

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Woods Elementary School.

April 13, 2013 10:00am-12:00pm

Location: Harper High School 6520 S. Woods St.

CPS Facilitators:

Jennie Huang, Treasurer

Melinda Gildart, Controller

CPS Presentation:

Jennie Huang, CPS Treasurer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. Ms. Huang provided an overview of the information that attendees received in regards to the proposal to close Woods Elementary. In addition, she explained that every receiving school will have safe passage, increase security, and additional safety equipment. Melinda Gildart, CPS Controller, explained the meeting rules and procedures. Ms. Huang introduced Melinda Gildart, CPS Controller. Ms. Gildart explained the meeting rules and procedures, and opened the meeting for public comment.

Brief Summary:

The purpose of this meeting is to receive public comment on the proposal to close Woods Elementary School in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. The speakers ranged from parents, students and teacher to community members and alumni of Woods. There were approximately 49 community members in attendance and 45 speakers (some spoke multiple times). The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including:

- Testimonials that the Woods community is like a family; that sending students to another school would be like sending them to a foster home
- Concerns about violence in the community and that closing the school would increase that risk
- Testimonials about how important Woods is to the community
- Description of the effectiveness of the instruction at Woods; students discussed how much students have learned at Woods
- Speakers highlighted the community partnerships that Woods has developed, and how meaningful those relationships are to the students and community
- Testimonials about how Woods does an excellent job serving students with disabilities
- Questions about how CPS came to the conclusions that they came to; unclear about the process
- Concern that the students will not be attending a school next to a Police Station (Woods)
- Concerns about students having to cross Ogden Park
- Community members questioned whether Woods is lower performing than other neighborhood schools
- Contentions that the information CPS has provided about the schools and their facilities is inaccurate and misleading
- Concerns about whether CPS is actually listening to the concerns that the community is facing
- Testimonials about the dedication of the staff, faculty and leadership at Woods

- Demands not to close Woods
- Concerns that CPS is being disingenuous in trying to persuade the community to accept the proposal; that Woods already has all of the amenities that Bass is proposed to receive
- Demands that CPS devote resources to schools, not close them
- Calls from the community that the Board of Education not close Woods
- Concerns about the social and emotional impact on children if a school closes
- Suggestions that small schools are superior and that the new facility risks overcrowding students
- Testimonials about the rigorous academic instruction at Woods