



CHAIR

GEORGE R. CLARK, ESQ.

January 11, 2010

VICE-CHAIR

NANCY MACWOOD

The Honorable Valerie Santos
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 317
Washington, DC 20004

SECRETARY

RICHARD HOUGHTON

TREASURER

FRANCIS M. CLARKE, III

Ref: RFP for Franklin School

Dear Ms. Santos:

TRUSTEES

W. KENT COOPER, FAIA
BILL CREWS
CARROLL GREEN
KEVIN LOCKE
MEG MAGUIRE
HON. JAMES E. NATHANSON
LORETTA NEUMANN
CHARLES J. ROBERTSON
MARY PAT ROWAN
LANCE SALONIA
RICHARD WESTBROOK
EVELYN WRIN
JOHN YAGO
BARBARA ZARTMAN

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City has over the years been actively involved in the fate of Franklin School. The importance of this building—architecturally, historically and culturally—is widely recognized and appreciated. The fact that both the interior and exterior of the building have received historic landmark designation confirms the significance of the structure as unique not only to the city but also to the nation. The goal of the Committee of 100 is to ensure the preservation of the architectural fabric and the basic integrity of the interior spaces in any future renovation of the building.

The Committee of 100 fully recognizes the problems confronting any development and re-use of the building. The amount of usable space is comparatively small, whereas the cost of rehabilitation is quite substantial. The installation of new systems and the modifications to meet codes, while retaining historic interior fabric, present a challenge. Offerors proposing a school or nonprofit use may not be able to muster the funding necessary for the required renovation, whereas Offerors proposing commercial use, such as a boutique hotel, might need to make such extensive alterations that the interior spaces are destroyed or irreparably compromised.

CHAIR EMERITUS

LAURA M. RICHARDS, ESQ.

We have learned that Franklin School may not have been declared “surplus” in accordance with the requirements of DC law. Such a determination must be made, and the law complied with, prior to any decision by the Deputy Mayor on development proposals submitted in

response to the RFP. Any future owner or lessee of the property must be assured that the City has the necessary legal authority to award development rights to the property.

Any renovation of Franklin School would require the review and approval of the Historic Preservation Review Board. The Committee of 100 recommends that the State Historic Preservation Officer and/or his staff be given an opportunity to review, discuss and comment on any proposals received as a result of the RFP. It makes no sense to select a proposal that will probably not pass muster with the HPRB. In addition, we recommend that the Deputy Mayor convene a panel of interested civic and community groups to review and comment on the proposals received. Such a model has been utilized in the past for RFPs for City owned historic properties. We note that Section 3.13 of the RFP states, "The District expects Offerors to consider and incorporate stakeholder and community preferences to the extent possible." While any comments are of course not binding on the Deputy Mayor, it makes sense to receive this input prior to making a decision on the responses to the RFP. There will be one or more hearings by the DC Council on any proposal to develop Franklin School, and citizens and organizations will have an opportunity for testimony there, but that phase should go more smoothly if there is input before the selection of a developer is made.

It has now been almost twenty years since the exterior restoration of the school was completed. It has been brought to our attention that the roof is leaking, resulting in interior damage, and that some of the windows are partially open, admitting rain water and birds. We urge that essential maintenance and repairs be undertaken immediately. In the current economic climate and with the many problems facing development of the property, it may realistically be quite some time before any construction is undertaken on the building. The City should exercise good stewardship of the property in the meantime.

Sincerely yours,



George R. Clark
Chair, Committee of 100
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Charles J. Robertson, Co-chair,
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cc: David Roberts, Project Manager for Franklin School RFP
David Maloney, State Historic Preservation Officer
Rebecca Miller, Executive Director, DC Preservation League
Joseph Browne, Coordinator of Coalition for Franklin School
Vincent Gray, Chairman, DC Council
Kwame Brown, Council Member and Chair, Committee on Economic Development
Mary Cheh, Council Member and Chair, Committee on Government Operations
and the Environment
Jack Evans, Council Member, Ward 2