

**ROLL CALL – PRESENT:** Alderman Feldman Alderman Bernstein  
Alderman Newman Alderman Moran  
Alderman Drummer Alderman Engelman  
Alderman Wynne

A Quorum was present.

**ABSENT:** Aldermen Kent and Rainey

**PRESIDING:** Mayor Lorraine H. Morton

A SPECIAL MEETING of the City Council was called to order by Mayor Morton at 5:16 p. m. April 4, 2001 in the Council Chamber for the purpose of considering a Zoning Ordinance text amendment. The Council voted to hold the special meeting at the March 26 City Council meeting.

City Manager Roger Crum announced that Council would consider language in proposed Ordinance 24-O-01, which has the effect of allowing offices for the public school district to be part of the zoning allowed in this district. That was the only matter before the Council, no other matters could be considered and a vote of six aldermen was required to pass the text amendment.

Ordinance 24-O-01 – Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Consideration of proposed Ordinance 24-O-01 by which the City Council would approve the recommendation of the Plan Commission to amend Chapter 18 “Definitions” of the Zoning Ordinance to be explicit in including within the definition the offices and support facilities of a public school district when these are on a zoning lot substantially used for classrooms.

**CITIZEN COMMENT:**

W. Michael Green, 1631 McDaniel Ave., stated that a false picture had been painted of McDaniel Avenue neighbors that they don’t want young children to be educated by denying a day care center in the neighborhood. Their main concern is that African Americans will pay above and beyond what others pay for this facility to be built. He said that no property value analysis was done to see if real estate values would go down if the facility were built. He suggested that if property values go down, that has to be added to the cost of this facility. He asked why, in the name of integration, they (neighbors) have to pay more to get things done. He referred to one construction project that resulted in cracked foundations and basement flooding. They heard that the district did reconnaissance at Lincolnwood School. The district has stated the administration building at 1314 Ridge Avenue cannot be torn down because it is a historical landmark. He noted the old Evanston YMCA was a historical building and was torn down for a building in the Research Park, so things can be changed. He could not see building this facility with the amount of traffic that will be generated and where many elderly people live. The neighborhood is fragile and still recovering from damage incurred from the deep tunnel project. Now the district wants to add to that and take open space. He said no feasibility study has been done. Since last October neighbors have asked for feasibility studies for this facility at other sites and no documents were forthcoming. To him, a feasibility study would include a cost analysis and drawings of other sites. He asked who is to say they cannot use heavy machinery, with the language in the ordinance, in the future? He noted there are few sidewalks there.

Ben Jackson, 2417 Lake St., expressed concern about sidewalks and streets in his neighborhood. He passed out copies of definitions of alley, sidewalk and street; showed a private sidewalk on Grove Street to Pitner Avenue. He noted that people walk in the streets and when it snows it is impossible to get by. A resident for 48 years, he has seen many children hit by vehicles there. He referred to a traffic report that indicated no sidewalks were needed and alleys were sufficient. He said the traffic report was prepared by District 65 on Pulaski Day when traffic was 50% of what it is normally. There is a lot of traffic on Lake Street. He asked what about streets and sidewalks for residents and the children? He noted there are speed bumps from Church Street to Grove Street but behind the school there are no speed bumps. He noted on one report Clark Street was listed and there is no Clark Street there. He alleged the traffic engineer was trying to railroad this building into the neighborhood by putting out a false report. He pointed out that McDaniel is an avenue with only one sidewalk. Neighbors were told the street would be widened. He said when somebody gets out on the right hand side of their car they have to dodge traffic and people speed on that street. Residents want speed bumps there but don't have them. He has walked the neighborhood for the past nine months talking with residents and the City has not been out there. He termed this a serious condition with children walking in the streets. He noted that traffic for ETHS cuts down Fowler and McDaniel, both one-way streets. He observed that they have stops lights, stop signs and flowerpots at intersections and people still speed. He predicted that it would get worse if they build a \$27 million building where there are inadequate sidewalks and streets.

Rose Cannon, 745 Brummel St., lifelong resident, spoke of District 65 trying to force a new building into a neighborhood that already has three schools within a three block radius. She noted the King Lab School has over 300 students. ETHS has 3,033 students, with a potential for 5,000 students and the Shore School for disabled children is nearby. Traffic comes in daily to each of these institutions. She said this issue is citywide and not restricted to the McDaniel neighbors. Thirty busses are anticipated to come into the neighborhood for the Lab School and the new facility. She called this project irresponsible and unconscionable; pointed out the loss of green space to residents and students attending these institutions. She said that District 65's plan is to build a facility in an area that already has deplorable air standards and lots of traffic. She asked what the children would breathe with the constant rotation of vehicles. She pointed out at the lab school and ETHS, there is a break in the middle of the day where there is no traffic, but the childcare center will have a rotation all day long. She predicted no relief for the residents who will constantly breathe fumes, lose green space and have their homes devalued. Her group is willing to use all remedies available to block this building; does not want this facility in this neighborhood and she asked them to put it somewhere else. There has been no environmental impact study. Her group was willing to seek legal remedies and go to state and federal authorities if necessary.

Peggy Tarr, 907 Sherman Ave., found it ironic that this meeting was held on the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., who advocated solving problems by peaceful means. She stated the City would be complicit if it approves the amendment to allow District 65 to build the early childhood/administrative office complex on the North Shore Channel park lot. The question has been asked is why not put this building at Lincolnwood School property away from ETHS and other schools where traffic wouldn't be as great. At Lincolnwood the building could have a basement. Because of flooding in this area, no basement is proposed. She asked what people were to think when the district stated the footprint wouldn't fit at Lincolnwood? She thought that was expected when the building was designed to fit on the King Lab lot. She noted the district said it could build an early childhood center on the King Lab lot without a change in the ordinance, which only serves to show the district's lack of concern for the early childhood population. If early childhood care was the district's chief concern it would have done something about the deplorable conditions long before now without focusing on combining early childhood care with administration offices. Suddenly, when a combined building is desirable, the plight of early childhood students assumes importance it never had before and serves to muster up compassion and endorsement by citizens who want better conditions for the early childhood population. A speaker at the P&D Committee meeting commented that they need to think about the children. She supposed the speaker did not think they needed to concentrate on the neighborhood in which senior citizens and people of color live and that they need to think about everybody. Air pollution from vehicle traffic is already bad in this neighborhood. Additional pollution will affect the children and residents alike. She begged Council and citizens to think about the impact of amending this ordinance. She asked what else would the district be able to put on open space without allowing the neighborhood any recourse? The neighbors who are threatened by this complex deserve to know that they are valued too. She urged Council to vote against the amendment.

Betty Sue Ester, 2100 Lake St., opposed changing the ordinance to allow the administrative building to be tacked on to the early childhood center. By removing the administrative offices, they would not need as much parking space for the staff. The building would be smaller because they would not need the large auditorium to hold district board

meetings. She recalled Alderman Drummer asking for the number of busses that will come. Different numbers have been given and they were given a traffic pattern. She nobody has said where the bus would turn around. One drawing of King Lab showed a playground in front of the new building with a fence on McDaniel to keep children safe. Today there are trees in that play lot. She thought there were too many unanswered questions. She discussed the number of early childhood students and the potential number of busses; pointed out the neighborhood children cannot attend the King Lab school and are bussed to other schools. She noted they are bringing in another program and probably not too many of those parents who have children in the early childhood program will wind up there. She noted that Headstart could only take so many children who are not low income. She asked what is the message they are sending to residents and to a certain population? She fights for public education daily and asked that they not harm the people who pay for public education nor residents by changing their neighborhood. She predicted many busses would park on McDaniel waiting to pick up three- and four-year-old children.

Sid Zwick, 1720 Washington St., long-term resident said he represented the view of Evanston senior citizens, many of whom have been forced out by high taxes. He is not affected by this project because he lives in southwest Evanston. He quoted "where there is a lack of vision, the people perish." He said this project has many flaws and showed a video of current traffic, streets, sidewalks, well-kept homes and busses waiting for school to get out. He noted this neighborhood is already congested; asked board members why this site was selected on a one-way street (McDaniel Ave.) between Church and Lake, when McDaniel between Grant and Colfax is a two-way street? He pointed out this open space is parkland. He asked why this area was chosen, with a large minority population, rather than the area around Lincolnwood School where the population is white? His opinion was that this was either conscious or unconscious racism. He found it hard to understand that the footprint for this building was too large for Lincolnwood School, which is on a spacious site. He pointed out there are no sidewalks on Grove Street so everybody walks in the street. He said that the school district wants to take what little open space exists in this neighborhood, while Lincolnwood enjoys a lot open space, which he termed unfair. He discussed overcrowding in the grammar schools in Evanston and asked what is the point of having all the early childhood programs in one location when it will require many busses and cars going to one location? He could not think of any neighborhood that would want that. He noted the elementary schools are not in one place – only the high school. He observed that a great deal of money has been spent on bussing children here since 1966. Theoretically he called it a condescending attitude by whites to think by sending black children to school with white children that their achievement levels would skyrocket. Many members of the black community are wondering if it would not be better to go back to neighborhood schools so parents don't have to go across town when they have to meet with the teacher. He was told the district spends about \$1 million annually on bussing and suggested that program be re-examined. He recalled when Evanston had separate beaches, separate seating at the Valencia Theater and separate YMCA's. To him it was not surprising that residual racism exists in Evanston. He said if the school boards had listened to residents, who three times tried to bring the districts together, they would not be in this predicament today. He questioned the assumption of bringing these programs together even though they are funded by federal/state funds and they were committed to spend \$14 million on the building. He noted that the Family Focus building (former Foster School) was suggested and rejected because it has to be updated. He said the school board had the gall to brag about the democratic referendum where there were no options. On the referendum last spring, nobody could separate the administrative from the early childhood part -- the choice was "yes" or "no." He termed that autocratic, noting hardly a third of the registered voters voted on this issue. He suggested they think about the entire community and was convinced there is no vision in this project. He felt this was up to the City Council to show they are concerned about the welfare of all citizens by denying this zoning amendment. He thought Family Focus was eager to share their building and the neighborhood yearned for a neighborhood school. He asked Council to think about the total tax picture for the community. He found the school board's communications about the referendum disingenuous and misleading in saying this would not affect taxes because the money has to be paid back.

Nancy Brown, 1501 McDaniel Ave., was directly affected by the construction of the deep tunnel, which was an ordeal. There were Mack trucks all summer long in 1996, which were disruptive to homes and foundations. It was a relief to see open space after that summer. She pointed out that soccer teams of children above five years of age who play there weekly use open space. There is also a baseball field and a basketball court. A vote in favor of the zoning amendment would eliminate these activities where parents and children bond and a "yes" vote would create misery for neighbors. She hoped they would consider the neighbors and how they feel about this issue.

Lidia Camacho, 2125 Darrow Ave., urged Council to think about the good things that will come from Headstart and the early childhood center. She works at Family Focus and they have a small space for children in the ESL program,

the GED program and computer lab. A larger space is needed for these services. She asked them to think about Headstart being together with kindergarten in the new childcare center.

Maria Esther Noria, 1748 Dodge Ave., said a new building is needed. The mother of a young girl currently in Headstart, she said there are many children there. When they go out, the young children are among older children, hear foul language and are pushed around by them. The teachers cannot handle all these older children. If parents had another place for their young children, they would remove them from this situation.

L. Brian Pitts, 2425 Davis St., (at McDaniel), noted that some had spoken about playing soccer, baseball and basketball but did not mention how international the green space is which is used by blacks, whites and Hispanics, who all play together. Taking away the green space would destroy the idea of the King Lab School. He bought his building 20 years ago and said if they build an administration building, he would not hear or see birds, geese or raccoons. He asked about the projected 90 busses and hundreds of cars exiting from the building on Davis? Cars are parked on both sides of Davis Street and, when there is snow, one can scarcely pass. He said if Council votes for the amendment, they would be destroying them.

Iris Axelrod, 828 Main St., supervisor of the special education program that will go into the early childhood center, said currently teachers and children are in programs located throughout the City. Programs such as Headstart, childcare, pre-K and special education are at different locations and it was important to put the pieces together to make a whole. She thought when together, the district would be able to provide a creative educational center where families can take advantage of a variety of services. She said many communities have early childhood centers.

Sally Rutherford, 2102 Harrison St., stated that this was not an ill-conceived project. She thought this would enhance education for pre-school children and children at Haven School, where 10 classrooms would be released and at two other grade schools. She said the issue is changing the definition. What they were asking for was adding offices to the educational services of this district. She termed the building appropriate for the space and stated the administration needs a modern, updated space. As a taxpayer she thought consolidating services and administration under one roof made sense and urged Council to vote to amend the ordinance.

Tana McDonald, supports friends opposed to building at this site. She passed out a chart describing vehicle arrivals and departures at the site; spoke of traffic for at least 12 hours a day, five days a week and that trees would likely be affected by traffic and air pollution. She said many elderly people live there who enjoy the parkland would no longer enjoy peace and quiet until after a protracted rush hour. She did not think they would want that in their neighborhood and asked why they are putting it on these people. She pointed out residents will find it difficult to enter their homes in the evenings due to increased rush-hour traffic. The neighborhood will change dramatically from homes in a tranquil setting to homes in a congested, heavily trafficked; educational district and property values will plummet. She said this is traffic for preschool age children whose parents must drop them off by parking their cars and taking them out of their child safety seats and carrying them into the building. She pointed out 3,000 students flow into ETHS plus nearly 300 faculty and employees and Lab School traffic. Enrollments and employees for these programs could increase. Maintenance for this site will be exorbitant. She urged the district to go the extra mile to find another site; suggested the Builder's Square site, which has been vacant for nearly two years. She saw this as "quick take" without compensation to residents, who will be financing the center with their health, peace of mind and hard-paid-for property values. Precedents have been set for this kind of compensation; e.g. payment to Chef's Station for loss of business during construction of the McDougal Littell building. She objected to the way information was presented to the Council from the Planning & Development Committee members dated March 9. Robert Best, attorney for the district, stated that Evanston approved the center and site in a March 2000 referendum. She stated the referendum did not specify a site for this center and called the traffic impact analysis inadequate.

Alderman Newman noted the meeting was scheduled from 5-6:00 p.m., regretted that he could not stay and left at 6:30 p.m.

Mary Erickson, 1214 Greenleaf St., chair of the Early Childhood Center Building Committee for the past two years reported the driving force for this building was the early childhood component, which will occupy 70% of the building and, by law, is allowed at this site. The center must be on the first floor, which dictates the size of the building's footprint. The building has to be in a suitable area, not in an industrial area, because very young children will be brought there. The district also did not want to take any more property off the tax rolls. She reported the

committee looked at the Rice Center (unavailable); contacted ETHS to see if they had any land they would swap or if the district could use space in their building. District 202 had no land available and no space at the high school. They talked to the City about available land or possibly doing a joint project with the City. They looked at the land where the new Levy Center will be built. They went to Family Focus about possibly re-acquiring that building. The Family Focus Board was not ready to give up that building, which is important to the community because of the many organizations it houses. Her committee brought aerial photographs of the Lincolnwood School and 1314 Ridge sites to the P&D Committee meeting and superimposed the building on those sites and it does not fit. The process has taken a lot of time and every step has been documented in a public record. She wrote a summary of the search, which was available at the second community meeting and given to the eight people who attended. She stated the part in question is the 30% allotted to the administration building. That is the part that does not fit in the Zoning ordinance definition of "educational facility" and what they are asking to be amended. She thought there was a rationale that to deliver education, administrators, curriculum and social service personnel who support education delivered by District 65 are needed. They would be housed in this center on the second floor as well as the Jordan Teacher's Center, which is currently housed at ETHS. She said the decision to put administration with education was to connect administrators with kids and was also an economic decision. They looked at 1314 Ridge Avenue, which is a beautiful but dilapidated building. Renovating that building would cost millions and they would end up with a building that was originally a house and not meant to be an office building. They looked at renting space downtown for administration but the cost was too high. It is possible 1314 Ridge could be sold and put back on the tax rolls, which they hope will happen and if that happened, they would still need a building. She said it was largely an economic decision to put the administration with the early childhood center.

Marla Israel, School District 65, stated many wanted a resolution of this matter that evening. Every day postponed puts the district further behind. She noted the traffic would change. They are asking Council to look at the amendment. The children and families need this new facility. Currently children are in inappropriate buildings. She was confused when she heard people speaking of vision and not talk about children. The vision and the future are children and the community needs to talk about its children.

Robert Best, attorney for District 65 and lifelong resident, stated the district prizes open space and invested a great deal of money in this property nearly 50 years ago. Great care was taken to retain open space at this site. The building proposed is permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and it is the placement of the administration on the second floor they are asking be amended. He said the traffic study prepared by Mr. Doron was thorough. In meetings with the City's traffic engineering staff, they concurred that streets in this neighborhood could accommodate the traffic. Busses will be parked behind the Lab School instead of in front as they do currently. Busses will be moved away from residents, not closer to them. He pointed out a great deal of information was disseminated about this project to every resident and in the material it was clear that this was the site for the building. He noted that not a single school referendum passed in the recent election in the six-county area. He reported a meeting with Alderman Drummer, who had expressed community concerns, last week to attempt to identify and address issues. Six points were summarized in a memo from Zoning Administrator Arthur Alterson and Community Development Director Jim Wolinski, which was distributed. He reported that Superintendent Hardy Murphy issued a letter indicating the support for both ventures and will make resources available for reconstruction of the alley on the east side of King Lab School and building of sidewalks on the entire west side of McDaniel from Church to Lake. The school district will pay up to \$50,000 (residents' portion) to reconstruct the alley. The school will make certain there are sidewalks. The other four items they were asked to address as they go forward. Those are that the City/District consider placing sidewalks on the south side of Davis between McDaniel and Fowler. They were happy to discuss this and to see if it is feasible. The City will consider establishing Resident-Only Parking Zones along Lake between McDaniel and Pitner and on McDaniel between Grove and Davis. The district supports that. The district will go along with the decision of the City on the issue of making McDaniel a two-way street between Lake and Church. The district and the City's Public Works Department are involved in discussions about appropriate schemes for bus traffic and the district will take reasonable steps to comply with all that City staff recommends. He stated the district was adding a few busses to those already coming into the neighborhood and thought they had made a good-faith effort to respond positively to Alderman Drummer's concerns.

Ann Blyth, 1513 McDaniel Ave., was concerned that not all information was disclosed to neighbors or misinformation was given out. She stated, currently, the district states they don't intend to bring in maintenance to the open land and that it is not in the plan; thought the way the ordinance was written so that maintenance could be brought to this site, which would bring environmental concerns and make the area more industrial-like. Some

speakers implied the neighbors are against the early childhood center. That was not true. Neighbors are opposed to the location the district is proposing. If Council approves the amendment, she felt they were validating some of the misinformation or lack of information. She recalled twice in the *Evanston Review*, a person representing AYSO was told one thing regarding availability of land for children, who come daily after school and weekends to play soccer. The board has now changed that according to AYSO. Last week in the *Evanston Review*, the district board president asked why was there environmental concern for a parking lot of 75 cars? The blueprints and zoning analysis given out in February do not agree with that number which was 165-204--a drastic change. She acknowledged that voters approved the referendum by a margin of three to one and pointed out the referendum was two-pronged. The district asked for a new building and increased funds for technology. If a person was for one part, such as technology, they voted for it anyway. The referendum did not stipulate location. Several weeks ago soil testing was done and she wanted to know the results of the soil test such as quality of soil and water table. She said Alderman Drummer heard their concerns many times. She was disappointed to hear there was a meeting between District 65 and Alderman Drummer because they were not aware it and were not asked for their input.

Alderman Feldman stated Council had not anticipated the number of people who came that evening. He moved that this item be tabled until the Special City Council on April 16 when they would discuss the Levy Center contract. He hoped that Council would limit citizen participation to 15 minutes with no extensions of time. He thought Council had heard the community. Seconded by Alderman Moran.

Alderman Drummer reported that his meeting with school officials had nothing to do with commitment to the project and he would not vote for the amendment. He pointed out to the district that any zoning change is for the benefit of the applicant and not for the benefit of the community, therefore it is incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate that the proposed changes would be good for the neighborhood. There should be protections for the neighborhood. The two issues they discussed were financial and the district has agreed to those. The other issues have to be dealt with by the City, aldermen-elect and the neighbors. It will be up to neighbors to say whether they want these changes. There are things that need to be discussed that would make the neighborhood better than it is today. He complimented all for their efforts, noting the information on traffic and busses was the most complete he has seen. He thanked Council for not voting the past Monday and will explain why he would not vote for this at the appropriate time.

Alderman Drummer asked that Citizen Comment not be limited to 15 minutes, noting they were talking about changing people's lives. He urged that residents be permitted to speak for three-five minutes. That was acceptable to Alderman Feldman. Mayor Morton asked Council to agree to limit each speaker to three minutes. There were no objections. Motion carried. No nays.

City Manager Crum clarified that the special meeting on April 16 was to discuss the Levy Center final construction contract and the text amendment at 7:00 p.m. with a Human Services Committee meeting to follow.

There being no further business to come before Council, Mayor Morton adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Mary P. Morris,  
City Clerk

A videotape recording of this meeting has been made part of the permanent record and is available in the City Clerk's office.