



A recent Downtown Schools for Boston meeting

Push for a School On Hill Is Reborn

by **Eddie Small**
Courant News Writer

The movement to bring a public school to downtown Boston is heating up again, and people are optimistic that, this time, it might actually work.

On December 7, the recently formed group Downtown Schools for Boston held a recruitment meeting at 127 Mount Vernon Street to discuss why they wanted a public elementary school in the neighborhood and how they could

get one there. One of the main reasons attendees emphasized was how much easier a school would make it for parents with young children to stay in the city.

"I'm surrounded by families who are forced to make the choice between paying to put their kids into private schools or moving out," said Ania Camargo, one of the leaders of Downtown Schools for Boston.

About a dozen people attended the meeting,

Continued on page 14

School on Hill

continued from page 7

including City Councilor Mike Ross, who was a key figure in the failed attempt to get a public school on Beacon Hill roughly 10 years ago at 67 Brimmer Street, the building that now houses the Park Street School. However, he cited a few key differences between then and now that he felt could make the current effort more successful, including stronger support from Mayor Thomas Menino, the involvement of downtown neighborhoods besides Beacon Hill, and a greater willingness among families to send their children to public schools.

“Parents are now considering schools that they hadn’t before,” Ross said.

Attendees also mentioned that downtown Boston had become a more family-oriented area over the past few years, further demonstrating the

importance of establishing a public school. Between the 2000 and 2010 censuses, for instance, the number of children under five years old living in the Back Bay and on Beacon Hill increased from 674 to 880, according to the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

“No matter how you slice it, there are more families,” said Camargo.

Camargo laid out three main goals for the organization at the meeting: get a new school in downtown Boston by September 2014, keep middle class families downtown, and make sure the proposed school is high quality. She stressed that these were just the group’s initial goals and that, eventually, they would like to see additional schools in the neighborhood.

“We start with one,” she said, “but let’s not end with one.”

Camargo also emphasized how important it would be to expand the number of people involved with the group to make it more effective. As of December 12, their database contains

165 people, a number she would like to see increase to between 1,000 and 2,000 people.

Andrea Killory, who attended the meeting and has lived on Beacon Hill for about 10 years, said she would love to see a public school come to the neighborhood. She has two children, ages one and three, and is trying to figure out now whether she will need to move to send them to school.

“It’s a nice place to raise your kids, so I’d love to be able to stay,” she said.

Beacon Hill resident Christian Rail, who also attended the meeting and has a one-year-old son, is already trying to make the same decision.

“When the kid is born, you start figuring out, ok, ‘where do we want to live?’” he said.

Downtown Schools for Boston will have its next meeting in late January. The exact date and location have yet to be determined. Anyone interested in learning more about the organization can sign up at downtown-schools.org/signup.html.