

RESEARCHING MUNICIPAL DECISION-MAKING:

HOW TO SEARCH AND USE COUNCIL MINUTES, BY-LAWS, MAYOR'S FILES, OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK'S FILES, AND CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE FILES

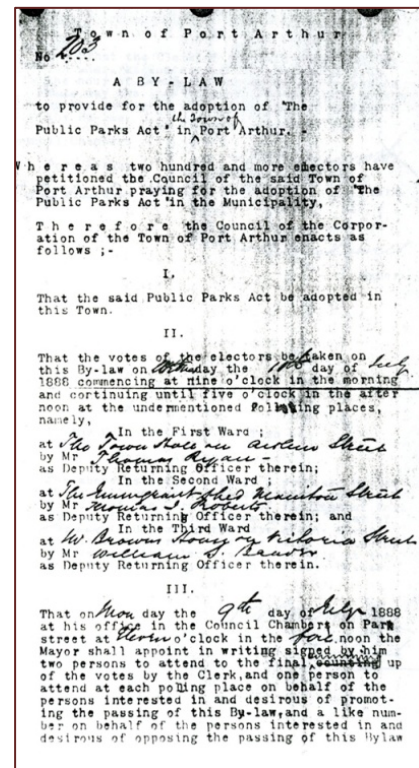
INTRODUCTION

Much of the City's official history is preserved through the decisions made by Mayors, Council, and City administration. Whether you are interested in tracing an issue, an event, a person, or a place, information and evidence may be found in City Council minutes, By-laws, or various office files. Research using these records becomes simpler the more you know about how municipal government operates, and how it has operated in the past.

This guide presents types of records held by the Archives related to the City Council decision-making process, and highlights how municipal government has been documented, for the Cities of Fort William, Port Arthur, and Thunder Bay. However, this guide is not an exclusive list of available resources, and you may find other records useful, depending on your specific research interests.

The records covered in this research guide are:

- Council Minutes
- City By-laws
- Committee of the Whole Records
- Committee Records
- Mayor's Office Files
- Office of the City Clerk Files
- City Manager's Office Files



"Town of Port Arthur, Bylaw 203." 1888.
Series 19. City of Port Arthur fonds.
TBA 5751-29.

BACKGROUND

Currently, Thunder Bay's City Council is made up of 13 elected representatives: the Mayor, who is Chair of City Council, five Councillors at Large, and seven Ward Councillors. The Mayor and Councillors are all elected, at the same election, for a four year term. City Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are held on a weekly basis and are open to the public. All meetings are held at City Hall and air live on a local television network, and minutes of the meetings are available online.

It is worth noting that the official record of the meetings of Committee of the Whole and City Council are its written minutes, which are permanent records of the Corporation. Online and DVD recordings of Council meetings are available for 90 days after the date of the meeting. These convenience copies can be viewed or downloaded from the City's website, and DVD recordings can be purchased from the Office of the City Clerk, within the 90 window.

As of 2013, Committee of the Whole sessions are held for:
**Community Services,
Planning, Operations, and
Administrative Services**

In the past, the number of representatives and frequency of elections have varied, as has the frequency of meetings. For many years, both Fort William and Port Arthur held municipal elections every year, with a new Mayor and Council starting each January. Changes have been driven by growth of the Cities, and amendments to the Municipal Act and other legislation.

While the makeup and schedule of City Council has changed much over time, many of its roles and responsibilities have not.

How City Council Makes Decisions

Mayor and Council participate in formal City Council Meetings, and meetings of the Committee of the Whole. In Committee of the Whole, reports and recommendations are presented by the City's administration (General Managers and other staff), and deputations are made by members of the public. In a meeting of Council, formal decisions based on those reports and deputations are made and ratified.

This model was established in 1987. Prior to that, Council had established a series of Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees to address policies and issues.

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Council minutes are the written record of any and all executive decisions of City Council. They are a record of the actions taken and decisions made at a meeting or hearing, and describe the events of the meeting, starting with a list of attendees, a statement of the issues considered by the participants, and decisions made on these issues. The minutes accurately depict what happened at the City Council meeting, and may differ from what was indicated by the agenda.

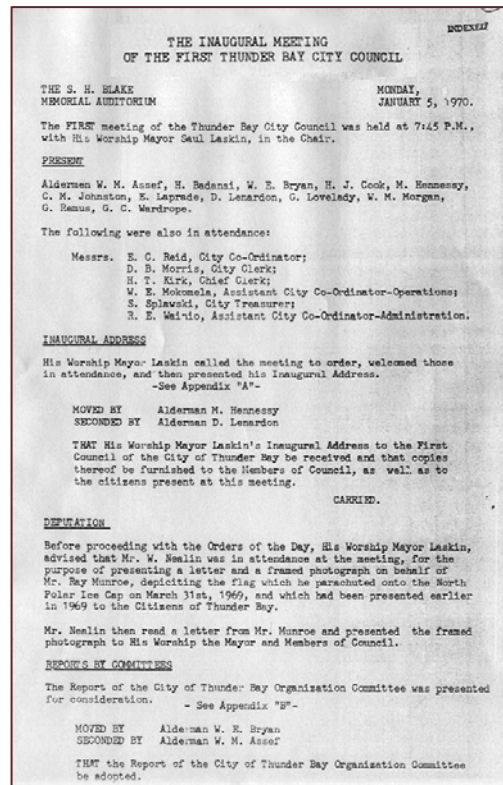
Minutes tend to be written in a very formal style, and are not a complete transcript of the meeting. In most cases, the particulars of discussions will not be recorded. Some meetings are held *In Camera*: in a closed session, which the public cannot attend. There are specific instances for when Council is permitted to go *in camera*. For these meetings, minutes are still kept, but they are not made generally available to the public.

The subjects covered by Council Minutes come from the functions of City Council and City Administration. Council is responsible for enacting, repealing, and amending by-laws, approving policies that determine how services will be provided, and passing the City's budget and setting taxation rates. Council is required by law to act in the public interest. The minutes reflect a variety of issues related to civic administration and finance, municipally-owned property, public services, and the development and growth of the community.

Format of Council Minutes

The Council Minutes are recorded in chronological order, and usually have the following information:

1. Date, time, and place of the meeting
2. List of those present – including members of Council and City officials
3. Opening Ceremonies
4. Disclosures of Interest
5. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings
6. Petitions and Communications
7. Reports of Committees
8. Reports of Municipal Officers



"The Inaugural Meeting of the First Thunder Bay City Council." 1970. Series 148. City of Thunder Bay fonds. TBA 5092-02.

9. By-Laws – each new by-law must be moved and seconded, and then voted on by Council
10. New Business
11. Other motions
12. Adjournment

The council meeting minutes include:

- a resolution to move to Committee of the Whole
- the time at which council moves into the Committee of the Whole
- the time in which the council meeting reconvenes

Minutes for the first meeting of each year generally document council appointments to standing committees and affiliated boards, as well as the appointment of various officers of the Corporation.

Council Minutes in the Archives

The Archives holds the Town and City of Fort William Council Minutes as Series 1 and Series 76, dating from 1892 to 1969, and the Town and City of Port Arthur Council Minutes as Series 17, dating from 1884 to 1969. These records are also available on microfilm.

There are indexes available to the minutes of both former municipalities, which help in locating a particular subject within the minutes. The Fort William Indexes to Minutes are available as Series 2, dating from 1901 to 1968, and the Port Arthur Indexes to Council Minutes are Series 18, dating from May 1884 to 1969. These records are also available on microfilm.

As of 2013, the Thunder Bay City Council Minutes in Series 148, date from 1970 to 2003. Some of these minutes are available in microfilm, and some are available electronically. Minutes of recent Council meetings can be found on the City's website.

Fort William:

- Council Minutes(1892 – 1969): **Series 1**
- Council and Committee Minutes (1923 – 1937): **Series 76**
- Indexes to Minutes (1901 – 1968): **Series 2**

Port Arthur:

- Council Minutes (1884 – 1969): **Series 17**
- Indexes to Minutes (1884- 1969): **Series 18**

Thunder Bay:

- Council Minutes (1969 -): **Series 148**

CITY BY-LAWS

The Municipal Act grants City Council the power to establish policies and enact by-laws. By-laws address issues and concerns of the local community, and are created to protect the environment, public health and safety, and wellness of the community. By-laws are administered and enforced by City departments, and are enforceable by the courts.

The Office of the City Clerk keeps the most recent version of each active by-law on file and will provide a copy upon request.

By-Laws cover a wide range of issues and concerns. There are By-Laws to:

- approve agreements
- appoint municipal officials
- appoint members to local boards
- construct sewer and water systems
- allow parking restrictions on city streets
- open and close streets
- establish water rates
- provide for holding elections
- allow the keeping of animals
- allow for the expropriation of lands
- establish suitable property conditions
- restrict excessive noise
- restrict the unauthorized placement of signs
- establish businesses licenses
- borrow or lend money, levy and collect taxes
- approve corporate records retention
- designate heritage buildings

When researching using By-laws, it's easiest to start by consulting the indexes. Each year has a By-law Index which is stored at the start of the year. Index entries are arranged alphabetically by topic and by name. For example, there are alphabetical arrangements of street names, names of people for appointed positions, corporate names, and institutional names, as well as topical terms such as taxation, official plans and agreements.

The City Archives holds a number of series related to By-laws. These include:

Fort William:

- By-Laws (1892 – 1969): **Series 3**

Port Arthur:

- By-Laws (1884 – 1969): **Series 19**
- By-Laws - Bound Volumes & Index (1884 – 1964): **Series 21**
- Licensing By-Laws (1918 – 1968): **Series 30**
- Zoning By-Law Amendment Files (1961 – 1969): **Series 94**
- Debenture By-Law Files (1941 – 1969): **Series 221**

Thunder Bay:

- Original By-Laws (1970 -): **Series 98**
- Police Services By-Laws (1970 – 1995): **Series 234**
- Planning Department - Zoning By-Law Amendment Files (1978 – 1981): **Series 290**
- Planning Department - Interim Control By-Law Files (1988 – 1989): **Series 301**

Needing Township By-Laws (1948 – 1960): **Series 295**

Shuniah Township By-Laws (1929 – 1969): **Series 296**

Many of these records are also available on microfilm.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

All members of Council also take part in the Committee of the Whole meetings. The meeting is chaired by an elected member of Council. A Committee of the Whole meeting allows Council members to deal with matters outside of the formal structure of the regular council meetings.

When Council wishes to discuss a policy, question, or by-law under relaxed rules of procedure, a resolution to move to Committee of the Whole is required:

“Moved by Councillor ____ that this meeting resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider (the subject matter) and Councillor ____ shall chair the meeting.”

Committee of the Whole Meetings also hear deputations to Council, where individuals and community groups can bring matters of public interest to the Council’s attention in formal proceedings. In the Committee of the Whole meetings, matters are not formally adopted, but recommendations are made to a subsequent meeting of Council, at which time a decision will be made on the recommendations of the Committee.

Committee of the Whole meetings may be devoted to a particular set of issues related to the governance of the City. As of 2013, the meetings rotate regularly between Community Services, Planning, Operations, and Administrative Services. Council may also address specific ongoing matters in Committee of the Whole sessions.

Before this system was established, Council had established policy committees to address particular areas of government administration. These Standing Committees were comprised of members of Council who wished to serve on them, with no fewer than seven members per committee.

1970-1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of Persons and Property • Health and Social Services • Recreation and Community Services • Planning
1975-1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of Persons and Property • Health and Social Services • Recreation and Community Services • Planning • Finance • Housing
1978-1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Planning and Development • Engineering and Operations • Corporate and Administrative Executive • Community Services

The City Archives holds Committee and Committee of the Whole records. The most comprehensive source for the Committee of the Whole since 1987 is **Series 150**, Thunder Bay Administrative Committee Minutes. Recent Committee of the Whole meetings can be found on the City's website.

- Thunder Bay City Clerk's Files (1970 -): **Series 117**
- Thunder Bay Committee of the Whole and Council Agendas (1979 -): **Series 125**
- Thunder Bay In Camera Agendas (1984 -): **Series 126**
- Thunder Bay Administrative Committee Minutes (1970 -): **Series 150**
- Committee of the Whole and Council Agendas (Sterling Lysnes fonds) (1970 – 1997): **Series 206**
- Committee of the Whole and Council Agendas (Shirley Trotter fonds) (1981 – 1983): **Series 208**

COUNCIL'S SUB-COMMITTEES

Council also delegates responsibility to sub-committees. These sub-committees may be standing committees or ad hoc committees.

The two current standing committees are the Committee of Adjustment (which deals with zoning variances, easements, leases in excess of 21 years, and other Planning Act issues), and the Heritage Advisory Committee (which designates heritage properties, establishes policies for heritage preservation, and manages programs like Doors Open.) These committees are comprised of members of the public and report to Council.

An Ad Hoc Committee is created by Council resolution to investigate and report on a particular matter. Over the years, these committees have covered a wide range of subjects: from electoral boundaries to

community safety. The Ad Hoc Committees are formed because of particular needs, and are disbanded once they have carried out their work. Typically, an Ad Hoc Committee may be comprised of a mix of citizens, City staff, and Councillors.

The Archives holds files of both standing and Ad Hoc committees. In some cases, Committee records may be mixed with other files, such as in the City Clerk's Files.

Fort William:

City Clerk's Files (1903 - 1969): **Series 4**

Port Arthur:

- City Clerk's Files (1905 – 1969, predominant 1950 -1969): **Series 29**
- Committee of Adjustment Records (1951 – 1969): **Series 50**
- Public Utilities Commission Files (1914 – 1969): **Series 88**

Thunder Bay:

- Ad Hoc Committee Minutes (1972 – 1988): **Series 152**
- Special Committee Minutes (1970 – 1988): **Series 151**
- Special Committee Files (1970 – 1988): **Series 231**
- Employee Relations Committee Files (1981 – 1992): **Series 61**
- Neighbourhood Improvement Program Files (1974 – 1985): **Series 97**
- City Co-ordinator Files (1965 – 1975): **Series 112**
- City Clerk's Files (1970 -): **Series 117**
- Mayor's Office Files (1983 – 1998): **Series 120**

MAYOR'S OFFICE FILES

Records of the Mayor's Office have been kept by the Archives since 1983. These records include inaugural addresses, policy documents, plans, reports, leases, and correspondence on a variety of subjects. Mayor's Office records tend to be organized by subject headings, representative of partner organizations, issues, or challenges, and tend to be chronologically ordered.

These records are found in **Series 120**, Thunder Bay Mayor's Office Files. As of 2013, this series covers the terms of Walter Assef, Jack Masters, David Hamilton, and Ken Boshcoff.

The Archives also holds records, both personal and professional, from former Mayors and Councillors. These include Walter Assef (**Series 287**), John Oliver Booth (**Series 434**), Charles Cox (**Series 356**), Saul Laskin (**Series 405**), Sterling Lysnes (**Series 206** and **Series 207**), and Shirley Trotter (**Series 208**, **Series 209**, and **Series 233**).

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

The City Clerk, and his or her staff, is responsible for all of the records of the City, as well as administering municipal elections, and other statutory responsibilities such as issuing marriage licenses and lottery licenses. The Clerk is responsible for producing and keeping all of the minutes of Council and Committees. Because the City Clerk deals with such a wide range of issues, the Clerk's Files contain information on many different subjects: inter-governmental relations, City policies, elections and plebiscites, budgets, special events, grants and support for community programs, emergency preparedness, public health, licensing, and more.

- Fort William City Clerk's Files (1903 – 1969): **Series 4**
- Port Arthur City Clerk's Files (1905 – 1969, predominant 1950 – 1969): **Series 29**
- Thunder Bay City Clerk's Files (1970 -): **Series 117**

CITY MANAGER, CITY COORDINATOR, OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

The City Manager is responsible for municipal administration, is reported to by all department heads, and reports directly to Council. He or she provides advice to Council on policies, long-term plans, and meeting the objectives of the City. The same role has been known by different names in the past: City Coordinator (1970-1975), and Chief Administrative Officer (1975-2008.)

- City Manager's Files (1986 – 2004): **Series 412**
- City Coordinator's Annual Reports (1969 – 1975): **Series 159**

CONTACT THE ARCHIVES

235 Vickers Street North

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Phone: 807-625-2270

Fax: 807-622-4212

Email: archives@thunderbay.ca