

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Victor Herbert Elementary School

April 12, 2013; 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Location: Whitney M. Young High School, 211 S. Laflin St.

CPS Facilitators:

Tracy Martin, Chief, Strategic School Supports

Stephanie Donovan, Chief of Staff, Strategic School Supports

Also in Attendance:

Sebastien De Longeaux, Chief Procurement Officer

Amabel Crawford

Lt. Whitmore, Chicago Police Department

CPS Presentation

Ms. Martin welcomed everyone in attendance and stated the purpose for the meeting. Ms. Martin introduced lieutenant Whitmore from the Chicago Police Department. She explained the protocol and procedures for the public comment portion of the agenda. Ms. Martin then reviewed the proposed security plans for welcoming schools. She then presented an overview of the proposal and explained the information on the handout distributed to the audience. She then introduced Ms. Donovan.

Ms. Donovan reiterated the procedures for public comments and opened the meeting for public comment at 5:10 pm.

Brief Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Victor Herbert Elementary School, welcome students at Robert Nathaniel Dett Elementary School and relocate Dett to 2131 W. Monroe St., in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. Parents, teachers, students, and community members came forward to speak. Most comments were in praise of Herbert's special education programs or reflected concern over the violence and gangs in the area. The speaker's comments are summarized below:

- Concern was raised about possible gang activity that occurs in Dett Park.
- Multiple students commented on their affinity for Herbert and their opposition to its closure.
- Concern was raised about gang activity in the area and how children would be safe traveling across gang lines by multiple people. Some teachers claimed to walk their students home because of the dangerous neighborhood.
- A parent insinuated that the Dett administration failed in the past to properly educate her son.

- Concern was raised about Herbert and Dett's 20th day enrollment difference. Herbert had a larger enrollment.
- The principal of Herbert listed Herbert's accomplishments, moving off probation, various art contest victories, their middle school model, etc.
- Multiple people described Herbert as being "like a family."
- Dett and Herbert were both described as quality schools.
- Concern was raised about the disruption to special education students.
- Concern was raised about crossing Western. It was described as being "like a highway."
- Concern was raised about changing the name of Herbert.
- Concern was raised about overcrowding after Herbert's closure.
- One person sang a song about Herbert to the tune of *You are my Sunshine*.
- Concern about other schools' ability to appropriately educate special needs students.
- A Herbert teacher insinuated that the Dett principal "will not care about Herbert" students.
- A student-made power point presentation was displayed to the panel containing pictures and test scores of Herbert.
- A request was made about the expected social and emotional supports for students affected by actions.
- Multiple people, former students and parents related anecdotes about their experiences or their students at Herbert. Many of these stories centered on the success of Herbert's special needs programs.