

An open letter to Homer Plessy School CEO Megan Raychaudhuri - Keep Our School in the French Quarter

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Over the last two weeks, we've had the opportunity to meet and connect with dozens of diverse Plessy parents, multiple diverse teachers, alumni and members of the French Quarter community. In addition to the 1,400+ signature [petition](#), we've been overwhelmed with the number of culture bearers and community organizations that have not only agreed with the goal of having Plessy stay in the French Quarter, but have offered their help in keeping it here. We're writing today to oppose the plan to apply for the Drew Building and the larger idea of moving Plessy out of the French quarter for the following reasons:

1. Parents, grandparents & caregivers have made a conscious and specific decision to send their children to school in the French Quarter when applying for Plessy. Going to school in the French Quarter is an education in and of itself – providing unrivaled history, artistic opportunity, and diversity. Many parents recognized this and therefore chose this school for their children. Removing the school from the Quarter removes a key element that informed the decision of many parents and separates Plessy from other schools.

2. Many parents rely on the location of the school due to the proximity to the CBD, Treme, middle school, and its location in the French Quarter. Parents and family members who work in the service, hospitality and retail industries depend on being within walking distance to the school. Two miles difference doesn't sound far when an assumption of car travel is made, but is significant for those who normally or occasionally have to walk. Since adequate time was not provided to parents to apply elsewhere (this decision has come after the OneApp deadline for



Homer Plessy French Quarter

next year) this move cannot be considered.

3. When in the 7th ward, Plessy had difficulty integrating the school, and it was a less diverse and dynamic school than it currently is. Source. The School was moved to the French Quarter with the goal of “spurring growth, and attracting a broader base of students”. Julie Hanks said, “If you’re from Uptown or the 9th Ward, or Lakeview, or the East, everybody has a chance to come into the French Quarter and feel a part of the city as a whole. Which is also what we are hoping to reflect in our hallways: that all are welcome.” Given what was said when Plessy moved here, we can assume a move from the Quarter, and the draw that has for parents, will decrease diversity and provide a school in which students feel less a part of the city as a whole.

4. Other possible actions and building remediations were not adequately considered. An independent 3rd party assessment of the school building was not conducted, alternative funding sources for repairs and improvements were not presented to stakeholders, and a milestone based plan for incremental renovations (not only considering a gut and rebuild) were not provided.

5. This decision was not adequately considered with input by parents. Parents were not consulted on this decision until after our petition drew attention and outrage about the plan. The town hall meeting was also only considered after the petition. Source. During the town hall meeting, the CEO committed to sending out a survey to parents – this survey was not sent and instead closed feedback was requested. This feedback was not presented to parents for audit, and multiple parent emails asking for the survey were ignored.

6. The community was not adequately consulted or considered. Over 1,400 members of the community, including parents, alumni, residents and more have signed a petition against moving the school. Additionally, the community was not provided the needed information to make such a decision: this topic was left off school board agendas, and minutes pertaining to this decision were not publicly posted. We believe this did not provide the adequate public notice and violated Open Meetings laws.

7. We believe the Plessy CEO cannot make this decision to apply, and instead a board vote is required due to this being both a facility and financial decision. While it was stated in the town hall meeting that the board voted to give the CEO the ability to make this decision in the February board meeting, a vote can only be taken on items listed on the proposed agenda, which this was not. We believe this violates public comment rules and Open Meetings laws.

8. Many questions remain unanswered, and need to be adequately addressed:

a. Many parents weren’t able to attend the town hall meeting due to short notice, conflicts, work, lack of transportation etc. How have you ensured that the voices of those most impacted by this potential move have been heard?

b. Why were current & prospective Homer Plessy French Quarter parents not informed of this

possibility before the OneApp deadline?

c. How many children/families walk to/from school. How would this be disrupted by a move?

d. Why have emails from parents asking about the parent survey been ignored?

e. Why was only 1 of 11 Board members in attendance for the Town Hall?

f. What other options for building renovation plans have been considered?

g. Has an independent assessment of the building been conducted? What were the results?

h. Has a conversation between the school and the VCC taken place to address assumed permitting/design issues?

i. Have other sources of funding been considered? What private or public sources have been discussed/what research has been conducted into grants, public dollars or private investment?

The process issues around this decision are disappointing and we believe preclude Plessy from effectively submitting this application. However, it is our hope that a larger understanding of this issue will prevail and persuade you to not apply. Keeping the school in the French Quarter, where parents and caregivers wanted and chose to send their children, is ultimately in the best interest of the community, the parents, and most importantly – the “Quarter Kids” - the students of Homer Plessy.

Christopher Olsen

chris@olsen.ventures

Save Our French Quarter School

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