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Board of Education [in person or remote]

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Agency: Chicago Public Schools

Date: Sept. 28, 2022

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Takeaways

- It seems that the district has worked to resolve concerns over CHA housing by working directly with the organization.
- Opinions are still divided on the vote however, and it will be interesting to see how far the Near South high school project will go.
- It would be good to see more about the cooperation between CPS and CHA on housing.
- This was a consequential and close vote, so I listed how each member voted.
- Member Scott had a great point about ensuring that local officials are kept in the loop on the project.

Follow-Up Questions & Observations

- How will the Near South development plan continue to be altered to ensure CHA commitments are honored?
- How will CPS continue to engage the community on the planning process?
- What is the timeline for the Near South high school project?

Notes

Call to order at 10:30 a.m.

Roll Call - All members present, Quorum is 7

Special Presentation: Hispanic Heritage Month/ Tribute to Manuel Sanchez

- Manuel Sanchez was the city's first Mexican American school principal.

- Members of Sanchez’s family spoke about his life and achievements.
- More on Sanchez [here](#).

Remarks from CEo - Bogdana Chkoumbova

- First day attendance was over 93%, up from 91% from last year.
- 8 CPS High Schools and 11 Middle Schools enrolled 40% in outside school summer programs.
- Adoption of Skyline curriculum has been successful among hundreds of CPS teachers, Chkoumbova says.
- More on Skyline [here](#).

Presentation from CEO - Pedro Martinez

- “I recognize that leaders like myself sit on the shoulders of so many people before us. Like many of our children, I was not born in this country,” Martinez reflects on the Manuel Sanchez presentation.
- The district has seen students from the 1,000+ migrants from Texas. The district is working to make these students feel welcome and provide them with the right resources.
- “As someone who came to this country from Mexico at the age of 5, I know what it is to be a child making a start in a new place.”
- Martinez urges all staff, students and parents to get a vaccine booster or a first time shot. Appointments can be made through the CPS website.

Public Comment, with rules introduced by Secretary Estella G. Beltran

- Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) Recording Secretary Christel Williams-Hayes discusses the importance of assisting migrant students from Texas by providing resources and continuity of education. “Our immigrant students desperately need more support. We can and must do better.”
 - Hayes also said that the board should reconsider alternatives to building a new \$120 million Near South high school on land set aside for public housing.
 - Additional info [here](#).
- Parent and organizer Irene Robinson also opposes the building of the proposed new high school.
 - She cites the [2013 closure of schools](#) by then mayor Rahm Emmanuel.
 - “Start investing in our children.”
- The proposed high school is the subject of several more public comments.
- David Wu, Executive Director of Pui Tak Center in Chinatown, shares two stories highlighting the importance of ESL support and bilingual services programs for

immigrant youth. He advocates for a new nearby neighborhood highschool that emphasizes these services.

- Angela Lynn cites the need for more community engagement on the issue of the Near South High School before proceeding with actions.
- Three principals from Urban Prep Academies speak at public comment. They highlight the mission of the schools in giving black and brown men an opportunity to succeed.
 - Urban Prep recently [ousted its CEO](#).
- Multiple charter school representatives speak about renewing their charter.
- Illinois State 2nd District Representative Theresa Mah speaks.
 - “There are three items on your agenda today related to the proposed Near South High School project, which I respectfully urge you to oppose at this time. As the legislator who secured the \$50 million in state funding for the construction of a CPS school in response to decades long community advocacy to get the high school built, I nonetheless oppose the current proposal at the site on 24th and State.”
 - Mah said that it was a divisive idea to choose the site and that discussion should not continue. She cited many reasons including proximity to other schools whose decline in enrollment would be accelerated. Mah was concerned that it would appear that the Chinatown community would have no qualms taking away land promised to former CHA residents. “This could not be further from the truth,” she said.
 - “What appears to me is that this project has been seized upon by the mayor as an attempt at an election year win. A feather in her cap at the expense of community members who did not ask to be pawns in her game. She’s touting a new high school in a location that would harm existing schools and potentially accelerate their closure.”

Break for Recess - Meeting Resumes at 1:21 P.M.

Presentation on 20th Enrollment Data from

- Total 20th day enrollment for CPS was **322,106**
 - A 2.5% decrease from last year.
 - Decline lower than the 5.4% decline from the 20-21 to 21-22 school year. However this is continuing the enrollment decline CPS has seen over the past decade.
- Elementary schools have seen a 10.3% decline since 2021.
 - Charter elementary schools have declined 7.4% within the same time.
- 6.3% increase in preschool since last year.

- Biggest increase in enrollment was at the preschool level.
- High School enrollment was stable.
- Martinez “Our high schools continue to be stable because our graduation rates continue to improve.”
- Racial and ethnic makeup has not shifted over 5 years.
- Students with IEPs, English Learners, Temporary Living Situations and Economic Disadvantages rose 28.7% since 2022.
- O’Hare district had the largest enrollment with an 18% increase this year.
- Douglas district had the lowest, a 15% decrease this year.
 - North and West side district enrollment down.
- Majority of students who left the district graduated or transferred to a school outside the city. Other reasons include -
 - Leave codes
 - Homeschool
- Students who left the district decreased by 6%, while there was a 3% decline in new students joining the district.
 - 42,230 students were new to the district.
- First four weeks attendance was 91.6% overall.
 - Slightly lower than the 2021 school year, but schools opened fully remote that year.
 - Attendance increased for Black and African students.
- Member Michael Scott Jr. asked if students living in temporary living situations (STLS) were identified more easily than they were during the pandemic, and what resources were there to provide them with educational support.”
 - CEO Matinez “We added resources specifically to work with STLS students. We also provided more resources over the summer, as well as more support after school.”
 - Martinez said that schools were instructed to “target the students you think need it the most and those resources will be there.”

Presentation on Near South High School by Pedro Martinez, Fatima

- “We intentionally made the decision to pull this item back in June and give us more time to meaningfully engage the community.” - Martinez
 - Martinez said that the board had expanded on the proposal of the Near South High School with an emphasis on community investment.
 - More on the Near South School controversy [here](#).
 - Martinze said that fiscal and enrollment challenges are not new, arguing that new schools have been built during more difficult times.
 - Martinez says the proposal is not “either or” but “both and,” meaning that

- the city can invest in the school and the neighborhood together.
 - “I understand the skepticism that exists. I get it.”
- “The Board is voting on:
 - The PSA (contract to purchase) 23rd and Wabash site for CHA as consideration for the 95 year lease.
 - An IGA and 95 Year Lease with CHA for 24th and State
 - The PBC formulation.
 - Begin the design process for the high school, with stakeholder engagement.
 - “We have to make sure that we’re clear about what the priority is.”
- Stakeholder Engagement
 - 730 parents and community members have participated in engagement since June. 351 were parents. Questions that came up included -
 - Will this be a true neighborhood school, or another selective enrollment school?
 - Why did you select this location for the new school?
 - What is the plan to build housing for the right to return residents?
 - What are you doing to strengthen the schools in the surrounding area?
 - District to continue the engagement process into other surrounding communities.
- Near South Demographics
 - 2,255 high school students, expected to increase.
 - 5,983 Elementary school students.
 - 244 CHA housing units will be built in Southbridge in the near future.
 - 1.5 Children per unit, adding up to 366 students.
 - 86% of students in the boundary will travel a shorter distance to the new location.
 - The new boundary will include portions of the Wells, Philips and Tilden high school boundaries, and 9 elementary school boundaries.
 - 42% of students in the proposed boundary attend selective enrollment schools.
- Location.
 - 16 sites were considered in total. Some sites were not viable for several reasons including:
 - Air quality and environmental issues.
 - Sites were currently in use for other city services.
 - Distance for students to travel.

- Proximity to other schools.
 - A lack of space for open fields.
- Locations considered.
 - **17th and Canal - Not Selected**
 - Issues with air quality and noise level. Other sites including the Goodale Corporation and Devon Canal sites will be impacted.
 - Far from Black student populations.
 - **15th and Clark - Not Selected**
 - Athletic fields could not be accommodated.
 - Proximity to the railroad.
 - Once again, too far from Black student populations meant to be served.
 - **24th and State - Selected**
 - CHA and HUD disposition approval would cause delays.
 - Currently designated for low-income replacement housing in a mixed income context. CPS is considering 1.7 acres of the designated site for the new high School
 - Issues with noise levels from expressway and transit rails.
- Benefits of 24th and State site.
 - Centrally located in the region.
 - Existing resources including a CPS soccer field and a Park District baseball field.
 - Accessible via multiple forms of transportation.
 - Keep nine elementary school communities together.
 - Part of the larger Southbridge regional development.
 - CPS may purchase two parcels of land adjacent to the CHA housing site.
 - Solves the growing need for a high school in the expanding region.
- Chicago Housing Authority - Ann McKenzie, CHA Chief Development Officer
 - More on the CHA [here](#).
 - 877 mixed-income housing units are planned for the former Ickes site and surrounding properties. The units are returning in phases.
 - 244 units are for CHA families.
 - 206 apartments in Phase 1A and 1B are leasing. 68 are CHA.
 - Phase 1C will begin construction in 2023, adding 105 units. 39 of which are CHA. Buildings planned on State Street and Dearborn
 - CHA could create residential buildings that compliment the size of the co-located school. This could lead to a denser population in the are.
 - New Wabash parcels allow for more housing developments.
 - All committed CHA rentals will return to Harol Ickes parcels.

- “Neighborhoods aren’t just housing. Neighborhoods are schools, recreation, libraries” - McKenzie.
- Two vacant properties on Wabash adjacent to southbridge may be acquired to maintain the same amount of land for CHA.
- “We strongly support this. We know that we can work together well.” McKenzie.
- There will be a working group to determine who the development moves forward.
- Discussion on Public Agenda Items.
 - Member Scott “The one thing that I would do is urge this board to have in-depth conversations with those elected officials that are local.” Continued “I think it is a lapse in judgment to withhold resources for or hold hostage those people that we want to come back to an area that they deserve to come back to. And I think it is unjust to not have a school for a community that is growing in rapid numbers.”
 - Member Chapman “This is not a one and done checkbox if this shall pass today. It is a movement forward, assertively and think about humanity along the way too.” Chapman stressed the importance of continued engagement and community feedback.
 - Member Novak “I do think that it’s important for us to think about procedure, and to make sure that we are making thorough decisions.”
 - Novak asks Martinez to clarify the voting items. Martinez clarifies that the board is voting on preliminary steps, such as acquiring the land, but not the full project.
 - “To me it sounds like the school’s going forward, and the design and the details and everything else will be decided later once we get a budget.”
 - Martinez “This is not new for our district. I think the question is ‘is it addressing a need that we have, and what is our responsibility to address our local need?’ Because as much as I’m in for building a bigger plan it’s much more complicated, it involves how we work with the state, how we work with partners and advocacy, how we get full funding.”
 - “We will be able to manage this”
 - Member Revuluri asks where the money for the project is coming from.
 - Martinez says that funding will be finalized in the capital and operating budget to be approved later.
 - Novak asks about the timeline for the lease of land.
 - General Counsel Joseph Moriarty: “The purchasing agreement would have to be signed by September 30th.”

Vote on Public Agenda Items

**Motion RE: Approval of Record of Proceedings of Meeting Open to the Public
August 24, 2022**

Approved 7 - 0

Vote on Bulk Agenda Items

Agenda 7 - 0 Medrano Novak has abstentions on PR 6 and PR 7

Seperate votes on individual items.

**Approve Entering Into an Intergovernmental Agreement and a Lease with the
Chicago Housing Authority for the Construction of a New Near South High
School on CHA Land**

Approved

Revuluri - No

Todd-Breland - No

Chapman - Yes

Medrano Novak - No

Scott - Yes

Ponder - Yes

President del Valle - Yes

**Authorization to Purchase Property at 23rd Street and South Wabash Avenue
in Connection with the Construction of a New Near South High School**

Approved

Revluri - No

Todd-Breland - No

Chapman - Yes

Medrano Novak - No

Scott - Yes

Ponder - Yes

President del Valle - Yes

Request the Public Building Commission of Chicago to Perform Formulation Services: Planning, Pre-Design and Design Services for the FY23 New Near South High School Project

Approved

Revluri - No

Todd-Breland - No

Chapman - Yes

Medrano Novak - No

Scott - Yes

Ponder - Yes

President del Valle - Yes

Procedural Votes.

Motion to enter closed session.

Closed Session

Motion to Adjourn

Meeting ends at 4:34 p.m.

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