

Talking Points Memo

Tom Hebert

Re February 11, 2016 telecon of proposed Peace Corps House (PCH) with Charlotte Kea, Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP)

1. Can PCH use the words “Peace Corps”? It’s possible that Peace Corps lawyers have already told Ms. Kea that the words “Peace Corps” couldn't be used or would be problematical in its name. However, an October 23, 2008 official Peace Corps press release rather clearly supports its use because the two words had already been legally vetted when the Peace Corps went to Congress in 2008 to establish the *independent* Peace Corp Foundation. www.peacecorps.gov/media/forpress/press/1389/
Reference:

“The Peace Corps Foundation would be a **private charitable non-profit corporation** Ultimately, a Peace Corps Foundation **building** in Washington D.C. would serve as an educational facility where Americans, **particularly children, would come and learn** more about other cultures and countries, as well as how the Peace Corps fulfills its mission of promoting peace and friendship worldwide.” Equally interesting is the description of children’s programs similar to Peace Corps House that would take place in the moribund Foundation’s own building. With slight editing they could be included in PCH’s own mission statement. Thus, it is here suggested that Peace Corps House not be brought down by in-house lawyers.

2. Would Peace Corps House in an inner city neighborhood have significant tangential importance to the Peace Corps itself? Because, exactly as the Foundation proposed, PCH will be independent, **it won’t cost Peace Corps a nickel**. But it will be a local asset to the Peace Corps. As stated in the second paragraph of the Concept Paper: “To be founded by the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), Peace Corps House will also raise the profile of the Peace Corps locally among policy makers, provide a natural focus for ongoing involvement of local RPCVs, and not least, help revitalize Ward 8.” (This 43-word sentence was drafted by a former staff assistant to a mayor of Washington DC as well as a PC overseas staff assistant.)

3. Funding for Peace Corps House? Typically 75-80% of the funding in such neighborhood centers comes from existing local, state, and federal social service programs. With sophisticated NPCA fundraising in government, foundations, and private sources, budgets will be met. Coincidentally looking at another issue of the *Peace Corps Times*, PC partnerships with the Knight Foundation and UPS was mentioned. Already on a list are the Kellogg Foundation, Rotary International, and Apple (support of PCH educational programs). NPCA’s very sophisticated in-house fundraising consultants, Carlson & Company, might view Peace Corps House as a selling point to possible donors. It would be a tangible Washington DC public service center that would demonstrate to all visitors that NPCA can get things done. Similarly, as suggested above, PCH might be attractive to governmental health and welfare interests.

4. Building renovation funds? Working from a long-term lease, one possibility: The Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) is a Community Development Corporation that was “established to meet the overall economic needs,

and to improve the quality-of-life circumstances of the District of Columbia residents, specifically those residing in the Anacostia/Far Southeast community. Over the years AEDC and its subsidiaries have been at the forefront of housing development, commercial revitalization (including small/minority business development), job creation and venture development to serve residents who live East of the Anacostia River and the District of Columbia at-large. Along with these opportunities AEDC helps create safe communities for residents to live, work, and patronize.”

5. Would the *Peace Corps Caucus* of John Garamendi, Sam Farr, et al, support a Peace Corps House? After a serious review, likely. A full copy of the Binder is now on Garamendi’s desk. Harris Wofford, a founder of the Peace Corps and senator and founder/director of AmeriCorps, has also been sent a review copy of the Concept Paper.

6. What would kick-off an informed discussion of the potential of, and way forward, for Peace Corps House? Glenn Blumhorst, president/CEO of the NPCA, is scheduling a “*windshield tour*” to acquaint participants with Ward 8 and perhaps see possible sites for Peace Corps House.

7. Who will accompany Blumhorst? At this point, two deeply experienced settlement house professionals, beginning with an early supporter of PCH, Irma Rodriguez, executive director, International Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers.

IFS is a 90 year-old organization established to bring organizations developed in the settlement house tradition across the world together to share information and best practices. World-wide, the IFS represents over 1400 agencies and local organizations, including 400 in the U.S.

Also traveling from NYC to DC for the windshield tour and associated meetings—because he strongly supports Peace Corps House—will be Michael Zisser. Zisser is the president of the board of directors of the International Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers as well as CEO of New York City’s University Settlement, the largest group of Houses and programs in the world which now serves over 40,000 New Yorkers of all ages, with a total staff of nearly 900 and a combined budget of more than \$50 million.

Perhaps OSP should join the tour? And the Peace Corps’ director?

8. For the unknowing, what is the Office of Strategic Partnerships? From the *Peace Corps Times*, Fall 2012: Director Aaron Williams in 2011 set forth his strategic vision for a 21st century Peace Corps: “We have learned to increase our development impact through innovative partnerships with international and domestic organizations that can leverage resources, promote knowledge sharing at home and abroad, and maximize the impact that Peace Corps Volunteers have around the world.” Williams formed the Office of Strategic Partnerships to focus exclusively on forging these crucial, strategic relationships. Such connections have grown rapidly, resulting in 20 global partnerships and 18 domestic partnerships since 2009.

9. Seven essentials

- Congressional legislation in 2008 to create the Peace Corps Foundation as a “private charitable non-profit corporation” suggested that the words “Peace Corps” are possible here. That said, no Peace Corps logo or flag will fly atop Peace Corps House.
- Because it will be established by experienced professional settlement house managers and a committed and careful NPCA and local RPCVs, there are few unforeseen potholes ahead.
- On the contrary, as with all beginning organizations with successful antecedents, a rich purpose and vision, it’s full of unforeseen *opportunities* for both the NPCA and the Peace Corps. Because it will be so close to the White House and the Capital, it could enhance Peace Corps’ presence and reputation.
- Peace Corps House won’t cost the Peace Corps a penny. It will be independent.
- Absolutely all the project lacks from the Peace Corps is a letter from the Director wishing Peace Corps House well, with hope that a strategic partnership forms as it moves ahead.

And finally, because Peace Corps House is the right thing to do for its own home town. Oh, yes, the Director could attend the ribbon cutting.

10. Summary of February 11 conversation with Charlotte Kea:

Given that Peace Corps House, as managed by NPCA with a world-class professional leadership, will be entirely self-supporting, the following would prove helpful to quickly move PCH forward:

1. Giving personal encouragement, a letter of support from the Director wishing Peace Corps House well. And if so desired, noting the possibility that a mutually useful partnership could develop as it moves ahead.
2. An understanding that the words “Peace Corps” in its name is absolutely essential. Of course, if the management of PCH was to go awry at some point—become a liability—Peace Corps would be within its rights to say, “Shape up or shut down.”
3. Because Glenn Blumhorst will be hosting the windshield tour with Irma Rodriguez and Michael Zisser, after that tour an informal conversation, perhaps over lunch, would be both useful and interesting to them and the Director.

Glenn also wrote on February 7, “As NPCA, RPCV/W and several prominent settlement house professionals have endorsed the plan, we believe we are giving Peace Corps the opportunity to be a part of something big that is already gaining traction.”

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