



Proposed School Closure of Hope Community High School

January 14, 2020

Kershaw Elementary School

6450 South Lowe Ave

5:30-7:00 PM

CPS Staff in Attendance

Megan Hougard, Herald “Chip” Johnson, Judith Camacho-Campbell, Lauren Feldman, Cheryl Nevins, Toylee Green-Harris, Bing Howell, Ernest Ilarde, Jamel Chambers

CPS Presentation

Mr. Chip Johnson, Chief of Family and Community Engagement, opened the meeting. He welcomed the audience, introduced CPS staff in attendance, and thanked participants for coming. He then informed the audience that the purpose of tonight’s meeting is to obtain public comment and feedback on the proposal to close Hope High School. He stated that this is the first community meeting, with the second community meeting taking place at Kershaw and the Public Hearing taking place at 42 W Madison on January 29th, 2020. Mr. Johnson then shared the agenda for the discussion, stating that we would start with the presentation and then go on to public comment. Finally, he introduced Megan Hougard, Chief of Network 16.

Ms. Megan Hougard, Chief of Schools for Network 16, started by introducing the logistics for public comment and sharing that when we get to that time Ms. Cheryl Nevins, Director of Demographic Planning & Analysis, would hold up a sign to indicate when there is 1 minute remaining and again when there is 30 seconds remaining. She notified the audience that if they do not have an opportunity to comment or feel more comfortable sending an email, they may do so at transitions@cps.edu.

Next, Ms. Hougard provided an overview of the school action process. She explained the law that governs Chicago Public Schools and actions the district must take when closing, consolidating or co-locating schools. Before Chicago Public Schools can take any action, they must receive community feedback. She informed the community that this is the first of two community meetings before the Public Hearing. The Board may then vote on this proposal as early as February 2020.

Ms. Hougard then transitioned to sharing information about Hope High School. She started by reiterating that Hope High School has 0 students enrolled. She explained that the proposed action is to close Hope July 1, 2020. If this proposed action is not approved by the Board, the school will instead close on July 1, 2021. Ms. Hougard shared that the new Englewood High School, which was a nearly \$100M investment, is now the neighborhood school for any student living in the Hope boundary. Finally, Ms. Hougard shared that at the end of last year, school year 2018-2019, Hope High School had 20 students enrolled. This year, all 20 students are now enrolled in new schools. These schools are receiving an extra \$6,100 in transition support for each student.

Ms. Hougard then opened the public comment portion of the meeting. She first reminded everyone of the registration process, and that each individual would have 2 minutes to speak. Finally, she reiterated that individuals are also welcome to share their feedback via email to the transition inbox if they are not able or comfortable speaking.

Mrs. Judy Camacho-Campbell came to facilitate the public comment portion. She first shared with the audience that Ernest Ilarde, from the CPS Talent Office, is also in attendance if anyone has concerns related to staff. She then called the speakers.

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Public Comment

Kurt Hilgendorf: Former teacher and current Legislative Policy Director of the Chicago Teachers Union. Stated that he was a teacher at John Hope College Prep High School from 2006 through 2011, where he taught history and economics. Stated that one phrase he learned at John Hope is that, “Students don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” State that based on this process, it is clear that the district doesn’t care about the students at that school. The school was named for the first black president of Morehouse College, who was an early civil rights champion and helped found the NAACP. State that there are several different histories of the school. The unwritten history of that school is written by the alumni of that school. The written history is that of the school that won state basketball titles, multiple debate championships, and even was featured in a Common video. And then there is the intentionally obscured history, based on a series of decisions that occurred over many years that nobody at the building had any impact to change. That involves the students, the staff, and years of missed opportunities. And there is the erased history, and that speaks to the fact that now on the State Board of Education there is no record of Hope High School. And that speaks to the dramatic loss that people in the neighborhood feel, that there’s no place to turn. Thank you.

Shakita Thomas: Hope High School Alumnus. Stated that she is a former student of John Hope from 6th grade through 12th grade in 2007, and that she had a few questions. Stated that we say that we are closing Hope because there are zero students, but that is because of the gradual phase out, and you could argue it started even before that. But one thing I want to leave you with is a song that represents the spirit of Hope. (Played “I believe in a place called Hope”). I know I am at time, but I want to say that there is still hope in the community and that’s something we need to take into consideration as we are taking steps toward closing. Thank you.

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Closing

Mrs. Camacho-Campbell asked if there were any other public comments from the audience. There were no replies.

Ms. Hougard asked Mr. Johnson if he had any final remarks, he replied that he did not.

Ms. Thomas asked if she could ask a question since there was more time. She proceeded to ask about what will happen to the school building if the school closes. Ms. Hougard replied that the building is currently co-located with KIPP Bloom Charter School. There has not yet been a process to determine the overall use of the building. The building is not slated for closure.

Ms. Hougard then asked if there were any other questions. When there was no reply, she adjourned the meeting at 5:51 PM.