

CB12M Youth and Education Committee

Meeting #3
Monday, March 8, 2021
Minutes

LOCATION: VIRTUAL MEETING

Committee Members Present: Fe Florimon, Chair; Waldys Cruz, Assist Chair; Glennis Aquino-Gil; Gabriela Estrella; Miriam James; Maria Luna.

Board Members: Wayne Benjamin, Chairman of Land and Use Committee, and Assistant Chair, Tanya Bonner.

Committee Member(s) Excused: Christina Richiez.
Absent: Jonathan Nunez-Frometa; Paradise Phoenix.

Public Member(s) Absent: Guillermo Perez.

Guests: SCA Team Michael Cona, Director of Real Estate; Mr. Gelman Darrell, Senior Counsel; Gayle Mandaro, Senior Director of SCA's Real Estate Services; Michael Mirisola, Director of External Affairs; Steve A. Tuozzolo, *Community Relations Manager*; **SD6 Team:** Manuel Ramirez, Superintendent of SD6; Marisol Rosales, Executive Superintendent for the Borough of Manhattan SD6; Desideree Ramos from PS.18 (on behalf of Principal Connie Mejia); Daniel Pena, Dean from PS 278 (on behalf of Principal Bryanna Velasquez).

Public Attendance: Rebecca Alicea, Family Leadership Coordinator for SD6; Blanca Battino, RTI Specialist & Fromer D6's School Principal; Gabriela Biel, Parent from PS 278 ;David Thom, Parent from PS 278; Jenny Hernandez, Parent MS05 Mellisa Williams, Parent from P.S. 278; Elisa Vanderlinde, Parent from PS 278; Yanilda Rodriguez, Parent from PS 18; Johanna Garcia, Representative from Senator Robert Jackson's Office. Ashley Del Valle, CEC6's Member;

The meeting was called to order by Chair Fe Florimon at approximately 7:02 pm.

Discussion that took place as indicated below:

Chair welcomed and thanked members, guests, and general public present. Part of the new goals of the committee it's to give members the opportunity to exercise leadership by co-chairing meetings. For this meeting member Mrs. Aquino-Gil was expected to direct today's meeting, but it was postponed and the Chair proceeded to direct the meeting.

Chair asked for committee and board members to introduce them-selves for the record. She discussed the unfolding of the agenda followed by the introduction of the guests/presenters: NYC School Construction Authority's (SCA) representatives: Michael Mirisola, *Director of External Affairs*, and Steven A. Tuozzolo, *Community Relations Manager*. Subject of Presentation: SCA's proposal for the site selection construction of a New School Building M502. Site location: 3761 10th Ave New York, NY 10034 - School District 6.

As the main presenter, Mr. Mirisola, initiated the presentation by thanking the committee for assisting the SCA's team in carrying out their mission to inform the board about what's going on in the community. He introduced the following members of his team, and their respectively roles as follow: Mr. Gelman Darrell, Senior Counsel to the SCA's Real Estate Department; Mr. Michael Cona, Director of Real Estate; Mr. Steven Tuozzolo, Community Relations Manager, and Gayle Mandaro, Senior Director of SCA's Real Estate Services.

According to the Presenter "our Charter are requires us to come before the Community Board and the general meeting and the Community education Council in their monthly general meeting to bring forward a school, a site for

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possible acquisition by the SCA.” The presenter also stated that: Although we already carried out that technical requirement we're here because we want to get the word out to as many people, and we really appreciate your giving us this time, so thank you very, very much.” Following this comment, Mr. Mirisola proceeded to share to share (visually) a document with titled “**Notice of Filing**” and anticipated that to comply with formality he had to read it as follows: “Pursuant to 1731 of the New York city School Construction Authority Act, notice has been filed for the proposed site selection of Block 2198, Lots 1&5 and any other property in the immediate vicinity which may be necessary for the proposed construction of a new, approximately 860-seat primary and intermediate school facility in Community School District No. 6, in the Borough of Manhattan.” This along with other descriptive data including site location for the new school, land square feet “property owned” were part of the document.

Although the presenter showed willingness to accept questions, he also admitted that the problem he found with possible responses is that the process still in the early stage. The public was encouraged to submit their comments by mail: New York City SCA, 30-30 Thomson Ave, Long Island City, New York 11101- Att: Gayle Mandaro or via email at sites@nycsca.org . All comments must be submitted by March 29, 2021.

Chair Florimon explained that Deputy Superintendent Rosa Argelia Arredondo was next guests on the agenda, but due to an unforeseen circumstance, couldn't attend the meeting. Instead D6 Superintendent Manuel Ramirez made a surprise appearance before the committee along with the Borough of Manhattan Executive Superintendent (ES) Marisol Rosales. Ms. Florimon encouraged the Superintendent to share his thoughts/opinions on the school proposal. For example, when the project started, how he felt about it and any additional piece of information he may want to volunteer would be much appreciated.

Mr. Ramirez indicated that from his perspective the way to handle the situation was by listening and based on the information provided he will continue the conversation. He then proceeded to introduce E.S. Ms. Rosales. After thanking everyone, Ms. Rosales, wanted “to shout out all of my colleagues, women across Manhattan as we celebrate our day. So a big shouts out to women who educate our children here in Manhattan.” Like the Superintendent, Ms. Rosales has also attended the meeting to listen to the community, and offer her support. She is excited for the project, and what it means for the children. She also thanked the SCA team.

The next speaker was Chair Wayne Benjamin from Land Use Committee. He provided brief and well-descriptive comments based on his committee's perspective. Before he got into the actual discussion of the project proposal, he mentioned that prior to the meeting a combined list of questions produced by Land Use and by Youth and Education was sent to the SCA by the board's District Manager Ebenezer Smith. He inquired if the presenters had the opportunity to review those questions in anticipation for meaningful responses and a productive conversation. Mr. Mirisola confirmed receiving and reviewing the questions and expressed willing to review them as far as possible.

Subsequently, Mr. Benjamin proceeded with a series of questions and comments from the view of the Land Use Committee. For example, in his original question he asked if there are any discretionary zoning or land issues that are involved, which he thinks there are not since SCA is exempted from zoning or can be overridden. He also stated that regardless, “schools are considered community facility uses so in the zoning that we have that would be a zoning issue.” Mr. Benjamin continued with additional questions and statements in the hope of obtaining a broader sense of the decision for the proposal. At the end of his statement, he restated that his discussion with the SCA team was from the real estate and site acquisition perspective (e.g. the purchasing of a new lease), which he believes was covered.

Ms. Florimon opened the discussion for members of the Y&E Committee and encouraged them to ask questions and share any concerns. Her initial point of concern, which she considered most valuable, was to find out how the parents and students population feel about the project? And that the committee wants to hear about their testimonials and learn about their concerns. She was expecting to learn from the schools' (PS18-PS278) Principals, and their position on the proposal. Furthermore, Ms. Florimon she asked the presenter several questions. The first question was in reference to the financial aspect of the project, and possible impact on the services needed in old schools (e.g. plumbing, ventilations system, security, and cameras).

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In addition to other inquiries, Ms. Florimon also asked if the SCA had any knowledge about the Mayor's office's report issued on August 2, 2018, referring to the "Inwood NYC Points of Agreement." In the report it appears that the City has promised to issue a "Request for Proposal (RFP)" for the development of the 4095 Ninth Ave location, which will include approximately 570 units of affordable housing, and an "Inwood Innovation Hub" that will focus on "STEM TALENT Solution." The committee also wanted to know if the new school proposal and the lack of lease renewals for both schools are related to the RFP. Additional questions were asked by Ms. Florimon including if the DOE had created any strategic plans to inform parents and students about this proposal, and if they have offered them any possible solutions in case of any unforeseen eventuality, if so, when and how? She also asked, if the old schools were on schedule for demolition. These and many other questions were asked by the Y&EC.

According to the Superintendent Ramirez's statement the plan is on the very early stages. It is three and a half years from the implementation phase, moving into the school, and he considers these conversations to be part of the Community outreach. He also stated that the SCA has recently participated in the last Community Education Council 6's (CEC6) meeting, and if necessary, as he knows the Council very well, the Council is willing to provide any additional and necessary community meetings.

Member Maria Luna discussed the two parts she focused her attention on during meeting. The first was about the construction of the new school and quality of education, which she felt the Y&EC had focused more on. And the second was the Land Use Community's Chair, who is an Architect, and knows about the requirements for construction and related matter to this project. She also expressed satisfaction for parents' participation in the process. Maria provided Spanish translation for her own statement.

Natalie Espino, Representative of President Gale Brewer's office, wanted to make sure that parents go to speak. Ms. Florimon opened the Q&A phase and encouraged parents, principals, and the general community to ask questions and to share any concerns.

Community's testimonials:

Melissa Williams, D6 Parent –PS 278, and DOE's employee expressed concern for not being able to track the number of participants in the meeting and asked if this is how the board normally does the meeting or if it was for this particular meeting only. She also acknowledged that 71 parents were present from her school (PS. 278) thanked them for attending. Ms. Williams presented a slide describing the secret to successful schools. She expressed concern for the lack of community engagement, and felt that the community's concerns have been minimized, which has resulted in the lack of trust. It is her opinion the process is not being followed right and she is very frustrated.

On behalf of School Principal Bryanna Velazquez, Daniel Pena, Dean from PS. 278 attended to inform that at this point, and like Superintendent Ramirez has stated, she needs more information about the project. She may have questions in terms of safety, and environment. Presently, she's in meeting with the Superintendent and other Principals believe that opportunities will come to speak with the community.

Gabriela Biel, parent from PS 278 is concerned with the new school's distance. According to her it "is a very long distance from most residents, and it's also dangerous crossing either over the bridge or across traffic there."

According to David Thom, Parent from PS.278 the proposal to relocate 900 students to a new school that is located, a mile away from the school's current location without showing evidence a single math, it tells you how flawed, this process was. In Mr. Thom's opinion, this project location is "utterly bizarre."

Elisa Vanderlinde, Parents from PS. 278 complained to SCA's representative Gayle Mandaro for saying that he felt that parents did not bring any value to this process, and that they represented an obstacle. In her own words she added "I am a city planner, an architect by training and I have been in public service for over 20 years, so I have been through the same process that you are currently going through, and this is appalling. I mean I'm even getting nervous on this call, because I cannot believe the worst you say it on this call. So I asked for your apology to all of us." Ms. Mandaro stated that she was misunderstood or misinterpreted, and she was terribly sorry and she certainly didn't mean to imply that; and further elaborated on her view.

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Ms. Desidere Ramos from PS.18 appeared on behalf of Principal Mejia stating that they will keep parents and staff informed with any updates during the process based on any information they receive. At this point her only concern was what would happen if for some reason they can't move into the new building within the timeframe as expected? What would be the plan? Mr. Mirisola responded that this will be the case and guaranteed that by September 2024 they will be in the new building. Ms. Ramos also stated that there were lots of parents who want to ask questions. He asked if the committee had translation services available to, which Ms. Florimon volunteered to do so.

Yanilda Rodriguez, President of Parent Association from PS 18, as a parent she feels excited about the project. This project has more advantages than disadvantages. She thinks the main objective is for the children to have a better quality of education (e.g. better technology, more space etc) and the new school may offer that. She also asked if parents can provide feedback about the project and Mr. Mirisola responded positively and encouraged all parents to participate.

Jenny Hernandez, Parents from MS05 expressed concern about possible enrollment decreasing at her school to the upcoming new schools. Mr. Ramirez responded that it's all about providing quality program, and if her school (MS05) implements programs of good quality then she shouldn't be worried. He stated that he has met with the Principal and discussed that they have 3 years to prepared and improve the school in many areas before the arrival of the new school.

Mr. Ramirez asked to be excused from the meeting, and mentioned that the Family Support Coordinator from his office Mrs. Rebecca Alicea was on the call taking notes. He also encouraged the Community to reach out to his office for comments via email.

CEC6's Member, Gabriela Biel, parent from PS 278 Ashley Del Valle, shared concerns for the lack of a plan B, on the financial aspect of the project. What would happen in case the school cannot open in September or the following year? She stated that due the pandemic many construction sites were not able to continue. She was also concerned that no data regarding the surrounding environment had not been shared or discussed.

Note: There were 150+ participants at the meeting. Only those listed were able to speak.

Johanna Garcia – Rep. for Jackson's Office

Comments:

Senator Jackson's office has yet to see directly what the plans and data look like even though there was a scouting process for sites, or there were issues with renewing the leases. It was backwards that parents found out about this second or third hand.

Questions:

What are the zoning lines going to look like for parents (seeing as it is in the zoning turf of PS 5)
What is the process in terms of the timeline in involving CEC since they have jurisdiction over approving zoning lines?
While scouting did you send it to the CEC 6 to share with parents or did you share it with parent leadership of PS 18 and PS 278 so they can also assist in finding locations.

The SCA tried to respond to as many questions as possible however, since the proposal is in its early stages many questions were not answered. As for the committees 'experiences (Y&EC and Land Use), they both learned that the lack of community engagement has been one of the most important components missing in the process according to the community at large.

Florimon asked the committees if they have any further questions or comments.

- Tanya inquired about the expiration dates of the schools' leases PS18 and PS278, remaining time and possible extensions. SCA's responded that the leases will expired in 2024, and there is not possibility for renewal.

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- Wayne discussed important dates involving this process. For example, (as previously stated) comments need to be submitted before the deadline (by March 29th), after the Boar's general, which will be held on Tuesday March 23rd. The SCA's first written notification about disclosing the proposal was dated February 12, 2021 and received by the board on February 22, 2021 (ten days behind schedule).
- Based on the information collected during this meeting, especially the input from the general community a motion was called by Chair Florimon, and seconded by Gabriela in support of a new school to accommodate the expiring leases with reservations (e.g. concern for the location, travel distance for current user of the schools, and lack of community engagement- suggested by Gabriela). The resolution is in reference to how the site selection process was undertaken. Tanya also made reference to the parents' concern about the Con Edison plant near the new school location.

The solution was passed with the following number of votes:

	Yes	Oppose	Abstain
Committee Members	5	0	0
Board Members	2	0	0
Public	7	1	0

Business / New Business:

Community Announcements – were pending for April meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14pm. Seconded by Gabriela.

NOTE: To view this meeting, please access the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7tXq0UC64E>