

Testimony of Fynnette Eaton for the Friends of the DC Archives,
Before the DC Council Committee of the Whole
Chairman Phil Mendelson
Re: Secretary of the District, DC Archives
March 12, 2015

Good day, my name is Fynnette Eaton. I am a more than 30-year resident of the District and a retired Federal archivist, currently performing records management work for two Federal agencies as a contractor. I am a member, and testifying for, the Friends of the DC Archives, a group of professionals and others who advocate for the DC Archives and good record management in the District Government (friendsofdcarchives.org).

FDCA believes that a strong Archives is necessary to promote an understanding of our history and ensure accountability of our public officials. We support the preservation and accessibility of our historic and contemporary records, in all formats, and the proper management of the District Government's records by a high-quality, professional staff.

As you know, the Mayor and Council wisely allocated some \$40 million for a new Archives; these funds should be maintained in the new budget. An immediate problem, is the poor physical conditions at the Naylor Court, NW, building. This endangers priceless materials and prevents proper public access and research. We invite you to visit the Archives to see directly the need for immediate repairs.

We need a strong professional staff, including a top-notch public records administrator to lead the planning, design and building of our new Archives. This position is currently vacant (although Clarence Davis is still listed as the Archives' Administrator). We want to work with the Bowser Administration to recruit a top person for this position. We met with Lauren Vaughan, the District Secretary, and her deputy, Joy Holland, to discuss these matters.

Unfortunately, the Department of General Services is pursuing a procurement for a new Archives building that is rushed, flawed and completely lacking the necessary outside input that we need to create a state-of-the-art Archives--the iconic civic facility the District deserves and the Bowser Administration surely wants. I attended the January 23 DGS meeting of potential bidders for the new Archives and came away dismayed. DGS is proceeding without any of the basic planning, consultation and pre-award decisions that are needed before procurement, including where the new facility might be, its size and what functions it will house.

These problems were pointed out by Councilmember David Grosso in a February 11 letter to DGS (attached) and in our February 23 testimony before the Committee on Transportation and the Environment. As far as we can tell, DGS is not consulting with other agencies or jurisdictions, as we discussed with the Ms. Vaughan; nor has DGS contacted us.

Most troubling, however, is DGS' insistence on proceeding while there is no public records administrator, the "customer" for the new Archives. How can DGS proceed without being guided, in fact directed, by a new public records administrator? We invite you to join us in asking the Administration this threshold question. If DGS continues along this path, we will urge the Council to disapprove the new Archives' contract (surely over \$1 million).

FDCA remains most anxious to work with the Council, the Office of the Secretary, DGS to create a model Archives for the District. We are ready to answer any questions.

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