

STADIUM STOMPERS

Last summer, Stadium Stompers met with Englert in Sullivan Hall. In the presence of his office staff, local clergy and residents, as well as State Representative Curtis Thomas, we asked him to agree to a meeting with our community, in our community. Englert said he would “take it under advisement.” This advisement had little sway, and eight months passed with no response from the university or Englert’s office. Only after Stadium Stompers, NAACP and the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity organized a town hall at G.W. Carver High School for Engineering and Sciences did Temple announce plans for its “information session.” When this meeting finally occurred, it was not prompted by Temple’s concern for the community that hosts it. It was a cowardly response to the community moving ahead, and holding our own town hall meeting on March 1st.

Our town hall at G.W. C. High School of Engineering and Science, adjacent to the site for the proposed stadium, brought in over 400 community residents, business owners, homeowners and members, all concerned about the football stadium rupturing their lives. Stadium Stompers, NAACP, and the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity hand-delivered invitations to Richard Englert, Darrell Clarke, and Patrick O’Connor. Yet that night, three empty chairs adorned the stage next to the ministers, community leaders, faculty and alumni who were speakers. The empty chairs symbolized both Temple’s silence and refusal to speak with us and in turn their silencing of our concerns. By ignoring multiple requests from many leaders in our community, Temple set up the conditions that produced the impasse between frustrated residents and a recalcitrant university administration at the information session on March 6th.

Stadium Stompers formed as an organization more than two years ago, and has asked repeatedly for meetings with Temple presidents Theobald and Englert. In the meantime, we have held three town hall meetings, to which Theobald and Englert were invited. They declined to attend any of these meetings. Englert’s decision to hold the meeting during spring break was a maneuver to silence any dissent and avoid accountability from the students and faculty, whom largely oppose the stadium.

It is not the community’s job to facilitate a relationship with an encroaching university. The burden of facilitating such an engagement should fall on Temple, which is to say that all of this is too late. Clearly, the university has moved ahead with proposals to the City Planning Commission without engaging the majority of people whose lives the stadium will disrupt. So we will move ahead, too. Richard Englert and Temple University will find us at every turn, and we hope that you will join us.

To reiterate, it was not the community that stopped the conversation at the March 6th meeting. The meeting was never a conversation. It was an opportunity for Englert to pontificate about a sugar coated version of the stadium plans. Englert closed down his own meeting by being escorted out by his entourage of security police.

We will continue standing at the forefront between Temple University and the larger North Philadelphia community. We will continue to hold meetings at the Church of the Advocate on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 6pm-7:30pm. We will continue to listen and amplify the needs and concerns of our residents and **WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED!!!**