

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Charter Actions Requiring a Vote

- ☐ Approve a Charter Application
- ☐ Approve a Charter Renewal (15 yrs.)
- ☐ Approve Charter Continuance (5 or 10 yrs.)
- ☐ Approve a Charter Amendment Request
- ☐ Approve a Charter Agreement
- ☐ Give a Charter Notice of Concern
- ☐ Lift the Charter Notice of Concern
- ☐ Commence Charter Revocation Proceedings
- ☐ Revoke a Charter
- ☐ Board Action, Other_____

Non-Voting Board Items

- ☒ Public Hearing Item
- ☐ Discussion Item
- ☐ Read into Record

Policies

- ☐ Open a New Policy or Changes to a Policy for Public Comment
- ☐ Approve a New Policy
- ☐ Approve Revisions to an Existing Policy

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SUBJECT: **Public Hearing: The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School Facility**

DATE: **February 24, 2020**

The following proposal was opened for public comment on January 9, 2020, and it will remain open until the public hearing on February 24, 2020. The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) will vote on full charter approval, including the facility address, at the meeting scheduled for May 19, 2020. No comments have been received to date. Any public comment received will be discussed prior to the vote.

Proposal

DC PCSB staff requests that its Board hold a public hearing on the request from The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (Truth PCS) to locate at 1800 Perry St. NE in Ward 5. The facility would be shared, each in distinct sections of the building, by Truth PCS, Latin American Montessori Bilingual PCS (LAMB PCS), Perry Street Preparatory PCS (Perry Street Prep PCS), and St. Jerome Academy, a small private school with a satellite campus of eight students on the third floor. Pending its full charter approval, the school will begin operation in school year (SY) 2020-21, seeking to enroll 90 students in grades 6 and 7. By SY 2026-27, it will reach maturity, serving a total of 450 students in grades 6-12.

If Truth PCS is approved to open at its intended location, DC PCSB staff will conduct a pre-opening site visit at least two weeks prior to the start of the school year. The school must meet all safety and compliance requirements found in the Pre-Opening Site Visit Checklist¹ to operate at the proposed facility.

Background

The mission of Truth PCS is to:

...Empower students to transform the world. Students at Truth PCS will graduate ready for success in college, career, and life. They will serve as active agents in the construction of peace. They will know who they are, what they want, and where they are going. They can walk into any space, find their place, and make a powerful contribution. Truth PCS achieves this vision through a Montessori education built upon student-led classrooms with a learning environment deliberately designed to enable student engagement in meaningful, authentic work and to foster a close-knit community where students pursue justice and practice stewardship.

The DC PCSB Board granted Truth PCS conditional approval on May 20, 2019 to establish a new public charter school. As explained in Truth PCS's decision letter,² this approval is contingent upon the school satisfying all of the Board's conditions, which includes securing a fully executed lease or title agreement for a facility. In early November 2019, the 1800 Perry St. NE space became available, and on November 27, 2019, Truth PCS and LAMB PCS signed a letter of intent outlining the proposed lease terms (Attachment A). On January 31, 2020, the school submitted a fully signed and executed sub-sub-sublease agreement between the two parties (Attachment B).³

According to the lease agreement, Truth PCS will occupy four classrooms, offices, and pull-out space on the second floor in addition to a reception area, offices, and amenities on the first floor. Shared amenities and spaces include the health suite and use of the nurse, the multipurpose room, outdoor and greenspace, staff lounge, adult restrooms, warming ovens, cooling refrigerators, and the conference room. Truth PCS may pay a prorated share of food service, WiFi, and phone costs should it choose to operate under the same contracts as LAMB PCS.

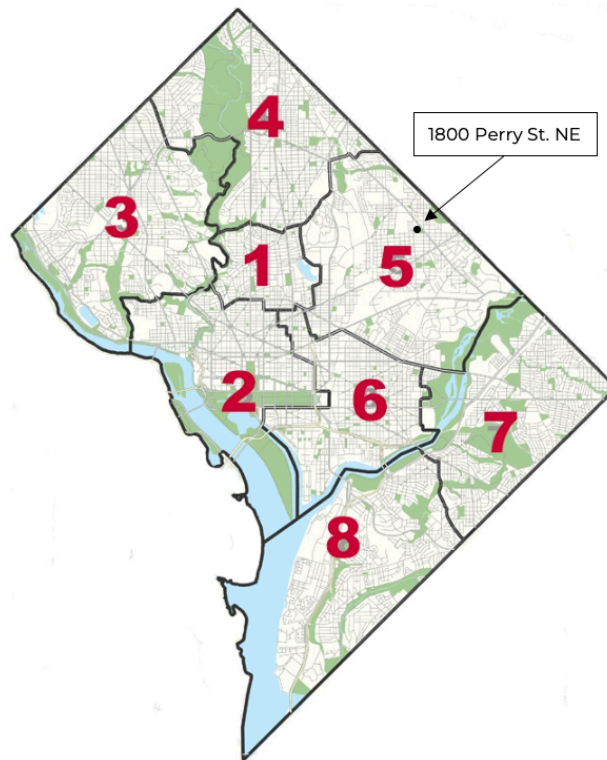
¹ The checklist may be found at <https://dcpcsb.egnyte.com/dl/aWwDCwzMfT>. This checklist is subject to revisions, which will be shared with the school in advance of the site-visit.

² The decision letter can be found at <https://dcpcsb.egnyte.com/dl/rASnSWb8RJ>.

³ Of note, the prime landlord, the municipal government of DC, leased the property, commonly known as the Taft School, to Perry Street Prep PCS, which leased a portion of the premises to the Charter School Incubator Initiative, a DC nonprofit corporation, which then leased to LAMB PCS. Truth PCS will lease a portion of the sub-sublease premises from LAMB PCS.

As there is no specific parking associated with the facility, there are no parking spaces associated with the lease.

The lease will last for one year, commencing on June 22, 2020, and the school will have the opportunity to discuss a mutually agreed upon extension by November 15, 2020. Because Perry Street Prep PCS is the original sublessor and occupies a portion of the facility, Truth PCS has also engaged with its leadership to ensure a successful co-location and explore potential expansions in the facility.



Photograph of 1800 Perry St. NE

Financial Implications

The full-service lease agreement between Truth PCS and LAMB PCS stipulates an annual usage fee of \$300K. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) facilities allowance was \$3,335 per student, requiring Truth PCS to enroll 90 students to break-even on its facilities revenue.

As of February 7, 2020, the school had received 103 total applications through the My School DC lottery. The table below outlines low, medium, and high enrollment scenarios, relative to the facilities funding:

<u>Scenario</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>
Estimated Enrollment	75	85	90
Faculties' Allowance	\$3,335	\$3,335	\$3,335
Occupancy Costs	300,000	300,000	300,000
Total Costs	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
UPSFF - Facilities Funding	\$250,125	\$283,475	\$300,150
Total Encroachment	(\$49,875)	(\$16,525)	\$150

As illustrated above, the low enrollment assumption of 75 students yields an encroachment of \$50K on the school's non-facilities revenue. Further, the school's budget reflects an operating surplus above \$400k and cash on hand in excess of \$600K (100+ days) for the year. Thus, this total encroachment can be absorbed with little impact to the budget overall. Lastly, any increases in facilities revenue for the year will result in more favorable outcomes for FY 2021.

Community Engagement and Notification

The school responded to several questions from DC PCSB regarding its community outreach efforts (Attachment C). As a secondary Montessori school, Truth PCS focused on Ward 5 for its location because of its proximity to DC's nine public Montessori elementary campuses and their families. In particular, three of these nine campuses – Lee Montessori PCS – Brookland, Shining Stars Montessori PCS, and LAMB PCS – are located in Ward 5, and about 33 percent of applications received to date have come from Ward 5 students. Truth PCS began canvassing Ward 5 in June 2019, going door-to-door, holding informational sessions at the Woodridge and Lamond-Riggs public libraries, attending events such as Ward 5 Day and the Ward 5 Race and Choice Forum, and mailing postcards to all homes within a one-mile radius of 1800 Perry St. NE.

Furthermore, Truth PCS has engaged many civic leaders and community members about its intention to locate in the area, including: Ward 5 Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie and staffer Jonathan McNair, Ward 5 State

Board of Education Representative Zachary Parker, and Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) Chairperson Ursula Higgins of Single-Member District 5B02, which encompasses the proposed facility. Truth PCS leadership also presented to ANC 5B at its meeting on January 22, 2020 and solidified a community partnership with the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) to provide enrichment programming. Both Chairperson Higgins and UDC have submitted letters of support for the school's facility (Attachment D). In all outreach conducted, Truth PCS has received only positive feedback with locating at 1800 Perry St. NE.

On January 9, 2020, DC PCSB staff notified Chairperson Higgins of the school's intent to locate at 1800 Perry St. NE. Staff also posted the notice in the DC Register and on DC PCSB's website.⁴

Attachment(s) to this Notification

Attachment A: Signed Letter of Intent

Attachment B: Executed Sub-Sub-Sublease Agreement

Attachment C: Memo to DC PCSB – Response to Facility Questions

Attachment D: Letters of Support from Chairperson Higgins, 5B02, and UDC

⁴ The public hearing notice can be found at <https://dcpcsb.org/notice-public-hearing-facility-sojourner-truth-pcs>.