

Parents Challenge Upper West Side Schools Proposal

They claim council overstepped authority by devising plan for rezoning elementary schools

By

Leslie Brody, Oct. 24, 2016 11:22 a.m. ET

A coalition of Upper West Side parents [argued in a letter](#) to city officials that a zoning council overstepped its authority and violated open public meeting laws by spelling out a plan for rezoning elementary schools.

Calling itself the “Coalition of District 3 Parents,” the group includes parents who oppose re-siting P.S. 452, a key part of the zoning council’s design for shifting the catchment areas of at least 11 schools.

The Sunday night letter ratchets up the conflict in an already contentious effort to alleviate overcrowding and increase diversity from West 59th Street to West 116th Street, and possibly beyond.

Last week, the Community Education Council for District 3 released an 11-page plan for redrawing zone lines.

The parent coalition said in its letter Sunday that it is up to the department of education to present a proposal, not the council, which votes on it. Further, the coalition’s letter said the council members didn’t craft or approve its own plan in public with a roll-call vote.

“Not only was the plan proposal process unlawful, the plan will exacerbate overcrowding and diversity issues in District 3,” the letter states.

Joseph Fiordaliso, president of the Community Education Council, said Monday that the “CEC has authority over zoning” and he stood by its plan. “I’m very comfortable with the way this has been handled” by the council, he said

“The tenor the conversation has taken is unfortunate, however I understand parents’ frustration,” he said. “Because of the changes required there is a level of disruption that is inevitable.”

The coalition asked the Community Education Council to provide a range of its records, emails and text messages among council members and city officials under the Freedom of Information Act. Mr. Fiordaliso said he was seeking legal counsel from the department of education on how to respond, and noted that his council is made of elected parent volunteers.

“We value the CEC’s leadership and partnership, and are reviewing the recommendations outlined in the letter sent last week,” a city Department of Education spokeswoman said by email. She noted that a council vote takes place after the department submits a formal proposal, expected in the coming weeks.

Many parents at P.S. 452 oppose moving the school 16 blocks, saying it will disrupt their community bonds, while many others support the move, saying it will give the school space to grow with its own library, gym and cafeteria.

The Community Education Council’s letter called for P.S. 452 to move to a building that will be left vacant by the expected relocation of P.S. 191 to a new home at 21 West End Ave.

A member of the Coalition of District 3 said it includes over 80 parents.