



Revised Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 24, 2010

Topic: Proposed Siting of Lefferts Garden Charter School with Existing Schools in School Building K092

Date of Panel Vote: February 24, 2010

The analysis of public comment regarding the proposed siting of Lefferts Garden Charter School (“Lefferts Garden”) was revised on February 24, 2010, to reflect additional comments that had not been captured in the analysis that was posted on the New York City Department of Education’s (“DOE”) Web site on February 23, 2010.

One advocacy organization submitted general comments objecting to all proposed co-locations of charter schools with existing district schools. Although the comments did not address any one co-location proposal in particular, the DOE has appended these comments to the public comment analysis for each of the proposed charter co-locations.

Summary of Proposal

In 2010-11, Lefferts Garden Charter School (“Lefferts Garden”), a new public school, will open in school building K092, located at 601 Parkside Avenue in Brooklyn. Lefferts Garden will remain in K092 until the school completes construction of a private facility to which it will eventually move. In its first year of operation, Lefferts Garden will serve students in kindergarten and first grade. The school will phase in one new grade annually until it achieves its full scale, serving students from Kindergarten through fifth grade in 2014-15. K092 currently houses P.S. 92 Adrian Hegeman, an existing school serving grades Pre-Kindergarten-5. No P.S. 92 students will be displaced by this proposal, and both schools will have adequate space and facilities resources to support all students, including those with special needs.

The creation of Lefferts Garden will achieve several key goals.

First, by converting underutilized space in K092 into new elementary school seats, Lefferts Garden will help alleviate overcrowding in elementary schools throughout District 17. While admission to Lefferts Garden will be via lottery, District 17 students will be given

preference in that lottery, resulting in a net gain of approximately 325 K-5 seats in District 17 once the school is operating at full scale.

K092 has the capacity to house Lefferts Garden without displacing any P.S. 92 students. K092 has a target capacity of 1,060 students, but P.S. 092 will only enroll 629 students, resulting in a target capacity utilization rate of only 60 percent. Lefferts Garden will enroll between 90-110 students during its first year, and will enroll approximately 300-350 students when it achieves full scale. K092 can accommodate both schools operating at full capacity; however, Lefferts Garden will eventually move to a private facility. That relocation will take place at a future date to be determined based on the completion of that site's construction.

Second, this proposal will continue to expand access to high-quality elementary school options for District 17 students and their families. Lefferts Garden is authorized by the Chancellor and the New York City Department of Education. The school will utilize an environmental science program to develop academically motivated and civic-minded students to succeed in competitive high school and college programs. Currently, there are more than 6,350 students on the waitlist for the five charter schools located in District 17.

An Educational Impact Statement on this proposal was posted on the Department of Education's Web site on January 8, 2010.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing was held at K092 on February 22, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Ten members of the public spoke in opposition to the proposal, citing concerns about the feasibility of both schools existing comfortably in the space and a potential expansion of P.S. 92 to serve grades K-8.

Twenty-five members of the public spoke in favor of the proposal, stating strong connections to the proposed community and community based partnerships that will expand learning opportunities for students and families of Lefferts Garden. Supporters of the proposal also noted that Lefferts Garden's science-based inquiry model is consistent with national efforts to support green schools and expand environmental education.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and Oral Comments and Significant Alternatives Suggested

A total of twenty-four written comments regarding this proposal were received. No oral comments were received. Ten comments were opposed to the proposal; all remaining comments were in support. Those in opposition to the proposal The founder of Lefferts Garden attended PS 092 as a child.

In the original version of this analysis, seventeen total written comments and no oral comments were submitted. The comments were submitted by District 17 parents and residents of the community. Seven comments supported the proposal, and they noted that they approved school's curriculum's focus on learning opportunities presented by the school's proximity to

Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. Ten comments were opposed to the proposal, and they focused on their desire to only house PS 92 in the space, but found no flaws in the proposal for Lefferts Garden. They wish to expand PS 092 to a K-8 building although that request has not been submitted. No significant alternatives were originally proposed.

In this revision, seven additional comments in support of the proposal and no comments in opposition to the proposal were submitted. Thus, a total of twenty-four comments were submitted. The additional comments in support of the proposal were submitted by members of the community, and they raises the number of comments in support to fourteen. They reiterated their enthusiasm for Lefferts Garden's curriculum and noted that Lefferts Garden is a welcome addition to educational options available in the neighborhood. The additional comments did not propose any significant alternatives.

Analysis of Issues Raised, Significant Alternatives Proposed and Changes Made to the Proposal

One reason given for opposition to the proposal was concern about the ability of the schools to fit into the K092 building. The target capacity of the K092 building is 1,060 students. The 10.31.2009 Audited Register at P.S. 92 was 629 students. Therefore the K092 building can accommodate approximately 430 additional students. The projected enrollment of Lefferts Garden Charter School at scale is approximately 325 students. Therefore K092 has sufficient space to accommodate both Lefferts Garden Charter School and P.S. 92 at scale. Even with both schools at scale the projected target utilization rate would be 90%.

With regards to the possibility of a grade expansion at P.S. 92, the principal and School Leadership Team did not submit an application for a grade expansion for the 2010-2011 school year. If the school does submit a grade expansion application in the future, the Office of Portfolio Planning will make a recommendation on the proposal based on the school's performance, the district's demographic need, the impact an expansion would have on the enrollment of other schools, and community input.

No changes to the proposal have been made. The proposal will be presented to the Panel for Educational Policy at the February 24, 2010 meeting as it is currently posted.

A copy of the educational impact statement for this proposal can be obtained at <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/585A6F4E-316F-45AF-A1C4-0F38AC7260E8/75208/K092LeffertsGardenEISFinal1812.pdf>.

Summary of Issues Raised and Significant Alternatives Suggested

One advocacy organization submitted general comments objecting to all proposed co-locations of charter schools with existing district schools. In opposing the DOE's proposed co-locations, the comments cited the following reasons: (1) the DOE did not use accurate data in analyzing the utilization and capacity of school buildings; (2) the utilization formula used by the DOE is inadequate and assumes inappropriate target class sizes; (3) charter schools enroll fewer high needs students than district and citywide averages, leading to higher concentrations of high needs students in district schools; and (4) the expansion of charter schools has eliminated critical space from district schools.

The comments suggest a moratorium on any new charter co-locations, or expansions of existing charter schools within shared public school space, until an independent review is conducted to assess the capacity in existing public school buildings and make determinations about the amount of space required to reduce class size to mandated levels.

Analysis of Issues Raised, Significant Alternatives Proposed and Changes Made to the Proposals

The comments assert that the DOE did not use accurate data in analyzing utilization and capacity of school buildings. The data used in analyzing the utilization and capacity of school buildings comes from "The Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization Report" (also known as the "Blue Book"), which is the standard by which the DOE measures the maximum capacity of a school building compared to the enrollment. These calculations are based on information provided by principals in the Annual Facilities Survey conducted by the School Construction Authority. In addition to considering the Blue Book information, the DOE conducts a physical survey of school buildings and takes into consideration current programming prior to proposing a change in utilization.

With regard to the comment regarding the use of inappropriate target class sizes, the DOE does use aspirational targets for school buildings but feels that these goals are appropriate for ensuring a quality education for all students. The DOE understands that building usage varies by schools and leaves programming decisions to school leaders. However, it is important to have a standard means of assessing the use of our limited physical plant resources consistently across the city. The class size targets used for the 2008-2009 Blue Book calculations of target capacity and utilization are lower than those used for determining historical capacity and utilization.

The comments assert that charter schools enroll fewer high needs students than the citywide and district averages, thereby leading to higher concentrations of high needs students in district schools. It is important to note that charter school admissions are done by lottery as

required by State Education Law. Charter schools do in fact serve the full range of public school students.

**Prepared by
Department of Education**