

November 15, 21 & 22, 2000

**QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS COMMENTS ON NYC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION
AUTHORITY PLANS FOR THREE SCHOOLS AT CREEDMOOR**

The Queens Civic Congress, a coalition of almost 100 civic, community, cooperative and tenant associations, finds the School Construction Authority/Board of Education plan to construct three schools at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center now consistent with our original plan to develop the site and design the schools. In particular, we note plans to enter the site at Union Turnpike, save trees in the wooded slope corridor bordering the Grand Central and Cross Island Parkways.

The Queens Civic Congress's Special Committee on Creedmoor first identified the site for us as a public school campus and worked to gain a community consensus for the proposal. Bottom line: We found the site. We got community support. We conceived a plan for the site. Board of Education officials promised to use the entire site. The community accepts no half-way proposals.

The Queens Civic Congress, acting through its Special Committee on Creedmoor, reminds the SCA and Board of Education officials to ensure the use of the entire property in accord with a Master Plan developed over two years by the community groups surrounding Creedmoor. At successive meetings that included Board of Education officials, the Queens Civic Congress made clear the need to use the entire site to provide students a full-range of facilities, including athletic facilities not be readily available at other sites being developed as schools elsewhere.

The current plan would site the three schools across 19.3 acres and anticipate the later acquisition and use of the rest of the land for storm water retention and ball fields. The Congress stands by our original recommendation to locate the three schools along the entire site for better spacing and individuality of programs. The Congress takes no position on the proposed high school as the High School of Teaching Professions with 1,182 seats and serving grades 9-12 and the assignment of P.S./I.S. 208 with 925 seats and P.S./I.S. 266 with 760 seats to the Chancellor's School District. The Congress strongly recommends that the Board of Education work with the community as the plans for the school and its programs progress.

Absent the spacing out of the schools along the entire approximately 32 acre parcel, the Queens Civic Congress seeks clear design plans showing use the remaining space adjoining the sites for the schools to serve as athletic fields and playground space to serve the students of various ages who will attend one of the three schools. In addition it makes sense to provide sufficient on-site parking when there exist no nearby streets to accommodate parking for personnel.

Board of Education officials clearly committed at a September 15, 1999 meeting with the Queens Civic Congress and elected officials, that it planned to proceed as if it purchased the entire site. As the plans proceed, this must be followed. The community will accept nothing less.

The City should engage community involvement in its proposed major revamping of the traffic light signal system at Union Turnpike at the proposed new front entrance to the campus since it would involve a major change in traffic and traffic patterns at a new intersection. For example, one civic expressed concern about mitigating any impact from the modification of the Union Turnpike/Commonwealth Boulevard intersection and the effect it will have on the westbound left turn traffic headed southbound on the Cross Island Parkway service road. Another civic expressed concern about the traffic impacts of the modification on traffic using Commonwealth Boulevard and any possible congestion that may result. Finally, a civic recommended that additional exits should be made available in case of emergencies, including roadways to Winchester Boulevard and emergency exits on Commonwealth Boulevard.

The SCA should make their plans available to us at the earliest possible time so that we can present their proposals to our members.

The Congress also expects full compliance with environmental protection activities including safe removal of any unsafe asbestos in the buildings to be demolished.

At a time when other communities oppose school sites, the SCA/Board of Education should show a clear commitment to work with communities abutting Creedmoor who identified this site and applied the political pressure to get uniform support of elected officials for a three-school plan for the entire site.

The Civic Master Plan outlines a framework for the SCA and Board of Education to work with the community; it makes sense follow this guide for engaging the community successfully in planning for new schools.

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