

SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM
Minutes of meeting of DECEMBER 11, 2012

Present: Sherilyn Pruitt, chair; Mark Pattison, secretary; Lisa Connor, Kesha Pendergrast, parent representatives, Alicia Anderson, PTA president; Toby Susse, PTA first vice president; Tia Holt, Joele Michaud, teacher representatives; Robyn Brooks, staff representative; Carl Bergman, community representative; plus Jamie Miles, principal, and Jim Elliott, guest.

Follow-Up/Follow-Through (FUFT) on school boundary redrawing: Bergman noted that Ward 3 councilmember Mary Cheh, in an op-ed in the Dec. 5 issue of the Northwest Current, explained the intent of the School Boundary Review Act which she said would grandfather current students and their siblings into existing feeder patterns. (The essay can be seen at <http://www.currentnewspapers.com/admin/uploadfiles/NW%2012-05-20121.pdf>)

Minutes: Michaud moved, Connor seconded approving the November LSAT meeting minutes, amended to correct the meeting date. Motion carried.

Safe Routes: Elliott, the parent of a pre-K student, began a discussion of Safe Routes to School, which would encompass more walking and bicycling to school. ... He noted that Jennifer Hefferan of D.C. Dept. of Transportation visited the school during morning dropoff to observe traffic patterns. ... Recent efforts by the LSAT have been to find nearby parking that would allow a short walk to the school to relieve congestion. Previous efforts failed to yield lots for park-and-walk, and the “Walking School Bus” seemed to have little effect. ... Congregation Tifereth Israel may consider asking the D.C. government to lift the “no standing” restriction on northbound 16th Street NW during morning rush hour to allow for parking; the LSAT would lend its support to Tifereth Israel if the synagogue leadership were to go ahead and make the request. ... New signs on 14th Street alongside the school have seemed to have a positive effect. There was consensus that bad driving and parking habits discourage walking. ... There are pedestrian safety educational curricula available, including a free online materials from the National High Traffic safety Administration – separate curricula for K-1, 2-3, and 4-5., each a five-lesson series and cross-curricular. The Washington Area Bicyclist Association gives presentations to DCPS schools citywide. There is potential for a tie-in to Earth day if children and parents are encouraged to ditch cars and walk and bike more (it must be noted that only about 30 percent of the school’s students live in-boundary), as there is a Bike-to-School Day annually in May (Wednesday, May 8, 2013) and a Walk-to-School Day in October (October 9, 2013). ... The school

could sponsor a bicycle rodeo, with stations where kids can practice and get fitted for helmets. ... To know where we currently stand, teachers could take a head count of students who walk to school – and who COULD walk but currently do not. The LSAT could also survey parents on their transportation patters, including carpooling and use of public transit. ... The crossing guard was effective when posted at Jonquil and 14th, but is back at Kalmia and 14th and cannot leave the post and cannot go down one block on her own initiative. More emails may be needed to convince DOT to reassign the guard.

TV Turnoff: The LSAT will use the PTA listserv to find someone to put together the bulletin board with TV-Video Game Turnoff Club members. Kesha will do it Dec. 18 if nobody else volunteers. (Additional photography and picture printing did not take place on that date as scheduled.)

FUFT/Librarians: In addition to two librarians Bergman identified from Tifereth Israel, there may be some Catholic University grad students in library science who may be able to help. There is also a library jobs listserv that requests for help can be posted.

FUFT/Fingerprinting: Pendergrast said DCPS would not come to Shepherd, but would allow afternoon or late/extra hours for a group from Shepherd to do fingerprinting for volunteer certification. DCPS generally doesn't accept other agencies' clearances.

FUFT/Kickball: So far, no coach has been found to coach a Shepherd kickball team.

Community Engagement: Holt related a “community walk” she once did along Georgia Avenue, talking with business owners. She said they wanted to see “more” offered at the school, like ESL for adults. Could an event like Literacy Night be promoted to the whole neighborhood, including those parents whose children go to school elsewhere? ... The community should be invited for events like Jazz Night, the concerts and the beautification days. Open Houses could also be opened to the neighborhood. ... It should be two-way traffic between the school and the Shepherd Park Citizens Association, which uses the school for its meetings. It might require a liaison from the school to the SPCA; there are only two LSAT members who live in the neighborhood. ... We could survey current volunteers in the quest to find more. But we should be specific in the nature of the request of tasks for volunteers to do.. ... We can highlight neighborhood business. ... Some schools have a PCSO – Parent Community School Organization – to welcome

community input and reaching out to neighborhood families whose children don't go to the school. Lafayette School seems to stay well connected with its neighborhood. ... We could also stand to stay connected to our ANC commissioners, primarily Dwayne Toliver, whose district includes the school.

Strategic Planning: A subcommittee was formed. Its members are Sherilyn Pruitt, Kesha Pendergrast, Carl Bergman, Mrs. Miles, and a to-be-named representative of the PTA.

Culture and Climate: The music concerts are a big part of the school culture, and the fear is what could happen after Mr. Giles retires at the end of the year. ... Can we do similar activities? The PTA could be more out-front about it. The PTA could use those events to do outreach and bring people in. ... Even something as simple as nametags to put names to faces helps. ... Carpool lane is a good thing, but when parents stay in their cars, it takes away from face time. Personal contacts are helpful; broad appeals less so. ... Classroom potlucks are a good bonding tool, and could be considered to boost parent participation. ... The idea of a happy hour has been broached, and Star Achievers said it would be OK with watching students until 7 p.m. ... The talk shifted to classroom parents and their role. Is there a classroom parent handbook? No, but Yasmin Lewis, the PTA's second vice president, is the facilitator of classroom parents, and she is in regular contact with them. Less clear, however, is whether each classroom parent conveys the information to the parents. The PTA is collecting the email addresses of each parent in each classroom and will transfer it to a database ... "Ethnic days" were discussed, such as International Day in December, plus Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month. These events are promoted at the school. ... The school has been asked to provide entertainment for the SPCA New Year/New Neighbors potluck in January. There is no telling yet just what that entertainment will be.

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, Jan. 9, 4 p.m., at the school.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Pattison, secretary
Shepherd Elementary Local School Advisory Team