

Friends of the DC Archives

FY2022 Budget: Committee on Housing and Executive Administration

Councilmember Anita Bonds, Chair

Office of the DC Secretary

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Good day. I am Bill Rice testifying for the Friends of the DC Archives, a seven-year-old group of professional archivists and concerned citizens interested in the preservation and management of the DC Government's archives and records. We advocate for:

1. A new, state-of-the-art Archives;
2. More staff and upgrading of the current Archives at 1300 Naylor Court, NW; and
3. Comprehensive records management for the DC Government.

A modern archives would put us on par with other state archives. Instead, we are dead last and falling further behind other state archives facilities. Indeed, a modern archives function would be an additional commitment to our quest for DC Statehood as well as fulfill the Office of Public Records' mission for a modern record management system for our government.

In 2012, the Gray Administration initiated the new facility project. It recognized that the current facility, a converted stable, is too small, lacks modern environmental controls, provides inadequate storage capacity and offers only limited research access.

Since then, the project has made scant progress due to a lack of professional leadership. There are conflicts over its size, location, and funding. For example, we do not know where all DC Government's records are stored much less which ones would go into the new facility.

There are also major coordination problems among the Department of General Services, the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, the Office of Public Records and UDC the facility's putative location, problems exacerbated by the District's lack of central facilities planning.

We do not hold Secretary Kimberly Bassett responsible for these failures. Despite her best efforts, the only thing produced in nine years is a stack of consultant reports.

To break this logjam, we urge the Committee to do something that the Council has not done - hold a hearing on the project--long overdue for what will be at least a \$70 million project. A hearing would bring the parties to the table, to include the Secretary, UDC, the Chief Technology Officer and the Department of General Services. We also suggest including representatives from the National Archives, the Maryland and Virginia state archives and professional archives associations. Finally, it should include the Washingtoniana Collection of the DC Public Library and the Historical Society of Washington, which have invaluable relocation experience.

Chairman Bonds let's work together to make the DC Archives a state-of-the-art facility that can add rather than detract from our statehood effort. I happy to answer your questions.

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