

**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**

**March 2, 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 regarding the role of the Department of General Services in designing and constructing the new archives building for the city.

This Committee’s Chairperson’s Report and Recommendation of the Committee on Facilities and Procurement on the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget for the Department of General Services said:

The Committee has heard numerous complaints from constituents on the lack of transparency regarding the agency’s selection of a new archives building. At our last hearing on May 28, 2020, Director Anderson said the agency was in discussions with UDC on determining a location. Moving forward, we urge that the agency does not keep interested groups in the dark on the construction plans. These groups are interested mainly in the preservation of history that the Archives will one day hold and working with them can ensure that goal. ***The committee recommends that the Department engage the public regarding the future DC Archives and that the Department work closely with interested members of the community on the future of the Archives.***

I am sad to report that DGS has not heeded that strong recommendation. Through Chairman Mendelson, the Archives Advisory Group asked to meet with a DGS representative to discuss the status of the plans for the archives, but that request has not been answered. The Archives Advisory Group also requested, again through Chairman Mendelson, that we be provided access to planning documents, in accordance with the Archives Advisory Group Act of 2020 that authorizes the Group to “have access to all draft and final documents relevant to planning and costing a new archives facility, including any feasibility study.” Specifically, we requested:

1. The statement of scope of work for the proposed sole source contract issued January 25, 2022;
2. Any and all studies, reports, and major documentation to and from DGS and Hartman Cox relating to the planning of the new archives facility, 2016 to the present.

This request also has not been answered.

Simply put, DGS is not responsive to the Archives Advisory Group, a legally constituted body of the Council, and it is not responsive to the public's need to know the plans for the new archives facility.

We are puzzled about the repeated delays in the project. Hartman Cox Architects, the firm that was awarded the initial contract for A/E design services for the new archives, submitted its final report on December 7, 2018, on the feasibility for the selected location at the University of the District of Columbia for the archives ("OPR and HDC Co-Location Study"). According to a September 2019 document on the DGS website, the next step in the archives project was "complete solicitation of the second phase of A/E contract with Hartman Cox Architects." That second phase contract, a sole source, was not issued until January 25, 2022. And while the due date for contractors was February 5, 2022, we have not seen an announcement of the award.

The 2018 Co-Location Study ended with a set of recommended next steps, noting, "There are a great many steps that need to be undertaken between the completion of this study and the commencement of the design process." It goes on to list six steps, one of which is "Preparation of an Updated Program of Requirements."

To be able to accurately advise the Council on the plan for the construction of the new archives facility, the Archives Advisory Group and the public need to know what is the updated program of requirements Hartman Cox is to use in developing the architectural and engineering plans for the building. The Co-Location Study shows a total gross square footage for the building of 79,000, with a storage area and a non-storage area. The non-storage area is to include Reception/Lobby/Gallery, a research center, and a staff work area. The storage area is to have space for archival storage, records center storage, and for records receiving. And that, with their associated footages, is all we know about the archives program. What is Hartman Cox now using as design criteria? The Council and the public need to see the requirements.

The same Hartman Cox 2018 document provides budget recommendations. It assumed \$74,000,000 in capital funding would be available. However, Hartman Cox said that if the building is constructed to LEED Platinum Certification standards, the cost would rise by \$2,900,000. With the inexplicable slowness of DGS to move on the project, four years have passed since that capital budget figure was developed. Construction costs have risen substantially in the intervening years. We must look at the original criteria for the project—what do we want the Archives of the District of Columbia to hold, what programs do we want it to execute, and what people, both staff and public, do we intend to see there—and revisit the cost of the building. We must fit cost to program, not the reverse. The Archives Advisory Group urges the Council to require DGS to prepare a revised cost estimate immediately.

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