

## Public Comment Analysis

Date: March 19, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Re-siting and Co-location of Academy for Careers in Television and Film High School (30Q301) to New Building Q404 with New School 30Q291 and 75QTBD Beginning in 2013-2014

Date of Panel Vote: March 20, 2013

### Summary of Proposal

On February 1, 2013, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) proposed to re-site Academy for Careers in Television and Film (30Q301, “ACTVF”), an existing Career and Technical Education (“CTE”)<sup>1</sup> school that serves students in grades nine through twelve. ACTVF is currently located in building Q204 (“Q204”) at 36-41 28th Street, Queens, NY 11106 within the geographical confines of Community School District 30. ACTVF is currently co-located in Q204 with I.S. 204 Oliver W. Holmes Middle School (30Q204, “I.S. 204”); an existing school serving grades six through eight. If the proposal is approved, ACTVF will be re-sited to new building Q404 (“Q404”), which is located at 1-50 51st Avenue, Queens, NY 11101 within the geographical confines of Community School District 30, and will be co-located with 30Q291 (“30Q291”), a new district middle school which will serve grades six through eight at full scale, and a yet-to-be determined District 75 (“D75”) school (“75QTBD”) beginning in the 2013-2014 school year.<sup>2,3</sup> A re-siting means students will attend classes in a different building than in previous years, and a “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias. If this proposal is approved, ACTVF will no longer serve any students in Q204 after the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year, and will serve all its students in Q404 beginning in the 2013-2014 school year.

30Q291 is expected to serve students in sixth grade in 2013-2014, and then add an additional grade each year until it reaches full scale in the 2015-2016 school year. In 2015-2016, when 30Q291 achieves full scale, it will serve approximately 375-405 students in sixth through eighth grades.

75QTBD is expected to serve students in both a 6:1:1 and 12:1:1 setting. Typically, the majority of students served in a 6:1:1 setting are classified with autism, and the majority of students served in 12:1:1 alternate assessment setting are classified with intellectual disabilities. Should the D75 placement office

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<sup>1</sup> CTE programs integrate academic study with workforce skills in specific careers. Students receive instruction in an industry-related area and have the opportunity to graduate from high school with industry-specific competencies and skills that lead to post-secondary education, further industry training and/or entry into the workforce

<sup>2</sup> D75 provides citywide educational, vocational, and behavior support programs for students who are on the autism spectrum, have significant cognitive delays, or are severely emotionally challenged, sensory impaired and/or multiply disabled. D75 provides services to students in a variety of settings, including elementary, middle, and high schools, students’ homes, hospitals, and agencies. These programs are located at more than 310 sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island, and Syosset, New York. Please visit the DOE Web site for additional information about D75 programs at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/District75/default.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> It is not yet determined whether 75QTBD will be a new school or a new site for an existing D75 program. However, 75QTBD will serve new students and/or students articulating from existing elementary and middle school D75 programs. 75QTBD will add D75 seat capacity at the middle school and high school level in Queens.

determine that the classes offered by 75QTBD are appropriate; a student with any disability classification may be offered to this site. 75QTBD is expected to serve students in sixth and ninth grades in 2013-2014, students in sixth, seventh, ninth, and tenth grades in 2014-2015, students in sixth through eleventh grades in 2015-2016, and students in sixth through twelfth grades when it reaches full scale in the 2016-2017 school year. In 2016-2017, when 75QTBD achieves full scale, it will serve approximately 90-96 students.

The Q404 building is projected to have the capacity to serve 1,071 students.<sup>4</sup> If this proposal is approved, ACTVF students will be re-sited to Q404 for the 2013-2014 school year and would be co-located with 30Q291 and 75QTBD. During the 2013-2014 school year, these organizations will serve approximately 618-674 students, yielding a projected building utilization rate of 58%-63%. In the 2016-2017 school year, when all organizations in the building have reached full scale, there will be a total of approximately 990-1,066 students in building Q404, yielding a projected building utilization rate for all organizations of 92%-100%.

### **Summary of Comments Received**

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building Q204 on March 14, 2013. Representatives from the Community Education Council (“CEC”) 30 and members of the School Leadership Team (“SLT”) from ACTVF and I.S. 204 were invited to participate. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. While representatives from the Citywide Council for Special Education, Citywide Council for High Schools, and Citywide Council for English Language Learners were invited, not all chose to participate in the hearing. Approximately 70 members of the public attended the hearing and 13 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: District 30 Community Superintendent Dr. Phil Composto; Edgar Rodriguez, Principal of ACTVF; Mark Dunetz, Founding Principal of ACTVF; Yvonne Leimsider, Principal of I.S. 204; Isaac Carmignani, CEC 30 Co-President; Jeffrey Guyton, CEC 30 Co-President; Valerie Labour, CEC 30 Member; Michelle Norris, CEC 30 Member; Ernie Brooks, CEC 30 Member; SLT representative from ACTVF, Simoa Santiago; SLT representative from I.S. 204, Fotina Lambos; Nick Gullota representing Congressman James Van Bramer; Dymtryo Fedkowskyj from the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”); and Allen Miller and Jillian Roland from the Division of Portfolio Planning.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing:

1. Isaac Carmignani, CEC 30 Co-President, made remarks about the community input into the proposal:
  - a) He stated that there was not enough community input in the DOE’s creation of proposals.
  - b) He stated that the Hunters Point community wanted a school focused on marine life not ACTVF.
2. Jeffrey Guyton, CEC 30 Co-President, made remarks about the community input into the proposal:
  - a) He stated that he saw no demand from the community for an engineering focused CTE program.
  - b) He stated that he is pleased that the rezoning has increased the CEC’s power and legislative authority.

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<sup>4</sup> The official target capacity and utilization rates for the 2012-2013 school year and beyond are not yet available. All references to building utilization rates in this document are based on the designed capacity of building Q404 as per the Program of Requirements (“POR”) from the School Construction Authority.

3. Valerie Labour, CEC 30 member, expressed concerns about the process:
  - a) She stated that the 2 different EISs for the resiting of ACTVF to Q404 and the co-location of a new CTE program in Q204 were both being discussed on the same night one week before the PEP. She further stated that this cemented her belief that 99% of DOE proposals are set in stone.
  - b) She stated that ACTVF should get all the proper accommodations to be able to operate as they have been in regard to lighting and power.
  - c) She expressed her belief that the PEP just votes according to what the Mayor asks. She encouraged people to write to the PEP. She further clarified the CEC job was as an advisory panel and to advocate for the District 30 community. The PEP are the people who make the final decision.
4. Michelle Norris, CEC 30 member, expressed concerns about the re-siting of ACTVF:
  - a) She stated that the DOE had promised that ACTVF would give zoned priority for the Hunters Point community.
  - b) She stated that Q404 should house a 6-12 school. The middle school portion should be zoned for grades 6-8 and they can recruit additional students for grades 9-12. However, the residents of the Hunters Point community should have the right to stay in the school in 9-12.
  - c) She stated that ACTVF is concerned with the construction and configuration of the new building and if it will work for their specific programming. She asked if there was a dark room in the new building and if there were too many windows.
  - d) She expressed concerns about ventilation and dust in Q404.
5. Ernie Brooks, CEC 30 member, expressed that ACTVF could be good in Hunters Point:
  - a) He stated that the proposal did not involve any community input.
  - b) He stated that the community was more interested in a marine-based school for Q404.
6. Edgar Rodriguez, Principal of ACTVF, spoke in favor of the proposal:
  - a) He stated that the building layout and the location of Q404 is ideal for ACTVF to expand the program and diversify the student body. He is looking forward to the collaboration between the schools in Q404.
7. Simoa Santiago, SLT member of ACTVF, spoke in favor of the proposal:
  - a) She stated that the ACTVF community is very excited about the move to Q404 and the growth of the school programs. Due to a strong school leadership, a dedicated staff, and a strong school culture the school will continue to succeed in Q404.
8. Mark Dunetz, founding Principal of ACTVF, spoke in favor of the proposal:
  - a) He stated that the new building space is ideal and that the ACTVF community is very excited about the re-siting of the school.
9. Multiple commenters spoke in favor of the proposal.
  - a) They stated that ACTVF will continue to flourish in the new location and will collaborate well with the new Middle School and new District 75 school.
  - b) One commenter stated that Q404 is an ideal building with great outdoor space.
  - c) One commenter expressed support that ACTVF should continue with the current enrollment and not have priority to District 30 students.
10. One commenter expressed concerns about ACTVF's admissions process.

**Summary of Issues Raised in Written and/or Oral Comments Submitted to the DOE:**

11. The DOE received a letter from Assembly member Catherine Nolan expressing support for the proposal to re-site ACTVF:

- a) She stated that ACTVF is a new school with a unique purpose and high academic achievement.
- b) She stated that since the school is intended to give students the skills and knowledge for working in the film and television industry, the new Hunter's Point location, with its proximity to industry giants such as Silvercup Studios, would present the school with a tremendous opportunity for hands on learning.
- c) She stated that relocating ACTVF to Q404 would be a boon for both the school and local community. Recently, it was awarded one of the top report grades for high schools in the city, putting it on par with selective high schools like Bronx Science and Stuyvesant and noted that ACTVF is a valuable asset for Queens and especially for the Long Island City area.

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

- Comments 1(a), 2(a), and 5(a) express concern that community input was not part of this decision. Comments 1(b) and 5(b) stated that the community wanted a school focused on marine life.

The DOE is committed to engaging with the community, included its elected representatives, for all proposals that require a significant change in school utilization, as detailed in Chancellor's Regulation A-190. Additionally, the DOE has solicited feedback regarding this proposal via a dedicated phone line and a dedicated email address.

Prior to this hearing, the DOE worked with the CEC to survey the community regarding their interests for the Q404 building. 135 total responses were received via mail, email, and an on-line survey which related to both the middle school and the high school. Overall, the community response reflects a very small percentage of the D30 community at large. However, it is important to note that the majority of responses (over 90%) were from parents representing 13 different schools of varied levels (elementary school, middle school, and high school). 34% of the respondents felt that a CTE program was important in the community and approximately 1% felt that a focus on marine life was needed.

Additionally, the DOE is committed to providing high quality CTE programming to students in Queens. ACTVF offers a rigorous academic program with a CTE component designed to equip students with the skills necessary to achieve post-secondary success.

- Comment 3(a) suggests that the decision to have only one hearing for 2 different proposals on the same day and just a week before the PEP vote was unfair to the families of Hunters Point.

The DOE works continually with school communities—SLTs, Principals, parents—and CECs to select the best possible hearing date for that community. In some instances, newly emerging priorities or concerns may prompt any of the impacted parties to request a rescheduled hearing date. To the extent possible, the DOE aims to accommodate reasonable requests for rescheduling options within the appointed hearing window as far in advance as possible.

In the case of the combined joint public hearing to review both the proposal to re-site ACTVF and the proposal to co-locate the new district CTE high school in Q204, the DOE strove to avoid the inconvenience of requiring families in the community to come out to two hearing at two different locations during the same time frame. As such, the DOE approached the CEC with the

option of holding just one meeting at Q204. This was posed as an option that the Co-Presidents of the CEC, as representatives of the CEC, accepted. Once the hearing was scheduled, notice of the combined hearing was posted on the DOE's website and distributed accordingly:

- Paper copies of the combined hearing notice with the date were backpacked home with students, shared with the SLT and made available in the main office of both ACTVF and I.S. 204.
- Paper copies of a combined hearing notice with the date were mailed to the School Leadership Team, CEC, and all Queens Community Boards.
- The Office of Public Affairs emailed notice of the combined hearing date to relevant elected officials.

Persons who were unable to attend a joint public hearing for any reason are welcome to submit comments and concerns via phone, email, or dedicated website. The PEP vote on a proposal also provides an additional opportunity for interested parties to provide direct and in-person feedback regarding a proposal.

- Comments 3(b) and 4(c) express concerns about the Q404 facility and if it has the necessary accommodations for ACTVF's needs as a CTE school; and Comment 4(d) specifically expresses concern that the building has proper ventilation.

The Q404 building can accommodate ACTVF's CTE programming. The building was designed to meet the requirements of a high school facility. The building includes 3 science labs and 3 science lab prep rooms, a gymnasium and an auxiliary exercise room, an auditorium, a library, and a cafeteria.

Further, the NYC School Construction Authority ("SCA") designs and constructs safe and environmentally sound public schools while achieving the highest standards of excellence in quality and integrity. All SCA buildings are built with proper ventilation according to building code regulations.

- Comment 4(a) concerns the fact that ACTVF should offer zoned priority to Hunters Point residents.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high-quality school at every stage of their education. Admissions to ACTVF is open to any New York City student via a limited unscreened admissions method. Limited unscreened schools give admissions priority to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending an information session, open house event, or visiting the school's exhibit at any one of the High School Fairs. As a resident of New York City, families have more high school options available to them than any other city in the country. There are nearly 700 programs at over 400 high schools to choose from, and families can decide exactly which ones meet the students' needs and interests.

- Comment 4(b) concerns the fact that the Q404 building should have a 6-12 school.

The DOE is proposing to re-site ACTVF based on feedback that Q404 would be an ideal location to expand the existing CTE school. ACTVF provides a rigorous CTE program and is one of the highest performing schools in New York City. The DOE believes that re-siting ACTVF to Q404 would allow the school to continue to admit approximately five sections of ninth-grade students,

and thus give more students the opportunity to attend than have historically attended the school. Furthermore, building Q404 is in closer proximity than Q204 to the Silvercup Studios, which is located at 34-02 Starr Avenue and at 42-22 22<sup>nd</sup> Street in Long Island City, NY 11101, one of the school's main partner organizations, where the students have opportunities to use the production facilities and gain real-life experiences. The proposed re-siting of ACTVF in Q404 is expected to have a positive impact on the community by providing additional high school seats with a high quality option for students in Queens.

Comment 10 questions the admissions process at ACTVF.

ACTVF admits students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process and ACTVF's admissions policies would not be impacted by this proposal. ACTVF admits students through a limited unscreened admissions method. Limited unscreened programs give priority to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending a School information session or open house event, or by visiting the schools exhibit at any one of the High School Fairs.

Comments 2(b) and 3(c) do not directly relate to the proposal and do not require responses.

Comments 6(a), 7(a), 8(a), 9 (a,b,c) and 11(a,b,c) were all in favor of the proposal and do not require responses .

### **Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes have been made to the proposal.