

Testimony of Mary Alice Levine
President, The Friends of Tenley-Friendship Library
February 15, 2012

Good afternoon. My name is Mary Alice Levine, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Friends of the Tenley-Friendship Library.

The new Tenley-Friendship Library opened its doors one year ago. The Friends are happy with the library and its dynamic, innovative staff headed by our branch librarian Nick Kerelchuk. The Tenley librarians are knowledgeable and quick to provide information and research assistance, and the circulation staff is bright and equally helpful. The library building itself has quickly become the Tenleytown community center, something we had all dreamed of during the years Tenleytown and Friendship Heights residents lived without a library. Tenley's circulation is number one among DC's libraries because of its high-performing staff, beautiful building, excellent location and committed patrons.

But Tenleytown's beautiful new library is not open much of the time. It is open only two nights a week. Most working people have access to the library only on Monday and Wednesday evenings and during the day Saturday. The library is closed all day Sunday. Community groups vie for the use of Tenley's lovely conference room facilities, which are dark five out of seven nights, even though the building was designed to let the public have access to conference rooms when the rest of the library is closed. Tenley librarians sometimes can't schedule their own evening programs because conference rooms are booked months in advance.

The Tenley Friends have offered to help work with the City on the issue of library hours, but have so far been rebuffed.

Tenley's book collection is also smaller than it was in the days of the old library. Browsing the stacks is no longer as rewarding as it once was (though books can be ordered speedily from other libraries.) Displays of paperback books... classics, mysteries, romanceso popular in the old library...are missing in the new library.

The Friends are able to help fund additional collection materials, not only for our library, but for other libraries throughout the city, but to date, our help has not been wanted.

Finally, there are some flaws with our new building and some maintenance matters that are slow to be taken care of. There is a leak in one of the building skylights that lets rain water into the building. Another part of the roof leaks, dating from the day of the earthquake, and this has yet to be fixed. HVAC is spotty, sometimes hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

To sum up, the Friends of Tenley-Friendship Library are happy with our new library and its staff, but are concerned that the library is not open much of the time, that our book collection is smaller than that of the old library, and that facility flaws and maintenance are not being addressed.

Thank you.

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