

# Washington Jewish Week

## Zoning approved for D.C. day school expansion

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THE JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL EXPECTS TO INCLUDE A MIDDLE SCHOOL IN 2018.  
RENDERING COURTESY OF JPDS-NC

Groundbreaking for a middle school at the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital is set for June 2017, now that the District of Columbia zoning board has approved its expansion plans.

"We are excited," said Naomi Reem, head of schools. "Getting zoning approval makes it much more concrete that this is happening."

The middle school, which will be built at the north campus on 16th Street and Military Road, is expected to open its doors to students in the fall of 2018, she said. The school currently is home to students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.

The educational home for seventh and eighth graders will be constructed in a third-floor addition and will be named the Moses Family Middle School.

JPDS will become the Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation's Capital. The north and south campuses will continue as the Kay and Robert Schattner Center.

"This is a historic moment in the life of the school," Reem said. "We are fortunate to have a growing team of volunteers who are lending their talents to help us build the future of our school and the Jewish community in Washington, D.C."

The school received \$21 million in gifts last April, paving the way for the expansion. Alfred Moses, a former ambassador to Romania, and The Gottesman Fund each donated \$10 million.

Another \$1 million, plus an additional \$500,000 if the school community matches that amount, is being offered by school parents Steven and Chani Laufer.

Fundraising is underway to match the \$500,000, Reem said. “We have a little ways to go.”

During a ceremony at the school to announce the donations, Moses, a member of Keshet Israel Congregation, explained he was determined to stop the flow away from Jewish education.

Keeping students in Jewish day school for even two more years will make “a meaningful difference,” Moses had said at the time.

The Jan. 19 approval by the Board of Zoning Adjustment took about a year and involved work by architects, a project manager, real estate lawyer, traffic consultant and school trustees and volunteers. Two neighborhood open houses were held and plans were presented to three neighborhood civic associations.

Reem said she was thrilled that the zoning approval allowed for construction of a third floor and the traffic plans proposed by the school.

“The conditions are all totally doable,” she said. “We don’t have to change the plans.”

Robert Zucker, chair of the school’s external affairs committee for the board of trustees, said the expansion “addresses the desire of families to continue to give their children a Jewish day school education with the quality and spirit that they expect, near where they live.”

While it is too early to discuss the new middle school curriculum, Reem said it will include the “most up-to-date education.”

Reem said next up will be the development of plans for the interior of the building, including the elementary school wing, and “building a curriculum and learning environment that respects and celebrates the cognitive abilities, the physical and social emotional needs and innate curiosity and spiritual life of our elementary school and middle school students.”

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