

Testimony of Karen Beardsley, Co-president Noyes Children's Library Foundation

Members of the Montgomery County Council,

The Noyes Children's Library Foundation was established in the early 1990's and has been advocating for and raising funds to support the historic Noyes Library c.1893 in Kensington, Maryland. The Foundation is continuing its efforts to raise money for the "Make MORE Noyes" renovation project. This expansion is not just a MCPL "refresh", it is a long overdue renovation that triples the size of this historic gem. It will ensure a universally accessible space for children, parents, caregivers and educators. The new space will house the Jan Jablonski Early Literacy Training Center, making Noyes through its critical early literacy mission, an essential part of the County's "Thriving Youth and Families" initiative and educational enhancement, following the isolation of COVID-19.

This important renovation is outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the County and the Foundation signed in 2016. The MOU stated that the initial budget of the project was \$3.1M, with our contribution being \$1.6M. The project was approved by both MHT and MC HPC in 2019/2020 and the plans were submitted to the Department of Permitting Services in July of 2020. The design was reviewed and approved in July of 2021, despite the COVID shutdown. With the permit in hand, the project can now go out to bid. However, since 2016, the costs have gone up and the most recent estimate from January 2020 was over \$4M.

To date, the Foundation has raised more than \$900,000 toward our commitment to the project. We are diligently working hard to raise more. We have received an impressive amount of community and donor support, though we have found that some large potential donors have suggested that the County should be responsible for the renovation of a public facility, thus, restricting our fundraising reach.

While we respect and understand that the Council is always facing budget challenges, we are asking that the Council honor our intention and accept the funds we have received to date and move ahead. The foundation and our library patrons need to see shovels in the ground and that their donations are at work. We will continue to do what we can to get additional donations and are currently pursuing a Maryland General Assembly Legislative bond. It is essential that this renovation get started to better serve the youngest children in Montgomery County.

Thank you.