

**BEFORE THE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO**

**In the Matter of:**

**The Public Hearing to Elicit Public Comment on the**

**Proposal to Co-Locate North River Elementary School**

**With ASPIRA Charter School-Haugan Middle School**

**in Shared Facilities Located at 3729 W. Leland Avenue)**

**Presiding**

**Hon. Francis J. Dolan (Ret.)**

**) Independent Hearing Officer**

**January 19, 2022**

**Hearing Officer's Report and Determinations to the Chief Executive Officer  
Regarding the Proposal to Co-locate North River Elementary School with  
ASPIRA Charter School-Haugan Middle School in Shared Facilities Located  
at 3729 W. Leland Avenue**

**I. Introduction**

On or about September 30, 2021, the Board of Education contracted with Judicial Conflict Resolution, Inc., for a hearing officer to preside over a hearing scheduled pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/34-230. Through Judicial Conflict Resolution, Inc., I was retained to serve as an independent hearing officer in this matter. I am an attorney licensed to practice in the State of Illinois and a retired State of Illinois judge.

A public hearing was convened at 5:00 p.m., on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 42 W. Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60602. The purpose of the hearing was to enable the Hearing Officer to receive public comments from concerned persons, specifically including representatives of the CEO, members of the school community and interested members of the public, concerning the CEO's proposal to Co-locate North River Elementary School ("North River") with ASPIRA Charter School-Haugan Middle School ("Aspira-Haugan") in Shared Facilities Located at 3729 W. Leland Avenue. Notice of the hearing had been served on the school community. Notice of the hearing had, also, been served

upon the public by newspaper publication in the *Chicago Sun-Times* newspaper. Additionally, the information concerning the hearing was published on the CPS Internet website. More specifically, in the January 4, 2022, written notice sent to the school communities, it was stated the, "...public hearing will be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A Spanish translator and sign language interpreter will be available to support the ... public hearing." A certified Court Reporter transcribed the hearing.

Pursuant to the directives provided in 105 ILCS §34-230 ("School Action Public Meetings and Hearings") and the document entitled "Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidation, Co-location, Phase-out, or Reassignment Boundary Change" the undersigned summarizes below the input received at the Public Hearing.

**II. Relevant Statutory Provision  
and Board Policies/Procedures**

**A. Illinois School Code (105 ILCS):**

**1. §34-18. Powers of the board**

"The board shall exercise general supervision and jurisdiction over the public education and the public school system of the city, and, except as otherwise provided by this Article, shall have power:

"1. To make suitable provision for the establishment and maintenance...of schools of all grades and kinds;

"7. To apportion the pupils to the several schools;

"24. To develop a policy, based on the current state of existing school facilities, projected enrollment and efficient utilization of available resources, for capital improvement of schools and school buildings within the district, addressing in that policy both the relative priority for major repairs, renovations and additions to school facilities, and the advisability or necessity of building new school facilities or closing existing schools to meet current or projected demographic patterns within the district."

“The specifications of the powers herein granted are not to be construed as exclusive but the board shall also exercise all other powers that they may be requisite or proper for the maintenance and the development of a public school system, not inconsistent with the other provisions of this Article or provisions of this Code which apply to all school districts.”

**2. § 34-200. Definitions**

For the purposes of Sections 34-200 through 34-235 of this Article:

“School action” means any school...co-location...”

**3. § 34-230. School action public meetings and hearings**

“(a) By October 1 of each year, the chief executive officer shall prepare and publish guidelines for school actions. The guidelines shall outline the academic and non-academic criteria for a school action. These guidelines shall be created with the involvement of local school councils, parents, educators, and community organizations. These guidelines, and each subsequent revision, shall be subject to a public comment period of at least 21 days before their approval.

“(b) The chief executive officer shall announce all proposed school actions to be taken at the close of the current academic year consistent with the guidelines by December 1 of each year.

“(c) On or before December 1 of each year, the chief executive officer shall publish notice of the proposed school actions.

“(1) Notice of the proposal for a school action shall include a written statement of the basis for the school action, an explanation of how the school action meets the criteria set forth in the guidelines, and a draft School Transition Plan identifying the items required in Section 34-225 of this Code for all schools affected by the school action. The notice shall state the date, time, and place of the hearing or meeting. For a school closure only, 8 months after notice is given, the chief executive officer must publish on the district’s website a full financial report on the closure that includes an analysis of the closure’s costs and benefits to the district.

“(2) The chief executive officer or his or her designee shall provide notice to the principal, staff, local school council, and parents or guardians of any school that is subject to the proposed school action.

“(3) The chief executive officer shall provide written notice of any proposed school action to the State Senator, State Representative, and

alderman for the school or schools that are subject to the proposed school action.

“(4) The chief executive officer shall publish notice of proposed school actions on the district's Internet website.

“(5) The chief executive officer shall provide notice of proposed school actions at least 30 calendar days in advance of a public hearing or meeting....

“(d) The chief executive officer shall publish a brief summary of the proposed school actions and the date, time, and place of the hearings or meetings in a newspaper of general circulation.

“(e) The chief executive officer shall designate at least 3 opportunities to elicit public comment at a hearing or meeting on a proposed school action and shall do the following:

“(1) Convene at least one public hearing at the centrally located office of the Board.

“(2) Convene at least 2 additional public hearings or meetings at a location convenient to the school community subject to the proposed school action.

“(f) Public hearings shall be conducted by a qualified independent hearing officer chosen from a list of independent hearing officers. The general counsel shall compile and publish a list of independent hearing officers by November 1 of each school year. The independent hearing officer shall have the following qualifications:

“(1) ...must be a licensed attorney eligible to practice law in Illinois;

“(2) ...must not be an employee of the Board; and

“(3) ...must not have represented the Board, its employees or any labor organization representing its employees, any local school council, or any charter or contract school in any capacity within the last year.

“The independent hearing officer shall issue a written report that summarizes the hearing and determines whether the chief executive officer complied with the requirements of this Section and the guidelines.

“The chief executive officer shall publish the report on the district’s Internet website within 5 calendar days after receiving the report and at least 15 days prior to any Board action being taken.

“(g) Public meetings shall be conducted by a representative of the chief executive officer. A summary of the public meeting shall be published on the district’s Internet website within 5 calendar days after the meeting.

“(h) If the chief executive officer proposes a school action without following the mandates set forth in this Section, the proposed school action shall not be approved by the Board during the school year in which the school action was proposed.”

**4. § 34-225. School transition plans**

“(b) The chief executive officer or his or her designee shall prepare and implement a school transition plan to support students attending a school that is the subject of a school action that accomplishes the goals of this Section. The chief executive must identify and commit specific resources for implementation of the school transition plan for a minimum of the full first academic year after the board approves a school action.

“(c) The school transition plan shall include the following:

“(1) services to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; supports for students with disabilities, homeless students, and English language learners; and support to address security and safety issues;

“(4) the provision of appropriate transportation where practicable.”

**B. Board Policies/Procedures:**

**1. FINAL GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ACTIONS  
2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR (“Guidelines”)  
(Published October 25, 2021)**

**I. PREAMBLE**

The Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/34-230) requires the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to publish draft guidelines for school actions by October 1 of each year. These guidelines shall outline the academic and non-academic criteria for a school action, be created with the involvement of local school councils, parents, educators, and community organizations, and the draft guidelines, and each subsequent revision, are to be subject to a public comment period of at least 21 days before their approval. The Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/34-230) also requires that the CEO announce all proposed school actions to be taken at the close

of the current academic year by December 1 of each year. The draft guidelines were published on October 1, 2021 and remained open for public comment until October 22, 2021. On October 25, 2021, Chicago Public Schools hereby publishes the Final Guidelines for Schools Actions applicable for the 2021-2022 school year.

## **II. CRITERIA**

If recommending any school actions, the CEO will consider the criteria specified below:

### **A. Criteria for Co-location**

The CEO may propose a co-location of two or more schools within the same facility only if:

1. the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a co-location proposal be considered via the process to request proposals outlined in the definitions section; and
2. the combined projected enrollment is within the facility's enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Space Utilization Standards and the facility can support the academic programming of the schools being co-located together.

In determining whether to propose a potential co-location that meets the above-specified conditions, the CEO may consider other information, including, but not limited to: safety and security, school culture and climate, school leadership, quality of the facility, and an analysis of transition costs.

## **III. NOTICE AND SCHOOL TRANSITION PLANS**

Notice of any proposed school action will be provided to the principal, staff, local school council, parents or guardians, Illinois State Senator, Illinois State Representative, and Alderman for the school or schools that are subject to the proposed school action. Notice will include the date, time, and place or forum of public meetings being held to elicit public comment on the proposal.

Along with notice of the CEO's proposal, the CEO will issue a draft school transition plan concerning the proposed school action. The draft school transition plan will include, but is not limited to,

the following: (1) services to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; supports for students with disabilities, students in temporary living situations, and English language learners; and supports to address security and safety issues; (2) options to enroll in higher performing schools; (3) informational briefings regarding the choice of schools that include all pertinent information to enable the parent or guardian and child to make an informed choice, including the option to visit the schools of choice prior to making a decision; and (4) the provision of appropriate transportation where practicable; (5) the departments that are responsible for the oversight; (6) specific programs to be offered; and (7) support to implement plans at receiving schools, specifying the funding source.

The Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/34-230) requires that for a school closure only, eight (8) months after notice is given, the CEO must publish on the District's website a full financial report on the closure that includes an analysis of the closure's costs and benefits to the district.

#### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

“Co-location” means two or more separate, independent schools with their own school leader(s) coexisting within a Chicago Public School facility.

“Process to request proposals” means one of the following:

1. requesting a proposal via e-mail at [ceoguidelines@cps.edu](mailto:ceoguidelines@cps.edu) or [transitions@cps.edu](mailto:transitions@cps.edu) by November 1, 2021;
2. requesting a proposal via formal communications to the CEO or Chief Education Officer by November 1, 2021; and
3. requesting a proposal at a community meeting or open public meeting by November 1, 2021.

“School action” means any school...co-location...

“Space Utilization Standards” mean the Chicago Public Schools’ Space Utilization Standards, establishing the standards for determining enrollment efficiency, overcrowding, and underutilization, found at:  
<https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/school-facilities/facility-standards/>.

**2. CPS Capacity Utilization Standards (Issued December 2018)**

**“Elementary School Approach:** For elementary schools, CPS provides an enrollment efficiency range based primarily upon the total number of instructional classrooms available in the main/permanent building. Each building is allotted a number of dedicated K-8 general education homeroom classrooms equaling 77% of the total classrooms available. Each elementary school building is also allotted a number of ancillary classrooms equal to 23% of the total classrooms available. An elementary school building’s ideal capacity (IC) is derived first by multiplying the total number of classrooms by 77%, rounding down to the nearest whole number, and then multiplying this product by 30. As an elementary school’s enrollment increases above the efficiency range (above 110% of ideal capacity), a school may be considered overcrowded, as classroom space programming options are reduced or compromised. As an elementary school’s enrollment decreases below the efficiency range (below 70% of ideal capacity), a school may be considered underutilized, as classroom spaces are unused and/or inefficiently programmed making the use of limited resources less effective.

**“Co-located schools:** There are...instances where more than one school (typically two) are located within the same facility. In these instances the ideal capacity refers to the facility itself and the utilization percentage refers to the combined enrollment of the co-located schools.”

**3. SHARED FACILITY POLICY - (Policy Manual Section 410.7, Board Report 05-0126-PO1) February 23, 2005**

**I. Purpose and Goals**

“The Chicago Board of Education has expressed its intention to create more small schools through the transformation of some existing CPS school buildings and the limited construction of new buildings. Many of CPS existing school facilities were constructed during a different era, one in which the prevailing model for schools was large scale buildings intended to accommodate large student populations and classroom sizes. As the Board moves forward with the creation of more and better small school options, the need to house more than one school in a facility and therefore, the need for the Board to articulate a common vision and plan for shared facilities has arisen.

“The Shared Facility Policy builds upon the extensive experience CPS has had in creating small schools and providing opportunities and support for small schools to share one facility. The Policy is guided by six essential



principles for successful building sharing which stem from that experience:

“(1) A commitment to the equitable use of facilities to accrue the greatest benefits of schools sharing buildings.

“(2) The establishment and maintenance of strong relationships among school leaders in a shared facility.

“(3) Strategic thinking about physical space and visual cues in a shared building so as to foster the maintenance of distinctive identities of each individual school.

“(4) The development of a detailed and thoughtful Memorandum of Understanding and Sharing Agreement to memorialize all agreements between individual schools related to the shared facility arrangement.

“(5) A conflict resolution process that enhances the legitimacy of the agreements made between individual schools and provides an efficient means for resolving any conflicts.

“(6) The capitalization on the benefits of building sharing through the pooling of resources in order to better serve the students in each individual school.”

## **II. Definitions**

“A “Shared Facility” is a CPS building (owned or leased by the Chicago Board of Education) that houses more than one CPS school, each of which is autonomous, have their own school leader(s), their own governing body and CPS identification number. A CPS building may become a Shared Facility in one of four ways: “(1) A Host School that previously occupied a CPS building alone may be joined by one or more additional schools...

“A “Host School” is a school that welcomes another individual school into the CPS school building that it has occupied alone prior to the building becoming a Shared Facility.”

## **III. Application of Policy**

Beginning in fiscal year 2005, the Shared Facility Policy shall apply to all schools housed in a CPS Shared Facility, regardless of whether the school is a charter school, contract school, performance school, small school or other CPS school. However, where a CPS Shared Facility is comprised solely of more than one charter school or contract school or a combination

of contract and charter schools, the extent to which this policy applies shall be governed by each individual school's charter agreement or contract school performance agreement and lease agreement.

The fact that a Host School previously occupied an entire CPS building alone and later becomes a Shared Facility does not give that school any preferential treatment under this Policy. Each autonomous school within a Shared Facility shall have equal status.

#### **IV. Identification of Potential Shared Facility Opportunities**

“It is in the best interest of the Board, students and the community CPS serves to identify the CPS buildings that are not being utilized at full capacity and to improve the use of those facilities. One potential use for underutilized buildings is transformation from a single school facility to a Shared Facility by bringing one or more additional schools into the building.

#### **V. Comprehensive Space Analysis**

“...any proposal submitted to CPS to open a school in a Shared Facility shall include an explanation of how the school intends to utilize the space within a building and a proposal for the allocation and use of shared space given the school's specific programmatic needs. The comprehensive space analysis shall consider both short and long term projections for the utilization of space in the facility based upon the optimal use of the building by two or more schools. The analysis shall also include a review of the proposals submitted by individual schools regarding the utilization and allocation of space within a building as well as a school's specific programmatic needs. The analysis shall also include an assessment of improvements that should be performed to support the occupation of the facility by two or more autonomous schools.”

#### **VI. Memorandum of Understanding and Sharing Agreement**

“Prior to the occupation of a CPS facility by two or more individual schools, the schools shall submit a Memorandum of Understanding and fully executed Sharing Agreement...”

- A. Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”).** A MOU shall be prepared by and shall be binding on all individual schools sharing a CPS facility. The MOU may be amended annually to accommodate changed circumstances or agreements between the individual schools. All MOUs shall include the following components:

1. Memorialization of Mutually Agreed Upon Principles. This section of the MOU shall state the overarching principles by which the individual schools shall operate as a whole.
2. Understanding of Campus Manager Roles and Responsibilities. This section of the MOU shall set forth an outline of how the facility itself shall be governed....
3. Plan for Regular Communication Among Schools. This section of the MOU shall set forth a mechanism for regular communication among the individual schools...

**B. Sharing Agreement.** The MOU shall also include, as an addendum, a Sharing Agreement that is signed by representatives from each school. The Sharing Agreement shall identify what portions of the campus shall be occupied by each school and what portions of the campus shall be shared or designated as common areas.

## **VII. Management of Shared Facility**

As owner of the CPS building that is shared by individual schools, the Board has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the facility is properly maintained, that it is shared equitably among each occupant and that any administrative issues or disputes among the individual schools in a building are resolved in a fair and efficient manner.

**D. Charter Schools in a Shared Facility.** Charter Schools are independently operated public schools approved and certified under the Illinois Charter Law, Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/27A. Nothing in this Policy shall be read to alter or amend the rights and responsibilities granted to Charter Schools under the Charter Schools Law. However, a Charter School opting to locate within a Shared Facility shall enter into a lease agreement with the Board of Education and shall be bound by the terms of that agreement. Accordingly, as a party to the lease agreement, a Charter School may be required to utilize certain services and contribute to the payment of certain shared expenses.

Nothing in this Policy shall be read to require a Charter School to relinquish the autonomy granted to it by the Charter Schools Law or to prevent a Charter School from retaining its own personnel or additional personnel to perform non-Shared Facility services or from agreeing with other individual schools at a Shared Facility to retain independent or additional personnel to perform Shared

Facility services. Any such agreement must be memorialized in the Shared Facility Memorandum of Understanding and Sharing Agreement.

### **VIII. Capital Improvements to Accommodate Shared Space**

“The Board has embraced the Small School philosophy through the passage of its Resolution on Small Schools (1995), the Small Schools Policy, 02-0424-PO03, and again with the adoption of the Renaissance 2010 Initiative. An important aspect of the small school philosophy is for each school in a Shared Facility to have its own identity and community with a shared vision and goals. Accordingly, where reasonable and appropriate, the Board will approve requests for capital improvement projects intended to make a CPS building more suitable for use as a Shared Facility.

**“A. Set Up Renovations.** “At a minimum, prior to the opening of a CPS building as a Shared Facility, the Board shall perform certain set up renovations. Those set up renovations may include:

- “1. Construction of separate administrative offices for each individual school at a Shared Facility
- “2. Construction of necessary barrier walls with doors to separate individual schools
- “3. Installation of basic technological infrastructure to support individual schools
- “4. Development of separate entrances through installation of individual signage and separate locks
- “5. Installation of separate public announcement and/or bell systems

“Where doing so would not pose an unreasonable financial burden, the central office shall cover the costs of set up renovations performed at a Campus.”

**“B. Additional Renovations to Accommodate Shared Space.** “Any individual school at a Shared Facility may submit a request to the Chief Administrative Officer or his designee that additional renovations be performed to accommodate shared space. These additional renovations may include the installation of metal detectors in high schools, the construction of separate laboratory classrooms or upgrades to the gymnasium or other school spaces.

“Any additional renovations performed at a Shared Facility shall either be funded through the Department of Operations capital improvement program or by the individual schools.”

**4. THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: “PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS ON PROPOSED SCHOOL CLOSURE, CONSOLIDATION, CO-LOCATION, PHASE-OUT, OR REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE”**

“1. Upon considering to recommend to the Chicago Board of Education (“Board”) that a school be ...co-located... an independent hearing officer shall be appointed consistent with 105 ILCS 5/34-230(f) to conduct a public hearing.

- a. The hearing will commence and conclude at the time designated in the notice of hearing;
- b. The hearing will be transcribed; and
- c. The hearing officer will be solely responsible for conducting the hearing and will conduct the hearing in an efficient and impartial manner.

**2. Chief Executive Officer’s Presentation**

- a. An attorney will present the Chief Executive Officer’s proposal by making an opening statement and submitting evidence in support of the proposal to be considered by the hearing officer.
- b. The attorney may also introduce witnesses, who will present statements regarding the proposal. The hearing officer may ask the witnesses questions to clarify any statements they make.

**3. Public Participation**

- a. The hearing officer will receive relevant statements, comments, documents or written proposals from members of the public. The community may view and participate in the hearing virtually. To virtually attend the hearing as an attendee or speaker, individuals must register online before noon on the day of the public hearing. Starting one day prior to the hearing date, registered participants will receive instructions on how to access the meeting virtually. Written comments may be accepted by the next business day, before 5:00 p.m. if delivered by hand (42 W. Madison) or via email (transitions@cps.edu) to the attention of the CPS Law Department.

- b. All those wishing to comment on the matter being considered will be required to sign up to do so as provided in the notice of hearing.
  - i. Registration must be made online by the individual who will be commenting on the proposal; and
  - ii. An individual may not sign in to speak on behalf of another person.
- c. The hearing officer will determine the order of speakers.
- d. When called by the hearing officer to speak, the speaker shall phone in per instructions, and s/he will have two minutes to present his/her remarks and materials to the hearing officer.
- e. The total number of persons speaking at the hearing will be subject to the sole discretion of the hearing officer.
- f. The hearing officer and Board's Office of Safety & Security may impose any other reasonable procedures or limitations necessary to ensure that the proceedings are orderly and efficient.
- g. Courteous, respectful and civil behavior is expected from all speakers and all persons attending a hearing. Disruptive individuals may be removed from the hearing.

#### 4. Hearing Officer's Written Report

- a. Following the hearing, the hearing officer will prepare and submit to the Chief Executive Officer a written report summarizing the public comments and the documents received at the hearing.
- b. The hearing officer's report will also determine whether the Chief Executive Officer complied with the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/34-230 and the Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions.

### **III. HEARING**

Laura Battistoni, Senior Assistant General Counsel, of the Board of Education, presented the CEO's proposal. She submitted the following evidence in support of the proposal:

## **EXHIBITS PRODUCED:**

Documentary submissions were received and included the following:

### **CEO's Compiled Exhibit 1**

#### **A. NOTICES OF HEARING**

- Tab 1 Notice Letter to the Parents or Guardians of Students at North River Elementary School ("North River") and ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School ("ASPIRA") dated December 1, 2021 and Draft Transition Plan for the Proposed Co-location of North River and ASPIRA
- Tab 2 Notice Letter to the Administrators, Staff, and Local School Council Members at North River and ASPIRA and Elected Officials, dated December 1, 2021 and Draft Transition Plan for the Proposed Co-location of North River and ASPIRA
- Tab 3 Notice Letter to the Parents or Guardians of Students at North River and ASPIRA, dated January 4, 2022 regarding instructions for virtually attending the two Community Meetings and the Public Hearing
- Tab 4 Affidavit of Mirlene Dossous, Director of Community Partnerships for the Office of Portfolio Management for Chicago Public Schools, regarding: (a) publication of Draft Guidelines for School Actions on October 1, 2021, (b) publication of the List of Independent Hearing Officers for Hearings on October 27, 2021, (c) publication of final Guidelines for School Actions on October 27, 2021, (d) publication of proposals on December 1, 2021, (e) delivery of Notice Letters to Parents/Guardians, School Personnel and Local School Council Members of North River and ASPIRA on December 1, 2021, and (f) publication of summaries from Community Meetings on or about January 14, 2022 and January 18, 2022
- Tab 5 Affidavit of Charles Swirsky, Acting Chief Officer for the Office of Public Policy for Chicago Public Schools, regarding Electronic Mail Delivery of Notice Letters to Elected Officials on December 1, 2021
- Tab 6 Public Notice of Hearing and Community Meetings by Newspaper Publication in the Chicago Sun-Times on December 30, 2021

#### **B. RELEVANT LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL DOCUMENTS**

- Tab 7 105 ILCS 5/34-18 ("Powers of the Board"), effective January 1, 2022
- Tab 8 105 ILCS 5/34-200 ("Definitions"), effective July 13, 2012
- Tab 9 105 ILCS 5/34-225 ("School Transition Plans"), effective August 19, 2018
- Tab 10 105 ILCS 5/34-230 ("School Action Public Meetings and Hearings"), effective June 17, 2021
- Tab 11 Chicago Public Schools Capacity Utilization Standards (Issued December 2018)

- Tab 12 Chicago Board of Education Shared Facility Policy, Policy Manual Section 410.7, Board Report 05-0125-POI
- Tab 13 Guidelines for School Actions, 2021-2022 School Year (Issued October 25, 2021)
- Tab 14 Chief Executive Officer's Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidation, Co-Location, Phase-Out, or Reassignment Boundary Change

**C. DOCUMENTS AND WRITTEN EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSAL**

- Tab 15 Transcript of the January 11, 2022 Community Meeting regarding the Proposed Co-location of North River and ASPIRA
- Tab 16 Summary of the January 11, 2022 Community Meeting regarding the Proposed Co-location of North River and ASPIRA
- Tab 17 Transcript of the January 13, 2022 Community Meeting regarding the Proposed Co-location of North River and ASPIRA
- Tab 18 Summary of the January 13, 2022 Community Meeting regarding the Proposed Co-location of North River and ASPIRA
- Tab 19 Written Statement of Iliana Vargas, Director of Planning and Data Management for the Chicago Public Schools
- Tab 20 Written Statement of Venguanette Dye, Acting Executive Director of Capital Operations for the Chicago Public Schools
- Tab 21 Proposed layout for Co-Location of North River and ASPIRA-Haugan
- Tab 22 Written Statement of Julie McGlade, Chief of Network 1 Schools for the Chicago Public Schools
- Tab 23 Formal Request for Co-location from the North River Local School Council, dated September 24, 2021
- Tab 24 Letters of Support from Elected Officials, dated September 27, 2021
- Tab 25 Letter of Support from Roosevelt High School Principal Daniel Kramer, dated September 28, 2021
- Tab 26 Letters of Support from North River Staff Members

**D. Public Comment Documents**

There were no documents offered by the public to be received at the public hearing.

It was announced at the public hearing that the record would be kept open until Friday, January 21, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., to allow those parties who were unable to attend the hearing, or for any other reason, to submit written testimony or any documents relating to the CEO's proposals that they would want made a part of the record of proceedings. The public was given the option to either hand deliver the documents to the CPS Law Department Office located at 42 W. Madison Street, Chicago, or send via email to the following email address: [transitions@cps.edu](mailto:transitions@cps.edu).



**TESTIMONY PRODUCED:**

**A. CPS Witnesses:**

**Name**

**Affiliation**

**Iliana Vargas**

**Director of Planning and Data Management  
for Chicago Public Schools**

Good evening, Your Honor. My name is Iliana Vargas. I am the Director of Planning and Data Management. My responsibilities include undertaking school demographic studies, enrollment projections, and the monitoring of space utilization of the public school facilities throughout Chicago. I have been in this position since 2020.

I have been asked to appear at this hearing today to convey to you, the parents and the community, as well as interested members of the public in attendance, information regarding the space utilization of the 3729 W. Leland Ave. facility with respect to the proposal to co-locate North River Elementary School ("North River") and ASPIRA-Haugan ("ASPIRA") charter school. A co-location is when two schools share space in the same building, or on the same campus, but operate independently from each other.

Under the Guidelines for School Actions for the 2021-2022 School Year (Guidelines), the CEO may propose a co-location of two or more schools within the same facility if: (1) the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a co-location be considered via the process to request proposals; and (2) the combined projected enrollment is within the facility's enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Capacity Utilization Standards and the facility can support the academic programming of the schools being co-located together.

This proposal is consistent with the Guidelines for co-locations. The proposal was formally requested by members of the Albany Park community. Specifically, the proposal came from the North River Elementary Local School Council, through a letter dated September 24, 2021. This letter is located in your binder at Tab 23. Additionally, the combined projected enrollment of North River and ASPIRA is within the facility's enrollment efficiency range.

To understand the enrollment efficiency range of a facility, Chicago Public Schools utilizes its Capacity Utilization Standards and Methodology, which is located in your binder at Tab 11. CPS provides an enrollment efficiency range for elementary schools based primarily on the total number of instructional classrooms available in the facility. Each elementary school's ideal capacity is identified as 77% of the total number of physical classroom spaces, rounded down and then multiplied by 30. Classrooms under 650 square feet are counted as half of a classroom in the space utilization formula.

There are 37 classrooms within the 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility. This includes 34 full sized classrooms and 3 half classrooms. Because the 3 half classrooms are only counted

as .5, 35.5 classrooms are used in the formula. The ideal capacity for this facility is 810 students. For a co-location, any combined enrollment between 563-895 students is determined to be within the enrollment efficiency range of this facility.

North River is currently located at 4416 N. Troy Street and it currently serves approximately 259 students in grades PreK-8. The school serves one classroom per grade level and has experienced a decline of 20% in enrollment in the last five school years.

ASPIRA-Haugan is a charter school that serves 121 students in grades 6-8. The school has had a decline of 70% in enrollment in the last 5 years.

The projected enrollment of North River for the 2022-2023 school year is 247 students and the projected enrollment of ASPIRA for next year is 108 students. The combined projected enrollment is 355 students and well below the enrollment efficiency range of the building of 563 to 895 students. There is sufficient capacity within the facility for both schools.

To accommodate the enrollment of both schools in the 2022-2023 school year, 19 classrooms would be assigned to North River, and 15 classrooms would be assigned to ASPIRA. In subsequent years, as both schools' needs may change, adjustments will be made to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which governs the assignment of spaces within the facility.

Next, you will hear from my colleague, Venguanette Dye, who will explain how a co-location at 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility can support the academic programming of both North River and ASPIRA.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
<b>Venguanette Dye</b>	<b>Director of Capital Operations of Capital Planning and Construction for Chicago Public Schools</b>

Good evening, Your Honor. My name is Venguanette Dye. I am the Director of Capital Operations of the Department of Capital Planning and Construction for the Chicago Public Schools. My responsibilities include oversight of all capital planning and expenditures, environmental, design, construction, and the real estate portfolio. I have been in this position since June of 2019. I have also concurrently been the acting Executive Director of Capital Operations since November of 2021.

The Chief Executive Officer of CPS has asked me to appear before you today at this hearing to convey to you, and to the parents, staff members and local school council members, as well as interested members of the public in attendance, information relevant to the proposal to co-locate North River Elementary School (North River) and ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School (ASPIRA).

As stated in the Board's Shared Facility Plan, which is included in your exhibit binder at Tab 12, CPS believes that it is in the best interest of the students and communities to identify buildings that are not being utilized at their full capacity and to improve the use of those facilities. One potential way to accomplish this is for two schools to share space in a facility. You have already heard from my colleague, Iliana Vargas, who has explained that the 3729 W. Leland Ave facility has sufficient space for both North River and ASPIRA. I will now speak about how a co-location at the 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility can support the academic programming of both North River and ASPIRA.

### **Facility Description**

ASPIRA is located in Chicago's Albany Park at 3729 W. Leland Avenue. The facility was originally constructed in 2005, and is 115,292 square feet. The main entrance to the facility is at 3729 W. Leland. Staff and visitor parking is located in the main lot adjacent to the school on the corner of Hamlin Avenue and Leland Avenue. An auxiliary lot is located on the corner of Lawndale Avenue and Wilson Avenue. Baseball and softball fields along with basketball courts are located at the park district facility immediately north of the school.

The facility has a total of 37 classrooms, which, in part, include specialty classrooms such as: 1 computer lab, 1 music room, 1 art room, 1 fitness room, and 1 workforce development room. The fitness room is located on the first floor, the lunchroom is on the first floor, and there is also one gymnasium on the first floor. There is a large library on the second floor, and the third floor houses the computer lab, the music room, and the art room.

### **Proposed Allocation of Space**

The 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility has sufficient space to accommodate the needs of both North River and ASPIRA for academic courses, lunch, physical education, administrative offices, and other programming. If this proposal is approved, a specific memorandum of understanding (MOU) to allocate space between the two schools will be drafted in accordance with the Board's Shared Facility Policy. At this time, I will outline our recommendation as to how these two schools can allocate the space to ensure that the needs of both schools are met. Our recommendation for the allocation of space for the 2022-2023 school year can be visually seen in the images at Tab 21. You will see that as the legend shows, proposed North River space is in blue, proposed ASPIRA space is in purple, proposed shared space is shown in peach, and Park District space is shown in yellow.

Today, I understand that North River needs a total of 19 classrooms and that ASPIRA needs a total of 15 classrooms. For the school year 2022-2023, North River would use dedicated classroom space on the second floor and limited classroom space on the first floor, and ASPIRA would use classroom space on the third floor.

Both schools also need space for physical education. The 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility has one gymnasium that will be utilized by both schools.

Both schools need administrative office space. North River will have dedicated space to create a main office on the first floor and ASPIRA will continue to use the existing main office located on the first floor.

While both schools need to maintain separate school identities while still sharing certain common areas, they will have a shared school entrance on Leland Avenue. Due to the layout of the facility, this shared entrance will be most accessible and safest for both school communities.

Both schools will need space for lunch. The lunchroom is located on the first floor and is approximately 6700 square feet. The lunchroom will be used by ASPIRA and North River. We also propose that they share the library.

If this proposal is approved, the Department of Capital Planning and Construction in conjunction with the Department of Innovation and Incubation will work with both schools and the campus governance manager to develop the MOU confirming all dedicated and shared spaces and scheduling use of each space. Prior to the beginning of school year 2022-2023, the campus manager and building council will review and assess the need for classroom space and allocate accordingly. My colleague, Julie McGlade, will explain the roles of the campus governance manager and building council.

### **Scope of Renovation Work**

During the summer of 2022, the scope of work for the 3729 W. Leland facility will include providing updated signage for both schools, and phone, IT, and temporary programmatic improvements as needed for the 2022-2023 school year for both schools. Major renovations to accommodate programmatic and operational improvements will be completed during the summer of 2023. These renovations will include the addition of a science lab, a multipurpose workforce development space, and office and student service space for ASPIRA. Renovations will also include the addition of the following for North River: pre-k classroom(s), office space, a computer lab, music and art space.

To conclude, these two schools can fit within the 3729 W. Leland facility and if this co-location is approved by the Board, the Department of Capital Planning and Construction will work with the campus governance manager to develop a MOU that outlines all dedicated and shared spaces.

**Name**

**Affiliation**

**Julie McGlade**

**Network Chief of Schools for North River  
Elementary School**

Good evening, Your Honor. My name is Julie McGlade, and I am the Network Chief of Schools for Network 1 and North River Elementary School. Chicago Public Schools are divided into Networks, managed by Chiefs, who provide support and oversight for the schools assigned to them on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). North River Elementary School ("North River") is within Network 1 and I am responsible for the support and oversight of this school on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer. I have been in this position since July of 2018.

I appear before you today because the CEO is proposing a co-location with North River and ASPIRA-Haugan ("ASPIRA"). On September 24, 2021, the Local School Council ("LSC") of North River, with the support of their school community, elected officials, and the North River school community, requested that North River be co-located with ASPIRA, located at 3729 W. Leland Avenue in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood.

I am here to convey to you, and to the parents, staff members and local school council members, as well as interested members of the public in attendance, information regarding North River Elementary School and co-locations.

**North River and ASPIRA-Haugan**

The North River LSC has expressed that this proposal would provide students a quality education and the academic continuity they need for a successful elementary school education. The current North River location at 4416 N. Troy does not provide a playground, safe outdoor space for students, or a full-functioning gymnasium. There is no available space for supplemental programming, such as science or computer labs. In addition, because North River currently shares a facility with the Archdiocese, there are several restrictions on timing of programs, access to the facility before and after school hours, and the use of certain spaces. This proposed co-location would provide North River with an equitable access to space and programming that is restricted at their current location. A letter in support of this proposal from the members of the North River LSC are located in your binder at Tab 23.

This proposal is also supported by Alderperson Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez, State Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas, and State Representative Jaime Andrade, Jr. The elected officials indicate their support for the co-location to increase safety and provide students with access to spaces necessary for effective learning, such as science labs, a gym, an auditorium, and space for related service providers. In addition, Alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa supports this proposal due to the lack of adequate space at the current North River location. The elected officials' letters are located in your binder at Tab 24.

This proposal is also supported by the neighboring Roosevelt High School principal and several North River staff members. Letters are located in your binder at Tabs 25 and 26.

Finally, members from the ASPIRA-Haugan staff and school community have expressed an openness and welcoming approach regarding this proposed co-location. Comments from the public community meetings are located in the transcripts in your binder at Tabs 15 and 17.

Although North River and ASPIRA-Haugan follow two different school models, through collaborative partnership, co-sharing benefits extend past sharing the facility and can provide opportunities such as: shared teacher professional development and collaboration, student and family services, after-school programming, and shared community partnerships.

### **Co-locations**

Secondly, I would like to provide some information regarding co-locations in general. CPS has 44 schools that share space across 21 campuses in the district. Out of the 21 co-location campuses, 12 of the campus co-locations are between a CPS District School and a CPS Charter School.

CPS believes that when done in a thoughtful and collaborative manner by school leadership, the students will not only benefit from the school they are attending, but also from the school and student body that is sharing a facility. Leadership of both North River and ASPIRA-Haugan have demonstrated not only a willingness, but an eagerness to collaborate for the betterment of all students. For example, before and after school programming will be available to both North River and ASPIRA students.

To ensure the successful co-location of North River and ASPIRA, CPS commits to the following:

- Providing an equitable use of the facility;
- Building and maintaining strong relationships between the two school communities;
- Supporting school identity and autonomy;
- Supporting future plans;
- Partnering with the Park District to expand team sports and offer intramural and enrichment opportunities for both schools;
- Establishing and maintaining a conflict resolution process that will work best for both schools; and
- Capitalizing on the benefits of sharing a building

CPS will establish a community advisory council made up of parents, staff, and students from both schools to make these commitments a reality and to develop collaborative programming and approaches that lead to success for both school communities. In addition, a campus governance manager will work with both school principals to set up and participate in a building council which will meet regularly, develop space sharing

plans, identify initiatives for schoolwide and community collaboration, and provide annual feedback to the district for areas of improvement. The building council will consist of the administrative and selected staff from both schools.

In conclusion, this proposal is consistent with the Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions ("Guidelines") because it is a proposal requested by a parent or community members via the process to request proposals outlined in the Guidelines. Furthermore, as you heard from my colleague, Iliana Vargas, the resulting space utilization after the co-location will not exceed either school's enrollment efficiency range, as defined by the CPS' Capacity Utilization Standards.

**B. Public Comments:**

**Name**

**Affiliation**

**Rossana Rodriquez**

**Alderman of 33<sup>rd</sup> Ward**

So, I'm happy to be able to speak in the first community hearing, and I just wanted to stress how important it is that North River Elementary is able to co-locate with ASPIRA-Haugan in the timeline that has been established on the proposal.

I think that the idea of allowing one more year of the school community at North River Elementary having to do silent gyms because there are funerals going on is absolutely unacceptable.

So, I am absolutely in support of this proposal, and I just want to make sure that we are following the timeline that has been created for the proposal and that our children are able to have the space that they so desperately need.

I am excited to see this move forward.

**Fernando Grillo**

**CEO of ASPIRA**

Good evening, your Honor. I am Fernando Grillo. I serve as CEO of ASPIRA.

I would like to thank CPS leadership, North River leadership and every student for engaging in a collaborative conversation in the community of school leaders and parents at ASPIRA.

ASPIRA supports the ongoing conversations currently lead by CPS leadership around the co-location of the North River Elementary School and ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School.

Last year, as ASPIRA CEO, I publicly stated and I reiterate today that ASPIRA supports a new facility in the co-location for North River Elementary School.

I am on the record that all children in Chicago Public Schools deserve to learn in a quality facility that offers the same as the building on Leland Avenue has afforded our ASPIRA students.

For ASPIRA it is vital to continue serving our students in a community with instruction and the violence prevention and workforce development programs we currently offer.

ASPIRA requests that the respectful dialogue between our two school communities continues and that it results in a memorandum of understanding which will be equitable and provides the opportunity for both campuses to flourish and grow and for ASPIRA to continue to deliver our programs to our students, North River Elementary School students and students living in our Albany Park community, without the risk of losing funding for programs specifically funded to provide services and support students in that community area.

Thank you for your continued collaboration, CPS and North River leadership. ASPIRA looks forward to welcoming our new neighbors from North River Elementary School for the 2022-2023 school year.

**Anthony Chalmers**

**Principal of ASPIRA**

First, I'd like to say thank you, your Honor, elected officials, CPS leadership, Mr. Grillo, ASPIRA Board of Directors, River North leadership and the entire ASPIRA-Haugan leadership team.

We at ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School welcome the families, students and community members of North River Elementary School. We understand that their current environment is not ideal for quality learning and welcome to share the building at 3729 West Leland.

ASPIRA understands that there's more than enough space for both schools to continue to operate and flourish and grow, again, we -- our expectation is that students all continue helping the students and that we all, both schools, continue helping the community -- being a pillar in the community.

**Felix Cardona**

**Alderman of 31<sup>st</sup> Ward**

I would like to take the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the families in our community. (Inaudible) -- student population comes from my ward.

ASPIRA's mission goes beyond instruction and education. It is a pillar in our community in serving our people, especially those underserved and marginalized.

Right now, for the community and for me, it's critical to ensure that the co-location process will not affect ASPIRA services to our community.



I hope that the conversations and negotiations with ASPIRA and CPS continue to have the best interest of students and families as a priority.

I'd just ask ASPIRA to continue to be heard and treated with respect. Our families needed to be heard, and you have done it by the community meeting, which I thank you.

Our community wants ASPIRA to continue serving, instructing and helping its students. We want to ensure the co-location does not ultimately relocate ASPIRA-Haugan's family. We welcome the North River families to also benefit ASPIRA services.

We have a number of professionals and successful people that graduated from ASPIRA. It's proven beyond a doubt that ASPIRA is needed in our community.

We want ASPIRA to continue to serve in our community for the years to come.

**Jaime Sanchez**

**Principal of North River**

I want to thank everybody, especially your Honor, members of -- representatives of the Board of Education, CPS leadership, our Network 1 Chief. I especially want to thank our partners, the ASPIRA community leadership, CEO and, of course, Mr. Chalmers.

We look forward for this opportunity to be able to come together, the two school communities to forge a new identity. We are excited about these opportunities to build and grow.

I feel that this can both be a beneficial possibility for both schools to expand our experiences in how we educate students, how we work together collaboratively.

I believe that this opportunity can serve as a great example not only for those present here but for those students directly and also for the greater community.

Our hope is that we continue to forge moving forward and developing relationships that build over time and that they will enforce our partnership and it is positive, beneficial and always respectful.

Thank you to all leadership for supporting this.

**Christina Pacione-Zayas**

**Senator, 20<sup>th</sup> Senate District**

Good evening, everyone. Thank you for accommodating me. I, unfortunately, just became aware of this hearing. I had not received any invitation. So, I appreciate the accommodation.

I always appreciate the opportunity for the community to come together to have a discussion about this opportunity.

I know that we had some problems, I think, with the interpretation, but I want to make sure that the parent that just spoke does have an opportunity to speak, and I hope that my time does not infringe upon that. Can that be assured because I want to make sure that parent voice is centered in this discussion as well?

**HEARING OFFICER DOLAN:** Senator, you can be assured of the fact that all those who have signed up to speak tonight, even if we go beyond the 6:30 limit, will be heard. I will not adjourn the meeting until all those who have taken their time to be here tonight have been given that opportunity. And, also, you can be assured that we're going to do everything we can with respect to the little glitches that we have with respect to the interpretation, or what we're hearing on this end, that we rectify as best we can so that we have that individual and all such individuals on the record.

**SENATOR PACIONE-ZAYAS:** I just was, you know, basically saying I appreciate the opportunity to share some kind of thoughts and reflexes.

I had participated in a meeting, I want to say it was, just last week that specifically kind of was addressing the topic and hearing from various voices.

It has been on record that I submitted a letter, I signed a letter with colleagues, Representative Jaime Andrade, Alderwoman Rossana Rodriguez, in support of the co-location, and that with North River co-locating to the Haugan Middle School. And specifically in my comments the last time, I had indicated that over the summer I had an opportunity to visit the location, actually, both locations and see the conditions of facilities and what was happening.

I think my biggest concern while I was visiting North River was it's -- not only that there's a lack of space such as, you know, had --

**HEARING OFFICER DOLAN:** We've lost you, Senator.

**SENATOR PACIONE-ZAYAS:** I will just kind of summarize what I had said before. Hopefully, it captures the sentiment. I just wanted to acknowledge that I participated last week in the community meeting specifically to lift up a joint letter that was signed by myself and Representative Jaime Andrade as well as Alderman Rossana Rodriguez in support of the co-location of North River and ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School.

I just want to share some reflections and observations on visiting both spaces.

The first would have to be that, when visiting North River, it's clear that the space is not designed for the size of the school population and to accommodate the various kind of basic needs to have a developmentally appropriate space that supports teaching and learning.

Hallways had quite a few items in it, and that was, I think, as a result of social distancing and some of the protocol so that we can mitigate the spread of Covid.

The gym was troublesome because you can see that it's a cement floor, it has columns in it, it's also the basement of a church where events such as funerals take place and, basically, having the teacher have to keep children's voices down and also make sure that activities are designed so that they don't run into columns and get hurt with the cement floor.

The building, itself, is not ADA-accessible, and I know, you know, that's a ways that we have to go just as a district, but we know that limits potential opportunities for family members and other people who are part of the school community.

And there's no playground.

So, with having said that, that's why it just seemed as though, given what we know about the size and space, the facilities of ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School and that both school populations could be accommodated, it just makes the best sense so that we can have a space where all children are able to access their education, be safe, continue to grow, learn and live up to their greatest potential.

I also would like to just acknowledge that ASPIRA has made it very clear that they are supportive of the co-location and welcoming families and becoming a blended family. I guess that's one way to speak to it in this process.

And, you know, that the institution, in and of itself, always has community at the heart, and so I think this is a wonderful opportunity for the needs to be met of the broader community areas that I represent, that I have the honor to represent.

And that was precisely why I got involved in this process; because visiting schools, understanding facilities, understanding the very kind of granular needs in school communities is a part of what I've been doing prior to serving in the senate and happy to lend my experience and my leadership in assuring that all children in the 20th District are able to access education and, obviously, have a high-quality experience.

And so I'm really pleased to support this co-location. I'm also pleased that all parties have been working together to ensure its success.

**Micaela Gonzalez**  
(Via Spanish Interpreter)

**President North River LSC**

She wanted to say thank you to everyone here, and thank you to the students, to the parents, to everyone who was named as possible because it's a good cause, it's for the North River Community, and thank you to the students.

I'm here speaking to you not as necessarily the president of the LSC but more specifically on behalf of the students.

These changes that are coming forward, these are opportunities for the students, opportunities for them to reach their goals, for them to be able to compete academically, sport-wise and in the future.

Again, I'm not here to speak to you as the president necessarily of the LSC but simply on behalf of the students.

Thank you for making their dream a reality and especially that they -- as an ASPIRA community and everyone who has been happy -- has been working with us and with me specifically as part of the LSC of North River to give me a space to give a commentary to share my voice and to recognize specifically that the pandemic has highlighted the need for states that our children have the need for not just academically but sport-wise, and so really wanted to thank you all for giving us this opportunity and for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.

**Maria Vences**  
(Via Spanish Interpreter)

**Parent of student at North River**

My name is Maria. I do have something to share with you regarding my students.

I work with different parts of the community with anyone here. I am aware of the space here in ASPIRA. There's not a lot of kids at the school, but I'm also concerned because there's a lot of gangs.

A lot of these kids like to be in a small environment, and we have a pretty high graduation percentage.

**Martha Gutierrez**  
(Via Spanish Interpreter)

**Parent of Student at North River**

I have a student that actually comes to this school. I am very pleased with what we have. Obviously, I do not there's no cafeteria. I would like better security. The building also has a church. Our kids have, you know, to have a better school, different opportunities.

And I wanted to give thanks on behalf of all the parents for letting us speak our mind and sharing all the information we also have and share with you all.

**Daniel Kramer**

**Principal of Roosevelt High School**

I am the principal of Roosevelt High School, and I'm calling to enthusiastically endorse the co-location of North River to the building that ASPIRA currently occupies.

I was introduced by Alderman Rossana Rodriguez to Principal Sanchez about a year ago when the North River relocation proposal was made. Roosevelt is about five blocks from the new location so we immediately went into a conversation of how the schools could work in collaboration.

And I just want to really emphasize that the team at North River is an exceptionally talented team. This is the way that neighborhood high schools and elementary schools are supposed to work together.

We began discussing opportunities for things such as our high school students to come over to tutor students, the fact that they have a strong dual language program at North River, how that would feed into the program at Roosevelt, it's important for refugee families.

And so I would just like to emphasize as well that it is critically important that we stay true to the timeline that is part of this proposal. We work on an academic year calendar. It's seven months from now into the fall of 2022, and we feel that certainly is ample time for the schools to divide the space and for North River to begin an opening part, and I just want to say again welcome, and we are excited to have the addition of the North River Elementary School to the Albany Park community.

**Veronica Solis**  
(Via Spanish Interpreter)

**Communities United**

I am a leader of student organization here at the community.

We need this communication as far as the school. I am a coach of a football. I've been with Albany Park working with the community. I also have students. I'm a parent of Roosevelt High School as well.

I directly understand North River and appreciate everything they do. I also know of the need of the space of the students, and I also know that they need this special room for mental health just in case we have any situation just like the pandemic, if we lost someone in the family.

But I also understand that this could be very traumatic just because the students don't have to keep their voices low and remind them that there's funerals happening in the building, keep their voices down. It's very frustrating for us to hear all of this.

Instead of using a real ball, sometimes they have to use a sponge ball. So, this is very damage, you know, it damages -- they also know that they have to be very careful with the floor, not to damage the floor. They limited everything in so many things in so many ways.

I also support Albany around the community, the location.

I understand the communication as far as between those schools. I'm also a coach in football. I also am part of Albany School. I'm also a parent of students at Roosevelt School.

Basically, I know the importance of having and applying all of this to North River and the space that the students need to have any kind of space that's needed especially for mental health.

Think about people who have -- students who have lost loved ones to have that actual space when they go through these traumatic moments where they need to be there with the psychologist. They're also reminded that, having a funeral, they have to lower their voice.

You can think about all the frustrations that the students and the teachers have to live with day by day.

As a coach, I'm also saying that, using a regular sports ball versus a sponge ball, you know, that's very not a good thing to do. To be careful with the floors, not to damage the floors. Having all of this in mind, it's very frustrating.

I do support, like Albany, supporting my kids and being there with them. I support Albany School in part of the other school that, you know, we agree to all of this with other reasons.

I do think and I support this school, and I am with them a hundred percent.

**April Curtis**

**Chief Strategy Officer at ASPIRA**

My name is April Curtis, and I am the Chief Strategy Officer here at ASPIRA.

As mentioned, we have schools. But, most importantly, long before schools, ASPIRA has been in the community for over 50 years both in programs in Chicago Public Schools, charter schools and alternative schools as well as the surrounding communities.

Our only hope through all of this is that we are not forgotten upon as it relates to our programs.

We are the heart of our community, and the work that we do, we're working with all children, not just the ASPIRA families. We welcome and open up our doors for all kids to participate in our programs and look forward to this co-location with North River to be able to enhance our programming as well as to offer to their families as well. During the height of the pandemic, ASPIRA opened the doors while all doors were being closed. We remained open and continued to serve our community.

We take that same pride with everything that we do. We serve in our Latino families and children in work that we're planning to do and continue to do in our community.

We run robust summer programs and offer over 200 jobs throughout the city as well as summer programming and summer camp.

We also take pride in our park district partnership that we have had for all of the years that we have been at ASPIRA-Haugan and look forward to the continued partnership in the work that we're doing; that we are not competing, that we are complimenting programs.

We look forward to this co-location and the work ahead of us.

**Student A**

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at North River**

My name is Student A. I'm a fifth grader in North River Elementary School.

Just like my sister, I'm also very shy, and I'm nervous, but that's okay because (inaudible) I care.

The same as everyone here; everyone cares about the students of North River Elementary. I love my school, I love my teachers, and I love I made very good friends.

I think it is a good idea, good chance for my friends and me to meet new friends (inaudible) at ASPIRA-Haugan Middle School. They have a very good school, and we can both share the building. We can take turns within the gym. I love to play volleyball and basketball, and I can run track and -- (inaudible) -- said I cannot play many sports because you cannot bounce the ball too loud, and we cannot get too loud when we are playing tag. There's not a lot we can do, and this makes it hard for my Gym Teacher Mr. John Atchison to teach us new sports.

(Inaudible.) We can now work as a team for everyone to be happy and share the building. It's a very big building, and I'm sure there's enough space for everyone to share.

**Student B**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Student at North River**

I am eight, and I'm in third grade at North River.

I think we need a bigger space because we don't have enough space. I think so because when there's a funeral upstairs, it really sucks to have to keep quiet. It's really bad that we have to keep quiet when we have school, a school that's really small and we really should have a nice space for us.

Thank you for your support, and thank you, everyone here.

**Ricardo Vasquez**

**Parent of Student at North River**

(Via Spanish Interpreter)

Before I start, I just want to thank everyone for their support, and I thank the organizers for their interest in helping the school.

During the last part regarding this proposal, we have heard from parents from North River there are plenty of reasons that exist for there -- to need an invitation.

As parents, we want to raise children who will be good people in the future. Unfortunately, currently we do not have enough space to grow -- to grow and for those hopes to flourish. We need more space physically and mentally.

And the limitations that we currently have in our space allow our children to not be able to call -- co-parent necessarily to other schools.

ASPIRA, as we know, has great services and enough to provide to our kids as well and enough of what our kids required, and I know that we're able -- will be able to join this building -- together while retaining the individual identities of each organize -- of each school, work together to benefit all.

**Patricia Reyes**  
(Via Spanish Interpreter)

**Parent of Students at North River**

My name is Patricia Reyes, and I'm the mother of two girls at North River.

So, as we've heard from other parents today, the need that the North River students have the most is related to limited space and limited classroom size.

Currently we have small classrooms as about 25 to 30 students. We don't have a gym, we don't have an auditorium, and we want to --

-- we also have a room for our parent meetings and LSC. And that's the same space that's used for children that are in the special ed program to have their recess -- which means that, when we have those meetings, we take their space from them. And as a parent and member of the LSC, that makes me sad because I don't think it's fair to put those limitations on them.

So my daughters have been going to North River for six years. They provide a good education but not with enough space, which gives way to a lot of limitations.

It's maintained as a one-plus throughout these years. And the reason that I'm raising my voice today is because I have another daughter and I got to see her experience and it's very different from the opportunities that my other daughters are given.

She just said that she saw what a great difference that opportunity made and that people have encouraged her to switch, but she didn't switch her children because she believes in the school.



**Daisy Ziolo**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher at North River and Teacher Representative on LSC**

Hi. My name is Daisy Ziolo. I'm a first-grade teacher at North River, and I'm also the teacher representative on the LSC.

And I just wanted to quickly share why the relocation is very important for North River from a childhood development perspective.

And, you know, we have educators. We know that a school doesn't only service students' academic needs, but it should also be supporting students' social and emotional needs.

As many have mentioned, at our current North River location, we do not have the appropriate outdoor space for our students, however some upper grades are able to go outside for recess to play in the alley area which is between the dumpsters and Kedzie. But we've always said, you know, at least, they're getting some fresh air.

However, my first-grade students do not have that privilege, quote-unquote privilege, because they're younger and it's very unsafe for them to be playing in that area.

In short, currently we're unable to provide students with the basic opportunity to play outside, which means they are missing out on the many, many benefits that come from outdoor play such as motor skills, imaginative play, muscle strength, brain development, some social benefits are greater self-awareness, improved peer-to-peer relationships, a better development of sense of self and just overall health.

So as a primary teacher, this is why this relocation is very important.

And I thank you all for being here.

**Miren Jauregi**

**Citywide Clinician Servicing North River**

I'm one of the citywide clinicians who has been servicing the North River community for eight years now.

I just wanted to chime into a lot of the positive message that has been shared this evening about the welcoming of the co-location of both the schools, ASPIRA-Haugan and North River.

I'm not going to comment on many of the needs that the children at North River have experienced over the years. I know we've been talking about a space and talking about from the health perspective, even facilities such as the bathrooms have been in a very detrimental state. So we're talking about safety but also talking about in the basic health of the students.

I'm very positive about the welcoming message, and I'm really looking forward about a solid partnership between both communities as we will be enriching each other's experiences and also, from an equitable point of view, allowing the students and the families that are at North River access to additional community services that at the current location is not positive because of the limitation of the space.

A limitation of the time in which the current available space is been able to use.

So thank you, everybody. I do appreciate the work commitment, CPS leadership, ASPIRA leadership as well as North River leadership for them working in partnership for the last few years to make this dream come true for everybody.

**This concluded the testimony taken during the public hearing.**

Subsequent to the adjournment of the Public Hearing, the following public comments, received via email sent to [transition@cps.edu](mailto:transition@cps.edu), were tendered to the Hearing Officer:

**M. Collazo**

**Parent of Student at North River**

I'm not able to attend the conference, but will like to share my comments, I'm not in favor with the school moving location. It's far from us. I work near North River and I'm able to pick-up my kids within my lunch break.

**Alissa Mekami**

**Parent of Students at North River**

As a parent, I would agree to this move. I have 1 daughter who graduated Valedictorian last year and has moved on to Lane Tech. She attended North River from Kindergarten through 8th grade. I have two other daughters in 5th & 7th grades, who have been with North River since Kindergarten.

I've always felt their school was odd. No proper gym, no outdoor playground and so on. I SUPPORT THE NORTH RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MOVE.

**Elizabeth Serrano**

**Parent of Student at North River**

I believe classes should remain the same at North River elementary. Our students benefit from the size of the school during this pandemic. Classrooms are more likely to be properly cleaned and disinfected thus putting our kids at a lower risk of exposure. Our kids have had to adapt to this new normal and I do not believe changing them from school would benefit them. North River elementary is more than just a school, we are a family. Together with teachers, students, parents and staff we can keep our kids learning at North River.

**Leon Towns**

**Senior Security Officer at North River**

I have been the Senior Security Officer at North River Elementary School since 2012. One of my daily duties is to assist with the student recess time which can occur either indoors in an auditorium that also doubles as a gym, or outdoors in the parking lot behind the school or the church parking lot down the street. In the parking lot behind the school children have to play next to the garbage dumpsters for the school, and the garbage shed for the church. In the auditorium, the students have to maintain a certain voice level to play as it is beneath the church to which the school is attached. The indoor situation can sometimes be compounded by activities at the church when there is a funeral or a wedding. We know that kids will be kids and will make do with what they have. However, I also believe that allowing them to have a decent, safe, recess free from garbage dumps, parked cars, funerals and other non-school activities is a must in order to help our students to be successful and to feel safe. I only want the best for the students, good safe fun, just like I had when I was in elementary school.

**This concluded all testimony received for the public hearing.**

#### **IV. Statement of Determinations**

I make the following determinations regarding the proposal to Co-locate North River Elementary School and Aspira Charter School-Haugan Middle School in shared facilities located at 3729 W. Leland at the end of the current school year:

1. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (a) requiring the CEO to prepare, publish and submit for public comment “guidelines for school actions” has been had. (*Tab 10*)
2. Compliance with the provisions of §34-225 requiring “school transition plans” has been had. (*Tabs 1 through 5*)
3. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (d) requiring publication of notice has been had. (*Tab 6*)
4. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (e) (1), and (f) (1), (2), (3) requiring a public hearing conducted by a qualified independent hearing officer has been had via the hearing held on January 19, 2022, wherein the undersigned presided.
5. Compliance with the provisions of both §34-230 (f) (requiring: “The independent

hearing officer shall issue a written report that summarizes the hearing and determines whether the chief executive officer complied with the requirements of this Section and the guidelines”), and “Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidations, Co-Location, Phase-Out or Reassignment Boundary Change” (requiring:

“4. Hearing Officer’s Written Report:

“a. Following the hearing, the hearing officer will prepare and submit to the Chief Executive Officer a written report summarizing the public comments and the documents received at the hearing.

“b. The hearing officer’s report will also determine whether the Chief Executive Officer complied with the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/34-230 and the Chief Executive Officer’s Guidelines for School Actions.” (*Tab 14*)

has been had by this report which was prepared, and is submitted, by the undersigned.

6. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (e) (2), and (g) requiring opportunities to elicit other public comment has been had via public community meetings conducted by a representative of the CEO on January 11, 2022, and January 13, 2022 (*Tabs 15 through 18*).

7. Compliance with the provisions of the Guidelines (*Tab 13*), specifically, “III. Notice and School Transition Plans” and “Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidations, Co-Location, Phase-Out or Reassignment Boundary Change” (*Tab 14*) has been had via compliance with the various provisions of §34-230 as set out hereinabove. (*Tabs 1 through 5*).

8. North River is a Level 1+ district school located at 4416 North Troy Street in Albany Park (CPS’ Network 1). North River serves kindergarten through eighth grade, with pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten cluster programs. The school serves one classroom per grade level and has experienced a decline of 20% in enrollment in the last five school years. North River’s student enrollment is 259 students. The school leases space from the Archdiocese of

Chicago, and due to limited physical space, there is no available space for additional student programming or extracurricular activities. If this proposal is approved, North River will continue to have one classroom per grade and remain a school without an attendance boundary. (*Tab 1 and 19*).

9. Aspira-Haugan is a Level 1 charter school serving 121 students in sixth through eighth grades. ASPIRA-Haugan is located in a CPS-owned building. The school has had a decline of 70% in enrollment in the last 5 years. (*Tab 1 and 19*)

10. The proposal is that North River will co-locate with Aspira Charter School – Haugan Middle School, located at 3729 W. Leland Avenue, to provide an enhanced learning environment for the students of North River. This shared space creates a co-location consistent with, and subject to, the Chief Executive Officer’s Guidelines for School Actions (“Guidelines”). (*Tab 13*)

11. If this proposal is approved, it will create a “Shared Facility”, and the two schools will be expected to adhere to the Board’s Shared Facility Policy (Board Report 05-0126-P01).

This policy includes the following:

## **VII. Management of Shared Facility**

As owner of the CPS building that is shared by individual schools, the Board has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the facility is properly maintained, that it is shared equitably among each occupant and that any administrative issues or disputes among the individual schools in a building are resolved in a fair and efficient manner.

**D. Charter Schools in a Shared Facility.** Charter Schools are independently operated public schools approved and certified under the Illinois Charter Law, Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/27A. Nothing in this Policy shall be read to alter or amend the rights and responsibilities granted to Charter Schools under the Charter Schools Law. However, a Charter School opting to locate within a Shared Facility shall enter into a lease agreement with the Board of Education and shall be bound by the terms of that

agreement. Accordingly, as a party to the lease agreement, a Charter School may be required to utilize certain services and contribute to the payment of certain shared expenses.

Nothing in this Policy shall be read to require a Charter School to relinquish the autonomy granted to it by the Charter Schools Law or to prevent a Charter School from retaining its own personnel or additional personnel to perform non-Shared Facility services or from agreeing with other individual schools at a Shared Facility to retain independent or additional personnel to perform Shared Facility services. Any such agreement must be memorialized in the Shared Facility Memorandum of Understanding and Sharing Agreement.

12. The Guidelines require the CEO to consider certain criteria when recommending certain school action governed by the provisions of §34-230. The CEO's proposal to co-locate North River with Aspira-Haugan in shared facilities requires consideration of the following criteria set out in the Guidelines:

**“II. CRITERIA**

**“A. Criteria for Co-location**

“The CEO may propose a co-location of two or more schools within the same facility only if:

“1. the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a co-location proposal be considered via the process to request proposals outlined in the definitions section...”

**“IV. DEFINITIONS**

“Process to request proposals” means one of the following:

“2. requesting a proposal via formal communications to the CEO or Chief Education Officer by November 1, 2021...”

13. The request for a proposal to co-locate North River with Aspira-Haugan was received via the following written formal request dated September 24, 2021, addressed to the CEO wherein it was stated:

“As members of the North River School Local School Council we are asking for you and the members of the Board of Education to consider the co-location of North River School to a new school site at 3725 N. Leland Ave. We are asking for you to consider co-locating our school to an environment that guarantees our students will have access to amenities considered as standard at other CPS schools. North River School is located in school facility that is leased through the Archdioceses of Chicago and is significantly limited in scope.

“We have determined that our current school facility does not meet equal access to supports and services found as common at CPS schools across the city... our students do not have equal access to a healthy and safe modern learning environment that is designed to help them grow academically, physically and creatively... we feel confidently that this is an equity issue.

“...key bullet points which address our rationale and concerns:

- The school is not ADA accessible
- There are safety concerns due to multiple access points to the building.
- Significant limitations on implementing Covid 19 Social Distancing Guidelines.
- There are contractual limitations to shared spaces.
- There is no gym - North River uses the "church hall " as a multipurpose room.
- There is limited sports programming due to space and scheduling limitations.
- There is no green space - Recess and outdoor activities are held in the open church parking lot.
- There is no formal auditorium - The school uses the church hall to host assemblies and other auditorium related activities
- There is no playground or green spaces - Student do not have access to any jungle gym or outside playground equipment
- There is limited Mobility - Due to the buildings small size, moving students in classrooms to specials like gym, art, and lunch is difficult due to narrow hallways and stairways
- No available space for supplemental programs such as sensory room for our students in our low incidents program or science labs.
- Lack of space to accommodate fulltime social worker and related service providers.
- Continual plumbing and health related mechanical issues” (*Tab 23*)

Other members of the school community also wrote to the CEO:

1) North River’s early childhood special education teacher writes in her September 30, 2021, letter:

“...we are operating in a building that does not meet the excellence of our students and the quality of education they deserve, due to numerous facility limitations.

“My students are placed in an early childhood program with intensive support. Upon their transition to kindergarten, many continue placement in one of the district's cluster programs. Due to limited classroom space and gross ADA violations, our current building is unable to support the needs of a cluster continuum beyond early childhood. A new building would allow my students and their families to continue their education at North River, without the current upheaval from the school community, teachers, and related service providers that they have established relationships with. Additionally, this would expand the scope of extracurricular programming we could offer to these students, including participation in Special Olympics.

“One of the areas of focus in the Illinois Early Learning Standards is physical development and health. My students have no functional space to practice gross motor skills, such as a gym, fenced outdoor space, or playground. We currently utilize a meeting room in the church that poses safety concerns due to hard tile flooring, unlocked storage closets, and an exit door directly leading to the school parking lot.

“The proposed co-location allows for our school community to remain intact, providing an equitable education within the Albany Park neighborhood we all love.” (*Tab 26*)

2) The North River’s Diverse Learner Teacher and its Case manager jointly wrote in their September 28, 2021, letter:

“Our main concern is lack of physical space for our diverse learner population. To be more specific, currently special education teachers are utilizing shared classroom spaces among various grade levels. For example, two teachers are giving simultaneous instruction to two different classes at the same time, in the same classroom. It is obvious that our students would find this to be disruptive and very challenging to learn.

“Another concern we have is the building accessibility for parents and families of students. Individualized Educational Program meetings involve the parents or family members, and take place in person on the third floor. Our building does not have an elevator or any means to accommodate families that may have a disability.



“Lastly, there are multiple clinicians on a daily basis to service our diverse learner population. Each year, there is no consistent location for their workspace and personal belongings. Many clinicians require a confidential space due to the extent of the child's needs. Currently, some clinicians are sharing spaces with other staff members, and at times creates a conflict with the service that is being provided to the student as well as the additional staff and students in the shared space in the classroom.

“...it is evident that our student population does not have the appropriate learning environment to support their individual needs. In addition to the inside school space, our students do not have access to a safe, green outdoor space. Mental health could not be more important now, post COVID-19. With that said, it is imperative for our students to be able to run around, play, socialize, and get fresh air. These are simple requests, but can make a world of a difference in a students' school day.” *(Tab 26)*

3) The Music Teacher at North River stated in her letter:

“For the past ten years I have spent my time building the school's music program. In that time, I have seen so much potential come through our doors. Students that have a desire to sing, play instruments, and even perform. The facilities at our current location make performances and sharing talent difficult for many reasons. From the sound system, to the limited stage, to the seating, it has been a struggle to put on a good performance. Relocating would give the students a chance to really thrive in an actual performance environment.

“Along with the issue of performance space, we have had to turn down many grants that would have provided more opportunities for students to explore new musical concepts.” *(Tab 26)*

4) The Physical Education and Health Teacher at North River wrote in his letter:

“I'd like to paint you a picture of our School. Imagine a 3 story apartment building with 4 rooms on each level. There are two bathrooms in the building, neither of which are suitable for students or staff, and are extremely out-dated. Outside our building there is a rather large parking lot for the staff to park in; however, with no outdoor field space or regular gym, I ask half of the staff to park somewhere else to allow the students a recess and PE space on all days that weather permits. This outdoor space happens to be next to all of the dumpsters along with broken glass bottles and other trash from the neighborhood. Currently, there are large storage bins occupying some of the space which leads to blind spots for kids to hide behind, also including parked cars which the ball likes to hide under or behind.

“Our "gym" is located in the basement of the church, which is adjacent to the school. It has large unpadded concrete posts and a limited 12' ceiling.

“Some major issues include the following...

Number 1 - Safety - The Church has 5 possible entrances into the gym and since the church is open to the public, often there are homeless people seeking shelter from cold weather in the gym bathrooms. I worry about sending students to the bathrooms unattended while I watch the rest of the class. In addition, there are several safety hazards in the church basement including cement floors, walls, and beams. Plus, there are many blind spots where kids can hide. Outside in the parking lot there are power lines, dumpsters, an alley, and a very busy - Kedzie Avenue.

Number 2 - Inadequate Facilities - There is no playground or grassy field for young students to develop motor skills including agility, balance, and coordination. Research shows that unstructured play can lead to increased social skills, creativity, problem-solving, reasoning, and many other mental improvements--all of which will lead to increased brain activity and better test scores. Currently, North River students are lacking those experiences and exposure to outdoor activities. A standard amenity of a school gymnasium has a drinking fountain. The church does not have one. The standard height for an Elementary School Gymnasium is 24' to the ceiling. As mentioned before, due to the 12' ceilings and no field space, I have to modify any skill and sport that requires height.

Number 3 - Lack of Fundamental Opportunities - When you modify a sport like Basketball, Volleyball, and Softball which are some of the most popular sports that students will play in a high school (maybe even in college on an athletic scholarship), or as adults in social recreation programs, you are actually inhibiting their potential to develop the correct skills to play the sport. Academically North River Students are prepared for high school, but physically they are hindered. They do not have the facility accommodations that would help to build their foundation and interest in a new sport or activity. After speaking to some recent alumni of North River, I found out that a bunch of them wanted to play Volleyball in high school, but were reluctant to try-out because of a lack of experience. If I could give them a more "Real" experience on a basketball court, baseball field, volleyball court, or even badminton, then they would be developmentally ready for any challenge in their future.

“I will leave you with this one thought: Have you ever told 30 Kindergarten students to be silent for an hour during PE and recess because there is a Funeral going on upstairs? I have to do it several times a year.” (Tab 26)

5) In his letter dated September 28, 2021, the Principal of Roosevelt High School wrote:

“...I recommend the relocation of North River Elementary to current location of the Aspira Haugan charter school, thus providing North River Elementary with the quality school environment they have truly earned, providing the Albany Park neighborhood with a much-needed, exemplary elementary school option, and providing Roosevelt High School with a great partnership (one which has already begun.)” (*Tab 25*)

6) The Alderman of the 33rd Ward, joined by both the State Representative of the 40th District of the Illinois Legislator and the State Senator of the 20th District of the Illinois Legislature, stated in their September 27, 2021, letter:

We are “...writing to express...support for the relocation of North River School to a new school site located at 3725 N. Leland. In October of 2020, we advocated for the schools relocation due to serious health and safety concerns of their current building. I and my fellow electeds are writing once more to advocate for the students and families at North River School and urge the board to prioritize their relocation. North River School would stand to benefit greatly by a new school location that is safe and holds all the amenities necessary for effective learning.

“As a reminder, the North River School LSC has brought the following concerns to our attention:

- There are safety concerns due to multiple access points to the building
- There is no gym, auditorium, playground, or green space at North River and students and staff are forced to adapt activities to the church hall and parking lot
- There is no available space for supplemental programs such as a sensory room for students in low incidents program or science labs
- The current location is not ADA accessible and there is limited space for clinicians such as speech, OT and social work to meet or provide support services
- There is limited mobility due to the buildings small size and moving students from classrooms to gym, art, and lunch is difficult due to narrow hallways and stairways

“We are asking you and members of the Board of Education to consider and approve the relocation of the North River School to 3725 N Leland.” (*Tab 24*)

14. Accordingly, compliance with the criterion requiring requests from the public for a co-location as set out in the “Guidelines” at II. A. (1) has been had: “...the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a co-location proposal be considered via the process to request proposals outlined in the definitions section.”

15. The Guidelines require the CEO to also consider other criteria when recommending certain school action governed by the provisions of §34-230:

## “II. CRITERIA

### “A. Criteria for Co-location

“The CEO may propose a co-location of two or more schools within the same facility only if:

“2. the combined projected enrollment is within the facility's enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Space Utilization Standards...”

16. To understand the enrollment efficiency range of a facility, Chicago Public Schools utilizes its Capacity Utilization Standards and Methodology. These standards provide:

“**Co-located schools:** There are...instances where more than one school (typically two) are located within the same facility. In these instances, the ideal capacity refers to the facility itself and the utilization percentage refers to the combined enrollment of the co-located schools.” (*Tab 11*)

CPS provides an enrollment efficiency range for elementary schools based primarily on the total number of instructional classrooms available in the facility. Each elementary school's ideal capacity is identified as 77% of the total number of physical classroom spaces, rounded down and then multiplied by 30. Classrooms under 650 square feet are counted as half of a classroom in the space utilization formula.

There are 37 classrooms within the 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility. This includes 34 full sized classrooms and 3 half classrooms. Because the 3 half classrooms are only counted as .5,

35.5 classrooms are used in the formula. The ideal capacity for this facility is 810 students. For a co-location, any combined enrollment between 563-895 students is determined to be within the enrollment efficiency range of this facility.

North River is currently located at 4416 N. Troy Street and it currently serves approximately 259 students in grades PreK-8. The school serves one classroom per grade level and has experienced a decline of 20% in enrollment in the last five school years.

Aspira-Haugan is a charter school that serves 121 students in grades 6-8. The school has had a decline of 70% in enrollment in the last 5 years.

The projected enrollment of North River for the 2022-2023 school year is 247 students and the projected enrollment of ASPIRA for next year is 108 students. The combined projected enrollment is 355 students and well below the enrollment efficiency range of the building of 563 to 895 students. There is sufficient capacity within the facility for both schools. *(Tab19)*

17. Accordingly, compliance with the criterion concerning a facility’s enrollment efficiency range for co-location set out in the “Guidelines” at II. A. (2) has been had: “...the combined projected enrollment is within the facility’s enrollment efficiency range as defined by the CPS’ Capacity Utilization Standards....”

18. Other criteria that the Guidelines require the CEO to consider when recommending certain school action governed by the provisions of §34-230 is:

## **“II. CRITERIA**

### **“A. Criteria for Co-location**

“The CEO may propose a co-location of two or more schools within the same facility only if:

“2. ...the facility can support the academic programming of the schools being co-located together.

19. ASPIRA is located in Chicago's Albany Park at 3729 W. Leland Avenue. The facility was originally constructed in 2005, and is 115,292 square feet. The main entrance to the facility is at 3729 W. Leland. Staff and visitor parking is located in the main lot adjacent to the school on the corner of Hamlin Avenue and Leland Avenue. An auxiliary lot is located on the corner of Lawndale Avenue and Wilson Avenue. Baseball and softball fields along with basketball courts are located at the park district facility immediately north of the school.

The facility has a total of 37 classrooms, which, in part, include specialty classrooms such as: 1 computer lab, 1 music room, 1 art room, 1 fitness room, and 1 workforce development room. The fitness room is located on the first floor, the lunchroom is on the first floor, and there is also one gymnasium on the first floor. There is a large library on the second floor, and the third floor houses the computer lab, the music room, and the art room.

The 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility has sufficient space to accommodate the needs of both North River and ASPIRA for academic courses, lunch, physical education, administrative offices, and other programming. (*Tab 20*)

20. Accordingly, compliance with the criterion concerning a facility's ability to support both schools set out in the "Guidelines" at II. A. has been had: "2. ...the facility can support the academic programming of the schools being co-located together."

21. The Guidelines provide (II. A.) that the CEO may consider other information including, but not limited to, "...quality of the facility..." in determining whether to propose a co-location. (*Tab 13*)

The Shared Facility Policy requires a "Comprehensive Space Analysis" that shall include "...an assessment of improvements that should be performed to support the occupation of the facility by two or more autonomous schools." (*Tab 12*)

In her statement, the Director of Capital Operations of Capital Planning and Construction noted:

**“Scope of Renovation Work**

“During the summer of 2022, the scope of work for the 3729 W. Leland facility will include providing updated signage for both schools, and phone, IT, and temporary programmatic improvements as needed for the 2022-2023 school year for both schools. Major renovations to accommodate programmatic and operational improvements will be completed during the summer of 2023. These renovations will include the addition of a science lab, a multipurpose workforce development space, and office and student service space for ASPIRA. Renovations will also include the addition of the following for North River: pre-k classroom(s), office space, a computer lab, music and art space.” (Tab 20)

Additionally, the “quality of the facility” proposed for this co-location in the Transition Plan is enhanced because North River students affected by this proposal will be provided with an ADA accessible building at Aspira-Haugan. (Tab 1)

22. Prior to the occupation of a CPS facility by two or more individual schools, the schools shall submit a Memorandum of Understanding and fully executed Sharing Agreement. (Tab 12)

23. If the proposal presented at the Public Hearing on January 19, 2022, is approved:

“To accommodate the enrollment of both schools in the 2022-2023 school year, 19 classrooms would be assigned to North River, and 15 classrooms would be assigned to ASPIRA.” (Tab 19)

“For the school year 2022-2023, North River would use dedicated classroom space on the second floor and limited classroom space on the first floor, and ASPIRA would use classroom space on the third floor.

“The...facility has one gymnasium that will be utilized by both schools.

“North River will have dedicated space to create a main office on the first floor and ASPIRA will continue to use the existing main office located on the first floor.

“...they will have a shared school entrance on Leland Avenue...

“The lunchroom will be used by ASPIRA and North River. We also propose that they share the library.” (*Tab 20*)

“...the Department of Capital Planning and Construction in conjunction with the Department of Innovation and Incubation will work with both schools and the campus governance manager to develop the MOU confirming all dedicated and shared spaces and scheduling use of each space. Prior to the beginning of school year 2022-2023, the campus manager and building council will review and assess the need for classroom space and allocate accordingly.” (*Tab 20*)

24. It is a reasonable expectation that if the proposal to Co-locate North River with Aspira-Haugan in Shared Facilities at 3729 W. Leland Avenue is approved, CPS will work with both schools to develop a Memorandum of Understanding confirming all dedicated and shared spaces and scheduling use of each space in conformance with the provisions of the Chicago Board of Education Shared Facility Policy (*Tab 12*).

This expectation is based upon:

“...the extensive experience CPS has had in creating small schools and providing opportunities and support for small schools to share one facility, and its being guided by six essential principles for successful building sharing which stem from that experience:

“(1) A commitment to the equitable use of facilities to accrue the greatest benefits of schools sharing buildings;

“(2) The establishment and maintenance of strong relationships among school leaders in a shared facility;

“(3) Strategic thinking about physical space and visual cues in a shared building so as to foster the maintenance of distinctive identities of each individual school;

“(4) The development of a detailed and thoughtful Memorandum of Understanding and Sharing Agreement to memorialize all agreements between individual schools related to the shared facility arrangement;

“(5) A conflict resolution process that enhances the legitimacy of the agreements made between individual schools and provides an efficient means for resolving any conflicts;



“(6) The capitalization on the benefits of building sharing through the pooling of resources in order to better serve the students in each individual school.”  
(*Tab 12*)

25. It is in the best interest of the Board, students and the community CPS serves to identify facilities that are not being utilized at their full capacity and to improve the use of those facilities. By transforming the underutilized 3729 W. Leland Avenue facility from a single school (Aspira-Haugan) to a shared facility by bringing North River into it, the best interests of the Board, students and the community served by CPS will be served.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Based on these determinations, I conclude that the CEO has complied with the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/34-230 and the Chief Executive Officer’s Guidelines for School Actions to support his proposal to Co-locate North River Elementary School and Aspira Charter School – Haugan Middle School in Shared Facilities Located at 3729 W. Leland Avenue.

Submitted this 28<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2022

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**Hon. Francis J. Dolan (Ret.)**