

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

Together, We are the Champions for Children in Poughkeepsie City School District

ISSUE NO 57 | March 10, 2023

VOLUME 4



District, County discuss 26 Oakley St.



Poughkeepsie City School District and Dutchess County are discussing the district possibly purchasing the 26 Oakley Street property in the City of Poughkeepsie for use as district administrative offices. The county owns the property.

County Executive William F.X. O'Neil and District Superintendent Eric Jay Rosser have had preliminary talks about the building, which the county purchased last year. Dutchess County purchased the Oakley Street property with the intention of using the building as its new Emergency Housing

Facility, the cornerstone of a new evidence-based emergency housing model.

Ongoing challenges, including community opposition and pending litigation, high costs to meet zoning and state requirements, as well as substantial community benefit payment requests from the City Council, have forced the county to reconsider this location. The county is now looking at other options for the property, including possible sale to PCSD.

County Executive O'Neil said, "The high costs and challenges relating to the creation of our Emergency Housing Facility have made 26 Oakley Street a less viable option for the County. However, we do have other alternatives for the site, including possible sale to the Poughkeepsie City School District. Dr. Rosser and I have begun talks, and shortly we should have a final decision about this option."

The district has been engaged in a search for space to house the district's administrative offices since 2019. The district had previously been interested in the 26 Oakley Street property, going as far as putting in an initial purchase offer, however the county was already under contract to buy the property.

For the last several weeks, PCSD has been discussing this potential purchase and working with County officials to evaluate if this property will meet the requirements of the New York State Department of Education. In the event the district moved to purchase the property, there would be **no tax impact** on the city's taxpayers nor would it take away from student programming. Funds to purchase the property will come from a Capital Reserve account that was developed with insurance proceeds from damaged administrative offices. A public referendum vote would be required and would be scheduled to align with the annual school district budget vote held in May.

"Our efforts to identify a permanent administrative building and vacate Columbus Elementary School will provide opportunity for the district to explore a more child-centered use for the building. We recognize that as the resurgence of the City of Poughkeepsie continues, the Poughkeepsie City School District has to continue to transform itself to compliment the transformation underway throughout the city." shared Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools.

As the County considers its options for use of the Oakley Street property, the search for a permanent location for the Emergency Housing Facility will be reopened.

Cabinet visits HCZ, meets founder

Representatives of the [Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet](#) visited the [Harlem Children's Zone](#) (HCZ) recently and met with its Founder and President, [Geoffrey Canada](#). HCZ and Canada are recognized internationally as pioneers in the development of comprehensive cradle-to-career systems of support for youth.



The 18-member delegation from Poughkeepsie included Mayor Marc Nelson; Superintendent of Schools Dr. Eric Jay Rosser; Dutchess County Executive William F.X. O'Neil; Common Council Chairwoman Natasha Brown; Common Council Member Yvonne Flowers; and leaders from Poughkeepsie's youth services sector and community organizations. The three-day intensive site visit was part of an ongoing Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet–Harlem Children's Zone partnership to develop a similar [system of cradle-to-career support](#) for youth in the City of Poughkeepsie. Last year, the Children's Cabinet formalized a partnership with HCZ through a Memorandum of Understanding. Currently, a team of consultants from HCZ's [William Julius Wilson Institute](#)



Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet members met with Harlem Children's Zone Founder and President Geoffrey Canada and members of the HCZ team.

is working intensively with Cabinet staff and stakeholders to craft a strategic plan to build a cradle-to-career pipeline of programs and services for children, youth and families.

While in Harlem, the Poughkeepsie delegation received a comprehensive overview of HCZ's programs. Detailed conversations with key members of the HCZ staff provided an in-depth understanding of the organization's approach to such topics as: parenting programs/education; preparing children to enter school ready to learn; engaging caregivers and community members; social services coordination; fundraising and development; and college and career preparation and support systems.

The Children's Cabinet is co-chaired by Mayor Nelson and Dr. Rosser and, as a coordinating body, brings together decision makers, leaders and community representatives to improve the lives of youth and families in the city. The Cabinet was formed in early 2020 in recognition of the fact that between Kindergarten and 12th grade, children spend 80 percent of their time out of the classroom and in the broader community. Geoffrey Canada said, "We are excited for the wonderful work Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet is doing to change outcomes for underserved and under-resourced children in Dutchess County. We hope the delegation's visit to our Practitioner's Institute provided them with further insight into our model and left them with renewed conviction to put their young people on the pathway to economic mobility."

Dr. Rosser said, "My excitement for what the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet means to children and families of the City of Poughkeepsie was elevated from seeing what is possible through the type of work HCZ engaged in to transform their community. HCZ is a perfect example of how a school, home, and community approach can positively impact the lives of children prenatal to college and career."

Mayor Nelson said, "Spending this time at HCZ was both invaluable and insightful. In Poughkeepsie, we are in the process of solidifying the Children's Cabinet's role and governance, and we have all the ingredients to do so. The city is proud of the strong partnerships we have developed through the Children's Cabinet — and of our efforts to greatly expand our reach to aid youth through an increase in annual youth program funding, and through the creation of a city Youth Division."

Dutchess County Executive William F.X. O'Neil said, "The Harlem Children's Zone is doing remarkable work, starting as it did block by block and now becoming an international leader in the development of a comprehensive strategy to ensure all children have a chance to grow and prosper. Working with the



Children's Cabinet and HCZ is precisely the type of partnerships the county had in mind when we started our [Path to Promise](#) initiative, created to identify and help provide all young people in Dutchess County, from birth through age 19, the assets they need to achieve their full potential as they grow into young adults."

PCSD launches portrait of graduate survey



Community members are encouraged to complete a survey to help Poughkeepsie City School District develop its Portrait of a Graduate. The survey is a key element of the project which seeks to gain community perspective into what critical skills and competencies our high school graduates need to achieve success.

Portrait of a Graduate is a process being

launched by many school districts across the nation. It builds on Poughkeepsie City School District's 5-year strategic plan pre-planning work initiated in 2019.

Responses from community members, past and current students, parents, and teachers and staff in 2019 included students having competencies that reflected financial literacy to competencies that reflected critical thinking and many more. "By renewing our community input on the skills and competencies a PCSD student should possess will better inform [Pathway Transformation](#), extracurricular, social emotional learning, Saturday Morning Lights programming and programming offered by community-based organizations," Rosser said.

The survey, available online via a Google form in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#), asks respondents for their affiliation with the district, to choose seven of 14 key competencies are most important and to fill in an additional two or three competencies beyond academics a PCSD graduate must have to be successful in college, the workforce and life.

"Once we get the surveys back, we will categorize and analyze the responses to pick the top seven

competencies that we will use to create the portrait," Dr. Janety Encarnación, director of college readiness and workforce education, said.

"We will use that portrait to create a visual element that will be displayed in schools."

The portrait "will serve as a beacon to guide our strategic planning," she said.

Parents, teachers, students, representatives of post-secondary institutions (especially colleges and universities), business and organizations are encouraged to complete a survey.

The deadline to respond is March 31.



Scan for English survey



Escanear para encuesta

PHS cheer competition spreads kindness

Poughkeepsie City School District's, "Cheer from the Heart," event last month at Poughkeepsie High School brought cheer to the hearts of all who attended.

The February event was the result of an exceptional showing of school pride, hard work, dedication, effort and sportsmanship by PHS' cheerleaders who showed exactly what it means to cheer and lead an event that brought positivity, kindness, appreciation for others, and celebration of effort into the forefront in a well-executed, exciting and fun sporting event.

The Pioneers developed, planned and hosted this cheer invitational competition with teams from six regional school districts participating. Portchester, Arlington, Carmel, Saunders, and Yonkers teams showed up to strut their stuff and compete.

The event was the vision of the team, under the leadership of head coach Lynnece Edmond, assistant



coach Za'ire People, and DaQuez Green, (alum and former PHS cheerleader) that started over two years ago. The team faced many obstacles in coming together due to the COVID-19 shutdown, and event competition from other districts offering invitationals in the same timeframe. Despite the setbacks, the team held on to the vision and "Cheer from the Heart" became a resounding success.

Initially, the name came from the event's proximity to Valentine's Day, but it came to mean much more for the squad. The team of 17 girls developed the idea for the invitational competition to foster their heartfelt love for cheer, and their support and camaraderie for the cheerleading teams of other schools. As an answer to recent negative behaviors in the region at sporting events, Poughkeepsie's team set forth to create something different – an event of good feeling, friendly and supportive rapport, and positive vibes for and about sporting events involving the Poughkeepsie schools.



The PHS cheerleading squad after the successful, "Cheer from the Heart" event.

The team also set its sights on another goal - their own continued growth and success in cheerleading. Various cheerleading officials encouraged the team to consider team cheer camp as a "next step." A team development camp experience at the Universal Cheerleading Association Pine Forest Cheer Camp in Beach Lake, Pennsylvania, this summer became the team's focus and desire. The longer-term goal is to reach the US National Cheer Competition in Orlando Florida at Walt Disney World.

"This is the team's goal for 2024," Edmonds said.

Admissions, concessions and team registration fees from the event will help support these goals.

The competition was officiated by four judges from Section 1 with Poughkeepsie receiving the following awards: Game Day, runner up; Traditional large school/small team, first; Best Cheer, first.

Several specialty awards, determined by PHS alumni cheerleaders who assisted with the event were also given and coaches and cheerleaders were entered into gift raffles for Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts gift cards to show appreciation for each team competing in the event. Spectators had the opportunity to send special "shout outs" to teams and individual cheerleaders by purchasing a "Holla for a Dolla" and a DJ called them out before or after each team performed. All seniors were gifted with a rose and thanked for their participation.



CI Weekly

This week's newsletter focuses on engaging discussion strategies to utilize at all grade levels. These high-leverage practices not only help to increase academic skill and deepen content knowledge but also build social skills and foster classroom community. Other highlights include the superintendent conference day and approaches for monolingual teachers to support ELLs in their classrooms. [Download the March 10, 2023](#)

[issue here.](#)

Upcoming events

- **Saturday, March 11:** Saturday Morning Lights, Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave., 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- **Tuesday, March 14:** PCSD Pops Concert, 6:30 p.m., Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave.
- **Wednesday, March 15:** PHS Senior Honor Breakfast, Poughkeepsie High School, 70 Forbus St., 8:30 a.m.
 - BOE workshop meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.