

Friends of DC Archives, Meeting Notes October 1, 2014 (DCPL)
Notes by Katherine Hering

Attending: Mary Beth Corrigan (meeting chair), Katja Hering, Suzanne Gallo, Derek Gray, Patrice Brown, Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz, Fynnette Eaton, Bob Ellis, Jeff Morley, Margot Williams, Lisa Hawkins, Derrick A. Nash, Jesse Bemley, Clarence Davis, Leahh Prescott, Katie Thomas, Bill Rice, David Maloney, Bill Branch, Thomas Worthington, Dionne Calhoun, Danna Bell

Updates, recap.:

In 2013, the D.C. Council passed the 2014 Budget Proposal, and approved \$ 44 million to construct a state-of-the-art facility to house the city's records, including significant historical items dating back to eighteenth century (the proposal was shepherded by the Committee on Government Operations, chaired by Kenyan McDuffie, which oversees the Office of the Secretary of the D.C.). In May 2014, several representatives of the newly-organized FDCA, including Danna Bell, Trudy Huskamp Peterson, Bill Brown, Mary Beth Corrigan, and Bill Rice, testified at the Council, urging to maintain the funding, and allocate additional funding to support the adequate staffing of the Office of Public Records. The Council cut the overall funding for the fiscal years beginning in October 2014 and October 2015, but Mr. Davis explained that the balance of the funds remained for the following fiscal years.

Planning is still in its beginning stages; Greg Hunter, a consultant was hired to prepare a report that provided the vision of the project has produced a report that establishes the problem but fell short of what DGS and Office of Secretary needed. The concern is that, once again, the city will fail to act on its promises, and that the appropriated money will get re-directed to the capital budget. This happened about ten years ago, when Mayor Anthony Williams had appropriated \$ 40 million to renovate the archives at Naylor Court. Then, under the Fenty administration, that money was redirected to the capital budget. Mayor Gray restored the money and the commitment.

The challenge is now to develop a detailed plan that addresses all issues, and to meet the requirements by the GSA, so that they can send out a RFP.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Branch explained the basic structure of the DC Archives: The Office of Public Records (under the Secretary of the D.C.) schedules, collects, stores and manages records of the District government through the services of the District of Columbia Archives, Records Center and the Library of Government Information. The Office of Public Records does not hold legal custody to the records of agencies stored in the repository, so these records, stored in over 18 facilities, are not strictly part of the "D.C. Archives."

Mission Statement

Consensus to approve of the opening paragraph, with slight revisions:

The Friends of the DC Archives is a volunteer organization that advocates for a strong D.C. Archives that will preserve and make accessible D.C. records in all formats to ensure the accountability of its public officials and promote understanding of the history of the nation's capital. (Add "in all formats." "Promote" replaced "advance"). Motion approved.

Regarding the enumerated listed activities:

"Raise public awareness of the value of the D.C. Archives and of archives in general," group agreed this was especially important and wondered if it could be strengthened.

"Promote public access." Group suggested ways of elaborating upon this point. Who is and will be the audience of the archives? Who will be using the facilities? Who constitutes the public?

Suggestion to revise some of the other points in the mission statement. Mr. Davis and Mr. Branch wondered what the phrase "assist the Archives staff and city officials to implement..." meant. They suggested that we be clear that the Friends advocate in support of the OPR and its staff, but that the group does not take over the work of the officers, who work hard to fulfill the agency's mission and legal obligations.

Mr. Branch also suggested that it is inaccurate to say that there is no records management policy, as DC law provides for this. OPR/DCA has a problem getting compliance, and ensuring that the agencies transfer their records either to their successor, or to the OPR, as required by law (DC Code Title 2, Chapter 17).

Membership – how to define?

Ms. Corrigan stated that the intent is to provide a wide umbrella for anyone who is interested in advocating for the D.C. Archives, and, since it was initially re-organized this spring, the group has developed an informal structure, but we want to make sure that the organization is sustainable and legitimate. So far, Trudy Huskamp Peterson and Mary Beth Corrigan have served as co-chairs, Jennifer Krafchik has volunteered to serve as secretary, and Bill Rice was the public relations/government relations guy. The idea that came out of the June meeting was to form committees, based on interests and expertise, but this hasn't happened yet.

Longer discussion about governance and internal structure – should the FDCA adopt a well-established, clear structure, with executive committee, secretary, treasurer, etc., or should it

continue to be organized more informally? There are upsides and downsides to being a 501 c3. (We talked about this briefly at the June meeting.) Attendees emphasize that we need to divide up labor and responsibilities, and find a way to form committees or working groups based on needs, interests, and issues that will have to be addressed.

Mr. Worthington suggested the importance of being registered as a group. This is the only way we can be taken seriously by the city council and agencies. The group agreed that we were not yet at that stage. We needed to decide how to select officers, adopt by-laws, etc.

Who constitutes a member and what are they becoming a member of? The suggestion is that – at this point -- everyone who signs up to be a member is a member. The website should be used as a way that people could sign up and join the group.

Brief discussion about what role other institutions should play in the governance and the work of the group. DCPL's Washingtoniana Division is obviously a critical stakeholder and partner, and is closely working with OPR/DCA. The group generally agreed that FDCA needed an executive or steering committee, but how to determine who should be in that group? Should wards be represented, what functions, etc.

Upcoming elections and Mayoral Transition

The goal of the FDCA is to educate the candidates for mayor and city council about the significance of the D.C. Archives, advocate to maintain the commitment to fund the a new building for the D.C. Archives with \$ 44 million, and support the staff in their mission to ensure that departing politicians, as well as agencies, are honoring their legal and ethical obligations to transfer their records to their successor, or to the OPR. At this point, we need to be organized enough so we can serve as effective advocates for the D.C. Archives during the election season, and the transition period. Once we are through this critical period, we can focus on the question what kind of organization we'd like to be in the future.

There was a discussion of the following actions by the FDCA

Position paper

Presentation and discussion of position paper designed for candidates, which has three elements: Current situation, solution, FDCA position (drafted by Bill Rice). Discussion: The paper is in need of revisions, the language will have to be clarified, and important information will have to be added. OPR/DCA staff has to be consulted for information and specification. "Restore" is not a good choice of words for the title – the archives exist, so what does it mean to "restore"? "Support" or something along those lines would be more adequate. Once again, clarification about what constitutes the archives and its holdings seems to be needed – the first sentence: "The archived records of the District government are stored in over a dozen

locations” is too imprecise – distinction needs to be made between records that are in custody of agencies, and records that have been transferred to the archives. The description of the current situation inadequately describes some of the major issues and problems – one huge issue is the lack of authority of the OPR to enforce compliance by the agencies. Neither “solution” nor “FDCA position” addresses the staffing needs of the OPR – adequate staffing will have to be an important part of our demands.

Agreement that the position paper needs to be revised. Bill Rice will work on a new draft. Suggested process: Bill will consult with OPR staff for information first, and then the paper will be sent out for comments and approval by the group. Emphasis of paper will be on four points:

- Maintain appropriation for a new archives building;
- Need for basic repairs and staffing for the existing facility;
- Agency records and papers from departing councilmembers and the mayor have to be transferred,

Outreach to DC residents, councilmembers, ANC chairs

Social media (website, blog, twitter), conversations with neighbors, listservs, informing and involving professional organizations, such as MARAC, press release, letter to candidates (see: revised position paper), sending out postcards.

The FDCA have been fairly successful in getting media attention, THP was on Kojo, several papers wrote stories.

--Briefly mentioned: This month is a good opportunity to advocate for the DCA in conjunction with Archives Month (October), and we could also consider doing something for electronic records day (Oct. 10).

Next steps:

--Bill Rice will draft a letter to all candidates, will consult with OPR staff, and send it out for approval.

--Katie Thomas will be setting up a blog, where we can also post some background information, including the 2003 CP article, link to recent media coverage, and will also post a draft of the letter to candidates.

– Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz and Fynette Eaton will work on a postcard/mailing.

-- Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz will introduce and discuss the FDCA at the DC caucus meeting at MARAC, held in Baltimore 3. MARAC meeting in Baltimore, Oct. 16-18.

--Mary Beth Corrigan will continue the FDCA twitter account.

The next meeting will be some time after the elections, time and place tbd.

Meeting adjourned. Notes drafted by Katharina Hering, khering23@gmail.com