



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Directors of the Corporation

FROM: Larry Hanover  
Public Information Officer

DATE: April 18, 2007

SUBJECT: New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation (SCC)  
March Progress Report

### **Mission Statement**

*Create a brighter future for our children by renovating, building and funding cost-effective and efficient state-of-the-art community schools that support high quality learning environments to better prepare students for successful careers and leadership in the 21st Century in New Jersey and beyond.*

*Partner with communities and leaders in business, education and government to support our programs, policies and projects to create greater opportunities for our children, businesses and workforce.*

### **Introduction**

In March, officials of SCC and the Elizabeth school district broke ground for an elementary school, the first SCC project to be overseen by a Construction Management Firm.

SCC also announced the launch of its On-Call Demolition Program, designed to accelerate the process of razing vacant properties acquired by the agency. In Paterson, students participated in a beam signing ceremony to mark a major milestone in the construction of the New International High School.

In addition, it was announced that SCC will have a newly designed Web site to unveil to the public in June – one more user-friendly and easier to navigate – as part of the agency's overall strategic communications plan for 2007. While the current Web site is highly informative, this information is not always easy to find and the Web site itself is difficult to navigate. To address those concerns, a multi-divisional team was formed – consisting of Project Services, MIS and Communications – to work with the State Office of Information Technology to design a new website. The effort, under way since January, has produced a new, cleaner, streamlined design that is consistent with many of the other State department and agency Web sites.



### **SCC, Elizabeth District Break Ground for Mravlag School Expansion**

The start of an expansion project that will double the student capacity of Victor Mravlag Elementary School No. 21 was celebrated by officials of the Elizabeth School District and the SCC at a groundbreaking March 14<sup>th</sup> attended by students, teachers, residents and community leaders. The construction of the school expansion will be the first SCC project to be overseen by a Construction Management Firm (CMF) rather than by a Project Management Firm (PMF).

While a PMF oversees all aspects of a project from beginning to end, a CMF concentrates on day-to-day construction and building-related aspects that would impact the cost, schedule and successful completion of a project, including contractor and design invoices, change-order submissions and payments. The CMF will closely monitor these and other areas of construction management and provide technical support and advice in the SCC decision-making process.

SCC CEO Scott Weiner stated, “The use of a Construction Management Firm, in appropriate cases, is among the reforms we’ve initiated at the SCC to increase productivity in managing our building projects. These reforms will enhance our capability of bringing them in on time and on budget.”

SCC has hired Skanska USA Building Inc. of Clifton as CMF for the Mravlag addition, designed by architect Perkins Eastman of New York. Ernest Bock & Sons of Philadelphia is the general contractor.

Mravlag School, named after a physician and former mayor of Elizabeth, currently has 230 students in pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade. The expanded and renovated school will accommodate up to 500 students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade upon completion, scheduled for summer 2008. The facility will help to ease overcrowding,

enhance academic achievement for elementary students and provide early childhood educational programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.

With the 4-story addition, including a basement, the expanded school will encompass 80,215 square feet. It will house four pre-kindergarten classrooms and two classrooms each for kindergarten through 8th grade. It also will include a library/media center, technology and science labs, special education classrooms, art and music areas, a cafeteria and a gymnasium.

Pablo Muñoz, Superintendent, said, "This school is representative of the district's commitment to providing students with the most state-of-the-art resources to facilitate learning and development. I am certainly impressed by the perseverance of the Elizabeth Board of Education and the team members at Elizabeth Public Schools. Their dedication to providing excellent educational experiences to our students by supporting the construction of the most modern schools, helps groundbreakings like this one at Victor Mravlag School No. 21 come to fruition."

The SCC has completed eight school projects in Elizabeth, which is an Abbott district, including new construction and major renovations. It now has three other projects in construction.



Victor Mravlag Elementary School Rendering



## **SCC, Legislators Mark Progress in Razing Vacant Newark Properties**

Scott Weiner, SCC CEO, was joined by state Senator Ronald L. Rice, Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley and Mayor Cory A. Booker at Newark's future University High School site March 20<sup>th</sup> to mark a turning point in efforts to improve the quality of life in cities such as Newark affected by suspended projects.

Officials spoke about the On-Call Demolition Program, which is scheduled to be launched next month in New Jersey and will play a role in Newark. Under the program, the SCC has entered into contracts with 17 prequalified contractors, who will be eligible for future demolition and asbestos abatement work. Instead of having to wait to assemble large numbers of properties for demolition, the SCC will be able to start the process quickly after acquisition by dealing exclusively with the pool of firms.

In summer 2005, Rice and Stanley gathered at the University High School site to demand action by the SCC after it bought properties that cannot be built upon in the near future due to a lack of funds. Today, the legislators came to discuss the change in how new SCC management's deals with demolition and the quality-of-life improvement that results.

Under standard practice for a large school project, it has typically taken 18 to 24 months from the time the first properties are acquired until demolition, with the SCC losing a significant amount of time waiting for all or most buildings on the site to be acquired. Under On-Call Demolition, the SCC will seek bids from the pool of prequalified contractors as soon as a property or a small group of properties is acquired and vacated. The whole process will take 30 to 60 days.

"In many of our state's urban communities, abandoned buildings attract gangs, drug-pushers and worse, and the longer these buildings are up, the worse it gets," said Senator Rice, D-Newark, Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Public Schools. "Assembly members Stanley and (Oadline) Truitt and I have been pushing for the SCC to fund the demolition of vacant homes as a way to protect the law-abiding citizens of these communities, and we're glad that they've identified funding to move in that direction. Hopefully, they will be able to provide business opportunities to local contractors as well, to both stimulate the urban economy and move forward in providing quality schools."

"This will be a welcome relief for local residents who have been most affected by this unanticipated delay in building these projects," said Assemblyman Stanley, D-Newark, fellow Co-Chair of the joint committee and chairman of the Assembly Education Committee. "We need to continue to coordinate with law enforcement and local government to ensure these properties are secured and demolished as soon as possible."

Weiner said the initiative highlights new management's commitment to do the proper thing for neighborhoods affected by the 2005 suspension of projects in Abbott districts.

"I express my appreciation to Senator Rice and Assemblyman Stanley for their support of this program and SCC's new management," Weiner said. "It's an unfortunate legacy of past SCC management that the purchase of homes in cities like Newark has led to a void instead of a school being built. While we must await further funding before taking on additional projects, I am pleased residents in this neighborhood and others won't have to face the problem of vacant buildings that are eyesores and public-safety threats."

A contract for the first set of homes, at the Jersey City Early Childhood Center #13 site, has been awarded, with abatement work to begin shortly. SCC believes the On-Call Demolition Program will create a competitive process that will drive prices down. The SCC also will save money because costs for security and maintenance of properties are reduced when there are no buildings present. One in four On-Call Demolition contracts will be earmarked for small businesses.

Demolition at the University High School site is being conducted through the traditional-bid process. Demolition of all 58 homes should be complete by the end of the summer.

SCC owns 196 vacant buildings, having demolished 170 so far through traditional bidding. These properties are connected with 35 projects in 12 cities. This event was held at Demarest Street, in front of Hawthorne Elementary School.



### **Paterson Students Sign Final Beam for New International High School**

Students took part in a “beam signing” ceremony March 27<sup>th</sup> to mark progress of construction of Paterson’s new International High School, which will accommodate 520 students from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The students signed a steel beam that was hoisted into place as a permanent part of the new four-story, 113,000-square-foot school on Grand Street. State District Superintendent Michael E. Glascoe, officials of the school district and SCC also participated in the event.



### **Construction Update**

#### **Construction Status**

From its inception in 2002 through March 31, 2007, SCC has completed 30 new schools and 26 major additions/renovations. There are currently 34 projects under construction.

#### **Construction Contracts**

As of March 31, 2007, SCC has entered into construction contracts that total \$3,008,145,985 since its inception in 2002.

#### **Contractor Procurement**

Construction bids were advertised in March for two school projects in Camden and abatement and demolition for school projects in Jersey City and Passaic. (Exhibit A)

### **School District Grants**

From its inception in 2002 through March 31, 2007, the SCC has executed 2,562 Section 15 grant agreements in all 21 counties with districts that receive less than 55% of their budget in state aid. To date, 1,430 schools in 473 districts have been impacted by the Section 15 grant program. Total project costs amount to \$7,113,135,107 for which the state share totals \$2,207,165,170.

### **Office of Contractor And Workforce Compliance**

The SCC Office of Contractor and Workforce Compliance is dedicated to increasing the availability and accessibility of construction opportunities for small, women, and minority-owned businesses, and to individuals and their families in New Jersey.

In some instances this means working with other State agencies and departments to serve the SCC's target population. In others, it is working with SCC project management firms (PMF) and other internal SCC divisions to encourage business opportunities and equal employment opportunities in the school construction program. The Office encourages firms that do business with the SCC to support diversity within their ranks and in their hiring. At every opportunity, the Office endeavors to promote the use of New Jersey's diverse business and workforce communities on SCC projects. Further programmatic information is available on the SCC website.



### **Conferences/Presentations**

Public Schools Community Meeting, 3/5/07, Elizabeth

Public Schools Community Meeting, 3/7/07, Newark

Groundbreaking for Victor Mravlag School, 3/14/07, Elizabeth

On-Call Demolition Program Event, 3/20/07, Newark

International High School Beam Signing, 3/27/07, Paterson

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Larry Hanover

Attachments

