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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**

**Opening and Co-Location
of a New District Middle School at M096**

**10/8/13
5:30 p.m.**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 [Crosstalk]

3 MS. ALEXANDRA ESTRELLA: Good evening. This
4 is a joint public hearing of the Department of
5 Education, community education council 4 and the
6 PS96 school leadership team for the proposed co-
7 location of a new district middle school in this
8 building with PS96 beginning the 2004-2015
9 school year. I am Alexandra Estrella,
10 superintendent for district 4 schools and the
11 chancellor's designee for this hearing. We have
12 asked the district 4 community education council
13 and the school leadership team with PS96 to
14 participate in this joint public hearing. I am
15 joined tonight by Elender Foxe from the CEC as
16 well as the principal of PS96, Betty Lugo. This
17 hearing is being recorded. The purpose of this
18 hearing is for you to provide comments about the
19 proposal. Before I describe the proposal I want
20 to make sure you are all aware of the
21 opportunity to provide your input. All those
22 who wish to speak must sign up in the speaker
23 sign up area located just outside the
24 auditorium. The sign up list will close in 15
25 minutes. Speakers will be given the floor in

1 the order that they signed up. All comments
2 are limited to 2 minutes. There may be elected
3 officials who arrive at different times
4 throughout the evening. If they wish to speak
5 we will do our best to accommodate them at the
6 first opportune moment. Those who are here at
7 the start of the public comment segment will be
8 asked to speak first. All comments will be
9 monitored in the analysis of public comment to
10 be published and provided to the Panel for
11 Educational Policy the evening before the panel
12 votes. That vote is scheduled for October 15.
13 In addition, we welcome any comments and
14 feedback you may have at any time before the
15 panel votes on this proposal. The email address
16 and phone number where comments may be made are
17 d04proposals@schools.nyc.gov and (212), sorry
18 (212) 374-3466. I'm going to read the proposal
19 summary. The New York City Department of
20 Education is proposing to co-locate a new
21 district middle school in this building.
22 Building M096 located at 216 East 120th Street,
23 Manhattan, New York 10035 in district 4. If
24 this proposal is approved the new district
25 middle school would be co-located in this

1 building with PS96, an existing zoned
2 elementary and middle school that currently
3 serves kindergarten through 8th grade students.
4 PS96 also offers two sections of a full day pre-
5 kindergarten program. The pre-kindergarten
6 program is not expected to be impacted by this
7 proposal. If this proposal is approved the new
8 middle school would open in this building in
9 September, 2014 serving 6th grade students. The
10 new school will admit students through the
11 district 4 middle school choice process using a
12 limited on screen admissions method. This
13 method gives a priority to students who express
14 interest in this school by attending a school
15 open house or by visiting the school's exhibit
16 at the middle school fair. The new middle
17 school will begin enrolling 6th grade students in
18 2014-2015 and will add one grade level per year
19 until it reaches full scale and serves students
20 in grades 6 through 8 in 2016 through 2017. M096
21 has a target capacity to serve 730 students. In
22 2013 through 2014 the building is expected to
23 serve approximately 472 students yielding a
24 building utilization rate of 65 percent. This
25 means that the building is underutilized. If

1 this proposal to co-locate the new middle
2 school in M096 is approved there will be
3 sufficient space to serve PS96 and the new
4 middle school. The DOE is proposing to open
5 this new middle school in an effort to provide
6 additional middle school options for the
7 district 4 community. The district 4 community
8 has expressed consistent interest in opening new
9 high potential middle schools in the district.
10 Now, we will have presentations by hearing
11 participants, the CEC.

12 MS. ELENDER FOXE: Good evening everyone.
13 As was introduced my name is Ms. Foxe and I'm
14 here representing the community education
15 council for our district. And we just wanted to
16 let you know that we're here to support all of
17 the families that are currently enrolled in this
18 school, their students. And it is our hope that
19 this new school will serve the needs of our
20 students and will help them to grow to be
21 productive and successful young men and women.
22 You know middle school is a very crucial part of
23 a student's education. So, as a community
24 education council we would like for you to
25 continue to give us input so that this can be a

1 smooth transition and we do need your input if
2 there is any difficulties that come in the
3 future or we're hoping that as these schools co-
4 locate that they will work together very well
5 for the benefit of the students and their
6 families. So, just to remind you our office is
7 on 120th Street and 1st Avenue and our email
8 address is cec4@schools.nyc.gov. So, feel free
9 to provide your comments via email or come down
10 our office if you would like. Okay? Have a
11 great evening.

12 MS. ESTRELLA: Ms. Lugo would you like to
13 speak?

14 MS. BETTY LUGO: I would like to share a few
15 words with you and I want to thank you for being
16 here [Spanish audio]. In a few words I'm going
17 to try to stay under the 2 minutes. So, for
18 some years now we have heard about the talk of
19 another school coming into our building. And I
20 think we thought it was maybe talk. So, but now
21 here we are and it looks like it's unfortunately
22 going to happen. So, students and faculty and
23 parents have been working really hard to
24 increase the enrollment of the school to bring
25 in new programs, to offer just quality, quality

1 education to our students. Yet, we have not
2 been able to fill the building to the capacity
3 that the DOE says, right. We feel that we are
4 filling the building to capacity. Every single
5 room in our building serves an important purpose
6 to our school community. So, our school
7 building that houses very little ones as young
8 as 3 years old. And it's a challenge already
9 sharing spaces with the big students that we
10 have in our building particularly bathrooms
11 become an issue. So, it's very easy to say
12 let's limit, we'll limit the middle school
13 students to the 3rd floor bathrooms. But, we
14 know that the gym is on the second floor, the
15 library's on the second floor, the cafeteria's
16 on the first floor. So, it's inevitable for
17 these older students to have to share bathrooms
18 with the little ones. So, that's already a
19 struggle and that becomes an even larger
20 struggle if we're bringing in 200, 300 older
21 kids into our building. Using spaces like the
22 gym and the science lab and the cafeteria are
23 already a challenge, right? We have 10
24 different grades and so we have to share the
25 elementary school and our middle school has to

1 share these spaces. So, what is it? It's
2 going to be an even bigger challenge with
3 another school in the building. We have also
4 been working very hard to create a safe social
5 emotional environment to our students. And
6 having a new middle school in our building could
7 potentially disrupt that environment that we're
8 trying to create. We know that middle school
9 students tend to be somewhat more problematic
10 than the elementary school students and have
11 challenging behaviors and as we heard in the
12 proposal, the middle school that's coming in is
13 unscreened, right. So, it means that a variety,
14 any type of students could be coming into our
15 school building. We have also established new
16 partnerships with many different community based
17 organizations and private organizations. And
18 these partnerships require room in our building
19 to successfully run the programs. So, and I'll
20 give you an example. I just formed a
21 partnership and I just met with them today with
22 an organization called - - in the School and
23 they'll be coming in to work with our pre-
24 kindergartners through 3rd graders. But, the
25 stipulation of the grant is they have to have a

1 room because it's an art program and the artist
2 needs a space to work with the kids. So, that's
3 supposed to be a long term partnership, but it
4 looks now that I'll have to truncate that to a
5 one year partnership because next year and the
6 year after I don't think there will be the space
7 available for this partner. So, thinking about
8 programs and how this proposal would be
9 disruptive to these programs. So, my fear is
10 that in summary that the co-location would
11 negatively impact the quality of education for
12 students and could potentially become an issue
13 of safety. Thank you.

14 MS. ESTRELLA: For the record, CEC member
15 Nicole McClammy is with us tonight. We have now
16 completed the formal presentations. We will now
17 open the floor for public comments. Speakers
18 will be given the floor in the order that they
19 signed up. All comments are limited to 2
20 minutes. Our first speaker is Andrea Kelson.

21 MS. ANDREA KELSON: Thank you ladies, thank
22 you, Ms. McClammy, Ms. Foxe, Ms. Estrella and
23 Ms. Lugo. This is going to be tough to do in 2
24 minutes but I'm going to try really hard. So,
25 I've been here for many, many years and I happen

1 to have many concerns for the prospective co-
2 location. This is Ms. Lugo's third year as
3 principal and I feel that as the school
4 continues to grow and prosper and make academic
5 gains more families in the neighborhood will
6 want to attend our school and what will happen,
7 we won't have enough seats for our neighborhood
8 families. I'm also concerned about the influx
9 of 200 plus unscreened students in a school
10 whose physical plant was developed for
11 elementary school age kids. I'm concerned about
12 the physical plant facilities. Ms. Lugo touched
13 very briefly on that before. But, we have one
14 gym, one auditorium, one science lab, one
15 outdoor recess space, one computer lab. And I
16 think that it would be challenging to share
17 those physical spaces with another school,
18 middle school kids. Also, lunchtimes could be
19 an issue. I've read an article in the Times
20 that said that schools who collocate lunchtime
21 often starts at 9:30 and goes well into 1:30 in
22 the afternoon and I think that would be a
23 challenge. So, which school gets the good
24 lunch? Do we get the good lunchtime or does the
25 new school? I have particular concerns about

1 bathroom facilities. I'm thinking about a
2 plethora of middle school students sharing
3 bathrooms with our much younger students. We're
4 talking about 5 year-olds and 6 year-olds. So,
5 I'm concerned about the bathroom facilities,
6 it's not my primary concern, but I sure am
7 concerned about the safety of our students.
8 Presently, we have city year volunteers, a girls
9 counseling program and an outside arts program
10 called Studio at School. We also have an urban
11 - - room. What will happen to those programs?
12 Who's going to get those classrooms? PS96
13 should get those classrooms not a new middle
14 school that's brought in just because we're
15 perceived as having 65 percent utilization. And
16 I think that's underreporting. Okay. I think
17 I'm 2 minutes under, so thank you so much for
18 your time and thank you for coming out.

19 MS. ESTRELLA: Thank you. Thank you. The
20 next presenter is Villemarie Benet. Be careful
21 with the - - .

22 MS. VILLEMARIE BENET: I'm going to try for
23 2 minutes. I'm long winded. I'm going to start
24 by saying I attended this school in 1980. Back
25 in 1980 there were three schools here. It was

1 PS96, Science and Humanities and the East
2 Harlem Maritime School. The middle school wound
3 up getting bumped because there was just no
4 space for the elementary and for the middle
5 school - - . And that's a problem because you
6 don't want to situate some kids and then have to
7 move them because there's not enough space. My
8 question is: everyone at the CEC and the DOE
9 level knew that MS45 was closing. So, why did
10 they take this school and place it there instead
11 of filling the school with another charter
12 school? That wasn't fair. I think they would
13 have had more space. We just don't have the
14 space. We really don't have the space. It's a
15 safety issue because you got bigger kids mixing
16 in with the younger kids. It's an issue now
17 with the space in the cafeteria. It's an issue
18 with the space in the gym. So, to bring another
19 school here only to fail them, I mean, fail the
20 kids because that's what's going to happen,
21 you're going to fail the kids in the long run
22 because there's not going to be enough space
23 here to put them. So, then you'll be looking to
24 move again because I doubt PS96 is going to
25 move. So, I mean, I don't think it's fair. I

1 think they need to look at the whole picture,
2 they need to look at who's better fitting from
3 this move. If it's the school or if it's the
4 kids because if it's not the kids, then I don't
5 think they should be placed in a situation where
6 it's not beneficial for them. They can't use
7 the gym the way they should. They can't use the
8 auditorium the way they should. They can't go
9 to the bathroom freely the way they should. And
10 it's not fair. So, I think that maybe you guys
11 need to rethink it and kind of give us time to
12 rebuild because when Ms. Lugo came here it was a
13 mess. This school was a total wreck. And she
14 has worked hard with the parents and the
15 teachers here to make it a better place for the
16 children and good news travels. So, the same
17 way bad news spreads, so does good news. And I
18 think that more children have been coming to
19 this school because of word of mouth, because
20 people find it, I myself moved my daughter from
21 where she was at. And I brought her here
22 because I believe that this school could
23 prosper. And for the betterment of the
24 children.

25 MS. ESTRELLA: Thank you. The next

1 presenter is Jay Waugh, last named Waugh, I'm
2 sorry if I'm destroying your name, Ms. Waugh.

3 MS. J WAUGH: Good afternoon everyone. In
4 my research about school joining other schools I
5 have found that the environment become to
6 overcrowded children develop health risk, health
7 problems. And this is what I have been
8 concerned about right now. If we have so many
9 students coming in as Ms. Lugo said there will
10 be no space for us. We're limiting our space
11 and then what about our health problem?
12 Children with asthma, too many children in one
13 in the area, in the space, in the environment.
14 I think that will be a concern for us. Thank
15 you.

16 MS. ESTRELLA: Tomica Ferguson.

17 MS. TOMICA FERGUSON: Good evening--

18 MS. ESTRELLA: [Interposing] No, excuse me,
19 you need to speak in the mike because it's being
20 recorded. I'm sorry.

21 MS. FERGUSON: --good evening everybody. I
22 have an issue because right now our class rooms
23 are overcrowded and if we bring in a middle
24 school they're going to get more overcrowded.
25 The kids you see and the kids are running wild,

1 they're going to be extra wild. There's no
2 space in the bathrooms, there's no people to
3 actually sit and monitor them. The art program
4 will get shut down because there's only one art
5 class, so we're going to open up two? Do you
6 have money for that? Computers, they close down
7 because of the teacher, he was retired, but we
8 still have the grant for that. Cafeteria, again
9 for eating establishments we already have, what,
10 four periods now? Three now six? Is the staff
11 going to be equipped for that? We don't have
12 the space. Ya'll really need to rethink it
13 closely, look at what you have now, the school
14 has been picking up since the school year began.
15 And even with Ms. Lugo. So, I really think we
16 need to really look and see if we really want to
17 put this school here.

18 MS. ESTRELLA: I'm going to call four names
19 at a time so that you know your slot.
20 Jacqueline Candelario, Sylvia Dadsey, Betsy
21 Rugus [phonetic], Alana Diaz. In that order you
22 can come up.

23 MR. ALAN DIAZ: Alan Diaz.

24 MS. ESTRELLA: Alan Diaz. My apologies.
25 Jacqueline? Sylvia?

1 MS. SYLVIA DADSEY: Good evening everyone.
2 When I started hearing the panel speak it seemed
3 to me that the decision has already been made to
4 relocate this building and I find that quite
5 unfortunate because the members of this
6 building, the staff, the parents and even the
7 students need to be heard. When I heard the co-
8 location was going to happen I looked and I
9 found an organization called the New York
10 Communities Organization and they said that co-
11 location doesn't work. And these are some of
12 the reasons they stated. The new school
13 generally forced a communication between the
14 existing school and the new school. They enter
15 the existing building with a mandate that does
16 not foster mutual respect. They do not pay
17 their fair share for the rooms and resources
18 that our school already has. And that made me
19 think. Okay. Are they going to bring their own
20 cafeteria? Are they going to bring their own
21 gym? Are they going to bring their own library?
22 What are we supposed to do when we have children
23 already established with a routine and we talk
24 about children first and yet we're here to
25 disrupt children by turning the entire program

1 around by bringing in a new school? And not
2 only that, we've got youngsters coming in, they
3 just 10, 11, 12 through 14, strangers to the
4 building and they might be some rivalry because
5 we have an area where there might be some
6 rivalry and then therefore we have to make sure
7 that there is no rivalry between our older
8 children and the older children upstairs. I
9 think it's a farce to bring in a school into the
10 building when there's already an existing
11 building without having public hearings way in
12 advance before the decision was made to bring
13 this school into this building. I think it's
14 unfortunate for our children. If we're truly a
15 children first centered society then children
16 need to be first.

17 MS. BETSY RUGUS: Hi, I'm Betsy Rugus and I
18 have been teacher here at PS96 for 6 years now.
19 And I just want to restate something that Ms.
20 Lugo said that even though we have space in our
21 school, every room is always being used with all
22 the different programs that we have brought in
23 for our students. So, having a new school I
24 feel would take away from those programs that
25 are here to build the students' academic skills

1 as well as their social emotional skills.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. ESTRELLA: Alan Diaz.

4 [Crosstalk]

5 MS. ESTRELLA: - - two minutes.

6 MR. DIAZ: All right. My name is Alan Diaz.
7 Freezing, freezing, sorry.

8 MS. ESTRELLA: - - is that who - - .

9 MR. DIAZ: I'm the secretary of the PTA. I
10 brought my son to this school, I thought it was
11 a good environment. Clean school, space,
12 teachers are great, principal is great.
13 Everyone's friendly. I do agree with what most
14 of you guys had to say about the sharing the
15 bathrooms and the cafeteria and who's going to
16 get lunch first and I think I agree with the
17 last person who spoke that the kids should be a
18 first priority. And yeah, that's pretty much
19 it. Thank you.

20 MS. ESTRELLA: Last speaker Marilyn Rivera.

21 [Crosstalk]

22 MS. MARILYN RIVERA: Hello. My name is
23 Marilyn Rivera. I'm doing it for these three
24 little children right there. And they're my
25 great nieces. I adore them. My question is our

1 children, the ones that aren't here, are they
2 going to lack off because of the fact that other
3 children are coming in? Are they going to do
4 without? It takes many people to raise one
5 child, it takes a village, how are we going to
6 do this altogether? We need to think about
7 them, too. Our teachers are gems, I strongly
8 believe that with the teachers and us together
9 we can do this, but we're overcrowding our
10 schools, we're doing without. There's a lot of
11 lack of everything. I'm just concerned. I love
12 this school. I advertise your school mind you.
13 I must tell you that. I love this school. I
14 grew up around this area and I believe our
15 children, they need a lot of help and support,
16 but, 200 extra students. What are we going to
17 do now? We're lacking art, dangerous lunchroom
18 and the kids were telling me something about
19 them being picked on other kids older than they
20 are. And they're in this school already. I had
21 to stop a fight today. Two big kids were making
22 little kids fight. They were 5 or 6 years old
23 and they were filming this and laughing. I'm
24 concerned, that's all I have to say.

25 MS. ESTRELLA: Again, we welcome any

1 comments and feedback you may have at any time
2 before the Panel for Educational Policy votes on
3 this proposal at its October 15 meeting. The
4 email address and the phone number where
5 comments may be made

6 do4proposals@schools.nyc.gov and (212) 374-3466.

7 Thank you for your participation, this joint
8 public hearing is now closed.

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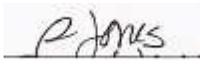
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C E R T I F I C A T E

The prior proceedings were transcribed from audio files and have been transcribed to the best of my ability.

Signature 

Date _____ 10/10/13 _____