

1 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
2 FY2019 CAPITAL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

3 Held on

4 July 19, 2018

5 At

6 6:00 o'clock p.m.

7 At

8 1145 West Wilson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

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12 STENOGRAPHIC REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS had
13 in the above-entitled cause held at Truman
14 College, 1145 West Wilson Avenue, Chicago,
15 Illinois, Richard Smith, presiding.
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23 Reported by: Tracy Jones, CSR, RPR, CLR

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1 (Call to order.)

2 MR. SMITH: Good evening, everyone. Thanks
3 for coming. We appreciate it.

4 My name is Richard Smith. I am the
5 acting Chief of Schools for Network 6 for the
6 Chicago Public Schools, and I'm here just to sort
7 of moderate things tonight.

8 We'll go through the rules in a minute,
9 but I would first like to introduce the people on
10 the stage. To my left is Mark Sitkowski. He's
11 the Assistant Budget Director for Chicago Public
12 Schools. And to my right is Arnie Rivera, and
13 he's the Chief Operating Officer for the Chicago
14 Public Schools. And we're going to start with
15 about five minutes of comments from Mr. Rivera,
16 and then we'll go right to the public
17 participation.

18 MR. RIVERA: Thank you, Dick.

19 Good evening, everyone. As Richard
20 mentioned, my name is Arnie Rivera. I'm the Chief
21 Operating Officer for Chicago Public Schools, also
22 a former teacher, husband of a CPS teacher, and
23 more importantly, I'm a parent of a CPS student.
24 So obviously, I look at this work not just from a



1 professional perspective, but through a personal
2 lens and understanding the importance of these
3 forums, but also the work that we're doing overall
4 from a District perspective.

5 I'm happy to present the proposed capital
6 plan for FY19. I'm happy to hear your comments
7 after my quick presentation.

8 So most of you know our Capital Budget
9 funds long-term investments for facilities in our
10 schools, renovations, new construction, as well as
11 any other investments that complement our
12 educational programs. Our FY19 Capital Budget has
13 been funded through the issuance of bonds as well
14 as a number of external sources, including TIF
15 funding, as well a number bonds.

16 MR. SMITH: We have Spanish and Mandarin.

17 Does anybody need Spanish translation?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. SMITH: Does anybody need Mandarin
20 translation?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. SMITH: Okay. And we have those.

23 MEMBER OF ASSEMBLY: Do you want to ask in
24 those languages?



1 MR. SMITH: In those languages. And we have
2 sign language.

3 MR. RIVERA: They're saying that they should
4 ask in those languages so that people who are
5 spanish speaking can hear it in Spanish.

6 Do you want to stand up and ask it in
7 Spanish.

8 THE SPANISH INTERPRETER: (Speaking Spanish.)

9 (No response.)

10 THE MANDARIN INTERPRETER: (Speaking Mandarin.)

11 (No response.)

12 MR. RIVERA: Thank you.

13 So the improvement of CPS's fiscal
14 situation has allowed us to propose a Capital
15 Budget that is the largest over 20 years. And to
16 provide some context, last year's Capital Budget
17 was just over \$100 million. And what we are
18 proposing for the FY19 Capital Budget is
19 \$989 million, which we're obviously very excited
20 to be able to have access that we haven't had in
21 recent years.

22 We'll get a little more granular, but
23 some of the key highlights of our Capital Budget
24 this year include the first round of a three-year,



1 \$75 million investment to ensure that all of our
2 high schools across the district have access to a
3 state-of-the-art science lab. We're making sure
4 as part of a four-year, \$125 million investment,
5 we're making investments and making sure that all
6 of our schools in the District have access to
7 devices, infrastructure, and software from an
8 IT perspective.

9 We're starting off our full-day preschool
10 expansion. We're expanding almost 4,000 additional
11 full-day pre-K seats. And we have capital
12 investment to support that initiative. And there
13 are a number of investments in the Capital
14 Investment Board that extend that and support
15 classroom expansion on a more granular level.

16 So when we take a look at how we're
17 evaluating our Capital Budget, we really break it
18 down to three key areas. One, deferred
19 maintenance, making sure that we're keeping our
20 schools warm, safe, and dry; educational programs,
21 and overcrowding relief.

22 Within the deferred maintenance, a lot of
23 what we do focused on roof masonry, HVAC, other
24 mechanical systems, fire alarms, security



1 equipment, and also making sure that we're doing
2 AC replacement, playground repairs and upgrades,
3 as well as new playgrounds across the city. One
4 of things that was very important to Dr. Jackson
5 and myself is making sure that we really spread
6 out these investments across the city. So what
7 you'll see is a lot of these investments are very
8 geographically distributed.

9 So real quick, I won't get into each of
10 these bullets, but ultimately, these are key
11 considerations and strategies across these three
12 areas. Deferred maintenance, we have about
13 \$1.8 billion dollars in critical need, almost
14 \$34 million for maintenance.

15 As we take a look at our educational
16 programs, as I mentioned, this budget does allow
17 us to make some key investments, allows us to
18 monitor and increase access to high quality
19 programs.

20 And then we also have the opportunity to
21 address short-term or immediate overcrowding
22 concerns, but making sure that we're making
23 investments in areas that have continued to
24 increase in population and are projected to



1 increase over the next few years.

2 The next slide shows how the \$989 million
3 of the Capital Budget was funded. 189 million of
4 that was from initial bonds that were issued
5 earlier this year; 290 in additional general
6 obligation bonds the District will issue this
7 fall, \$35 million out of a capital improvement
8 tax; \$50 million in federally funded projects;
9 \$50 million in capital transfer accounts, and then
10 \$305 million, again, that will be issued in
11 subsequent years as the majority of these projects
12 will be multi-year in nature.

13 So when we continue to look at things on
14 a granular level, this is how the 989 breaks out,
15 which we'll be getting into in more detail, but
16 it's 336 million in critical needs, 339 million
17 for programmatic investments, 138 million in
18 overcrowding relief; 88 million in IT, security,
19 and building enhancements, and 50 million of that
20 being the IT investment that I mentioned earlier;
21 \$46 million in site improvements, primarily in
22 playgrounds, play lots, as well as turf fields;
23 \$25 million in project support services to manage
24 the capital projects; and around \$16 million in



1 land acquisitions for a couple of key projects
2 that were in this budget to make up the full 989.

3 Taking a look at the critical need as
4 well as the programmatic investments, the lion's
5 share of the 336 are going to be new roofs as well
6 as masonry. The next big ticket item there is
7 mechanical. \$40 million in regards to contingency
8 moving into the school year. I think this gives
9 us flexibility in the event of unanticipated
10 repairs or just if our schools get to a point
11 where we need to address problems that aren't
12 identified in the Capital Plan but that manifest
13 themselves during the course of the years. They
14 involve about \$3 million for chimney stabilization
15 across the city.

16 On the programmatic side, we have --
17 we've already announced a replacement school for
18 Hancock High School, which is on the Southwest
19 Side of the city, as well as a new high school on
20 the near West Side, which we will work with the
21 community to identify the right location and their
22 needs.

23 If you take a look on down, you'll see
24 Hyde Park High School, that was wall to wall



1 program a few years ago. And we're finishing up
2 some renovations there to make sure that the
3 students there have the necessary investments to
4 align with the IB curriculum. Prosser High School
5 is actually adding a program, a vocational
6 program, so we're allocating some funding to build
7 out the necessary space at that school.

8 Senn High School, Rickover. So many of
9 you know that Senn High School and Rickover have
10 been co-located in the same facilities since 2005.
11 We're making investments to both the prior
12 property and to renovate the space so that
13 Rickover can have sole occupancy in the building,
14 and then we're also making some investments in
15 Senn which will allow them to renovate the space
16 so that as sole tenants of the facility, there's a
17 smoother transition across the school.

18 We're making some key investments for
19 Poe, McDade, and Decatur. These were three
20 classroom schools serving only a K through 6
21 population. There's been significant demand to
22 allow for expansion of the 7th and 8th grade. So
23 we're finally able to make that commitment as far
24 as the Capital Budget. McCutcheon Elementary, not



1 too far from here, is also getting an investment
2 to allow for a gym and some ancillary space for
3 the school.

4 we have a number of schools that are
5 going to extend to magnet, and we are also, as I
6 mentioned earlier, doing a three-year, \$75 million
7 dollar school science lab initiative, of which
8 \$28 million and 28 high schools will benefit from
9 that each year.

10 As I mentioned, we are expanding full-day
11 pre-K for 4-year-olds and have almost 4,000 slots.
12 So we have some corresponding capital investments
13 to support that work.

14 Phillips High School over in Bronzeville
15 is getting a new gymnasium and turf field. We're
16 doing similar to what we did in Back of the Yards,
17 we're working to identify a Chicago Public Library
18 co-location with a school with a high school on
19 the West Side.

20 As we go down the list, let me talk about
21 overcrowding relief. Dirksen, Palmer, Rogers, and
22 Waters are all getting enhancements to help
23 alleviate the crunch of pretty significant
24 population in the Belmont Cragin neighborhood. We



1 are working with the community to identify a
2 school to meet the needs of that increased
3 population across a number of schools and also
4 some concerns with regards to how the schools are
5 currently laid out.

6 \$88 million in IT, as I mentioned
7 earlier. \$50 million of that is going to go
8 towards -- in the first payment towards making
9 sure that all of our schools have the right
10 infrastructure devices and software and that every
11 school in the District has access to the most
12 modern technology.

13 And then the last page, or the last line,
14 I should say, we're doing \$46 million of site
15 improvements, primarily spaces for playgrounds,
16 play lots, turf fields, as well as some other
17 projects that we're fortunate to be able to do
18 with the help of TIF funding as well as funding
19 from other elected officials; the \$25 million that
20 I mentioned earlier to manage the capital projects
21 and the \$16 million for land acquisition.

22 And the last slide that we wanted to show
23 was just how these projects are distributed across
24 the city. We feel strongly that we have the



1 ability to do -- almost a billion dollars of
2 capital helps us to balance both the deferred
3 maintenance, modernization of our schools and some
4 key programmatic initiatives. We know that there
5 is still a lot of need out there, and not
6 everything that folks desired is in here. But we
7 also feel strongly with the increased financial
8 stability of the District, that moving forward, we
9 should have continued increase in our market
10 access.

11 So that concludes my presentation, and I
12 look forward to hearing from you.

13 MR. SMITH: I was told we have a timekeeper
14 here?

15 THE TIMEKEEPER: Present.

16 MR. SMITH: So just so I know how this works,
17 you're going to hold it up?

18 I'm going to read the rules for tonight's
19 public speaking. So please, if you're going to
20 speak, listen carefully.

21 This will end at 8:00 o'clock, or once
22 the last speaker speaks. If that's before
23 8:00 o'clock, that's when we'll end. But
24 8:00 o'clock is when we'll end, so hopefully we



1 can get all the speakers up here on time.

2 You will be able to talk for two minutes.

3 And the timekeeper here will -- You're going to

4 hold up one minute, and you're going to hold up

5 30 seconds, and you're going to hold up "Time is

6 up." So I've been on this side before when I was

7 a school principal speaking, and I know it can be

8 a little hard when you only talk for two minutes,

9 and it can be a little discombobulating when

10 somebody is holding up a sign in front of you.

11 And I know it is difficult, but we would love it

12 if you would cooperate and try to stay to those

13 two minutes so everybody can get in before

14 8:00 o'clock. So thank you.

15 I've had my phone all charged up ready to

16 go with my stopwatch on. I'm glad you're here.

17 Speakers will be called up in the order

18 that they've signed up. Please limit your topic

19 to the Capital Plan. We already talked about the

20 two minutes. When multiple speakers from the same

21 organization or school are listed, only one member

22 from that organization or school will be allowed

23 to speak regarding the same issue.

24 If you have a follow-up question



1 regarding what you want to talk about, please,
2 outside, our CPS staff members are in the lobby,
3 and they have a card that is a follow-up card that
4 you can complete. And you will get a response to
5 your follow-up question.

6 As you probably know, the full Capital
7 Plan is on the CPS website. You can provide
8 feedback or any questions on that website, and
9 that's cps.edu/capitalplan.

10 And so we will now proceed with the
11 presentations. And as we do at Board meetings,
12 we're going to follow the protocol of CPS Board
13 meetings where we will allow our elected
14 representatives to speak first. And we have two
15 representatives today.

16 Now, we have a microphone over here. Is
17 there a microphone over there? I can't see it on
18 the other side of the podium. So this is our only
19 microphone, to our left. So I would like to start
20 with Alderman John Arena from ward 45.

21 ALDERMAN ARENA: Thank you for this
22 opportunity, Mr. Rivera. I'm going to keep the
23 pleasantries short, because I have two minutes and
24 I want to stick to --



1 Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen, for
2 this opportunity; and, Mr. Rivera, thanks for
3 being here. We've worked together, and we
4 continue working together. I'm here to talk about
5 some of the capital issues that we've discussed in
6 the past. I did receive a letter from -- signed
7 by the Mayor and Janice Jackson that speaks to two
8 particular capital improvements in the 45th ward,
9 Farnsworth Park and Schurz turf field. Again, it
10 goes into a few operating investments in the ward.

11 And the reason why I think I'm here today
12 is because one critical component of -- that
13 should have come from years ago, 2016, when I
14 voted for the CIT budget, and the City budget that
15 included the CIT levy, and Schurz Field and Pitch
16 Field, Farnsworth, the Annex Step Crossing, and
17 St. Cornelius Early Education Center, were all
18 negotiated with CPS to be done to deal with the
19 overcrowding issues in my K through 8 schools. So
20 when I look at this and I see Farnsworth Field,
21 which is -- funding is comprised of \$100,000 of
22 automatic money, \$400,000 of TIF funds, and half a
23 million dollars of water Reclamation funds for
24 their uses, and then Schurz Field is entirely TIF



1 funded, it's a bit of an insult that the about
2 \$5 million we need to make the early education
3 center at St. Cornelius a reality is not in a
4 billion dollar proposal.

5 In the operating investment, I have four
6 schools that are -- that are touted as getting
7 expanded pre-K programs. My challenge to you is
8 where are we going to put those classrooms when
9 the reason why we've identified the opportunity to
10 open up 14 classrooms in the St. Cornelius
11 facility was specifically to address the plan to
12 expand the full-day pre-K?

13 So Beaubien, that has one pre-K
14 classroom, and is at capacity, how exactly do you
15 propose to do this? Two years after the 45th ward
16 was promised, that I voted to raise the taxes for
17 my constituents, and I can't get a clear answer on
18 when we're going to fund this proposal. So I'm
19 really incredibly frustrated.

20 And besides all the other issues with
21 we're building new schools in places where we have
22 capacity in other schools, and we have schools
23 that are horribly overcrowded and in desperate
24 need of deferred maintenance, that we are



1 misappropriating these funds in terms of what does
2 the system need.

3 Please go back, re-look at this, and make
4 sure that you are addressing the problems that
5 exist in the system today, and reject building new
6 schools on top of places where we don't need them.

7 We need to have an honest conversation
8 with our constituents about school boundaries and
9 about reallocating where kids go to school, and
10 have an honest conversation that a great school is
11 only a great school because the parents put the
12 time, energy, and their investment in making it a
13 great school. It is not only just the dollars
14 that go into the bricks and mortar.

15 So please, I beg you, as a member of the
16 City Council, and I know a lot of my colleagues
17 are feeling the same kind of wrong-sighted
18 allocation of funds in an understandably political
19 year, let's put that aside. Let's do what we need
20 to do to make sure that all of our students have
21 what they need, and readdress this budget at this
22 time. Thank you.

23 MR. SMITH: Thank you, Alderman Arena.

24 Alderman Cappleman.



1 ALDERMAN CAPPLEMAN: Thank you so much. I
2 just found out about this meeting about ten
3 minutes ago.

4 I want to talk about one school that you
5 helped that means so much to me and so much to our
6 students, and that's McCutcheon. McCutcheon was
7 built in 1971, and it had no gym. That means the
8 kids had to go next door. They rented one; but if
9 it was raining or snowing or any type of inclement
10 weather, they missed out. Because that gym is not
11 ADA compliant, that means children who rely on
12 wheelchairs were going to be left out. And anyone
13 who's in a wheelchair, they already feel too left
14 out.

15 I can't speak to the process that CPS
16 uses to make decisions about capital improvements.
17 It's very complex, and it still needs work. I'm
18 not here to -- I'm here to say that there is more
19 work that needs to be done. But I'm also here to
20 say thank you to this school.

21 This school is also, 20 percent of its
22 students are experiencing homelessness. Within
23 six blocks, I think, five blocks of that
24 particular school, we have seven homeless



1 shelters, including a shelter focused on domestic
2 violence, the only domestic violence shelter in
3 the Midwest focused on families that are
4 immigrants. So it was so, so important that you
5 stepped up, and the students and the teachers and
6 our Principal Kram, thank you so much.

7 MR. SMITH: Thank you, Alderman.

8 I would like ask Justin Heath, who is
9 here on behalf of Alderman Villegas from the 36th
10 Ward. Justin.

11 MR. HEATH: Good evening, gentlemen. Thank
12 you.

13 My name is Justin Heath. I'm the
14 Director of Policy for Alderman Villegas. I would
15 like to just read a letter from the Alderman.

16 A recent -- The recent release of the
17 Chicago Public Schools FY2019 Capital Improvement
18 Plan has drawn a great deal of attention from the
19 36th ward, and I wanted to share with you a few
20 thoughts. First and foremost, I appreciate the
21 new investment in our schools. The plan includes
22 desperately needed additional resources at schools
23 like Locke Elementary and Prosser Career Academy,
24 and I look forward to seeing those improvements as



1 soon as possible.

2 Similarly, it appears the need to ease
3 the overcrowding in elementary schools on the
4 Northwest Side are well underway. I know that you
5 will continue to involve the community as this
6 process moves forward, and you deserve credit for
7 this new path.

8 On the other hand, I feel the need to
9 share with you my disappointment that the much
10 discussed Hanson Park Elementary Annex was not
11 included in the 2019 plan. Hanson Park is one of
12 the top-performing schools in your system, even
13 though students are being taught both in hallways
14 and a neighboring church without proper heating
15 and cooling. I have toured the facility with your
16 team three times over the last three years, and no
17 one has argued that more improvements are
18 desperately needed.

19 Finally, I wish to remind you that the
20 fastest growing population within the city is
21 Latino families, and they currently also make up
22 the largest population in your schools. Last
23 year's budget neglected Latinos, and you faced a
24 significant backlash. This year's budget is



1 nominally better, but we must continue to make
2 progress. Latinos have been ignored for far too
3 long; and until our students and schools are
4 treated equally, Chicago's Latino community will
5 push back. I am optimistic, however, that the new
6 program for early childhood care and the new
7 investments in Belmont Cragin are positive signs
8 of a future Chicago Public School system that will
9 be warm and welcoming to all Chicagoans,
10 regardless of their ethnicity.

11 Alderman Villegas.

12 Appreciate it.

13 MR. SMITH: Thank you very much.

14 For the rest of the speakers, what we're
15 going to do is call everybody up five people at a
16 time. And so when the last person in the group of
17 five is going to speak, we're going to call the
18 other five. And we're going to go in order that I
19 say the names, and that's the order in which
20 you've signed up to speak.

21 So the first five speakers will be
22 starting with Regina Hawley Williams, Fatima
23 Peters, Steve Fix, Zoe Fix Zalkind, and Dawne
24 Moon. Will you please speak in that order,



1 please.

2 So we're starting with Regina.

3 MS. HAWLEY WILLIAMS: Good evening, Board
4 members, CPS family, and partners. I am Regina
5 Hawley Williams, a proud parent of a Sullivan High
6 School senior. Also, I am the LSC chair. On
7 behalf of our principal and Sullivan, we would
8 like to thank you for the capital investments made
9 to Sullivan High School. The academic investment
10 will serve 60 percent of our bilingual students.
11 Our science labs are being upgraded, which have
12 not been updated since the '60s. We are also able
13 to employ one full-time social worker, who
14 services 15 percent of our homeless students.
15 Also we're also to employ one full-time special
16 education case manager who services 25 percent of
17 our special education students and students with
18 high needs.

19 We're also here to ask for some help in
20 repairing our pool, and Ms. Fatima Peters will
21 expound on that.

22 MS. PETERS: Hello. My name is Fatima Peters,
23 and I am a parent of a junior student at Sullivan
24 High School as well as an ESL Student Support



1 Specialist. As Regina mentioned, on behalf of the
2 staff and families at Sullivan High School, we
3 thank you for your investment that you have made
4 towards our school.

5 I would also like to ask for help with
6 repairing our school's pool. Our pool has been
7 shut down due to costly repairs, leaving our
8 students, families, and community members without
9 a free and safe indoor pool to use. Our pool
10 services Chicago Park District's needs, the Rogers
11 Park community, our low incidence students, our
12 refugees, and the general population of our
13 school.

14 Sullivan High School is located less than
15 a mile away from the lake. This past year, we
16 have lost two of our feeder school students to a
17 tragic drowning in Lake Michigan. One of the
18 students drowned at Loyola Beach, which is
19 0.7 miles away from Sullivan, and the other
20 drowned at Rogers Beach, which is 1.3 miles away
21 from us.

22 Having a swimming pool at Sullivan High
23 school, we provided free swimming lessons to
24 students, their families, and our community.



1 Sullivan High School is known for our growing
2 population of our refugee students, also known as
3 Refugee High. And the majority of our students
4 and family members have never been swimming or
5 know how to swim. We feel it is our responsibility
6 to teach them. Our Low Incidence Department
7 benefited from aquatic therapy offered through PE
8 classes. Some of the great benefits we've seen
9 from our autistic students with sensory
10 difficulties. They became more engaged and less
11 distractible. The pool provided a safe environment
12 that supported students while providing them
13 important -- improvement in their social skills.
14 Many of our students were able to tolerate touch
15 after aquatic therapy.

16 I thank you for your time. I would
17 appreciate if you would consider helping us out.
18 Thank you.

19 MR. FIX: Hi. I have some people joining me.
20 So they're there.

21 Hi. My name is Steve Fix. I serve as
22 the Vice Chair of the Local School Council at
23 Decatur Classical, and I have served as a parent
24 for four years on the LSC. On behalf of myself,



1 the LSC, and the parents at Decatur Classical, I
2 would like to express our gratitude for the CPS
3 plan to use capital funds to address the lack of
4 7th and 8th grade in Decatur Classical School. Of
5 the 473 elementary schools in CPS, only three go
6 K through 6 instead of the standard K through 8.
7 These are Decatur on the North Side, and Poe and
8 McDade on the South Side.

9 As they get older, children become aware
10 that after 6th grade, they're going to have to
11 switch schools twice in three years to attend
12 7th and 8th grade at another school, and then
13 9 through 12 at high school. Our children love
14 the rigorous academic environment at Decatur, but
15 dread the uncertainty and stress it creates. In
16 many cases, the uncertainty causes parents to
17 transfer their children to K through 8 elementary
18 schools before they even get to 6th grade.

19 We have truly explored every possible
20 option to get a 7th and 8th grade at Decatur.
21 Every month, we have attended Board of Ed meetings
22 to speak about the topic. We have reached out to
23 the Mayor's office, the State Representatives and
24 Senators, to aldermen, two of whom mentioned



1 relocating Decatur into their wards. We have
2 thoroughly explored four specific solutions,
3 including moving into vacant schools, moving and
4 sharing space in underutilized schools, and
5 renting space in charter and private schools.
6 Several of these measures progressed quite far,
7 but did not ultimately succeed. In the absence of
8 any possible alternative solution, we are
9 delighted and appreciative that CPS has agreed to
10 use capital funds to put a 7th and 8th grade at
11 its three classical schools. While Decatur is on
12 the far North Side, it pulls students from all
13 over the city, including the West and South sides.

14 It is gratifying to see CPS remedy the
15 lack of 7th and 8th grades at all three classical
16 schools at once. In fact, Decatur, Poe, and
17 McDade are engaged in ongoing collaboration. In
18 our work to get 7th and 8th grades, our LSC and
19 PTA members have communicated extensively with LSC
20 and PTA members of those schools. Furthermore,
21 our principals are in regular contact, and
22 teachers have an opportunity to visit each other's
23 schools. We're excited to see what we can learn
24 from and alongside Poe and McDade as we extend our



1 classical curriculum to 7th and 8th grade.

2 On behalf of the entire Decatur parent
3 community, an extremely heartfelt thank you to
4 CPS, the Board of Education, and the Mayor's
5 office for acknowledging our situation, and for
6 working with us for so many years to allow our
7 children to continue receiving the excellent
8 education that CPS classical schools provide.

9 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

10 I'm wondering if the microphone on the
11 stair is a little difficult. Instead, can we just
12 put it on the floor, just put the stand on the
13 floor instead of trying to navigate around a
14 stair? Is that okay? And, if possible, could you
15 move the microphone over this way so we can see
16 the speaker.

17 There you go. That's perfect.

18 MS. FIX ZALKIND: Hi. My name is Zoe Fix
19 Zalkind, and I'm going into 6th grade at Decatur
20 Classical School. I just want to thank the Board
21 of Education for adding grades to Decatur. It
22 will really help because there was a lot of
23 pressure to change schools, and now students can
24 just stay at Decatur for 7th and 8th grade. Also



1 we don't have to worry whether we'll see our
2 friends after 6th grade, because we get two more
3 years with them.

4 when I heard there was going to be an
5 expansion, I felt all this stress about leaving
6 Decatur go away. So I'm just really grateful to
7 the Board of Education.

8 MS. MOON: I'm Dawne Moon. I'm a parent
9 member of the local school council at Kilmer
10 Elementary in Roger's Park. And I was interested
11 to hear that having safe, dry, and warm schools is
12 the top priority.

13 Kilmer has exceptional dynamic teaching
14 going on, but it is not currently a safe
15 environment. There's desperate need for
16 tuck-pointing. We have had bricks fall from the
17 building to the ground on the outside, and we've
18 had bricks fall from the gym wall to the gym floor
19 when students are playing there. We can hope that
20 the next brick doesn't fall on a kid, or we can
21 tuck-point.

22 Phase 1, I understand, has happened in
23 terms of putting a cover, a temporary cover over
24 the holes in the roof so that water next year



1 won't be pouring into the classrooms as it has
2 been. But we need a permanent roof, and we need
3 tuck-pointing to ensure the safety and dryness of
4 this building. And it's not clear why funding for
5 Phase 2 isn't part of this budget.

6 There are some other safety and dryness
7 issues. It seems like there were some sewer
8 problems, because the restrooms all smell like
9 urine even after they've just been cleaned. And
10 when it rains, sewer water seems to be backing up
11 into the play lot. This is not safe.

12 And the lockers are rusted out so that
13 when students drop things through the rusty holes
14 in their lockers, there have been cases where the
15 student got stuck in the rusty hole. And so
16 that's also not safe.

17 So we don't begrudge anybody a turf
18 field. We'd love one too. But it's not clear
19 exactly how it is that these funds are being
20 allocated and why the safety issue isn't a
21 priority.

22 MR. SMITH: Thank you, Dawne.

23 The next five speakers are Betsy
24 Vandercook, Eilane Edger, Jeff Meegan, Peter



1 Williams, and Gina Esher.

2 Betsy, you ready?

3 MS. VANDERCOOK: I am. It's a little low,
4 but ...

5 My name is Betsy Vandercook. I'm
6 speaking really with two hats, but first for
7 Network 49, a progressive organization in the
8 49th ward. I'm the Co-chair of the Education
9 Committee. You may know us best from Holy Day
10 Charter Freeze Referendum in 2016 for no more
11 charter expansion in the 49th ward, which won with
12 over 11,000 people voting for it. All right.

13 Also I was recently elected to Kilmer
14 LSC. My daughter went there years ago. Now I'm
15 back as a community member, and I'm so proud to
16 serve as an elected official.

17 You know, there's been a lot of press
18 already about inequity in this plan, particularly
19 in the North Side, which is getting a lot, and the
20 South and West Sides. Now, I'm from the North
21 Side, but from Roger's Park. And I went last
22 night to the Capital Program page to see what we
23 had gotten for our six schools in Roger's Park.
24 And I will read them off. This is the 2019



1 budget: Sullivan High School: Zero; Field
2 school: Zero; Gale School: Zero; Jordan School:
3 Zero; Kilmer School: Zero; New Field School:
4 Zero.

5 MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY: That ain't right.

6 MS. VANDERCOOK: This is in the Capital
7 Budget, what's in the papers, what shows in the
8 Capital Budget. I'm not saying there's not some
9 renovations going on or a new room or something
10 going on. I'm talking about what's in the Capital
11 Budget. You find a school, and that's what it
12 has, it shows what's been given over the last --
13 since 2018 and what's in the Capital Budget for
14 2019. And that's what it shows.

15 MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY: We just mean that's
16 not okay.

17 MR. SMITH: If we could just -- I know you
18 folks probably think you have the answers, and you
19 might. But let's let the speakers speak.

20 MS. VANDERCOOK: For Edgewater, what it shows
21 online is that for 2019, there is \$7 million, and
22 for West Rogers Park, \$57 million. Since 2011,
23 Rogers Park Sullivan has gotten about \$400,000,
24 and Field \$900,000 to start projects, coming to



1 about a million. Edgewater is \$24 million, and
2 West Rogers Park has gotten, including what I
3 mentioned, \$69 million. So it's a question of
4 equity. And the question is why. Why aren't
5 Rogers Park schools -- We also don't have any STEM
6 program, teen program, arts program, or language
7 arts programs, and have not for over some years.
8 Our surrounding communities do have those
9 programs.

10 And I just -- Again, like previously
11 said, I don't begrudge anybody having -- One of
12 the kids from Decatur, that's fabulous that
13 they're going to finally get a 7th and 8th grade.
14 But Rogers Park is not, for whatever reason, and I
15 would like you to answer that at some point, we
16 are not getting some of the other resources that
17 many of the other North Side communities are
18 getting.

19 I would like to say what Alderman Arena
20 already said and take this back to look at it
21 again to see what really isn't needed and what is
22 needed. You have two examples already, the pool
23 for Sullivan, a roof for Kilmer, and somebody from
24 Gale is going to be speaking. There are other



1 needs, really pressing needs in Rogers Park that
2 aren't being looked at. I ask you to look at
3 them. Thank you.

4 MS. EDGER: Hello. My name is Dr. Eilane
5 Edger. I am a parent of 6th grade twins from
6 Pierce Elementary School. I've been a parent
7 representative on the LSC, and I'm currently the
8 Chair of LSC this year. In a former life, I was
9 the research director for early childhood at CPS.
10 And as an advocate for full-day pre-K, we have
11 been trying to push for a full-day pre-K forever.
12 So I was very pleased to read that the free
13 full-day pre-K was going to finally be pushed into
14 the schools. And especially at Pierce too, so I
15 was very happy to see that. It will not only
16 strengthen the community, the community at Pierce,
17 but also ensure that the children at Pierce have a
18 very strong foundation and ensure that they are
19 ready for kindergarten. So thank you very much.

20 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

21 MR. MEEGAN: Good evening. I'm a husband of a
22 CPS teacher. I'm a father of a CPS student and
23 father of CPS graduate. On behalf of the Phillip
24 Rogers Elementary community, parents,



1 administrators, teachers, and students, we would
2 like to thank the Board of Education for the
3 investment you placed in our school. A special
4 thanks to Alderman Silverstein, who has actively
5 worked to improve the infrastructure in the
6 50th ward.

7 We know that communities are only as
8 strong as their infrastructures, great schools
9 being among the most important. Strong schools
10 equal strong communities. Phillip Rogers was
11 built in 1937 and hasn't received any real
12 investment since 1955. Since then, we've grown
13 into one of the most diverse schools in the city
14 with over 30 languages spoken by our families.
15 The capital investment will better allow Rogers to
16 continue to grow and serve the needs of our
17 diverse community. We are looking forward to
18 continuing our mission as an educational
19 environment that encourages learning, social
20 growth, community service, and leadership, while
21 striving to provide an individual education
22 experience for each child. The investment and new
23 addition will go a long way to helping us achieve
24 those goals. So we thank you for your time and



1 your commitment.

2 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Hello. I'm Peter Williams.

4 I'm a parent of a student at Senn High School, and
5 I'm an officer with the Parent Advisory Committee
6 at the high school there. And I just want to say
7 that this is extraordinarily exciting, and I thank
8 you very much. I think this is a great
9 opportunity for Chicago Public Schools and for
10 Senn High School in particular.

11 I haven't had a chance to look at much of
12 the details of your plan, but I hope it really
13 includes improvements and opportunities in the
14 arts for students. My child is in an arts program
15 at Senn High School, in the music program. And
16 currently, this is a major arts program in a high
17 school in Chicago, and they don't have a dedicated
18 room to do their music program. And they're
19 moving around in different areas, and I know that
20 Senn is going to be expanding with the Rickover
21 moving, so I hope they get a dedicated room for
22 the music.

23 And I just want to remind and say again
24 that I think the arts are a very important part of



1 education. I know it's helped my child
2 tremendously in being a better mathematician and
3 scientist in school. So please look at that.

4 MS. ESHER: My name is Gina Esher. I am a
5 parent of a 4th grader at Pierce Elementary. I
6 have a daughter who just graduated from 8th grade
7 there, so I've been involved for almost nine years
8 at the school. I'm also on the LSC and part of
9 the peer service organization.

10 I know a lot of people here have been
11 throwing around the turf. But I'm here to say
12 thank you for funding our turf because I don't
13 know if anybody sees this. This is a health and
14 safety issue for our kids and our parents. This
15 is what we go through. We lovingly call it Pierce
16 Lake, because that's what it comes to. It is a
17 lake, and it floods. We've had broken bones. We
18 have parents who have fallen, who have slipped.
19 We have to navigate. Our kids are not getting
20 recess. They're cancelled for four, five days at
21 a time because they cannot be out in this field,
22 whatever the conditions are. So I did want to
23 come here and say thank you. We look forward to
24 seeing the changes come. And I hope there's many



1 more schools that can be helped with the capital
2 expenditures. Thank you.

3 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

4 Our next speakers are Stephen Lee,
5 Christina Tassone, Maureen Delgado, and Samay
6 Gheewala.

7 And by the way, thank you so much, all of
8 you, for staying with the time. It's unlike Board
9 meetings where people tend to go over.

10 MR. LEE: Good evening. My name is Stephen
11 Lee. I am another Decatur parent. The earlier
12 speakers did cover just about everything I wanted
13 to say. I just want to quickly add my thanks for
14 making long time dreams finally happen, and for
15 making an amazing education available for the kids
16 and more families in the future. Thanks.

17 MR. SMITH: So nice of you to say that. Thank
18 you.

19 Christina.

20 MS. TASSONE: Hello. Good evening. My name
21 is Christina Tassone, and I'm a proud CPS parent.
22 I'm also a former CPS student. I am here as a
23 representative, along with my partner here, and we
24 have some parents here as well for Sauganash



1 Elementary School. The purpose here is to ask for
2 additional classroom space for our students in
3 order to fulfill educational needs and to decrease
4 our potential safety liability.

5 So since our 2011 addition, we have had
6 an additional 124 students. We also will have a
7 new addition coming in, a development called
8 Sauganash Glen with four- and five-bedroom family
9 homes. And I think it's about 50 or more homes.

10 So again, what our issue is is that we
11 have kids unable to sit at their desks. They sit
12 in the hallways for instructional learning due to
13 overcrowding. We have a picture here of our
14 class. And as you can see, and you can't see it
15 here completely, but we'll give it to you,
16 everything in red is where we have over capacity.
17 16 out of the 20 classrooms, grades, are at
18 capacity -- I'm sorry, over capacity. Our
19 kindergarten, and I just had a kindergartener in
20 there, 40 kids in a small space, two
21 40-kindergarten classrooms.

22 I have a 7th grader that was in class
23 with 33 kids. Two 30-kid 7th grade classrooms,
24 and it keeps goes on and on with all of that red.



1 In addition, we have used all of the
2 usable storage space. They've been converted into
3 classes. So just to give you an idea, we are
4 fortunate to have a science lab. But
5 unfortunately, it's only used as 7th and 8th grade
6 homeroom. Only they use it because of the
7 overcrowding.

8 A couple of points here in addition. Two
9 special education classes are sharing one room,
10 which makes it difficult to schedule students.
11 There are times in the day we are out of
12 compliance with ISBE due to the student ratio.
13 The music teacher has a to drive a cart to provide
14 music in the homeroom. The music teacher needs a
15 classroom for all of the musical instruments where
16 students can come and practice performing. We
17 have her desk in the empty F room with all of the
18 technology wires because all of the storage spaces
19 and closets are being used as classrooms.

20 Another additional thing I want to add,
21 the tutoring partitioned off in the hall. So all
22 of this is happening in the hallway. Speech
23 therapy happens under the stairwell and on the
24 stairs. We are out of compliance. We had



1 inspectors come in. We were penalized in our
2 rating because we have no rooms to be used for
3 storage because again, storage rooms are used as
4 classrooms.

5 The fire department has also been
6 advised.

7 MR. SMITH: Thank you very much. You have a
8 great school and a great principal.

9 Ms. Delgado.

10 MS. DELGADO: Good evening. My name is
11 Maureen Delgado, proud Principal of Clinton
12 Elementary School, which is in West Rogers Park.
13 We serve over 1200 students who speak 45 different
14 languages, and many of our students are refugees
15 or new immigrants to our country. I would like to
16 thank you because we are now the proud recipients
17 of a new roof. And for the last ten years, we
18 have been wet and moldy, and plaster has been
19 falling from our auditorium and our gymnasium on a
20 regular basis, which has made it very, very
21 difficult to create a welcoming environment for
22 our students who are dealing with a lot of social
23 and emotional issues. So now we are looking
24 forward to having a new roof, moving on to our



1 full-day pre-K, and we also will get our social
2 worker this year. So we would like to thank you
3 for those wonderful investments at our school, and
4 we look forward to this two-year budget and see
5 how it all turns out. So thank you very much.

6 MR. GHEEWALA: Good evening. My name is Samay
7 Gheewala. I'm speaking for Horace Mann Public
8 Education. We have a few questions about this
9 \$1 billion Capital Budget. We don't see where the
10 decision making is being done, and there seems to
11 be a lack of transparency. It's only been three
12 public meetings, and so we don't know if it's a
13 fair framework based on the needs. Was there more
14 engagement with the community when these decisions
15 were being made?

16 The facility assessments were not updated
17 in 2017 as required by law. This information
18 would be very helpful for us to see what the plan
19 is. We're not against any school getting
20 necessary repairs or upgrades if they need. And
21 we are not here to say that some school doesn't
22 deserve something. Every school in this district
23 needs something and deserves it. Most schools are
24 waiting far too long for facility upgrades. What



1 we're asking for is information on how CPS has
2 chosen who has to wait, who doesn't. The parents,
3 schools, and the members of the public deserve the
4 right to know this.

5 And furthermore, we would like a
6 framework where every school roof or failed
7 plumbing system is considered equal and worthy of
8 dollars. In the budget, 336 million is going to
9 the needs of existing schools, and 600 million is
10 going to new construction and programs. We don't
11 see why CPS is spending so much on new
12 construction when so many schools have basic needs
13 that need to be met. We think CPS should halt the
14 new construction until we -- either all of the
15 existing repairs are completed.

16 And we need a better process of community
17 engagement and transparency. We need a transparent
18 explanation to the public on what factors are used
19 to determine which schools are prioritized.

20 Clearly, some are, and some aren't. And we want
21 to know how that's calibrated.

22 There should also be, by law, a long-term
23 facilities plan developed with community input to
24 decide these decisions. And we would like to see



1 that. Because hundreds of millions of dollars are
2 being expended with little or no transparency,
3 with no oversight. We don't want the unelected
4 school board to vote on this until we have a more
5 transparent plan and community input.

6 MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Gheewala.

7 MR. GHEEWALA: As a member of the Friends of
8 Roosevelt group, we know Taft is overcrowded.
9 Roosevelt abuts Taft. And actually, a large
10 portion of the Taft attendance area is closer to
11 Roosevelt and more convenient. The children
12 currently have to cross the Edens Expressway.

13 Roosevelt has the capacity and is very
14 welcome to bring those Taft students over until
15 the overcrowding can be addressed. And I believe
16 Schurz and Steinmetz also have the capacity and
17 would be very happy to accommodate.

18 MS. SMITH: Good evening. My name is Erica
19 Smith. I'm a parent of a student at Thomas J.
20 Waters Elementary School, which is part of your
21 FY2019 Capital Plan. We -- So Waters is a
22 K through 8 neighborhood school that's situated
23 just east of the Chicago River right off the Brown
24 Line. And we are here to tell you a little bit



1 about our school. As you've heard, and I think
2 many people here would agree, the space
3 utilization formula doesn't really tell the whole
4 story about how space is utilized in our schools.
5 There are spaces in our school building that are
6 better characterized as large closets than
7 classrooms, and yet they count -- according to the
8 formula, they count as classrooms. Many of our
9 most vulnerable students are diverse learners and
10 English language learners. They receive service
11 in the hallway or in multipurpose space rather
12 than in a private setting, which would better
13 suit -- better serve their needs. We have
14 multiple traveling programs that have no dedicated
15 classroom space, and our bathrooms are in such
16 poor condition that many of our students refuse to
17 use them.

18 Between 2007 and 2017, our K through 8
19 enrollment nearly doubled, increasing by
20 86 percent. This tremendous growth has put
21 significant strains on our educators and our
22 families, closing our preschool program, despite
23 the high demand, in 2014. But through creative
24 scheduling and budgeting, we've been able to make



1 do with the things that we have. But we are
2 running out of solutions, and we are now at risk
3 of having to cut some of the very programs that
4 draw families to our neighborhood public school.

5 I'm sure any school in our district would
6 make good use of the funds that have been
7 allocated to waters. I would argue that any time
8 a neighborhood public elementary school is
9 targeted for an investment like this, it's a huge
10 win for Chicagoans. Our district suffers from
11 inadequate funding, and we won't be able to fix
12 everything at once. But all of our students do
13 deserve to have neighborhood schools that are
14 well-maintained and resourced. Parents in our
15 community have advocated strongly for fair and
16 equitable funding from CPS.

17 We've protested school closings and
18 charter expansions, attended school board meetings
19 and town halls, and we will continue to do so. We
20 want all CPS students to have all the same
21 opportunities and resources as our students, and
22 we'll stand with you to make sure that our
23 district and City and State governments are held
24 accountable.



1 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

2 Our next group of speakers, I apologize
3 it's hard to read the writing, Jason Honig, Carol
4 Lauhon, Norine Gutekanst, this other name I can't
5 make out, but I believe the last name is Mitchell.
6 And Christina Dussault.

7 So we'll start with Jason.

8 MR. HONIG: Thank you. My name is Jason. Job
9 well done on the name pronunciation. I'm actually
10 a former Christian school principal in Westridge
11 at the Bethesda Lutheran school. But we've
12 partnered with Boone and Stone and other schools
13 in our community. And so as a former principal, I
14 understand that our schools are the hub of the
15 community. And the old educational philosopher
16 John Dewey once said that our schools are the
17 bedrock of democracy. And the landscape that
18 we're in today, politically and otherwise, we
19 deserve strong schools because our schools serve
20 the whole child, the whole family, and whole
21 community.

22 And I know that you can't put price tags
23 on learning. You can't put price tags on our
24 values of our students. But what we need to do is



1 be able to prioritize people over profit and
2 politics. And the people in this room here today
3 are here to make sure that we hold CPS
4 accountable. And we appreciate you being here
5 today and presenting this information for us. In
6 Westridge, we're very grateful for all of the
7 expenditures and the support we've gotten from
8 CPS. However, my son will be attending Stone
9 Academy in the fall in kindergarten. So as a
10 former Christian school principal, I am now
11 delving into the public school system.

12 Stone Academy has deteriorated flooring
13 in their playground, and their playgrounds are in
14 disrepair. The playground at Boone has holes in
15 the steps going up to the play structure. And in
16 March, the parents from the school received a
17 letter saying that they were not in compliance
18 with the Department of Early Childhood for CPS, so
19 that they could no longer send their children out
20 to play. As parents and educators, our children
21 need that play time. They need that social and
22 emotional learning. And they need to be safe. So
23 I ask that you review this budget, come out to
24 Boone, come out to the neighborhood, and let us



1 fix our playground, and let us make sure that our
2 children are safe, and all for the common good.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. LAUHON: My name is Carol Lauhon. Can you
5 hear me? I'm retired, I don't use my teacher
6 voice anymore. My name is Carol Lauhon. I'm a
7 proud resident of Rogers Park, and I'm an
8 enthusiastic community representative on the local
9 school council at Gale Community Academy. I am
10 here to point out that with respect to facilities,
11 Gale has a 3,000-square-foot greenhouse, a newly
12 expanded community funded learning garden, and a
13 rooftop weather station. Our environmental
14 learning program has been developing with the
15 support of our neighbors and with the help of some
16 of our wonderful key community partners. Gale was
17 the only elementary school invited to appear at
18 Taste of Chicago 2018. we displayed urban
19 gardening at the Farm to Festival demonstration at
20 Buckingham Fountain. Add to that our eastern
21 border is the shore of one of the largest
22 freshwater lakes in the world. Gale Community
23 Academy can become distinguished as a locus of
24 climate, sun, and environmental education for the



1 21st Century. We have accomplished all of this
2 without support from CPS. With supportive funding
3 from CPS, our program can develop to sustain a
4 full-blown urban gardening and climate science
5 curriculum.

6 Gale Grows Kids is our motto. We know we
7 can attract more families to the neighborhood with
8 CPS support. Last year, CPS funded \$5 million in
9 special programming. We respectfully ask that you
10 invest in our green space learning initiative too.
11 Thank you.

12 MR. SMITH: Thank you very much.

13 MS. GUTKANST: Hello. I want to say good
14 evening to everybody here. My name is Norine
15 Gutekanst. I'm a staffer with Chicago Teacher's
16 Union. I'm a former teacher. I've got about
17 30 years in at CPS. So I'm here today because I
18 wanted to just bring up what -- you know, there's
19 a phrase that says a budget is a moral document.
20 And I think this seems more like a political
21 document than a moral document. It seems like
22 it's really designed to boost the Mayor's election
23 prospects rather than address really persistent
24 inequalities inside CPS.



1 One of the things that Mr. Rivera
2 outlined was something like \$500 million in
3 capital investments that are going to be paid for
4 by borrowing. That's problematic because this --
5 these dollars, plus interest, are going to have to
6 be paid for. And where is that money going to
7 come from? It's either going to come from taxes
8 or it's going to come from State funding and the
9 operating budget. So there are repercussions to
10 all of these borrowed funds.

11 This moral document doesn't really seem
12 to contain a vision to end inequity in Chicago, in
13 Chicago's public schools, and to address what are
14 really very important needs in our black and Latin
15 communities. So I'm going to echo what Mr. Arena
16 said, which is where is the process whereby these
17 school communities who have needs get to present
18 them and get them to be ranked? It seems as
19 though it's -- the process is quite the opposite
20 of transparent. I think everyone in this
21 building, in this room tonight, they would like to
22 see a school system where every single child in
23 Chicago gets the kind of education that Zoe would
24 get at Decatur. That's in their vision too. I am



1 very happy there are winners, but we need a system
2 where there aren't winners and losers. And we
3 need a transparent capital planning process, not
4 just a system that passes around capital
5 improvements right before the election to help
6 boost the Mayor's election prospects.

7 And finally, I'm going to say we need an
8 elected school board because with an elected
9 school board, we will have advocates for these
10 communities who can advocate for that transparent
11 process.

12 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

13 MS. MITCHELL: Good evening. My name is
14 Dr. Mitchell. I'm a proud Chicago Teachers Union
15 member. Malfeasance. Correction, malfeasance
16 with racist intent in the entire Chicago Public
17 school system. Malfeasance, wrongdoing,
18 especially by public officials. Chicago officials
19 want to spend capital funding dollars for only
20 affluent community public schools especially their
21 communities, and leave CPS schools that service
22 black and brown children without a library. It is
23 a disgrace for the Chicago Public Schools, being
24 the third largest educational system in the United



1 States, to not have funding for black and brown
2 communities' school libraries. We're demanding
3 it. You guys have to do some of the capital
4 funding to ensure that this money is being spread
5 out equitably across the school districts to
6 ensure that all students have access to books with
7 within their school libraries. Thank you.

8 MS. DUSSAULT: My name is Christine Dussault,
9 and I teach in Logan Square. I've been a teacher
10 at Chase Elementary school for the last seven
11 years. And I have to say the families at my
12 school and my staff are incredible. As much as
13 our shared engineer and wonderful maintenance
14 staff try, they cannot stay on top of all of our
15 building's needs. One can easily get sick going
16 from room to room in our school with the heating
17 and air conditioning nightmares, malfunctions.
18 And the leaks, there are so many leaks. It's just
19 become commonplace for those leaks.

20 Looking at the CPS Capital Budget, I am
21 angry, because it is clear that it is not fair and
22 transparent, just like many have said tonight.
23 Not all students, including my students, are
24 represented in this plan. The teachers at my



1 school work tirelessly, as most teachers do, and
2 many have turned into part-time grant writers just
3 to provide the world class education that our
4 children deserve. But we are tired, and we cannot
5 continue on this trajectory. The kindergarten
6 teacher alone at my school has raised over \$10,000
7 just this school year from donors. We have lost
8 arts, library, community programs, after-school
9 programs nearly every single year. These are
10 classes and opportunities that can literally make
11 or break a child's school experience. When are
12 you going to invest in my school? I've been
13 waiting, and yet another year has gone, and it's
14 nothing. We need a budget that invests in all
15 students. Stop playing politics with our
16 students.

17 MR. SMITH: Our next five speakers in this
18 order are Lucy McGowan, Juan Zavala, Saul Garcia,
19 Wilma Pittman, and Catherine Mora. So we'll start
20 with Lucy when she gets up there.

21 MS. MCGOWAN: Hello. My name is Lucy McGowan.
22 I live in McKinley Park, and I teach at the nearby
23 Ordonez Middle School. I'm here because I'm
24 disturbed and infuriated by the capital budget.



1 The priorities are completely out of whack in that
2 they primarily favor communities that are already
3 thriving on the North Side and in the center of
4 the city.

5 In 2013, CPS closed 50 schools, mostly on
6 the South Side in black and brown communities.
7 They said this disinvestment would save
8 \$500 million. Five years later, they're pouring
9 almost precisely that sum, \$500 million, into new
10 construction and improvements into more affluent
11 communities. It's not right. You're appeasing
12 people in power, and you will do almost anything
13 to avoid integration, building annexes and new
14 schools to relieve overcrowding when nearby
15 schools sit underutilized and under-resourced. I
16 want to see equity in investment. Stop trying to
17 appease constituents with political clout, and
18 start serving all of our students in all of our
19 neighborhoods in all corners of the city.

20 MR. ZAVALA: My name is Juan Zavala. I'm a
21 middle school teacher at Calmecca Academy. I am a
22 product of CPS, United States Marine Corps
23 veteran, and I model on the weekends.

24 In all seriousness, I'm here because of



1 the lack of transparency with the budget. I feel
2 like too many decisions, like you said before, are
3 based on a political agenda, and not enough was
4 actually based on students. I've heard the word
5 "investment" used a lot. But we need to invest in
6 all our students equally, not by neighborhood or
7 economic status of parents or any of that.

8 I want to share a quick story of my first
9 day of school a couple of years ago. So as the
10 students were going to lunch, one of the students
11 looks at me and says, "You look like a really nice
12 teacher. I'm sorry I won't get to know you." And
13 she starts running. And I see she has scissors.
14 And I run up and get the scissors. She was trying
15 to stab herself. This was a student who suffered
16 extreme trauma and almost about 50 times, I had to
17 pull scissors away from her that school year.

18 We have one counselor for 805 students.
19 And although I appreciate that that student is
20 still alive, that's not enough. So we need to
21 invest in our kids.

22 I'm sorry. I'm a Marine. I don't cry.
23 But in all seriousness, our children are worth
24 much more than a new building, new school, or new



1 tests.

2 MR. GARCIA: Hello, everybody. So let me
3 just -- Correction. My name is Saul Garcia, not
4 Saul Garcia. I am a teacher on the Southwest
5 Side, Little Village neighborhood. I'm a lifelong
6 Little Village resident. I have lived there my
7 whole life. I am a CPS product through and
8 through. I have graduated from Farragut Career
9 Academy. And unfortunately -- And fortunately, I
10 am very lucky to work at a school that has
11 adequate resources, adequate funding, even though
12 it's on the Southwest Side. Unfortunately,
13 though, this is not the case for a lot of schools
14 in the South Side, in the West Side. We are
15 seeing this happen every day. We are seeing the
16 stories, rat infestation, mice, all these
17 different things. Like we've said before, this
18 budget is not transparent. We can see that it's
19 benefitting only North Side schools or majority
20 North Side schools while they are defunding
21 schools and closing schools in black
22 neighborhoods. That's not right. It's not right
23 at all.

24 There is a new school in the works in the



1 Belmont Cragin neighborhood. You've read the
2 stories. The community themselves have been
3 saying they do not want this school, they don't
4 need this school. That funding could be allocated
5 to schools in my neighborhood, in our
6 neighborhood. Maybe we should start locating
7 schools in predominantly black neighborhoods and
8 funding them instead.

9 Unfortunately, we are right now in the
10 system where our school boards are hand-picked by
11 our Mayor, and they are not representative of our
12 people. This is why, as Norine has said, and as
13 many others agree with, we need an elected school
14 board, one that works for the entire city and not
15 just a few. I call for us to really push our
16 elected officials. We need an elected school
17 board now.

18 MS. PITTMAN: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Wilma Pittman. I am from McCutcheon Elementary
20 school. I have four children -- four
21 grandchildren in McCutcheon currently. I just
22 have one in first grade. I am here to thank the
23 Board because I am so grateful and thankful that
24 we're receiving a new gym because we have children



1 that's in wheelchairs, and our little ones can't
2 go outside when the weather is really bad to take
3 gym.

4 So I also would like to thank or
5 principal, Ms. Kram, and Alderman Cappleman,
6 because we really worked hard, tirelessly and many
7 hours, to make sure that this come -- that we get
8 the gym. And we would like for the gym to become
9 a hub for Uptown where we might be able to have it
10 open on the weekends, you know, early in the
11 morning so the kids can come in and so we can have
12 activities.

13 So again, I wanted to say thank you, and
14 I am so grateful. And I will be forever grateful
15 we finally have our first gym at McCutcheon
16 Elementary School. Go Mustangs!

17 MS. MORA: Hi. I'm Catherine Mora. And I
18 have a daughter at Schurz. And I wanted to thank
19 you for the field. I had a chance to meet with
20 the students, the athletic students. And when I
21 told them they were getting a field, you should
22 have seen their faces. They were overjoyed. So
23 they were thrilled and (inaudible), and the mascot
24 is a Bulldog, and they can actually be Bulldogs.



1 The second thing, because Schurz stresses
2 improvement academically, it has an honors
3 program, a guidance program, a CD program,
4 (inaudible). And in keeping with CPS rules,
5 keeping students safe, warm, and dry, I had a
6 chance to walk through the school when it rained
7 one day and watched a wall crumble in the
8 cafeteria. There are serious issues with the roof
9 and tuck-pointing. And we have leaking and
10 flooding throughout the school. There is the
11 BAS system, the heating system, is failing. We
12 only have two engineers, and the size of that
13 school, if you've been in it, it's enormous. And
14 the two engineers that are currently working there
15 have to work 12-hour shifts during the winter
16 because if the system fails, part of the school
17 will freeze.

18 We have green and black mold underneath
19 the library carpet and the counseling carpet. And
20 I've documented everything. So I have pictures
21 and samples and everything. We also have peeling
22 paint in the auditorium that is falling, and
23 there's concerns that it's lead-based paint. So I
24 have samples of that hoping to get that tested.



1 I'm just -- So knowing that Schurz is on
2 improvement academically and keeping -- The kids
3 there, their morale is up because they're getting
4 a new field. But you still hear it when they walk
5 the halls. I mean, it's gross. And you have
6 kids, they gave away \$19 million in scholarships.
7 These kids want to achieve. So I just hope that
8 standing before you, you guys will understand that
9 when you invest in your public schools, it's not
10 just throwing money. You're actually giving back
11 to your community and to a future that can
12 reinvest in the system as it matures.

13 MR. SMITH: We have ten speakers left. So the
14 first speaker is Walterine Brock, Ebony Deberry,
15 Justin Heath, Adele Sims, and Julio Rodriguez.
16 Are they here? If any of you are here, Alderman
17 Arena, did you want to speak again?

18 So that would be -- I see they're coming.
19 Okay. So it would be Ms. Brock next. Thank you.

20 MS. BROCK: Good evening, everyone. I just
21 wanted to say my name is Walterine Brock. I'm a
22 parent with Gale. I'm an LSC member. I'm a
23 volunteer. I'm a safety volunteer for the kids.
24 And so my concern is I was really appalled when I



1 put my little one in Gale and found out they had
2 so many major issues. So I decided to, instead of
3 being a problem, I decided to be part of the
4 solution. But I do have a list that I would like
5 to read off, because I'm concerned about the
6 students at Gale.

7 And my list consists of paint peeling in
8 the cafeteria, cracked tiles, walls with holes in
9 them, water fountains rusty and smelly, toilets
10 leaking, sinks leaking, floors staying wet all
11 day, bathrooms smelling.

12 Security is one of my main issues there.
13 I know we need more security there. You have
14 students walking off the grounds because we don't
15 have enough teachers or security to cover all the
16 doors and the locations because we're right out
17 off the park.

18 Kindergarten overcrowding. First grade
19 overcrowding. And I'm asking that CPS see can
20 they put forward some effort to try and make sure
21 that Gale is a little bit more safe. My biggest
22 concern is the kids being safe coming and going
23 and staying on school grounds. All the other
24 issues, I think you can work with. But safety is



1 one of my biggest concerns with Gale. And thank
2 you all.

3 MR. SMITH: Next speaker is Ebony Deberry.

4 A SPEAKER: You talking about me?

5 MR. SMITH: The next speaker I have is Ebony.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hello, everyone. My
7 name is Marilyn, and I am a former Rogers Park
8 resident. I was also on the local school council
9 at Gale. And one of the things that concerns me
10 was the lack and cut of teachers for the special
11 needs students. I had a 6th grade son there
12 before we moved to Uptown, and the school is being
13 cut from different type of programs and special
14 needs students. So my son started acting out from
15 us -- from him being traumatized from us living in
16 the shelter for two-plus years. I was getting
17 calls up to the schools. I was told that my son,
18 something was wrong with him. Rather than him
19 getting the services he needed, he was -- I was
20 being told to take him to Lake Shore Hospital to
21 get him checked out. Every time he acted out, I
22 was being told to take him to Lake Shore.

23 Another thing that I observed while I was
24 living in Rogers Park, I worked at the shelter



1 right on Howard Street where I serviced 36 women
2 and children. And a lot of the women came in
3 broken through domestic violence, substance abuse.
4 And when they came to the shelter, they got on
5 their feet. But most of the parents that lived at
6 the shelter, their kids attended Gale. So most of
7 them had children that Gale no longer had the
8 pre-K expansion, which was a bigger need for the
9 schools in Rogers Park.

10 I'm no longer a Rogers Park resident. I
11 now live in Uptown. So when I came to Uptown, it
12 was no different. I seen that one school had
13 already closed. Lofts are being built and condos.
14 I hear there's a \$75 million upgrade to the Uptown
15 Theater. I hear that there is an underground
16 tunnel being built to get us to O'Hare in
17 12 minutes. And I wondered where would we get
18 this money from? And it's very sad that the City
19 talks about they don't have money for this, they
20 don't have money for that. But they certainly
21 have money for the things that's not for the lower
22 class.

23 Also I'd like to point out that I have
24 two daughters at Roosevelt. My son goes there to



1 middle school, and I'm hearing that the middle
2 school might be phased out as well. Also I have a
3 daughter that graduated from Uplift. Uplift have
4 some very good, caring teachers. It's a small
5 school. Although McCutcheon is going to get a
6 gym, teachers from Uplift are being laid off as
7 well.

8 And you have violence on every corner,
9 which is a lack of security as well. So I just
10 ask that you all keep these things in mind. Thank
11 you.

12 MR. SMITH: Thank you. I have Justin Heath as
13 the next speaker and Adele Sims after him.

14 No Justin Heath.

15 Adele Sims. Thank you up at the top.

16 MS. SIMS: Thank you for listening. WBEZ
17 reported the bulk of these funds are going to the
18 North Side, white and mixed schools getting most
19 of the money. And that money is 989 million. Why
20 do most of the doors close in the black community,
21 the blacks or mixed areas, Latinos? It seems like
22 excellent locations are being provided, and high
23 school doors are constantly being closed. Why is
24 this? The West Side and the Latino schools are



1 being left out. Don't they count? why does it
2 appear that the white schools are receiving the
3 bulk of the funding? And the question still is,
4 why?

5 MR. SMITH: Are you Julio?

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Julio Rodriguez.

7 MR. SMITH: Julio is next. And then after
8 Julio, our final speakers are going to be Ms.
9 Issalma Franco, Ranj Mohip, Betsy Melton, Mini
10 Bandera, and Marisela Estrada thank you.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon. I am Julio
12 Rodriguez. I live in the Belmont Cragin
13 community. My mom owns many businesses around the
14 area. And I went to Belmont Cragin Elementary
15 school. I fully support the Capital Plan that is
16 laid out. My family and my neighborhood, my mom
17 and friends, are all small business owners that
18 want to support the new school for Belmont Cragin.
19 Not only would it ease overcrowding, but this
20 decision is community led and presented the best
21 interests of the community. Thank you.

22 MS. FRANCO: Good evening. My name is Issalma
23 Franco. I am a resident of the Belmont Cragin
24 community. I really want to say thank you for



1 having this location for Belmont Cragin. It is
2 time. For example, my brother, who went there, I
3 went there. It is time for him to actually be
4 able to use the bathroom without running outside
5 to go to another location, because they share a
6 building right now. So it's really helpful. I
7 know when I've been to the building now, as I
8 graduated, I go and visit or go volunteer, it's
9 over packed. There's papers everywhere, there's
10 boxes everywhere, and it's something about safety
11 too.

12 And Belmont Cragin School is something
13 that I know the community has fought for and
14 really wanted. And we're really happy that it's
15 now happening. And we're thankful for it. Thank
16 you.

17 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

18 MS. MELTON: Hello. My name is Betsy Melton,
19 and I am a parent of a Blaine Elementary School
20 student and also the President of Friends of
21 Blaine, a fundraising organization. In addition
22 to that, I just stepped off after serving as a
23 parent representative on our local school council.

24 First of all, I just wanted to say that



1 we're very pleased to see continued financial
2 investment in maintaining and improving Chicago
3 Public Schools. I know it's relative; but as a
4 previous speaker mentioned, I just wanted to thank
5 you for your assistance in repairing the holes in
6 our field, in our turf field. It's certainly
7 going to make recess an easier -- certainly an
8 easier time for our students. So I appreciate
9 that.

10 It's my understanding that maybe four
11 years ago, we were on a list to receive an annex
12 at Blaine due to, at the time, we were -- it was
13 stated we were overcrowded. As we continued down
14 that road and that process, our capacity was
15 reevaluated. And it changed into being
16 modifications in our classroom and our lunchroom
17 space as opposed to adding an annex to the
18 building. It's my understanding that we're not
19 slated for any additional building improvements to
20 help alleviate our space issues. In addition to
21 the overcrowding we were experiencing then, we've
22 now taken on a full-day preschool. We have
23 lunchroom issues that are going to be related to
24 that as well as advisory periods and teacher



1 education times as well as not being able to find
2 space for our testing for our students.

3 Educational planning is an additional
4 issue. And on top of that, with the required
5 120 minutes now for PE, and the additional
6 30 minutes for health, we have continued space
7 issues as well. So I guess our questions are, how
8 can we get a better understanding of where Blaine
9 is on the plans for building improvements? And in
10 addition to that, how have your CPS building
11 capacity calculations changed to account for the
12 120 minutes for PE, 30 minutes of health, and the
13 four now full-day pre-K classes that we'll be
14 taking on?

15 MR. SMITH: Thanks.

16 MS. BANDERA: Good evening. My name is Mini
17 Bandera. I work and live in Belmont Cragin.
18 Don't believe what you see or read in an article.
19 We had a Belmont Cragin quality of life.
20 Mr. Rivera, you visited Belmont Cragin, and you
21 spoke with parents. The article doesn't quote any
22 parents.

23 We are the second largest community in
24 Chicago that's Latino. We do need -- I work at



1 the schools. I work with parents. I walk the
2 hallways. The building was built to relieve
3 overcrowding. The building was filled. We are
4 going to have to build an annex. Only one school
5 in Belmont Cragin has room, and that's Burbank.
6 Due to boundaries, they can't take any kids.

7 Believe me, if you want come to Belmont
8 Cragin, we'll show you the schools. Those
9 students do need it. We are Latino. It's time.
10 And this is not something that just happened.
11 We've been fighting for this for five years. If
12 you don't know Belmont Cragin quality of life,
13 look it up. And believe me, those parents, we're
14 ready. We've been asking. It's time. I feel
15 you. If you want your school for any fight, join
16 us, and we'll just make that happen. Not because
17 we're the North Side, we have everything. They
18 bypassed Belmont Cragin. But it's time that that
19 ends. So that's why I'm here.

20 Thank you. And we will continue to fight
21 for all those schools. But we've been on this
22 fight for five years or longer, and Belmont
23 Cragin -- Belmont Cragin already sits -- it's a
24 cold case in the Northwest middle. We're just



1 looking for a building that will have many
2 benefits for the whole community, not just that
3 school, a community center and school that's going
4 to benefit our community. We have no community
5 center in Belmont Cragin.

6 So thank you so much for the funding that
7 you will be doing at Belmont Cragin, because we
8 need it, and it's long overdue.

9 MR. MOHIP: Thank you. My name is Ranj Mohip.
10 I am on the LSC at Armstrong School. That is in
11 the 50th ward, but I live in the 49th ward because
12 of the way things are. And the way things are is
13 we have to beg the alderman in the 49th ward for
14 money. They look at it and say, well, you know, a
15 lot of you guys are in the 50th, go ask the
16 alderman in the 50th. We ask the alderman in the
17 50th, and we get nothing because there's not
18 enough votes for these politicians. So I do want
19 to thank Chicago Public Schools for finally
20 getting us, which to some may seem unnecessary,
21 but we finally are really getting a field turf at
22 Armstrong. We've had many kids injured, many
23 times, and it's unfortunate what I'm seeing here
24 today. And I know the frustration of everybody on



1 the process, but we have the South Side pitted
2 against the West Side, we have the West Side
3 pitted against the North Side, everyone is
4 fighting over the small amount of dollars. As a
5 representative, community representative at
6 Armstrong, I'm very thankful for what we're
7 getting.

8 We don't have any lockers at the school;
9 still need that if anybody's listening. But I
10 just wanted to thank CPS for what we're getting.
11 And hopefully, everybody can get what they need,
12 because this is something we really needed.

13 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

14 Can we give a nice round of applause to
15 Marisela Estrada. She's our last speaker, and she
16 waited all night.

17 MS. ESTRADA: Good evening. Good night. I
18 don't even know what time it is, I've been here so
19 long. My name is Marisela. I'm a parent and a
20 resident of Belmont Cragin School. As my grandma
21 always used to say, use the magic words, "please"
22 and "thank you." So right now, I'm going to ask
23 you to please hear me out. And what I have to say
24 that I have to share with all of you is what we



1 have been through. It's been a long journey.
2 It's been five years of standing up for the needs
3 of our students, for the needs of the students in
4 our community. We've been through meetings up and
5 down. We've been through all the road. I hear
6 your -- I hear your petitions, and trust me, we
7 understand. She always taught me to put myself in
8 somebody else's shoes, and that's exactly how I
9 feel right now. I know how you feel, but I'm
10 really, really, really grateful right now for what
11 we are getting.

12 Our students are in a school that's
13 co-located inside of another school. My daughter
14 is part of that school. She's 9 years old, and
15 she comes to the house, and she says, "Mommy, I
16 love the school, but I couldn't play in the
17 playground because we don't even have a place for
18 recess." She shares a lunchroom. She shares
19 bathrooms. We don't have a library. We have a
20 library, but it's located in a room. So what we
21 are getting is a well-deserved building that it's
22 not also -- it's not only going to be a school,
23 but it's going to serve as a community center for
24 the community.



1 We are proud of Belmont Cragin. This
2 school is a dual and a public school. It has a
3 social and emotional learning program, and it
4 helps the students with trauma. Belmont Cragin is
5 the fastest growing community in Chicago. We have
6 12,000 students belonging to this community, and
7 trust me, I invite you to go there. Our houses
8 are not like the houses out there. You see a
9 building of three floors, that means there's three
10 different families possibly living there. It's
11 not a building per family. We are overcrowded so
12 stop, if you can, if you want to come and meet our
13 community from the heart. We are also having this
14 community center to help out our own community.
15 If you hear about Belmont Cragin, all you hear,
16 most of what you hear is bad, unfortunately.
17 Well, let me tell you, not all of us in there are
18 bad. We're looking for a better future. I have
19 two daughters, a 9-year-old and 2-year-old. I
20 look -- I struggled with what I had in the time I
21 had it. I'm a low-income Latina, and I'm looking
22 for a better future for not only my kids but for
23 the kids in my community.

24 Thank you very much for what you gave us.



1 I think it's well-deserved, and we all deserve
2 what we are asking for. Thank you.

3 MR. SMITH: Just before we all leave, I want
4 to thank you all for being here, and those who
5 spoke. And for those of you who actually stayed
6 here to hear all the speakers, not only was it
7 very respectful, but I think it demonstrates your
8 commitment to the children in Chicago and the
9 betterment of their education. So thank you very
10 much, all of you, for being here tonight. Thank
11 you.

12 (Off the record at 7:42 p.m.)

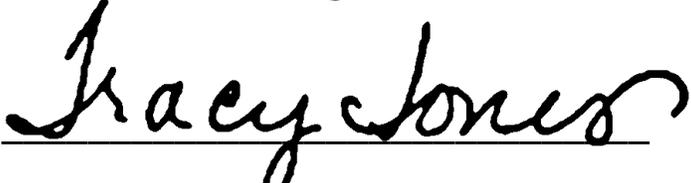
13 (Whereupon, the Public Hearing
14 adjourned at 7:42 o'clock p.m.)

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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
2) SS:
3 COUNTY OF C O O K)
4

5 I, TRACY JONES, being first duly sworn, on
6 oath says that she is a court reporter doing
7 business in the City of Chicago; and that she
8 reported in shorthand the proceedings of said
9 Public Hearing, and that the foregoing is a true
10 and correct transcript of her shorthand notes so
11 taken as aforesaid, and contains the proceedings
12 given at said Public Hearing.

13 
14

15 TRACY JONES, CSR, RPR, CLR
16 LIC. NO. 084-004553
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