

## SIT Meeting with Chancellor Michelle Rhee, January 30, 2009

DCPS: Chancellor Michelle Rhee, Eric Lerum, Anthony DeGuzman; SIT: Tawana Franklin, Karen Langford, Andrew Smiles, Shellie Wood, Dr Karen Crews, Kirk Rankin, Marijke Gero, Karen Martin, Malin Kerwin, Mary Osterman, Jane Malhotra; PTA: Lucy Smiles

Chancellor Rhee began by apologizing. After the meeting with the 2007-08 SIT one year ago, she felt that the group was interested in exploring a PPP as long as the main concerns – preserving green space for Janney, and ensuring that Janney would benefit from the deal – would be addressed. She felt it would be okay to push for the project with that in mind. She must look across all of DC to prioritize facility needs. Janney would get extra money, and the student population would grow, so the PPP appeared to be a win-win. Although she lost direct communication with the SIT, she always told the mayor that if the school doesn't get out of it what they need, it's a no-go.

Through DMPED, lots of frustrating things occurred. She saw specific emails about green space, but didn't realize there was a lack of good information.

It is her belief that we can come up with a situation that will benefit the school. The most recent proposal – with an increase of green space, moving up the timeline for Janney in the MFP, and additional money that the PPP will put toward the renovation of outdoor facilities – in her view, makes sense. Much went wrong in the process. Other interests were driving things. She and the mayor never wavered on the fact that this would not go through unless the school would benefit from it.

She said that the best next steps need to be determined, and she will chart a course to ensure that she is fully aware of what is going on.

Kirk Rankin thanked the Chancellor for taking the time to meet with the SIT. He noted that last year was a different time and group. That the rationale of getting advanced in the queue has changed. That the Janney community is now confident that Alan Lew and Chancellor Rhee would get Janney's facility needs addressed without need to give up land. The PPP appears to be more of a land sale. How much would we give up? When we get rebuilt is what's important. Through FOIA'd documents, there appears to have been political manipulation showing Janney had been scheduled for a 2010 renovation but it was moved later to the end of the queue to make a PPP more attractive. Janney is a high-achieving, overcrowded school that needs to be expanded.

Chancellor Rhee noted that the only official documents released have Janney in 2014. If we move with the PPP, the timeline will move up. Drafts go back and forth all the time.

Kirk said the draft reflects informed decisions made by people such as Anthony deGuzman, her own assistant, who believed that, based on the guiding principles of the MFP, Janney's needs should be addressed soon.

Chancellor Rhee responded that every school feels that way. Her first focus is on classroom environment and by that standard, Janney's issues are not the top priority. There are schools in Ward 8 with deplorable conditions. Many schools have demountables. She understands that Janney is bursting at the seams but some schools' conditions are incredibly bad. She does not play in the politics of it and that is not how she makes her decisions.

Kirk agreed that many school's facility problems are great, but that Janney's peculiar needs are around capacity. Chancellor Rhee said she understood that Janney SIT would by definition be advocating for our school's needs. Kirk asked where is Janney in the MFP now. Chancellor Rhee answered that her goal is to combine all that needs to happen citywide, and that Janney's place in the MFP queue would be dependent on the PPP.

Kirk clarified that if there is no PPP, Janney would be modernized and expanded beginning in 2014. Chancellor Rhee confirmed this but noted that she does not know the details. Andrew Smiles brought up the MFP guiding principles, suggesting that Janney's needs should be addressed based on the merits of our case. Chancellor Rhee responded that Janney's expansion/modernization without the PPP would be slated for last on the list. That the guiding principles first focus on classrooms, and that having demountables is not considered a negative classroom experience. That demountables are beautiful compared to some of the classrooms in buildings across the city.

One person confirmed that she was aware that Janney has just one set of bathrooms on the first floor for the 500 students. That there is just one adult toilet for the staff. Again, Kirk noted that capacity is our issue, not condition.

Chancellor Rhee said that expansion of schools is not a priority. We have to choose. The mayor and Alan Lew want the former 20-year MFP compressed so that all schools across the city would have needs addressed in the next five years.

Kirk responded that the Janney community, the only population that conceivably benefits from the plan, opposes it by a margin of five to one, and would prefer to wait until 2014 and not have any part in a PPP. No one in the community, except for the few hardy souls that DMPED meets with, supports this plan. The library has been hung out to dry, and they are mad at us for the delays caused by entertaining this project for the last five years. This is extremely divisive in the neighborhood. The broader community has looked repeatedly at the concepts, the Janney community has looked at all the plans, and we are not interested, we are willing to take a pass. He asked the Chancellor if she will listen to us.

Chancellor Rhee said she has to look at the facts and weigh in. She'll have to make a decision. With the current plan it appears that there would be increased green space, the modernizing of the school's outdoor facilities (which Janney would not get if it waited until 2014), and everything would happen earlier.

Andrew remarked that no one saw 2014 as getting anything less. Lucy Smiles noted that we want the library and the school's public space preserved. We have to consider what we want the space to look like in 100 years. Chancellor Rhee noted that she is looking at the proposal from the school's purview so she is focused on that point of view. Lucy affirmed that the building of a nice library of great value to the community. Jane Malhotra said that the library is an educational asset to the community as well, and the lack of it for five years has had a negative impact not only on access to knowledge for the kids at Janney, but on the students at Deal and Wilson as well, where school libraries are sorely lacking.

Shellie Wood noted that one year ago when the SIT met with the Chancellor, there was a nice sentiment about the project. People were open about looking at the possibility. But plans eroded. There is a huge trust issue. Wrong numbers were used to make it appear that we were getting more green space in the proposal.

Chancellor Rhee responded that she wanted the back and forth dialog on what was being proposed. She said she has to look at what is currently being proposed. We won't move forward til we all look at it.

Kirk asked the Chancellor how much money is being generated from the sale of the land.

She said she didn't know. She asked Anthony DeGuzman, and he said they would need to ask the DMPED people who were waiting outside the conference room.

Kirk asked if she had not seen a term sheet. Chancellor Rhee said there are certain things she knows. She doesn't know how much money is coming through the deal, but there is an upside of moving forward with a PPP vs. a delay if we didn't.

Kirk asked about the status of the library. That Neil Albert's letter says that the library has to be integrated into the structure. This would mean a delay to the library 18-20 months post PUD approval. This consideration should be in the Chancellor's analysis, as five years has been the wait already.

Chancellor Rhee said this was helpful to know.

Kirk confirmed that the Janney community will be engaged in the design process with or without a PPP. Chancellor Rhee agreed but that the plans could look different. Kirk asked what is the scale of the Janney addition and what is the status on the educational specifications. DeGuzman said they want to move quickly with the Ed Specs. Lucy emphasized to the Chancellor that the community is overwhelmingly against this.

Kirk asked about the process for dispossessing land and that this would need council approval and that would require Councilmember Cheh's support. Chancellor Rhee said that how the council operates can be unclear and that, while it would require council approval, she and the Mayor have placed a focus on education that the council recognizes.

Lucy noted that the library and the school will be impacted by a large building right there. Dr. Crews stated that Oyster teachers had problems with not enough teacher parking in the garage when more teachers were added. What would happen if Janney added another 20 teachers after the project?

Chancellor Rhee said she doesn't care about the development aspect of the deal. She is willing to fight with DMPED to make sure the school's needs are addressed first.

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Additional DC staff joined the meeting:

Sam Yeung (OPFM), Tony Robinson (OPFM), Eric Scott (DMPED), Matt Troy (DMPED)

DeGuzman notes that the ed specs call for a 35-40,000 sq ft addition for Janney.

Chancellor Rhee asked if the latest plans have been seen. Eric Scott said they are now up on their website. Chancellor Rhee said she wants to have the proposal. Doesn't want anyone in the school community to think it's the end all and be all. There is a process to resolve problems. The plans may look glossy and thus appear decided but they are not.

DeGuzman noted that the plans have suffered more from a lack of glossy.

E. Scott noted that there have been many iterations of the plan. He said they sought community feedback. The changes they have made are a result of community feedback. At some point they will reach a stopping point.

Chancellor Rhee responded that there is a natural progression of back and forth but the impression has been that there's not been much opportunity for input. Andrew Smiles asked about the term sheet – as a DC tax payer, how much would be put into the city coffers from this deal?

Matt Troy asked if he meant how much would be given to DCPS. He said it changes as the building plans change, and the market is getting worse. There has been a major downshift even since two weeks earlier. The original proposal using to justify – or not justify, but measure – what would come to Janney, has changed. It is now a 165 unit building. They are looking at somewhere between \$5-7 million. Nobody is lending anymore.

Andrew Smiles said say it was seven million. Is some used to move Janney up in the queue, and some for outdoor enhancements and renovations? E. Scott said it would not be earmarked for any specific use. Jane asked about the library part of the mixed use site – what about the legislation saying revenue from library property/air rights must be used for library purposes? Troy responded that he has read the entire legislation and that, because the property also includes school land, the funds do not have to be directed to DCPL specifically but to any public benefit.

Kirk asked when the term sheet would be confirmed. Troy said there would be a readjusted capital appraisal today or tomorrow. Developing the term sheet had been slow as it has taken a back seat to the time DMPED has been spending on collecting community outreach. (Laughter and brow-raising from some SIT members.) Troy continued that they expect a term sheet in mid-February.

Chancellor Rhee thanked everyone for coming. Malin asked to make one more comment: that the SIT is looking out for the best interests of the school, and that it is not the building that makes Janney, but the community of people inside it that make Janney vibrant. And the majority of this community – six to one – do not want this PPP.

Chancellor Rhee said she understood. But she believes that Janney parents were responding this way more due to a widespread lack of understanding of what has gone on. It is based on fear of what may have been going on. Folks should understand what took place and where we are now.

Karen Martin asked what is the time line moving forward, so that we can get back to our community with some next steps. Chancellor Rhee said that the SIT, DeGuzman and E. Scott should agree on a timeline to get information out there, and clarify misperceptions of what's out there and why. DeGuzman said he would set up a follow up meeting with the SIT, DCPS, DMPED and OPFM. Jane asked if DCPL shouldn't be included. DeGuzman said he would check with the chancellor. Karen and Andrew asked when is DMPED's community meeting to present the final plan. Dates will be scheduled around Janney availability but sometime in mid-February. Kirk asked if Chancellor Rhee would allow the people who wrote the FOIA'd emails to meet with the SIT to explain what happened, including the contractor Dunleavy. She said yes.