

Testimony of Fynnette Eaton for the Friends of the DC Archives,
Before the DC Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Mary Cheh, chair
Re: Department of General Services,
February 23, 2015

Good afternoon, my name is Fynnette Eaton. I am a more than 30-year resident of Ward 6 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 records management in the District Government (<http://www.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 all our records, whether historic or contemporary and in all formats, and 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 building and we want to make sure that these funds are maintained as you consider the new budget. There are a number of immediate matters that FDCA wants to bring to the Committee's attention. First, the poor physical conditions at the Naylor Court, NW, building endanger its priceless holdings and do not allow for full public access and research. We invite you to visit the Archives and see for yourselves the treasures it houses and the need for immediate, short-term repairs.

In order to create a new Archives and reach our other goals, we need a strong professional staff, including a top-notch public records administrator who can lead the planning for a rebuilding of

the Archives. However, this position is currently vacant; we want to work with the Secretary of the District to find top candidates for her to consider.

Particularly problematic are the activities of the Department of General Services, which is under your Committee's purview. 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 having been made, including where the new facility might be, its size and what functions it will house. We want to work with DGS, the Secretary, the Council and the Mayor to help answer these questions. And because there is no public records administrator, the "customer" for the new Archives, we ask that DGS explicitly note the need for this office to be intimately involved in all stages of the project. We also suggest that the Office of the Chief Technology Officer be consulted as well.

We have just received a copy of a letter Councilmember Grosso has written to DGS which reflects many of our questions; we will share our response with you and your colleagues.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify; we look forward to your tour of the Archives.

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