

Community Meeting for the Proposed Closure of Edward C Delano Elementary School

April 15, 2013; 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm.

Location: Al Raby High School, 3545 W. Fulton Boulevard.

CPS Staff in Attendance

Wanda Washington, Chief of Garfield Humboldt Network; Herald Johnson, Deputy Chief of Garfield Humboldt Network; Tracey Ginwright, Assistant Deputy Chief of Schools; Myetie Hamilton, School Support Center Officer; Steve Gering, School Leadership Development Officer.

Brief Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Edward C. Delano Elementary School, welcome students at Genevieve Melody Elementary School and relocate Melody to 3937 W. Wilcox St. in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. CPS officials made a presentation regarding this proposal. Alderman Ervin voiced his opposition to the proposal primarily due to safety reasons. The meeting was attended by 42 people

CPS Presentation

Ms. Hamilton opened the meeting by welcoming audience members. She introduced herself, as well as her co-facilitator, Mr. Gering. She provided a brief overview of the proposed action by reviewing the informational handout given to audience members upon their arrival. She then transitioned to Mr. Gering, who facilitated public comments.

Public Comment

Alderman Jason Ervin

Alderman Ervin does not support this consolidation because CPS is proposing unrealistic attendance boundaries. He indicates that the streets are chaotic and the safe passage of students has not been taken into consideration. He also raised the concern of parents walking their students to school. He indicated that there are parents in gangs who cannot go past certain boundaries within the city. By merging Delano with Melody, CPS will be forcing these parents to cross gang territories and risk their lives. Alderman Ervin concluded by stating his disbelief that a school on probation is absorbing a school that is not on probation. He indicates that of all the schools that are closing, this is the proposal of the greatest concern.

Linda Norwood, Delano Parent

Ms. Norwood stated that the Delano community has been begging for air conditioners for years. She concluded by saying that everything that is being proposed, Delano already has.

Kelly Sul, Teacher at Delano

Ms. Sul raised the concern of the climate and culture of Delano Elementary. In the 2012 School Progress Report, Delano received several higher ratings than Melody. She does not understand how a lower performing school can come in and overtake a higher performing school.

Ms. McGhee

Ms. McGhee has been involved with the school for over forty years. She questioned why Melody was absorbing Delano. She stated that Delano has higher ratings.

Concerned Parent from Delano Elementary

The speaker spoke about all the great things going on at Delano such as Family Focus and the COFI program. She indicated that all of their classrooms are being used and the utilization report is not entirely accurate.

Delano Parent

The speaker read a comparison between Melody's School Report Card and Delano's School Report Card. She concluded by stating that Delano has the highest ratings between the two schools.

K.O., staff member at Delano

K.O. stated that in terms of student performance, Delano's ratings have been consistently higher than Melody Elementary School.

Ms. Turner

Ms. Turner stated that the merger was not adding any value or positive change to the students at Delano or Melody students.

Erica Baker, Parent of Delano

Ms. Baker pointed out the dedication of the staff. She described them as teachers who "truly care" about their students. She believes that closing Delano is unfair and cruel. CPS officials need to take into consideration the background and social environment of affected students.

Staff member of Delano

The speaker stated that CPS's announcement to close Delano drained the life and joy that was once in the school.

Theresa V., a Teacher on the North Side

Ms. V. stated that the attack on Westside and Southside schools is unfair. She then leveled and ad-hominem attack on the CEO.

Mrs. Triplet., Delano Elementary Staff Member

Mrs. Triplet stated that CPS needs to look at qualitative and quantitative data when making decisions to close schools.

Wendy Pearson

Ms. Pearson indicated that if CPS is trying to gain the community's trust, the lies must stop.

Angela Harris, Alumni of Delano Elementary

Ms. Harris stated that teachers at Delano really care about their students. She is now a doctor in New York and contributes much of her success to the dedicated staff of Delano Elementary.

Jordyn Brown, Pre-K Student at Delano

Ms. Brown read a speech she wrote to plea for Delano.

Calvin Tate

Mr. Tate stated that CPS can shut down buildings, but they could never steal the knowledge that community members have within.

Hazel Prentiss, Graduate of Delano Elementary

Ms. Prentiss stated her pride in remembering her grammar school days at Delano Elementary. She does not want the school to close and urge CPS officials to consider the entire positive legacy that Delano has created in that community.

Wendy Pearson

Ms. Pearson recited a poem in response to CEO Byrd-Bennett feelings of community members calling her a racist. She then went on to give her own personal account of a family member being shot down the street from Melody Elementary School. She is concerned about the safe passage of students and the over abundant amount of sex offenders in the area.

Crystal Williams

Ms. Williams claimed to speak for a former student of Delano who wrote an essay in lieu of her absence. She urged CPS officials not to close Delano Elementary.

Wendy Pearson

Ms. Pearson spoke of her beginnings on the west side of Chicago. She does not believe that CPS cares about the wellbeing of the community or the students.

Michelle Rose

Ms. Rose said she has students in both Leif Ericson and Delano Elementary Schools. She questioned why CPS is spending \$7M on safe passage when their proposed plan still isn't warranting the highest caution or safety of the students.

Dorothy Terry, Chairperson for NCLB at Delano

Mrs. Terry raised concern that her child will be labeled by going from a school that is not on probation to a school that is currently on probation. Her child is on the honor-roll and has worked hard. She does not want to deflate the enthusiasm of her child by sending her to a lower performing school.

Member from Occupy CPS

The speaker stated that CPS is not considering the needs of their students. She urged the community to fight back. She then indicated that Occupy CPS can assist in their movement for justice. She invited audience members to meet her in the hall after the meeting for more information.

Member from Occupy CPS

He stated that he has seen frightened parents scared their children will get murdered on their way to school. He urged parents to stand up for themselves. He presented himself as someone who could help organize the movement. He then asked audience members to meet him in the hallway after the meeting.