

Administrative Records

Wisconsin Municipal Records Schedule

This section of the Wisconsin Municipal Records Schedule pertains to record series that are generally grouped under Administrative Records. The schedule identifies records created by most municipalities and is applicable to all records regardless of format or media.

Municipalities must adopt this schedule or have an ordinance in place before it can be used to manage their records. Please read the Introduction section of the WMRS before applying ANY section of the schedule to your records.

To simplify the recordkeeping process for municipalities, the Wisconsin Historical Society has included a field identifying if notification is required before record series may be destroyed.

- Records identified as **Waived** means that the Wisconsin Historical Society has determined the record series to have low historical value and waived the notification period as indicated Wis. Stat. § 19.21(4)(a). Municipalities are free to destroy any waived records once they reach their required retention period.
- Records designated **Notify** require you send written notification to the WHS before destruction. Details about the notification process are available on the [Wisconsin Historical Society website](#).

Note: Notification should be given on any records 75 years or older regardless if they are marked waived.

Requirements Specific to Administrative Records

The Administrative Records section is organized by the following subsections:

- Administration (general)
- Common Council/Village Board/Town Board
- Emergency Planning
- Human Resources/Personnel
- Legal
- Licenses and Permits
- Municipal Land Ownership
- Municipal Vehicles
- Payroll
- Real Property Titles

This section is intended to provide municipalities with schedules for the most common record series generally grouped under this topic. Municipalities that are in need of schedules for records not covered in this section are encouraged to review and consult the appropriate General Records Schedules listed below:

- [Administrative Records General Schedule](#)
- [Fleet and Aircraft Management Records](#)
- [Human Resources and Related General Schedule](#)
- [Payroll & Related General Schedule](#)

Municipal Court Records are scheduled by [Supreme Court Rule 72](#), which specifies the retention periods for court records and requires municipal courts to give 60 day notice to the Wisconsin Historical Society prior to destroying obsolete records. Furthermore, SCR 72 states that notice is not required for records in which “the historical society has indicated, by blanket waiver, that it has no interest for historical purposes.” The Wisconsin Historical Society has waived the sixty-day notification period for all municipal court records dated 1941 or later. This waiver applies to all municipal courts throughout the state and allows for the disposal of municipal court records without further notification. Municipal Courts are still obligated to maintain the records for the minimum time specified in Supreme Court Rule 72. Please contact the Wisconsin Historical Society if you have any questions regarding Municipal Court Records.

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Administration Records (general)				
Appointment Files	Materials documenting appointments and nominations to boards, task forces, councils, or other bodies. May include applications; cover sheets, letters of recommendation, resumes, and correspondence.	Event+2 years; Event=End of term	No	Notify

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Appointment Files (not selected)	Unsuccessful appointments and nominations to boards, task forces, councils, or other bodies.	Event+1 year; Event=Position filled	No	Waive
Committee Records and Minutes (Excluding Common Council and Zoning Board)	Records of committees, boards, councils, and commissions, other than Common Council. Includes meeting minutes, agenda packets, reports, and resolutions. See Common Council section for retention of Common Council Minutes. See schedule for Zoning Board Records in Public Works Section.	Creation+7 years	No	Notify
Complaints (External)	File related to complaints regarding issues not related to a specific program. Complaints are not otherwise regulated by state or federal requirements.	Event+2 years; Event=Complaint resolution, dismissal or end of litigation	No	Waived
Contracts and Agreements	Any contracts or agreements to which the municipality is a party.	Event+6; Event=End date or cancellation of contract	No	Waive

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Correspondence (Senior Level or Elected Official)	Business-related correspondence (paper and electronic) of senior level staff and elected officials.	<p>Event+6 months; Event=Separation from position/end of term</p> <p>Note: Correspondence that relates specifically to a program or project may need to be retained per that particular schedule</p>	No	Notify
Correspondence (General Staff)	Business-related correspondence (paper and electronic) of non-appointed general staff.	<p>Event+1 year; Event=Creation or receipt</p> <p>Note: Correspondence that relates specifically to a program or project may need to be retained per that particular schedule</p>	No	Waive
Grants	Records relating to grant-funded projects where the agency is the grant recipient or issuer, including the application process, the receipt and expenditure of grant funds, or denial.	<p>Event+4 years; Event=Date of final report or notification of denial</p>	No	Waive

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
House Number and Address Change File	Provides official control and reference source for city addresses.	Permanent	No	N/A
Internal Policies and Procedures	Established departmental policies and procedures. Note: May also be called administrative practices or directives or executive directives.	Event+7 years; Event=Date the policy/procedure is superseded or made obsolete	No	Waive
Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) & Service Level Agreements (SLA)	Agreements between government units. Sometimes define agreements between a large government unit's separate divisions or bureaus.	Event+4 years; Event=Ending date of the MOU or SLA.	No	Waive
Notice of Removal of Human Corpse	Form for the removal of a human corpse if death occurs in a hospital, nursing home, or under hospice care at any location.	Event+2 months; Event=Date of death	No	Waive
Oath of Office	Elected or appointed municipal officers may be required to take, and file in writing, an official oath within ten days after receiving notice of election or appointment.	Event+5 years; Event=End of term	No	Waive

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Open Records Requests and Responses	Records relating to regular and reformulated, repetitious, systematic or continuing requests by individuals, groups or organizations for access to general information under the provisions of the Wis. Stats. §§ 19.35-19.37.	Event+3 years; Event=Response provided	No	Waive
Organizational Chart	Repository of the official organizational structure of offices.	Event; Event=Superseded	No	Waive
Organizational Planning	Includes division and unit strategic business and operational planning files such as, but not limited to, final plan and significant work papers.	Event+7 years; Event=Completion of plan	No	Notify
Petitions	Petitions submitted to municipalities for improvements or changes to existing municipal services/structures.	Event+7 years; Event=Petition approved or denied	No	Waived
Press/News Releases	Information about municipality programs and events.	Creation+3 years	No	Notify

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Proclamations	Proclamations issued by the mayor, commissioner, or elected executive on behalf of the municipality.	Event+1 year; Event=End of elected representative's final term	No	Notify
Reports (Annual)	Annual reports produced by all departments and programs.	Event+7 years; Event=Date of issue	No	Notify
Reports (Monthly)	Monthly reports of divisions/committees.	Creation+3 years	No	Waive
Subject Files (Senior Level or Elected Official)	Subject files (paper and electronic) of senior level staff such as department heads and elected officials.	Event+6 months; Event=Separation from position/end of term	No	Notify

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Common Council/Village Board/Town Board				
Affidavits of Publication	Records providing proof of publication for legal notices as required by law. (Note: See Wis. Stat. § 985.12 for more information on proof of publication).	Event+7 years; Event=Date of publication	No	Waive
Audio Tapes	Recordings of meetings used to produce minutes. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 19.21(7).	Event+90 days; Event=Date the minutes have been approved and published	No	Waive
Minutes (Common Council)	Official minutes of the Common Council/Village Board/Town Board.	Permanent	No	N/A
Ordinances	Official ordinances and any ordinance books kept by municipalities.	Permanent	No	N/A
Resolutions	Official records pertaining to resolutions passed by municipalities.	Permanent	No	N/A

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Emergency Planning¹				
Continuity of Government Operational Plan and Documentation	Agency official plan and documentation of the Continuity of Operations Plan/Continuity of government plan.	Event; Event=superseded by revised plan	No	Waive
Critical Incident Management Plans	Critical incident management plans, local site security plans, local emergency action plans, life safety, and other similar documents.	Event+3 years; Event=superseded by revised plan	No	Waive
Disaster Recovery Records	Records created during the disaster recovery process.	Event+3 years; Event=Date recovery effort is complete ²	No	Waive
Human Resources/Personnel				
Grievance Case File	Records of grievances filed by employees.	Event+7 years; Event=Date grievance is closed	Yes ³	Waive

¹ No specific statutes restrict the records in this series. However, the balancing test per Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) should be applied prior to release.

² Note: When Federal Grant money is involved, the retention is 3 years from the date of the final Financial Services Report.

³ No specific statutes restrict this type of record. However, the balancing test per Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) should be applied prior to releasing this type of record. Personnel files may contain patient health records which may be protected by Wis. Stat. § 146.82 and/or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Personnel Files	Documents employee personnel actions during the employment of the employee. Applies to ALL employees.	Event+7 years; Event=End of employment/service	No ⁴	Waive
Legal				
Attorney Opinions	Municipal attorney opinions given to answer specific questions regarding the interpretation and application of statutes and ordinances, or other legal matters.	Permanent	No ⁵	N/A
Case Files	Files include, but are not limited to, pleadings and legal arguments, evidence, research, orders, legal summons and subpoenas issued. ⁶	Event+7 years; Event=Close of case	No ⁷	Notify on historically significant cases only ⁸

⁴ No specific statutes restrict this type of record. However, the balancing test per Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) should be applied prior to releasing this type of record. Personnel files may contain patient health records which may be protected by Wis. Stat. § 146.82 and/or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

⁵ Records may contain material protected by Attorney-Client Privilege Wis. Stat. § 905.03.

⁶ Records may contain the client file with information pertaining to expenses, attorney notes, medical records, government agency filings, discovery such as requests for production of documents, deposition transcripts, and evidence.

⁷ Records may contain material protected by Attorney-Client Privilege Wis. Stat. § 905.03.

⁸ Historically significant case files include those that have established legal precedents; cases that received widespread attention from the public and news media; and cases recognized for their uniqueness. Examples of such cases include, but are not limited to, major civil rights cases, major labor relations cases, major environmental cases, cases dealing tribal governments and treaty rights, major cases with constitutional implications, and cases related to major prosecutions of public officials.

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Licenses and Permits				
License Applications	Includes license applications (approved and unapproved) and license stubs. Includes all non-alcohol related licenses including, but not limited to, non-intoxicating beverages, soda water beverages, food handling and sales, mobile home park licenses, restaurant, retail dairy products, pet, and animals. Also includes permits for the excavation of streets by private utility companies.	Creation+3 years	No	Waived
Liquor and Beer Licenses	Includes license applications (approved and unapproved) and license stubs. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 125.04(3)(i).	Creation+4 years	No	Waived
Permits	Permits for public space usage. Includes, but not limited to, burning, street usage, and parking permits. NOTE: See Public Works Section for retention of building permits.	Creation+5 years	No	Waived
Permits (septic tanks)	Permit for a septic tank. The permit records the location and ownership of the tank.	Permanent	No	N/A

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Municipal Land Ownership				
Land Titles, Conveyances and Easements	Documentation for municipal owned land. Also includes any legal rights granted to others that relate to municipal owned land.	Permanent	No	N/A
Sales of Facilities and/or Land (Case Files)	Includes appraisals and related valuations. Projects where a municipality plans or actually sells either facilities and/or land assets.	Event+6 years; Event=date of the completion of the transaction	No	Waived
Municipal Vehicles				
Motor Vehicle Control and Assignment Records	Documentation of agency motor vehicle assignments to employees. Includes completed documentation on reservations for pool cars, individual trips, driver profiles, check-in and checkout logs.	Event+1 year; Event=date the vehicle is disposed	No	Waived
Motor Vehicle and Heavy Equipment Maintenance Records	Records documenting service and repair orders to motor vehicles. These records normally include maintenance orders, logs, fiscal documents, such as requisitions or purchase orders for parts or services, vehicle warranties, operation and repair manuals and parts lists.	Event+1 year; Event=date the vehicle is disposed	No	Waived

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Vehicle Use Agreements	Agreements between individuals and municipalities required before driving a municipal owned vehicle.	Event+1 year; Event=termination of agreement or employment	No	Waived
Vehicle Inspection Reports	Inspections of municipal vehicles.	Event+1 years; Event=date the vehicle is disposed	No	Waive
Payroll⁹				
Employee Payroll & Benefit File	Includes various documents that are maintained throughout the employee's term of employment.	Event+7 years; Event=Employee retirement, transfer or termination	No	Waived
Monthly and Quarterly Payroll Reports	Includes, but is not limited to, quarterly report of federal income tax withheld; quarterly report, payroll summary; state's quarterly report of wages paid, and monthly memorandum report.	Event+5 years; Event=Report Issued (provided record has been audited)	No	Waived

⁹ No specific statutes restrict this record series. However, the balancing test per Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) should be applied prior to releasing this type of information.

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention	Confidential	WHS Notification
Payrolls and Payroll Registers	Payroll listings showing gross and net pay, as well as deductions for state employees. Referred to on questions of back pay and income taxes.	Creation+4 years	No	Waived
Real Property Titles				
Title Documentation	Records documenting the title of land owned by the municipality including the abstract and certificate of title, opinions of title, and title insurance policies.	Permanent	No	N/A