



Analysis of Public Comment

Date: April 19, 2010

Topic: Proposed Temporary Co-location of New School P.S. 290 with I.S. 73 in Q873

Date of Panel Vote: April 20, 2010

Summary of Proposal

Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, P.S. 290 will be temporarily housed in school building Q873 for four years (through the 2013-2014 school year). P.S. 290 will open as a new school and will serve grades K-5. Building Q873 is an annex to school building Q073, located at 70-02 54 Avenue, Queens in District 24. Housed in Q873, P.S. 290 will serve elementary school students residing in the P.S. 153 Maspeth Elementary and P.S. 071 Forest zones. P.S. 290 will serve approximately 50-75 kindergarten students in 2010-2011, and will phase-in one new grade per year until it grows to its full grade scale (approximately 270-350 students in grades K-5) in 2015-2016. P.S. 290 will be temporarily co-located in Q873 with I.S. 73 - The Frank Sansivieri Intermediate School, an existing school currently serving grades 6-8.

While space exists in Q873 for P.S. 290 to serve students at its full K-5 grade scale, P.S. 290 will not remain in Q873 for the long-term. On behalf of the Department of Education (“DOE”), the School Construction Authority has proposed the acquisition and construction of a new public school facility on a site located at 55-20 Metropolitan Avenue, less than two miles away from Q873. Should the proposed site receive all necessary public approvals and once the building occupancy date has been determined, the DOE will propose the re-siting of P.S. 290 to the new facility in a future educational impact statement to be submitted for approval by the Panel for Educational Policy.

If P.S. 290 is not able to move to the new facility by the 2014-2015 school year for any reason, the DOE will propose an extension of the co-location of P.S. 290 and I.S. 73 in a separate educational impact statement and submit the proposal to the Panel for Educational Policy for its approval.

The co-location of P.S. 290 in Q873 addresses the need to relieve severe school overcrowding in District 24. The long-term site for P.S. 290 on Metropolitan Avenue is in close proximity to P.S. 153 and P.S. 71, which will position P.S. 290 to most effectively relieve overcrowding at those two elementary schools when that project is completed. Beginning next

fall, P.S. 290 will incubate at Q873 and admit students currently zoned to P.S. 153 and P.S. 71 in this interim site. This will reduce crowding pressures at P.S. 153 and P.S. 71, allowing P.S. 290 to open immediately in an existing underutilized school facility while the Metropolitan Avenue project is underway.

I.S. 73 currently houses its sixth grade students in Q873 and its seventh and eighth grade students in its main building, Q073. There are no other schools housed in Q073. Enrollment at I.S. 73 has been steadily decreasing over the past several years. I.S. 73 enrolls students beginning in both sixth and seventh grade, as it has K-5 and K-6 feeder elementary schools. Two of I.S. 73's feeder elementary schools, P.S. 049 Dorothy Bonawit Kole (24Q049, "P.S. 49") and P.S. 102 Bayview (24Q102, "P.S. 102") are currently expanding to K-8, which is contributing to the decline in I.S. 73's enrollment. In fact, I.S. 73's current seventh grade class is much smaller than its current eighth grade class. This year, I.S. 73 will graduate approximately 715 eighth graders, while the school only enrolls 590 seventh graders. Due to the matriculation of this large eighth grade class and overall declining enrollment trends at I.S. 73, there will be space for I.S. 73 to begin transferring some of the sixth grade sections that are currently served at Q873 back into Q073.

Eventually, all of I.S. 73's sixth-grade sections will be served in the main building. This process will create space for P.S. 290 to incubate in Q873. Based on current enrollment trends, Q873 will have sufficient space for the first year of P.S. 290's phase-in while some of I.S. 73's sixth-grade sections remain in the annex facility. As enrollment continues declining at I.S. 73, the main Q073 building will eventually have adequate capacity to accommodate all of the school's sixth-grade students. The combined projected enrollment in 2010-2011 for P.S. 290 and I.S. 73 is approximately 1,650, and the combined capacity of Q073 and Q873 is 1,979. At scale, the projected enrollment of I.S. 73 is 1,500-1,550 and the capacity of Q073 is 1,554; the projected enrollment of P.S. 290 is 270-350, and the target capacity of Q873 is 425 students.

The opening and eventual full phase-in of P.S. 290 in Q873 will create approximately 270-350 elementary level seats in District 24. P.S. 290 will also house one section of approximately 25 Gifted and Talented students that qualify for this program in District 24. In the short-term, students enrolled in P.S. 290 will be bused to Q873 from the P.S. 153 and P.S. 71 zone, pursuant to Chancellor's Regulation A-801. In the long-term, once P.S. 290 is housed in its permanent site, it will become a zoned elementary school, which will require the creation of a new zone. Zoning decisions require a separate public process under the purview of the Community Education Council ("CEC"). The DOE will propose a zone for P.S. 290 to be discussed in public meetings and voted on by the District 24 CEC. In addition, P.S. 290 will grow to serve approximately 600 students once housed in its permanent site.

An educational impact statement on this proposal was posted on the DOE's Web site on March 5, 2010. The original educational impact statement posted on March 5, 2010 stated that a new elementary school, P.S. 873, would be permanently housed in at Q873 and that there would be a local zone created for the school. After receiving feedback from the community and the District 24 CEC, the DOE decided to revise the proposal so that the new school would only be housed in Q873 temporarily, rather than remain in Q873 for the long-term. As described above, the revised educational impact statement states that the new school will eventually move to a

new construction facility on Metropolitan Avenue. Additionally, the DOE renamed the new school P.S. 290 to align with the building code the new construction facility on Metropolitan Avenue will likely be assigned. The DOE has determined that the proposed new site on Metropolitan Avenue is better positioned to reduce overcrowding in the high-need areas of District 24.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at Q873 on April 14, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 100 members of the public attended the hearing, and 11 people spoke. Six members of the public opposed the proposal, stating that:

- Kindergarten students being housed with middle schools students is a major safety issue.
- Busing Kindergarten students to the new school is not ideal.
- The process moved too quickly.

Three members of the public spoke in favor of the proposal, noting that:

- The proposal provides the fairest and equitable solution to relieve the massive overcrowding at P.S. 153.
- The decision to support the proposal was not made lightly.

Two members of the public had mixed feelings about the proposal, stating that the overcrowding at P.S. 153 is a serious problem and needs to be addressed, but were concerned about the busing of students to the new school.

A few people opposed to the proposal suggested that, to relieve overcrowding, P.S. 153 should truncate their school from a K-6 to a K-5 configuration and the 6th graders should be sent to I.S. 73.

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

Five written comments regarding this proposal have been received. One oral comment has been received which opposed the proposal and suggests an alternative. All five written comments opposed the proposal.

The comments received can be summarized as follows:

- A civic association opposes the co-location because of concerns that it will negatively impact quality of life for the community and exacerbate traffic and congestion in the area.
- Despite the fact that I.S. 73 is under capacity, co-locating a new K-5 school in Q873 will create more problems including adding more students to a congested area.

- There are problems with students from I.S. 73 in the community including increased fights, vandalism, litter and graffiti.
- The schools in the Maspeth community are being used as a dumping ground for students from other districts that are overcapacity.
- Because there is a high school right behind Q873, high school students will be mixing with early elementary students.
- The growing number of schools built in the neighborhood place additional strain on the Maspeth community.
- There is a high amount of street traffic in the area due to MTA cutbacks and the fact that the area is a double-zone for transit, which will be further exacerbated by the co-location.
- At the District 24 CEC public meeting on March 23, 2010, the CEC asked the DOE to reconsider locally zoning P.S. 290 in the Q873 building given the feedback from the community. The CEC asked the DOE to instead consider relocating P.S. 290 to the Metropolitan Avenue site and locally zoning P.S. 290 at that time.

Some commenters suggested the following alternatives:

- Have P.S. 153 return to a K-5 school and send students entering grades 6 and 7 to I.S. 73.
- Use seats at P.S. 128's annex to relieve overcrowding at P.S. 153.
- Transfer one or two Kindergarten classes from P.S. 153 into P.S. 229.
- Expand P.S. 229 to include a middle school.

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

In response to community feedback about eventually siting the new school at the Metropolitan Avenue site and re-zoning at that time, the DOE revised the proposal so that the new school would be sited temporarily in Q873 and eventually move to a newly constructed building on Metropolitan Ave that is currently going through the public approval process.

P.S. 153 and P.S. 71 are elementary schools in District 24 with severe overcrowding. The 2008-2009 target utilization rate of Q153 was 122%, and the 2008-2009 target utilization rate of Q071 was 95%. Kindergarten enrollment has steadily increased over the past few years at these schools, and that increase is expected to continue in 2010-2011. The incoming Kindergarten class at P.S. 153 rose by 15 students from 181 students in 2008-2009 to 196 students in 2009-2010; and the incoming Kindergarten class at P.S. 71 rose by 32 students from 155 students in 2008-2009 to 187 students in 2009-2010. P.S. 153 and P.S. 71 are not expected to be able to accommodate all zoned incoming Kindergarten students, and will likely have to cap their Kindergarten enrollment in 2010-2011. The opening of P.S. 290 in Q873 will alleviate overcrowding at P.S. 153 and P.S. 71 and will provide an additional option for Kindergarten students zoned to these schools.

Some speakers at the joint public hearing complained that this proposal was made too quickly; however, the conversation as to how to relieve overcrowding at P.S. 153 and P.S. 71 began with the District 24 CEC in the fall of 2009. As one commenter suggested, the option to truncate the 6th grade at P.S. 153 was discussed at a CEC meeting in the fall of 2009. This

option, however, was met with resistance. Since that time, the DOE and CEC explored various possibilities around re-zoning until landing on the option to open the new school, P.S. 290, at Q873.

With respect to comments expressing concern that the siting of an additional school in the neighborhood will reduce the quality of life of the Maspeth community due to increased street traffic and vandalism, P.S. 290 will only be temporarily sited in Q873. Students will be bused based on their address and the DOE busing guidelines. Most students will be coming from either the P.S. 153 or P.S. 71 zones. Approximately 50-75 students will be bused to Q873 in 2010-2011; approximately 125 students in 2011-2012; approximately 175 students in 2012-2013; and approximately 225 students in 2013-2014. The DOE does not expect there to be a significant increase in traffic as a result of the siting. Staggered scheduling of arrival and dismissal times for I.S. 73 and P.S. 290 will also help minimize congestion in the area. As for the comments concerning vandalism, the DOE does not anticipate that the siting of an elementary school in the building will lead to an increase in vandalism. Any reports of vandalism or graffiti in the area should be referred to the New York City Police Department.

There were also concerns raised about elementary school students mixing with high school students once the new high school in Maspeth is opened in 2012-2013 at 54-40 74th Street, which is one-half mile away from Q873. Staggered scheduling in arrival and dismissal times at the high school and elementary level as well will minimize any interactions between high school students and elementary school students.

The DOE also does not believe there will be any significant safety issues for Kindergarten students to be co-located with middle school students. There are many K-8 schools, as well as shared campuses with elementary, middle and high school level students, throughout the city. Moreover, sufficient space exists in Q873 and the main building for clear separation of the instructional spaces for the two schools. In 2010-2011, the Kindergarten sections housed in Q873 can be isolated on one floor of the building, while the few 6th grade sections from I.S. 73 remaining in Q873 would be on other floors. I.S. 73 will eventually be able to serve all of its students in the main building while P.S. 290 remains solely housed in Q873 during its incubation period, further eliminating any interactions with the elementary and middle school students. It is also worth noting that there is a direct entrance from the Q873 mini-building into the cafeteria, which would minimize the need for elementary students to walk the hallways in Q073. Finally, staggered scheduling of arrivals, dismissals, and passing periods are strategies that school leaders will be able to use to minimize safety concerns of elementary and middle school students sharing spaces in the Q073 building.

The alternatives proposed by the community to relieve overcrowding at P.S. 71 and P.S. 153 – to either use seats at P.S. 128’s annex or to open additional Kindergarten classes at P.S. 229 – are not viable. According to the October 31, 2009 Audited Register, P.S. 128 currently serves 545 students in grade K-6 and is expanding to serve grades K-8. The capacity of the main P.S. 128 building is 648, and P.S. 128 shares this space with D75 program, Q255. The P.S. 128 annex has a capacity of 147. Beginning next year, P.S. 128 will require their annex as they add grade 7 in 2010-2011, and grade 8 in 2011-2012, and there would not be space for P.S. 290 to grow there. According to the October 31, 2009 Audited Register, P.S. 229 currently serves 1,339 students in grades K-6. The capacity of the Q229 building is 1,198, which makes its current

utilization rate of 111%. There is not sufficient space for a 2 sections per grade elementary school to phase-in at the P.S. 229 building. Likewise, there is not sufficient space in the building for P.S. 229 to expand to become a middle school. Furthermore, the addition of grade 7 and grade 8 at P.S. 229 would not alleviate the overcrowding at the elementary school level.

A copy of the revised educational impact statement for this proposal can be obtained at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/BD228776-71B2-459E-93C9-BCEEE02F65F5/80480/Q873_PS290RevisedEIS_Final_33010_v2.pdf.