I. Call to order
   A. Welcoming remarks: Co-Chair State Rep. Soto called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm. She thanked the members of the public in attendance for coming. She explained that the meeting date had been originally set to hear testimony from the CPS CEO. However, because of Jean-Claude Brizard’s October 11th resignation, there would be no testimony from the new CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, as Barbara Byrd Bennett was not available to attend tonight’s Task Force meeting. The Chair stated that the CEFTF would reach out to the new CEO to brief her on the Task Force’s work and the time-sensitive recommendations that were submitted to CPS in September.

   B. Roll call for attendance: 8 members were present at the meeting. Present were Rep. Soto; Rep. Golar; Cecile Carroll, Blocks Together; Rene Heybach, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; Dr. Nona Burney, Grand Blvd. Federation; Stacy Davis-Gates, Chicago Teachers Union; Valencia Rias-Winstead, Designs for Change; and Michelle Young for Chicago Public Schools.

   C. Establishment of a quorum: With 8 members present, quorum is established.

   D. Approval of prior minutes: Rep. Golar moved, and Ms. Carroll seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the June 18, 2012 and Sept. 13, 2012 meetings. Motion approved on a voice vote.

II. Testimony by Special Guest: Chicago Alderman Bob Fioretti

The Chair asked the members to permit a change in the order of the Agenda in order to recognize Hon. 2nd Ward Alderman Bob Fioretti and allow him to give his remarks. With the assent of the members, Rep. Soto called on Alderman Fioretti.

Alderman Fioretti reported to the CEFTF that 32 members of the Chicago City Council have signed on to a Resolution calling for City Council Hearings on Chicago Public Schools’ proposed School Closings. The hearing in the City Council Education and Child Development Committee is yet to be scheduled, but he anticipated that it would happen within the month; and prior to the Dec. 1st deadline for CPS to make its proposals public. The alderman stated that Council members are very aware of the CEFTF, and have reviewed the Task Force Findings of January 2012, pointing to grave concerns with CPS’ process for taking actions. He stated that he has 40 very diverse public schools in his Ward, and he has found that concern is growing among his colleagues about the future of our schools, calling it “an issue that resonates across the city.” Aldermen are concerned that the fate of public school students and neighborhoods’ schools should not be determined by the socioeconomic background or zip code. He and the other co-signers on the City Council Resolution want to ensure that students are safe, and that decisions about “where we move our kids and what we do with our public school buildings” is an open discussion. Aldermen’s concerns include student safety when kids are moved to different schools crossing gang lines, problems with fair management of schools that have to co-share facilities, fairness in quality of schools, and ensuring that all students have great neighborhood schools.

While acknowledging that CPS might sometimes have to take School Actions or even close some schools, Alderman Fioretti said there is a great need for much better transparency and respect for community input. He stated that his constituents and the public at large are involved, want to be involved and have great ideas to offer to CPS. One example of the need for greater transparency at CPS was that he has not been able to get reliable figures from CPS about how much the school district
is spending in the schools in his Ward, and cited Jones College Prep HS as a case in point. Alderman Fioretti explained that several members of the City Council will be working with him (the progressive caucus) to try to get more public involvement, and they are holding meetings on the City Budget this month. The Alderman pledged to stay in touch with the CEFTF and CPS, and urged greater collaboration going forward.

Rep. Soto thanked the Alderman for his testimony. Several Task Force members responded to the Alderman’s remarks: Ms. Carroll asked if Aldermen are aware that the state law now requires CPS to do a comprehensive 10-Year Educational Facilities Master Plan, and if CPS had reached out to aldermen for their input? Alderman Fioretti said that he and his colleagues who’ve followed the CEFTF’s work are aware, but that there has been no outreach from CPS to him or any other alderman he is aware of, to get their input into CPS’ plan. Ms. Rias-Winstead commented on the Jones HS case, as she had served on the LSC. She noted that the successive waves of changes, facility renovations and the building of a new “replacement” building show plainly that CPS is not transparent, lacked parent input, and had no long-term plan or perspective. Ms. Young asked that the Alderman keep CPS apprised of public outreach meetings or hearings that he or City Council plan to do. Representative Golar also thanked Alderman Fioretti for his testimony, stated that she is encouraged to see Aldermen getting more involved, and urged him to work with the Task Force in identifying needed changes and investments in neighborhood public schools. In conclusion the Alderman pledged that he and his colleagues are ready to “roll up our sleeves” to work with the Task Force, the public, and CPS.

III. Reports of Standing Subcommittees
A. Report of the School Actions Subcommittee – Dr. Nona Burney, Chair. The written report of the Subcommittee is attached to these Minutes. Overview of the report: Dr. Burney summarized the work of the Subcommittee over the summer, and attempts to work with CPS on (1) revising the School Action Guidelines; (2) ensure there was time for robust public feedback and further revisions; and (3) ascertain the impacts of the 2011-12 and future School Actions and Turn-Arounds.

She reported, however, that CPS failed to respond to CEFTF recommendations about revisions, early release, and robust public engagement. Instead CPS reported at the Oct. 9th Subcommittee meeting that CPS had not yet drafted the School Action Guidelines due on November 1st. Adam Anderson of the CPS Portfolio reported that he was on the CPS team developing the guidelines, along with Todd Babbitz, Chief Transformation Officer, but could not name the full team. CPS planned to launch an online survey and dedicated web page immediately (as of 10/09/12) to get feedback from the public on last year’s Guidelines; hold a tele-Town Hall meeting (week of 10/15); and then draft the Guidelines. While some of these steps are clearly well-intentioned, the Subcommittee members remain gravely concerned that CPS has waited until the last possible moment to engage the public at all, and that online surveys and phone conferencing do not constitute sufficient public engagement.

Overall, CPS was largely unresponsive to the Task Force’s longstanding concerns about: Academic performance criteria lacking clarity, the lack of specific criteria for each type of defined School Action, the need to factor in students’ and schools’ past history with previous Actions and mobility, exempting schools from Actions if the principal had only been in place for 2 years or less, weigh the impacts of nearby competing “new” schools on schools slated for Actions, and the need to revise CPS’ School Utilization standards.
CPS did indicate that they are developing “threshold” criteria to distinguish between the need for Closure as contrasted with Phase-Outs, but has yet to address several other key CEFTF recommendations, i.e., disclosure of the “pool” of schools CPS deems eligible for each type of proposed Action; quantify and specify how CPS measures and weighs “non-academic” factors; and the need for CPS to track at the student level the impacts of its Actions and Turn-Arounds, and account for the placement of the 7,700+ students affected in 2011-12. The Subcommittee concludes in the report that “Despite the best efforts of this Subcommittee, the scenario of last year’s distribution [of the Draft Guidelines] and inconsequential public input will be repeated” and that CPS will not release their draft until the statutory deadline of November 1st.

The Subcommittee plans to pursue discussions with CPS at its upcoming meetings to ensure that student outcomes of the 2011-12 and future School Actions are systematically evaluated; and that Transition Planning is undertaken in a more rigorous manner.

B. Report of the Master Planning Subcommittee – Cecile Carroll, Chair. The written report of the Subcommittee is attached to these Minutes. Overview of the Report: Ms. Carroll summarized the recommendations developed over several Subcommittee meetings for strategies to engage the public, Local School Councils and educators in developing the 10-Year Master Plan and to have strong intergovernmental coordination in the process. She reported that CPS has not yet implemented any public engagement steps, even though state law requires CPS to prepare and disclose a draft 10-Year Plan by January 1, 2013. She observed that some of the recommendations for community input had been “mimicked” in CPS’ steps to get feedback on last year’s School Actions Guidelines, but that it is unclear how public comments will be used to advance the long-term Master Plan development. She stressed that since the passage of the reform law in June 2011, the CEFTF has been in dialogue with CPS, and had urged the school district to take appropriate steps and work with the Task Force to launch the master planning process.

The Subcommittee report cites several key concerns moving forward: (1) Utilizing well-researched national best practices for engaging all stakeholders in developing a long-term Educational Vision and the 10-Year Master Plan; (2) the need for widespread and thorough vetting of any draft 10-Year plan by all stakeholders to ensure the Plan addresses communities’ needs; (3) growing concern that CPS sees the 10-Year Plan as merely a means to “right size” the District without having a forward-looking strategy for sustaining and improving neighborhood public schools; (4) concerns about the quality and type of data CPS may use to develop the plan; (5) the need for strong intergovernmental coordination, which has been set back by CPS’ cancellation of a previously-agreed joint CPS-CEFTF Intergovernmental Briefing that had been scheduled for 10/12/12; and (6) CPS’ clear intent to proceed with additional School Actions before developing the 10-Year Master Plan to provide the context for any closures or Actions, and before a shared vision has been developed to create better outcomes for students. She cited specific concerns that CPS is so focused on “right sizing,” that the school district is not factoring in forward-looking population growth projections, trends in housing and other neighborhood redevelopment over the next 10 years, or considering the public’s growing concern about addressing educational issues such as appropriate class size.

The Subcommittee is recommending that CPS should: (1) Expand and extend its community engagement efforts, both for developing School Action Guidelines and the 10-Year Plan; (2) immediately implement the CEFTF’s recommendations for the FMP community engagement strategy; (3) transparently disclose and clarify what planning process CPS is using, and employ the
best practices that the Task Force has been documenting and suggesting to CPS; and (4) take steps to ensure intergovernmental coordination in creating the Draft 10-Year Plan.

C. Discussion: There being no questions for the Subcommittee Chairs, it was moved by Ms. Gates and seconded by Ms. Heybach to accept the reports as presented; motion approved by voice vote.

IV. Public Comment

Due to the limited time remaining, 4 witnesses testified:

**Ms. Bonilla, parent at Ames Middle School** (translation provided by Ms. Brown, Logan Square Neighborhood Assoc): Ms. Bonilla testified that Ames Middle School is seeking a “moratorium” on any CPS Actions to force their school to co-locate with a military academy. She stated that Ames is being negatively impacted by past CPS School Actions that changed their feeder school and grade configuration, and now faces being taken over. The community has clearly expressed that parents and educators do not want to share their building with a Military Academy. The declining enrollment at Ames was in part created by a CPS decision to have another nearby school (Mozart) retain their 7th and 8th grade students. Additionally the parents and LSC at Ames Middle School have met with their CPS Network Chief, who supports the community’s position that the Co-Location with the military academy is not a good course of action. Ames parents and community have repeatedly objected to CPS’ “closed door” meetings where the future of their students and school are being discussed and possibly decided without parent and educator input, and is making “politicized” decisions rather than decisions based on what’s best for Ames students. Ames has made significant strides, and has agreed-upon steps for further school improvement with a newly hired Principal. The new Principal has strong parent and teacher support and has everyone excited about plans for Ames. Ms. Bonilla also explained that Ames is part of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association’s local School Facility Council, through which several schools in the community are coming together to make long-term, coordinated, mutually supportive plans. She urged the Task Force to continue its efforts to ensure that parents and community members have a greater voice in these decisions.

**Mr. Ronald Jackson, Tilden HS**: testified that the CEFTF is right to insist that CPS evaluate what the student impacts have been of past School Actions and Turn-Arounds, and cited his high school as a key case in point. He pointed to confusion over the academic performance criteria that CPS has used in the past, stating that historically, Tilden has improved from a Level 3 (academic probation) to a Level 2. Its performance problems since then are directly tied to years of principal turn-overs and poor leadership, and declining program resources. Since Tilden HS was approved for a CPS Central Office Turn-Around, he stated that the new administration has failed to organize the LSC, and asked for assistance from the Task Force in monitoring the situation, and ensuring that the Turn-Around administration starts up the LSC properly and takes parent input.

**Mr. Jerry Skinner, Teacher at Kelvyn Park HS**: testified that the stability of and resources to Kelvyn Park HS are being systematically undermined by CPS, and that the school community believes they are being targeted for an imminent School Action. Examples of diminishing resources at Kelvyn Park HS include the lack of English course textbooks on the first day of school; large class sizes; loss of 2s veteran Art Teachers and 2 experienced P.E. Teachers, even though enrollment levels did not justify the staff cuts; insufficient resources to help the school address and remediate its academic probation status; and no Grants Manager for the Transformation grant funds that the HS does have. He appealed to the CEFTF to investigate the HS’s situation. He cited: (a) inaccurate enrollment data being used by CPS to decrease the number of teachers in the building; (b) monitoring of LSC meetings by staff from the Network Office impeding LSC discussions and planning; and (c) inadequate and potentially illegal staffing levels and management in Special Education classes. He submitted a detailed packet of information that he asked the Task Force to review. The packet includes many more examples of
resource and staff depletion, irregularities with student placement and management in Special Education, and documents efforts by KPHS teachers and LSC members to propose alternatives to CPS. Based on this research, Mr. Skinner said the school community is fearful of an imminent School Action, when fair treatment and resource allocation within the school could restore quality programs and reduce undue burdens placed on the remaining teaching staff to compensate for lost positions.

Xian Barrett, Teacher at Gage Park HS: testified that the CEFTF is well positioned to be pro-active about ensuring widespread input in the 10-Year Master Plan, and urged the Task Force to develop its own questionnaires and other public engagement tools.

V. Set dates for next Task Force meetings – Tabled.  
CEFTF support team (pro bono advisors) will work with members to set future meeting dates.

VI. Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.