



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

November 3, 2011

Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, New York 10007

Re: CEC District 2 Rezoning Proposal & New Community District 4 School Openings

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) applauds the commendable work undertaken by the Department of Education's Office of Portfolio Management, but we are writing to express our concern for public school children and parents within Community District 4¹ and due to the reasons and issues raised below express our disapproval and call for the rejection of the rezoning for Chelsea.

The Office of Portfolio Management presented a draft of its rezoning proposal to the Community Education Council District 2 and members of the general public on September 22, 2010. This proposal pushes the zones northward, which in our district will primarily affect residents in the southern portion of Chelsea who currently have the choice to send their children to PS 41 or PS 3 and also residential buildings that are just east of Penn South who want to send their children to PS 11 on W. 21st Street and a portion of residents in Penn South.

During CB4's committee meeting, a group of parents in our district whose children will be impacted by the proposed rezoning attended to express their concern and opposition to the proposal. Some of the issues raised were:

- 1) The proposal demonstrates disregard of parents' current choices and comfort in their neighborhood schools. By re-zoning, the DOE is re-siting families who are content with current zoning and replacing them with families who have expressed strong opposition to enrolling their children to newly zoned schools.

¹ Our district boundaries stretch from W. 14th Street to W. 59th Street from the west side of Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River from south side of W. 59th Street to north side of W. 26th Street and west of Sixth Avenue from south side W. 26th Street to the north side of W. 14th Street.

2) The proposal has a harmful impact on schools as a community resource; these communities of families are built around their schools: the schools that their friends' children already attend and which they expect their own children to attend years down the road. Parents and schools rely on their neighbors to pick up students from school and watch them on the playground. Families depend on groups of children to walk to-and-from school together to ensure safety. When neighbors, buildings, and blocks are split, parents and the school community cannot rely on previous forms of protection and security. By re-zoning our district both our schools and community networks are disrupted.

3) The DOE has not provided adequate answers regarding the quality of the data driving the redistricting plan at any of the public hearings. Community School District 2 faces tremendous capacity issues and it is unclear if teachers, aides, security officers and their needs were taken into account in the written proposal or addressed by senior DOE Officials. Public hearings are the legal venue by which parents and community members receive information we cannot support the DOE's re-zoning proposal without sufficient information re school age population projections.

4) The proposal uses a Student Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization formula that arguably contributes to the overcrowding problem in District 2; a problem that can only be addressed through adding new seats, teachers, and staff.

5) The Office of Portfolio Management cited the opening of two new elementary schools, 393 East 91st Street in 2012 and Peck Slip which will begin incubating in lower Manhattan in 2012 and slated to open in 2015. Logically, if the opening of two new elementary schools before 2015 warrants the redistricting of Community Education District Council 2 at this time, it would be fair to presume that the addition of the Foundling School at 17th Street & 6th Avenue slated to open in 2014 and the new proposed school at the current Western Rail Yard site should also be included in the Office for Portfolio Management's draft rezoning proposal. Manhattan Community Board 4 respectfully poses two questions:

- How will the addition of 560 new elementary seats in 2014 at the school being constructed at the former Foundling Hospital site affect the current CEC District 2 rezoning proposal?

- How will the addition of 420 new elementary seats and 330 new intermediary seats at the proposed school slated for 2017-2019 at the Western Rail Yard site affect the current CEC District 2 rezoning proposal?

Community Board 4 is not alone with its concerns; this proposal has been opposed by parents and community leaders in Tribeca, the Village, and Chelsea, including Community Boards 1, 2, 5 and 6.

We encourage CEC2D to reject the proposal in Chelsea and for DOE to work with us and all the stakeholders in a dialogue to ensure that every child has access to a quality education and a well run and staffed school.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson
Chair

[signed 11/3/11]
Jesse Campoamor
Co-Chair
Quality of Life Committee

[signed 11/3/11]
David Pincus
Co-Chair
Quality of Life Committee

cc: Superintendent Mariano Guzman
Shino Tanikawa, Community Education Council District 2
Speaker Christine Quinn
NYS Senator Thomas Duane
NYS Assemblymember Gottfried
M.B.P. Scott Stringer