



Better Buildings: Better Schools

Issue 22 (September 2004)

*Monthly news on DC Public School facilities from the 21st Century School Fund (21CSF), a Washington DC based, nonprofit - **working to build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities.** To subscribe or unsubscribe please email: newsletter@21csf.org.*

DC Board of Education Candidate Forum, October 14

The Board of Education races for District 1 (Wards 1 & 2) and District 2 (Wards 3 & 4) will be decided in the November 2 elections. A collaborative of DC education advocates, including 21CSF, DC Voice, SHAPPE and DC PTA, is sponsoring a Candidate Forum on Thursday, October 14 from 6:30pm – 8:30pm at Sumner School (1200 17th St NW, Farragut North Metro). A flyer with event details and a list of Voter Guide Questions that help frame the important issues facing candidates are available at www.21csf.org. This meeting is open to the public.

Come and meet the candidates!

District 1

Eleanor Johnson
Keenan Keller
Christopher McKeon
Jeff Smith

District 2

Mai Abdul Rahman
Hugh Allen
Thomas Dawson, III
David Jordan
Victor Reinoso
Dwight Singleton
Laura McGiffert Slover

Continuing Discussion on School Facilities, October 27

21CSF convened a general meeting on school closings and consolidations on May 18th (notes from this meeting are available at www.21csf.org). A follow up meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 27th from 6:00 to 8:00 at the Sumner School, (1200 17th St NW, Farragut North Metro). This meeting is open to the public.

We will continue the May meeting discussions around Planning, Co-location, School Closings and Consolidations and Capital Budgeting, as well as explore strategies for improved Maintenance and Repair at DCPS. Please call Nancy Huvendick at 21CSF if you would like to be included in the October 27th meeting or e-mail nhuvendick@21csf.org.

Medical Homes DC Community Forum, October 29

21CSF has spent the past year working on this citywide initiative, being lead by the DC Primary Care Association (www.dcpca.org), to increase the capacity of primary healthcare for uninsured and underinsured residents in the District. 21CSF's role has been to research the range of healthcare

services currently offered in the DC public schools, research the practice nationally of locating health clinics in schools, and look for opportunities to locate new clinics in DC public schools. These findings of this will be presented at a Medical Homes DC community forum at George Washington University on October 29th. For more information on the forum, call the DC Primary Care Association at 638-0252.

DCPS Capital Budget Reallocation

The DC Board of Education convened September 9 for a public hearing on the reallocation of the FY 2005-2010 Capital Improvement Plan Budget for the District of Columbia Public Schools. Several organizations, teachers and students presented testimony, including 21CSF's Nancy Huvendick and Jordan Spooner. The deadline for the Board's reallocation decision is October 1.

21CSF generally supports a reallocation that would scale back the scope of modernizations to make the projects simpler and cheaper. We also recommend that structurally sound schools such as Birney and Woodson, not be torn down but rather be upgraded with simpler, and much less expensive, renovations. In a system that is losing students, we do not need a few bigger, fancier schools. We need lots of really decent neighborhood schools. A copy of the capital budget and 21CSF testimony are available at www.21csf.org.

ABC 7's I-Team Investigates DC School Construction Costs

ABC 7's I-Team aired a segment on DC school construction costs on Monday, September 27. 21CSF's Mary Filardo was interviewed for the story. The segment highlighted the large cost overruns, calling them "a pattern of chronic over-spending and mismanagement that has cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars." ABC 7 provides a list of the cost overruns on their website. To access the list and read the full story, please visit <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0904/176094.html>. The I-Team plans to do further school construction investigations in the future.

Noyes Elementary School Reopens

Noyes Elementary School students returned to a completely modernized facility in September. After three years in temporary swing space at Hamilton Elementary School, the doors opened again at 2725 10th St NE, a residential neighborhood only a few blocks from the Rhode Island Avenue Metro stop.

A bit of finish work and unpacking are still taking place, but students are enjoying spacious new classrooms, a large auditorium, a separate gymnasium and cafeteria, a media center, science room, and a combined art and music room. There is also a new large outdoor basketball court. The historical 1931 building and auditorium addition are totally refurbished; and a new addition houses early childhood classrooms, each with its own attached outdoor play area.

While the student population at Noyes had dwindled to less than 200 during construction, demand appears to be great for the new facility. More than 100 additional neighborhood students have registered at the school bringing it close to the new building's stated capacity of 360. Look for announcements of the official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Playground Enhancements in Your Neighborhood?

Have playground upgrades been completed at your local elementary school? Please let us know what you think of new or repaired equipment. DCPS received \$4 million from a federal earmark last year for playground upgrades which means that by now most DCPS elementary schools should have more serviceable playground equipment to start the school year. Also, please let us know what further improvements would you like to see. Send reports and comments to nhuvendick@21csf.org.

FixOurSchools.net

FixOurSchools.net was launched recently by Marc Borbely, a former Eastern SHS teacher. The site allows the public to document school facilities problems by posting photos. The site's aims are 1) to serve as a tool for parents, students, teachers and advocates in their attempts to seek repairs and physical improvements at their schools and 2) to provide a forum for anyone with access to the Internet to discuss facilities issues on an individual school level. Marc hopes the school advocacy community, as well as students, parents and teachers at large, will find the site to be a useful tool. He is seeking comments on how to improve the site and, most importantly, needs volunteer photographers. Marc can be reached at borbely@fixourschools.net.

Computer Needed

A DCPS family, including a homebound high school student who is recuperating from gun shot wound and is not able to attend school, and his mother who is a Parent Volunteer, is in need of a computer for use at home. Support with hooking up to the internet would also be appreciated. Please call Cathy Reilly of SHAPPE 723-3310 if you are able to help.

Commentary...

Invest in Educational Buildings, Not Just Sports Stadiums!

It looks like baseball is moving back to DC. With it come promises of a revitalized community, a reinvigorated economy, and a chance for DC to compete in the Major League. We at 21CSF hope these forecasts are accurate. We believe that vibrant cities are a complex blend of good government, safe and sound communities, rich cultural and arts organizations, strong retail environments, enthusiastic professional sports teams, and most importantly, healthy public schools.

The proposed baseball stadium, with a publicly financed price tag of \$440 million, has shown us that where there is a political will, DC can generate the funds and drive to deliver. Public education is a priority. Along with PROP 100% (Pledge to Rebuild Our Public Schools 100%), we insist that any public financing for a new baseball stadium be equally matched with funding for public school reconstruction and renovation. Now that we have baseball, the Mayor and the city need to put as much energy into rebuilding the schools as they have put into attracting the Expos.