



**The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park**  
Park Place Community Meeting  
June 3rd, 2010

**Notes from Questions/ Answer portion:**

**(bold typeface indicates questions and comments from the community)**

The below represents a capture of the discussions to the best of the ability of Rothschild Doyno Collaborative. Please forward any comments or revisions to [geoffc@rdcollab.com](mailto:geoffc@rdcollab.com)

**1. Please consider child care for follow up meetings.**

**What is the structure of organization?**

**What is your 501c3 status?**

**What is the role of board and imagine schools?**

**Who employs the teachers?**

**What are the teacher's qualifications?**

The Board is independent, and holds the charter. The school board has the charter, has fiduciary responsibility, employs staff, and uses the services of Imagine Schools for management. The Board leases the building. Imagine did initial financing.

Unlike schools, a charter cannot issue bonds to raise the initial money.

The Board is a 501c3 organization, Imagine Schools is not.

The University of Pittsburgh has helped our teacher to take extra courses for a science-based curriculum.

This is in addition to best practices.

**2. Are the teachers in the union?**

They are not. The teachers and staff are "rehired" every year, which promotes good performance.

**3. There has not been an effort or movement to unionize teachers at ECS. People join unions when they're not treated well. The Union helps protect complicated situations.**

**4. I moved here because of ECS, and the school has helped make my child "a completely different person."**

**5. What is the proposed timeline for construction?**

Jason Kambitsis of City Planning described the conditional use process. There is no "school use district" – they go through a conditional use process.

- Planning Commission is first part of the process
- Planning Commission has public hearing, and says yes or no.
- City Council then has a public hearing to issue a ruling.

After that, construction drawings begin. If all goes well, the move-in goal would be the fall of 2011.

**6. How many students will there be in the school? How many are at ECS?**

The maximum number will be 234 students. (there are 319 currently at ECS at Frick Park)

**7. Does Pittsburgh Public Schools have any approval in this process?**

No, the current charter accounts for the growth. They will certainly be notified, though.

**8. When will the current tenants leave?**

We currently have an agreement and the tenants have been notified. Current tenants are given the option for a short term renewal, but will maintain their rights for as long as their lease is valid.

**9. We deal with a lot of traffic on South Braddock avenue: Shadyside Academy, Children's Hospital access, high school and elementary pickup and drop offs. Are these issues the same as those you dealt with at Regent Square? Shadyside has been responsive for a few weeks after comments. Will current parking lane become bus lane?**

Part of this community process is to construct a solution that will work – please make sure we are aware of all of the traffic concerns.

**10. The left turn from Brashear to Braddock is very difficult. The visibility is bad here – buses are a huge concern.**

The state has criteria for these sightlines which will be considered.

We will address the left turn issue; one solution may be prohibiting the turn during certain hours.

**11. We have been trying to get a stoplight on Braddock Avenue.**

This is dictated by state criteria- we may not have the volume.

**12. The tax situation: will the school pay taxes, and we will lose the tax revenue from the seventeen apartments? Will the Planning Commission consider this?**

We are currently paying taxes for ECS at Frick Park, because it is leased. Because Imagine owns the building, taxes will be paid on it. The planning commission will not consider this in their decision.

**13. Do you need to be a resident to attend the school? What is the current percentage of students from Pittsburgh?**

Currently, 65% of the students are from the City. The lottery system gives preference to Pittsburgh residents, and due to the waiting list, it will eventually become a 100% city school if the trend continues.

**14. I see ECS as a regional asset, but not a neighborhood one.**

Long term, we would like to be locally based, to encourage local preference and reduce environmental impact. We need community support to get this change in the charter. Our charter is renewed in 3 ½ years; this is when we will have the opportunity to address this.

**15. Has anyone looked at the traffic/ parking needs for the neighborhood, and not just the school? Is there any history of the sustainability of charter schools – what happens if the charter school does not continue?**

Charter schools in PA have existed for 10 years. In that time, good charter schools do continue on. Our strategic planning is looking 5 – 10 years in advance.

We are aware of parking challenges, and have begun a dialogue with Shadyside Academy. This process is part of that.

**16. Is there a plan for ongoing community interaction?**

The intent of the Parent Community Organization is to continue the community dialogue. The Environmental Focus Group, Garden Club, and additional family focused community events also are meant to engage the community.

The building should serve the community – it should add value to the neighborhood.

We need to set up open lines of communication; we are open to better mechanisms.

We have just begun a Regent Square group that meets quarterly to discuss school operations.

**17. What entity will own the building?**

It will be some form of private investor. They will renovate it and lease it back to the school.

Imagine will pay the lease if the school doesn't in the future.

**18. The City of Pittsburgh is struggling to maintain young professionals. This school helps to attract and maintain them, and possibly draw them to the neighborhood.**

**19. The case for a neighborhood draw of students should consider both environmental impact and geographic preference.**

**20. There are aspects of the school that are unique to the region, in regards to some of its teaching systems. The school is doing some innovational things.**

**21. Will the school be used in the summer?**

Not currently, except for some faculty. We don't currently anticipate a summer program. We do use it for the Community Supported Agriculture Program.

**22. How long will Imagine run the school? How long has Imagine existed?**

They won't; the school board runs it. The period of Imagine's management is up to the board.

Imagine is about 5 years old.

**23. Having students at ECS has committed me to living in the neighborhood for the next 15 years, including buying and renovating a home. Getting into ECS encourages parents to move closer to the school.**

**24. Will the parking allocated be sufficient for the staff?**

This will be part of the parking demand analysis.

**25. Is this site a good fit for a school? The neighborhood has made a push for R2 zoning, in order to protect the housing stock.**

In the next meeting, we will work to specifically identify the traffic issues (afternoon, morning, parking, etc.)

**26. How are you going to get students to the park? Containing them onsite will be noisy and chaotic.**

We very much want to use the park – this access will depend on traffic and safety issues.

**27. How does a school zone work?**

There are criteria – it can certainly be part of the traffic plan. We will vet the plans with the community before submitting them.

**28. The speed on Braddock is striking – would traffic calming be a benefit to the community?**

**29. I hope that the traffic solution will involve everyone in the community, not just the most vocal ones.**

**30. Will the minutes be posted?**

These notes will be sent to the Park Place Blog.

Questions can be directed to John at the Park Place Blog.

**31. Is the reason that ECS doesn't currently have a school zone because of the establishing criteria?**

We are currently pursuing it. This also has a community involvement process. The school finances the infrastructure for it.

**32. Another benefit of the school is that it instills community amongst parents who are also residents. They also invest in homes in the area.**

**33. For future meetings, please post flyers in the neighborhood – not just around the school.**