

**TESTIMONY**  
**Before the Committee on Government Operations and Facilities**

**On behalf of the Archives Advisory Group of the Council of the District of Columbia**  
**by Trudy Huskamp Peterson, Chairperson**

**February 17, 2022**

My name is Trudy Huskamp Peterson. I am testifying on behalf of the Archives Advisory Group. Our mandate, as outlined in the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Support Act of 2020, is to “advise the Council of the District of Columbia about Project AB102C in the District’s Capital Improvement Plan to construct a new archives facility for the District of Columbia.” The seven-member group was sworn in on November 18, 2021, and holds bi-weekly meetings. As we consider advice that we may provide to the Council, we look forward to engaging effectively with the Secretary of the District of Columbia, the Department of General Services, the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, and the public.

The Archives Advisory Group is testifying today to raise the Council’s awareness of the important role the Office of the Chief Technology Officer will play in the development and operation of a new archives facility for the District of Columbia. After the Council made the initial appropriation to build a new archives facility in the FY 2014 budget, in December 2014 the Mayor requested and Council approved the transfer of \$600,000 from the new facility’s capital budget to the budget of the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to “support the development of an IT system to be used by the Office of the Secretary, Office of Public Records, as that office prepares to move into a new archives facility.” It now appears, over seven years later, that the construction of the new facility will begin in 2024 and the need for OCTO’s support remains.

The Archives Advisory Group has identified three components of the archives project that will require active OCTO engagement: preparing for the move, operating the new facility, developing a digital archives capacity.

Preparing for the move. The immediate task is a survey to identify the records and other materials that will be moved from their current location to a new location within the new facility. These materials are located in dozens of agencies and off-site storage, in addition to the holdings in the current archives space at Naylor Court and in rental space at the U.S. National Archives. The survey team will need an effective business process solution that will allow the input of information identifying the type of record (for example: paper and electronic, photographs, engineering drawings, audio recordings), where it is now held and where it will go in the new facility: an electronic “master location register.” The system will then serve the archives as a locator when the new facility opens.

Operating the new facility. Archives need electronic systems that support public programming and technical archival processes. The public will use electronic means, both in the facility and remotely, to access information about the archives and its holdings, and as more records are digital, the public will need access to them as well. The facility will need capacity to host technology-enabled public programming, facilitate the use of electronic equipment brought into the facility by researchers, support mass digitization and preservation projects, and operate the usual office systems. And the electronic security systems protecting the holdings must be robust.

Developing a digital archives capacity. Although the District government has been using electronic formats for doing business of every kind for at least a quarter century, no permanent electronic records have ever been transferred to the DC Archives. The new facility must include an electronic records system that ingests, validates, preserves, and makes available the permanently valuable electronic records

of the DC government. Let me be clear: this is not a simple database; this is a complex electronic preservation system. Electronic records come in hundreds of formats, from the familiar email and desktop applications, to websites, PDFs, CAD drawings, GIS maps, images, digital audio and video files, and more. Safeguarding this digital content in a systematic process is essential to preserving the electronic records that have unique historical and governmental importance to the District. Procuring this system, learning to operate it and beginning to transfer electronic records to it is absolutely essential and requires significant investment of both human and financial resources.

Building a new archives facility is a great opportunity for the District to create a modern and functional archives for the city. The Office of the Chief Technology Officer has an essential role in the development of the District's new archives facility, and it needs to be actively involved in the current planning.

Thank you for your attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions.