

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

April 8, 2013; 7:30-9:30p.m.

Location: Amundsen High School: 5100 N. Damen Avenue

CPS Facilitators:

Tim Cawley, Chief Administrative Officer

Sebastian De Longeaux, Chief Procurement Officer

Also in Attendance:

Dr. Carlos Azcoitia, Member, Chicago Board of Education

Craig Benes, Chief of Elementary Schools, Ravenswood Ridge Network

Phil Salemi, Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, Ravenswood Ridge Network

Luis Garcia-Juarez, LocalSchool Council Relations

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 105 ILCS 5/34-230. CPS officials reviewed the proposed action. There were about 57 community members in attendance and 25 speakers. The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including: maintaining Courtenay's 100% lottery status and concern over space at Stockton.

CPS Presentation

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 translators 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

Catherine Humphreys, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Ms. Humphreys said that she loves the city and the culture and to stay she must also love the schools. She stated the proposal to change Courtenay to a neighborhood school is a disservice to Courtenay and Stockton students. She said all students should be welcomed into a 100% lottery model that serves them. She also stated that there is no precedent for relocating a high performing school while completely changing its model. She said parents need to know their voices are heard and listened to.

Wendy Auffant

Ms. Auffant said that the proposal is insulting and disrespectful to parents. She stated that Courtenay was not on the list of proposed closures and was not provided a community forum as promised by CPS. She said the proposal is not to merely relocate the school, but to fundamentally change the model by making Courtenay a neighborhood school. She said Courtenay was a school of neighborhoods. She said CPS loses enrollment to the suburbs because of proposals like this. She stated that CPS has the responsibility to put forward proposals with thoughtfulness, integrity and with the goal of improved outcomes for children.

Christine Clark, Parent of a Kindergarten Student at Courtenay

Ms. Clark spoke about the application and lottery process to enroll at Courtenay. She said she thought Courtenay was amazing because it was ranked 25th in all Chicago elementary schools and had 77% low income students. She said she was offered a space at Courtenay in July and took it. She said the Assistant Principal explained that there was no Principal. She said she was most offended when she received a packet that said Courtenay's administration was taking over. She said there is no Principal, just an Assistant Principal and one man in the office. She then said this is the first chance she has had to speak and that she did not know it was a four month process.

Joshua Keesecker, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Mr. Keesecker stated awards received by Courtenay including 2012 honor roll school, spotlight school, top 20% of performance in CPS and in 2010 Courtenay was ranked as the 25th elementary school in CPS. Mr. Keesecker said that Courtenay has a 100% lottery based system and that the model should not be abandoned. He said the north zone of Chicago is underserved by lottery schools. He said maintaining 100% lottery school is essential. He said he is excited to expand but the Courtenay model should not be changed. He said that Stone is the only lottery school north of Montrose to serve the densely populated Uptown, Edgewater, Rogers Park and Lincoln Square areas. Mr. Keesecker concluded his remarks in Spanish, loosely translated to: Maintain a 100% lottery school in Uptown for more students.

Theresa Fernandez, Parent of Two Students at Courtenay

Ms. Fernandez thinks that the merger of these two schools is a great idea. She said that Courtenay can survive. She said that if there are any Stockton parents in the audience, "welcome to Courtenay."

Debby Pope, Retired Teacher

Ms. Pope is a resident of Edgewater and employee of the Chicago Teachers Union. She said she was here to speak on behalf of Stockton. She said Uptown deserves a school that serves black, brown, white – any child who comes to the door. She said Stockton does not require a lottery application to find caring and compassionate educators to meet the needs of every child. She said that it was noted that the facilities at Stockton are much better, that there are computers and AC. She said that it was time all neighborhood schools have those facilities. She said Uptown gentrification is what diminished Stockton. She said there are a lot of people who do not have school aged children or who send their children to magnets because their children get into

magnet schools. She said this proposal is turning Stockton around, it is not closing Stockton. She said that CPS is saying to a bunch of staff that “you are worthless.” She concluded by stating that CPS is bringing in staff because they know what is better for your children. She said “It’s a bunch of crap.”

Keti Tuthorn, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Ms. Tuthorn is a Courtenay parent. She said after listening to people speaking that there appears to be two very different cultures. She said they both love and want to defend their schools. She said we keep hearing that this has been going on for four months that 20,000 people participated, yet she was informed about this proposal the 21st of March. She said Courtenay was not on the list that came out on February 13th. She said it came out of the blue and that Courtenay’s first meeting was after the March 31st deadline. She said it was deceitful for CPS to say this was predicated on community feedback. She said the proposal should be invalidated because the community did not have a voice. She said Courtenay is not underperforming or underutilized. She said they are full with 200+ on the waiting list. She said that if Courtenay is being moved all of it has to move, that the model has to move. She said to expand the model and allow all children to participate.

Vivian Assumpaco, Parent of Two Students at Courtenay

Ms. Assumpaco arrived in the country in February of last year and that her 5th grader and then Kindergartner were admitted to Courtenay through waitlists. She said Brennemann is her neighborhood school and it is not an option for her. She said that Courtenay is the best environment for her children. She said Courtenay challenges them every day. She asked how merging a 100% lottery school will create a better education for all students. She said all good schools are full and that there are waiting lists. She said she wants priority in schools she is applying to now. She said that she wants to keep a high performing, 100% lottery school or she wants a chance to reapply.

Diane Horwitz, PhD

Ms. Horowitz has a PhD in education, with a focus on curriculum and instruction. She said she is from a network of over 100 education professors and researchers in the City that has written a research brief that argues there should be a moratorium on school closings. She said that both Courtenay and Stockton value small class size and that both have 30% special education populations, with many children in self-contained classrooms. She said small class size is in jeopardy and that Stockton should not be punished for doing right by students. She said it is not only unwise but unconscionable. She said there are three rooms at Stockton not being used for other purposes and asked how all of Courtenay would fit. She said it doesn’t add up.

Claudia Pesenti, Stockton Chicago Teachers Union Delegate

Ms. Pesenti is the CTU delegate at Stockton and has taught at CPS for 27 years. She said her students are not test scores that they have “survived Sudan and Somalia and the CPS Board of Education.” She said that Stockton has a computer lab, library and playground but they are not financed with the latest and greatest technology because Stockton spent money on smaller class

sizes. She said there are students who are English Language Learners, Special Education students, homeless students and students who travel from Englewood to Stockton. She said that to her knowledge, a Board member has not walked through or in front of the CPC (child parent center) where someone had previously been shot. She also said that a 13-year old was shot on Halloween eve. She said that students will not be sold out for air conditioning or an iPad or anything else they deserve. She demanded Stockton to stay open. She said we welcome our students so we don't need a welcoming school.

Christine Clancy, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Ms Clancy spoke on behalf of another parent who could not attend due to a death in the family. She said this family laid down roots at this little school and wonderful community and that their daughter is safe and cared about. She said they never thought the school would be fundamentally changed and that they are heartsick. She said that parents are up in arms because the school did not meet the criteria to be closed that they were not given an opportunity to advocate. She said she came to insist that this gem of a school be relocated and maintained as 100% lottery. She said neighborhood schools are wonderful but that is not the model we chose. She said they had found their place in CPS and don't want the successful model to be taken away.

Brooke Gard, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Ms. Gard explained that the process of researching, applying and being accepted to schools in Chicago took months. She said her family was thrilled to be accepted at Courtenay and they have been very happy. She said the plan is illogical and confusing. She said that the community was not given time to process and speak about the proposal and to come up with other ideas. She asked what part of Courtenay was being relocated. She said that no one chose Courtenay for the amenities that are being offered at Stockton. She said this proposal is not the way to expand the model.

Steven Serikaku, Stockton Graduate and CPS Retiree

Mr. Serikaku has fine memories of Stockton. He said that he is disappointed in CPS and that whoever thought up the plan did not do a good job. He said that the action did not make sense because Courtenay does not have a Principal, the schools have two different cultures and Stockton has English Language Learners and Special Education cluster programs. He asked why CPS was proposing this action. He said that CPS is hurting real people. He said that the City and CPS are treating students, teachers and communities like they are interchangeable parts. He urged the Board of Education to reconsider the proposal.

Karen Zaccor, Community Member

Ms. Zaccor lives a block from Stockton, her daughter graduated from Stockton and she taught at Stockton. She said don't close Stockton; don't close Courtenay; don't close any school. She said that the Board of Education lied when it stated in materials that its proposals incorporated feedback from 20,000 people. She said it did not because 20,000 people said "don't close our schools." She said that the materials discuss welcoming schools and that some Stockton parents

were told they would have to reapply and do not feel very welcome. She said that she is concerned that it is taking school closings to provide customized safety plans.

Marc Kaplan, Local School Council at Uplift High School

Mr. Kaplan's son went to Stockton and is now a biology teacher at Von Steuben High School. He said that of the 20,000 people who spoke at community meetings he did not hear one person say we support closing schools. He said none of the Courtenay parents were there because they didn't think their school was affected. He thinks parents from all impacted schools need to work together to make sure schools do not close. He said he proposes that attendees figure out next steps after this community meeting. He said we can have the quality schools we need.

Tim Furman, Community Member

Mr. Furman lives in Rogers Park. He is a resident, tax payer, voter and American. He said he wants to address elected officials and in the case of the CPS Board of Education, in any other community, Board members would be voted for and be held accountable to voters. He said to please tell Barbara Byrd Bennett that not everyone "got it" at the community meetings and that he thinks she is living in a fog. He said he thinks she is waging war on these communities. He said that people will be on the streets on the 27th to save the schools of Uptown, to save the schools in all of the communities.

Miriam Socoloff, CPS Teacher

Ms. Socoloff was a CPS teacher for 34 years. She said that she is an arts educator, a Golden Apple winner and a Presidential Recognition winner (President Barack Obama). She said she sent her children to CPS schools and they were admitted to some of the most selective colleges in the country. She said that CPS has heard from 20,000 distraught teachers, parents, and children to keep their schools open. She said people are communicating that these proposals are wrong. She said the proposals drive people to the suburbs and undermines confidence in the schools. She said it is child abuse. She said the pay-off would be an iPad, an iPad to carry through unsafe neighborhoods to homes without wi-fi and that perhaps they could go to libraries, except that library hours were cut. She said that CPS has not heard anyone. She said CPS has an agenda of privatization and corporate reform. She asked Board Member Azcoitia to be a dissenting vote.

Michael Presser, Community Member

Mr. Presser has two children that attended CPS. He said that CPS already has the answer in their minds. He said that CPS will listen and be kind on the surface but then give UNO a share of schools. He said that the Lab School is one of the great underutilized schools in the City. He said he taught at a therapeutic school with 5 students per classroom and that those students received something that was meaningful for them. He said that he wants the decisions to be made by people who are the closest to the situation. He said decisions are never made by parents, teachers or students.

Lois Jones, Chicago Teachers Union Field Representative for Stewart and Stockton

Ms. Jones said that she spoke with the Network Chief after announcements were made and was assured that not one student would be negatively affected by the actions. She said she is the class size coordinator for the CTU and has never received a referral from Courtenay or from Stockton. She said that she does not care about what numbers or test scores say. She said there are 3 rooms not being used at Stockton and does not know how 8 classrooms from Courtenay will fit. She said there is not room at Stockton and that the proposal is closing Courtenay, closing Stockton and opening a completely different school.

Diane Lyman, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Ms. Lyman said that like others, she applied to 20 schools and was waitlisted. She said her neighborhood school is not bad, but is becoming overcrowded because of its reputation. She said the energy at Courtenay is tangible and that after her second day at school her daughter said that it was much better for her. She said she is beyond disappointed, beyond angry and upset trying to figure out what her next step will be.

Jesus Gonzalez, Parent of a Student at the Stockton Child Parent Center (CPC)

Mr. Gonzalez said that Stockton is a great school. His son can read, do math and completes drawings that are amazing for a 4 year old. He said he has lived in the neighborhood for 20 years and that it keeps changing. He asked what will happen over the next 5 years. He asked if the school will become overpopulated. He said he is supporting Courtenay – they want to keep their school and he said Stockton wants to keep their school. He said the students should not be competing Courtenay vs. Stockton but competing globally. He said he wants his child to have a great school and he thinks he has it.

Brenda Shiller, CPS Teacher

Ms. Shiller works for CPS, her children attend CPS schools and she is a product of CPS. She said her children went to Stockton and one is at Von Steuben and the other at Lincoln Park IB. She said they received a great education at Stockton. She said she does not think Courtenay is bad, or better or worse than Stockton. She said Courtenay works for Courtenay parents and students and that Stockton works for Uptown.

Risa Hynes, Parent of a Student at Courtenay

Ms. Hynes lives in Uptown and believes that the neighborhoods around Courtenay and Stockton are very different and that the Mayor lives in one and not the other. She stated that if Courtenay gets a better facility then Stockton is diminished. She said she wants to stay at a school that is lottery and asked why CPS would force them together.

Derek Bridges, Teacher at Stockton

Mr. Bridges feels that someone owes Courtenay parents an apology because they were pulled into the action because Stockton students needed a higher performing school to attend. He said that all of the Courtenay parents mentioned waitlists and said that he wished he had that support from all parents at Stockton. He said he has 5th grade students who care for their siblings for a number of different reasons. He said Courtenay performs higher because of parent involvement.

He said they are both great schools with great people. He concluded by stating, “you’re playing with someone else’s toys, don’t break them.”

Maria Galicia

Ms. Galicia thinks this meeting shows that parents should support one another. She said people are going back and forth that one school is better than the other. She said if parents want them both to stay open, parents have to work together. She said that parents needed to raise their voices and support one another.

There was no public comment from 8:43pm to 9:30pm.

At 9:30p.m. the meeting was adjourned and Tim Cawley thanked all attendees for coming.