

Resolution Urging Seattle City Council to Provide for Funding of School Construction

Whereas Seattle is experiencing unprecedented population growth, and Seattle Public Schools (SPS) has consistently increased enrollment by about 1,000 students annually since 2010; and

Whereas Seattle is critically and urgently short hundreds of permanent classrooms, with insufficient funding for this capital gap, at great and immediate cost to the quality of education outcomes; and

Whereas essentially all previously surplus permanent classroom space has been reclaimed, and SPS is now teaching about 4,800 students in 200 “temporary” portable classrooms; and

Whereas Seattle needs approximately 350 more classrooms to lower class sizes to 17 students in grades K-3, as required by Washington’s basic education laws; and

Whereas a voter-approved program for quality preschool education is requesting space in SPS school buildings; and

Whereas the 2016 SPS capital levy is mainly directed to the maintenance backlog and does not address the enrollment growth and class-size reduction needs; and

Whereas Seattle is experiencing a 40,000-unit housing boom with no known plan to add schools to accommodate this growth; and

Whereas the Growth Management Act (GMA) empowered local jurisdictions to impose developer impact fees so that growth would pay for growth, and those fees are an essential source of school construction funds in most other growing Puget Sound cities; and

Whereas a countywide planning policy enacted under the GMA recognizes the essential nature of public school facilities and specifically requires Seattle (and SPS) to “Plan, through a cooperative process between jurisdictions and school districts, that public school facilities are available to meet the needs of existing and projected residential development consistent with adopted comprehensive plan policies and growth forecasts,” and

Whereas developer impact fees would provide funding essential for construction of SPS school facilities needed by Seattle’s burgeoning population;

Therefore, be it resolved that we urge the Seattle City Council to recognize the SPS capacity crisis and pass a developer impact fee ordinance dedicated to funding construction of public schools in Seattle.

Adopted by the King County Democratic Central Committee, August 23, 2016

Originated by Sarajane Siegfriedt (sarajane3h@comcast.net), in consultation with Eden Mack
Submitted by Dean Fournier (demdean48@gmail.com)