

## DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY

### INTRODUCTION

Good Morning, President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am James Leonard, Commissioner of the Records Department. Joining me today are Tracey Williams, Deputy Commissioner, and Carl Zimmerman, Budget Officer. I am pleased to provide testimony on the Records Department's Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget.

### DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

**Mission:** The Department of Records (DOR) provides inclusive, efficient, and effective service to City agencies and the public in the management of City records through: recording and maintenance of all land title documents in Philadelphia, including the collection of local and state realty transfer taxes and recording fees; management and operation of the City Records Storage Center, which contains the inactive physical business records of all City agencies; copying and form management services for City agencies in the City's Central Duplication Facility; and public access to records, including financial disclosure forms, public safety reports, land records, City Archives, and City regulation public notices. DOR provides public-facing services that residents can see, touch, and feel.

#### Plans for Fiscal Year 2026:

**Document Recording:** Records will continue to provide a high level of customer service by e-recording over 90 percent of documents recorded. DOR will continue to collaborate with the Office of Innovation and Technology (OIT) and a recording vendor to integrate a new e-payment system to improve customer experience and efficiencies in operations. As part of a multi-tiered and collaborative effort to combat deed fraud, Records will: (1) expand its citywide community outreach and engagement; (2) continue its partnership with law enforcement to aid in criminal deed fraud investigations; and (3) implement new strategies to prevent deed fraud from occurring. In its ongoing effort to reduce the number of families impacted by tangled titles, Records will continue partnerships with local, state, and national organizations to educate families about preventing and resolving tangled titles and seek to develop regulatory and legislative solutions to prevent tangled titles from occurring. This would include an investment in tangled title outreach and solutions that would be funded with the proposed increase to the document recording fee.

**Records Management:** Records will strive to reduce the Records Storage Center inventory by 10 percent through a combination of recycling expired records and working with departments to digitize records and update their retention schedules to more closely align with their operations.

**Imaging:** Records will collaborate with applicable departments to reduce the amount of paper copies ordered and convert to a digital format.

**Public Access to Records:** The Department issued a request for proposals and awarded a contract to a concessionaire to digitize and host online approximately 11 million genealogical records located in the City Archives collection. The Department, in collaboration with the Office of Innovation and Technology and the Fire Department, released a new online portal for the public to purchase and obtain copies of their Fire

incident reports. Previously, the only way to obtain a copy of a Fire incident report was to go through an all-paper application process, which was time-consuming. Lastly, the Department will continue digitizing deeds for availability on its online public web portal. Currently, the online web portal contains deeds from 1973 to the present. The goal in FY26 is to digitize deeds going back to approximately the mid-1960s over the next three years.

## Proposed Budget Overview & Other Budget Drivers

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY24 Original Appropriations	FY24 Actual Obligations	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Estimated Obligations	FY26 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY26 Proposed-FY25 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$3,616,541	\$3,334,130	\$3,623,071	\$3,809,387	\$3,793,693	(\$15,694)
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$804,122	\$736,883	\$829,122	\$704,122	\$829,122	\$125,000
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$143,758	\$297,399	\$143,758	\$143,758	\$143,758	\$0
	<b>\$4,564,421</b>	<b>\$4,368,412</b>	<b>\$4,595,951</b>	<b>\$4,657,267</b>	<b>\$4,766,573</b>	<b>\$109,306</b>

Contracts Summary (Professional Services only)							
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY25 YTD (Q1 & Q2)	FY26 Projected
Total amount of contracts	\$932,919	\$1,063,980	\$1,172,129	\$1,104,161	\$1,000,000	\$981,917	\$1,100,000
Total amount to M/W/DSBE	\$315,000	\$475,000	\$475,000	\$498,590	\$380,000	\$380,000	\$440,000
Participation Rate	34%	45%	41%	45%	38%	39%	40%

*Note: Due to project priorities and lower total contract amounts in FY25, the participation rate is lower than previous years.*

Total M/W/DSBE Contract Participation Goal (Public Works; Services, Supplies & Equipment; and Professional Services combined)			
	FY24	FY25	FY26 Projected
M/W/DSBE Contract Participation Goal	40%	40%	40%

**Proposed Funding Request:**

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget totals \$4,766,573, an increase of \$109,306 over Fiscal Year 2025 estimated obligation levels. This increase is primarily due to a one-time allocation of \$125,000 in FY26 to support e-Pay conversion which will allow the Department to accept credit cards.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$3,793,693 in Class 100, a \$15,694 decrease from FY25. This decrease is attributable to one-time bonuses for members of DC33 and DC47 in FY25. This funding will provide the Department with 60 full-time positions to provide high-quality service to the public and other City agencies, level with FY25.
- \$829,122 in Class 200, a \$125,000 increase from FY25. This funding will continue level services for contracts and maintenance and enable the Department to implement an e-pay solution that will enable the Department to accept credit card payments.
- \$143,758 in Class 300/400, level with FY25. This funding will permit the Department to purchase the materials, supplies, and equipment necessary to provide services to the public and other Departments and to maintain internal operations.

## STAFFING LEVELS

The Department is requesting 60 budgeted positions for FY26, level with FY25.

Employment Levels (as of November 2024)			
	FY25 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2024	FY26 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	60	55	60
Number of Exempt Positions	3	3	3
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		2	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$60,094	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$51,198	

## NEW HIRES

New Hires (from 7/1/2024 to November 2024)	
	Total Number of New Hires
Hispanic or Latino	1
White	3
Total	4

**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Document Recording

**Program Number:** 1

**FY26 Proposed General Fund:** \$1,567,693

**Program Description:**

The Document Recording program consists of the examination, recording, indexing, and mapping of all land title documents in the city, the collection of local and state realty transfer taxes, and the collection of recording fees.

**FY26 Strategic Goals:**

- The Document Recording program will maintain a one-day turnaround time for recorded documents.
- The Department will expand its deed fraud public outreach and engagement campaign and collaborate with national partner organizations to elevate Philadelphia as a national model for this work.
- The program will add three more years of historical deeds to PhilaDox, DOR's public-facing database of recorded documents.

**FY26 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY26 Target
Percentage of land records filed electronically (deeds, mortgages, etc.)	92%	90%	92%
Percentage of documents recorded within 24 hours <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%

**Program Name:** Records Management

**Program Number:** 2

**FY26 Proposed General Fund:** \$318,024

**Program Description:**

This program consists of the management and operation of the City's Records Storage Center (RSC), which contains the inactive physical records of all City departments, offices, boards and commissions, City Council, and the First Judicial District.

**FY26 Strategic Goals:**

- DOR will reduce the RSC inventory of 135,000 boxes by ten percent through a combination of recycling expired records and collaborating with departments to digitize records. This would result in improving efficiencies in operations and reducing data debris and aligns with the Mayor's goal of making Philadelphia the greenest big city in the country.
- This program will work with at least five departments to review and revise retention schedules to align with each department's current operations and policies.
- Records Management will onboard, develop, and retain team members to fill vacancies due to employee transfers.

**FY26 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY26 Target
Number of boxes containing expired records recycled <sup>1</sup>	6,162	5,500	5,500

<sup>1</sup>FY24 actuals include increased activity due to the transition to a new administration and departments cleaning out records.

**Program Name:** Imaging

**Program Number:** 3

**FY26 Proposed General Fund:** \$674,834

**Program Description:**

The Imaging program consists of Central Duplication unit, which provides a full range of copying, printing, and binding services to all City agencies. This program is also responsible for reviewing, cataloging, and maintaining all City forms.

**FY26 Strategic Goals:**

- DOR will collaborate with departments to identify opportunities to reduce paper copy orders and transition to digital distribution formats.
- DOR will monitor Central Duplication performance using a workflow management system and set appropriate performance measures.

**FY26 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY26 Target
Percentage of print jobs completed within customer deadline	99%	98%	98%



**Program Name:** Public Access to Records

**Program Number:** 4

**FY26 Proposed General Fund:** \$1,328,575

**Program Description:**

This program includes five major activities, each of which is centered around making City records available to the public and promoting government transparency:

- **Financial Disclosures:** As required annually by state and local law, DOR manages electronic and physical filings of city and state financial disclosure forms and makes them available to the public.
- **Public Safety Reports:** DOR provides public safety incident reports to the public for a fee and to City agencies.
- **Land Records:** DOR makes all land title records for real estate located in Philadelphia available to the public. These are available electronically through fee-based web applications and physically in a public research room that DOR maintains. This function also includes the Department's Mapping Unit, which ensures that legal descriptions in recorded deeds match the City's official tax records.
- **City Archives:** DOR manages and preserves the City Archives, which contains millions of historical records dating back over three centuries. The Archives are open to the public and provide access to City records of historical and cultural significance that are permanently maintained and preserved at 548 Spring Garden Street.
- **Public Filing of Regulations:** DOR oversees the public filing of regulations proposed by City offices, departments, boards, and commissions, as well as bonds filed by City officers and employees. It manages the public advertisement of proposed regulations, processes public hearing requests, and ensures proposed regulations are available to the public online and in paper form.

**FY26 Strategic Goals:**

- DOR will issue a request for proposals (RFP) for the City Archives to source a vendor to provide a software solution that will catalog and index the Archives' assets and provide an online platform for the public to search the Archives.
- DOR will continue its partnership with OIT and Police to expand the public safety online portal to include police incident reports, similar to the project completed for fire incident reports. Currently, obtaining a police incident involves a manual paper process that can be time consuming. Digitizing this process will streamline report retrieval times and improve customer experience.

**FY26 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY26 Target
Percentage of financial disclosures electronically filed	100%	98%	98%
Percentage of public land requests turned around within one day	100%	100%	100%

**Program Name:** Department Administration

**Program Number:** 5

**FY26 Proposed General Fund:** \$877,447

**Program Description:**

This program reflects the day-to-day operational management of all DOR programs. It includes the Department's Executive Office, which consists of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Budget Officer, Records Operations Manager, and other administrative staff.

**FY26 Strategic Goals:**

- In collaboration with the City Treasurer's Office, DOR will implement remote deposit safes in its central administrative office, which will expedite revenue deposits and free up administrative resources.

**FY26 Performance Measures:** *No performance measures associated with this program.*

## **OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS**

**Federal and State (Where Applicable)**

N/A

## CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts											
Top Five Largest Contracts, FY25											
Vendor Name	Service Provided	Dollar Amount of Contract	RFP Issue Date	Contract Start Date	Ranges in RFP	% of M/W/DSBE Participation Achieved	\$ Value of M/W/DSBE Participation	Total % Participation - All DSBEs	Total \$ Value Participation - All DSBEs	Local Business	Waiver for Living Wage Compliance?
Tyler Technologies	Document Recording System	\$514,262	2/21/2020	7/1/2020	MBE: 20-25	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	NO	NO
					WBE: 20-25	0%	\$0				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Connexus Technology, LLC	Indexing Historical Deeds	\$250,000	10/5/2023	7/1/2024	MBE: 10-15	100%	\$250,000	100%	\$250,000	YES	NO
					WBE: 5-10	0%	\$0				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
LRW Solutions Group, Inc.	Records Inventory	\$90,000	7/9/2024	8/5/2024	MBE: BGFE	100%	\$90,000	100%	\$90,000	NO	NO
					WBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Element 84, Inc	PhillyHistory Support	\$54,788	5/3/2023	7/1/2023	MBE: BGFE	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	NO	NO
					WBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Rosales LLC	Deed Fraud Marketing	\$40,000	4/28/2023	6/1/2023	MBE: BGFE	100%	\$40,000	100%	\$40,000	YES	NO
					WBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				

*Non-Profit Vendor Demographics not applicable.*