

Community Education Council 31 Meeting

**CALENDAR
MINUTES**

SEPTEMBER 12, 2011

7:30 PM

**PETRIDES COMPLEX
BUILDING A, ROOM 118A
715 OCEAN TERRACE
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10301**

September 12, 2011 Calendar Meeting Minutes (attached to October 3, 2011 Calendar Meeting Notice)
An audio-taped record of all CEC Meetings is available for review under Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) procedures.

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| TYPE OF MEETING | Calendar Meeting |
| FACILITATOR | Sam T. Pirozzolo, President |
| NOTE TAKER | Kathy Baldassano, Administrative Assistant |
| ATTENDEES | Steven Beck; Peter Calandrella; *Tamica Fairley; Ting Lei; *Franca Okeiche; Michael Reilly; Frank Squicciarini – Erminia Claudio, Community Superintendent, District 31 |
| SPECIAL GUESTS | Nicole Malliotakis, Assemblywoman, 60th District; John Grassadonio, DoE Student Suspensions Director, District 31; Drew Patterson, DoE Office of Portfolio Management; Thomas Taratko, Executive Director, DoE Office of Space Planning |
| ABSENT | Rhonda Whitfield *Note: Tamica Fairley and Franca Okeiche exited the meeting before adjournment; they were not present when voting took place on resolution. |
| APPROVAL OF MINUTES | Minutes of July 11, 2011 APPROVED as written. |

As there was no objection to the content of the minutes as submitted, the Business Meeting minutes of July 11, 2011 were accepted by general & unanimous consent of the Council. (Note: There are no minutes from the August 1, 2011 CEC Meetings because quorum was not met.)

LISTED SPEAKERS SESSION

DINA TUSH (Parent) spoke about support for the "Jessica Tush Act" (NYS Assembly Bill #A04596) named for her daughter who was murdered in April 2008 by an ex-boyfriend. Mrs. Tush wants to start a letter writing campaign to NYS legislators to pass this educational law, which would provide NYS schools with a curriculum on dating abuse and domestic violence for grades 7-12 and a curriculum on respect and self-esteem for grades K-6. She is also proposing a "purple ribbon" campaign for greater awareness of the problem. October is Domestic Violence Month; teen dating violence is the precursor of domestic violence. Another law being considered is the "Danielle DiMedici and Jessica Tush Act" (NYS Assembly Bill #A05396A), named for 2 domestic violence victims, which would establish a statewide registry for domestic violence offenders, accessible by civilians as well as law enforcement, similar to the existing sex offender registry.

MARK DAVINO (PTA President, PS 8) said that his school lost teachers due to layoffs and his PTA started a campaign to get the teachers restored, even though the parents were told that nothing could be done. Parents should be aware that they can work together and change things for the better. Politicians need to know that parents are really the ones with the power to make changes in our schools.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – SAM PIROZZOLO

- Mr. Pirozzolo introduced NYS Assemblywoman **Nicole Malliotakis** who spoke about a letter she wrote to Chancellor Walcott, pointing out that the borough of Staten Island is unique in both geography and infrastructure, with very limited access to public transportation, and proposing that DoE issue school bus variances to students (otherwise ineligible) who need to cross a road of four lanes or more to reach the closest MTA bus stop. Ms. Malliotakis points out that DoE is already paying for buses that contain empty seats and that these students could fill those seats without any additional cost. It is estimated that approximately 1,500 Staten Island students would qualify under this proposal. The letter was signed by 8 Staten Island elected officials and CEC 31's President.
- **Greg Liss, representing Assemblyman Michael Cusick** spoke about a bill to be introduced in the NYS Assembly (Bill #A08580) that would allow school principals to determine the number of unoccupied school bus seats, and ask DoE to make those seats available to students otherwise ineligible for school bus service. A selection system would be determined by DoE and no additional drop-off or pick-up stops would be made.
- Mr. Pirozzolo encouraged audience members to write a letter of support for "Aniya's Law" to the NYS legislators and Sheldon Silver. A letter template is posted on the CEC 31 website at www.cec31.org for parents to print out, sign and send to Albany. Discussion followed regarding Mayor Bloomberg's responsibility to prevent any more tragic deaths due to lack of school buses. Many state legislators support "Aniya's Law", but we did hear from one Assemblyman who does not. Mr. Reilly read an e-mail from NYS Assemblyman Joel M. Miller, 102nd District (upstate NY) who said if "Aniya's Law" comes up for a vote he will be voting against it because he attended NYC public schools and walked long distances to get to and from school. He believes there "is no need for most busing." Mr. Reilly said that Mr. Miller is being hypercritical because in Mr. Miller's district, all students receive free school busing, even pre-K students and nursery school students. Audience members were encouraged to call or write to Assemblyman Miller regarding his stance on this issue.
- On September 14th the **Panel on Educational Policy meeting** will be held in the Petrides School auditorium, here on Staten Island. We hope that parents will attend and speak out on the issue of school busing. Mr. Pirozzolo said that we need to let everyone who wants to be the next NYC Mayor know that Staten Island parents are very concerned about restoring school bus eligibility to students.
- Mr. Pirozzolo introduced the following DoE staff: **John Grassadonio, Drew Patterson** and **Thomas Taratko** who spoke about the DoE proposal to site an **Alternative Learning Center (ALC)** on the Petrides Campus in Building A. An alternative learning center is a program where students who are suspended from school attend in order to receive academic, social and emotional support to prepare them for a return to the school from which they are suspended. Students are between the ages of 12-16 years old; ALC centers are used for students who have been found guilty of a Level 4 or Level 5 infraction of the DoE Discipline Code. DoE claims that ALC students would not "technically" be co-located with Petrides students since they would be housed in Building A, which is an administrative building and not a school building. The presentation was followed by a question & answer session, in which parents in the audience indicated their feelings about the proposal, and asked about: security for the ALC students; lack of public bus availability; concerns that ALC students might linger on the Petrides grounds or that the ALC students might return to the Petrides Campus after dismissal; that ALC students represent a potential danger to the Petrides students; if DoE had already made the decision to site the ALC program at Petrides. Parents were told that it was already decided, is currently in the design stage and could be operating in about 30 days. The audience members reacted with anger and dismay at this news and many said that they would continue to fight this. Mr. Pirozzolo said that since DoE claims that this would not "technically" be a co-location with the Petrides School, DoE did not feel obligated to notify parents or get public feedback; however we do not feel that we received any answers and we don't want this plan to go forward. He added that a further conversation needs to happen between DoE and parents on this issue. Parents are encouraged to attend the PEP meeting at Petrides on 09/14.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – ERMINIA CLAUDIO

- Superintendent Claudio said that many teachers have been excessed, school principals and the superintendent do not make the decisions about excessing teachers, excessing is a provision of the UFT contract; excessed staff is assigned to the **Absent Teacher Reserve Pool** (ATR Pool). PS 6 lost 8 teachers.
- There are **three new principals** in our district: PS 54 (Karen La Rosa); IS 34 (John Boyle) and IS 61 (Susan Tronolone). There are also some CFN network changes.
- All of our networks are making the attempt to roll out the **Common Core Standards (CCS)**; there is a wealth of material available online about the CCS. The NYS Commissioner of Education will be at the October 3rd CEC meeting to discuss Common Core Standards.
- Summer school was well attended and very successful; only 15% of summer school students were not promoted into the next grade.
- The **"Contracts for Excellence"** public hearings will be held in October or November. Details will be forthcoming.

RESOLUTION #69 - CEC 31 REQUESTS THE NYS LEGISLATURE AND NYC COUNCIL AMEND STATE AND CITY TRAFFIC LAWS TO PROHIBIT U-TURNS IN SCHOOL ZONES AND U-TURNS TO AVOID A STOPPED SCHOOL BUS

WHEREAS, hazardous traffic conditions near schools have increased at an alarming rate and proactive measures need to be taken to prevent fatal accidents for the safety of our children; and

WHEREAS, Currently NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (Article 1, Section 105) - Business District defines a business district as *"The territory contiguous to and including a highway when within any six hundred feet along such highway there are buildings in use for business or industrial purposes, including but not limited to hotels, banks, or office buildings, railroad stations, and public buildings, which occupy at least three hundred feet of frontage on one side or three hundred feet collectively on both sides of the highway"*.

Community Education Council 31 (CEC 31) recommends amending this NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (Article 1, Section 105) - Business District - to specifically include buildings which are primarily utilized as schools (both public and private); and

WHEREAS, NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (Section 1161) - U-Turns in Certain Areas Prohibited is defined as *"No motor vehicle shall make a U-Turn upon any curve, or upon the approach to, or near the crest of a grade, where such motor vehicle cannot be seen by the driver of any other motor vehicle approaching from either direction within five hundred feet"*;

CEC 31 recommends the following addendum to this NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (Section 1161):

- a) No motor vehicle shall make a U-Turn within 1000 feet of a building that is primarily utilized as a school (both public and private).
- b) No motor vehicle shall make a U-Turn to avoid a stopped school bus with flashing lights and stop arms extended when discharging or loading passengers, regardless of location; and

WHEREAS, NYC Traffic Rules and Regulations (Section 4-05[b]) - Limitations on Turning Around, is defined as

- 1) The operator of any vehicle shall not make a U-Turn upon any street in a business district, as defined in Section 105 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law.
- 2) The operator of a vehicle shall not make a U-turn upon any street outside a business district unless such turn is made without interfering with the right of way of any vehicle or pedestrian;

CEC 31 recommends the following addendum to NYC Traffic Rules and Regulations (Section 4-05[b]):

- 3) The operator of a vehicle shall not make a U-Turn within 1000 feet of a building that is primarily utilized as a school (both public and private).
- 4) The operator of a vehicle shall not make a U-Turn to avoid a stopped school bus with flashing lights and stop arms extended while discharging or loading passengers regardless of location; and **therefore be it**

RESOLVED, Community Education Council 31 recommends the New York State Senate and Assembly amend NYS Vehicle and Traffic Laws to prohibit U-Turns within 1000 feet of a building primarily utilized as a public or private school and prohibit U-Turns as a way for an automobile driver to avoid a stopped school bus loading or discharging passengers on all roads and to mandate a penalty upon conviction of offense – 2 points on Driver's License; and **be it**

FURTHER RESOLVED, Community Education Council 31 recommends that the City Council amend NYC Traffic Rules and Regulations to prohibit U-Turns within 1000 feet of a building primarily utilized as a public or private school and prohibit U-Turns as a way for an automobile to avoid a stopped school bus loading or discharging passengers on all roads and to mandate a penalty upon conviction of offense – 2 points on Driver's License.

There were no persons wishing to speaker to Resolution #69.

MOTION was made by Mr. Squicciarini; 2nd by Mr. Calandrella to approve Resolution #69. **APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY** by roll call vote of all members present: **6 YES; 0 NO** (Absent for vote: Fairley, Okeiche, Whitfield). **RESOLUTION PASSES.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS - COUNCIL MEMBERS

There were no committee reports.

OPEN AGENDA/ SPEAKERS

LORETTA PRISCO (Retired Teacher) spoke about the emphasis on test scores which results in viewing some students as liabilities, not as children who can be a challenge to teach; it also leads to cheating; in addition, teachers will not emphasize subjects that are not tested. She asked the Council members to come out against evaluating teachers based on test scores.

LAURA CAVALLERI (Parent) said that parents hear that 40% of students who have learning disabilities drop out of school early; 60% of prisoners and 85% of juvenile offenders have reading problems; she believes that we need to identify and help the ALC students who may have learning disabilities.

ED JOSEY (President, Staten Island Chapter of NAACP) said his organization fully supports the passage of "Aniya's Law" and that NAACP members are writing to Sheldon Silver and the NYS legislators asking for their support for "Aniya's Law". Mr. Pirozzolo thanked him.

CEC Member Frank Squicciarini said that the CEC was able to get school bus service restored to several PS 29 students based on an error made by the DOE Office of Pupil Transportation in measuring the distance from the students' homes to their school; he reminded all parents of students who receive denial of bus service (due to distance measurement) to Mapquest the distance and appeal the OPT decision if Mapquest.com indicates that the distance requirement is met.

ADJOURNMENT Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

CALSEP11 SUBMITTED BY KATHY BALDASSANO, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, CEC 31