

Written Testimony by Barbara Bates  
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Submitted to the Committee of the Whole  
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I am writing in support of adequate funding for the DC Archives. The DC Archives on Naylor Court houses a treasure trove of documents and materials critical to those doing research on local history if not of national history as well.

It is most important that the Archives receives funding necessary to upgrade the existing facilities to preserve these documents and to increase the number of staff to process and provide much greater access to these materials. Funding should also be provided to begin the building of a new state of the art facility.

I highly commend the outstanding work of the three staff with whom I have worked over the past several years for the research conducted as indicated below.

In 2009, I spent seven months on site working with a team of Howard University students headed by Mary Belcher going through 75,000 death certificates from 1871 to 1890 to identify the 8,400 African Americans buried in the African American Cemetery where Walter Pierce Park is now located. During this time, I was also able to review a number of wills to clarify relationships among some of the family members. The database has been made available on the web site as well as the report on the project so families can locate their ancestors. The Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery at Walter Pierce Park is now also on the National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom to honor those who risked their lives or helped others to freedom from slavery.

In 2013, I was able to go through the building permits for changes made to stores located in the historic Chevy Chase Ice Palace/Park and Shop complex at 4433-4465 Connecticut Avenue, NW from 1938 to recently. It was demolished in 2013 to make way for Park Van Ness, an apartment rental building with retail space on the first level, soon to open. The report on the commercial history of the many small businesses located there as well as the sports facility and television station is available in the Kiplinger Research Library of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. (HSW) and the Washingtoniana Room of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLK).

In the summer of 2015, I spent five mornings over five weeks going through recorded deeds from 1907 through 1955 for a property. The house built on that property in 1924 is now listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and on the National Register of

Historic Places.

These are examples of the important resources housed in the DC Archives. I was only able to make an appointment on a Tuesday or Thursday morning to conduct deed research; given my own work schedule it took my five weeks to complete my research on that one property. Because of the location at Naylor Court, I could easily go the HSW and/or the MLK library for additional research afterwards.

In summary, funds are needed to upgrade the current facility for conservation and preservation of the collection materials, proper storage and a climate controlled environment. They are also needed for additional staffing; and to begin preparations for the new state of the art facility that will provide the amount of space needed for the existing and expanding archival collections. Ideally, the new facility should be located near the other research resources as the current one is now.

I urge the DC Council to support the necessary funding for the DC Archives.

Thank you for your consideration.