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Schenley Facility Work Is Well Beyond District's Financial Capacity

Necessary Remediation and Renovation Confirmed at More Than \$75 Million

PITTSBURGH, May 19, 2008 – In a six-month extended review process, including additional budget analysis, community input and expert opinions, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt tonight announced that it is not in the best interest of the entire District to do the remediation and renovation of the Schenley facility. The Superintendent is recommending that the Board take action to close the Schenley facility at its June 2008 legislative meeting. Additionally, Roosevelt proposed that the District aggressively pursue alternative uses for the building.

“As much as we love the Schenley building, we cannot afford to do the major work needed,” said Roosevelt. “We respect the historic significance of this facility and the passion that so many parents, alumni and students have for it. But after seeking the advice of many national and international experts, there is no shadow of a doubt that the project will cost upward of \$75 million.”

The District faces a delicate balancing act as it seeks to improve student achievement while reducing expenses to align with prior and projected enrollment declines. Even without the Schenley project, the District must cut \$40 million in recurring budget expenses by 2010. “It is irresponsible to have to make more budget cuts on top of those we must already make for a building renovation,” Roosevelt added. “And we are committed to not raising taxes.”

Taking on the Schenley project at this time would require a \$7 million additional debt service payment per year for the next 20 years. In 2007, the District paid more than \$58 million of its \$530 million General Fund budget for debt service based upon a debt obligation of \$476 million.

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The Superintendent noted the dramatic improvements that have been made in the last three years to hold the line on spending while prioritizing investments for the initiatives that will prepare all children to achieve academic excellence. Major academic accomplishments include the implementation of ongoing professional development, school-based coaches and a consistent, core curriculum in most grades and subjects.

Over the past three years, the District has significantly reversed what had been a rising trend in spending.

- From 2005 to 2008, the General Fund budget *decreased* from \$530.1 to \$529.1 million.
- From 2002 to 2005, the General Fund budget *increased* by 9.1% from \$485.7 million to \$530.1 million.
- From 1999 to 2002, the General Fund budget *increased* by nearly 19% from \$409.4 million to \$485.7 million.

“We will continue to show fiscal restraint, but at the same time, we must embrace initiatives that can move us forward academically. Our focus is on providing better programs and more new options that are rigorous and bring out the passion that children can have for learning.”

Noting the commitment of the District and community in making The Pittsburgh Promise a reality for future generations of Pittsburgh Public Schools students, the Superintendent noted, “We have big ambitions to advance the life prospects of our children, but we can’t do everything and must prioritize the funds that we have and those we seek.”

Meeting the Needs of Pittsburgh Schenley Students

Given the rapidly deteriorating conditions of the Schenley facility, the Board took action in February 2008 to relocate the students and programs for the upcoming 2008-09 school year.

- **Pittsburgh Schenley** school will be relocated to the Reizenstein facility for students in grades 10-12. The current Pittsburgh Schenley students will remain together at the Reizenstein facility until the final class graduates with their Pittsburgh Schenley diploma in 2010-11.

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- Incoming 9th grade IB/IS students will attend **Pittsburgh Frick**, which will be expanded to a 6-9 school. To date, enrollment for the 9th grade class is nearly full – 139 students have enrolled and capacity is at 150.
- Incoming 9th graders who enroll in the Robotics Technology Magnet, will attend **Pittsburgh Peabody**, which is the new home for this magnet program.
- Incoming 9th grade non-magnet students, who would have been previously assigned to Pittsburgh Schenley, will be assigned to the new **University Prep 6-12** school, which will open in the fall at the Millions facility. The school will open with a 9th grade and add more grade levels over time. With a capacity of 150 students for 2008-09, the school already has confirmed enrollment of 140 students, 50 of which are from other parts of the city and have applied through the open enrollment process.

Recommendation to Open New 6-12 IB School in 2009-10

In keeping with its commitment to provide better and more rigorous programs, the District will open a new 6-12 IB school at the Reizenstein facility in 2009-10. The Superintendent is recommending that the Board take action to open the new school for 2008-09 at its June 25, 2008 legislative meeting. Pittsburgh Frick IB/IS students will become part of the new school, which will open with grades 6-10 and a capacity for 750 students. As grades 11 and 12 are added over time, the total student population will grow to 1,050.

To provide certainty and stability for students, the Superintendent is proposing that the Reizenstein facility house the new IB school for four years, during which time a permanent home can be identified and prepared. The District plans to create an IB committee in July 2008 to review facility options and financial implications in order to recommend a permanent home for the IB 6-12 school to the Superintendent by November 2008.

For more information, please visit www.pps.k12.pa.us. Public feedback can be provided to the Parent Hotline at (412)622-7920, to the Superintendent via an e-mail to: superintendentoffice@pghboe.net, or via mail.

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