



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

March 15, 2011

Lorraine Grillo
President and CEO
School Construction Authority
30-30 Thompson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101

Re: Public School 51 Construction

Dear Ms. Greenberger:

The Housing, Health and Human Service Committee of Manhattan Community Board No. 4 held a meeting with parents and representatives of PS 51 at its monthly meeting on February 17, 2011 to hear their concerns regarding the school construction.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Originally condemned in 1975 for the construction of a new school and housing, the project site has been the subject of a number of unrealized development proposals, until it was identified in the January 2005 Hudson Yards Points of Agreement as a publicly-owned site on which to develop 600 units of permanently affordable housing and to construct a new and expanded P.S.51.

The new P.S.51 facility will be located on West 44th Street behind the existing school and will accommodate 650 students. It is a component of a larger residential development that encompasses almost an entire city block between West 44th and 45th Streets, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues. The residential development will include 1,210 residential units, of which 675 will be permanently affordable to families of low-, moderate- and middle-incomes.

The plan is for the current P.S.51 facility to continue to operate on the site until the new facility is ready for occupancy which is anticipated to be in the fall of 2013. After the new facility is built, the existing school will be adapted for reuse as a residential building.

CONTINUED OPERATION OF EXISTING P.S.51

Since the development was conceived, it has been our understanding that the existing P.S.51 facility will continue to operate at the same location until the new school facility is constructed, the community continues to have significant concerns. Those concerns focus on the health and safety of the students and staff during construction, and the unavoidable disruptions resultant from construction on school programming.

P.S.51 will be operating in the middle of a major construction site. Excavation, foundation work, demolition and construction will take place on all adjacencies, including construction of a structural platform and two residential buildings over the Amtrak railroad cut immediately east, demolition of one story garages to the west and new construction to the west and the construction of the new P.S.51 to the south.

The parents attending our meeting expressed a strong preference for the temporary relocation of the all the students until the construction completion. They also requested the Board assist them to investigate, understand better and inform the community on the status of the issues listed below:

The parents presented and the committee discussed extensively the feasibility of relocating the school during construction. The parents stated they understood the construction of the new PS 51 had an unavoidable construction impact. However, they objected the construction impacts resultant from the affordable housing to the east and west. They identified several possible temporary relocation sites. The Board agreed to investigate the feasibility of those sites. The sites included:

- Holy Cross School at 332 West 43rd Street and
- The New York Public Library Beekman site

Mitigation of health impacts during demolition and construction

- The installation of new air conditioners throughout the existing PS 51 building to minimize noise and reduce construction dust
 - Please specify the number of new air conditioners being installed and the number of air conditioners being repaired.
 - Please note the date by which all air conditioners will be replaced or repaired.
- The installation of temporary window seals for construction dust protection
- The installation of air purifiers for all classrooms, library, cafeteria and nurse's office
- It is our understanding that testing of the indoor air quality will be conducted both at the time of the air conditioner installation and separately by the UFT and we ask that those results are shared with CB4. Additional testing should be conducted as needed and under a schedule agreed to by the PS 51 Community Advisory Construction Task Force

Matthews/Palmer Park as the designated temporary PS 51 school playground

- Provision of daily cleaning of the bathrooms located in the park
 - Lengthen the pedestrian crossing phase at Tenth Avenue and 45th Street during the period of construction.
 - Install a School Safety Officer at park during school use from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
 - Provide a nurse on-site at the park during hours of School use.
 - Confirm that the hours for the Crossing Guard at Tenth Avenue and 45th Street will be extended to include 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
 - Confirm that P.S.51 students and staff will have exclusive use of Matthews/Palmer Park between 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Noise Relief during Standardized Testing

- Extending the no construction work days from six (6) to ten (10) days in May 2011 during Department of Education Standardized Testing.

The PS 51 Environmental Impact Statement will be placed on the CB4 website and sent to the School. The parents have requested the addendum Report be obtained and posted as well.

CB4 continues to have ongoing concerns for the vulnerable school-age population during construction. All possible steps must be taken to minimize disruption, lessen health impacts and ensure regular communication with all constituents.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to continued dialogue.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair

Manhattan Community Board 4 Housing, Health & Human Services Committee



Joe Restuccia, Co-Chair

[signed 3/15/11]

Barbara Davis, Co- Chair

Housing, Health & Human Services Committee

cc: D. Walcott, Deputy Mayor
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
NYS Senator Thomas Duane
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
Clinton Block Associations
The Gotham Organization (Melissa Pianko)
P.S.51 Nancy Sing-Bock,
P.S.51 Parent Teacher Association, President - Katherine Consuelo Johnson
NYC DOE Micah Lasher