Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Best Practice High School
January 20, 2012; 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Cregier (Noble Street – Bulls), 2040 W. Adams

CPS Staff in Attendance
Sasha Tuzel, Arnie Rivera, Jeneen Hatoum, Susan Ryan, Barbara Dubielak-Wood, Debbie Jobst, Lafayette Ford, Elizabeth Fisk, Efran Castaneda, Willie Sims, William Valentin, Mike Clark

Brief Summary
The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Best Practice High School, an existing phase out school, in accordance with Public Act 097-0474. CPS officials made a brief presentation regarding the proposal. There were approximately 55 community members in attendance and 13 speakers. Public comments focused on a variety of topics including: support of the plan to close Best Practice, emphasizing the importance of a high-quality education, and that they would like to see CPS use the proposal as an opportunity to reinvest in the schools and provide students with excellent educational opportunities. A “Fix our schools” chant began at about 7:00PM. Additionally the comment “If you don’t fix them kids are going to fix you ’cause you are not educating them” was made. Mr. Rivera invited the audience to attend the public hearing on January 25, 2012.

CPS Presentation
Arnie Rivera welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting and the CPS staff in attendance. He covered the ground rules for the meeting. He also relayed the date of the public hearing, January 20, 2012 and January 25, 2012 respectively. Jeneen Hatoum then gave the presentation.

Public Comment

Jeannette Farmer
Ms. Farmer stated that they are sick and we are tired. They want efficient and effective changes, and to stop moving students around. Give them a home so they can accomplish their goals.

Daryl Hill
Mr. Hill stated that CPS should fix it. Fix the school system. We are tired of politicians and the school board talking and doing nothing. Kids in the suburbs, their schools are being fixed. Fix it. This money is going inside CPS pockets. I am not going to talk soft. Fix our schools because if you don’t fix it you are going to feel the repercussions behind it from the kids. Fix our schools. Fix them.

Melvyn Lenton
Mr. Lenton stated that he was here to tell the board of education that they are teaching the same way they taught 40 years ago. The schools are warehousing our children. He feels that the whole system stinks. They are not being trained to compete on the world stage. If we do that, we won’t have to come to these meetings any more.
Dr. Silfredo Gonzalez
Dr. Gonzalez stated that reform of schools is good. Best Practice has been on probation. We believe in change and desire better education. The decision was made some time ago. At some time we have to draw the line, for our future for our children. We must open better schools for our students. For some reason, the union is standing in the way for our children. CPS must do right for our children. We need to have a competitive program for our children.

Carl Hunter
Mr. Hunter stated that it’s time for change. The system has been sending our children to jail, prison and getting them killed because they aren’t being taught. CPS needs a new system and should build it to educate kids.

Rev. Oscar Avila
Rev. Avila is father of two children who attend CPS. He thinks it’s in our best interest to have our children go to schools that have all of the resources that they need. They are the future of this country. They need to be challenged. Some of us don’t have the money we need to send them to a private school or to another district because the school in our community isn’t serving their needs. CPS needs to do whatever it can to provide for our children.

Lester Williams
Mr. Williams is from this community and his daughter came to this school. He stated that some of the teachers are very limited themselves. When all is said and done they are going to close the school anyway. In the suburbs they give them computers and afterschool programs. We don’t have anything in Black and Hispanic communities. They learn to gang bang, or go to jail because they have no one to teach them. Teachers are supposed to teach the children. When they come home we need to teach them. Other than that you all buy new cars and new houses.

Jay Gonzalez-afterschool program teacher at a church
Mr. Gonzalez stated that CPS is supposed to provide the highest level of education. They are not. He did research for the examinations they give at school PSAT and ACT. Best Practice and 3 other schools had only 11th percentile. Either the teachers aren’t doing their job or it is the administration. He said all should look at the facts and the evidence that we have. The teachers and administration are not living up to expectations. We have these tests that categorize the students. CPS is supposed to be providing the highest level of education. They are wasting our time and the students’ time as well.

Michael Curry
Mr. Curry agreed with everybody who spoke. Better teachers, better programs. He is a Carver Military Academy grad. Kids also had lower test scores when he went to school there, too, but they opened up his opportunities and he graduated. You don’t want the gangs. We want better schools for our kids and better opportunities. It’s better to keep kids in public schools and not send them to private schools.
**Natascha Tribelett**
Ms. Tribelett is from the neighborhood. She thinks it’s important that students should have their moment of silent time where they can pray. They took that away. We stop in class and acknowledge other people. We should let students get to know God.

**Thomas Woods**
Mr. Woods grew up in Chicago. He stated that today we are at a crossroads crisis that’s going to affect all of us. As a child where he grew up, they were all neighbors. They didn’t need as much money as we need now to keep our kids educated. The green party suggests that we can best solve this problem by taxing the system. This should be enough to pay off pensions, be able to lower property taxes, and educate our kids. We should give our kids some rules about how to be successful. You have to work very hard to get ahead. We all have to pitch in. We can save our young people tell them they have to follow the rules, there are no exceptions. We need to make sure that the Board understands that we have to have rules for students. We shouldn’t be moving them around the city and endangering their lives. Schools in their communities so they can walk. They shouldn’t be afraid. The reason they don’t participate in park programs is that the parks don’t have the right people running them. You have to remember we have to bring our neighbors out. The ones not here need to participate in the process.

**Donald Saterfield**
Kids are supposed to have education in school. If they don’t have that we won’t have anything.

**Melvin Fagan**
Mr. Fagan stated that you got your education and now our children need to get theirs.

Public Comment concluded at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Rivera reiterated that all were invited to attend the public hearing on January 25, 2012.