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

**Proposed Opening and Co-Location of
New District 75 School (75KTBD)
with 17K181 in K181
February 10, 2015**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 TRANSLATOR: Hi. Good evening. This
3 announcement is for our Spanish speakers.
4 [Speaking Spanish].

5 MR. CLARENCE ELLIS: Good evening, family
6 members and community members of PS 181. Thank
7 you for coming out to this joint public hearing
8 on the proposed opening and co-location of a new
9 site existing in our district. I'd like to just
10 honor our dais members by introducing them.
11 Estelle Aquar [phonetic], from the Office of
12 Planning and Zoning; and Mira Nyhra, principal
13 of 396; Heather Lawrence, Principal of 181;
14 Kenneth Wright, CEC member; and I'm Clarence
15 Ellis, community Superintendent of District 17.

16 I guess we'll go on to the events of the
17 evening. This is a joint public hearing of the
18 Department of Education, the Community Education
19 Counsel and School District 17 for the proposed
20 opening and co-location of a new site at the
21 existing District 75 school PS 396K in the
22 building K181 beginning in the 2015-2016 school
23 year. I am community school District 17
24 Superintendent, Clarence Ellis.

25 We've asked District 17 Community Education

1 Council and - - of PS181 and of PS396K to join
2 this public hearing. Again, I'm joined tonight
3 by Heather Lawrence, the PS181 SLTV to my right,
4 Mira Nyhra, principal and SLT member of PS396
5 and Mr. Kenneth Wright from the CEC.

6 The hearing is going to be on video--audio
7 and video recorded. The purpose of this hearing
8 is for you to provide comments about the
9 proposal. Before I describe the proposal I want
10 to make sure you're all aware of the opportunity
11 to provide your input. All those who wish to
12 speak must sign up in the speaker sign up area
13 located just outside the auditorium as you
14 entered. The sign up list will close in about
15 15 minutes. So I'm looking at around 6:35.

16 Speakers will be given the floor in the
17 order that they sign up--in the order that they
18 sign up to speak. All comments are limited to
19 two minutes at which time I will time out. Any
20 - - officials who arrive at different times
21 throughout the evening, if they wish to speak
22 we'll do our best to accommodate them at the
23 first opportune moment. Those who are here at
24 the start of the public comment segment will be
25 asked to speak first.

1 In addition, we welcome any comments and
2 feedback you may have outside of this hearing.
3 All comments submitted prior to 24 hours before
4 the Panel on Education Policy votes - - votes,
5 including comments made at this meeting. This
6 will be mentioned in the analysis of public
7 comments being published and provided to the
8 panel the evening before the panel votes. That
9 vote is scheduled for Wednesday, February 25th.

10 The email address and phone number where
11 additional comments may be made outside this
12 meeting are D17proposals@schools.nyc.gov.
13 That's D17proposals@schools.nyc.gov. The phone
14 number is 212-374-0208, 212-374-0208.

15 So we'll move on to the proposal summary.
16 D396 is an existing D75 school currently
17 servicing students in three sites--with two
18 sites in District 23 and one site at District
19 17. P181 is an existing zoned school in
20 District 17 located at building K181, serving
21 students in kindergarten through eighth grade
22 and offering - - program. The purpose of this
23 proposal is to open and co-locate a new site for
24 P396K at building K181 to be called P396K at
25 K181.

1 P396K at K181 will serve a range of
2 students across grades six through eight who are
3 classified as autistic, intellectually disabled
4 or multiply disabled under the Individualized
5 Education Program. P396K at K181 is projected
6 to serve eight sections of students in self-
7 contained sections in twelve to one to four,
8 twelve to one to one, eight to one to one or six
9 to one to one classrooms. So those are the
10 ratios of students to teachers and
11 paraprofessionals. These sets indicate a ratio
12 of students to teacher and paraprofessionals.
13 If approved, this proposal will add
14 approximately 48 to 96 District 75 self-
15 contained seats in K181 of District 75 middle
16 school students.

17 The proposal is intended to meet increased
18 demand for District 75 self-contained middle
19 school seats in District 17. The DOE is
20 proposing to utilize the excess space at K181
21 for P396 to ensure that more District 17
22 students recommended for placement in a District
23 75 school can attend school in their home
24 district.

25 Details of the proposal can be found in the

1 Educational Impact Statement, copies of which
2 are available here tonight. So, thank you.
3 Next presenter--may I have the list? Okay.
4 We're waiting for the list now. Thanks for
5 being patient.

6 Our first speaker will be Ms. Mira Lawrence.

7 MS. HEATHER LAWRENCE: Good evening
8 everyone.

9 VOICES: Good evening.

10 MS. LAWRENCE: I'm very happy to see you.
11 Those members of the 181 community, it's always
12 a joy to see you on a daily basis. Those of us
13 who are here this evening, our guests from
14 P396K, it's very, very lovely to have you here
15 with us as well. We are welcoming members of
16 the CEC. We are welcoming members from District
17 75 parent - - and we are also thankful to have
18 Ms. Claudette Azar who was just tenured.
19 Welcome. If I knew how to say that in Haitian
20 and Creole I would as well.

21 To that end, it's important that everyone
22 feel welcome here. We are a zoned school. We
23 are a zoned school that serves the community of
24 District 17. And it is important that we
25 remember that as we think about our

1 responsibility as educators. When we educate,
2 we do not discriminate against who needs our
3 services. When we educate, we make the
4 commitment to ensure and secure the futures of
5 all who attend.

6 And to that end, as members of the community
7 of District 17 there are in excess of 600
8 students who require spaces in a District 75
9 program that I feel--and in the words of my PTA
10 president during a walkthrough--I understand
11 that it would be a crime to be anything other
12 than open to all members of our community in our
13 zone that need a space.

14 It is for this reason that this community
15 had several meetings both at the school
16 leadership level, at the teacher level, at the
17 parent level and myself--at the level we are - -
18 . I've also had the opportunity to discuss what
19 it means to serve a community. Right?

20 It is very difficult to say to your
21 neighbor, leave. It is very difficult to say to
22 your neighbor we don't serve you and we're not
23 interested in being near you; and it's for that
24 reason that this school community is committed
25 to being open and responsible and are servants

1 to everyone who lives around the corner or two
2 blocks away or three blocks away.

3 It is my privilege and pleasure to work with
4 the parents and students of the current 181
5 community, which is in District 17; and it will
6 continue to be a privilege and pleasure to be of
7 service to every family that has a need in
8 District 17. The opportunities to learn and
9 grow, which at my core is what I understand we
10 do as educators, and so I'm thankful for this
11 opportunity to live what I understand my
12 responsibility is as a school leader--to learn,
13 to grow, and to model what it is to be an
14 educator; someone who is open, someone who is
15 consistent, someone who is of service to all who
16 come and have a need. That does not mean that
17 it will be easy. That does not mean that I
18 understand or expect that there will not be days
19 where the things that I have to learn will
20 stretch me or charge me. That's a lot like
21 being a principal.

22 So since I understand the expectations of
23 this new world to be identical to those that I
24 currently handle, I would again close the way
25 that I--welcome to every member of the District

1 17 community that has a need or has a child.

2 I started in the Department of Education as
3 a special education teacher. I grew in the
4 Department of Education as someone who was
5 responsible for helping a community that did not
6 have a large special education population move
7 to become better at serving a population that
8 exploded from 2% to 30%.

9 I have also had the responsibility of
10 helping new schools move into established
11 spaces. So it is for this reason that I am not
12 simply doing this as an educator but as an
13 individual who has worked throughout her years
14 in the Department to prepare spaces for people
15 who have needs, a commitment and a desire to
16 learn.

17 Thank you for those who will be partnering
18 with us as we learn and grow together. Thank
19 you to the Superintendent and to my peers on the
20 dais.

21 MR. ELLIS: Principal Nyhra.

22 MS. MIRA SCHWARTZ-NYHRA: Good evening,
23 everyone. It truly is a pleasure to be here and
24 to sit next to somebody as eloquent as Ms.
25 Lawrence. I'm very impressed and touched.

1 Thank you so much. Mr. Ellis, thank you for
2 laying the groundwork.

3 I want to be a little bit day driven for
4 just a moment and give you a little bit of
5 information. I had to actually reference my
6 numbers here on the page. Ms. Lawrence has
7 talked a lot about the community in District 17
8 and so I want to tie that back to some numbers
9 for District 75.

10 So District 75 serves students with the most
11 severe needs. And from District 17 there are
12 672 students who have been identified as needing
13 services provided in District 75. 672
14 individual students. Currently, only 173 of
15 those 672 are actually educated within the
16 confines of District 17. What does that mean?
17 I can't do the arithmetic that fast, but maybe
18 you can. It's about 500 students who actually
19 had to go on the yellow bus and travel quite a
20 distance outside of their home district to
21 access District 75 services. So I applaud the
22 idea that we are looking to move forward with
23 making more seats available closer to home for
24 those students.

25 Many of those students who would be served

1 in a twelve one four setting are what I would
2 call our most fragile and most vulnerable young
3 people. They are children who oftentimes have
4 medical needs that require their parents to rush
5 to school and they are often traveling a great
6 distance. They may go to the hospital and again
7 the parents are traveling great distances and as
8 you can imagine, that's extremely stressful.

9 So that's a big why. Why is this important
10 and why is this a really positive thing to
11 happen. I am trying to imagine some of the
12 questions or concerns that parents of the P181
13 setting may raise and I would like to hopefully
14 be able to address some of them.

15 I think sometimes there's a belief that
16 students in District 75 are the bad kids, and
17 that brings a lot of anxiety and concern and I
18 understand that. What's going to happen? Are
19 those kids going to create problems? And the
20 students at P396, again, they're among the most
21 vulnerable and the most dependent and typically
22 we do not have lots of behavioral concerns. I'm
23 not saying zero because I don't want to mislead,
24 but typically that's not a concern with our
25 P396K population.

1 Something else that sometimes is of
2 concern, people are worried that testing results
3 will mix together and cause a decline in the
4 place of 181. So two points to that. Our
5 students are almost all--probably 99% alternate
6 assessment, meaning they do not take the ELA and
7 the math. They take something called the New
8 York State Alternate Assessment. And 396 keeps
9 those scores. They don't mix with the scores
10 from 181.

11 Something else that may come up, quality
12 review, progress reports, all those metrics that
13 the Department of Ed uses to rank schools.
14 Again, those are separate for both
15 organizations. And one does not impact the
16 other, other than in the ways that I want to
17 talk about that are advantageous. I hope we're
18 not ever a burden to Ms. Lawrence. So we're not
19 coming in asking Ms. Lawrence to do yet another
20 job. I continue to be the principal and I have
21 responsibility for the unit. We have an
22 assistant principal who will supervise if not
23 every single day, many times per week and most
24 typically there is a unit coordinator who is on
25 site every day.

1 So currently we have a site at 289, which
2 is also District 17; and we have a lovely unit
3 coordinator who is there every day, or on jury
4 duty, to address the needs on a day to day
5 basis. Ms. Hansford [phonetic], who is here
6 this evening, is the assistant principal who is
7 at that site probably three to four days per
8 week. So supervision is provided from 396.

9 So I thought and I thought and I think those
10 are probably some of the concerns that might
11 come up. Some of the benefits--Ms. Lawrence was
12 so articulate, I don't know that I can say it
13 any better. But we do bring a certain level of
14 expertise that we love sharing, and we love
15 collaborating, and whatever little tiny bit of
16 resources we get, we're open to sharing.

17 My experience has been that the
18 collaboration that happens, and in particular
19 I'm thinking of our 289 site, we all benefit.
20 And I think that connects with what Ms. Lawrence
21 is saying. We grow together and we strive--we
22 have an expression at our main site reach for
23 the crest, reach for the heights. And we do
24 that all together. And so I'm excited, a little
25 bit nervous, as I'm sure you are. But I'm

1 excited. I think it's a wonderful
2 opportunity. I think it's the right thing to
3 do. And I think that's what she said. So I
4 thank you for your attention.

5 Oh, if I can just--we have some--I brought
6 some old pamphlets that talk a little bit more
7 specifically about 396 and the programs. So
8 I'll just make those available. Thank you.

9 MR. ELLIS: Thank you, Principals; and I'd
10 like to introduce Mr. Kenneth Wright from the
11 Community Education Council.

12 MR. KENNETH WRIGHT: Thank you
13 Superintendent Ellis. It's a wonderful
14 opportunity to sit on this dais with
15 Superintendent Ellis and Principal Lawrence and
16 the other Principal. I didn't hear - - tonight.
17 It's a pleasure to be here as well and this is -
18 -.

19 As a Community Education Council member, we
20 don't always get the opportunity to speak well
21 of something that's going to happen in our
22 District. We do get the opportunity but not as
23 often as we'd like. The Council members several
24 weeks ago had a discussion about District 75
25 schools co-locating in the building and we

1 didn't have everything in front of us but what
2 we did--and my colleague to my right, Ms.
3 Carter, who has more of a specialty than I do,
4 we realized we only had one D75 middle school in
5 the District. We have, by my count, about 14 to
6 18 special education students. So in making
7 that assessment, this is the proper place for a
8 D75 school. Not only are you bringing parents
9 back into the district who were traveling out,
10 but we're getting that opportunity here in
11 District 17 for autistic kids, kids with special
12 needs, kids with disabilities.

13 I believe within this immediate area, four
14 schools in this immediate area, it was about
15 13%. One of the dynamics that we found positive
16 and it's only at the discussion level how it
17 would work out and play out later is there are
18 special education students in 181. Having a D75
19 school within the same building opens the
20 opportunity to share resources, to share
21 expertise, possibly co-located classrooms where
22 those students who have a need will be met.

23 I believe in any D17 school we have a number
24 of experts and we can share that expertise,
25 whether it be a meeting room or between two

1 teachers in the hallway. So from my
2 discussion, I fully support the idea of co-
3 locating a D75 school here and that's my
4 statement. Thank you.

5 MR. ELLIS: Yes. I'd like to just
6 acknowledge one of the District administrators
7 from our principle leadership facility. That's
8 Janine Lindsey. She serves as my deputy.
9 Janine. So I'm going to also have our CEC
10 District 75 - -, Tameeka Carter, say a few
11 words.

12 MS. TAMEEKA CARTER: Yes. - - from 181.
13 Hi. I'm Tameeka Carter. Good evening, everyone.
14 Good evening parents, principals. Good evening
15 everyone. My name is Tameeka Carter. I'm the
16 IEP parent representative for District 17
17 Community Education Council.

18 I'm here on behalf of Ms. Jobe [phonetic],
19 the president. Ms. Jobe sends her regrets for
20 not being able to attend this evening. She had
21 to attend an event at her daughter's school.

22 When this proposal was shared with CEC 17,
23 CEC 17 was in attendance on the District 75 walk
24 through, SLT meeting, PS181 community meeting
25 facilitated by the DOE, and various discussions

1 regarding the proposal. We have reached out
2 to engage District 75 parent lists and attended
3 meetings with District 75 superintendent Darren
4 Heck [phonetic].

5 There is a need for a District 75 school.
6 Having a District 75 school within this
7 community will allow parents to have their
8 children attend a school within this community.
9 We realize there are two major concerns--safety
10 and enrollment. In light of this, we inquired
11 about what the capacity of the proposed District
12 75 K396 will have and we were assured that
13 enrollment would be no more than 100 students,
14 which would not impact PS181 enrollment. All
15 students will be accompanied and not pose a
16 threat.

17 MS2 and PS 289 currently have D75 schools
18 within their buildings. As to date there have
19 not been any major incidents within the two
20 buildings. If issues arise, we, the Council,
21 will be able to address them. We are also aware
22 that PS181 has space and a desire to increase
23 enrollment. There is also a plan to bring many
24 of the components of a community school into
25 this building to support this community.

1 After taking into consideration all the
2 issues and concerns, District 17 Community
3 Education Council is in support of the co-
4 location of D75 396K in the PS181 building, as a
5 model to show how two schools can work together.
6 Thank you.

7 MR. ELLIS: Wonderful. Wonderful. I'd like
8 to just call on Ms. Celia Greene [phonetic], a
9 representative from D75. Can you say a few
10 words, Ms. Greene?

11 MS. CELIA GREENE: Good evening everyone.
12 My name is Celia Greene and I am part of the
13 District 75 C1 Education Council. I have four
14 children who are on the spectrum of autism and I
15 live in this region. I have been a D75 parent
16 for 20 years and as a D75 parent I wish that
17 maybe 20 years ago or even ten years ago that
18 there was a program here at 181 because then I
19 wouldn't have had to bus my daughter at least an
20 hour away and even farther just to get the
21 education - -.

22 There are many, many kids who are my
23 neighbors, who are maybe not on the same block
24 but maybe only four blocks away or ten blocks
25 away, but they need schools nearer to them than

1 having to deal with busing and traveling for
2 an hour or two hours or three hours.

3 District 75 is a little different in that it
4 is a placement based on referrals, as opposed to
5 enrollment. So our numbers don't jump that
6 largely with effects on other schools. And even
7 if our numbers did, we would probably be
8 excited. So I'm happy to see that the 181
9 community is going to be in place for our kids
10 and I'm going to say it's about time. I am
11 really happy to hear about that. Thank you.

12 MS. NYHRA: I wanted to take an opportunity-
13 -I know I talked quite a bit but I think it
14 would be better would be to hear from one of our
15 parents and actually her son, who is a student
16 at 396. So I'd like Ms. Alsby [phonetic] and
17 Avante [phonetic] if you're not too shy.

18 MR. ALSBY: Hi. My name is Avante. I'm a
19 student at 396. I - - the hallway and the
20 people, the--I love it there - - and [background
21 noise] for me. That's how they make me - - at
22 least it may be better - - happy. Thank you.

23 MS. ALSBY: Good evening everyone. I'm the
24 PA president at PS 396 and I have to say we have
25 a saying where all children are the - - special

1 disability to go to, it makes it a better
2 place for them to learn and think better of
3 themselves. So I say that when I had my - - my
4 daughter, when she had to go to school for
5 sixth, seventh and eighth inside a regular
6 school setting for special education needs and
7 I couldn't find anywhere to help her with her
8 disabilities so she just had to stay until she
9 had to leave school. When she finally got to a
10 school, that was in the ninth grade, with
11 children all on the spectrum, autistic,
12 intellectually disabled - - and autism, but she
13 flourished immediately because everybody
14 understood what everybody needed in there as
15 opposed to her being in a class where some
16 children don't understand and she felt a little
17 left out and shy.

18 That was like Avante for the first through
19 fourth grade until the time of P396 is when he
20 started coming out, talking, being friendly, not
21 being shy. Believe me, he talk more than me.
22 He is not shy in P396 and actually he's running
23 for student council president there.

24 [Background noise] say any of this three or four
25 years ago. He was like very, very shy and that

1 school has helped him to open up with things
2 that he didn't even know he had inside him. So
3 children that want to come here will benefit
4 from having their own environment even though
5 they'll be here with other children who don't
6 understand them, which each one can teach them
7 as they are in there. They may find out oh,
8 these kids are not so bad. You're not the type
9 of children that we thought they were. I mean
10 our kids are going to help. Someone did say hi
11 to me. I do feel special today. They do talk
12 to us instead of feeling - - because of a
13 disability that they have.

14 So if they can come to this school and bring
15 our children here and everyone get together, I
16 really want that.

17 MR. WRIGHT: Thank you Avante. Thank you
18 Ms. Alsby. We're going to open up the floor to
19 public comment. First, we'll go with Ms.
20 Abigail Hanes. Ms. Abigail Hanes.

21 MS. ABIGAIL HANES: I don't think - -.

22 MR. WRIGHT: Okay. All right. We'll go
23 with Ms. Claudette Eard [phonetic].

24 MS. CLAUDETTE EARD: All right. Good
25 evening everyone. You know, I have to be honest

1 with you. I'm really excited about this.
2 I've always bragged on District 17. Celia knows
3 that. I've always talked about our goals and
4 talked about our relationships with our parent
5 leaders. So I--when I heard 181 I thought
6 great. It's just where - - needs to be and also
7 because you've worked with us closely on our
8 community town hall meetings. You're one of the
9 principals that opened up like that and did
10 that. So maybe I understand all those - - but
11 I'm very confident that this will be a good
12 relationship and I know the CEC is always here
13 to support. We know all the parent leaders in
14 District 75. They've come to the meetings.
15 We've gone back and forth. So I'm excited about
16 it and I know personally - - over there. - -
17 the council is going to have - - that we will
18 work on it together and so I am looking for this
19 to be - -. To be honest with you I really am
20 and to really be a shining star and so that's my
21 comment.

22 MR. ELLIS: Thank you. Ms. Eard is very
23 humble but she's also a former CEC president and
24 she is our Title 1 district and upper state
25 representative and - - all our DOE meetings.

1 Thank you Ms. Eard. So if we don't have any
2 other speakers--no one else signed up. Okay.
3 This is a good night. So I guess this speaker
4 list is now exhausted and again we welcome any
5 comments and feedback prior to the 24 hours
6 before the Council meeting and vote on this
7 proposal. This meeting is Wednesday, February
8 25th. Again, email address and phone number
9 where comments may be made are
10 D17proposals@schools.nyc.gov,
11 D17proposals@schools.nyc.gov and the telephone
12 number is 212-374-0208. That's 212-374-0208.
13 Thank you for your participation. Thank you
14 Principal Lawrence. Thank you Principal Nyhra.
15 Thank you Mr. Wright, Ms. Carter, - - all those,
16 Ms. Greene, Avante. Thank you all.

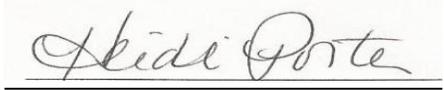
17 [END RECORDING]

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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 February 11, 2015