



October 11, 2013

Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor
NYC Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Lorraine Grillo
President
School Construction Authority
3030 Thompson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Chancellor Walcott and President Grillo:

We are writing today regarding an upcoming school renovation planned for the M063 complex in the East Village. This complex currently houses two co-located elementary schools: The Star Academy (P.S. 63) and The Neighborhood School (P.S. 363). The renovation will provide needed repairs to the building's façade and roof, but will also create a number of challenges for the school community. We respectfully request that the Department of Education (DOE) and School Construction Authority (SCA) address the concerns that we list below before commencing construction on October 15, 2013, and if necessary, briefly delay the project start date in order to satisfactorily respond to these concerns.

First and foremost, parents and staff are deeply concerned about maintaining health and safety standards at the school during construction. As with any project of this kind, dust management and air quality testing should be key components of a construction mitigation plan. The school administration is particularly concerned about asbestos abatement and requests that frequent air quality testing occur inside the school building during asbestos removal. We have no doubt that both DOE and SCA plan to follow health and safety regulations, though we ask that you take this additional step in testing air quality inside the school to ensure the safety of students, teachers and faculty alike. To date, the administration and parent teacher associations (PTAs) have received no written information regarding mitigation plans. It is essential that SCA provide a construction mitigation plan that meets the highest standards to the school administration, PTAs and elected officials for review and discussion before moving forward.

Second, scaffolding will be erected in the school's recess yard for the duration of construction leaving limited outdoor play space for the students. We understand that the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has submitted a proposal to SCA to explore the feasibility of using First Street Park as a replacement play space. We urge you to consider this proposal which includes a DPR staffer and play equipment. Additionally, considering construction will commence at 4:00 PM daily, the two after-school programs must find alternative spaces. Currently, the University Settlement program has secured alternative space at P.S. 19, but the Wingspan Arts program has not. We appreciate that both DOE and SCA are actively helping seek alternative space for the Wingspan Arts program and ask that construction

not begin until space has been secured. At the present time, Wingspan Arts is exploring spaces available at P.S. 15, P.S. 40, and Building 510.

In addition to addressing these immediate concerns, regular communication with the school communities should be strengthened. We recommend that a plan and timeline for the entire project be provided upfront, and that both DOE and SCA attend meetings every two weeks with the school administration, PTAs, Community Board 3, Community Education Council 1 and representatives of our offices throughout the duration of the project. This will allow parents and staff the opportunity to ask questions, flag problems and get up-to-date information and construction “look-aheads.”

While we believe it is essential that these issues be resolved before construction begins, we also understand the importance of not delaying this project any longer than necessary. We therefore request that you address these concerns expeditiously so construction can commence as close to the scheduled start date as possible.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these concerns. As always, we stand ready to assist in helping this project run smoothly. A representative of our offices will be reaching out to you shortly to discuss these requests.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer
Manhattan Borough President



Brad Hoylman
State Senator



Daniel Squadron
State Senator



Brian Kavanagh
Assemblymember

cc: William T. Castro, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Daniella Phillips, Superintendent, District 1
Darlene Cameron, Principal, P.S. 63
Dyanthe Spielberg, Principal, P.S. 363
Gigi Li, Manhattan Community Board 3
Lisa Donlan, Community Education Council 1
Markular Boons, P.S. 63 PTA
Fatima Baba, P.S. 363 PTA
Melissa Aase, University Settlement
Paul Ashley, Wingspan Arts
Mike Mirisola, School Construction Authority