Concerns Regarding Bond Fidelity

To address PPS’ aging infrastructure and chronic deferred maintenance, the District launched an ambitious 30-year+ plan to begin rectifying the situation. It anticipated at least seven capital bond measures would be needed.

In 2012 voters passed the first capital bond measure that modernized Roosevelt, Franklin, Grant high schools, and completely rebuilt Faubion. Additional capital projects were addressed providing ADA access, labs, roof and seismic upgrades in other school buildings.

In 2017 voters the second capital bond measure. It is projected to modernize Madison, Benson, and completely rebuild Lincoln. Additional capital projects are to be conducted at other school buildings in the district.

**Implicit in the bond measures passed thus far was the promise to the voters that the modernized/new buildings would be well maintained.**

I’m most familiar with Franklin High School, where I served as PTSA President for two years and continue to serve on its Site Council and was member of the Franklin DAG. To fulfill the promise of well-maintaining the new Franklin and its grounds (17+ acres), the custodial staff was to increase by six. **To date that has not happened.** In fact, the existing custodial ranks have been consistently drawn down (depleted?) by the District’s persistent practice of using high school custodians to fill absences in lower grade buildings. Presently, at Franklin, one custodian is on a long-term assignment to Lent, another is routinely assigned to other school buildings.

Franklin, and I presume Roosevelt is similar, has had its grounds maintained by the building contractor for the first year. In general, that has worked well. Open surfaces have been routinely mowed, but around the fence along Division (the baseball field) grass is now three feet high. At Franklin the care for the grounds now falls to its custodians and the District. **The District has informed the Franklin staff that it will now be placed on the routine mowing schedule along with the 90+ other buildings in operation.** If lucky, that means Franklin will be mowed once a quarter.

Franklin’s head custodian informs me he has two men willing to work on the grounds. **The problem is, the District hasn’t provided any of the necessary equipment to do that: mowers, blowers, hand tools. The estimated cost of these items ranges between $35 and $50 thousand.**

The PPS Board has recently expressed its concern about the inequities that abide among schools with foundations, booster clubs, and PTAs and those schools that do not. **Does it now fall to Franklin’s Foundation and PTSA to raise the funds to adequately maintain the building?** The same persons involved in the Foundation and PTSA are the same volunteers that have helped staff bond campaigns. Let me hasten to point out, while Franklin has a Foundation and PTSA, what it raises annually pales in comparison to other schools e.g. $50 thousand at FHS compared to $500,000 elsewhere.

**I sincerely feel this is not what was promised voters in the 2012 and 2017 bonds.**

As a member of the Citizens Budget Review Committee, I’m well-aware of the fiscal constraints faced by the District and the ongoing difficulty it has with hiring and supervising custodians. That said, **the fact remains, good faith with the voters is not being obtained.**

After occupying its new building, I’m aware there have been walk throughs with the contractor regarding as yet addressed deficiencies that are warranty issues. **Given the flux in District staff and in the Office of School Modernization, it’s concerning whether warranty items are being monitored and are being addressed in a timely manner.**

On the grounds of Franklin there are at least a dozen or more specimen trees and shrubs that were planted as part of the construction landscaping that are now dead. Again, this is but one of a number of warranty items yet to be addressed. I submit, dead trees are readily recognizable by the public.

I realize some of the concerns expressed here may seem far afield from the BAC’s charge, but it seems to me in addition to monitoring the fiscal administration of bond monies and ongoing construction the Committee may wish to look into the promises made voters in the bond measures and the fidelity the District is employing to fulfill those promises.