I. Call to order
   A. Welcoming remarks: Task Force Co-Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 9:48 AM. She recognized special guest State Rep. LaShawn K. Ford and thanked him for attending the meeting, as well as the members of the public who were present.
   B. Roll call for attendance: CEFTF members present were State Rep. Soto; Cecile Carroll; Nona Burney; Valencia Rias-Winstead; Dr. Clarice Berry, Chicago Principals and Administrators Assoc.; Michael Rendina, Chicago Public Schools; Sarah Hainds, Chicago Teachers Union (alternate).
   C. Establishment of a quorum: With 7 members attending, quorum was not established.
   D. Approval of prior meeting minutes (Oct. 17, 2012) - Tabled

II. Reports of Standing Subcommittees
   A. Report of the School Actions Subcommittee:

       Rep. Soto called on Mr. Rendina to update the Task Force on SB 547, the amendment to P.A. 97-0474. Mr. Rendina reported that in its November 2012 Veto Session, the General Assembly adopted a version of the amendment that CPS had proposed, resulting in a one-time-only extension of the statutory deadline for CPS to announce Proposed School Actions until March 31, 2013. Additionally, the General Assembly revised the due dates for the 10-Year Educational Facilities Master Plan: Draft now due by May 1, 2013; final adoption by the Board by May 1, 2013. The changes to P.A. 97-0474 also include some changes in language to strengthen student protections in the wake of CPS Actions, e.g., social services must “follow” students to their new school; students may not be re-assigned to larger classes than those at their school of origin (principals will have some discretion). Furthermore, beginning in 2013, CPS will be required to release Draft School Action Guidelines/Criteria by October 1st of every year, to ensure that there is adequate time for meaningful public comment and subsequent revisions of the Guidelines by CPS.

       Dr. Burney, Chair of the CEFTF School Actions Subcommittee then reported that the task force was very disappointed that CPS has yet to follow through on previous School Action subcommittee recommendations that CPS provide the CEFTF with a full accounting of what happened to the students impacted by School Actions and Turnarounds that CPS implemented in School Year 2012-13 (SY2012).

       She reported that through their 2012 meeting, the majority of Task Force members remain gravely concerned about how CPS can make evidence-based decisions about future School Actions when there has been no evaluation to date about SY2012 actions, outcomes for students, or even the re-assignment, enrollment and retention analysis that the CEFTF has repeatedly requested. She said this evaluation is "sorely needed," in addition to an evaluation of how well School Transition plans were done and implemented by CPS. She added that the members of the public who have come before the CEFTF repeatedly point to flawed school utilization data, on which 2013 School Actions/Closures are going to be based. She urged CPS to revisit what she and most CEFTF members regard as “deeply flawed” Utilization and Class size standards and policies.

       On behalf of CPS, Mr. Rendina responded that CPS’ new CEO plans to use the extension of the deadline for announcing proposed School Actions to get deeper community input. The CPS Utilization Commission will hold hearings in January 2013 to engage and hear from the public.
B. Report of the Master Planning Subcommittee: Master Planning Chair Cecile Carroll reported that to date, the CEFTF had received no feedback from CPS about its progress in developing the 10-Year Master Plan; nor specifically on the status of the Survey of LSCs and Principals to get their input (discussed at the November Master Planning meeting; draft questions provided by CPS’ Portfolio Office and distributed again at the 12/13/12 meeting). She urged CPS to prioritize the distribution of the Survey, and to provide Principals and LSCs with an introductory letter explaining the vital importance of their input to the Master Plan. Mr. Rendina responded that he did not know the status of the Survey, but would check with other CPS staff who are working on it.

C. Discussion: The Task Force members present discussed the need to set a regular schedule of meetings for the CEFTF. Rep. Soto announced that the CEFTF would initiate “Second Saturday” full task force meetings and Community Hearings, beginning Jan. 12, 2013, through at least April 2013 (Feb 9, Mar 9, and Apr 13). Ms Carroll proposed that since the future School Actions and the Master Planning processes are so closely linked, the 2 Subcommittees should establish a schedule of Joint subcommittee meetings for 2013. It was agreed that first such meeting will be held on Friday, January 11th, in the afternoon (exact time and confirmation of Bilandic Bldg location to be confirmed). At that meeting a regular schedule for subsequent joint sessions will be set. Due to the 98th ILGA session calendar, such meetings would likely have to be scheduled on Fridays or Mondays.

State Rep. Ford joined the discussion, thanking the Task Force for its years of work, and stating that he was finding the meeting very helpful. He stated that he hopes to be able to attend future CEFTF meetings.

III. Testimony: The 10-Year Educational Facilities Master Plan and School Utilization
A. Testimony by Raise Your Hand: Class Size and Utilization Study

By the invitation of the Chair, Raise Your Hand then provided a presentation on their organization’s recently released research study, “Apples to Apples.” RYH member and researcher Jeanne Marie Olson gave RYH’s testimony. Overall, RYH’s examination of CPS’ utilization standards and resulting rankings found that CPS is grossly over-estimating the extent of under-utilization in neighborhood public schools, and under-estimating the degree of overcrowding. Ms. Olson explained in detail the methodology that RYH used, and summarized their research findings:

- The “Apples to Apples” study found flaws in the CPS space utilization formula for elementary schools: [TOTAL # of classrooms x 76.9%) x 30 students = ideal enrollment for any elementary school and ideal enrollment +/- 20% = overcrowding/underutilization]. The CPS formula, which uses 30 students as the “ideal” number of students per elementary classroom and 36 students per classroom as overcrowded is not aligned with the “recommended maximum” students per classroom set forth by CPS. As a result the current formula calculates a much higher number of under-utilized schools than what actually exists based on class size recommendations.
- While CPS reports that 235 of 470 CPS elementary schools (50%) are underutilized. When RYH researchers adjusted what they consider “a significant flaw” in CPS’ formula, they found only 178 schools (38%) are underutilized – a 24% discrepancy from CPS’ findings.
- CPS reported 20% or 92 elementary schools as under-utilized by 50% or more, and thus potentially under consideration for closure. But RYH’s calculation shows a much smaller number of severely under-utilized schools - only 37, or 8%.
- RYH’s calculation also shows a much higher rate of overcrowding than reported. Based on the CPS formula, only 14% of elementary schools were dealing with overcrowding. However, RYH’s calculation reveals that nearly one third (31%) of elementary schools were overcrowded in 2011-2012.

RYH’s full report can be found on the organization’s website: http://www.ilraiseyourhand.org. Summary/Highlights of “Apples to Apples” study is attached to the Minutes.

Several CEFTF members asked clarifying questions following Ms. Olson’s testimony. Mr. Rendina called on CPS’ Senior Manager for Business Optimization (and former head of Demographics and
Planning for Central Office) James Dispensa to present CPS’ response to RYH’s findings. CPS’ hand-out, “Utilization and Class Size Fact Sheet” is attached to the Minutes. CPS disagrees with RYH’s critique of its Utilization formula. CPS counters that RH’s analysis rests on data from the 2011 IL State Report Card on average students by grade, rather by “actual classroom size”. Mr. Dispensa’s 1-page report included the following:

- Due to population declines, shifts, and growth in some parts of the city, “mean many of the locations of our facilities do not match where our children live.”
- CPS’ position is that “CPS currently serves about 402,000 students, but has space for more than 511,000.”
- “About 20% of our schools are half-empty and 12 % are overcrowded.”
- Under-utilized schools can experience “much higher levels” of overcrowding by class size, despite low over-all enrollment because they have “a decrease in funding because of loss of students,” resulting in “fewer teachers at the schools” and “higher class sizes.”

RYH’s researcher Jeanne Marie Olson and Mr. Dispensa engaged in a short debate, point-counterpoint discussion, which Chair Soto asked them to conclude, in the interests of time. Mr. Dispensa and Ms. Olson indicated that they would continue to pursue a dialogue.

Valencia Rias-Winstead remarked that RYH’s research was welcome, seems to support many of the concerns that her organization has heard from public school parents and LSCs; and questioned why CPS doesn’t embrace smaller class sizes for students in low-income neighborhoods who benefit educationally from smaller classes.

Mr. Rendina remarked that CPS may need to re-examine its Utilization Standards, take into account more variables, and needs “a holistic look” at our schools. He cited the creativity of one Principal who turned a classroom into a school library as an example of other “variables” that CPS might want to consider.

B. Public Testimony - Local School Councils

**Ames Middle School**, Alcinda Alivetti, LSC Chair (translator: Veronica Robles, Logan Square Neighborhood Assoc): Ms. Alivetti testified that Ames is facing a politicized, closed-door decision making process to try to close their neighborhood Middle School and give the school to a military academy. More than 90% of parents and the community, along with their Network Chief oppose this. The “excuse” being used to take action against Ames is a so-called “under-utilization” crisis. The Ames community believes that CPS’ actions falsely “manufactured” the under-utilization by withholding students from its “feeder” elementary school Mozart (McAuliffe, Nixon, and Mozart all sent 7th and 8th graders to Ames). In 2012, CPS took action to re-structure grades and re-draw Ames’ attendance boundaries, withhold Mozart students from Ames, and thus negatively impacted Ames’ enrollment. She stated this was done without any community, parental or LSC input, or proper notice to their Principal or to Mozart’s Principal and LSC. CPS can’t call Ames under-performing, since it is the only “Level 2” successful middle school in the area.

Ames LSC is disputing CPS’ utilization ranking since the Middle School currently uses its space to house a community health clinic and other programs that significantly benefit their students, families, and adults in the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, she stated that the facility where the military academy is currently operating is not overcrowded; however, displacement of Ames students back to the feeder elementary schools would result in overcrowding and larger class sizes. She concluded, this is why Ames parents oppose any more closings and disruptions, when CPS hasn’t even come up with a proposed 10-Year plan yet. Ames and its feeder schools are all part of LSNA’s community Schools Facilities Task Force, and they should be allowed to plan their schools’ futures.

CEFTF members responded to the Ames LSC Chair: Dr. Burney stated, this is exactly why we need the 10-Year Master Plan to be developed before CPS takes any more school actions. Ms. Carroll
pointed to the “profound” negative impacts and disruption that this kind of anxiety about takeovers and closings cause with a school and community. CPS’ representative Mr. Dispensa commented that perhaps there should be a requirement for greater transparency, with a 30- or 60-day “wait” before the Board can act on proposals to change attendance boundaries and re-assign students. Dr. Burney responded that the CEFTF should work on developing such a reform proposal.

Rogers Elementary School, Matt Farmer, LSC Member: Mr. Farmer questioned CPS in his testimony, asking if the CPS Utilization Commission is going to issue a specific list of schools to close. Mr. Rendina replied that yes, it is his understanding that the Commission is going to give the CEO a list, but that he does not speak for the Utilization Commission. Mr. Farmer then challenged CPS to explain how the Utilization Commission, which was just appointed last month, can possibly get from “Point 1 to Point B,” i.e., from the “pool” of schools that CPS says are under-utilized, to a final list of schools it will recommend for closing? He challenged CPS’ past decisions, pointing to attendance boundary changes and the opening of charter schools that decrease neighborhood schools’ student enrollment, through no fault of the neighborhood school. He pointed out that some Commission members are already starting to bring up other criteria such as academic performance, even though CPS’ School Actions Guidelines this year are only about utilization.

Further, he pointed out that CPS’ ranking of academic performance is flawed, citing his own school as an example: Rogers is a high-performing successful neighborhood school that was rated “Level 1,” but was dropped to “Level 2” by CPS this year because of flawed “value-added” formulas – even though nearly 88% of Rogers’ students are at or above state standards for their grades. Mr. Farmer echoed the concerns of Ames School, in that CPS has not even begun to work on the 10-year Plan, yet wants to ram through “downsizing” now.

Ronald Jackson, former LSC Member, Tilden HS: testified that in his experience, CPS’ policies have created many of the under-utilization situations by starving neighborhood public schools of adequate resources to make progress and serve their students properly. He pointed to the example of Tilden HS, some of whose students were siphoned away by Dunbar HS. Subsequently, the Tilden “under-utilization” situation was worsened as CPS did away with programs that would attract students, such as its Technology, Nursing, Carpentry, Business, and other Careers-focused programs. He also cited the case of a major School Transformation grant that should have helped Tilden HS, but that was never spent in the school.

He stated that LSCs are not getting proper respect and input, and that most of them don’t even know that CPS is supposed to come up with a 10-Year Master Plan.

State Rep. Ford responded, urging LSCs and communities to better organize themselves to strengthen the LSC so that in can – as it should – be a “major player” in key decisions about their school.

IV. Next Steps
A. Update on Brown v Board of Education Appeal - TABLED
B. CEFTF Meeting Calendar for 2013:
   Second Saturday CEFTF meetings were announced again: Jan. 12th, Feb. 9th, March 9th, and April 13th are to be placed on the CEFTF 2013 Calendar.

   A Joint Meeting of the Master Planning and School Actions Subcommittee will be held on Friday, Jan. 11th, 2013 (time/location to be confirmed).

V. Public Comment

Rosita Chatonda, Chicago Alliance of United School Educators (CAUSE): testified that CPS’ school actions and turnarounds put the heaviest burden on the African American community, both students and educators. She cited figures about the sharp decline in the number of African American teachers, and questioned whether school closings justified by under-utilization might be a
way to mask “economic layoffs” of Black teachers. She urged that impacted African American teachers be able to go into the teacher re-assignment pool. For CPS, Mr. Rendina responded that the new CTU-CPS contract does provide protections for teachers if there are open positions, and addresses the right to be re-hired at Receiving Schools.

Given time constraint, public comment was then concluded.

VI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:15 PM

Apples to Apples Release: Underutilized CPS Elem Schools Overestimated by 24% Overcrowding Higher than Reported

The following excerpt is from the Raise Your Hand Coalition website:

Flawed Formula Categorizes Some of CPS’ Highest Performing Schools as “Underutilized” Placing them at Risk for Closure

CHICAGO, December 3, 2012 – In its second phase of reporting, “Apples to Apples,” an independent investigation of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) data, reveals that CPS’ school utilization report is based on a flawed mathematical formula and therefore has revealed misleading numbers related to utilization at elementary schools in 2011-2012.

According to publicly reported figures by CPS, 235 of 470 CPS elementary schools or 50% were reported as underutilized. However, Apples to Apples researchers have uncovered a significant flaw in the CPS utilization formula that, when corrected reveals only 178 schools or 38% were underutilized – a 24% discrepancy. In addition, schools reported as underutilized by 50% or more, and thus potentially under consideration for closure, are also misrepresented, with CPS reporting 20% or 92 elementary schools in this category. Using the corrected formula this number drops drastically to 8% or only 37 schools.

The corrected calculation also reveals a much higher rate of overcrowding than reported. Based on the CPS formula, only 14% of elementary schools were dealing with overcrowding. However, the corrected calculation reveals that nearly one third (31%) of elementary schools were overcrowded in 2011-2012. [see below for side by side comparison]

The Apples to Apples investigation found flaws in the CPS space utilization formula for elementary schools: [TOTAL # of classrooms x 76.9%) x 30 students = ideal enrollment for any elementary school and ideal enrollment +/- 20% = overcrowding/underutilization]. The CPS formula, which uses 30 students as the “ideal” number of students per elementary classroom and 36 students per classroom as overcrowded is not aligned with the “recommended maximum” students per classroom set forth by CPS. As a result the current formula calculates a much higher number of under-utilized schools than what actually exists based on class size recommendations.

Using the CPS utilization formula to determine school closures, there were several Level 1, high-performing and gifted schools that were considered under-utilized in 2011 including Edison RGC, Alcott, Poe Classical, Lenart RGC, Brennemann, Chopin, Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter, Burr, Calhoun, Cather, Chappell, Talcott, Ward, Ryerson and Inter-American Magnet.

Visit http://ilraiseyourhand.org/content/apples-apples-release-underutilized-cps-elem-schools-overestimated-24-overcrowding-higher-re to finish reading the article and reviewing the data.