

# NEWS

## Greater New Haven Clergy Association

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### **The Greater New Haven Clergy Association calls for a fair and transparent process**

The Greater New Haven Clergy Association calls for a fair and transparent process surrounding the purchase and development of the Martin Luther King School site on Dixwell Avenue. The following statement calls on the local state representative to take leadership of this process to force Achievement First, Alderwomen Foskey-Cyrus and Clyburn, and the Bob Proto controlled unions to open up the meetings to public scrutiny and to negotiate in good faith with the community.

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For several weeks now we have been warning that the process to sell the vacant Martin Luther King School on Dixwell Avenue was an anti-democratic closed process that essentially shut out the people most affected by the sale, the neighbors who live adjacent to the site. We were also concerned that the proposed sale price of \$1.5 million was well below the appraised value of \$2.88 million the city obtained. We wondered in an earlier press statement what secrets were being hidden by the supposed negotiators Alderwomen Brenda Foskey-Cyrus (D-21) and Delphine Clyburn (D-20), as well as Dacia Toll of Achievement First. Why else would they continue to insist that a process that should be so open and transparent remain so secret?

The mystery behind all of the clandestine closed-to-the-public meetings is that the union funded Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE) has been running the show since the summer. Achievement First, the unions AFSCME and UNITE HERE, and Alderwomen Foskey-Cyrus and Clyburn were all there behind the closed and union guarded doors. There has been no sign of the neighbors.

We have been told several different reasons why we have been excluded from the discussions. One convoluted excuse has been that since we were not invited at the beginning, and therefore did not attend the earlier meetings, we have given up our right to attend now. Only seasoned politicians and double-talkers could come up with that justification with a straight face.

Another has been that there is no need for us to attend, since the issues we are raising are being addressed at the secret meetings. We had hoped that might be the case when at the last Board of Aldermen (BOA) meeting alderwoman Foskey-Cyrus had the sale sent back to committee. We actually thought that perhaps they would allow additional partners to join the discussions. How wrong we were. Instead, the requested delay at the BOA was to allow the alderwomen's bosses, Bob Proto and the unions, time to schedule some additional secret meetings with Achievement First.

What we learned, from press reports, are that those secret meetings were in fact a cover for a good old fashioned stick up. We first thought that Achievement First, with the assistance of the alderwomen, was attempting to rob the city with the steeply discounted sale price of the site, and we were correct in that assertion. Every time they develop one of these schools, they get a big fat raise in their salaries, \$70,000 for the CEO Toll, yet the taxpayers do not see a corresponding decrease in our taxes.

But what we didn't know was that the unions and the above named alderwomen were also committing a robbery of their own. Among other things, they are attempting to extort \$250,000 for "youth enrichment programs" which would be controlled by and for Bob Proto and the unions through CCNE and a new, mystery organization called Newhallville Rising. We don't know who they are, but we do suspect that it is again a union fronted organization.

Due to the clandestine nature of this mugging, we have not had access to the secret Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), but according to press reports, some of the other items in the document include: union jobs (read white and suburban) and resources for community organizations (read union). So when the union dominated aldermen approve this project they and their union managers benefit immensely.

No wonder everyone sitting around the table are either connected to Achievement First or Bob Proto and the unions; they do not want any other witnesses to the crime spree being committed.

Enough is enough. Don't Newhallville and Dixwell have enough crime in the community? Put on a white collared shirt and pay yourself enough money, and a crime becomes community service.

The Greater New Haven Clergy Association has from the beginning called for an open process of community meetings to discuss the fate of a CBA for the sale of MLK. Every time another secret is unveiled we see the community being further raped by it's so called leaders. This crime spree has gone on too long. The public has the right to know what is happening and who the players are in this transaction. They may have forgotten the neighbors of this school or the taxpayers of New Haven, but we have not.

The State of Connecticut is primarily funding this construction. We are calling on Representative Gary Holder-Winfield to take leadership of this process to ensure that the neighbors of this project and Newhallville residents do not get fleeced. We again call for Achievement First, Alderwomen Foskey-Cyrus and Clyburn, and the Bob Proto controlled unions to open up the meetings to public scrutiny and to negotiate in good faith with the community, to produce a Community Benefits Agreement that we can all be proud to call our own.

*Rev. James W. Newman III is the President of the Greater New Haven Clergy Association, and is the pastor of New Freedom Missionary Baptist Church on Starr Street bordering the Dixwell and Newhallville neighborhoods.*