

**JANNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM MEETING
July 15, 2008**

Minutes

Present: Kirk Rankin (Chair), Allison Feeney, Sczerina Perot, Andrew Smiles, Tawana Franklin, Shellie Wood, Marike Gero, Jane Malhotra, Karen Martin, Scott Cartland, Laure Hunter, Brenda Petteway, Anthony DeGuzman (from DCPS)

Updates

Mr Rankin noted that the principal selection process is still underway and that the committee will be meeting again soon. He introduced our interim principal Dr Brenda Petteway. This year there is funding for an assistant principal, who has been hired and will be starting next week. Her name is Carol Manning.

A review of educational issues that need our attention this year include: class size, health, professional development, safety, curriculum, arts integration, tutoring's possible impact on test scores, plant deterioration, facilities, and the 10-school collaborative. Mr. Rankin began with Mary Osterman's list and noted that the SIT is in solicitation mode for ideas and is encouraging more ideas as this is really the focus of the SIT.

Scott Cartland gave an overview of what the new collaborative is about. It was started by principals with shared beliefs about education hoping to share resources for staff professional development (teachers and aides). The schools span across the city. The 10 will have one common point of contact with the district and in that sense they'll be treated like a cluster.

Mr Cartland and Dr Petteway noted that the expected student population for 2008-09 is over 500.

Dr Petteway updated us on the DCPS facilities "buff and scrub" program, with Turner Construction being our partner. Contractors and businesses have donated funds and items to the schools and DCPS facilities coordinates the work. Hedge-trimming and other outdoor work is needed.

Dr Petteway noted that all of the teaching vacancies have been filled. She congratulated Mr Cartland and the school community on a job well done. There will be 22 homerooms and six aides, plus a permanent sub. All the supplies, textbooks, and consumables (workbooks) are in. Paper towels and kleenex boxes will be purchased in bulk this year so that most classrooms won't need parents to purchase them individually.

PPP

Mr Rankin noted that the meeting was called to discuss the current status of the Public Private Partnership between the Tenley Library/DCPL, Janney school/DCPS, and the Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development. The Mayor held a press conference July 10 to announce the selection of LCOR as the developer.

The PPP was discussed and many concerns were raised. In discussions with the DMPED, Mr Rankin noted that there is a possibility that no solution will emerge; at this time the SIT is exploring possibilities and gathering information.

Anthony DeGuzman, liaison to DCPS facilities from the Chancellor's office, provided information about his experience with four modernizations currently underway. He explained that the normal time frame is one year of planning and two years of construction. When the one year of planning is shortened, he advised, often there are many changes and corrections during the construction that then delay and add expense to the process.

Mr Rankin spoke with Eric Scott who said the old LCOR plan is out the window and that they are now in concept phase for a new plan. Fenty reportedly stated that he wants the students to "swing in space" -- that the children will not need to move out of the Janney building during construction. Mr DeGuzman said that the decision would be made with the advice of the builders and the Janney community, and that the final call would be made by Allan Lew and Chancellor Rhee based on educational need and what is best for the kids. It was noted that it will be complicated by the impact of the library and housing and underground parking construction. Mr DeGuzman noted that it also depends on the population of the school, among many factors.

Mr Cartland said that the school's preference would be to swing in space. Mr DeGuzman said that typically there is a right answer that makes itself very clear during the planning process. Eric Scott with the Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) is "focused on the corner" and seems to view a division line between the library/housing construction and the school. The school plan will not be done by LCOR and the school's design and building process will be handled by Mr Lew and DCPS.

Karen Martin wondered how the projects can be viewed separately when the underground parking will be shared and will be on the school property. Mr DeGuzman agreed that there will need to be careful sequencing of the two projects and that Mr Lew can begin to inform the process and work this out once the money from the PPP is on the table.

Mr DeGuzman reviewed the process for community and SIT input in the design of the school building. The planning process typically includes monthly meetings during that first design year with all the stakeholders (such as the teaching staff), facilitated by Lew's team. Year 2 the project is then handed over to the builders and can take anywhere from one to two years. Mr Lew is constrained by the dollars. It typically takes 3-5 million for the planning process alone.

Mr Rankin noted that he is troubled that the economic part of this is driving the train. What about the money from the capital improvement plan? What is the Chancellor's response to the fact that Janney is the most overcrowded school in the system?

Mr DeGuzman noted that the Chancellor is adamant about supporting the successful schools.

Andrew Smiles asked for clarification about some kind of guiding agreement to indicate how does the SIT fit in from a process perspective. Mr Rankin said that DMPED did not respond favorably at this time to a Memorandum of Understanding and turned down his request to attend an upcoming meeting with DCPL and DCPS. Mr Smiles noted that factors such as the sequencing issue may come up along the way where the SIT will want guaranteed input.

Mr DeGuzman agreed that so far in the process, DCPS's voice has been underrepresented. He indicated that the Chancellor will be weighing in strongly on behalf of the school going forward. The Deputy Mayor of Education is also very interested in ensuring that the interests of DCPS and Janney are met. Mr Lew's team will be working in the best interest of the school. All three parties will be inserted as negotiating blocks on behalf of the school.

Ms Martin noted that the silence from DCPS and the city has been deeply frustrating. The SIT was assured last winter that there would be opportunities for input and an open process but information has not been forthcoming and no one has been engaging the SIT in the decision-making process.

Mr DeGuzman explained that DMPED had been communicating with former DCPS facilities staff now working for Mr Lew and had believed that that meant they were getting necessary input from DCPS through those channels. He noted that is abundantly clear that more community input is required to get this right.

Mr Rankin noted that he would like the SIT to prepare a statement to the community to be released this week.

Sczerina Perot noted that the Deputy Mayor of Education should have a peer at Neil Albert's level at the table to help shape the agreement. The PPP issue is divisive and complicated and DCPS must be more responsible for answering to the school community regarding it. The SIT needs to ensure that the SIT priorities are in writing to DCPS and to DPMED/Neil Albert.

Mr DeGuzman noted that Eric Lerum would be at the meetings, and that Paul Taylor and Robin O'Hara from Allan Lew's office will be working on the plan. He assured us that DCPS will be at the table with DCPL and DMPED to make sure any plan makes sense.

Ms Martin stated that we need to see that communication and know that we have a voice before the deal is done.

Mr DeGuzman said that he will go back and review the minimum requirements from the SIT. Jane Malhotra noted that perhaps our minimum requirements from before do not adequately address unknown issues such as sequencing of the library/housing construction with that of the school's, and the expanding need for green space as the school is expected to be designed for a growing population of 550.

Mr DeGuzman said that the school's needs seem reasonable but the project must also accommodate the needs of the library, the community (workforce housing, for example), etc. He asked that the Janney community trust DCPS to represent the school's needs as an active partner in the negotiations and planning. They will sit down with Eric Scott's office with the SIT's list of requirements and see if there are any sticking points.

Mr Smiles note that there is a big trust issue and that the SIT would need more assurance that the school's list of needs will be addressed and that we can move ahead with some level of integrity.

Mr Cartland clarified that Janney is currently designed for a capacity of 390 plus demountables but with a population of close to 500 that is expected to grow, the educational specs indicate a design for a modernized school with a population of 550. Again Jane Malhotra brought up the issue of green space and the need to expand green space rather than not lose green space. Mr Cartland said that DCPS facilities has assured him that Janney has enough green space for the school property but that perhaps it is not being used creatively.

Mr DeGuzman noted that urban schools have to get creative with green space design and he is confident DCPS planners can do that for Janney. Allison Feeney suggested that if Janney were not accommodating other schools' children during recess, there would be less crowding on the playground. Mr Cartland noted that the half hour that the grounds are used by St Ann's students is not the issue but that Janney's lunch and recess could be programmed differently to help accommodate the growing student population – stretch the lunch/recess time to an hour and a half, for example, to stagger the kids.

There was discussion about the Bon Secours property located behind the school, where an expansion is planned in the coming year. The parking lot at the rear of the property, adjoining the Janney playground, has been used by Janney students during recess but will no longer be available during and after their construction (and the overflow parking will also be lost).

The SIT thanked Mr DeGuzman for earnest and informative responsive to many questions about the PPP and about the DCPS modernization process in general.

A discussion followed in preparation for writing an updated letter to the community. Some of the SIT's major concerns include the lack of open communication from the city about the project, the SIT and DCPS' apparent lack of a "seat at the table" in this process, a need for a written agreement or MOU between DMPED and DCPS, issues around green space for Janney, the library/housing building height and mass, proximity to the school, the alley, and student access to the library. Ms Feeney noted that Councilmember Cheh said at the press conference that she wants to ensure that the money from the developers would be directly assigned to the school. Mr Rankin noted the complexity of logistics facing LCOR for the proposed project, and hoped that lessons can be learned from the problems with the Oyster project.

Ms Perot was asked to draft a letter that the SIT would review and approve by email. Meeting adjourned.