

CB9 Manhattan  
Youth Education and Youth Committee Minutes  
565 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York NY 10027

December 13, 2006

Meeting opened at 6:40 PM

**Present**

Romana Jennett Co Chair  
Barbara Marshall Co Chair  
Okopti Sowah  
Carlotta Damanda  
Sandra Carter

**Excused**

Michel Jewel  
Margaret Jacobs

**Absent**

Janet Ramon  
Winston Magette

**City College** Mrs. Karen Witherspoon from City College New Director of Urban and Governmental Affairs came to introduce herself to CB 9 and to let us know she will be attending all of our future committee meetings. Next month Mrs. Witherspoon will bring CB9 up to date as to what City College has been doing and the plans for the future. For the next meeting she should have the new brochure.

**Columbia University** Ms. Roxie R. Smith Vice Provost came to the committee to explain programs available within **Community service A Directory of Columbia University Programs and Partnerships in Upper Manhattan** but was unable to any of the questions put to her by the committee she referred to \* Mr. Maldonado the newly hired principle of the new school for Columbia. Also at this meeting

Ms. Orit Dawish **Project Coordinator Office of Government and Community Affairs** came to bring The School at Columbia on West 110 Street and Broadway but was also unable to answer questions put to her about the program. Her reply was this is not her department and \*Mr. Maldonado can answer these questions.

\***Mr. José G. Maldonado** Principle and Project Director of Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science & Engineering (new school) at Columbia was not on the agenda to speak but he showed up at the request of Ms. Roxie R. Smith, to explain the programs being presented.

**PS 186 Boys and Girls Club.** Ms. Shirley Lewis came to have the Education component explained by one of her Directors. He had an emergency and was unable to attend Ms. Lewis went over the programs After School, summer reading Camp, Project Learn, Family plus Program and Project 2009. Ms. Lewis will come back in January and have the project manager and he will be able to give presentation and answer questions.

## **Columbia University Teachers College**

Last month the Ms. Carmen Perez (Our thanks to Carmen for bringing this to our attention) of Assemblyman Keith Wright's office brought to the attention of CB9 P.S. 36 on West 123 Street and Amsterdam Avenue. In addition we must thank Keith Mitchell for his assistance.

Columbia University Teachers College is going to insert a middle school into their school with Pre Elementary School Pre-K to 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade with Junior High Students Grades 6-12.

The Parent Teachers Association sent CB9 a letter (attached) this letter addresses all the concerns of the Parents and Teachers of PS 36.

Dear Community Members and Leaders,

Recently the community members of Public School 36 were informed that the Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science and Engineering will be moving into the P.S. 36 facility in the fall of 2007. The Columbia Secondary School is stated to be a 6<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school for "talented" students. It will open with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade containing 100 plus students then each year add a grade until it reaches her full enrollment capacity at 650 students. The members of the P.S. 36 community including our students, parents, alumni, faculty and staff members, and the community at large are extremely concerned about the new school moving into our early childhood facility. We feel that the addition of the Columbia Secondary School would be at the detriment of our successful community school and would eventually lead to P.S. 36's demise.

P.S. 36 are an early childhood school that serves children aged three through eight. The facility at P.S. 36 was constructed in 1965, and has been serving the community for the past 41 years. The original design was intended for small children less than 4-feet tall, and each classroom ideally not exceeding fifteen students. Each classroom is outfitted with a bathroom and an age appropriate toilet, sink and water fountain. The classrooms square footage's are all smaller than the more traditional size classrooms, and do not have built in closets for students coats, book bags, etc. Therefore each classroom has a set of age/height appropriate cubbies for such belongings. P.S. 36, a school with several wings instead of the more traditional floors going from level 1 to 4, have many exits and entry points. Two of these points lead to outside age appropriate parks for our students. Other exits lead to the veranda, our self made multi-purpose area. In support of all these things and many others, the PS 36 facility is an ideal setting for the young child and offers a secure environment within the classroom, play spaces and general movement throughout the building.

Having said that, the building itself is an inappropriate setting for middle and high school students. The classrooms are not large enough, there is no

were not a party and over which we have no authority."

In a way I feel sorry for Columbia; they probably thought they'd gain good will for their expansion plans by starting a new public school and counted on DOE to make the proper interim arrangements, but clearly they didn't do their homework.

A quick news search about the controversies that erupted around NEST and PS 154 last year when DOE tried to put charter schools into their buildings should have told them what to expect.

I was struck by Tolbert saying that 7 selective magnet schools are currently planned for minority neighborhoods, yet as far as I know, there is no mention of this in capital plan. In fact, there is not a single new HS in the capital plan for anywhere in Manhattan.

Instead, DOE will probably continue to take over existing school buildings as they are currently doing; w/ no consultation of parents or staff in those schools, causing resentment and increased overcrowding. We've had five years of this nonsense, and they continue on the same track, with no thought of the consequences. See also mention of PS 109 sitting empty below; it would be great if community members of CB 11 would network w/ CB9, the City Council, the CECs and the MBP's office on this issue. PS 109 would be an ideal site for one or more of these new schools.

Below John's record of events there are additional news stories from the NY Sun and the Columbia Spectator about last night's meeting?

#### PS 36 Special Hearing

Here is the gist of last night's special CB 9 Hearing on the Proposed Creation of a Columbia Magnet Secondary School to be Temporarily Housed in PS 36

Because it was a hearing from subcommittee rather than a regular CB meeting, CB President, Jordi Reyes-Montblanc, did not facilitate and the woman who did, the Chair of their Youth, Education, and Libraries Subcommittee, was very weak-resulting in poor process throughout -people constantly interrupting each other and a lack of decorum overall;

The DOE had three reps in attendance-Jami Bernard, Terrence Tolbert, and the prospective principal of this new school-Maldonado (I didn't catch his first name) plus Gale Reeves, the regional superintendent. Bernard, Maldonado, and Reeves were respectful of the concerns of the parents and tried to engage. Tolbert, on the other hand, was blatantly defensive and antagonistic often refusing to answer questions and adopting a rather curt tone throughout.

\* The DOE's official position:

1) This is not a Columbia project-Columbia is "merely" a DOE "partner" in the developing the academic component of the school. It will be a DOE school specializing math, science and engineering, and will give "first priority" to students who live above 96th Street. Maldonado said this school was set up for the students of this community and was developed on the premise and desire for more "communities of color" to have access to accelerated academic programs

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## Columbia Faces Two-Front Opposition to Expansion Plans

By Staff Reporter of the Sun  
December 7, 2006

Parents fighting a plan to put a Columbia University  [<http://www.nysun.com/related\\_results.php?term=Columbia+University>](http://www.nysun.com/related_results.php?term=Columbia+University) - affiliated secondary school in the same building as a Harlem elementary school have joined forces with residents battling a university plan to expand its campus farther north.

At a Community Board 9 meeting last night, parents from P.S. 36 were supported by a contingent of community activists fighting Columbia University's proposed expansion into Manhattanville as they fired angry questions at Department of Education

[<http://www.nysun.com/related\\_results.php?term=U.S.+Department+of+Education>](http://www.nysun.com/related_results.php?term=U.S.+Department+of+Education) officials about the plans to temporarily house the new school inside the elementary school. The department, which will finance and oversee the Columbia Secondary School of Math, Science, and Engineering due to open, next year, announced last month it is considering the elementary school, which is next door to the university, as a temporary location. Department officials have emphasized that the decision is not final, but parents were skeptical.

"Stop trying to snowball us and give us a clearly defined answer," one P.S. 36 parent said before storming out of the raucous meeting.

Part of the reason for calling the meeting was to push the department to include parent input and allow the board to learn more about the plan, the chairman of Community Board 9, George Reyes-Montblanc, who has been a leader in opposing the university's Manhattanville expansion, said.

"The fact that the DOE didn't consult us really bothers me," he said. "We're not here to crucify anything, we're just here to find out what's going on."

Parents have said it would be inappropriate to put a secondary school inside P.S. 36, which serves 3- to 8- year-olds. The school is too small, they say, with toilets outfitted for smaller-size people and a low-ceilinged cafeteria that triples as a gym and an auditorium.

The principal of the new school, Jose Maldonado, addressed P.S. 36 parents for the first time, apologizing for not involving the community in earlier planning stages for the secondary school and assuring them that the school would be representative of the community.

Eventually, the school will be housed on land provided by Columbia University. Its expected location at 125th Street and Broadway is currently home of a McDonald's <[http://www.nysun.com/related\\_results.php?term=McDonald's+Corporation](http://www.nysun.com/related_results.php?term=McDonald's+Corporation)> and the corner of a 17-acre area of Manhattanville the university is eyeing for an additional campus.

The zoning change needed to build the school there must first be approved by Community Board 9.

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Parents, DOE Clash At Hearing on P.S. 36

Secondary School Plan Debated at CB9

Posted: 12/7/06

Parents clashed with representatives of the Department of Education at a hearing Wednesday night over the department's plan to locate the Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science and Engineering at P.S. 36.

The secondary school, a public magnet which will be run collaboratively by DOE and Columbia, is slated to open next fall. It will eventually be housed in its own building on the University's proposed Manhattanville campus. Until that building is ready, DOE has proposed putting the school at P.S. 36, an early childhood school on Morningside Drive. Parents have strenuously objected to the plan, saying that mixing middle school students with P.S. 36's young population is unsafe and will overcrowd the school.

Wednesday's hearing, held by Community Board 9, began on a contentious note as parent Cedric Flemming rose to demand concrete information. "Don't snowball us," he said, "Let us know what the deal is so we know what to do with our children. ... If there's nothing we can do to stop it, I'll go home."

As Jemina Bernard of the DOE's new schools office said that DOE was still evaluating the feasibility of the plan, Flemming said, "Same bullshit," and left the meeting.

"I've seen plenty of information and documentation to prove that putting the school there will hurt the school," said parent Christina Heath. "Everybody is saying we don't want it. Why would you still go ahead with it?"

Bernard said that DOE felt it was important to open the school before its

permanent building was ready, and that P.S. 36 was the only feasible location they had found. "The demand for this kind of high quality, high caliber [school] starting in the sixth grade was so high that we thought it in the best interest of this community to open the school sooner rather than later."

But attendees continued to criticize what they perceived as the department's indifference to their feelings on the issue. "If a parent says to you that they don't want their children with older children in a school that was designed to be on a community model, and that it will destroy the work that has already been done, that has to be factored into the equation somehow," said CB9 member Dr. Vicky Gholson, "Parents want to expand the existing school. ... Why is the Department of Education not expanding the existing school?"

"I probably made mistakes in not reaching out to the community as soon as I should have," said the secondary school's principal Jose Maldonado. "I see the combination of the sixth and seventh graders with the little kids as having possibly very positive effects," he said, adding that he hoped to send his own 2 year old to P.S. 36.

Columbia declined to attend the meeting. Provost Alan Brinkley wrote in an e-mail to CB9 chair Jordi Reyes-Montblanc that "we feel it inappropriate for us to participate in a discussion of this decision, to which we were not a party and over which we have no authority."

University President Lee Bollinger said in an interview earlier this week that despite the dispute over the site, he was still pleased about Columbia's involvement in the project. "There are bound to be controversies," he said. "I take the view that if you have a fundamentally good idea, over time you will work through all these things and you will end up with a better world. So I don't regret for a second agreeing to work with the city on this."

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We can attach many statistics and other information but, The bottom line is the Parents, Teachers and the Community at large do not want this project to proceed  
The Committee is presenting a Resolution tonight that we hope will stop Columbia and DOE

Respectfully Submitted B.A. Marshall Co-Chair Youth Education & Libraries  
Committee