observations.** Our site visits to the City Clerk's Office and the off-site Passport Office, provided our Project Team with first-hand information regarding the processes and procedures of the Department's services. We were able to review the use of *Legistar*, the agenda management system, the vault (used for document storage), and evaluated the front desk/waiting area for accessibility monitoring and control.

- **Data and Document Review.** We reviewed documentation such as the City's Sunshine Ordinance, the City's and City Clerk's website, commission information, budgets, documentation of expenditures, the City's public meeting calendar, the City's Administrative Manual, and other documents and data points.

- **Smart Practices and Benchmark Analysis.** We conducted a benchmark analysis of the city clerk services of seven cities in Southern California with similar size and services to the City of Riverside to compare service levels, budgetary resources, organizational structure, services provided, staffing levels, and other obtainable information to other comparable organizations. We also conducted a smart practice assessment in order to determine if there were suitable recommendations regarding services for the City.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The activities of the City Clerk's office appear to be efficient, effective and timely. Our assessment found no critical findings related to the operations. Within the City Clerk's Office, we did not find any issues with compliance including those imposed by the City's Sunshine Ordinance which requires more days to post of the agendas than that imposed by the Brown Act.

We did identify four issues which we believe would improve the Department's performance. None of these were critical findings that need to be corrected, but the issues should be considered for improvements to operations in the City Clerk's Office. This includes:

- Staffing and workload;

- Public participation process for boards and commissions;

- Records management controls; and

- Financial expenditure controls.

In this report, we have noted the following recommendations as areas for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness for the CCO:

Staffing and workload recommendations

1. Adding an additional City Clerk Specialist could be utilized to help manage the administrative services, passport services, and records management of the CCO.

2. The CCO should regularly monitor the agenda queues to ensure that reports are not being held up by one approver. This process might be addressed by an automated reminder system, e.g., via e-mail, based on a predefined review schedule.

3. The City Clerk and the Assistant City Clerk should regularly review software updates/features to the agenda management system to improve the CCO's efficiency.

4. The City Clerk should consider the possibility of adding a budget/concurrence process to the agenda queue for increased effectiveness of the overall agenda process.

Public participation recommendations

5. The City Council should periodically review the standing committees to ensure their objectives align with the City's strategic plan and goals.

6. The City should consider adding an additional Deputy City Clerk to provide professional clerking resources to the standing committees, boards, and commissions.

7. The City Council should regularly reevaluate the effectiveness and use of City advisory commissions.

8. Board and commission training for new members and continuing members should include expectations of members by the Mayor and City Council, e.g., video welcome with current strategic plan or annual policy goals.

Records management recommendations

9. Each department should establish a clear schedule for Category C retention records which are approved by the City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, and the City's Executive Management team.

10. The CCO should retain a records management consultant to provide an inventory of records stored at both the storage facility and within the City, establish searchable physical and electronic records, and establish a records management program for the City.

11. There should be a designated Records Management Coordinator who has the responsibility to clear out records and coordinates with the departments on their records retention schedules and off-site storage.

12. The CCO should meet with the IT department at least annually to review time consuming public record requests. This would include evaluating the accuracy of City information available on the CCO's Online Documents, particularly for data that is the responsibility of other departments. Lastly, ensuring that any technology updates germane to the database are being implemented in a timely manner.

13. Provide cross training opportunities for the City Clerk Specialists assigned to the Passport Acceptance Facility.

14. The document storage activity of the department should be recorded into a centralized record management system. The documentation of storage activity should be verified by the CCO and the department for compliance with the City's Record Retention Resolution.

Expenditure control recommendations

15. For Purchase Card (P-card) transactions, evidence of the requests, and a detailed statement or receipt should be provided to the P-card cardholder, for inclusion in their monthly review, validation and documentation of their P-card transactions.

16. A manager in the CCO should annually review the list of authorized users and verify that all required training and usage agreements are on file.

Organization

Current Organizational Structure

In FY 2022-23, the City Clerk's office had 11 FTE. This includes the City Clerk, one (1) Assistant City Clerk, along with five (5) Deputy City Clerks and four (4) City Clerk Specialists. The City Clerk's Office has well defined roles for each position and each of the Deputy City Clerks are also knowledgeable in other City Clerk functions. The City Clerk is responsible for the management of the Department. The Assistant City Clerk manages the overall services of the City Clerk's Office and many of the overall administrative functions of the Department. Interviews with the staff noted that the Deputy City Clerks typically reported to both the City Clerk and the Assistant City Clerk.

The organizational chart in Figure II-1 (on the following page) differs slightly from the City Clerk's Organizational chart in that all of the Deputy City Clerk staff noted that they reported equally to both the City Clerk and the Assistant City Clerk. By designated responsibility, the Assistant City Clerk is responsible for the direct supervision and performance evaluations of the Deputy City Clerks and City Clerk Specialists. In addition, four of the Deputy City Clerks are responsible for agendas and minutes of elected and appointed officials and are placed to the legislative side (left) of the organizational chart, while one Deputy City Clerk has primary responsibility over records and administration, which has been placed to the right along with the other City Clerk Specialists that primarily perform non-legislative administrative functions for the CCO.

Each of the Deputy City Clerks have primary responsibility for one of the following:

- City Council agenda management

- City Council minutes, clerking services for standing committees, and services managing public hearings

- Board and commissions recruitment including filing of Form 700s for the City and clerking services for the Riverside Public Utilities Board

- Board and commissions onboarding and clerking services for several commissions

- Managing public records requests

Each of the City Clerk Specialists have the following primary assignments:

- Receptionist for City Clerk's Office

- Supporting overall services of the City Clerk's Office including administrative services and contract management
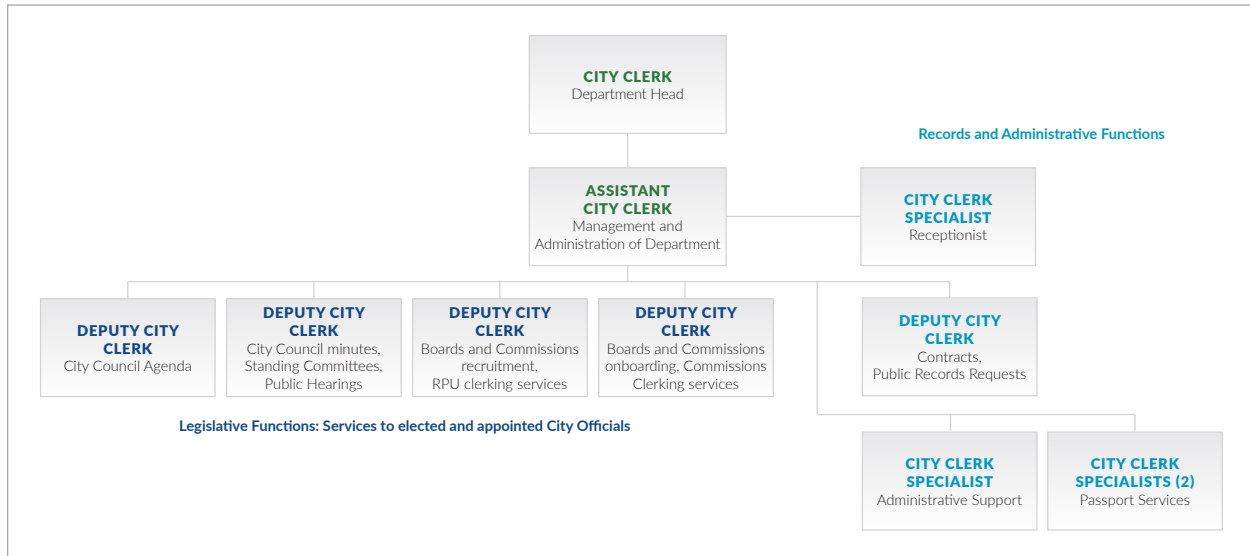
■ Two (2) passport services management (off-site)

Figure II-1: Organizations structure with positions and primary functions

Staffing levels

While the current organizational structure has been working well, it was noted several times by almost all of the CCO staff that the Department could use additional personnel to help with the workload. The City has some unique challenges affecting workload. These include:

■ A city "Sunshine Ordinance" that requires agendas to be published 12 days prior to a meeting rather than the State's Brown Act that requires the posting of agendas 72 hours (or three days) in advance;

■ The City's desire to provide professional clerking services to the City's boards and commissions;

■ An increasing number of public record requests; and

■ A large number of passport requests as a U.S. Passport Acceptance Facility.

In evaluating the CCO's staffing level and the work effort required to meet all requests and delivery deadlines, we conducted a survey of other cities of similar size. The data focused on activities directly impacting City Clerk operations. Our benchmarking survey noted the following staffing levels:

City	County	Population	Annual Budget FY 2021-22	Budget per resident (in dollars)	Staffing levels FTEs (FY 21-22)	Number of City Council meetings/ month	Staff per annual number of City Council meetings
Anaheim	Orange	335,946	$1,784,197.00	$5.31	8	2	0.3
Fontana	San Bernardino	212,616	$795,570.00	$3.74	6	2	0.3
Irvine	Orange	305,688	$4,591,059.00	$15.02	17.9	2	0.7
Long Beach	Los Angeles	460,245	$3,863,937.00	$8.40	15.3	4	0.3
Moreno Valley	Riverside	208,302	$1,036,287.00	$4.97	3	2	0.1
Pasadena	Los Angeles	137,814	$3,339,404.00	$24.23	13	4-5	0.3
Riverside	**Riverside**	**314,818**	**$1,970,394.00**	**$6.26**	**11**	**4**	**0.2**
Santa Monica	Los Angeles	91,739	$3,049,723.00	$33.24	12	2	0.5
Average		**258,396**	**$2,553,821.38**	**$12.65**	**10.8**		**0.3**

Table II-1: Benchmark Comparisons of City Clerk's Offices

Most of the benchmarked cities selected were ones that were closest in population size to the City of Riverside and located in Southern California. We also included the cities of Long Beach, Pasadena, and Santa Monica in Los Angeles County for comparison. The staffing levels and budgets for the City Clerk's Offices in the benchmarked cities varied significantly. Reviewing the averages from the benchmarked cities, the City of Riverside has a larger than average population, but a smaller than average budget for a City Clerk's Office. This translates to a significantly smaller dollar per resident amount, where the City budgets less than half the amount per person than the other cities.

At the current level of 11 positions, the City of Riverside has a slightly higher than average staffing level (10.8 FTE) of the benchmarked cities. Managing a City Council's meeting agenda and meeting minutes is the primary workload of a City Clerk's Office. A key performance metric when comparing the CCO's workload to most of the benchmarked cities is the number of Council meeting per month. The City, at four, is twice those of most of the benchmark cites, which only meet twice a month. For the staff per annual number of City Council meetings, the staffing level for the City of Riverside is the second lowest of the group's staffing levels. Only the City of Moreno Valley has a lower staffing level per the number of City Council meetings; however, some of the City Clerk responsibilities for that city are offset by the sharing by four City Council budgeted staff.

The City of Riverside's City Clerk's Office functions with less staff than other benchmarked cities per the number of City Council meetings.

Workload Trends

In one-on-one interviews with the CCO staff, we noted a high level of job satisfaction. This is despite a constant stream of work. The staff also found as a positive the opportunity to cross train. The Deputy City Clerks were also given the opportunity to earn accreditation as Municipal City Clerks. While the current staffing level have been able to manage the current workload sometimes requiring accrued comp time. We did note some opportunities for increased efficiencies for the Department with implementation of recommendations contained in this report.

> *Workload has been increasing in passport applications and public record requests for the City Clerk's Office.*

There is a current increase in passport service requests. International travel, post-COVID, is on the rise, approaching pre-COVID levels. While the passport services provided by the City of Riverside are currently well utilized, it remains to be seen whether the trend will continue to grow or plateau to pre-COVID levels.

Trend of U.S. Passports Issued

Figure II-2: Trend in US. Passport Issued for all of the United States

Residents in the City of Riverside have broad access to passport application acceptance facilities. The U.S. State Department identifies four (4) passport acceptance facilities in the City of Riverside, with a total of ten (10) passport facilities within ten (10) miles of the City of Riverside City Hall. The CCO's Passport Services is convenient and offers applicants enhanced features over other passport acceptance facilities, including online appointments and online information. While these services are well received by residents, it is not an essential service to the residents of the City of Riverside. The federally regulated U.S. passport application fees as a passport acceptance facility and the income from passport photo service has generated additional revenues for the City.

The other trending issue identified within the City is the increasing number of public records requests. Many of these public record requests are for multiple documents and email records. Such requests not only require retrieval, but they also require someone to manually review the documents for any sensitive information that is required to be redacted. Staff have noted that the number and length of time required to fulfill the requests have been increasing.

Recommendation #1:
Adding an additional City Clerk Specialist could be utilized to help manage the administrative services, passport services, and records management of the CCO.

This City Clerk Specialist could be utilized in multiple ways. This person could be trained to process Passport Services and could also be utilized to gather information for public record requests, assisting the current Deputy City Clerk in charge of City records administration.

Legislative Proceedings

City Council Agendas

There are four City Council meetings on Tuesdays of each month, often meeting over the course of up to three sessions in one day. This typically includes an early afternoon session, a late afternoon session, and an evening session. The City's Sunshine Ordinance requires the agenda to be posted 12 days in advance of a meeting rather than the usual 72 hours as required by the State's Brown Act requirements. This requires careful planning of the City Council agendas, and results in working on two agendas at the same time. Because of the posting time, agenda items are on lists and calendared to ensure that items are approved in a timely manner.

The City Clerk convenes a weekly City Council Agenda management meeting with the Mayor (an elected position), Mayor Pro Tem (appointed member of City Council), City Manager and other relevant City staff each week to provide timely information on the agendas. The Mayor and the Mayor Pro Tem often determine the timing and order of agenda items, while the City Manager and staff ensure that the administrative needs of the City are met.

The provisions of the Sunshine Ordinance place a significant burden on the City Clerk's Office to compile, organize and distribute material for Council meetings in a timely manner. Our assessment of the activities of the City Clerk's Office is that it is efficient, organized and timely in meeting deadlines. We also noted that stakeholders appreciate the work that it does to ensure that the City staff stays on task, allowing it to meet the business demands of the City. The City Clerk currently uses *Legistar* software by Granicus, which keeps agenda items in a queue prior to being ready for publishing.

The queue utilized by the agenda management system requires approvals from multiple people, depending on the item. While this system is orderly, the progression of items through the queue can be delayed, waiting for a particular approver to complete their review of the document. Interviews noted that at times, the queue can get held up by one individual, or that an individual may show up in the queue twice, based on job title and department responsibilities. It was noted that people at the end of the queue often have much less time to review and approve items due to queue compression. It was also noted that the CCO staff is often required to work overtime to meet agenda publishing dates, due to delays in receiving all outstanding approvals from the queue of approvers.

We reviewed a sample of approval sequences. The Principal Analysts in the City Manager's Office are typically the second in the queue. In interviews, they noted that sometimes additional time and effort were required in editing the original reports from departments. Especially those who are not regular agenda submitters. For the most part, the City staff who are regularly in the agenda review queue thought the process was reasonable. The Assistant City Managers who are later in the document review queue, noted that they were often not given sufficient time, leading to them reprioritizing their tasks to meet deadlines.

Recommendation #2:
The CCO should regularly monitor the agenda queues to ensure that reports are not being held up by one approver. This process might be addressed by an automated reminder system, e.g., via e-mail, based on a predefined review schedule.

It is important that agenda items be moved along in the queue in a timely manner. Information found on the *Legistar* software (www.granicus.com) noted that there were settings for reminders for approvers in the queue. *Legistar* software is regularly updated with new features that might improve utilization but have not been utilized by the CCO. These features may be useful in moving agenda items along. Some of the interviewees noted that, as they became more familiar with the system, there were features which would help with efficiency that they did not originally notice. Some of these applied to the administrator (in this case the CCO). Others could be implemented and utilized by other staff in the queue (such as individual reminder notifications). Ensuring that everyone is aware of items in the queue awaiting their approval, in a timely fashion, would ensure that things move along more quickly.

Some new features that we noted on the Granicus website that may be helpful to incorporate into the process: the ability to add due dates for approvers in the queue, emailed automatic reminder notices to approvers, and emailed daily summaries to approvers. The use of these features in the agenda management software would create more of a sense of urgency in the users, hopefully resulting in items moving more quickly through the system.

Recommendation #3:
The City Clerk and the Assistant City Clerk should regularly review software updates/features to the agenda management system to improve the CCO's efficiency.

In our interviews with stakeholders, the CCO was noted for its professionalism in managing the agenda process and doing so in a timely manner. There were no complaints during our interviews with respect to form in either the agendas or the minutes of the City Council meetings. Additionally, based on our limited review, we found them to be in compliance with governing laws and policies.

It was also noted that there is a separate concurrence process/queue for agenda items that requires Purchasing and Budget approval in order to assess the funding capacity for the item, based on the City's budget. This process occurs prior to documents being uploaded into *Legistar*

by the originating department. It is the originating department's responsibility to ensure that this concurrence process occurs. It may help with agenda efficiency if this concurrence process can be added as a process into the queue in *Legistar*. Finance Department staff noted that some staff reports moved forward in the agenda process without the changes to the staff report that were made during the concurrence phase.

Recommendation #4:
The City Clerk should review the possibility of adding a budget/concurrence process to the agenda queue for increase effectiveness of the overall agenda process.

Standing Committees

Standing committees of the City are responsible for researching and revising policy before submission to the entire City Council for approval. The City of Riverside regularly utilizes three member standing committees. Meetings for the standing committees also require agendas, publication, and minutes. The CCO is responsible for ensuring that all meeting documents are posted and recorded properly. The City Council currently has seven (7) standing committees which meet on a monthly basis. Standing committees for City Councils are most often used by cities that have elections districts with district representatives.

Standing committees should serve the interests of the Mayor and City Council.

The time required by the members of the standing committees and the CCO can be significant. It is in the best interest of the City to ensure that the meetings are meaningful, relevant and productive. Standing committees can become counter-productive if there is nothing of substance or relevance to the work of the City Council to discuss. If the direction and focus of the meetings do not align with the Mayor or the City Council's legislative goals, this may result in agendas presenting topics that may or may not be relevant to the Mayor and City Council. Regular reviews (possibly annually or after each election) of the standing committees would ensure that each has a specific purpose to enhance the overall work of the Mayor and the City Council.

Recommendation #5:
The City Council should periodically review the standing committees to ensure their objectives align with the City's strategic plan and goals.

Board and Commissions

City boards and commissions are useful in gathering community input into the City's departments or functions. It allows residents the opportunity to directly participate in issues of governance. The CCO provides clerking services for eight (8) of the City's 17 active boards and commissions. Most cities do not use the City Clerk's Office to provide clerking services for appointed boards and commissions. In the case of the City of Riverside, several stakeholders noted an improvement in the timely posting of agendas and minutes for the boards and commissions since the CCO took over the responsibility of clerking services of several of the City's boards and commissions.

City	County	# of Boards and Commissions (active)
Anaheim	Orange	13
Fontana	San Bernardino	8
Irvine	Orange	20
Long Beach	Los Angeles	23
Moreno Valley	Riverside	9
Pasadena	Los Angeles	26
Riverside	**Riverside**	**17**
Santa Monica	Los Angeles	17
Average		**16.6**

Table III - 1: Benchmark comparison of the number of City Boards, Commissions, and Committees

The number of active boards and commissions for the City of Riverside is the approximate average number for the peer group (defined as having met within 2022 and/or 2023) . Of the eight (8) benchmarked cities, only three (3) of the cities utilize CCO services for any of their boards and commissions, which include the cities of Riverside, Fontana, and Pasadena. Most city committees, boards, and commissions are not staffed by a CCO staff. While most of the benchmarked cities' boards and commissions have posted agendas for meetings, many do not have minutes available online. The posting of minutes of each meeting is not required by the Brown Act, however, it does signal the City's willingness to be transparent.

The boards and commissions agendas and minutes produced by CCO uphold a professional standard that other city staffed boards and commission are not currently meeting. This may be due to a lack of professional training in clerking services by other City staff. In order to continue with the transparency of the work of the City's boards and commissions, the City may want to consider having other the boards and commissions staffed by the CCO to uphold professional standards; however, there are some concerns:

- Providing an adequate staffing and budget allocation to the CCO for the clerking services;

- A need for a clear understanding that the department responsible for the activity of the board and commission still needs to provide departmental staff to commission.

Recommendation #6:
The City should consider adding an additional Deputy City Clerk to provide adequate professional clerking resources to the standing committees, boards, and commissions.

Currently, the staff time allotted to the CCO for clerking of the standing committees, boards, and commissions is insufficient if the City continues to pursue best practices in its level of open government that moves beyond Brown Act requirements. Clerking for some boards and commissions require more staffing hours than others. Consideration should be given to the time and effort needed to clerk the number of standing committees, boards, and commissions. An additional Deputy City Clerk would allow for an increased transparency for the City by utilizing the professional clerking services, especially if the CCO is to take responsibility of additional boards and commissions.

For the Commission on Aging and the Commission on Disabilities, where the CCO has clerking responsibilities, other City staff have not been consistently present.

There should be a City staff designated as liaison to all boards and commissions. The Deputy City Clerk's responsibility should primarily be keeping the record of the meetings. Effective advisory boards and commissions for a City Council, will have a regular means of communication. The boards and commissions should serve at the will of the City Council, meaning that the boards and commissions should advise the City Council on topics of interest to the residents of the City. If there is no regular, open communication, or the City Council has no interest in the advisory commissions' topics, the commissions can become obsolete. Effective and popular advisory commissions are because the residents know that they are able to have a significant impact on the policies of the City and City Council. When members know they are engaged and impactful to the City, the boards or committees are also less likely to have consistent vacancies. More than one or two vacancies and regular difficulty establishing quorum for an advisory commission should trigger an evaluation of the effectiveness of the commission by the City Council.

Recommendation #7:
The City Council should regularly reevaluate the less effective advisory commissions.

Training is provided for residents appointed to boards and commissions. Interviews by both City staff stakeholders and other commissioners noted that the training should also include expectations of board members and commissioners. Some meetings end up being off task or move beyond their

intended scope. As the boards and commissions are advisory to the Mayor and City Council, training could include mission and vision of the City Council and the strategic plan of the City.

Recommendation #8:

Board and commission training for new and continuing members should include expectations of members by Mayor and City Council, e.g., video welcome with current strategic plan or annual policy goals.

There should also be a shared list of on-going agenda item issues for standing committees, boards, and commissions that are consistently monitored and communicated to other departments by CCO staff, just as there are for City Council agenda items. There needs to be regular communication of the issues that were discussed at a board and commission meeting with the City departments and City Council. Without regular communication of issues from the board and commission meetings, some may have been inadvertently dropped, especially if it impacts a department that was not present at the meeting.

Records and Administration

Managing the records of the City is an important function of the City Clerk's Office. The City has its documents well organized in its *Laserfiche* system. Contracts and City documents are regularly uploaded into the digital system. Electronic records management is the state-of-the-art records management environment and enables the City staff to quickly access and recall City documents as needed. In addition to electronic files, many government agencies also keep hard copies as backup.

Records Retention and Storage

Both the digital and hard copy versions of files require on-going maintenance. There needs to be a good understanding of the records retention policies of the City, and storage and retrieval protocols.

> *There is not a clear understanding of the records retention policy that is followed City-wide.*

The City of Riverside Resolution No. 23548 was the latest update to the Records Retention schedule approved on February 4, 2020. However, other than demarking a C = 2 to 15 years and P = permanent, it still remains unclear as to the retention policy by each department for Category C. According to the Resolution, departments "should identify the appropriate retention/destruction within the 2-15 year time frame based upon operational needs." The CCO should maintain a record of each departments' listed retention/destruction time frame. It is not clear whether or not the resolution was fully implemented, and whether the departments established their records retention schedules for Category C records. This policy, established just a month prior to the State's pandemic response, needs to be fully implemented by the City, followed by the departments, and monitored by the CCO.

Recommendation #9:
Each department should establish a clear schedule for Category C retention records that is approved by the City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, and the City's Executive Management team.

The CCO should ensure that each department is following the intended schedule. This retention schedule is essential in providing timely responses for public record requests. Currently, the CCO spends many hours manually combing through documents in response to public record requests. To comply with requests appropriately, staff must recover, compile and, if sensitive, redact data. Should departments follow their records retention schedule, it may allow for a quicker response to public records requests.

There is not a good understanding of current hard copy records being stored and retained by the off-site document storage facility.

Docu-TRUST, an offsite storage facility operator, is used by the City to store and retain hard-copies of documents. Departments directly request that boxes of files be picked up for storage or retrieved from facilities. Conversely, the CCO is responsible for the payment of storage fees. The CCO receives from *Docu-TRUST* a monthly statement for the documents sent to, or retrieved from, the storage facility. It is presumed that the departments know how many boxes of documents are sent to, or retrieved from, the off-site storage. Specific activity, however, is not documented by the departments. There is no master list of the files that are stored that is managed by the CCO. The CCO should ensure that documents for permanent storage are well organized so that they could be recalled, if needed.

Untimely disposal of documents that are retained past the retention schedule, costs the City unnecessary fees. "Regular inventories provide a complete understanding of what records are generated in utilized..."[1] State entities are required to inventory their records once every five years. While it takes time and effort to inventory records, it is also costly to store records that are beyond the City's retention limit and should be destroyed.

Recommendation #10:
Retain a records management consultant to provide an inventory of records stored at both the storage facility and within the City, establish searchable physical and electronic records, and establish a records management program for the City.

The CCO should be responsible for ensuring that hard copies of documents are properly stored and are easily accessible, if needed. Currently, a City Clerk Specialist has the responsibility for storage of hard copy contracts signed into record by the City Council. Other departments have responsibility for their own physical records retention. A City Records Management Coordinator should work with a responsible custodian of records for each department. Each department's custodian of records would additionally be responsible for ensuring that the City's records retention schedule was followed for both physical records and electronic records. The City Records Management Coordinator would work with the departments on the inventory and management of the City's electronic and physical records both in City facilities and at the off-site storage facility.

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1   Secretary of State, Archives Division, California Records and Information Program (CalRIM), State Records Appraisal Program (SRAP). Records Management Handbook. Updated December 2018.

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Recommendation #11:

There should be a designated Records Management Coordinator that has the responsibility to clear out records and coordinates with the departments on their records retention schedules and off-site storage.

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Public Records Requests

An increasing number of public record requests are becoming more time consuming for the City. The Granicus 2022 Public Records Complexity Benchmark Report benchmarked information from over 500 public agencies. Between 2018 and 2020, the total number of documents provided to requesters from government entities increased by 31%.[2] The national report found that, not only were the number of requests increasing, but the complexity of the requests was also increasing. The complexity most often noted in interviews with the CCO included the quantity of information being requested and the time to manage the requests.

We reviewed public record requests received by the CCO for FY 2019-20, FY 2020-21, and FY 2021-22. Each year has seen an increase in requests. In FY 2019-20, there were on average 3.5 public record requests per day, while in FY 2021-22, the City averaged 4.8 requests a day. While the CCO managed a fifth to a quarter of the monthly requests on their own, the majority of the requests required inquiries/research from staff in other City departments. This requires the CCO to manage and monitor the requests to ensure that they are responded to in a timely manner.

Public record requests for the City of Riverside increased by 38.5% from FY 2019-20 to FY 2021-22.

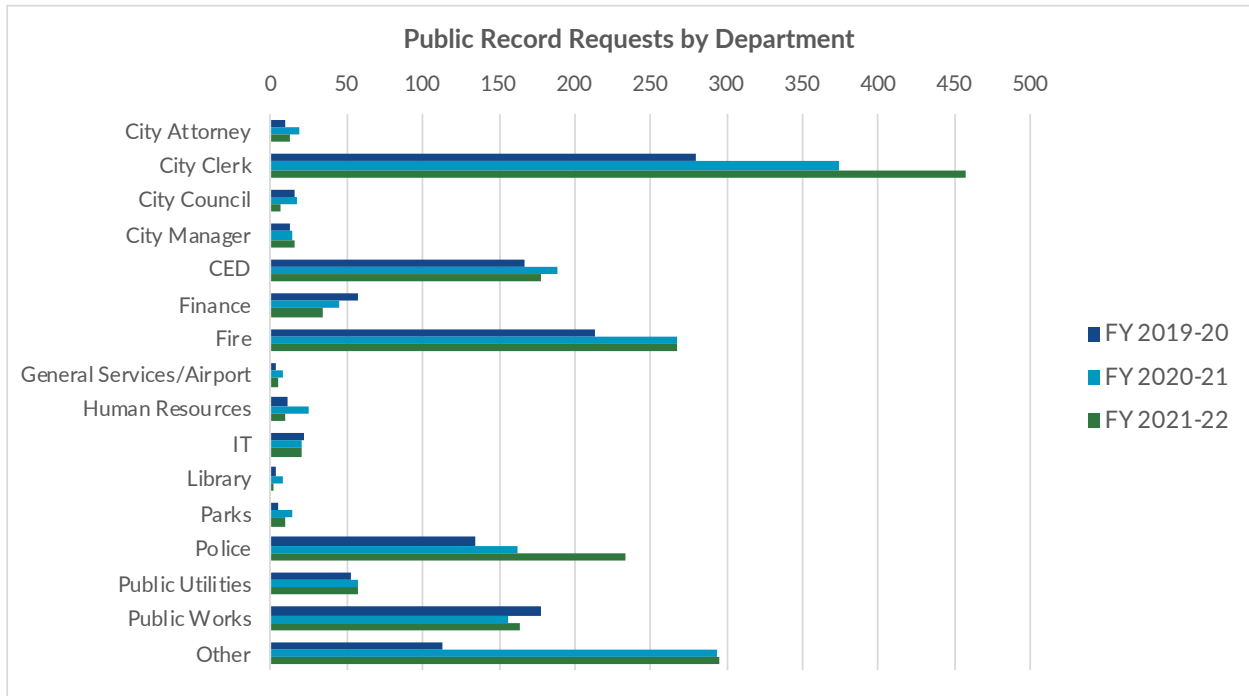2   Mansell, C., Building a Lifeline: How Governments Can Avoid Drowning in Records Requests, https://granicus.com/blog/drowning-in-records-requests/

Public Record Requests by Department

Figure IV-1: Annual Number of Public Record Requests by Department

If information is available via the CCO's Online Documents page, the CCO should be able to retrieve and manage the information without requiring the involvement of other City departments. An interview with the IT department director noted that the CCO has access to most of the City's information from each department. This includes access to be able to retrieve emails. However, if the information is not available via the CCO's Online Documents page, the CCO must coordinate, and manage the response to the requests with other departments. This is to ensure that the requests are responded to in a timely manner. While a public agency has 10 days to respond to public record requests, the City has maintained an average of under five (5) days for its responses. This is in spite the increasing number of requests.

Recommendation #12:

The CCO should meet with the IT department annually to review time consuming public record requests. This would include evaluating the accuracy of City information available on the CCO's Online Documents, particularly for data that is the responsibility of other departments. Lastly, ensuring that any technology updates germane to the database are being implemented in a timely manner.

New technology is constantly being added that is meant to help with efficiency in CCO practices. *Granicus' Gov QA*, the software currently being utilized by the City to track public record requests,

has updated systems that allow for predictive deflection technologies, optimized intake tools, bulk actions, and automated workflows. Meeting with IT for an annual "tune up" will ensure that any new technology is being fully utilized. In the world of Artificial Intelligence (AI), any information that is available online (whether to the public or via the City's intranet) should be able to be easily found with minimal human effort. AI should also allow for the compiling of the appropriate information easier in the future. The CCO will still be required to review the information for appropriateness to the response.

Passport Services

The City of Riverside Passport Acceptance Facility is located at a non-City Hall facility located next to a Public Library and in the same facility as the City's Public Utilities Customer Resource Center. The Facility provides services by appointment since re-opening after the COVID pandemic. The office also disseminates helpful information beyond that offered by the U.S. State Department. For example, there is a video, uploaded on May 11, 2023, that explains the process needed to apply for a U.S. passport through the City of Riverside.

The Passport Acceptance Facility has been a source of revenue for the City, as it collects a $35 processing fee per passport application and charges an $8 passport photo fee, for those needing this service. The City's Passport Acceptance Facility "processed approximately 6,400 passport applications including 5,000 photos." The total revenue from passport applications and photo fees exceeded the expenditure of the Passport Acceptance Facility, which included two City Clerk Specialists. The Passport Auditing Reports have averaged 567 passports a month since April 2021.
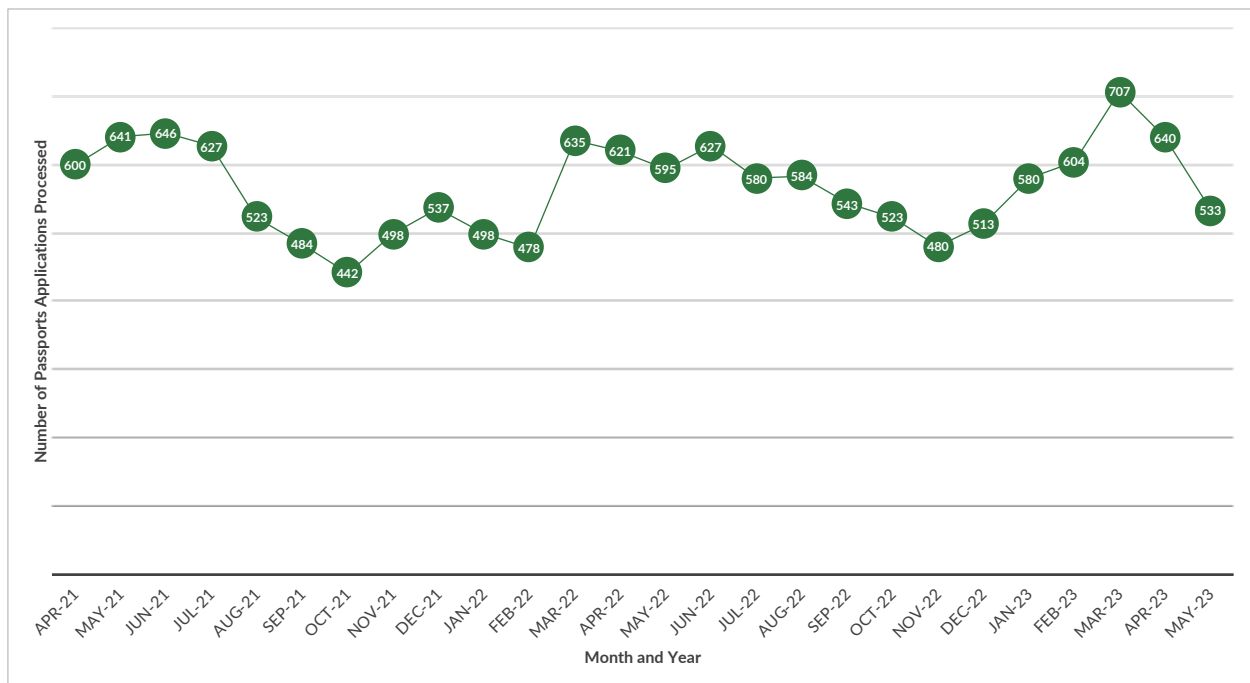

Figure IV-2: Passport Applications Processed by the City of Riverside from April 2021 to May 2023

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Not all city clerk offices for cities in Southern California provide passport services. Three of the eight benchmarked cities did not have passport services including one (the City of Santa Monica) that just suspended their passport service as of April 6th, 2023, due to lack of staff. Of the benchmarked cities that operate Passport Acceptance Facilities, the City of Riverside's stands out. As a dedicated facility its appointment services include an online appointment scheduling interface, and targeted marketing and information portals. This customer service strategy would rank the City's service as a best practice.

Increasing the number of FTEs in Passport Services to three City Clerk Specialists will help to manage some of the current volume of U.S. Passport applicants. While it is unknown if the passport application trend will continue to increase as it has post COVID, as shown in Figure II-2, it will help the Passport Acceptance Facility to alleviate some of the current workload by being able to have at least two City Clerk Specialists during all open hours. Currently, if one of the City Clerk Specialist assigned to the Passport Services needed to be out unexpectedly, one of the other City Clerk Specialists from the City Hall site would step in, creating a backlog of other work.

Recommendation #13:
Provide cross training for the City Clerk Specialists assigned to the Passport Acceptance Facility.

Certain cross-training have been provided to the other staff in the City Clerk's Office. The ability to cross train as well as opportunities to learn and earn accreditation as a Certified Municipal Clerk have been a hallmark of the Department. Because the Passport Acceptance Facility is off-site, it is important to allow for opportunities for continued career growth. To ensure that the City Clerk Specialists assigned to Passport Acceptance Facility are given the opportunity to understand the role of the CCO, provide cross-training in Records Management and other CCO responsibilities.

Election Services

The CCO manages election services for the City. Responsibilities include managing the filing of any City elections, including candidates for City elections and measures. The City Clerk swears in elected officials and annually files Form 700 Statements of Economic Interests for all elected officials and any public employee who makes or influences government decisions. Our analysis of the services of the CCO, we did not find any issues that would indicate that the CCO is out of compliance with the governing laws and regulations.

In addition, the CCO is also charged with electoral redistricting efforts of Council districts after the U.S. Census every ten years. In interviews with City stakeholders that included City residents, the CCO was praised for its inclusive efforts within the City's redistricting process. Our review of redistricting materials found that these efforts comply with the governing laws and regulations from AB 849 (2019), the Fair and Inclusive Redistricting for Municipalities and Political

Subdivisions, which required that the public is provided the opportunity to provide input into the redistricting process with minimum amount of participation. The CCO has exceeded the minimum efforts for compliance with the redistricting efforts.

Financial Expenditure Review

The City Clerk's Office is involved in documenting, implementing and validating activity as directed by the City Council of the City of Riverside. Many of the expenditure activities involved documenting and archiving City Council meeting discussions and actions as well as implementing and/or overseeing compliance with public notice requirements for City activities.

Range of Expenditures: Expenditures included in the population of transactions were for non-direct salary payments. The range of expenditure was based on the account codes for the department. Only labor and benefit costs were removed from the selection's population. The number of line items for expenditures for each year were:

- FY 2020 – 748 lines of activity
- FY 2021 – 685 lines of activity
- FY 2022 – 794 lines of activity

Sample Selection Process: We requested and received a General Ledger transaction report for the Fiscal Years 2020, 2021, and 2022. The reports reflected all activity recorded as debits (typically expenses) posted to the department cost center.

The selection size was derived from a statistical sampling table, and assumed a Tolerance Rate of 5%, and a Confidence Level of 90%. Based on these assumptions, a sample amount of 45 was chosen for each year. Using a random number generator, line items (based on a chronological report) were selected as part of the sample. Each year was treated as a separate population.

Scope Limitations: The test-work focused on the General Ledger activity recorded in the CCO's cost center which was the direct responsibility of the management of the department. Of the transactions selected (see discussion below) certain payments recorded were for indirect costs administered by other departments. No test-work was performed to validate the transaction process for non-direct managed expenditures. Such charges included lease payments, equipment rental payments, employee cell phone reimbursements, reimbursed labor costs for support departments participating in City Council meetings and community outreach meetings. In addition, certain debits noted were for adjustments to revenues posted by the Passport Application processing unit.

Our test work was limited in scope as noted:

1. Internal Billings – Certain costs charged to the CCO are indirect charges administered by separate departments. These include the Information Technology department, the General Services department, the Mail Services department, and Risk Management department.

2. Professional Services – Charges for professional services are not subject to standard procurement procedures. Expenditures were noted for engagement of artist, musicians, temporary staffing services, and specialty paper suppliers. Pursuant to City Resolution #23914, the CCO is not required to utilize the standard procurement procedures for professional services.

3. Newspaper and Periodical Procurements: Pursuant to City Resolution #23914, the CCO is not required to utilize the standard procurement procedures for advertising.

Compliance Deviations Identified

The results of the expenditure compliance test work for the CCO identified three items to be presented. The items noted are characterized as non-significant compliance deviations. The financial impact of the noted issues is not considered material.

◼ There is no verification by user department of costs billed by document storage provider.

Activity reported by *Docu-TRUST* for document transfer, retrieval and storage is presented in a monthly statement encompassing the entire City. The statement is received by the CCO and reviewed for reasonableness. It was stated that the activity by individual department is not monitored, documented or reviewed (per the statement) for accuracy. Control risks include monthly costs for one or more departments may be inaccurate, as determined by the vendor, or incorrectly charged to a specific department.

Recommendation #14:

The document storage activity of the department from the invoice should be recorded into the record management system. The document of the storage activity should be verified by the CCO and the department for appropriateness with the City's Record Retention Resolution.

◼ Request, use and authorization of purchase on "Purchase Cards" (P-cards) (utilizing Bank of America purchase card system) are not always in compliance with usage resolution.

Within the CCO P-card purchases are used for various recurring and non-recurring expenditures. Examples include payments to local newspapers for official notices, purchasing meals for council and committee meetings, and payments for travel and memberships. Control risks often include requests for usage that is verbal or via e-mail messages. In the first case, evidence of the requests may not exist, with only a bill or receipt retained as to vendor and amount. In the second case, similarly, the e-mail requesting may not be retained, or provided as support of the request. Lastly, in certain instances, the receipt presented to the card user does not contain the level of detail to adequately explain the purchase.

Recommendation #15:
For Purchase Card (P-card) transactions, evidence of the requests, and a detailed statement or receipt should be provided to the P-card cardholder, for inclusion in their monthly review, validation and documentation of their P-card transactions.

◼ Records on P-card training compliance are not up to date.

The CCO has four P-cards assigned to it. The City's Administrative Manual with respect to P-Card purchasing requires that a log on assigned users be maintained in a log by the P-Card administration (handled by Finance). Users must sign a receipt for accepting and using the card. Additionally, each user is required to sign a "Purchasing Card Program Cardholder Agreement.

An identified issue included a missing signed P-Card Agreement for one of the employees assigned a card. Per the Purchasing department, the employee in question was assigned a during COVID, and the P-card administrator, at that time, is no longer with the City. The current P-card administrator is correcting the documentation problem.

Recommendation #16:
A manager in the CCO, should annually review the list of authorized users and verify that all required training and usage agreements are on file.