Public Hearing Summary

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<th>Charter School:</th>
<th>DREAM Charter School Mott Haven</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Date:</td>
<td>March 28, 2019</td>
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<td>Hearing Location:</td>
<td>Building X151, 250 East 156th Street, Bronx, NY (CSD 7)</td>
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<td>Start Time</td>
<td>6:03 p.m.</td>
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<td>End Time</td>
<td>7:06 p.m.</td>
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**Background:**

The New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) proposes to temporarily co-locate Kindergarten of DREAM Charter School Mott Haven (“DREAM Mott Haven”) in part of Building X151 (“X151”) beginning in the 2019-20 school year. X151 is located at 250 East 156th Street, Bronx, NY in New York City Community School District (“CSD”) 7.

DREAM Mott Haven would be temporarily co-located with P.S./M.S. 31 The William Lloyd Garrison School (“P.S./M.S. 31”), a district school serving students in grades K-8 and in 3-K and pre-Kindergarten programs, J.H.S. 151 Lou Gehrig (“J.H.S. 151”), a district school serving students in grades 6-8, and KIPP Academy Charter School (“KIPP Academy”), a charter school authorized by the NYC Schools Chancellor and serving students in grades 5-8. X151 also houses the community based organizations (“CBOs”) NY Edge and Aspira. The New York City Panel for Educational Policy approved this proposal on April 17, 2019.

According to the NYCDOE’s Enrollment, Capacity, Utilization Report, X151 has the capacity to serve 1,607 students. Currently, the building serves approximately 1,281 students, yielding a building utilization rate of approximately 80%. According to the NYCDOE, for the 2019-20 school year, building X151 is projected to serve approximately 1,270 – 1,454 students, yielding a projected utilization rate of approximately 70 - 90%, which demonstrates sufficient space for all schools.

The NYCDOE Building Usage Plan (“BUP”) allocates DREAM Mott Have four full-size rooms, two half-size rooms, and zero quarter-size rooms for the 2019-20 school year.
Hearing Notes:

Approximately 60 members of the public attended the hearing. District 7 Superintendent Rafael Alvarez facilitated the hearing.

P.S./M.S. 31 Principal William Hewlett spoke in opposition to the co-location. He stated concerns with opening a Kindergarten program including safety of all students, especially regarding traffic outside of the building. He stated traffic needs to be addressed through the police department that that drivers converge and get into violent combat. He stated that he will work with administrators to work on scheduling. He expressed concerns about construction impacting the school’s summer program.

A DREAM Charter School student spoke in favor of the co-location. He stated he likes the afterschool program, classes, and teachers.

A P.S./M.S. School Leadership Team member spoke in opposition to the co-location. He stated concerns about safety and dismissal gets very tense with so many campuses together. He stated security is understaffed and traffic concerns are not enforced, which causes buses to be trapped and cars to speed. He expressed concern about another school adding to dismissal and safety around entering and leaving the building.

A J.H.S. 151 parent spoke in opposition to the co-location. He stated concern about traffic and congestion in the neighborhood and did not think the building had enough space.

A J.H.S. 151 teacher spoke in opposition to the co-location. She stated concern about traffic and summarized an incident that occurred where an ambulance could not get to the school due to cars blocking the street. She questioned the involvement of the community in the decision making process and stated there was no discussion with anyone who lived and worked in the community about the proposal. She expressed concerns for children to participate in activities on co-located campuses and questioned what would happen if DREAM Mott haven was allowed to grow past one year. She stated the building’s lobby is congested and expressed concerns about having young children in the lobby at dismissal. She asked questions on how lunch times would work and how little children would get up and down from the fourth floor. She stated it is not fair to take space from schools and smash them together.

A J.H.S. teacher spoke in opposition to the co-location. She expressed concerns over space. She stated she did research and found the Bronx has 31 charter schools in District 7 and 47 district schools, which is a ratio of 40% charter schools and 60% district schools. She questioned why the charter school could not build a new school for the Kindergarten. She expressed concern for Kindergarteners using the bathroom and that money would be spent to fix the bathrooms because little people need special bathrooms and they would only to be used for nine months.

A DREAM Charter School staff member spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she grew up in the community and attended P.S. 31. She stated that DREAM Mott Haven will only be in the building for a year but is committed to the South Bronx and the school works hard to build relationships with the community. She stated DREAM has built relationships with local police.
precincts and prides itself on partnering with local communities and looks forward to partnering with the other co-located schools.

A DREAM Charter School parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she has two children who attend DREAM and the school has been supportive and assisted her children. She stated the school gives her daily updates on her child’s progress, and wants the same opportunity for other families.

A former DREAM Charter School student spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she attended DREAM and now attends a private school. She stated that her school was in a co-located space and she understands the concern over space, overcrowding, and organization. She expressed that DREAM is good at being flexible and involved in benefiting the community. She stated a charter school is not flawless but gives a space to advocate for needs. She expressed the schools’ ability to manage lunch times and gym times by talking and communicating.

A DREAM Charter School parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated DREAM focuses on family involvement and has plenty to offer because they are always willing to help. She stated she feels DREAM Mott Haven will benefit being in the co-located space despite negativities because they focus on more options for the students.

A P.S./M.S. 31 parent spoke in opposition to the co-location. She stated she understands DREAM’s mission and is not trying to knock it as a parent but her concerns are with the space. She expressed concerns around the safety and timing of dismissal and students act wild when they are not around their parents. She expressed frustration about when her child only gets five or 10 minutes to eat lunch because other schools need the space. She stated her child is uncomfortable adding another school and going to another floor to use the bathroom. She expressed concerns that the fourth floor is not accessible by elevator unless medically needed and with the number of emergency exits. She stated there are only three security guards for three schools and is concerned about safety and the amount of space.

A DREAM Charter School parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she is proud of the way her children are learning and that the school welcomes parents, and the school deserves another spot.

A DREAM Charter School parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she has a child at DREAM and a first grader at another charter school. She stated she went through the NYCDOE public schools and felt that charters were the best fit for her children. She expressed she likes DREAM’s shared space meetings where they meet with the other schools. She stated she did not know anything about shared space but has seen schools work together to sit down and figure out issues. She expressed bathroom safety is a big issue with which everyone is concerned but schools can figure it out together. She stated if schools come together, they can help all children learn and grow from each other. She stated dismissal sounds hectic but with more schools comes more resources and DREAM dismisses between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. She stated a fourth floor walkup is something that can be done.
DREAM Mott Haven’s prospective principal spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she has worked for DREAM for 10 years and is thrilled to open a school in District 7. She stated she is aware of the challenges sharing a building may create but is eager to work with principals and community. She stated she has shared space with two NYCDOE schools and knows the importance of collaboration, communication, and compromise. She stated the students would eat lunch in their classrooms to schedule more time in the cafeteria for other schools.

CEO of DREAM Charter Schools Eve Colavito spoke in favor of the co-location. She thanked the leaders of the other schools and expressed appreciation for engaging in conversation and providing honest perspectives. She stated conversations would take place about traffic, arrival, dismissal, and shared space if the proposal goes through. She stated schools have co-located in the past and sees the collaborations as partners. She stated DREAM Mott Haven is asking for one year of space for Kindergarten as the school has identified space for the fall of 2020.

A DREAM Charter School parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she has been at the school for four years and DREAM is patient and willing to work with families. She stated she is asking for space to bring new students and a better life for the community.

A P.S./M.S. 31 parent spoke in opposition to the co-location. She expressed concerns about overcrowding and being rushed in the cafeteria. She stated she is a head start teacher and concerned over health and safety because putting little children on the fourth floor is a hazard. She stated she is concerned about lock down drills, fire drills and the staff ratio for children. She stated the bathrooms are not accessible for young children.

A DREAM Charter School parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated she loves the curriculum and unit topics. She stated DREAM Mott Haven will be an excellent addition to the building and thinks the schools can work out any concerns. She stated the students can eat lunch inside the classroom so that it does not interfere with other lunch times.

A P.S./M.S. 31 parent spoke in opposition to the co-location. She stated the hearing is not to discuss curriculum or instruction or student needs but to discuss a new school coming into the building. She expressed concerns about safety and chaos outside of the building. She stated there are only three security guards and they do not know who is coming into the building. She stated her son does not have enough time for gym and gets hit outside by bigger kids. She stated that all schools offer curriculum and rigorous instruction and that it is not about compromise. She stated the fourth floor includes big kids and is not suitable for Kindergarten.

**Preliminary Determination:**

The State University of New York (“SUNY”) Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) reviewed the Educational Impact Statement and the BUP prepared by the NYCDOE for the facility at issue. The Institute also inspected the space at the time of the hearing and found it to be a typical NYCDOE building that appeared to be in compliance with applicable law. Based on the documentation prepared by the NYCDOE and the information in the charter school’s renewal application and other information, the Institute also finds that the proposed use of the space by the charter school would not violate applicable law.
Based on the site review, the physical space proposed to be allotted to the charter school was safe and adequate. In addition, there appears to be sufficient common spaces and resource spaces to be shared by the charter school, the district schools, the charter school currently in the building, and the CBOs. Finally, the Institute notes that the BUP, at the time of the co-location hearing, was in draft form. Pursuant to New York Education Law, school leadership teams from the co-located schools are required to agree on a plan to utilize common spaces in the building. As such, the BUP will not be finalized until the co-location is finalized.

With respect to public comments, the Institute thanks the members of the community for their candor. The Institute notes that SUNY has no authority over NYCDOE decisions regarding the physical locations of NYCDOE schools, grants, or programs. SUNY also has no positive authority to place schools into NYCDOE space.

As the charter school proposes to move to a facility in the CSD or NYC borough set forth in its renewal application, the Institute only needs to determine whether the space, and the charter school’s use of the space, would be in compliance with its charter and applicable law. In such cases, SUNY does not separately approve the school’s location. Therefore, as the Institute has held the hearing on behalf of the SUNY Board of Trustees as required by the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended), the Institute approves the facility for use by the charter school subject to compliance with the terms of its charter agreement regarding facilities.