

Pittsburgh Public Schools Spring Hill PreK-5 Special Public Hearing Testimonies
July 29, 2025

#1

Ingrid Nagin

Community Member

My name is Ingrid Nagin. I have been a resident of Spring Hill since 2008 when my husband finished building our house. Also I am a board member of the Spring Hill Civic League.

Spring Hill Elementary School is quite literally the center of our Spring Hill community. We vote at the school, we use the playground, we send our kids to play basketball and we use the auditorium for our civic league meetings. Our Halloween parades end on the school ground. Emma Munson, a Pittsburgh non-profit foundation whose mission is to give out Halloween costumes to low-income children. For the last 4 years, with help of the Spring Hill Civic League, the Emma Munson Foundation has parked their truck outside the school and brought out racks of costumes so the children as they are leaving school can pick out their new Halloween costume. Such a great gift.

Spring Hill is a multi-generational community. There are people who are well into their 70's and 80's who went to Spring Hill Elementary and they sent to their children to that school. Many new families have bought houses in this community because their children could walk to the elementary school.

- We as a community must understand what PPS intends to do with this property. We must be part of the discussion.
- Communications about the school. Since I am not a parent I receive no updates about the status of the school. How can I be included in these communications?
- Has the renovations of Northview school started? What is the scope and costs? How do I receive updated about the renovations?



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#2

James Rizzo

Organization, Community Member

Keep Spring Hill Elementary Open Dear Members of the Pittsburgh Public School Board, I'm speaking today both as president of my neighborhood RCO, the Spring Hill Civic League, and as an individual concerned about the challenges facing the city, county, and PPS. I have two points to cover and will be brief and direct. First, I want to advocate FOR keeping Spring Hill Elementary school open and to advocate AGAINST a plan that closes Spring Hill while spending \$30 million dollars to reopen Northview Heights as the K-6 feeder school for our zone. This is by far the largest outstanding cost in the closure plan as a whole. Director Barker: you told WESA in January that closing King and reopening Northview Heights would be "a 'righting a wrong' kind of thing.", While I agree that Northview Heights deserves the services in the plan, this feeder pattern inflicts a fresh wrong on the students and families of Troy Hill, Spring Garden, and Spring Hill—part of which falls in your district. Second, should Spring Hill Elementary close, I ask that you work with the Spring Hill Civic League on the disposition of the building. We hope it can continue to be a part of our community as it has been since 1896. And I want to challenge you, the board of directors of one of the largest taxing agencies by revenue in the commonwealth, to support quality of life in our neighborhoods that fall outside a strict K-12 educational mandate. Without losing money, could you open a laundromat or grocery store where there's a need and demand? What about serving inexpensive dinners in a school cafeteria? Opening gyms one night a week? We look forward to trying to figure this out as best we can in Spring Hill, and hope you will do the same citywide.

Thank you.



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#3

Debbie Rihn

Organization



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#4

Erin Banning

Parent



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#5

Lily Allman

Student



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#6

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent, Community Member

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#7

Kate O'Brien

Parent, Community Member

What are you going to do with Spring Hill elementary ?

First thank you for allowing me to speak with you through online streaming. It has allowed me to participate today.

You know that none of us want you to close Spring Hill Elementary, we have been trying to advocate for it for over a year now. I know none of that matters because it closing in disregard of what our community wants. So now I am asking you what are you going to do with the building?

The school is a vital part of our community. It's where our little kids play, our older kids learn to ride bikes and play basketball. We vote there and have community meetings. It's a charming feature of our neighborhood nestled into our residential neighborhood. We don't have any other places where we could have meetings and vote, possibly the funeral home but nobody wants that.

Dr. Walters keeps saying that it could possibly become something else, we need more than that. We need a plan on what it will become. We don't want another shut down school, we already have one right over the bridge and Northview Heights.

We don't want it sold to become something that excludes members of our community. This school is the heart of Spring Hill.

The responsibility of keeping Spring Hill vital relies on PPS at this point. You have already decided our elementary school is going to shut down. Please be a good neighbor and show us that you care about what happens to our neighborhood by coming up with a plan for the building that won't hurt Spring Hill, won't destroy our property values, won't be an eyesore, and allows us to keep voting and hold community meetings.

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#8

Bill Fulmer

Student, Community Member

From what I'm seeing, this doesn't look like a thoughtful education plan. It looks like a sales pitch to cut costs and the savings they're promising will not come. In fact, I am arguing it will cost us more in the long run.

They toss out big numbers like "\$40 million," but they haven't shown the math. There's no breakdown of the real costs again just a sales pitch: closing buildings, busing kids across town, reassigning staff, or expanding support at the schools expected to absorb more students. But even by their own numbers, once you subtract the investments they're already planning to make, the net savings are maybe \$2 to \$3 million a year. And in a \$700 million budget. That is less one third of a penny on each dollar spent.

And what this sales pitch tries to even avoid talking about is the hidden cost: the cost of failing our kids. After Chicago closed dozens of schools from the same sales pitch to save money, dropout rates jumped. In Philly and Detroit, leaders made the same sales pitch we're hearing now and ended up pushing students into lower-performing schools with less support for special education. And the savings were none to marginal.

Meanwhile, this plan quietly pushes out the kids who are in need the most, who are most at risk in our communities for falling through the cracks and in all cases targeting the same poor communities, the same minority-majority neighborhoods.

If the goal is to downsize the district don't dress it up as "modernization" or "equity" when the process, the numbers, the tactics and the playbook all tell a very different story from past experiences. The board should understand what this vote really means for all of our communities, all of our children, and our shared future. Because this is not a thoughtful plan. It's a recycled sales pitch. And we've seen how that ends.



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