

**Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Joseph Stockton Elementary and relocate Courtenay Elementary to 4220 N Beacon St.**

April 11, 2013; 7:30-9:30

Location: Amundsen High School, 5100 N Damen Avenue

**CPS Facilitators:**

Tim Cawley, Chief Administrative Officer  
Sebastian De Longeaux, Chief Procurement Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

Craig Benes, Chief of Elementary Schools, Ravenswood Ridge Network  
Phil Salemi, Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, Ravenswood Ridge Network  
Luis Garcia-Juarez, School Council Relations  
Aldermann James Cappleman, 46<sup>th</sup> Ward

**Brief Summary**

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Stockton Elementary School and relocate Courtenay Elementary School to 4220 N Beacon St. in accordance with Public Act 097-0474. CPS officials reviewed the proposed action. There were about 70 community members in attendance and 38 speakers. The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including: the Courtenay community's capacity for the change and their desire to partner with and work together with the Stockton community, maintaining Courtenay's lottery status, and transition plans.

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**CPS Welcome**

Tim Cawley, Chief Administrative Officer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. He introduced the sign language interpreters and Spanish translators. He asked if anyone required Spanish translation. One attendee raised a hand, the translator moved to sit next to the person who had requested translation. Cawley then presented an overview of the proposal and reviewed the materials available to meeting attendees. Sebastian De Longeaux, Chief Procurement Officer then explained the meeting rules and procedures. The meeting was opened for public comment at about 7:45pm.

**Public Comment**

**Natasia Lopez, Parent of two Students at Courtenay**

Ms. Lopez said that she chose to send her children to Courtenay because of a negative experience at a neighborhood school despite having some good teachers and a good principal. She said the classrooms were overcrowded and her child struggled to hear. She said she was concerned about safety. She said that as a single Hispanic mother, she knows how few options there are for education and what the odds are against her and her children. She said magnet schools give them options. She said poor and minority children show two times the improvement in small class settings. She said that kids need stability in their schools and adult to

keep them safe. She concluded by asking how we can succeed in school when doors to opportunities are closed.

**Cassandra Vickas, Parent of two students at Courtenay**

Ms. Vickas said that she thinks this is not a bad plan. She thinks it is a good plan. She said that CPS is in a budget crisis and has known for a long time that Courtenay could be on a list because it is small. She said that Courtenay now can take a good school model to Stockton and help to make Stockton better. She said it relies on parents, teachers, administration and students, she said a school is not a building, but that people make a school and this is the kind of challenge they can accept. She said she would like to hold CPS accountable to ensure they support the transition. If the communities sacrifice and take the challenge they do not want to be left hanging. She said they don't want to hear about a fund, they want to see it and see the investments.

**Gene DeRamos, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Mr. DeRamos said he rises in favor of the proposal as it stands. He said that he and his wife came to the conclusion with some level of anxiety as they are tremendously satisfied with their current circumstance: 1<sup>st</sup> class academics, safety, no bullying. He said they want to see those things preserved. He said whatever comes out of the new entity has to have the ability to be a 1<sup>st</sup> class school in the near term. He said there is great potential and great risk. He has seen that the synergies from mergers can be very elusive and don't materialize unless they are made to happen. He said a third party has to be involved and that the network must have a formal level of accountability and be an equal partner and invested in success just as the parents are. He said that if those conditions are there, then success can be had.

**John Humphreys, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Mr. Humphreys said he is an attorney and parent of a Courtenay student. He said he is generally supportive of more efficient schools and better opportunities. He said there are two impediments to success, first that in eight years if the Stockton boundary does not have enough children to utilize the building, then they will be back in the same situation after Courtenay students graduate out. Next he said the CPS proposal calls Courtenay welcoming but is truly closing Courtenay without granting procedural rights. He said that he thinks Courtenay ceases to be Courtenay, loses its building, and becomes a neighborhood school. He said CPS is denying the process and benefits for schools under consideration for closure. He said Courtenay does not fit with the CPS model for closure, that it is high performing and not underutilized. He said there are viable solutions to keep Courtenay a lottery school.

**Melanie Bienemann, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Bienemann said she is a proud parent of CPS Courtenay Elementary School student. She said that Courtenay is a level 2 school by CPS standards; it went to a 2 from a 1 during reconfiguration of standards. She said that what is being proposed closes Courtenay. She said Courtenay has great teachers, good leadership and is small school so there should be 100% open enrollment and no boundaries. She said parents embrace diversity; parents want to choose remain 100% lottery to be successful; she said there are too many transitions. Courtenay can't

be successful as they combine, double their size, and hire new principal; she said this process is rushed, it can't have integrity. She stated that when she worked at Lurie's Children's hospital there was a moving plan that took five years to construct; the procedural changes were made 3 years in advance and 6 months before and after the move there were no changes. She said her daughter had a challenging PK experience and Courtenay loves her daughter. The administration loves her. She is doing wonderful; she knows her 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher. She said the school can't be prepared to move forward with there being so many transitions in short period of time; she suggested CPS keep the Courtenay model intact so teachers and students are allowed to do their best work.

*Tim Cawley – The only way Courtenay name will change is if Courtenay Local School Council (LSC) chooses to change the name. No one else can do that. Only body that has power to change name is the LSC.*

### **Cynthia Heywood, Teacher at Courtenay and LSC member at Courtenay**

Ms. Heywood read a statement written by Courtenay teachers, to the Stockton teachers and then added a few comments:

“Dear Stockton Teachers: In light of the proposed situation and after feedback from April 8<sup>th</sup>'s community meeting, we the Courtenay teachers feel it is important for you to know our thoughts feelings. In event that our schools merge, we want you to know that we hold your staff in high regard. We know there are great teachers at Stockton. This proposed merger would be very difficult without you and we look forward to working together for the good of our new school. Our goal is to make the new school the best school it can be and that it is structured to meet the needs of all our future students. We, like you, value high quality teaching and small class sizes. We plan to find an administration that values that as well. We look forward to meeting and working with you in the near future.”

She ended on a personal note, stating that Courtenay has only been a lottery school for 2 years, perhaps as a strategy to keep open because enrollment has been small as long as she has been at Courtenay. She said previously Courtenay took everyone who walked in door. There was high expectation for students; students worked hard, and teachers worked hard. Success had nothing to do with the building or lottery. She said a school is not a building, a school is community. She closed by saying that we believe we can be a community with the people currently at Stockton.

### **Mila Cohen, Mother of Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Cohen is the mother of a special needs student at Courtenay. She said she opposed the proposal and said that the mayor says the time for negotiation is over but there has been no negotiation, dialogue or transparency. She asked if Courtenay was ever on a closing list; and why should it be? She said it is one of the top 25 schools, the second most promising school. She said there is a high percent of low-income students and the only reason the school is not Level 1 is that there was no significant movement – she said using that logic CPS would downgrade Harvard for not improving. She said relocation, and welcoming schools are all euphemisms. She said by destroying everything that makes Courtenay, they are being punished for success.

The Mayor and CEO who tout choice are contradictory. She explained that the only rational explanation is that the school is real estate for developers; the rationale is not ethical. She said CPS is cramming together students, selling public land, and putting charters in the area. She said even Margaret Thatcher would not do this. She said she is concerned because charters do not take special education students because they are not profitable. She said her daughter is safe and happy. She concluded by saying that society judges how people treat the most vulnerable, and for CPS it is not good.

**Megan Cusick, CPS Parent**

Ms. Cusick said she is a CPS parent, and member of a neighborhood school organization in Rogers Park, and also a member of the organization of Northside Save our Schools. She spoke to procedural concerns, and had no intention to speak until she heard Mr. Cawley at an earlier meeting talking about there was a large turnout for this meeting; not so much for earlier meeting. Mr. Cawley commented on that. She said she acknowledged the fact that the Mayor said time for negotiations is over. He just closed the door on parents; this makes this process a sham. She mentioned stability and doing what is best for children; and this has to be done in a few months; and we know kids need more stability. She said Mr. Cawley got a 2-year reprieve because his daughter needed stability in schooling. She said Mr. Cawley appreciates what these children need what is good enough for his child should be good enough for these communities as well. As far as the partnership with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) she commended CPD for stepping up, saying it is a difficult job because it will wreak havoc; this partnership should be with parents, teachers, and students.

**Kandalyn Hahn, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Hahn said she is a parent of a Courtenay student and spent 4 years looking at schools for her son. She toured three dozen schools, maybe more, she lost count. When she saw Courtenay, she saw something special: small classrooms, low numbers, it was more than nice. With other schools there will be too much noise; she said one can't think much less learn. She said even before lottery status parents were making active choices that parents cared enough to drive to do better for their kids. She said parents chose to go to school without bells and whistles, and no auditorium, gym, full time music, or specialty teachers. She said many who chose Courtenay did so because of the culture they created. She said teachers are not overwhelmed by classrooms that are too big. She said she turned down a gifted program and Agassiz which has dance, language, and a nice building. She said she knows what is important, that kids were focused at Courtenay and would be supported to learn. She said to turn Courtenay into a neighborhood would make it lose what is special. She asked what would it be like if you don't want to give commitment to parents like her; and answered her own question by saying we'll do what we have to do for our kids and CPS may lose us for good.

**Stacy Walker, Parent of Students at Courtenay**

Ms. Walker said her children attend Courtenay and she proposes that they go to Stockton because our kids deserve a better facility, and our kids can go to a better facility and our teachers go to help students; she said to embrace Stockton not to turn away, that two heads are better than one. She said better we go to help all children perform at higher level because no

child should be left behind. She said every child deserves a better education; don't want to throw away our future and children are our future.

**Alonzo Rivas, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Mr. Rivas and his wife chose Courtenay over schools that were arguably better. They saw the value of educational model, diversity and that the administration and staff were welcoming and fostered parent involvement in education. He said he thought after hearing the subsequent debate about merging both student populations that the merger will not benefit Courtenay or Stockton students. First, he does not believe the district can keep low class size as the hallmark of both schools as it has been representing. He said that given the fact both schools have sizeable sped populations above 30% that require lower class sizes. He said even though the district stated only Stockton is closing, and that Courtenay will become a welcoming school, but CPS's plan in effect is closing both schools. Courtenay will cease to exist. Administration and staff at current school will be replaced so the staff unfamiliar with community. He said these are the reasons he is opposed to merger. He supports the move for keeping Courtenay model and to keep it as 100% lottery school.

**Lindsay Annunzio, Teacher at Courtenay, Teacher LSC chair**

Ms. Annunzio said she is a middle school science at Courtenay and the LSC teacher chair. She said she wasn't here on Monday, and she feels that the culture was misrepresented. She said Courtenay has a long history of educating all children; Courtenay was the first to use inclusion education and make special education a high priority; it was the first school in CPS to educate HIV positive children; when students succeeded at Courtenay they attended other schools in CPS. She said the lottery is new, up until 2 years ago students just walked in door. She said that staff loved and nurtured every child that did [walk in the door]. Even though the school was not lottery that goal was still achieved. She said to please know that if the merger takes place, children, parents, and teachers will be welcomed. She said she plans on doing what she has been doing: providing a high quality education to all students no matter the building. She closed by saying "I am good at what I do, no matter who I teach."

*Alderman Capplemans joined the meeting.*

**Corina Chou, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Chou said she has two upper grade students and that a lot of upper grade parents heard commotion after Monday. She said many are invested in getting a transition plan in place. She said she has two high performing students and when she walked into Courtenay, the school wasn't lottery school. She said she didn't know if it is lottery in upper grades. She said she finds the whole thing disturbing; she lives in Uptown; she knows Uptown inside and out and she knows the Stockton area. She does not like the attacks she has heard on the neighborhood she said those attacks make her a bad parent. She asked the question why would I choose to live in Uptown? She said there is phenomenal potential with Alderman and a diverse and integrated community. She said there is phenomenal leadership, teachers, and parents at Courtenay and she is sure Stockton has same. She said when my teachers and leadership tell me this is going to be challenging but glass half full we can make best of it, we will make the new

schools phenomenal. She said she has faith in the new school's new teachers and new administration. She said we would like to see investment from CPS. She said we're willing to come in; we want to come; we want training. She said all of the meetings are just holding us up at this point. She said she has kids who need to go to new building and she doesn't want them to walk to hostile environments she wants them to walk to the best place.

**Brad Reed, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Mr. Reed says he appreciates the opportunity to speak, and is thankful for all Courtenay parents and those who couldn't be there who entrusted him to deliver community message. He said it is important to know and understand that the majority of Courtenay parents are concerned with the proposal. He said numerous parents representing all grades totaling 130 people have signed a petition. He said many Courtenay parents are concerned over the absence of an initial forum to discuss the action. In addition this could have served as venue for other options such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), or magnet IB. He asked why Courtenay is the only school in action proposals that incorporates a change to enrolment policy. He suggested moving the school but changing it to 100% lottery. He said parents of Courtenay want to remove Courtenay from the proposed action due to not meeting criteria combined with absence of a forum to discuss the proposal. He said it is unethical to call it "welcoming" when it will absorb a building, community, and enrolment model. He said if a merger must happen, and it looks like it will, to expand the model to maintain lottery without boundaries. He said this is proven and effective; Courtenay is most successful as school of neighborhoods not a neighborhood school.

**Larren Tuggle, Parent of Student at Courtenay**

Mr. Tuggle said he is a proud dad of a Courtenay student. He has been a CPS teacher for 13 years. He said he stayed up all night trying to write something but like many colleagues he was working on grades for last three days. He said he wanted to talk to the idea of what he thinks is the timeline. His son was accepted into Peirce and then they heard from Courtenay, which sounded like special place so they chose to go there and passed on Peirce. He said the lottery was in December and then in CPS made announcements regarding schools consolidations and then parents were asked if they wanted to fill out a second lottery, which they did, but when they filled out there were a lot of schools missing, where is due process, he asked. He said that criminals get due process and asked, do teachers, students, parents? He said they were promised opportunity to be at higher functioning schools. He heard that promise before, it was NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and that that didn't happen. Mr. Tuggle said he is good at what he does, he is a Golden Apple winner and has had success for 13 years, but he has had five different administrations in two years; he said CPS is in the third iteration of the people running SIG grants. He said he can work 90 hours a week but given those movements there would still be chaos; it is hard to do job well. His final comment was "Vote for stability."

**Lavera Lee, current LSC chair of Stockton**

Ms. Lee said her biggest concern is around special education children and the services they receive at Stockton, like the Snoozlen room. She said some of the parents who have special education children are really concerned. She said she is against any closings in Chicago. She said that since we have had to come together she has listened to people say "neighborhood

school” like they were spitting. She said Stockton is a wonderful school. She sent all of her children to Stockton. My oldest is an engineer. She said it is not the area. It’s what a school does with children. She said that if this is going to happen, we want it to be as smooth as possible for the kids. She said all of this politics and the kids are being lost. She said to think about their feelings and make the transition as smooth as possible.

*Anne Cuddy*

*Was called to speak and did not address the meeting*

**Melisa Rakanovic, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Rakanovic is the parent of a high functioning child with autism. She said they missed the opportunity to participate in early intervention and she went to the neighborhood school to initiate the IEP; she said the school did not accept her child because they were full. In February of 2013, her child was placed at Courtenay. She said when his IEP was written he was uttering 2-3 words in phrases and now he is talking. She said she is against school closing period. She said to invest in education; she does not agree with proposals because of the wording. Stockton is not being closed; Courtenay is. Regardless, she said they should be proposing to expand resources and funding to higher performing schools to Stockton instead of a merger. She said that the deficit needs to be figured out; it is not for the kids benefit that CPS is doing this. She said she does not want to lose Courtenay. She does not agree with converting Courtenay to a neighborhood school.

**Keti Tuthorn, Parent of Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Tuthorn said she wanted to clear up misconceptions; she said when parents talk about Courtenay’s lottery they are most concerned about being confined to a neighborhood. She said she has a son going to Courtenay and said that if the school becomes a neighborhood school then her second child would probably not get it. She said when we talk about lottery that is what we’re talking about; equal opportunity for all children. She said everyone is concerned regarding class size and that Courtenay and Stockton pride themselves on using discretionary funds to keep size down; they are committed to small class size. She asked if Stockton with 33% and Courtenay 30% special education how is it possible to accommodate all these people. She said we don’t need to traumatize them all over again. She said she understands money, she is not stupid. She suggested doing change slowly over time. She said an alternative is to expand Courtenay, that there are empty buildings and CPS should let Courtenay into an empty building then let in the 200 children on wait list. She said Disney II is getting funding to expand, how come they are getting funding, can’t CPS send money to Courtenay to the school can grow PK to 12. She said people will leave and go to private schools or the suburbs.

**Kerry Martin, Special Education Teacher at Courtenay**

Ms. Martin said she came to talk to people here. She has been a special education teacher at Courtenay for 20 years. In 1993 Courtenay started to bring in general education students because previously we had been 100% special education. She said Courtenay has always been a diverse community both academically and culturally. The school was named after woman at

forefront of free and appropriate education for all. She said she personally welcomes the opportunity to work with the Stockton community and sees this as chance to grow professionally. She said they can develop a stronger professional community to increase collaboration and to stretch their wings, that it is a great opportunity for kids and families, they will have more space to grow access to better facility and larger community of friends. She said she looks at it like this: Stockton needs kids and Courtenay has some. Courtenay needs a building and Stockton has a beautiful one. She said let's make this work. She said she was on the picket line with the teachers. She does not want to see any schools close. She said she does not want parents and children to be stressed out. Both Courtenay and Stockton will survive. "Let's make it the best darn school in the city!" She said like others, she still has questions, after 20 years a superior rating, NBCT (National Board Certified Teacher) and masters' degree plus, she feels she still doesn't have the job security she is looking for. She said she finds comfort in knowing if she keeps her personal high professional expectations for herself, she will be okay and so will you.

### **Christine Clark, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Clark said that when the new Courtenay becomes the best school in city her 3 year old son won't attend because we don't live in boundary. She said her neighborhood school Principal has been removed twice. She said she does not know what she is going to do with her son. She then read on behalf of Ameli Jacobi: Ms. Jacobi wrote that her voice is in opposition of moving Courtenay to Stockton. She wrote of challenging family circumstances including a change of residency and the need to spend large amounts of time on public transportation get to school, but she do it because she loves Courtenay. She wrote that her children do well academically. She said the idea was sold in a manner that benefited Stockton and was a disservice to parents and kids. She wrote that safety is a large concern. She wrote that CPS guidelines state that no child will be transferred to lower ranking school and this is not accurate with the Courtenay/Stockton proposal. She concluded by writing that children are not responsible for lack of planning by the Board of Education. She closed asking listeners to reconsider the effects on decision lives of children of Chicago.

### **SP, Student at Courtenay**

SP said she was first afraid of moving to Stockton because she didn't know anyone and didn't know if they would be nice. She said she went to visit and felt okay, she thought the school was really big – there was a gym, music room, auditorium and lockers. She said she met some of the kids when playing basketball. She said they were nice, and let her shoot some hoops with them. The music teacher let her play xylophone; she was friendly nice let her go on the stage in auditorium. SP said she is excited to move to Stockton because Courtenay doesn't have all of these things. She is so excited to make new friends and meet new teachers.

### **Romana Puente Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Puente said she knows people are upset. She said CPS is proposing these schools and move. She said in a perfect world CPS should keep all schools open. She said this is not a perfect world. She said we are losing sight what matters most – students. She said we should work together with teachers to make the transition as easy as possible for kids. She said Stockton is an



amazing school, building and that teachers, staff and parents are all a pleasure to meet. She said she has faith in teachers and students, and that parents have nothing to worry about. She said the schools separately are amazing and to imagine and what we can do together.

**Tamiye Meehan, Stockton Community Resident**

Ms. Meehan said she has lived on Dover Street for the last 50 years and watched Stockton grow from a small to school to a school loaded with mobile units. She said Dover street neighborhoods are welcoming the changes. She said listening to Courtenay teachers she is impressed. She said Stockton will benefit from the combination and Courtenay will too. For last several months the Dover Street neighbors have been working with the library and are impressed with the quality of materials in library. She said there is not sufficient staff to keep open and center for reading for children of Courtenay or Stockton. She says there needs to be a full-fledged ALA accredited librarian as well as aides. She said neighborhood condos go for \$300-400k so people don't need to worry about who is walking down street. She said what you might have to worry about are coyotes between 9:30 and 11:30 at night. She said the neighborhood came a long way in 50 years and she is looking forward to retiring safely in her community. She said, welcome Courtenay. She says she looks forward to what they will do and to a school that they can market as great to the neighborhood.

**Patrick Lyman, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Mr. Lyman said his daughter had started in neighborhood school, it was fine, however, when they got the opportunity to go visit Courtenay he immediately saw that it was a special place. He said within two days of being at Courtenay his daughter was transformed – she was engaged and happy and told her parents she was much happier there. He said everyone's stories share that Courtenay is a very special place. He said we all want to be hopeful about change but it is hard not to be cynical about the announcement at the last minute. He said Courtenay doesn't meet criteria, and that it is like putting the Cardinals name at Wrigley Field. He said his request is they maintain the lottery program, maintain what is special about Courtenay. He said he has young twins who will be affected, and won't be able to attend Courtenay with their sister. He asked to do take time to consider maintaining what makes Courtenay special.

**Brooke Gard, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Gard said she is here to read on behalf of parent **Dawn Kirsschman** who couldn't attend. Ms. Kirsschman's letter expressed concern regarding special education students and asked about the impact on populations that were each 30% special education. She said that students need structure and consistency and that when students move classrooms that teachers take months to prepare them for such transitions. She questioned much larger transitions to a new building with new people. She wrote that it is a humanitarian issue. She said many children cannot return to their neighborhood schools that maybe they were forced out or the schools simply couldn't help special education students because of resources. She asked what better place than one where the administration and teachers trained and care. She wrote that she thinks Stockton as lot to offer. She thinks Courtenay has a lot to offer. My problem is not with putting two together it's about the process and how parents were informed. She said they are feeling like we made choice to attend a school and that choice is being take way.

### **Taryn Kurth, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Kurth said she supports relocation. She chose Courtenay because it is small and intimate and had strong academics. She said they have an exceptional faculty and administration dedicated to children. She said amenities are not possible in the current building. She does not think education will be diluted because of a different building; there will be additional experiences available. Small class sizes support inclusion and shows respect for all students. She said Courtenay and Stockton share in common that students are admitted blindly, teachers are exceptional at assessing strengths and weakness of all students. She said Stockton is proposed to close as underutilized; she met teachers and hopes many can come in as part of the Courtenay community.

### **Jesus Gonzalez, Parent of a Student at Stockton**

Mr. Gonzalez spoke at the last meeting. He had an opportunity to meet people from Courtenay, some of the administration. He said they were very nice people and heard both sides pro and con. He said one of the things he is against is that they call it a welcoming school; really it is not for Stockton it is a takeover for the Stockton building. He said he spoke with several Stockton parents and the people he spoke with are all against it including most of the Latino community. He said the neighborhood school doesn't speak very well about it. He has a stepdaughter at Lakeview HS honor classes, very good teachers; he doesn't see what is negative in a neighborhood school. He said he travels from Logan Square to CPS because Stockton is a good school. He said nothing is wrong with neighborhood schools; if a takeover will happen, the administration from both schools will have to be more open to parents. To hear parents who are concerned. He said whatever happens he is still against it but he wants the best for his child.

### **Derek Bridges, Teacher at Stockton**

Mr. Bridges said he is a teacher at Stockton and he teaches 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He said he spoke on Monday and once again, wasn't planning on speaking. He said he heard a lot of people say a lot about Courtenay. He said not many talk about what Stockton students get. He asked what the benefits are for my children. He said Stockton was level 2 last year. He said there are no gangs and they already have prekindergarten. He said Stockton students are in the same neighborhood and they already have Air Conditioning and a Library, two technology labs, and iPads. He said in three years CPS has had five CEOs who don't fulfill promises. He said his students have bigger concerns than iPads. He talked about the principal selection process and said Stockton has two times the students but Courtenay chooses the Principal. He said the joint LSC meeting assured attendees that they would represent both schools, but some parents said their LSC doesn't listen to them – he asked if they don't listen to their own parents, how will they listen to Stockton parents. He said he does not see a single benefit to Stockton students. He said that if closures are about finances, teachers and students did not create the financial mess and that if CPS can't figure it out to find someone better with finances to run the district.

### **Maria Galicia, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Galicia told a story about her son. They lived a block away from school that only went to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. There was a middle school and they moved him there. While there, a child threatened her

son with a knife. Maria said she took him out and moved him to Courtenay. He had a lot of trauma and depression from what he went through at school. She said she didn't have any doubts about moving another son to Courtenay. She said at Courtenay, her son who was depressed improved quickly and now he gets As and Bs. Ms. Galica would like the school to remain on the same site, now her younger son will be in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She is afraid her younger son would be at the new building. She said Stockton students see Courtenay students like they invading and she fears they will do something to her son. Maria said the other thing is we're looked at as intruders by the Mayor; but it is easier for him to move out of way than for us to move our school.

**Pete Winninger, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Mr. Winninger has a son in fourth grade at Courtenay. He wanted to say publically, thank you, Courtenay is an amazing community and such a good home for his son. I'm sure Stockton has been good home for their children as well, he is upset about fact that CPS has not given time to integrate the communities together. He said had he talked with Stockton parents earlier that he hears their concerns, similar concerns, if we could met with them in orderly fashion his reservations would be lifted. He hasn't seen a vehicle for this. He said your [facilitators] jobs are funded by my tax money, my real estate. He said the writing is on the wall that this has to happen and he wants it to happen positively as no one wants a riot. He said to let us merge i a way that makes sense as humans not as corporate interests. He said no one knows the "why", and that he doesn't care about or expect transparency. He said they need to be given a chance to transition and the most important investment is our kids.

**Melanie Biememann**

Ms. Biememann said she is not elitist; she is not against Stockton people. She said she has read the story, and it is an amazing story. And we all want what is best for our kids. She said we want small class sizes, 25, not 30. She said Courtenay has small class size because they can't fit more kids in room. She said we have to keep using discretionary funds but CPS will shut us down the effort because CPS wants us to have 28 -30. She said we can't have those numbers and have successful schools

**Symantha Lancaster, ESP Stockton**

Ms. Lancaster said she was sorry if you noticed her doing outbursts because as a parent of a special child and employee of CPS for 23 years she has some ideas she wants to share. She said she witnessed a shooting in front of the Child Parent Center (CPC), a person who was not a part of gang, brought a child to CPS and was shot out front of school. She said there are still problems. She said this happens everywhere. She said Courtenay is miles way and that she is sure it is beautiful. She said Tammy [Courtenay AP], is a sweet person, and they worked together when at Stockton. She said the main thing is that kids are coming to a new area. She is concerned about safety.

**Keti Tuthorn, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Tuthorn said that she was glad safety was brought up. When she keeps hearing about safety plan it does not make her feel better, it makes her feel worse. She asked what will children walk through such that we need plan. She said there is no safety plan at Courtenay; that is

a big change. She said the police can only do so much. She asked why can't we expand Courtenay and put it in a safe neighborhood. She said people from Stockton can send their children to Courtenay as could people from all across Chicago. She said she is not saying that she doesn't want kids to go to Stockton, but that an option for all of Chicago is threatened to be taken away. She asked why don't we have schools like Courtenay in safe neighborhoods that can be large and keep class sizes smaller at 25, 26 we can compromise we can meet half way. She said things are moving too fast.

**Melisa Rakanovic**

Ms. Rakanovic said she has reservations about returning to Kilmer, her neighborhood school. She said she visited and did not like the administration. She asked why is Courtenay being closed, why can't funding be given to Courtenay. She said when I say neighborhood I think boundaries. If this goes through my other child won't attend same school as her bother. She said that her family cannot pick up and move. She said, as a Stockton teacher said, there is no benefit to just renaming Stockton Courtenay and there is going to be dire impact on community on the whole. She said she does not think CPS will see the school repeat the performance that Courtenay has shown.

**Claudia Pesenti, Teacher at Stockton**

Ms. Pesenti she said she is a teacher at Stockton until June 30<sup>th</sup> when Stockton will cease to exist as a Board of Education person told her. She said she was in Stockton library until Derek told her in June that the library would be closed and she wouldn't be the librarian; the library opened in Feb. or March. She read a research brief on school closures that found that when a facility shuts down are children displaced, and communities lose vital resources. Says that current round of closures CPS stated that it was not closing on performance but utilization of the facility. However throughout 2000s the justification for CPS was using standard test scores. She said there is a relation because closure and charters. She said CPS and charter school operators claim closures have nothing to do with charters and that CPS will not repurpose buildings into charters. She said charters are funded with public money and privately operated by for –profits or non-profits removed from public decision making processes. She said CPS has plans to expand charter system which creates conditions under which traditional neighborhood schools are underutilized. She said the people in charge of CPS are supporters of charter school expansion.

**Melanie Bienemann, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Bienemann said she has two propositions 1. How about CPS rent us the Courtenay building for 1 dollar of the next 100 years, then we can make our own charter. Then she said she better not hear the building was turned into a charter school or she will be upset.

9:21pm

**Alderman Cappleman**

Alderman Cappleman said he wished he had arrived earlier however he was at another event. He said he is a former teacher and this is a sad sad moment. He said he doesn't know the answers. He appreciates hearing your voices. He said he will stand with you in any way he can to make

sure your children get the education they deserve. He said he has been very outspoken about his stance and as a former teacher he does not support charter schools.

**Melanie Bienemann, Parent of a Student at Courtenay**

Ms. Bienemann said why can't we have a compromise where 30% neighborhood 70% lottery? She asked has anyone proposed something like Courtenay and Stockton come together and have 30% neighborhood and 70% lottery? She said another speaker said relying on neighborhood won't work as the neighborhood is too small and we will have the same problem in 8 years.

Tim Cawley thanked attendees for their comments and participation and closed the meeting at 9:30pm.