



M^{School} Management News

Ohio School Boards Association

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Understanding school district records commissions

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School districts create and receive a lot of records. There are records related to the work of the board of education, administration of schools, employment of personnel, enrollment and education of students, operation of school buildings, financials of the district and more. Because these records document the decisions, policies, procedures and operations of the district, they are important sources of information for an open and transparent government and may not be destroyed or disposed of except as provided by law or under the rules adopted by the district's records commission.

Records commissions are required by law for each educational service center and each city, local, joint vocational and exempted village school district. The commissions provide rules for the retention and disposal of records and ensure that the proper procedures are followed for scheduling and disposing of records. This article reviews their duties and responsibilities, and identifies resources to help districts maintain an effective and efficient records system.

District records commission

By law, a district records commission consists of the board president, treasurer and superintendent, and must meet at least once every 12 months. As a public body, the commission's meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Act and must be properly noticed and open to the public. The records

commission must adopt a rule that identifies the method it will use to notify the public of the time and place of its regularly scheduled meetings and the time, place and purpose of its special meetings. The commission also must promptly prepare, file and maintain minutes of its meetings.

Records retention schedule

The chief duty of the district records commission is to establish a schedule of records retention and disposition. This schedule is sometimes referred to as an "RC-2 schedule" based on the name of the form created by the Ohio History Connection (OHC) to house these schedules. The schedule lists the types of documents the district retains and the length of time that the district retains them. OHC's Local Government Records Program has established suggested retention schedules for school districts, but district records commissions may approve alternate schedules. If the district determines its own retention periods, OHC suggests evaluating the following values for each record series:

- **Administrative value** — Records have administrative value if they are used by the district to perform its duties. These records should be kept as long as they have administrative value. Districts should consider how often the records are used and the likelihood the records will be needed or useful in the future.
- **Legal value** — Records have legal value when they document the rights or obligations of the district or members of



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the community. These should be retained as long as such rights or obligations are still viable.

- **Fiscal value** — Records have fiscal value when they document a financial transaction or are required for an audit. These should be retained as long as they have fiscal value.
- **Historical value** — Records have historical value when they document the district's organization, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities or where they document significant information about people, places or events. Records with historical value may have secondary value as a source of information for persons other than the creator.

Four signatures are needed on the RC-2 form in order for a district's records retention schedule to be in effect. First, the form requires a signature from the "responsible official" of the district, department or unit responsible for the records. OHC suggests that a records officer be designated in each department. That person's responsibility would be to supervise the retention, storage and disposal of records within that department. While not legally required, this may be a useful procedure to assist the commission and would more clearly define the "responsible official" in each department for purposes of the RC-2 form. For a districtwide retention schedule, the district could designate an individual — such as the treasurer or another district employee — as the "responsible official." Once the form is signed by the district official, the

records retention schedule is ready to be discussed in an open meeting of the district records commission. After the commission has discussed the RC-2 form at an open meeting and approved its contents, the RC-2 form should be signed by the chair of the commission.

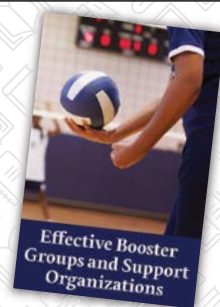
Once these two signatures have been obtained, the form should be sent to OHC's Local Government Records Program. OHC has 60 days to review the records retention schedule and will mark on the commission's schedule any records that will require a certificate of records disposal form (RC-3 form) prior to their disposal; this process is discussed below. After its review, OHC will sign the form and forward it to the Ohio auditor of state (AOS) for approval. AOS also has up to 60 days to approve and sign or disapprove the schedule. After AOS has signed the RC-2 form, it will send it back to OHC, which will retain the records retention schedule permanently and return a copy to the records commission. The records retention schedule is in effect once it has all four signatures and has been returned to the commission.

The records schedule is meant to be a living document and should reflect how the district's records are being kept and managed. To amend or add an item to the schedule, the commission must submit another RC-2 form, which will go through the same signature process. The commission may either submit the entire updated records retention schedule with all the records series again or just the items that are being added or changed. Although

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many districts find it easier to keep the items together and submit the entire schedule each time they have an update, it is not required.

Disposal of records

Records may not be altered, removed, destroyed, mutilated, transferred or otherwise damaged or disposed of, in whole or in part, except as provided by law or pursuant to an approved records retention schedule.

The process that must be followed before a district may dispose of records that appear on an approved records retention schedule depends on the effective date of the district's record retention schedule. The effective date is the date the district's records commission signed the schedule. If your district's retention schedule has an effective date earlier than Sept. 29, 2011, the district must complete a certificate of records disposal (RC-3 form) and provide OHC the opportunity to select records for historical purposes prior to disposing of any records on the schedule. If the district's schedule has an effective date on or after Sept. 29, 2011, the district

must complete and submit an RC-3 form only if the records to be disposed have been marked by OHC on the records retention schedule (RC-2 form) as records that require a certificate of records disposal (RC-3 form) prior to disposal. The RC-3 form is signed by the responsible officer for the district.

In response to a submitted RC-3, the district may be required to submit the records to OHC for review prior to or instead of disposing them. If an RC-3 form is not required or if OHC has not responded to the commission within 15 days of submitting an RC-3 form, the district may dispose of the records pursuant to its approved records retention schedule. Although not required by statute, OHC strongly encourages district records commissions to keep a permanent and internal record of all public records disposals, regardless of whether a RC-3 form is required.

The district may discover records that have never been properly scheduled on an RC-2 schedule. If these records are no longer created or were created only once and no longer have any administrative, fiscal, legal or historical value, they are

considered "obsolete records." The commission can submit an RC-1 application for the one-time disposal of obsolete records to OHC for review. OHC may request that the district forward the records to OHC for its custody in lieu of disposing them. After completing its review, OHC will forward the application to AOS for its determination. AOS must approve or disapprove of the application within 60 days.

The OHC Local Government Records Program helps Ohio's local governments create and maintain sound records management programs. Its website, www.ohiohistory.org/research/local-government-records-program, offers myriad resources for public records commissions as they complete this important work, including the Local Government Records Manual, answers to frequently asked questions and detailed instructions for completing the RC-1, RC-2 and RC-3 forms. OSBA's Division of Legal Services is also available to provide more information about district records commissions and their duties and responsibilities.

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