



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

DAVID GROSSO
Councilmember At-Large
Chair, Committee on Education

Committee Member
Finance and Revenue
Health and Human Services

February 11, 2015

Jonathan Kayne
Interim Director
Department of General Services
2000 14th Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009

Re: Archives RFP

Interim Director Kayne:

Recently your agency issued DCAM-15-AE-0091 for architecture and engineering services for the D.C. Office of Public Records and Archives. This was done in accordance with the Council's project approval in the FY2015 capital budget and it represents an important step towards consolidating and modernizing D.C.'s historic records. I am very interested in seeing this move forward; though I am concerned that the current RFP will not serve the project as well as it could with a few changes.

I have two particular concerns about the approach used in the RFP process:

My first concern is that the facility, as planned, could quickly become a data silo. That is, I am concerned the city lacks a comprehensive archival plan, which would result in the materials being warehoused in isolation. For example, how does the D.C. Superior Court System, Sumner School's archives or D.C. Public Library's archives fit into this project? I also understand that the National Archives holds a significant number of cubic feet of D.C. records. What plans are there to acquire D.C. related archives from the National Archives for this facility, if any?

Secondly, it appears your agency understands that the new archives facility is quite different from traditional office construction and the RFP recognizes this need and uses a non-traditional approach to contracting for the facility. However, the RFP's approach raises several important questions, by either inclusion or omission. The project as presented poses two difficult challenges to successful completion. The challenges are finding a contractor with sufficient technical experience and creativity who also meets D.C.'s standards for local participation. The District of Columbia has a unique status as a government playing the role as a state, county and a city. As a result, I believe that DGS should strongly consider a two-step bidding process. The first step would set technical qualifications along with meeting D.C.'s

contracting requirements. The second step would concentrate on selecting the best approach to meet D.C.'s unique archival requirements as described above.

There are also a number of other important issues that I think should be taken into consideration during this process. They are described as follows:

- Building Size- The RFP is for an 110,000 square foot facility. Of this, 90,000 square feet will be for archival space. When asked at the bidder's conference why it was this size, the answer was that the current facility is 60,000 and this facility assumed a fifty percent increase in archival space. Please explain the process used to determine the appropriate size.
- Stakeholders- The RFP should require collaboration with DDOT, DDOE and the Friends of the Archives. It should also include the District of Columbia Superior Court, DCPS and PCSB, Public Library, and D.C. Historical Society. Resources to consider should also include local universities that have archives; the National Archives and state archivists, who have recently developed facilities, should be consulted as well.
- Standards- During the recent RFP conference, bidders were told that the facility had to meet the General International Standards for Archival Description (IASD (G)). This requirement should be explicitly incorporated into the RFP.
- Location- DGS noted it is open to different approaches for where the facility should be located and the type of building that is new construction or reuse, etc. The selection process for the archives needs to be more transparent. It is not clear what process DGS will use to locate a site.

I believe that these changes in the RFP are both important and timely to the project's success. It presents a daunting challenge that will require an approach as unique as the government it serves. I am happy to discuss this further if you would like.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Grosso', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Grosso
D.C. Council (At-Large)
Chair, Committee on Education