

MEMORANDUM

May 1, 2013

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst *vy*

SUBJECT: **Worksession: FY14 Operating Budget
Non-Departmental Account-Montgomery County Historical Society**

The Health and Human Services Committee held a worksession on the Executive's FY14 recommended operating budget for the Montgomery County Historical Society (MCHS) portion of the Historical Activities NDA on April 18. The Committee recommended (3-0) approval of \$32,250 proposed by the Executive for MCHS.

The Committee also recommended (3-0) that additional amounts be placed on the reconciliation to provide for the operation of the Montgomery County Archives per the HHS Committee Chair's request (©1-2):

- \$45,000 for MCHS to hire a part-time archivist and provide other operating expenses to operating the Montgomery County Archives; and
- \$80,000 for DGS to build a climate-controlled facility within the Records Center to store the Montgomery County Archives.

Committee members expressed concern about the inability to access historical records, the deterioration existing archival records, the potential destruction of County government documents of historical value, and the non-County's non-compliance with State standards related to archival records. Excerpts from the April 18 packet describing the Montgomery County Archives are attached at ©3-5.

Department of General Services staff reports that additional costs are needed to build the facility within the Records Center to house the Archives. In addition to the original cost estimate of \$80,000, an additional \$15,000 is needed for permits, contingency, and data lines. **If the Committee is interested in having the climate-controlled facility built within the Records Center, it would need to add \$15,000 to the reconciliation list, resulting in a total build-out cost of \$95,000.**



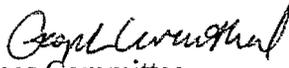
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

GEORGE LEVENTHAL
COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 18, 2013

TO: Nancy Navarro, Council President
Craig Rice, Councilmember

FROM: George Leventhal, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee 

SUBJECT: Historical Archives

Today the Health and Human Services Committee (HHS) will receive an update on the status of the County's historical archives. The archives are currently being stored at the Broome School (located at 751 Twinbrook Parkway in Rockville), a situation that is untenable due to an upcoming construction project. This problem is compounded by that fact that control of the Broome School will revert back to the Montgomery County Public School System in 18 months. When this happens, storage of the archives will most likely return to the basement of the Red Brick Courthouse in Rockville. According to the Department of General Services, historical documents are currently being lost. Other documents are suffering irreparable damage. I believe it is imperative to take immediate action with an eye towards a long-term solution.

Over a year ago, I tasked staff to develop a series of options to deal with the archives situation. Staff will recommend three options. Of these options I urge my colleagues to support the second option. This option calls for additional funding of \$125,000, which would create a space for the collection in the County Records Center that would be temperature and humidity controlled and would comply with State requirements for archival facilities.

This funding would also support a 20-hour per week archivist. The position would work in collaboration with the Department of General Services to develop and implement a system of records review to ensure that County records of historical value are not destroyed when they have run their useful life or have gone through the digitizing process. The archivist could potentially leverage volunteer support through local university archival programs, and may begin the work of re-cataloging the existing archives collection currently in storage when space is made available with the goal of making the collection available to the public.

Though these are tough budget times, \$125,000 is a small amount to ensure that historical records are available and accessible for not only for current residents but for future generations as well.

those who lived in the house from another perspective, and can also provide more information on African American history in Montgomery County.

- "Beall-Dawson Tavern Night" is an event aimed at a young professional crowd, provides an opportunity to familiarize a younger audience with the Society and the Beall-Dawson house. Upton Beall's father-in-law, Adam Robb, was a local tavern owner and the Bealls frequently entertained guests in their home.

A calendar of events for MCHS for the remainder of FY13 is attached at ©6, and the MCHS Annual Report for FY12 is attached at ©7-17.

Council staff recommendation:

Council staff recommends approval of the Executive's recommended funding for MCHS. The Committee recommend restoring funding for the organization as funding sustainability allows.

Montgomery County Archives

The Montgomery County Archives are the permanent repository of County Government records of enduring value. Prior to FY11, MCHS operated the archives through a contract with the County and received \$10,000 annually to support a part-time archivist for about 10 hours per week to make the archives minimally available to the public. The arrangement terminated as a result of FY11 budget reductions. The archives were moved to Broome School in FY11 because of construction scheduled on the Red Brick Courthouse, its prior home.

The Archives continue to be housed at Broome School because the Red Brick Courthouse (post-construction) is currently housing future tenants of the new Judicial Center Annex. DGS reports that temporary space to house the collection will become available in FY14 in the Red Brick Courthouse or the Grey Courthouse. Neither of these locations are permanent options, and in any case, the archives must be relocated from the Broome School in the next year to 18 months due to construction on that building. Council staff notes that the environmental conditions in the Red Brick Courthouse are likely to be better than the conditions prior to construction, but conditions in either the Red Brick or Grey Courthouses may not meet COMAR's temperature and humidity standards for archival records.¹ **Moreover, the proposed FY14 budget for MCHS does not provide funding for recataloguing the documents currently in storage and making them accessible to the public.**

Council staff notes that the Archives has not functioned adequately as a historical archives for a significant period of time and has been out-of-compliance with State mandated requirements. Because of the lack of storage space and funding for staff support, the Archives has not received records from the County since FY2000. Because the County has lacked resources to review records for historical significance after they have passed their

¹ MCHS has previously discussed problems regarding the archives with the Committee. MCHS alerted the Committee to the poor condition of the archives, having been stored in the basement of the Red Brick Courthouse, which lacked appropriate temperature and humidity controls and was subject to flooding.

useful life, it is likely that records of historical value have been and will continue to be destroyed. Moreover, the collection has a substantial backlog of unprocessed records, and the contents of the unprocessed records are generally unknown.

The collection includes sought-after records of policymakers including the County Council. In 2011, a Ph.D. candidate in history at Boston College wrote to the Council suggesting that information in the County Archives: "are not just of historical importance but are also of ongoing concern to residents and of interest to scholars [The] contents of the collections lead me to conclude that they represent one of the most complete and important sources of information about post-1945 suburban history in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and arguably in the United States."

In order to provide a functional historic archival program, the Council would need to increase its investment in the Montgomery County Archives to provide the following:

- **Adequate Storage Facilities:** Facilities should have appropriate temperature and humidity controls, be free from flooding, and be large enough to accommodate additional County records of historical significance.
- **Access to Public:** Records should be accessible to the public.
- **Archival Program:** There should be defined processes for identifying records of historical value and transferring them from the County Records Center to the historical archives.
- **Adequate Staffing:** There should be enough staff time to ensure that the Archival program is carried out, backlogs are processed, and records are made available to the public.

Council Staff presents the following options for funding the Montgomery County Archives and urges the HHS Committee to recommend at least the minimal amount of funding needed (\$45,000) to ensure that County Government records of continuing historical value are not being destroyed after they have passed their useful life or have been digitized.

Minimal funding of \$45,000 to develop and implement a process to ensure that County records of historical value are not destroyed: This funding would support a 20-hour per week Archivist and provide a small operating budget for necessary archival supplies and office equipment. The position would work in collaboration with the Department of General Services to develop and implement a system of records review to ensure that County records of historical value are not destroyed when they have run their useful life or have gone through the digitizing process. The Archivist could potentially leverage volunteer support through local university archival programs, and may begin the work of re-cataloging the existing archives collection currently in storage when space is made available with the goal of making the collection available to the public. It is not likely that this level of funding would allow progress toward cataloguing unprocessed records already in the collection or make the collection available to the public more than a minimal amount.

Additional funding of \$80,000 to support construction of an adequate facility within the County Records Center: Through this additional funding, a space for the collection would be built within the County Records Center. The facility would be temperature and humidity controlled and would comply with State requirements for archival facilities. The facility would prevent or minimize the further degradation of fragile records. Council staff understands that G.O. bonds are not eligible to finance construction of this nature.

Provide \$320,000 for a full-service archival program: This amount of funding would provide for the following: the hiring of a full-time archivist and part-time administrative assistant; construction of an adequate facility in the County Record Center; the equipment or contractual support needed to begin digitizing the collection; archival supplies; office equipment; and other miscellaneous expenses.

Finally, Council staff notes that the Committee may be interested in exploring the possibility of developing a long-term solution to housing the County Archives collection and co-locating them with the MCHS historical archives collection. MCHS is interested in exploring a public-private partnership to develop a one-stop Archival facility at the King Farm Barns, a historical facility on 355 north of King Farm, owned by the City of Rockville. The City of Rockville currently does not have a plan for the facility, and additional information can be collected if the Committee is interested in exploring this opportunity.