

Schools committee discusses in-school visits, surplus property policies

By Kate Bennett
Special to The Southwest Portland Post

At the November meeting of the SWNI Schools Committee, chair Will Fuller began by talking about school visits. Fuller and the rest of the Committee would like to arrange school visits so that neighborhood residents can get a glimpse of what happens at some local schools each day. The visits would occur sometime between January 2009 and March 2009.

Fuller's first step in making these visits a reality is to give a handout to each local school principal. The handout would list that particular school's information and ask if the information is correct. Secondly, the handout would ask what types of visits are acceptable at the school.

With this information, Fuller would coordinate the various school visits, given their available days and times. With a potential school visit schedule in hand, neighborhood association chairs would then go back to their neighborhood associations and publicize the visits.

If there is enough accumulated interest, residents will go on these various visits. They will tour the school building, sit-in on a class, and speak with the principal to learn updated news about the school. They will also learn about the school's needs, if any. Fuller hopes that these visits will lead to better relationships between the schools and neighborhood residents.

After speaking about the school visits, Fuller mentioned that he wants a "one or two page attractive newslet-

ter." The Committee would produce an electronic newsletter, and it would go to principals, neighborhood association chairs and key folks within the Portland Public Schools system.

SWNI's Leonard Gard mentioned that the Committee could also post stories on their website but acknowledged that the website needs some work as it is only a "C or C minus right now."

The next order of business dealt with the Smith School Lease. Fuller stated that the short-term lease is a "done deal" but that Riverdale Elementary School will not occupy the building until at least June 2009.

The move might increase transportation in the neighborhood and some local school children might be tempted to switch to Riverdale, but the school's fields and grounds will remain open for neighborhood use on weekends, holidays and after 6pm on weekdays.

The Committee then discussed Portland Public School's surplus property. According to Fuller, there is a small group of people who have become upset about the proposed policy changes for disposal of surplus property.

The Committee is interested in whether there is a material change in the policy and whether there is enough advance and/or adequate public notice. Fuller stated that the Committee will continue to monitor the situation.

The final agenda item dealt with racism. Claire Coleman-Evans, the committee member from Bridlemile, mentioned that the racist incident

that occurred at Bridlemile Elementary School "was basically shoved under the rug." For those who are not aware of the incident, there was defacement on Obama signs posted near the school.

Motivated in part by this incident, Fuller wants to examine "multi-cultural effectiveness" in schools. He wants to learn what is happening in our schools regarding multi-cultural issues and to see how people of color are treated in Portland schools.

Fuller's comments led to a discussion about racism in Portland. Fuller asked: Does racism still exist in Portland? Does there need to be a forum on multi-cultural issues and our increasingly diverse world?

After listening to everyone's opinions, the committee decided that they need to ask first of all if there's really an issue. Second, if there is, why should the Committee deal with it? And finally, what is Portland Public Schools doing about this issue?

Markham and Rieke schools receive grants from local medical clinic

The Fanno Creek Clinic in southwest Portland is continuing its commitment to the community and education by awarding two grants to local area elementary schools.

A \$1,000 grant is being awarded to Markham Elementary School to help fund field trips for educational opportunities in Portland. Field trips include visiting the Portland Art Museum, plays at the Keller Auditorium, the Oregon Zoo and other attractions in the Portland metro area.

Rieke Elementary School will receive a grant for \$4364 for document cameras and data projectors to be used in four classrooms. This equipment greatly increases student access to instruction.

One benefit is the ability to be responsive to student needs in real time. Classrooms already equipped

at Rieke have proven the importance of the visual system for students' learning.

Fanno Creek Clinic has previously awarded grants to Stephenson School for hiring certified and/or classified Portland Public Schools staff to provide individualized instruction for students who need assistance in writing and math.


Hayhurst Neighborhood received a \$3,000 grant for upgrading their library including the purchase of new books and instructing students in library skills. Woodlawn School was given \$3000 for class room equipment and supplies.

Located at 2400 SW Vermont Street in southwest Portland, the clinic includes 14 primary care physicians, as well as gastroenterology, ENT, mental health counseling and podiatry.

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