

Board of Education of the

City of Chicago

In Re: The Matter of the Proposal

To Locate

James R. Doolittle Jr. with Chicago High School for the Arts

Heard Before

Judge Charles R. Winkler (ret.)

An Independent Hearing Officer

Report of the proceedings held on January 26, 2012 in the hearing room of the Chicago Board of Education at 125 S. Clark Street, Chicago.

Included herein are summaries of the statements of the 28 people who testified at the hearing and a review of the 15 faxes and e-mails received by CPS and forwarded to the hearing officer. In addition, the hearing officer reviewed the transcripts of the hearings conducted January 6, 2012 and January 20, 2012, regarding the same subject matter.

Lastly, the hearing officer will set for his findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction

At 5:30 p.m. on Thursday January 26, 2012, a hearing convened at the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 125 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of the hearing was to enable the hearing Officer to received public comments from concerned persons, specifically including representatives of the CEO, members of the local school councils, parents of the schools' students, members of the staffs, the Principals, students, concerning the CEO's

proposed co-location of Chicago High School for the Arts with James R. Doolittle school. The proposal would expand the location of Chi Arts, currently at 521 E. 35th Street into the same CPS facility as Doolittle, located at 535 E. 35th Street. A Certified Court Reporter transcribed the Hearing.

Notice of the Public Hearing was served on the parents, teachers, staffs, Principals, and members of the Local School Councils of the affected schools via U.S. Mail, as required by Illinois law, and/or the Board's applicable Policies, Guidelines and Procedures. Notice of the Hearing was also served via hand delivery to the schools. Finally, Notice of the Hearing was swerved upon the public by newspaper publication in the Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Tribune Newspapers. (CPS Exhibit E in Binder).

Approximately 68 individuals attended the Public Hearing, not including representatives from CPS. Approximately 29 individuals signed in to make public comments on the CEO's proposal, and everyone who wanted to make a public comment did in fact testify (28). Moreover, the Hearing Officer left the record open in this matter until 5:00 p.m. on Friday January 27, 2012 thus allowing an additional opportunity for written commentary from the public. Additional comments were in fact received after the Hearing and they are summarized herein.

The undersigned summarizes below the input received relevant to the issue of whether the CEO's proposal that Chicago High School for the Arts located at 521 E. 35th Street be co-located at the end of the current school year with James R. Doolittle Elementary School, located at 535 E. 35th Street as a result of Chi Arts needing additional capacity for 150 Freshmen to enter in the Fall of 2012, Doolittle having a declining enrollment and the CPS' position that the existing Doolittle building is adequate to house the two schools, which would share the building

and the surrounding campus. Presently both schools occupy separate buildings not far from each other. In a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed on July 1, 2011, the schools agreed to share space. The CPS proposal would go further by placing the two schools in one building, with separate entrances and stairways. If the proposal is approved, a new MOU would be signed by Chi Arts and Doolittle.

Summary of Evidence

CPS opened with presenting a binder to the Hearing Officer who received it in evidence. The testimony and written statements of James Dispensa, Cory Davis and Jadine Chou contained therein were in support of the central contention of CPS that (1) the additional 150 students added to Chi Arts' present enrollment along with (2) plans to repair and upgrade the Doolittle building, including the installation of an elevator, and (3) additional equipment to upgrade security for both schools, would be sufficient to move the proposed co-location of the two schools to the next phase, the completion of the planned project.

After CPS completed its presentation, a short break at 6:30 p.m. was followed by opening up the meeting to hear the comments of those who had signed up to speak. The central contention of the speakers who were mostly mothers of Chi Arts students focused on (1) lack of security, (2) inadequacy of the space to be occupied by Chi Arts' students, (3) putting the Chi Arts and Doolittle students in the same building (4) the failure of CPS to establish a centrally located building to house Chi Arts.

The following is a summary of the speaker comments. Chi Arts (CA), Doolittle (DO)

1. Kristina Roque (CA): bad to put the two schools together
2. Mimi Simon (CA): not a safe place, robberies and shootings

3. Lynn Burmeister (CA): lack of safety, Chi Arts needs its own building
4. Janice Show (Teacher at DO): object to two schools together, safety issue
5. Catherine Kirkland (CA): present CA building and location is not adequate, suggested other locations
6. Rita Falcon (CA): safety issue, violence around the school
7. Tameka Diggs (DO): safety issue, violence around school, DO lacks books and computers
8. Sherry Swan (DO): safety issue
9. Annie Pieniacha (CA): school should be centrally located, her child travels a long distance
10. Julian Brown (CA): safety concerns
11. Cynthia Smith (CA): suggested various sites for CA, safety concerns against co-sharing
12. Gladys Hansen-Guerra (CA): two kids at CA, safety concerns, suggested an advisory committee, Board and CA work together, plans moving forward
13. Gwynda Jones (CA): her daughter selected CA over St. Ignatius and Frances Parker, said CPS live up to your promise, put CA in a good, safe location
14. Suzanne Pierce-Coggins (CA): safety issue, security for the kids
15. Karen Manfred (CA): safety, child passes both campuses, day and evening
16. Laura Owen: looking to see the permanent location for CA
17. DK Edwards (CA): pointed out the short comings of DO facility for CA students – the DO platform (ie: stage) not big enough, CA students have to go to other schools for programs, the logistics in moving kids in and out, parking and auditorium, lacking space, called CA a gem

18. Sherry Jones: give us what we want
19. George Sanders: like to see school make progress
20. Dorothy Moore (CA): would like to see CA renamed Maggie Daley School for Performing Arts
21. Alma Moreno: the five million spent on co-location could be better spent on a new stand along CA building, presently CA small and inadequate
22. James Moran (CA): against putting both schools together
23. Kimberly Bowsky, teacher, addressed questions to School Board members – are you still accepting students at DO? Parents of CA and DO should join together and fight for what they need
24. Kathleen Murray, Chicago Teachers Union: start figuring a better place for CA and DO
25. Vicky Thomas (CA): her child in first year, highly motivated, afraid to go to school (security issue)
26. Kevin Korschen, teacher at CA expressed his passion for the future development of a new CA facility, school has potential to be labeled “excellent”
27. Darryl Thomas, parent: safety issues
28. David Leary, architect: not a good idea putting the two schools in one building

The comments received by e-mails and faxes after the hearing closed on January 26, 2012 for the most part mirror the testimony heard on the 26th. Therefore, they will not be summarized.

I acknowledge and thank the following for their submissions:

Gwynda Jones, Anne Ware, James Moran, Mike Crowcock, Cynthia Smith, Margaret Nielson, Susan Attea, Michelle Perez and Bianca Corral, one unidentified person, Waldemar and Norma Zambrano, Michelle F. Sfahani, Brenda Wilkerson, Lynn E. Burnmeister, Donna Tague.

The Summary of the Community Meetings on January 6, 2012 and January 20, 2012, have been available for public view. I note after reading this that the comments made at the two hearings are similar to those previously described in this report.

This completes the summary of the evidence.

Documents given special attention

1. Petitions signed by 256 concerned parents and others, received in evidence and reviewed by me. Again, the strong feelings of those most affected by what is going on at Chi Arts and Doolittle is heard.
2. The e-mails and letter of Lynn E. Burnmeister showing a commitment and passion to move forward to provide an acceptable venue for Chi Arts.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

CPS has complied with the law and its own internal procedural rules in timely notifying the public and all others who would have an interest in the proposal of CPS to co-locate Chi Arts and Doolittle. CPS has conducted three hearings, two at the community level and the one I presided over pursuant to law.

CPS has clearly stated its position as to why its proposal should move forward. The concerned parents, teachers and other interested people have raised strong and legitimate concerns, at times arguments, attaching the proposal as not good for the Chi Arts or the Doolittle

kids. Documented by police reports are incidents of crime. There is theft, violence, vandalism and robbery at Chi Arts. The children have expressed their fears to their parents. They attack the soundness of placing grade school children with high school children. They question the adequacy of parking, a stage for performing arts, the location of the building. They are frustrated and some are angry, that this proposal is just another delay in the commitment of CPS to provide a stand alone building in a central location for Chi Arts.

At the first community hearing on January 6, 2012, Tim Cawley, Chief Administrative Officer of the CPS stated "we believe strongly that this is a temporary situation. We are trying hard to find a permanent home for Chi Arts for their final move." "We have some alternatives that we think will be great for it that they could move into, we believe, in two years."

The safety issue has been addressed by the CPS in their proposal. I find that they have, within their ability, provided for the safety of the children. Much depends on the police and concerned citizens living in the community.

I find that Chi Arts must accommodate 150 more students within seven months and that although not the best solution, the proposal to co-locate will have to do for the present time.

I further find that CPS has not fulfilled the promise to find a suitable free standing building in a central location within a reasonable time frame to house Chi Arts.

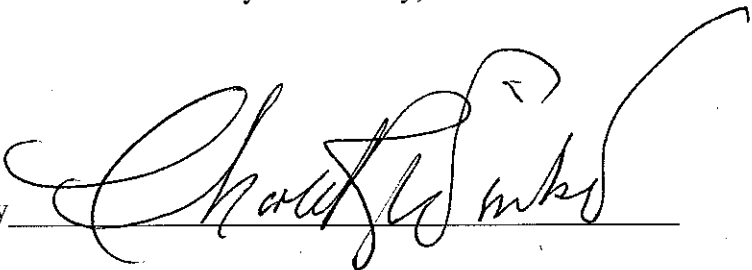
In this respect, I recommend that CPS form a committee and ask the following parents to serve: Lynn Burnmeister, Gwynda Jones, DK Edwards. I also suggest teacher Kevin Korschsen be included. The purpose is obvious.

Meetings should be held at least ever four months to move this issue of a permanent home for Chi Arts to resolution.

Over time, promises unkept, become lies.

Based on the record set forth at the hearing on January 26, 2012 and my findings, I conclude that CPS has supported the proposal to co-locate Chicago High School for the Arts with James R. Doolittle School.

Submitted this 7th Day of February, 2012

By 
Charles R. Winkler