

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close West Pullman Elementary School

Monday, April 8, 2013; 7:30-9:30pm

Location: Harlan High School
9652 S. Michigan Avenue

CPS Staff in Attendance: Todd Babbitz, Joseph Sobus, Tracey Redmond, Elizabeth England, Erin Nieukirk, Thyatteria Townes, Michele Taylor, Kelly Donohoe, Brenda Bell, Mark Klimesh, Melinda Gildart, Board member Jesse Ruiz

CPS Presentation:

At 7:30pm, Todd Babbitz, facilitator welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. He gave an overview of the West Pullman-Haley transition referring to the handout. He summarized the info in the handout in regards to funding, boundary approval, and other details.

Melinda Gildart welcomed everyone, invited participants to speak, and reviewed the time limits for speakers. She informed the audience of the court reporter and note taker roles.

Brief Summary:

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close West Pullman Elementary School in accordance with 105 ILCS/34-230. CPS officials stated the purpose for the meeting, introduced CPS staff, and reviewed the handouts provided to the community. There were about 33 community members in attendance.

Public Comment:

Kathy Murray, CTU

Ms. Murray has had a long history in Lake Calumet. She was a teacher and is now concerned about gang rivalry. She emphasized that parents are very committed to West Pullman and is. Concerned over Gangster Disciples and gang rivalry. The parents were very committed to West Pullman and worried about kids walking and the charter school nearby.

Towanda Thaxton, alumni and parent of former West Pullman students

Ms. Thaxton explains that the school has improved over the years. She is concerned that her child will be hurt traveling to school.

Nina Stoner, parent

Ms. Stoner discussed how she has been a volunteer for over 18 years.

T.D., student

Student passionately stated they he/she does not want the school to shut down since he/she has had such close ties to the school.

L.D., student

Student has close ties with the school and does not want it to close.

Davonda Buff, LSC chairperson

LSC chairperson was concerned CPS is not focusing time on the neighborhood needs and families. She stressed the importance of having activities for families and children. She questioned why resources have not been given to West Pullman over the receiving school.

Barb Smith, Case Manager/former teacher at Haley

Ms. Smith was concerned for student's safety and believes that the dollars should be placed in the classroom. She is also concerned about safety and the fact that kids will need to walk over 8 blocks to school.

Erica, teacher

Erica discussed how this year has been very rewarding and believes her students are making progress. She claimed that CPS has good teachers and more progress can be made.

Facilitator states when the next meetings will occur.

D.B, student

Student spoke highly of the teachers and believes the school should be given another chance.

P., student

Student did not want the school to close and has close ties to the principal and assistant principal.

T.P, student

Student has close ties to the school and believes the student is invested in everyone's work.

Jeniece Price, parent

Parent believed the school should stay open because it is too far and is very close to violence.

Erica Fox, Assistant Principal

Ms. Fox discussed how she has been very involved with teachers and staff and believes they are a family. She discussed how the administration constantly talks about College and Career ready standards.

T.D, student

Student believes that the teacher is excellent.

S., student

The student discussed how the teachers spend a lot of time working with the children.

Nina Sumner, parent

Ms. Sumner discussed how West Pullman has potential and is thriving.

Kathy Murray, CTU

Ms. Murray stated that the schools that are on the list have new principals and CPS should give them an opportunity to prove themselves.

D.H., student

Student expressed that everyone in the school is like family and the new principal has been a very positive influence.

Safety officer

Officer discussed how the neighborhood is dangerous and students are not used to change so the transition might be difficult.

D.W., student

Student discussed how traveling to school given all the violence is dangerous.

J., student

Student does not want the school to close.

Flora James, counselor

Ms. James has been working at the school for 18 years and discussed her experience with Haley being very dangerous.

Erica Fox, AP

Ms. Fox discussed how the school has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club which has alleviated crime in the area. She is concerned that community partners will discontinue their services.

Emmanuel Price, parent

Parent is concerned about the commute and would like information on how this will be handled.

D.B., former student

Student does not want his/her siblings to travel many blocks to Haley.

D.C , student

Student does not want school to close.

S., student

Student does not want the school to close.

Student

Student questioned how panel feels about closing their school.

S.C, Student

Student does not want school to close.

Kathy Murray, CTU

Ms. Murray is concerned about who would be by a home near a boarded up a school.

E. P, student

Student is concerned about safety when commuting to school.

Public Comment concluded at 9:00pm