



Better Buildings: Better Schools **Issue 31 (October 2005)**

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/unsubscribe, please email: newsletter@21csf.org.

School Modernization - Legislation Update

On October 18th, the DC Council Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation met to markup and vote on the “**School Modernization Financing Act of 2005**”, which was intended to provide an additional \$1 billion (on top of \$1 billion already budgeted) in capital funds over ten years to modernize D.C. public school buildings. This was a revised version of the same bill (#16-250) originally offered by Council member Fenty (Ward 4) and others earlier this year.

The financing package included modest increases to two taxes paid predominantly by non-DC residents – the hotel occupancy and parking taxes – plus an increase on the cigarette tax and a 10-year delay in the final step to lower personal income taxes included in the Tax Parity Act of 1999. Education Committee Chair Kathy Patterson (Ward 3) put forth the bill with the following press release language: “We are talking about raising taxes in order to provide children with safe, modern schools. If the package is approved, we will put taxpayers’ money where our rhetoric has been, and provide children with new schools that can and will be maintained in the years to come.”

However, the hotel industry lobbied Committee members heavily against the bill, and specific opposition to voting for it then came from three of the members – Barry (Ward 8), Gray (Ward 7), and Schwartz (At-Large). As a result, the bill was temporarily pulled from consideration by Ms. Patterson, and a vote was postponed.

A public roundtable is now scheduled for **Tuesday, October 25th from 4:00 to 9:00 at Roosevelt Senior High School** (4301 13th St, NW) to hear testimony on the funding options for the bill. The public witness list has already filled up, but individuals may also submit written testimony, which will be made a part of the official record. Written testimony should be submitted to Evelyn Bourne-Gould, Legislative Assistant to the Education Committee, at egould@dccouncil.us, or to Mr. Ira Stohlman, Acting Secretary to the Council, Room 5 of the Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004. The record will close on November 7th, 2005.

DCPS Master Planning

Work has begun by DCPS and its team of consultants (including 21CSF) on the formulation of the Master Education Plan (MEP) and Facilities Master Plan (FMP). Superintendent Janey now intends to submit the MEP to the Board of Education in January 2006. **It will address two major issues:**

- How to strengthen our education programs so they provide high-quality teaching and learning opportunities to all students in the city; and
- How to utilize our school buildings so they support our educational programs and meet other public needs – such as housing charter schools, community groups and others – and responsibly improve our buildings so they are safe, healthy and educationally-appropriate.

The MEP, in particular, builds on the DCPS Strategic Plan (*Declaration of Education*) and previous work by the DC Education Compact and others. And it sets the stage for detailed school-by-school facilities recommendations to be included in the FMP (to be presented to the Board of Education in April 2006), and detailed education initiatives (which will be ongoing). DCPS is developing these plans with input from parents, teachers, principals and neighbors throughout the city, as well as with help from leading education experts.

Over the coming months, DC residents will have the chance to contribute their views on the content of both the MEP and FMP. In November, **five community forums have been scheduled to help facilitate public input.** The dates and locations are as follows:

- Nov. 9 – Patterson Elementary School, 4399 S. Capitol Terrace, SW (Ward 8)
- Nov. 14 – McKinley Tech Senior High School, 151 T St, NE (Ward 5)
- Nov. 15 – Cleveland Elementary School, 1825 8th St, NW (Ward 1)
- Nov. 17 – Janney Elementary School, 4130 Albemarle St, NW (Ward 3)
- Nov. 21 – Kelley Miller MS, 301 49th St, NE (Ward 7)

All community forums will take place from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. In addition, a website is under construction and will provide background information, online surveys, and chats where citizens can share their views.

High School Roundtables

21CSF, Senior High Alliance for Parents, Principals, and Educators (SHAPPE), DC VOICE, and other organizations are currently cosponsoring a **three-part series of public roundtables on high school reform for DCPS.** The roundtables have been specifically designed to inform the DCPS master planning process described above (and hence, the MEP and FMP reports) by developing recommendations based upon the following questions: (1) *What* do our high school students need? (2) *How* can we best provide it? The first roundtable was held at McKinley Tech Senior High School on October 18th, and focused on the first question. The following **two roundtables remain:**

- Oct. 25 – Anacostia Senior High School, 1601 16th St, SE (Ward 8), focusing on: *How* can we best provide what our high school students need?
- Nov. 8 – Wilson Senior High School, 3950 Chesapeake St, NW (Ward 3), focusing on: *Recommendations* for the MEP and FMP.

For more information on the roundtables, contact SHAPPE at 202-723-3310, or DC VOICE at 202-986-8534.

Major Initiative: Capitol Hill Public Schools' Libraries

Parent organizations from Brent, Maury, Ludlow-Taylor, Payne, Tyler, Watkins, Peabody and Stuart Hobson public schools are organizing a community-based effort to renovate libraries at each of the schools, and have formed a new organization called the Friends of the Capitol Hill Public Schools' Libraries. The goal is to turn these school libraries into first-class, A+ facilities with beautiful, inviting spaces that welcome children and provide community space after school hours. Check out http://www.robinhood.org/programs/initiative_details.cfm?initiativeId=4 to see libraries that were designed for a similar effort in the New York City public schools.

The School Libraries Initiative has been accepted as a project by the Washington Architectural Foundation, and architects have been assigned to each school to develop designs. Victoria Kiechel Architect is assigned to Maury; Lawlor Architects is assigned to Brent; Studio 27 is assigned to Payne; Meditch Murphey Architects is assigned to Ludlow-Taylor; Hartman-Cox Architects is assigned to Tyler; Mancini Duffy is assigned to Peabody; Bonstra Architects is assigned to Watkins; and the Catholic University of America design collaborative (CUAdc) is assigned to Stuart Hobson. Design sessions involving parents, teachers, students and librarians will be held in the near future.

The Capitol Hill Community Foundation is supporting the School Libraries Project, and will be sponsoring “A Literary Feast” on Saturday, November 12. Thirteen dinner parties will be held in homes across Capitol Hill. Each dinner will feature food and fun relating to a specific book. To learn more about “A Literary Feast” contact Karen Reed at 546-5075 or feast@benjer.com. All proceeds will benefit the School Libraries Project.

Students, parents, teachers, neighbors, local business people, are urged to join the Friends of the Capitol Hill Public Schools Libraries. For more information on how you can help, contact Suzanne Wells at m.godec@att.net or 202-547-2477 or Todd Cymrot at todd.cymrot@verizon.net or 202-997-3296.

Thanks to Suzanne Wells for this update.

Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School Ribbon-cutting Ceremony

On October 18th, Thurgood Marshall Academy (TMA) Public Charter High School hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate its newly renovated and expanded building. The historic Birney school (formerly Nichols Avenue School) at Howard Road and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, SE is the new home of TMA. 21CSF assisted TMA as it planned and developed this state-of-the-art facility.