



The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park
Regent Square Community Meeting #2
February 24, 2010

Notes from Questions/ Answer portion:

(bold typeface indicates questions and comments from the community)

The below represents a capture of the discussions to the best of the ability of Rothschild Doyno Collaborative. Please forward any comments or revisions to geoffc@rdcollab.com

1. What is the relationship between RSCA and the school?

RSCA: We are hosting this meeting between the school and the community, but have not taken any position on the project.

2. What is the current membership of the RSCA?

RSCA: We are currently at roughly 10% of the overall residents.

3. Will the addition require a variance for height?

No. It will fall below the 40' height required by zoning.

4. What is the current percentage of building to site?

We have not calculated those numbers, but we will get back to you with them.

5. How was the decision made to send all traffic down LaClair? Did the "squeaky wheel get oiled" when traffic moved from Milton to LaClair?

We worked with the community at the time to come up with the new traffic plan. The plan was trying to come up with a one way loop, and LaClair was a good option to spread out the traffic. Additionally, Milton residents had experienced parking and traffic problems, so the plan helped redirect these.

6. With the growth of the school, won't visitor parking also have to expand?

Yes, to some extent. The formalization at the Biddle Lot is an attempt to help secure more spaces.

7. Did you get a control case for traffic when the school was not in session?

Not yet. We wouldn't have the opportunity until the summer.

8. Was there a strong correspondence between the automatic traffic recorders and the hand counts?

Yes.

9. Have you ever done a post traffic study to look at the accuracy of your projections?

Yes; we do this on a number of projects. We are currently conducting a post-occupancy evaluation at the Rivers Casino as a condition of the building's use.

10. Can we talk about conditions before entering the city process?

We can discuss conditions at any time.

11. What happens if the school elects not to fulfill any of the conditions of its use?

City Planning: The school can be fined.

12. If the community would like to get together and discuss possible conditions, could (City Planning) be a resource at that meeting?

City Planning: Of course.

13. What is the process to get a condition waived?

City Planning: The project would have to go back through the conditional use process.

14. Has the traffic study considered the impact of busses on Braddock?

The impact would be negligible, since traffic can continue to pass along side it.

15. Has the school considered a later start, so that it doesn't overlap with resident commutes and other school starts?

We will look at that as we move forward.

16. School parent: During the first year, the bus routes were extraordinarily long and inefficient, and as a result, many kids were driven. They have improved in the second year of the school.

17. Could you make it a condition to take the bus?

We can look at options, but we cannot mandate how students arrive.

18. How many trips will the shuttle make in the morning? Will there be after school activities?

Approximately 2-3 trips. The shuttle will be challenging for the staff, but they are willing to make it work for the benefit of the neighborhood and school. We haven't gotten to a finer level of detail yet, but will as we move forward.

19. When, in the city process, will we have an opportunity to ask for conditions?

City Planning: There will be opportunities at the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Planning Commission, and at City Council.

20. What are the criteria for a variance?

The Owner must prove a hardship from the site.

21. What are the variances here?

There are two: We would need a variance to modify the rear setback along the park, and a small area at the end of Milton.

Further questions for City of Pittsburgh Planning can be directed to:
Jason Kambitsis, Senior Planner, Department of City Planning

22. How is the project funded?

Imagine schools operates the building, works with the ECS Board, and looks for third party funding. The projects will be financed by a third party under a long term lease. The project works essentially "like a mortgage." Revenue: the school gets paid per students. There will not be facility financing that requires additional public sources (only the per student revenue we already get will be used to pay the lease payment.). The idea behind a school charter is to encourage success, its "market-based". If the school is not successful, it will not cover its costs.

23. Adding 300 students is detrimental; it will cause too much congestion, its too much! Frick Park is a public park or your classroom, it can't be both.

24. I feel deceived; I helped get petitions for the original school but I didn't know that there were plans to make it bigger. I also have concern over a 40' tall building 5' from the property line; I would like to see it stay within the setbacks.

I support the school, but feel deceived. The school size was known when ECS moved in.

We have done some research to try to determine where this misunderstanding originated. Our charter contemplates the eventual need to expand either on site or offsite. However, at the time that supporters were gathering petition signatures supporting the school, our best guess is that the potential for expansion wasn't something on anyone's radar. The concern of the moment was (1) getting the charter approved and (2) getting enough applicants (students) for the school for it to work economically. In today's environment, with great success and long waiting lists, it is hard to remember that there was a time when we weren't sure if we would even get enough students to pay the bills.

25. What percentage of children that attend are from the neighborhood? Can or would they get preference?

A predominant amount come from the East End. The exact numbers of the neighborhood depend on where the neighborhood is defined. Attendance is like any other magnet school, and works like a lottery system. We are not allowed to give preference to a specific neighborhood.

26. Has any consideration been into the Park Place school?

It is currently occupied as residences. We have been considering it, but aren't sure whether a transaction there would be feasible.

27. Will there be a problem with water lines? Breaking lines are a real issue in Regent Square.

We haven't reviewed them yet, but will work with PWSA, and will focus on Henrietta as well.

28. Describe the construction process in detail

It will be a "normal" construction for this size and scope. Work hours will be established; the City of Pittsburgh currently defines 7am – 6pm. We will have designated groupings to create a safe route. There will be concrete and dump trucks onsite, but not contractor parking. Area will be secure (fenced). We will try our best to control noise. There will be cranes during steel erection – maybe 3 days for each level. Once the building is fully enclosed, the noise levels will go down during the interior work. There will be controlled deliveries. One of the possible conditions would be periodic meetings with construction team.

29. Are you committed to leaving the area of Frick Park directly adjacent to the school as passive recreation (no playground)? Is the school committed to not "developing" the park? Will you be scheduling activities in the area of Frick Park directly adjacent to the school during the day?

This is City Parks property, and we have no rights over it. It will remain as is unless City Parks decides to change it. We can't commit to never supporting development of the park, because of school's connection to the park. Part of the ECS program is to use Frick Park. If needed, we can work with the neighborhood to schedule the use of the area.

30. Has a compromise been brought up? What about two classrooms per grade? What about building next to other Parks?

Frick is the best fit – as the “wild park” in the City, it best fits our mission. The “walkability” of the park is critical in its use.

31. Have you looked at the Center for Creative Play?

The building is not within city limits, and outside the charter.

32. During the construction, will the residents be able to access Braddock Trail through the area of Frick Park directly adjacent to the school?

Yes.

33. We're concerned over the impact of construction and traffic on streets and waterlines., and about increasing the carbon footprint of Regent Square.

34. Do charter schools receive feeder patterns?

We are more magnet-like, and cannot establish feeder patterns. We give preference to city students. Feeder discussions would be through the Pittsburgh Public School Board.

35. The Colfax expansion took a year longer than proposed. As a charter school, will you need the same approval process that they did?

No.

36. We haven't had traffic issues as a resident, except for a recent issue with plowed streets and busses?

We're aware of the issue, and have since resolved it. It was caused by the conditions of the streets due to the heavy snowfall.

37. How many additional students will there be?

We will grow from 320 students to 600.

38. How many parking spaces are you creating?

We are adding eighty at another site, to be shuttled in. There may also be up to twelve off-iste spots in a shared arrangement with City Parks.

39. Have you considered changing the access for the school (to the north)?

We haven't, but it would be impractical as a dead-end lot. We will look into that.

40. Will the addition be LEED certified?

The addition will be LEED silver.

41. Parking can be tricky (especially at the corner of LaClair and Henrietta).

42. Is there any information of the impact of a project on property values?

We are not aware of any. Other city schools that have expanded might be a good precedent.

43. Are there any plans for the memorial across Milton?

It will remain untouched (unless we can help to enhance it).

44. Are there any plans for the Memorial fund raised in the paper?

This fund is operated by Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy in memorial of two children, one of which was also a student at the school. Questions should be directed to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy - we can get a contact. They are very early in the process of determining what happens with this fund.

45. We like the physical “space” of Regent Square. As city lines break, brick roads are replaced with asphalt. I would like to urge a condition that brick roads be maintained when repair needed.

46. As a building owner, I can say that the school has become a draw for potential residents. We should look at the role of the school in a larger context, and consider the global and future impact.

47. I am concerned over safety in crossing Braddock. Consider adding a crossing light.

48. Is this an all or nothing proposition? If the project cannot move forward, what is your thought process?

If it was denied, we would be looking at alternatives. We want to service the students – and would like to fully understand the reasons.

49. Did the school plan to add on from the beginning?

Can only answer as principal. From the initial charter, the school needed to expand onsite or move to another school.

50. Discuss the impact of enrollment policies on the future student make-up.

The initial year was 63 - 64% Pittsburgh residents. Enrollment preference is given first to siblings, then city residents. If the pattern remains intact, the percentage would become greater. In six years it might be predominantly Pittsburgh residents.

51. In the initial meeting you stated that the building will be built on top of playground asphalt space. Has anything changed?

We continue to plan on using Frick Park (the playground at Forbes and Braddock), and the space on the addition.

52. Would not like to hear the phrase “Turtle Park” anymore. It is part of Frick Park. I am seeing a progress of the school into the park; an “annexation” of the park. I do not want to see kids in the park.

53. How much of the park will be impacted by construction?

None – its not our land.

RSCA: Our website is at: <http://www.regentsquare-rsca.org>

We will upload this presentation and these questions. We will also make efforts to highlight these links.