

# Samuel F.B. Morse

## 424 S. Pulaski Street

### Surplus School Stakeholder Meeting Notes

June 29, 2017

**Elected Officials:** Senator Barbara Robinson, Delegate Antonio Hayes, Sa'Toya Truss representing Delegate Nick Mosby, Dominic McAlilly representing Councilman Bullock

**City representatives:** Sara Paranilam (DOP), Tereina Galloway (DGS), Wendi Redfern (Housing), Jeff La Noue (DOP), Kyle Leggs (DOP), Jen Leonard (DOP), Armstead Jones (BDC), Robert Wall (R&P)

**Community and neighborhood stakeholders:** 72 citizens and or stakeholders attended the meeting to include Ms. Cynthia Tensley (Community President), Derwin Hannah (basketball program), Ms. Sabrina Wiggings (New Frederick Elementary school community coordinator with Bon Secours), George Kleb (Bon Secours), Greg Nalley (Nalley Fresh), Michelle Suazo (UEmpower Founder), Dominic Nell (Urban Farmer), Tavon Mason (former NFL Player), The Making of a Man Boys (Youth Development), and Carrollton Ridge community members.

**Meeting Purpose:** The purpose of the meeting was for the City to provide information to stakeholders about the surplus process and learn about community desires and concerns regarding future reuse of the Samuel FB Morse building. The information from the meeting will be used to share with future prospective buildings users to consider as plans are made.

### Background

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Plan includes strategies to increase the average utilization rate of school buildings. Baltimore City has more public school seats than students in its building inventory. Through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Program approximately \$1 billion in funding will be used to construct or completely renovate 23-28 schools. One of the schools that will receive a complete renovation is nearby Frederick Elementary where Samuel FB Morse students will attend in the fall. The School Board voted to surplus the Samuel Morse building in December 2016 and the Board of Public Works voted to surplus Samuel FB Morse in April 2017. Re-uses opportunities could include: a city agency, other government use, private reuse of building (sale or lease), temporary uses, shared use, demolition and open space, or demolition and new construction. For a reuse to come to fruition, a new user must have the interest and the capacity to improve the building and operate the facility and programs.

The Samuel FB Morse Building was constructed in 1979, has 67,000 gross square feet and sits on a 1.4 acre site. It is zoned R-8. The building includes a gym, cafeteria, library, classrooms, and 23 parking spaces. The annual utility expenses for the building are approximately \$130,000. Annual maintenance and repair costs are approximately \$150,000. There is a significant capital maintenance schedule and deferred maintenance items that should be considered. The Department of General Services will secure the building moving forward. A Baltimore City Recreation and Parks summer camp will be operated from June 19-Aug 25, 2017.

### **Stakeholder Engagement about Re-Use of Samuel F.B. Morse**

Many people spoke about the importance of keeping Samuel F.B. Morse as a safe zone for neighborhood kids and an anchor for the neighborhood. Residents identified the need for more services to address various needs in the community. There was particular concern that there are not enough activities for youth and closing the school could reduce the amount of safe options for kids even further. In particular, residents felt the building provided, and should continue to provide, a much needed indoor safe haven in a neighborhood with many challenges.

UEmpower of Maryland's Food Project expressed an interest in using the cafeteria portion of the building to do food-related community programming, including cooking skills, urban farming, healthy literacy program, table talks, food & farming crafts, healthy voice through movie making, jobs and restaurant training. The group consists of a partnership between several different organizations including Nalley Fresh, an urban farmer, a former NFL player, Makings of a Man, and others. Members from each partner organization attended the meeting and many of them spoke about how their organization's contributions could provide much-needed services in the community. They noted that they are ready and willing to move into the building now. The proposal was well-received by residents. Residents appreciated the interest from outside organizations, and also wanted to see local initiatives develop.

There was lots of interest in keeping and expanding indoor recreation programs in a portion of the building, including athletic programs, art programs, and after school programs. There is an existing basketball program that uses the space and also links to ABC park that residents would like to see continue.

The University of Maryland expressed potential interest in the building. They indicated that they are focused on serving the health needs of West Baltimore and understand that some services are better provided in the community rather than in a hospital setting. They indicated an eagerness to learn what types of services the community would be interested in. Many residents indicated general support for health services, but concern about methadone services. There was discussion about how methadone treatment centers are shifting and are no longer stand-alone facilities, but nonetheless the community did not want additional addicts who would loiter in the area and resell drugs on the street. University of Maryland indicated a willingness to work with residents and mentioned they are also looking at other sites to bring health services to neighborhood settings.

Based on the interests expressed, one possibility may be to divide the building for different purposes, rather than having one user for the entire building.

Residents expressed concern about crime and violence in the surrounding area, including lots of vacant buildings being set on fire. There was concern that if the building were left empty it would be vandalized and become a safety issue in the neighborhood.

Below is a list of the many types of services residents would like to see within the building or elsewhere in the neighborhood:

- **Youth programs:**
  - Safe zone for youth
  - Youth programming (for young men in particular)
  - Mentoring
  - Kids and family programming
  - Site for Making of a Man young men's development program
  - Young women group(s)
- **Recreation programs:**
  - Basketball/Sports programs that connect with ABC Park (Athletics/Fitness/Play space) and a larger recreation center
  - Water park/aquatic center
  - Art/Music/Dance opportunities
- **Food programs:**
  - Site for UEmpower of Maryland's The Food Project
  - Culinary activities/Culinary school
  - Food rescue/Food Hub
  - Urban farming and training on-site
- **Education programs:**
  - Early Childhood Resources
  - Literacy programs
  - GED
  - Financial literacy
  - School of technology
  - Adult education so parents can help children
  - Training for trades that are not easily replaceable positions (More than CNA/GNA)
  - Opportunity to use space to teach code/app making, photography, media
- **Other services and uses:**
  - Energy assistance
  - Family aid
  - Housing assistance
  - Ex-Offender programs
  - Health services

- Wrap around services
- Community Engagement Center
- Meeting/celebration hall
- Small Non-Profits

### **Walking path to the Frederick Elementary School**

As a project of the [INSPIRE plan](#), the Department of Planning solicited feedback about the design of a potential student walking path, leading from Helen Street to the back of Frederick Elementary school. To provide feedback please contact Kyle Leggs at [kyle.leggs@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:kyle.leggs@baltimorecity.gov) or (410) 396-4135.