

Minutes, Friends of DC Archives meeting

February 17, 2016, MLK Jr. Memorial Library

Attendees

Katherine Thomas; Alyssa Stein; Susan Wright; Barbara Bates; Robin Diener; Eric Stoykovich; Derek Gray; Mary Beth Corrigan, Katharina Hering; Fynnette Eaton; Kim Hoagland; Becky Katz

1. Welcome, introductions, and approval of agenda

2. Updates

a) DGS has publicly released the preliminary Programming Report for the Office of Public Records and Archives, developed by Hartman-Cox Architectects with EYP. The study is now available on the DGS website: <http://dgs.dc.gov/node/1139416>

Background: This is by far the most comprehensive, professional, study ever done of the needs and requirements for a new OPR facility and its Archives and Records Center operations. Hartman-Cox has considerable expertise in the design of archival facilities (it renovated the Archives I), and archival facilities expert Michele Pacifico served as a consultant to the project.

The report was originally supposed to be released December 15th, and, prior to that, in late November, the FDCA were asked to provide input into the report. Hartman-Cox/EYP then made a few changes members of the FDCA had also suggested, including adding more staff space, before releasing the report.

--FDCA will help with publicizing the report, and work with DGS to invite comments.

b) Naylor Court Renovations

DGS has committed \$3 million for renovations at Naylor Court. Most of this money will be spent to fix the HVAC system at Naylor Court (it has put out a request for bids), and repair the roof. DGS is committed to the project, and won't let the "records cook" for another summer.

The roof at Naylor Court is "holding up" and there is a minor leak next to the elevator.

Next steps: DGS will conduct a feasibility study into the PENN site discussed in the H-C/EYP report. Lauren Vaughan and Becky Katz have made clear that the results of this feasibility study can not be binding upon them.

c) Update on MLK Memorial Library

The discussion of co-location of the DC Archives and MLK Library has been taken off the table. The plan is that the entire library, including Washingtoniana, will move to several interim spaces

by the end of 2016. The staff expects an update with more details soon.

d) Current Archives funding

Becky Katz indicated that most of the \$1.4 million that had been budgeted for the DC Archives has been spent. Of this, a big chunk was spent on the report on the program requirements (\$1.1 million).

-Question: What are the funding needs for the DC Archives? How can we help request the \$ that is needed to improve conditions at Naylor Court?

e) Meeting with Lauren Vaughan, Jeff Bonvechio and Becky Katz planned for February 18, 2016. See report from the meeting by Fynnette Eaton:

Jeff Bonvechio confirmed that the plan to make Naylor Court water tight is moving forward (this is where 3 million will be spent). Until the OPR can move, annual funds need to be allocated for ongoing renovations (about \$ 250,000).

-DGS also confirmed that there will be one, if not more, feasibility studies of possible sites, which are not binding. Once a site is selected, Hartman Cox will begin with designing the new building.

The FDCA are hoping to continue meeting regularly with Lauren Vaughan and DGS.

3. Preparation for DC Council Oversight and Budget hearings

--We need volunteers to testify at the hearings, especially at the hearings of the Committee of the Whole, chaired by Phil Mendelson, March 7th, 2016.

--See the attached hearing schedule and the talking points provided, with the emphasis on:

1) Upgrade for Naylor Cort, annual funding for repairs.

2) Strong support for new state-of-the-art archives facility.

3) Support for increased staffing at OPR, including staff to implement records management programs and getting agencies to comply with the law.

4) Support for Becky Katz's priorities:

a) inventory of holdings at Naylor Court; b) preservation for materials at Naylor Court; Library of Government Information.

4) Support DC History Center, based at MLK Memorial Library

-Longer discussion about the DC History Center – Mary Beth Corrigan highlights precedents in

other states, and emphasizes the need for researchers to have a central places to find out where relevant records are located -- the situation is especially complicated due to the special status of DC, many records are at the National Archives, and scattered all over various repositories.

[There is also the ongoing DC Africana Archives project, supported by a CLIR grant, which offers a model for a shared virtual repository for several DC archives, including Washingtoniana, Howard's Moorland-Spingarn RC, GWU Special Collections, and DC Archives, KH.]

-Washingtoniana would be the ideally suited as a base for DC history center as a virtual repository, and as a staff space.

--Discussion about whether we should highlight the need for a DC history center at the hearings at all -- the need for a new archives facility and the need for a history center are different issues, and emphasizing the history center might distract from our central message. Bill Rice said we should not drop it all together, since there is a lot of interest in and support for the idea. We should stick with our demand to explore the idea, and commission a study. It will be best to bring up the History Center at the Committee on Education hearings.

-Another topic: implementing a successful records management program in conjunction with building a new facility. Who can we get to testify, emphasizing what a good model might look like? Message should be positive, forward-looking, with an emphasis on staffing needs.

-Question: What are the plans to digitize selected records at Naylor Court, including the deeds?

--Discussion that digitization programs are important, but need to be embedded in more comprehensive programs to preserve, arrange, and describe the records that are being digitized. There also needs to be a strategy to preserve the digital surrogates. The Fenty administration started a digitization program, the "war on paper," which turned out to be a disaster, because there was no strategy in place on how to manage and preserve the files.

4. Governance

Mary Beth Corrigan and Trudy Huskamp Peterson, the founding chairs of the FDCA, will step down. Fynnette Eaton has agreed to serve as acting chair until we hold elections in the fall. Both Mary Beth and Trudy will remain involved. We formed a small committee to review governance of the FDCA and prepare elections: Fynnette Eaton, Katharina Hering, Mary Beth Corrigan.

5. Existence of paperwork from an earlier Friends organization

An earlier Friends organization was formed in 2005 in collaboration with Mr. Clarence Davis, long-time Public Records Administrator, as a fund-raising arm for the DC Archives, similar to the National Archives Foundation. However, we are an advocacy organization, and don't have the resources to serve in that role.

6. Next steps:

-Preparation for hearings -- we need to line up volunteers who are willing to testify.

[Note to members: All testimonies that people submitted on behalf of the DC Archives in 2014 and 2015 can be found on the FDCA website, "Activities" section, <http://www.friendsofdcarchives.org/fdca-activities.html>.]

Week of February 22, 2016:

--Hearings on Tue, February 23, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Committee on Education chaired by Councilmember David Grosso (including DCPL)

--Hearings on the Committee for Transportation and Environment, chaired by Mary Cheh, Thursday, Feb. 25 (incl. DGS).

--Meeting with Phil Mendelson and David Grosso's staff on Feb. 24th.

--We should meet again, or at least send out an update, before the budget hearings, coming up in April (see attached schedule).