

Roundtable on the Office of Public Education Facility Modernization

June 25, 2008

Mary Filardo, Executive Director, 21st Century School Fund

I appreciate the energy this Mayor and the office of Public Facilities Modernization are bringing to school maintenance and repair, particularly, and I hope that we will see similar focus on the comprehensive modernization of schools very soon.

However, I believe we are underestimating the planning, engagement, management systems, internal controls and oversight that are required to ensure that our investments will generate the character and quality of public school facilities that we need for our students and in our neighborhoods. Specifically, this requires a joint effort among OPEFM, the City Council, DC Administration, DCPS, public charter schools, neighborhood residents and local school communities.

But we are a long way from having capacity for the level of partnership needed. Just a very few of the actions that might move us toward this goal are the following:

- An office of planning that is responsible for city-wide school capital planning aligned with other city development plans.
- A planning office within DCPS to ensure educational priorities are guiding construction, which has experienced staff members who understand the capital cost and other implications of educational planning decisions.
- A Council subcommittee on capital functions - - it could be used just for education (libraries & schools) or more broadly for all of the city's capital investments.
- A fully staffed and appointed Modernization Advisory committee, with public meetings and a clear directive for public oversight and input, staffed by the Deputy Mayor for Education or Office of the State Superintendent of Education.
- Audits per the legislation, but expanded to also assess educational design, construction quality, cost of maintenance and environmental sustainability through post-occupancy evaluations of completed projects.
- Clear policy defining how decisions are made on scope, cost, schedule and quality for each project and contract.
- Management review, to ensure there are internal quality controls and use of best practices in the management of the capital program.
- Requirement that **approved** plans - - the master plan and capital plans - - be in place before funds can be spent or reprogrammed.