

SIT Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2009

Present: Dr. Crews, Kirk Rankin, Jane Varner Malhotra, Karen Langford, Andrew Smiles, Cheryl Ohlson, Mary Osterman, Karen Martin, Chris Vaden, Jonathan McHugh

Discussion of the January 30 meeting at Michelle Rhee's office:

Kirk reported that, in addition to Chancellor Rhee, Matt Troy, Anthony DeGuzman, and Eric Scott are expected to attend the meeting. The general purposes of the meeting are to get answers to our questions regarding the PPP and the MFP and to get a sense of Chancellor Rhee's position on the PPP.

Mary suggested that the primary objectives of the meeting are to obtain additional information about Janney's position on the MFP; whether or not that position is contingent upon the PPP; and to reassert and emphasize Janney's critical needs for expansion and modernization. It was also suggested that SIT members take the opportunity to obtain answers about how the MFP-related decisions are made.

Jane and Andrew volunteered to find the statistical information that Jonathon McHugh had compiled regarding Janney's need for modernization and expansion and our place on the MFP. It was also suggested that someone print up the minutes from last year's meeting with Michelle Rhee, during which she noted Janney's successes and suggested that she would make high-performing schools such as Janney a priority.

Andrew summarized the points to be made on Friday:

- An expeditious expansion and modernization would allow for more students to be served (sooner) by high-performing Janney.
- Janney is currently one of the most overcrowded schools in the District, with the 2nd highest utilization rate at 133% and 90sf per student.
- Janney's student population of nearly 490 children currently has a single boys' and a single girls' bathroom.
- Janney's multi-purpose room currently serves four roles; cafeteria, gym, assembly room, and office space (for the ESL offices).

And the following questions should be posed:

- What is Janney's position on the MFP?
- Why has our position on the MPF changed?
- Is our position on the MFP contingent on the PPP?

During the meeting SIT members will also convey to Chancellor Rhee and those from the Mayor's office that the Janney community has made clear its opposition to the PPP by at least a 5:1 margin.

At this point in the meeting Sarah Thompson entered and presented her Student Council report. She reported that the student council is considering hosting a school dance, either on Friday February 13th (with a “creepy” theme) or on Valentines Day. She also reported that many books were collected for a school in Kenya during the successful book drive on Martin Luther King Day, and that the Student Council meets once a month (with an upcoming meeting on February 5th). Andrew suggested that if the Student Council is considering additional service projects in the future, they might want to consider projects at Webb-Wheatley, Scott Cartland’s school. Sarah will raise this possibility during the next Student Council meeting.

(Nelson Jacobson, a Janney parent, joined the meeting briefly to suggest that the PPP poll recently sent home to Janney families be posted online for additional members of the community to weigh in. The SIT considered this proposal, and decided that in order to ensure that each family has one vote on the poll, the hard copy poll is the most appropriate method.)

The results of the PPP poll, which indicated that the Janney community supports the SIT’s position regarding the PPP by a by at least a 5:1 margin, were then discussed. Andrew suggested that the strength of the community’s response on favor of the SIT’s opposition to the PPP provides the SIT with somewhat of a mandate to pursue its stated course of action. It was suggested that we wait until after the meeting with Michelle Rhee to determine our “next steps.” It was also stated that the meeting provides an optimal opportunity to advocate for the school and to voice clearly our opposition to the PPP. It was agreed that the SIT will need to reconvene after the meeting with Michelle Rhee in order to revisit our goals and identify next steps.

Andrew suggested that after Friday’s meeting the Facilities committee once again assumes responsibility for the PPP discussion, with the understanding that the committee will report back to the SIT at each monthly meeting, and more frequently when circumstances demand. Mary suggested that, when necessary, additional SIT meetings be convened to address PPP-related issues, so that our regular monthly meetings are reserved for other important school matters that have recently been pushed aside due to the focus on the PPP. Kirk suggested that we’ll need the consensus of the entire SIT prior to relegating PPP business back to the Facilities committee.

Karen M. suggested that the facilities committee and the SIT as a whole consider ways to involve those in the Janney community who want to play a role in the PPP advocacy issue. This would serve the dual purpose of facilitating the involvement of those in the community who are interested in becoming more actively involved, while also easing the burden somewhat for the SIT members, particularly those on the facilities committee, and also the Advocacy Committee.

It was agreed that the SIT would host a school-wide community meeting in February, after the latest or “final” LCOR plans have been released. This meeting would be geared towards the Janney community, and would be designed to provide the community with the latest information regarding the PPP and the MFP; to respond to questions; to explain the majority position of the SIT; and to explain opposing positions as well. Andrew suggested that a facilitator be hired to moderate the meeting, and Shelley suggested Tom Ward, a former Janney parent and current community member who is a professional

facilitator. (And who is likely removed enough from the current debate to be neutral.) It was suggested that the SIT could request funds from the PTA to cover the cost (likely minimal) involved in hiring a moderator.

It was suggested that the SIT consider distributing a follow-up to the recent poll after the community meeting is held, in order to provide parents with another opportunity to provide their thoughts and feedback regarding the PPP process and the SIT's position. While the community meeting will offer parents a chance to voice their opinions, it was acknowledged that typically only a small subset of the Janney community attends these meetings.

February 17th was identified as a possible date for the community meeting, in which case the regular SIT meeting would be moved to February 18th.

Karen M. asked if it would be helpful to have the comments from the PPP poll typed up for all SIT members to read, and the group agreed that that would be helpful and appropriate. The polls were divided among three of the SIT members, who agreed to type up the comments and send them to Karen M. , who will compile them and forward them to all SIT members.

Karen M. also suggested that we start thinking about a contingency plan for after the meeting with Michelle Rhee. It was agreed that the group will need to reconvene after the meeting in order to debrief and to re-evaluate our approach to the PPP efforts in light of any new information. Others re-emphasized the importance of taking the opportunity during the Rhee meeting to explain the school's position; that while the school agreed two years ago (or less) to consider the PPP and its benefits for the school, the school community generally feels that the pursuit of the PPP no longer represents the best interests of the school.

It was agreed that Kirk will take the lead representing the SIT during Friday's meeting. (Dr. Crews agreed and mentioned that in a previous conversation Chancellor Rhee had suggested to her that she appoint a SIT member to assume leadership of the PPP issue.) Kirk requested some assistance in locating the minutes from last year's meeting with Michelle Rhee, and indicated that he will remind Chancellor Rhee of that discussion as appropriate.

The SIT agreed to meet again on Tuesday February 3rd in order to summarize the January 30th meeting for those not in attendance and to address the important school business such as classroom configurations, staffing for 2009-2010, and SIT protocol and communications.

There will be a DCPS / LSRT budget meeting on February 4th. Andrew agreed to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50.