O'HARE NETWORK COMMUNITY MEETING

February 23, 2013.

11:00 a.m.

The Report of Proceedings had in the meeting of the above-entitled cause, taken before DENNIS M. HARTNETT, CSR in and for the County of Cook and State of Illinois, at 4300 North Narragansett, Chicago, Illinois, February 23, 2013, at the hour of approximately 11:00 o'clock a.m.

PRESENT:

Ms. Anna Alvarado       Chief of Schools for O'Hare Network
Ms. Shane Smith         Deputy Director of O'Hare Network

Mr. Craig Benes
Ms. Leslie Boozer
Ms. Grace Rappe
Mr. Patrick Payne.
Mr. Luis Garcia Juarez
INDEX

PAGE

OFFICIALS:

Alderman Timothy Cullerton 7
Alderman Mary O'Connor 9
Alderman John Arena 10

SCHOOLS:

Prussing Elementary 12
Wildwood Elementary 16
Belding Elementary 21
Steinmetz High School 25
Oriole Park 27
Murphy Elementary 28
Dever Elementary 34
Ebinger Elementary 39
Disney 2 42
Schurz 45
Scammon Elementary 46
Hitch Elementary 48
Roosevelt High School 52
Dirksen Elementary 58
Mary Lyon Elementary 65
Smyser Elementary 79
Palmer Elementary 80
MS. ALVARADO: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for coming out on a Saturday morning. My name is Anna Alvarado, and I'm the chief of the O'Hare Network. Very, very delighted to have all of you here. Just to share a little bit, I have been through several community meetings, not exactly just for the O'Hare Network, but I have been through difficult community meetings where the purpose of the meeting was completely different than what we have for today.

It's heart wrenching to hear parents', you know, sadness about losing, you know, their neighborhood school or that potential. And it's hard to listen to kids talk about how much they love their school and they have been there since pre-school or kindergarten and the thought of them moving to another school and in a different school community, as a parent, myself, it's very difficult to embrace.

For our Network, it's a very different story, and you and I know that. We had our first community meeting and that first community meeting was here, and we actually barely filled the auditorium. We had two break-out sessions and that
meeting was more about your voices being heard.

And, at that point, it was unknown whether
any of our schools would be impacted by the school's
actions. And when first this came out, we found out
that none of our schools was going to be impacted by
the school's action.

So today this is our second round of
community meetings, and I am so thrilled that you
are hear to have your voices heard. And, again, as
much as it's very difficult to listen to the stories
about school closings, when I visit schools, it's
also hard to see learning environments that
sometimes have safety issues in them, because of
overcrowding.

Sometimes I walk into classrooms, I'm
hopping over backpacks. I have seen kids eat lunch
on their laps in the auditorium. Some of you
brought up things like we don't have an adequate
play space for our children, and so if we're talking
about children, we're talking about all children.

And every child deserves the best learning
environment for them to learn and to grow, and every
teacher and every school administrator also deserves
the best school where they could grow children.
And with that in mind, I am asking you today, you came here to voice your concerns, about the learning environment at your school. And on behalf of Barbara Bennett, our CEO, we really would like to engage your, our community. Your voice is critical in this process.

And I know sometimes there's skepticism that happens, like do you really want to hear our voices? Are you really going to do, you know, make our suggestions happen?

I think the bigger question is, collectively, these are all our children and, therefore, collectively, all our voices matter. So that's the mind set that I want to bring you along for today.

I would like to have you engage, and I am so proud that we have a lot principals from the O'Hare Network here today to actually speak on behalf of their school communities and on behalf of their children.

So with that, I would like to introduce a few people who have supported this process throughout. And the first group I'm going to introduce are people who I have worked very closely
with, who are my colleagues and friends as well.

And I am going to start by introducing Craig Benes, who is the network chief of the Ravenswood-Ridge Network. Welcome Craig. Leslie Boozer, and Leslie is the Chief of the High School Northwest Corroborative. We have Grace Rappe, who is from facilities. Patrick Payne, Patrick has been working with the transition team for school action. And I have my Deputy, Shane Smith.

I also would like to introduce Luis Garcia Juarez, who is our LSC relations for the Network. I am not sure if Maruk is in this room, Maruk is our phase manager, she's probably outside, okay, so, thank you.

So there were two different sign-up, sign-in sheets outside, and the first one is for those who are speaking, and the other one is for those who are just listening. And so those are two sheets.

So the first one I am just going to run down the names of the school. We're going to do this per school. And if you're school is not here on this list, and you want to speak, I think you just, at the end of all the speakers, you will just
raise your hand and we'll call you.

So far we have Prussing, Wildwood, Belding, Steinmetz High School, Oriole Park, Murphy School, Dever, Ebinger, Disney, Scammon, Hitch, and Roosevelt High School.

So Patrick will be explaining the protocol for this morning. And before we start, I would like to introduce two aldermen who have been our greatest supporters in our network. And the first one is, I would like to call Alderman Tim Cullerton, from our 38th Ward. Tim, please.

ALDERMAN CULLERTON: Good morning. Thank you, Anna, Good morning to everyone. How is everybody today? First of all, thank you for conducting this forum here on behalf the residents of the 38th Ward.

I am here to represent some of the concerns of the people in the community, Forest Park School, Smyser School, Reinberg School, and several others.

We have, of course, the Belding School in the 38th Ward currently. And, of course, as Anna acknowledged, we have the opposite problem than, unfortunate problems that we have in other areas of the City.

So I would like to hear what plans are
pending to address the issues of overcrowding. And overutilization of our schools here in the northwest side. I would also like for you to talk a little bit about school maintenance, resources. I was at a school yesterday, I won't name the school here, I can tell you afterwards, they're mandated, you know, to have metal detectors, the metal detectors are not functioning and they haven't been since January 1st.

I would also like to talk a little bit about, if you can, address the process of how the tier system boundaries are arrived at, derived. I have had some concerns of the residents inquiring why the people across Laramie Avenue, across Montrose Avenue are in one tier versus another, when they're seemingly in the same income level.

And, of course, one matter that's close to me, almost a year ago we gave CPS nine acres of land, right here, right behind the site here on Dunning. And we would like to know what plans there may be in process for building a new traditional school here. Thank you.

MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Alderman Cullerton.

And now I would like to ask Mary O'Conner from the 41st Ward to share a few words.
ALDERMAN O'CONNOR: Thank you. I just broke my
glasses, so bear with me. My name is Alderman Mary
O'Connor, I represent the residents of Chicago's
41st Ward, which is located on the far northwest
side of the City.

I am here to speak on behalf of the 12
neighborhood schools that fall within my Ward
boundaries, many are in attendance here today.
These schools share many similarities. For
instance, they are high performing. They also have
dedicated teachers, great students, engaged parents,
and committed volunteers. Together they represent
some of the best schools in the public school
system.

Unfortunately, they also share a genuine
frustration with the conditions in which they are
expected to deliver a quality education. They are
frustrated with having to keep desks, copy machines,
and wheelchairs in narrow hallways. Frustrated with
having to convert their cafeterias, computer labs,
libraries, and broom closets into tightly packed
classrooms.

Frustrated with crumbling mobile units and
dangerous athletic fields. Frustrated with
overcrowded classrooms and an unfair minimum funding model. Frustrated with broken windows, rusty lockers, and roofs that leak. Frustrated with having to fundraise for descent computers, furniture, and other basic necessities.

These are honest, reasonable, hard-working people who want nothing more than what is fair. They have proven time and time again they are willing to do their part. However, in order to do so, they need safe working conditions and budgets to provide for the basics.

My constituents and I understand this body has been presented with a very difficult task. We are also aware that these problems certainly did not occur over night, and that the decisions you make will definitely impact people's lives.

No one is under the impression that there are easy solutions. As you begin the process of reshaping the public school system, all we ask is that you consider the needs of schools like our here in the O'Hare Network. We need your help. Thank you for your attention. Thank you very much.

MS. ALVARADO: I just want to acknowledge that Alderman John Arena walked into the auditorium.
Good morning, Alderman.

ALDERMAN ARENA: Good morning.

MR. PAYNE: Hi, my name is Patrick Payne, and I work in the transition team. So the format for today is we want to make sure that every school gets a chance to air their issues and be able to listen to them. So, we're going to give every school six minutes. You can use all six minutes, you can use less than six minutes, if you would like. You can have one person speak, you can have four people speak, if you would like.

But we're going to call up the schools in order that they signed in, and then you come up to the podium, if you would be more comfortable, or speak at either of the microphones and then, you know, we're here to listen, so, you know.

With respect to Alderman Cullerton's questions, there's a lot of confusion about some of the things that, some of the rules and policies that we have in the district. And I know that a lot of times at these sorts of events that people stay afterwards a little bit and have informal conversations.

So, I'm willing to stay and answer
questions afterward. I know a lot of the other folks up here will also be staying, you know, a little bit later as well, so if you still have questions. But we're really hear to listen to you and to hear what you have to say. And we want to make sure that we're not filling the air taking up time from you, to hear from as many people as possible.

So, with that, we'll start with the first school, Prussing.

MS. ALVARADO: Can I just ask real quick if anyone needs Spanish translation?

Okay. Thank you.

SPEAKER: Good morning, I am Lloyd Ehrenberg, I'm principal of Prussing Elementary School, and I have been for 17 and a half years.

Ten years ago, I was told by central office that I deserved to have an addition to my building. I haven't seen it yet. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed in my building, that every time we put in a request they get rejected by facilities.

The building was rehabbed in 1987, and in doing so they created a situation where we have no
windows for students can look outside, yet when they're inside in their classrooms, it's like being outside, because that's how the wind blows through and the water comes in these windows.

I have here a list of issues that need to be addressed in my building. I would hope that you would look at that and appreciate what we are requesting.

Also, we mentioned custodials. My custodial, we have non-city or non-CPS custodial workers. I have excellent custodial workers who keep my building in immaculate condition. They are now concerned that they're going to lose their jobs because CPS wants to hire custodial companies that do not have union representation.

Now, I am afraid that if my custodial workers leave and I get new custodial workers, they're not going to do the quality of jobs that my current custodial workers are doing.

Also, we talk about building utilization. I don't know how central office configures the space in a building, but I, according to your formula, I'm supposed to have another custodial worker. And I have had discussions with facilities about this, and
every time it comes back, well, I'm sorry, we don't have the money to give you another custodial worker.

I think that these issues need to be addressed. I have a special ed pull-out classroom on the stage of my auditorium. It creates a problem when we have inside recess, because I have to use my auditorium for that.

So we have a lot of space issues. We're a tier one school. We're overcrowded. We have been that way for many years, yet, academically, we're highly successful.

SPEAKER: Good morning. My name is Toni O'Brien and I am the LSC chair and parent representative from Prussing School here this morning. I made a decision 11 years ago to send my children to public school, rather than private school, because I really believed in Prussing, after doing a lot of research. And I did the right thing. I got very involved in the school, and in doing so, know the ins and outs of what Dr. Ehrenberg and his faculty and admission have gone through over the last 11 years.

And it's so surprising to me, being in private business, how simple things like windows and air blowing through them, our children sitting in
these classrooms are not taken and run with.

They have had their music room taken away. They have had their lunch room taken away. They had their special ed classroom this year taken away, because of our school and how wonderful our school is and people know that they will get a class education, they want to send their children there. And Chicago Public Schools should be so proud of schools like this, and schools in the northwest side.

And I know we are all here this morning because of that. However, our children do sit in broom closets. They do sit in lunch rooms in the corner. They sit on stages. They sit out on corridors sometimes. It's disgraceful. And as we move forward, Chicago Public Schools need to take this into consideration and need to give us more space. So our children can sit in nice classrooms and get a phenomenal education that they are getting, and smaller classrooms and in any nicer classrooms. Thank you so much.

SPEAKER: Just a side comment, Alderman, one of my jobs is to fix glasses. I do that all the time in my office. Come by, I'll be happy to fix yours.
ALDERMAN CULLERTON: I don't use them yet.

MR. PAYNE: The next school we have is Wildwood.

Just a comment, for everybody's safety, we have noticed that a few people are having issues on the stairs, myself included, so be careful when you're walking down or up the steps.

SPEAKER: You don't want me at the podium.

MS. ALVARADO: Six minutes, Mary Beth, we're timing it. Six minutes.

SPEAKER: So we are from Wildwood World Magnet, and much of our issues have already been represented. I want to thank Alderman Mary O'Connor, you were so succinct and clear in representing your schools, I was very impressed with that.

Overcrowding at Wildwood has been a long-term issue. We were given a temporary solution of a mobile 13 years ago. Since I became principal three years ago, we have consistently been short a classroom every year. My first year, the 8th graders were transient and through creative scheduling had to go from empty room to empty room to receive an education.

They knocked down a couple of walls and
built another classroom, which still wasn't enough.  It compromised clinician space for our special education needs, so this third year we're still short a classroom or two. I gave up my office to my case manager, turn the case manager into a special education office, and I sit in a corner in the closet library, where my work station is.

So that's about me, but this is about the kids. We have classrooms with 37 children. We have enough teachers to teach them, but we don't have any space to take them. So our classrooms are on the stage, as is Prussing. Our classrooms are in the hallways, we have tables in the hallway, and every corner and nook and cranny and entryways. And I'm expecting that next year we're going to be short two classrooms at minimal.

We are getting help from CPS, as far as looking for real estate options, for which we're limited because we have a forest preserve on one side, Niles on the north, a business district on the south, and railroad tracks on the east. So it is very difficult to secure and find. We have been looking earnestly for rental space, and we just can't find any. So we really are in dire need of
some space solutions for this fall.

But even more so, we want CPS, we really want CPS to help us begin the planning and design process for an addition this year, so when funding is clear, and we have some revenue to build, we are shovel ready for an addition because we are in desperate need.

SPEAKER: My name Sandra Lass, (phonetic) and as the vice principal, assistant principal described me, I came with the building. My first child graduated in 1999, and my son graduated in 2009. When my daughter was in school, her 8th grade was 37 kids in a school that was built in the 1940s. It was originally a four-room schoolhouse. So the rooms are very small.

So it's even, besides the problems now, it was even worse then, you could hardly move. The situation has not improved, in fact, it has gotten worse, but the worse thing is actually a good thing because more people are coming back, because they see Wildwood providing an excellent education.

And I want to compliment our current principal for the amazing changes that she has made to improve our school and to have it comply so well
with the international baccalaureate program.

However, one of the things that holds us back, even though we are a tier one school functioning extremely high is we can function even higher, if we had room for the programs and activities that we would like to provide our children.

So that I would hope and I would support her recommendation about the shovel ready facility, and to, and as a business woman myself, I worked in management consulting and made a lot of recommendations to people that sat on the shelves, which other school principals have talked about, is that it's really important to look long term, because we're wasting our money to rent space when we don't have to. Thank you.

SPEAKER: Hi, everyone. I have been at this process for a few years. My daughter started in kindergarten with 39 kids in her classroom, they had two teachers and they convinced me that it was going to be okay, don't worry. She's now in fourth grade in an overcrowded mobile.

My son, he started a classroom with 51 kids. They expected at that time that there were going to be less kids from the neighborhood that
came in, so they didn't have the planning ready.

Mary Beth this did a fantastic job of, you know, kind of putting all resources on this problem. It took two weeks of the first year of her teaching were spent on solving that problem, rather than educating the rest of the school.

So they did get separated into separate classrooms. My concern is one of timing. We keep trying to solve this piece by piece by piece, and we keep being told that, don't worry, we have a long term plan coming, or you're going to have to wait until there's money available.

And as this happens, this isn't a theoretical exercise anymore, this is, these are real kids that are aging each year, and my kids are going to graduate before we get this problem solved.

So I just want to underscore what Mary Beth said, we need to be shovel ready. We need to have something in place tomorrow, so that we can start to plan for when that money is miraculously available and we're ready to get the addition that we deserve.

SPEAKER: That's our time. As you can see, lots more people to speak. Thank you for having us here.

Thank you, Mary Beth, and thank you for your
commitment to shovel ready.

MS. ALVARADO: Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: We have got Belding up next and Steinmetz after that.

MS. ALVARADO: Come on up so people can see your faces.

SPEAKER: Good morning. Thank you for your time. My name is Scott Merrill, I'm a national board certified teacher at Belding Elementary, pre-K through 8th grade school. I'm here today with teachers, parents, community members to advocate for our issue of overcrowding.

So, currently, our school is 38 percent overcrowded, mass capacity, past the max capacity. We're looking for some help. We do have, we need some help from the board to rectify the situation. We have several plans in place and several options and recommendations, I'll show all of your this now.

SPEAKER: Thanks again for having us here and letting us speak to the issues that we see at our school and neighborhood, what's going on. My name is Matt Olson, I have been a Chicago Public School employee for 19 years, but more importantly, I have two children now that attend Belding, and that's
what I am here to speak about, is my students at Belding.

Same thing you're going to hear, I think, from everybody today, or most everybody that's here, our school is overcrowded. As he said, 38 percent is what it's overcrowded. We have a handout, I think. Do they have that? You all have got that, you see on the back, the map of all the schools that are in the area, they're all overcrowded.

We're not the only one in this situation. We have got Palmer, Scammon, Murphy, you know, all over capacity, but what we do have in the neighborhood, kind of what we're proposing you put in there, you have two underutilized schools. You have Marshall Middle School, which is 55 percent underutilized. And you have Spiro, which is 34 percent underutilized.

Some of the four things that we have outlined in here that we think would be helpful to not only us, but the other schools that you see in the neighborhood are another neighborhood elementary school. We know the board has already approved to have Disney to have a high school somewhere in the area. We think that's great, we know it's an issue
with overcrowding with that, but we would like to see, that's not going to address the elementary issues that we have.

And, you know, using one of those buildings as a new neighborhood school and redrawing the boundaries would alleviate this at all the schools in the area. You know, we have got the exact numbers on here, we don't need to go through them all, but something else that would help us is controlled enrollment, you know, with redrawing up the boundaries for our school, that would help, you know, if we have the same number of kindergarteners come in as we have the last four years.

You know, in the old times, just a couple of classes coming in, there was more space, now we're getting three and four classes coming in. If we have that again, we're going to have what, you know, a lot of you were talking about, what she said when she was in school, you see them in the lunch room, I think that's our next option, the lunch room. The lounge is gone, the closets are gone, those are classrooms now.

And we really don't want to see our students bused, our 7th and 8th graders, which we
know has happened in some of the neighborhood schools. We don't want that. We want the kids to continue on in the building they're familiar with and started with and continue to go on to high school.

You know, and with that, we also need, we have the rental space for our pre-K, they're not even in the building, I don't know what we would do if we had them there. We'd like that to continue, keep them over there, just a few blocks away. You know, we have four pre-K classes and there's nowhere to put them, if they came in our building. I think that's the short of it. So thank you all for hearing us. And, Mr. Payne, thank you, you came out to our school, I think in December, I think. That's it.

SPEAKER: I'm not used to this thing. So I am Jennifer Bohrer, I'm one of the parents there, I'm also the LSC chair, and we're here to support our school.

As you all know, you're all here because of overcrowding, what O'Hare has, and the other parts of the City don't have, is the issue of overcrowding. We need more elementary seats. We
need more schools. We can expand, we can build
additions, but we need physically more schools in
this area, and that's what were asking for from CPS.
And that's, you know, we do, I don't think
we need a high school, necessarily, I might be
wrong, I don't know the numbers, but it is obvious
from the support we have here that elementary should
be the primary goal for expansion right now. Not a
Disney 2, not another high school. What we should
do is improve our neighborhood high schools so that
kids want to go there as well as the selective high
schools. That's all I have got to say.

MS. ALVARADO: Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Steinmetz High School is next and
after that Oriole Park.

SPEAKER: Good morning. My name is Christopher
Swanson, I'm the LSC chair person from Steinmetz
High School. The reason I'm here today is to ask
CPS three questions. I have contacted CPS about if
schools are closings within the area, will it
overcrowd Steinmetz? I have tried talking to
Miss Byrd-Bennett's office. I have tried talking to
Leslie about this, because I feel if the schools
close around Steinmetz, it's going to overcrowd
Steinmetz.

The other question I have, the other question I have is about nursing services for all the schools within the area. And it's like, because this is one thing that I believe in, as far as nursing services for all the schools around Steinmetz.

My third question is I have been trying to find out, as the LSC chairperson, from CPS, about the capital improvement money, because Steinmetz needs capital improvement, ADA project, and I still have not got my answers from CPS, where the money is at or where it's going to be spent.

And, like I said before, I, personally, feel if CPS closes some of the schools, our special ed students will not be provided for, because I checked into charter schools, and charter schools do not provide a service for special ed students. And that's why I am here today, to get the answers that I am looking for from CPS.

I have contacted Mr. Bettelli's office. I have contacted Miss Bennett's office, but all I seem to be getting is the runaround. And I have not got the answers that I am looking for. That's all I
have to say. Thank you.

MS. ALVARADO: Thank you very much.

MR. PAYNE: Oriole Park. And after Oriole Park is Murphy School.

SPEAKER: My Name is Erika Wozniak, I'm a fifth grade teacher at Oriole Park. In our fifth grade class right now we have 35 students, which sounds like nothing compared to some of the other schools that spoke, but it's too many. We're asking too much of these kids. We're asking too much of these parents. We're asking too much of the teachers to meet the needs of 35 individual learners, it's too much.

And these kids have been in a class with 35 since they were in first grade. So as far as special ed at Oriole Park, we have students who are not getting the appropriate services, because we have a lack of personnel.

Co-teachers works at Oriole Park. Our NWA scores shows that co-teaching works, but we can't cover all the minutes, because we don't have enough people. The special ed students are working in the hallway and are treated as special or second class citizens, because they don't have a classroom.
And it's not that the staff or the principal or the community treats them that way, it's just the lack of space. The OSPs are barely getting their time in as well. We're also very concerned about the way CPS is using money. We're wondering why schools that were turned around only last year are being closed this year.

Why not give those schools a chance. Why are we expending all that money, when you can't even give that school another chance. So we're really concerned about what's happening at other schools in the district, not just in the O'Hare Network, because it seems like there's a lot of money being used to turn around schools, when we're not following through on it.

MR. PAYNE: Murphy School. After Murphy, Dever.

MS. ALVARADO: Dever.

MR. PAYNE: Dever, sorry.

SPEAKER: Hello, everyone. A little like the academy awards, although there's no great party afterwards. I am just going to start and say good morning and thank you for allowing us the opportunity, as concerned community members, to stand here before you today and voice our concerns
to sustain and build a strong neighborhood in the O'Hare Network.

We have representatives here today from GIPNA, which is the Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association, Independence Park community, Murphy Elementary, Albany Park and Athletic Field. My name is Roberta Solis, I'm the chairperson of the LSC at Murphy School.

We recently saw that Thurgood Marshall was slated to close and then removed from the second posting from your list for the most recent CPS listings, and we're here today to really accomplish a couple of goals.

We would like to hear your direct confirmation about what decisions and plans have been made around Thurgood Marshall. Will Thurgood Marshall remain open and stay as a middle school?

Moving forward, is there a plan to change the structure, utilization, or academics of the school? We feel that we should be an integral of that decision. And notified on a timely basis before any plans are made, so that the community knows that it has an intrinsic voice in the matter.

We'll leave our contact information today
so that anybody can contact us and provide us with that information. And we would like to propose a couple of ideas that we think might serve this long standing community best.

Particularly because Thurgood Marshall is literally two blocks from our school. We saw that Thurgood Marshal was slated to close and then we have been hearing lots and lots of rumors about the possibility that the space is being used by Disney for expansion.

Not to belabor the Disney issue, but nobody is really telling us anything, and since Thurgood Marshall is removed from the second posting of the school, from the closing list, on the recent listing, we still hear speculations that Disney may go into that place.

And during this whole time about this issue, our community has not been involved in any of the decision making processes. And we have not been directly informed that any such change that might occur or our input into this.

And we are not here to be antagonistic, we're really here just to be part of that process so that our voices can be heard. We all live in that
community. And we really care about what is going on, not in a bad way, we just want to know and feel like we're heard.

And today were asking you for -- so we would like to have some direct confirmation that Thurgood Marshall will remain open and stay as a middle school, it's as simple as that, yes or no, is it going to be a middle school or are you giving it away.

We know that it has been removed from closing, but we know that that does not mean that it may not transfer into some other thing. And if the decision is for it to remain open this year, does it include a phase-out initiative. And, if so, what plans are in place now for that space in the future. Again, we would like to have a voice in that.

If a decision has been made to close the school and phase it out and reopen another school in its place, when will this take place? How will we be involved in this decision making process to create a school that will better serve our community?

And we are putting CPS on notice that we would really, really like to be a part of that
process. Thank you very much for your time.

SPEAKER: Hello, I'm Penny Schultz, all six of
my children have attended Murphy School and then
gone on to selective enrollment schools, and it's a
difficult process, as many of you know.

And when we heard all this, we were a
little frustrated that this space that, honestly, we
have, I have been on the LSC, we have had dreams in
the last few years that this space right in our
neighborhood would be property, properly utilized by
our community, which is a very cohesive community,
we have a lot of excellent things.

Mainly we have a dream. We have a dream
that the space that is underutilized would be used
to have a continuation upon Murphy's success,
somewhat like a Murphy High School. We believe a
Murphy High School would be a perfect fit for
neighbor, because it would extend our academic and
cultural success that Murphy has demonstrated in the
past 88 years.

We are a level one fine and performing arts
neighborhood magnet cluster school. We have
relationship with Ravinia, Old Town School of Folk
Music, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, on and on and on.
A new high school would provide open enrollment for our area. We would offer magnet enrollment to support special concentrations and programs, learning centers for arts and technology, which would be supported in our very artistic neighborhood.

We have several artists in our neighborhood. These centers would serve as diamonds on the near northwest side, an area that does not currently provide this type of academic offering.

And I would like to introduce Alice McClary.

SPEAKER: Passion for the arts in Murphy High School, we would like to design an artists' teaching platform that would serve the arts education goals of developing artists into art teachers.

We believe that such a school would be an authentic training ground. This high school will partner with the local schools, businesses, and institutions to serve as teaching college for art professionals and up and coming teachers and artists.

The neighborhood community is filled with local artists, and this school would represent its surrounding community.
On the technology end, we would partner with technology companies, colleges and institutions to create a center for parents, students for college in the field of technology. The natural integration with the arts, with technology would be seemless.

Furthermore, Murphy High School enrollment would overlay with several other local schools and not compete nor lower the enrollment of two other high schools, Schurz and Roosevelt. Schurz is now an ivy school with CTE in automotive concentrations --

MR. JUAREZ: Time.

SPEAKER: All right. Thank you for your time.

MR. PAYNE: Dever School. Thank you, Murphy.

After Dever, Ebinger.

SPEAKER: Good morning, I'm Rita Ortiz, principal at Dever School, and I'm so proud to be here with all of you, as we speak about our common, common issues of overcrowding. I am here with Carie Murphy, who is an LSC parent representative, and she will deliver some comments.

First, I would like to share that I am very deeply concerned about the affect of overcrowding on the culture in our school. Everyone needs personal
space. We have none.

I see our children having problems with their peers and with their relationships because they are on top of each other. It is not our children's fault when you are bumping into people in the hallway and stepping over them in the classroom, that, perhaps, a word is exchanged that's not the best choice, and things can escalate. We don't want that escalation at Dever School. We want a good calm culture for learning.

I'm concerned that my teachers can't collaborate with each other because there's no place for them to be. When you're moving from space to space all day long, it's hard to find the colleague that you need to speak to. So they have to resort to e-mailing in the evening, or calling as they are in their car on the way home or on their way into school. And they do a wonderful job. They are wonderful, wonderful teachers and role models, but when they're forced to walk into the basement and sit next to a boiler room in order to have a table because their classroom is being used for lunch or by another teacher, that doesn't build a culture and the climate that we want to maintain at Dever
SPEARER: Dever is a level one school, according to the 2011-2012 school state's utilization report, Dever's school status is overcrowded. The ideal enrollment for our building is 630. We're currently at 838, 208 students over the ideal number.

Storage space and offices have been converted into classrooms. Teachers share work space, clinicians, speech therapists, social workers, psychologist, OT and PT have no private space to deliver services to children or conduct a private conversation with a parent.

Dever school does not have a lunch room or kitchen. Food is delivered from another school, and the first floor hallway serves as a makeshift kitchen. Refrigerators and coolers line the hall where children need to walk to get to their classrooms, resulting in a fire hazard.

Lunch is carried to each classroom in a picnic cooler and student must remain in the classroom to eat their meal. Dever has amazing students or teachers and staff who work hard and use best practices teaching methods.

Their efforts are being impacted by our
overcrowding. How can students work in groups if there's no space to move? How can teachers plan if they have to leave their classrooms during their preparation period so someone can step in and use the room?

How can our students fully expect the art education they so deserve when the art and music teachers are forced to travel room to room with their belongings on a cart? Hallways are overcrowded, two to three students share a single locker and there are only four student restrooms, two for the boys and two for the girls.

On a personal note, my daughter is on the third floor, she had crutches, she couldn't get to a bathroom, except on the second floor, until accommodations were made so that she could use the teachers' bathroom. So there is no bathroom on the third floor for the fifth through eighth grade students.

Time and energy that could be spent on leading Dever School improvement is being spent on logistics, maintaining order, and writing schedules that need to be color coordinated to communicate where everyone must be at a given period so two
groups don't end up in the same space at the same
time.

Recess for children is spent sitting in the
auditorium during cold weather due to a lack of
anywhere else for the children to go. During
outdoor recess our children are playing in an area
that is only partially fenced in for their safety.

I don't have a solution to the overcrowding
that exists in so many of our schools, I do implore
you, seriously, to focus on this growing problem. I
have already been told that an annex or addition for
Dever is not a consideration, even though
surrounding schools have received new buildings.

Repurposing our current space is being
looked at, but even those ideas are a mere band-aid
for a much larger more permanent problem. Our
children deserve a place of order and calm with
adequate space in which to learn, and our staff
deserve a respectful working environment.

We also did have school -- we had room on
our property, but that was taken and given to the
library. So they built a brand new library on our
property where we could have expanded. Thank you
for your time.
Mr. Payne: Thank you, Dever. Ebinger is next.

After Ebinger, Disney 2.

Speaker: I'm almost embarrassed to come before you to talk about some of Ebinger's concerns, because I have been in Wildwood, I have been in Oriole Park, I have been in Dever, and I feel for you. I mean the words that they expressed, unless you're there, you have no idea the conditions of those buildings.

I almost wish I could say come on down and use my time, but I don't think these two security guards will let me do that, so.

So, I want to come here and speak on behalf of all the stakeholders of Ebinger School, and I wanted to kind of piggy back on what Alderman O'Connor said at the beginning about school funding. I had four classrooms with 35 students in it and I was told by the 20th day, if I lost no students, I would receive an additional teacher.

I lost one student and, therefore, I did not receive that teacher. By one student. I just don't think that's fair. And I am not asking for equal funding to schools who have different demographics, with higher percentages of high
poverty, but I'm asking for equity.

In the last year and a half that I have been principal, we were able to buy enough computers to fill a brand new computer lab, we have new iPads and smartboards, but that was all done because of the generous donations of my parents.

All of, most of my parents are City workers that have no other choice but to live in the City and to send their kids to public schools.

Again, I just ask you for equity. And as we move into a culture of much time spent on testing on-line, and we have all this wonderful technology, 25 percent of my school year I have to tell my teachers and students they can't use it, because the internet network capacity at my school is so small, yet we have to spend weeks and weeks and weeks testing and we can't do it without turning off all the rest of it. And my teachers can't even check their e-mail during testing time.

So I'm asking that, and when I call the network or when I call downtown, they say, well, you only have a T1 line, I don't understand why all schools are not given the same type of network capacity.
Ebinger School has two demountable buildings that were given to them seven or eight years ago that hold eight classrooms. They're wonderful, I don't want to complain here, I'm embarrassed to bring up some of my concerns, when some of your concerns are far more serious, but my parents have some issues and I feel I need to go on record talking about the amount of instructional time that is lost going back and forth from those buildings to our main building for lunch and for their specials and, you know, they're also very afraid for safety.

I mean the Sandy Hook tragedies has really made them think when my children are going from one building to the next, are they safe. We say they are, but something can happen. So I guess when we think about future solutions, you know, do we really want to have kids having to move back and forth like that during the school day?

And then the last thing I want to bring up, as, you know, we're in school until the end of June and our calander has all those has changes, the learning environment in our school isn't what it needs to be in the summer months. We have no
air-conditioning, and it is sweltering and unless
you live it and if you have been in those junior
high school classrooms, where especially after gym
class, yeah, there's no learning going on because of
the heat and the smell.

But if we can look at some, you know,
solutions, again, I am talking about equity, there's
schools who have, you know, air-conditioning and
whatnot to make the environment conducive to
learning. That's all I have to say today. Thank
you.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Ebinger. Disney 2. And
after Disney 2, Scammon.

SPEAKER: Hello, my name is Caroline Bilicky,
(phonetic) and I am a parent of three children who
were fortunate to be accepted under the proximity
lottery at Disney 2.

I am also the immediate past president of
the PTA and an LSC member. I am here today to talk,
thank you again for coming this morning. I'm here
to talk about our expansion proposal. The Board of
Education approved our expansion proposal in
December of 2012 at their meeting.

However, that is all they have done. We
have no facility, and as we have heard from Murphy and Belding, there's a lot of conjecture going around in the community about where it is going to. Be we don't know.

It affects, not only does it affect us, it affects everyone else in the community. It affects our ability to engage community, to set enrollment policies, to forge partnerships, we can't do anything without a facility.

And, in addition to that, we're also missing funding. The Board of Education approved the expansion to high school because it recognized that we, as a district, need more high quality high school options. Disney 2 can provide that, but not without funding. It needs funding to secure personnel and make planning decisions. Right now it cannot do any of that. That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Good morning, my name is Dennis Gregor, (phonetic) I am a parent member on the Disney 2 LSC, also a community member on the Schurz LSC. And I have had children in a couple of public schools, before they both landed at Disney.

I would just like to speak to our panel
here. We have heard there has to be solutions for
the northwest side in terms of overcrowding. The
district is dealing with some very weighty issues
and everybody, I think, understands that, if you're
paying attention. But one of those has to be the
issue of overcrowding on the northwest side.

So I'll just agree with that. The second
thing I would say, and this comes from my experience
in these various roles, I have spoken to both
Aldermen, I call education my religion. I am
engaged in this at an intensive level. I would say
one of the things that sometimes is missing is as
you address the challenges of this community and the
community throughout the district, you have to be
able to think how these schools work together.

And this is one of the first times the
district has come out and we have schools and come
and talk and present our issues. And so the
solutions, people talk about inclusions and so
forth, and the district is getting better at it. It
needs to continue to work on that. So I would also
implore that.

And the last thing I would say, and I am
going to take a few minutes for Schurz, because
I signed up, so if you will allow me to, we need more quality high school options throughout the district on the northwest side.

I have been very fortunate to be a part of the process to help bring this thing with Disney is an opportunity that kind of came, we worked very hard and then going forward, I would say we want to work with everybody to continue to provide quality options.

I'm also at Schurz. We just recently got an ivy track at the school, it's just starting off, we're very excited about it, and there's some great things going on at Schurz. And so the district has, actually, this year done some things toward that end, and so we have to solve, we have to do both of those things at the same time. And if we do so, if we work together, this northwest, the community that we have throughout the city will continue to thrive and grow.

And if we don't, you know, we know the options. So I just thank you for your time, and for giving us the opportunity to speak, and I just, we need to find a way to work together to resolve these things.
MR. PAYNE: Thank you. Scammon. And after
Scammon, Hitch.

SPEAKER: Good morning. I am here representing
Scammon, where my daughter is supposed to be going
to school, but my husband and I have decided not to.
I'm actually surprised that there is nobody else
from the administration or the LSC at Scammon here
to say a few words.

The school, I am up here beating a dead
horse. It's what we all have been talking about,
every school that's here has the same concerns. My
husband and I were not interested in sending our
children to a school when they have to learn in
mobile homes on the property. And in a school where
my five-year-old can't go outside to play because
there is no playground because there are three
mobile units on the property for them to learn in.

Now, it's very strange to me that there's
nobody else here to speak to these issues from that
school. The school is overcrowded. 7 of the 11
schools within a mile and a half of my house are
overcrowded. Where are my options for knowledge for
our children? There are no options. I am not
willing, and I don't think any parent who lives in
the City should have to drive their children five miles, three miles, two miles to go to school because their own neighborhood school is overcrowded.

That is not a healthy learning environment. I think that the only solution for the O'Hare Network and for my community, Old Park and Independence Park, is more schools. We need more schools and taking away, and for me, the immediacy, and I think for a lot of parents in this room, the immediacy is elementary, elementary schools. High schools, yes, are important, but right now we need more elementary schools.

And as Alderman Cullerton pointed out, CPS was granted a lot of land, I would like to know what they're planning on doing with that land. It's the perfect place to put a school. Two schools, three schools. How many acres was it, Alderman?

ALDERMAN CULLERTON: Almost nine acres.

SPEAKER: Nine acres. Think about the possibilities of what could be there. Think about the possibilities for our kids, if they weren't climbing over each other and eating their lunch in the hallway, and learning in basements. I mean the
kids at Belding, I don't know how they do it. I don't know how they do it there. That's all I need to say. Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you. Hitch is next. And after Hitch, Roosevelt High School.

SPEAKER: Page one. First, thank you for giving us this opportunity today, we're really appreciative of that. Thank you to my parents and faculty and staff who turned out today, appreciate that.

We are Hitch School, I am Debbie Reese, the principal of Hitch. Hitch is also a tier one school and we're really proud of that. We want to stay there. And our goal is to be level one school full of career and college ready students. And our biggest problem right now is the overcrowding.

We also have 35 and 36 kids in some of our classrooms. We are overcrowded. We have been trying to get some relief from that for two or three years now. And our issues are kind of, you know, I don't want to echo what everybody else said, but I kind of have to.

We have a lunch room, so we're very lucky in that. We have been told to close our lunch room. I feel that that would be unfair to our student. A
right to a separate place to eat lunch seems to me
minimal of what our kids can expect.

We have been told to close our library,
which we also have and love. We feel this is not
only a right, but a necessity for our students. We
feel also that until the prisons do not have to
offer a lunch room or a library, which, by the way,
are state of the art libraries, that the minimal we
can offer our students growing up in the State of
Illinois are lunch rooms and libraries.

Our lunch room right now, we also have
started to call the lunch, I'm sorry, the
cafinasium, because in the afternoon we have two
extra gym classes on there, on inclement weather
days. This was one of the initiatives of our longer
school, sorry, I'm blanking on that, our full school
day, was to have a second gym teacher, which we're
thrilled with, but we also only have one gymnasium.

So we use that in the morning, in the
mornings we have enrichment classes. Also a full
school day initiative. We're glad to have it,
unfortunately it's very difficult because of the
loud equipment that's running in there, but we
really only use our lunch room two hours a day to
serve lunches. So we feel we are using that space.

We have closed two bathroom areas at Hitch School. One that was the men's bathroom, and we do have men teachers, they're now using the bathroom behind the gym, which was like the coaches bathroom. And they have been really, really, really good about it, but we did have to close that. It's a resource room. It was repurposed. Lost a bathroom.

We lost the kindergarten bathrooms, and we had to put up a wall, so we cut out one-third of our kindergarten, and it was a resource room. Now it's another half of kindergarten, because that's grown so much.

We have used the storage room, which you know has, it's a nice storage room, and it has windows and it is, you know, not a bad space, but it's a very small space, another resource room.

We have put up four of those gray cubicles that you see in many office buildings, which are small areas to pull out groups during the day. Somebody said it very well when they talked about, you know, second class citizens. That is not our attitude, but it's what we're forced to because of the lack of response from Chicago Public Schools to
our overcrowding problem.

   It's ashame when you walk through our halls
and you saw the kids who are, you know, the best
kids, we think we have the best kids in the world,
our teachers who are so wonderful and, okay, I got
that. So we have shut a couple of bathrooms, we
have and old shower room from 1925, the label still
says girl showers, that's where we put desks for
teachers who could no longer have desks in a
classroom.

   Our music teacher is in the auditorium.
Every single time we bring the kids in, for any
reason at all, the music teacher has to put
everything she was going to do that day on a cart
and go from room to room. Art is on a cart, or as
she calls it, art ala carte. We do our best.

   Our media teacher is doing a great job.
All our teachers are doing a great job, but under
conditions that shouldn't be there. And our
students as well. Tier one, yes. Working well,
yes. Our students are great, our parents are
superlative, but we are overcrowded. We should not
be working in these conditions.

   I am going to stop because I had more, but
I'm going to stop because I want Michelle Trico (phonetic) who is on our LSC, wants to say a few words also.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I have a question to you. You walk into a bar and by law it is posted that there is maximum of people that can go into that bar. Why not the classroom? All right.

The City says and it states there is an ordinance for the maximum amount of people that can enter this room. But schools, no. What is happening to our children? What is happening to their education? What is happening to our children with special needs? What's going to happen to all of us when these children are sitting in your places and they don't have the proper education to help you?

MR. PAYNE: Thank you.

Mr. Payne: Roosevelt High School. And after Roosevelt, Dirksen

SPEAKER: Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I wanted to speak a little bit more generally, since my specific school is not either overcrowded or under threat of closure this year.
About the school closure situation, but,
specifically, before I begin, those of you that are
concerned about high school classrooms up here on
the northwest side, I urge you to consider
Roosevelt.

I know Roosevelt doesn't always have the
best reputation. Our scores don't reflect what we
do. We're a very excellent school. We have great
students who are extremely diverse and they're
English language learners, but they all get along.
It's extremely safe, and our teachers work very hard
and we do a very good job.

So my name is Tim Egan, I'm a national
board certified teacher. I teach advanced placement
geography, geographic information systems, and world
studies. In addition, I read essay for the advanced
placement examine for the college board, and I
mentor candidates for the national board
certification.

So we believe the right, the drive to right
size the district and drive to privitize the public
schools through the proliferation of charters are
one in the same. We know that the district's
enrollment has decreased roughly 30,000 students
from a total of 2,000 in 2010, while enrollment in charters has gone up 50,000 in the same time period. And that most underutilized schools are located very close to recently opened charter schools, which have drawn off students from the neighborhood public school.

Excuse me. Which is this map right here.

Okay. Which I will turn in all of this documentation to you guys. Furthermore, we recognize the deceptive practice of CPS when it repeatedly and erroneously suggests that the City has lost 145,000 students, leaving CPS in an excess capacity of 100,000 student seats.

We know that the formula used by CPS to calculate underutilization is deeply flawed. During a meeting with seven parents and community representatives on November 13th, CEO Byrd-Bennett acknowledged the utilization formula has problems.

This was before independent analysis from Raise Your Hand, the parent group, finding that CPS' formula greatly exaggerates the number of under enrolled schools and under reports the number of overcrowded schools.

With that analysis we presented to CPS in
December, Commission Chairman Frank Clark said he didn't dispute the data and called the analysis excellent. We agree with CEO Byrd-Bennett when she says the district lacks credibility and there's a trust gap, but we maintain that CPS continues to actively ignore, disrespect parent-teacher input while continuing its deceptive practices.

We know the vast majority of underutilized schools utilized, as well as the vast majority of charter schools are located on the south and west sides in neighborhood of Color, which is indicated by this map.

We know that charter schools do not outperform traditional public schools and we know research has found they performed worse than neighborhood schools in certain student populations.

On average, charter school students can expect to see their academic growth be somewhat lower than the traditional public school peers, though the absolute differences are small. Other subgroups including Black and Hispanic students as a whole, have learning gains that are significantly smaller than those of their traditional public schools, that's from Stanford University.
We know there are significant profits to be made in creating charter schools. The new markets tax credit allows bankers and hedge fund operators to earn 39 percent tax credit over seven years, plus interest on the loans they make, doubling their money while using taxpayer funds as collateral.

We know that while undocumented immigrants struggle to realize the American dream in our public school, wealthy foreigner investors can simply buy visas to the United States by investing a half million dollars or more in charter school corporations. This was reported by Reuters.

We know that most members of the board are either current investors in charter operations or former bankers and charter operators themselves. We know that through the use of educational management organizations, or EMOs, a charter operator is entitled to skim 15 percent of the schools public funding for administrative costs, then create a subcontractor that can skim an additional 15 percent, thereby subverting as much as 30 percent of school's public funds from the students it is supposed to serve.

When charter holders and EMOs create
subsidiaries in order to shuffle real estate around among themselves, with each reshuffling, the value of the real estate increases and the profitability of parent, of the parent corporations and it's subsidiaries increases as well. UNO is very good at this.

Do you know that charter schools aggressively fine students for minor misconduct, as in Noble Street. They make recovery credit prohibitly expensive and they even deny credits earned unless poor performing students voluntarily transfer, in which case set earned credits will be restored, as in the letter I have here from Rauner College Prep, all in the name of pricing out poor students who are more likely to score lower on standardized tests.

We know charter schools have appalling rates of faculty turnover due to low wages and inferior working conditions, as compared to public schools with union employees.

While 67 percent of CPS first year elementary teachers return to their school, only 54 percent of all teachers returned to their UNO campuses, a similar attention gap exists in high
schools with 75 percent of first years.

MR. JUAREZ: Time.

SPEAKER: 30 seconds, I'm almost done.

MS. ALVARADO: Go ahead.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I would just like to close by saying that we know that neighborhood school closures will destabilize the lives of students, causing their learning to fall behind as much as six months, severing the bonds they have with adults in their lives who they trust, leading to potential alienation resulting or resulting in other negative social and educational consequences.

And that given violence in Chicago and schools nationally, like Sandy Hook, that stability is required to prevent violence, this is unacceptable. Experts agree that the number one thing that prevents student violence is a connection with adults.

MR. JUAREZ: Time.

SPEAKER: It's people over profits.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Dirksen is next. Dirksen Elementary School. After Dirksen is Hammond.

SPEAKER: I expect to have the same standing
Good morning, everybody. I would like to thank the members of the panel. I would like to thank our three Aldermen we have here, and really acknowledge that Mary O'Connor, from her first couple of weeks in office, has been a very good advocate for all of the schools that she has in her Ward. And made a personal visit in the first few weeks of her term to Dirksen School. And, Mary, we really appreciate all the help you have given us, and the other two aldermeme, I'm sure you're giving the same support. So, let's give it up for them. Let's give it up for our chief and deputy, because they have done a great job keeping our issues on the table.

I am a living testament to many, many of the statements that my colleagues, as principals, have made in this room, because before becoming an administrator, I was a reading coach in the district, former area one, which now encompasses the majority of O'Hare schools. And I, personally, have put my feet into those schools and I have, personally, seen that there is no exaggeration of what my colleagues have presented you today.
My name Daniel Lucas, I'm the contract principal of the Dirksen Elementary School, and along side me is Mr. Khalid Ahmed. And Mr. Ahmed has served the Dirksen School as LSC chair, and is currently serving as parent representative for the LSC.

In few minutes I'm going to ask Mr. Ahmed, who is going to outline some of our various facilities issues that the students, staff, and parents, and community must face to overcome our facility's challenges on a daily basis.

Rita, if you want to loan me your basement, Dirksen doesn't have a basement, and we certainly could use the space. My AP is deployed into a former janitor's closet with a slop sink, simply because I have to have an administrative presence in my middle school hallway.

A brief background about the facilities at Dirksen School. Dirksen was constructed in 1970, but in 1971 an addition was added because when they built the school, the school became overcrowded. However, this addition was designed to be what they call a demountable building, and I don't know, for those of you who don't know what a demountable
building is, it was meant to be taken down after several years and replaced with a more permanent structure.

The walls of the addition are created with pre-fabricated steel with conduit, everything in there, and, again, it's meant to be temporary, it's about 25 to 30 years past its useful life. Due to the age of this addition, the doors of many of the classrooms sometimes do not close properly. And the engineer has to be called to pry the door open to get the students out during the change of classes.

Yes, somebody just mentioned the F word, and it means fire, very good. They don't close properly. The walls are so thin on these additions that they don't have a sufficient sound barrier and it makes it very difficult to keep the sound, to keep our educational environment sufficient for instruction.

And for those of you who know me in this room, I am not an advocate for silent instruction. I do believe kids need to turn and talk, there needs to be healthy discussion. But you can't even have a normal discussion in our classroom without it interfering with what's going on in the room next
door, and also on the other side of it. The
structure is many years past due its useful life,
and it truly is in need of replacement.

In addition to this, the longer school day
has exacerbated the problem that Dirksen has no
place for the students to play. There is no place
for the students to play. The old playground was
replaced about 20 years ago, and in its place went
four, in there four mobiles. But even with that,
the space is not sufficient.

The nearest park for the Dirksen students,
Mary has heard me repeat it many times, every time I
see her, Mary, remember that the nearest brick and
mortar park to Dirksen School is two and a half
miles away. Kids have to go to two and a half miles
away. They have nowhere to go.

Many times I have had a couple of former
graduates who are freshman at Taft High School that
played on my basketball team, they come to me at the
door, when I'm working in my office at 5:00, 5:30 at
night, they have their basketball under their arm
and they say, Mr. Lucas, can we please use the gym
because we have nowhere to play. And I spent a half
hour with them and I let them play basketball in
there, because that's the only spot that they have
to go.

Those are just a few things that we have.

Our playground is part of the parking lot. What I
would like to do, Panel, is at least take that
playground and change it from a sea of glass to a
field of grass, so our kids can play soccer, they
can play baseball, they can do what they need to do
on their free time and not get into trouble, on the
outside during their free time.

I am now going to ask Mr. Ahmed to speak to
some of our consequences, and I have only named a
few, but they also match up to what everybody else
has said. So I'm going to turn it over to

Mr. Ahmed, one of my LSC reps.

MS. ALVARADO: Dan, you used up all the six

minutes. So we will have time at the end.

SPEAKER: Okay. We only have one more minute,
you yielded a minute to other guy.

MS. ALVARADO: Okay. One minute. Keep a tight

one minute, okay.

SPEAKER: Thanks.

SPEAKER: Good morning. I'm just going to be
short. The building was originally constructed to
service 500 students, presently we have 800 plus.

This year we have added two additional home rooms in

intermediate and middle school, a pre-K and

kindergarten classes (inaudible) for space. The

lunch room is small and some classrooms must now eat

in the hallways. Our art room is now an education

class room. Three of the six prep teachers must

move from class from class to class on a cart,

making smooth transition difficult and no allowance

for homeroom teachers to prepare lessons in the

room.

The people then must be shut down to allow

for assistant lunch, the two hour lunch and schedule

requires the movement of 740 students in a two-hour

period, often causing high traffic while passing in

the hallways. There is no open play areas to allow

for recess and PE classes. The parking lot has been

partially converted to allow for recess space.

There's only one available space for indoor recess.

MR. JUAREZ: Time.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Hammond is next. And after Hammond,

Mary Lyon.

Is Hammond here?
We're going to Portage Park next and then we'll do Mary Lyon after Portage Park.

Anybody from Portage Park? Mary Lyon? Mary Lyon is in the Fullerton Network, just FYI, but my personal experience with them is that they're overcrowded, so this might be a very appropriate meeting for them to be at.

MS. ALVARADO: Welcome to the club.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Anna Rivera, I'm a PAC advisory chair person, and I also do the safety patrol. One of the biggest concerns, of course, is the overcrowding. Years ago we heard that we have boundaries. What happened to those boundaries? What is CPS doing about it? When we can't figure out how we can stop these children who are coming from outside our district.

Okay. That's affecting our community very badly. We have 1,400 children plus. And it's very hard. They say because of the law saying to protect these children, that we cannot deny children to go to a school, but there's got to be a stop. There's got to be some kind of control or some kind of organization that they can stop this.

Second, I'm a baby boomer, years ago when
we were growing up, the lottery was supposed to be helping the funds of the City of Chicago and also for seniors. What happened? Over 25 years I haven't heard anything. So what are they doing with this money? We're having a lot more lottery than we ever did before in our lives.

The other thing, living the problem is not the same as hearing about it, okay. You can sit over here, you can listen to us, but when you live it, on a daily basis, it's hurting. It's hurting a lot of us. And it's not fair for our future of our kids and our grandkids.

So something has to be done. Not just being heard, it's the actions. So you got your action and your funds. Where are the funds? We're not hearing nothing.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is (inaudible), and I'm also proudly Mary Lyons School as a volunteer and I am a crossing guard. I sometimes have to help in the lunch room. Sometimes I have to help in the hallways, which is overcrowded. So overcrowded that some kids fight.

You know, the biggest concern in my school is about overcrowding. And we have so bright kids,
and by the way, we have a huge nice guy as principal, thank God we have Mr. Gabor. He's doing such a nice, sorry my English sometime is so bad. Let me tell you something, he has a huge heart. He's a sweet guy. I just have no words to describe him, but no resources.

We are here because we want to be part of the solution, that's what we are here for. We say we have to take recess, sometimes some of them taking recess sit for about 20 minutes in the auditorium, which is crowded, sometimes they have to go to the gym room, which is about 120 kids at a time, and we have to take care of them, right? Because we have no resources. I don't complain about it. I just want to know, I mean the safety of the kids, that's the only thing, besides that, we have no play room, we have no money to have a field done, okay.

And by the end, the security out of the building, we have no, any police officer by the end of the day, and sometimes we have trouble in that. Sometimes the crossing guard doesn't go, so I have to do crossing guard too, and I love to do it, but I need someone who can really help you.
And after work, I think this is a shame, it's a real shame to be, to be in the best country in the world, living in these conditions. I have six kids of my own, three of them in college, all of them went to Mary Lyon, that's why I serve Mary Lyon, because I owe so much to that school. Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you Mary Lyon. We have an independent speaker from a citizen organization, Helen Ramirez.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I came as a citizen today and I am a retired nurse, I have lived on the northwest side for many, many decades. My child went to school here, and people like the northwest side because we do have good schools. And I have heard speaker after speaker talking about the overcrowding. My child had to put up with mobile units decades ago. My fear is that the City will try to solve some of this by building these charter schools. And I believe in public education.

We need to build on what we know is good, what works, I want every child to get the education that has been promised. As a nurse, I have worked with children with special needs, and we know that
charter schools don't meet their needs and every
child is entitled to whatever education they are
capable of, and having their needs met in the
process.

So I ask you to find a way to expand what
we have that's good and not build those charters.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you. So that concludes our
people who signed in. We have time for anyone else
who would like to come up and speak. So every
speaker will have two minutes and we'll just, we'll
go until we run out of time.

SPEAKER: Hi, everybody, Christine Sheff,
(phonetic) and I'm a parent at Wildwood. I know you
heard from us already, and I would like to build on
that, and I would also like to summarize a lot of
the thoughts we have heard from all the schools we
heard today.

In addition to being a parent, I'm also the
vice chair of the local school council, and I
co-chair our CIWP, continuous improvement work plan.
And two things that we really heard today are around
safety and also the quality of education.

We are so overcrowded, there is an absolute
risk to children's safety at Wildwood, which I know
exists for many schools here. The question that we have is what needs to occur to show that safety is such a big concern?

The numbers are there, the data is there, and God forbid an event has to occur to show that the true safety concerns are what they are. So we request an immediate action plan from CPS to address safety concerns at Wildwood as well as all the other schools that are represented here today and others that are not here.

The other thing that we have heard is vision for an increased level of education. Wildwood has this vision. We have been told by the network chief last year, as well as through a coaching, teacher coaches that CIWP is exemplary. Our plan for a full extended school day is exemplary, but we spend valuable resources on more rudimentary needs, like safety, and we are at risk of not achieving that vision.

So we request an immediate action plan for space for next year, and we request an immediate action plan for the long term solution, and we want to be your advocates, so that CPS' vision of inspire, education, and transform can be achieved.
That's what we're doing at Wildwood, despite obstacles. We have an opportunity to show a spotlight on urban education in the nation, if we can all work together to achieve the visions that we have.

MR. PAYNE: So we're going to have people who would like to speak to come stand up here on stage, behind the speaker, and so then every speaker will get two minutes and we'll go with that, with the your next speaker.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm (inaudible) I'm a very active parent at Wildwood, and I just want to say thank you for being here and being mindful of our traditions, and I just want to say that, open up to analogy, and that we heard a lot over the past year about time and education and the school day, about quality and quantity, this analogy also applies to instruction and to space.

You cannot have quality education without the time to teacher a kid. And the same thing, you cannot teach a kid if you don't have the space to teach them in. And we have a lot of talk about money and numbers of students and percentage that we're counting, at the end of the day the fact of
the matter is these are not just numbers, these are our children.

And without children, they build on everything, and something I have learned as far as building things, you can't have walls and a roof unless you have a strong base. Our children are our base. Your school is built upon our children. Our community is built upon our school, and our future is built upon our community. If we are having problems inside of base of your children, then all of us, we all have a very shaky future.

SPEAKER: Good morning everyone, my name is Dave Ralston, I'm a proud graduate of Roosevelt High School back in the year one. And also my granddaughter is currently a member of (inaudible) Elementary School, it's a little bit out of the area, but basically we're very strong advocates for public education.

And I would like to make a simple point, I want to thank Alderman Cullerton, Alderman O'Connor, Alderman Arena, and everyone from the City Council who is thinking in terms of making a very basic choice, we can either fund Chicago Public Schools well or we can throw a lot of money towards charter
schools, which is a mistake. It's money poorly spent.

If we stick with a good situation, good single system that includes everyone, that has diversity, that is listening and responding to what we need for our children, we'll be, it will be the best situation for our kids. And I would like to ask everyone on the panel, and all the Aldermen here and everyone who has any contact or response to any political connection in the City, please send our message to them.

We want much better monies for public schools. Overcrowding, difficulty in services, special needs, all these things revolve around money, and if we have the money for it, we'll solve all these problems. If we spend a lot of money on charter schools, these problems will not be solved.

So it's a simple choice. Let's vote for Chicago Public Schools, let's give our political support and our political fervor for increasing the quality and the monies that goes to Chicago Public Schools. Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: Good afternoon, my name is Andrew Tomashell. (Phonetic) My two kids spent 12 years at
a great Chicago public school, Gray Elementary, and
the last 15 years I have been involved with youth
work in the City and have partnered with many
schools.

In 2006 I got an opportunity to participate
in a new strategic planning initiative by a Chicago
public high school that was struggling and decided
to take matters into its own hands. As the LSC,
they created a strategic planning process that
resulted in a five-year strategic plan, something
that interestingly I don't believe Chicago Public
Schools has, a strategic plan. There's a facilities
plan that's getting approved, but there is no
strategic plan.

So, in any event, in this strategic
planning process, all stakeholders, residents,
parents, students, teachers, the administration and
other community stakeholders were all invited to
participate in dialogue. We had about 1800 surveys
filled out. We had focus groups, through that
process we created a plan for the school.

Between 2010 and 2012, this school's rate
of freshman going on track has increase 25 percent.
The dropout rate has decreased 25 percent.
Attendance is up 10 percent. Test scores are up.

My point is that there's a lot of wisdom in this room, and there are, schools are complex organisms that deserve to have all of our voices heard.

And if we make a commitment to all of our school communities, to have everybody get involved and invested and have a voice, then we can change things, and I ask CPS to please do that before it makes plans like closing schools.

SPEAKER: My name Rafael Contreras, I'm actually a CPS student. I went to Curie High School, I graduated in 1995, and I continued on, and now I'm currently an administrator at a CPS school. I have worked at CPS for 15 years at Foreman High School, and I am now proudly the AP over at Murphy Elementary.

And I really want us to also remember students like us, people like us, who went to CPS and had such a wonderful experience at CPS and sometimes I worry about the children, the kids that are coming through CPS that might not have such a positive experience because of the problems that we're talking about. We talk about investment in facilities, I would like to see investment in, you
know, human capital, we're talking about our
children.

If we're not -- if we lose focus, as far as
the kids are concerned, kids like me, students like
myself, who come from a very low income and who made
a stride to go to school every day, no matter how
crowded or how dangerous or how complicated it was,
to take buses and go miles and miles and miles to
the nearest high school and elementary school, I
think we're losing sight of some of these things and
it's an issue for me not just as an administrator,
not just as a teacher, but as a person to see so
many people affected because of some of the things
that I know.

I know that some of us would like to do
better, but I think that we really would like to
have more of an opportunity to involve ourselves,
our parents. I would like to see another forum, if
we can, similar to this. I would like to see, we're
in an age of technology, I would like to see
something, perhaps on-line, where parents could
really contribute. A lot of parents who don't speak
English also, sometimes they're not presented with
an equal opportunity to do so. Habla Espanol, you
know, so sometimes it's very difficult.

So I would like to, you know, again, thank everyone for your time, and, again, just remember the students, like myself, who went to CPS and would love to have the same opportunity.

SPEAKER: Good afternoon, my name is Danny Vanaver, (phonetic) I am from Taft High School. I did sign up to speak, I was wondering maybe I filled out the form wrong or something. Anyway, when I came to Taft in 1993, we had about 1400 students. Today we have 3100. We're expecting a couple hundred more next year. So we're the second largest school in the City right now, I think.

We have no room for them, just like the rest of you who have been bringing up these needs about being overcrowded on this side of the City. It hurts everything, not just having classes in rooms that weren't classes before, but it also stretches even athletic facilities. We, you know, it's a great thing that kids are involved in sports and after school activities, but they're practicing in places that are actually dangerous, hallways, cheerleading and stuff practicing in hallways where, God forbid, someone slips and falls on that floor.
Using facilities in ways that are just not meant to be used.

I am worried about CPS' response because even though we, you know, it seems like we're pitting different sides of the City here, we're still one City, one school system. CPS management seems to be focused in on closing schools to help save money, but it's such a small part of the budget, and even if they were to close all the schools they're talking about, I'm not advocating for that, but even if they were to close all the schools they're talking about, it doesn't seem like they would save enough money just for the needs that we have heard in this room today, just for our side of the City.

The problem is much bigger than that, it seems like they should be devoting more attention to how they're going to do this in a bigger scale. They can't do it just by closing schools and opening new charters. Thank you for your time.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Patrick Reed, I'm the LSC vice chair at Belding, also a Belding parent, I have got two boys in a class of 37 at Belding. You know while a high school would be a nice luxury for
our area, we have a necessity to provide these small kids with more elementaries in our area, so, in life, our decisions are either part of the solution or part of the problem, and I am here to ask CPS to please be part of the solution. Thank you.

SPEAKER: My name is Jim Sequara, (phonetic) I'm an LSC parent member at Smyser Elementary. Smyser, just like the other schools, we are an overcrowded percentage, I think it's 28 or 30 percent. Last year you did address an issue where we got another building rented, but it seems too many times CPS, as with everybody else, it's a short term band-aid. We're not looking at long term.

You're not looking at, you know, building new schools that are the size that we need. Putting our school two miles away from where the main school is is not an answer. Putting mobile units in a parking lot is not an answer. You know, if we need to get the money, the funding, if CPS doesn't have it, we need to get it from a higher level of government.

Last year you pushed this longer school day, and all it did, in a lot of cases, was make overcrowding worse. Now we have kids who have extra
recess or longer recess time, they sit in a study hall because there's no recess place for them to go. We have one gymnasium that has classes in it all day. Kids are sitting in hallways, they're sitting in lunch rooms. This is not helping us. A longer school day is not an answer to education.

Better schools, smaller classrooms, and more money and a community of people that are there is the answer there. And the last meeting we had it was asked what makes these schools work, it's hard working principals, it's the hard working parents, it's not charter schools where we have no community involvement. You know, you have to, they are schools are part of our community, they are there as a beacon for our kids to grow up and to thrive. It's not to be a business and for somebody else to make money off of.

SPEAKER: My name is Barbara Beardon, (phonetic) I'm a parent of a student at Palmer Elementary and we also have a lot of overcrowding. What we're finding too is that when children have recess, there aren't enough people to watch them. If the children go outside, you need fewer people, but if they have indoor recess, when it's cold, and Chicago is cold,
you need more people because you have to have the
children in the classroom, you can't have two
classes in one classroom.

    We're finding with the longer school day as
well that you need more staff and it seems like
Chicago Public Schools didn't plan for that at all.
We need more teachers. A few years ago we had a lot
of our classes, a grade would have had four classes
and the next year the grade ended up with three
classes. So where we would normally have had four
classes, now we only have three classes because we
don't have enough -- we don't get the teachers
anymore.

    You're asking schools to, we're all told
pre-school and kindergarten, full day kindergarten
is good for young students, it helps them, it helps
to prepare them for first grade. We want to have
preschools and kindergartens in our schools, well
that's something that our schools were not really
built to contain. So we don't have enough people.
We simply don't have enough teachers and we don't
have enough staff, and that's what, I think, CPS has
simply not planned for and you need to add more
people. Thank you.
SPEAKER: Thanks again for having me. There's a few things that I want to continue to add. I want to echo the library question that Debbie brought up. I too have a library that's chopped into thirds, and the library, I don't know what my acronym for it is, Debbie, but you have got my creative juices going.

The library is chopped in thirds. It houses speech, it houses library, we do speech, we do special education, we do bilingual, and we do any other kind of special event that has to happen there.

But, and with my saying that, I need to remind this panel that a lot of these things are lawsuits waiting to happen. We, as principals, face audits from, and have to face guidelines by the Feds, and the Feds come in and say you have to have adequate facilities for all of these special populations, to which we are now compromising on, and we have to explain that. That goes into our evaluations. Things like that.

But most importantly, it puts the district at risk for legal consequences to truly happen. I don't know if we're past the consent decree, but a lot of these things have come up as a result of the
consent decree. So we have to be cautious.

The last cautionary tail that I want to say is I contacted my predecessor to ask for the history on overcrowding three years ago, when I took over, and I was told, Dan, be careful because they're going to ask you to give up your lunch room. And I am going to tell you right now, I'm not giving up my lunch room. I ain't doing it. I'm not doing it. I have given up too much. I can't do it. Besides, where am I going to feed the kids? On the roof? Don't ask us to give up facilities any more, we are stretched to the limit. We cannot take one more bending of the rules or anything else to accommodate what's going on, and I am hoping that after all the consolidation is done --

MR. JUAREZ: Time.

SPEAKER: And everything else, that there will be a plan to reallocate that money for where it's truly needed.

MR. PAYNE: So that concludes our open comment portion. I just want to thank everyone for coming out and advocating for your schools, for your area. You know, we understand that it can be frustrating, we don't have a lot of answers for you
right now. We are listening to what you're saying.

Continue to talk to us, maintain open lines of
communication with the Network, and we'll make sure
that we'll, you know, follow up with that. And if
you would like, I'll follow up with you, personally,
after. You know, we're hearing you.

You know, I have talked to Mary Beth for a
long time for the last year or so with Wildwood's
concerns, I have been out to Belding, you know, we
want to make ourselves available to come out to your
schools and talk to you as much as we can.

So we are listening, we understand that,

you know, right now the district is focused on
school closings and school actions, which is not the
situation that's going on in O'Hare. So I know that
can be tough.

But we want to thank everyone for coming
out. Please continue to be an advocate. We will
continue to, you know, reach out and have
conversations with you, you know, the idea of having
community dialogue to understand what buildings need
to be put in different areas, you know, how space
can be used more creatively. Making sure that we
have plans for annexes that we, you know, do know
that we need to build, there are new school buildings that need to be built, and to try and do that kind of planning up front to make sure the plans are shovel ready. I think these are suggestions that can be done, so thank you, everybody, and thanks for coming out and I understand that it's time on a Saturday and we appreciate your time and your voices. Thank you.
STATE OF ILLINOIS   
)  
COUNTY OF COOK   
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The within and foregoing community meeting taken before Dennis Hartnett, C.S.R., at 4300 North Narragansett, in the City of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, at 11:00 o'clock a.m. on the 23rd day of February A.D. 2013.

The undersigned is not interested in the within case, nor of kin or counsel to any of the parties.

Witness my official signature in and for Cook County, Illinois on this 25th day of February A.D. 2013.

DENNIS M. HARTNETT, CSR, TOOMEY REPORTING
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