

3/26/15 testimony

Good evening everyone. My name is Karel Kilimnik. I attended Philadelphia Public schools all my life. I am a retired teacher and a member of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools (APPS).

I have been asking questions at SRC meetings for years. Last week, for the first time, I was directed to a district staffer to answer my questions about the cost of closing 24 schools. I have a major problem with this. If a question is asked in a public meeting then the answer should be given in a public manner. I have not heard from the staffer despite contacting the person. First, my questions are ignored. Now they are redirected with the same result -no answers.

As to my questions posed a mere week ago, it does make me wonder - who is running this district? Those 24 schools closed almost two years ago. Why aren't these figures readily available? The district claimed it was to save money so how will we know it did if our questions go unanswered? Or was it a ploy to turn vacant district buildings over to charter operators, a plan included in the Great Schools Compact.

The five commissioners sitting up there may not be receiving a direct salary but you are dealing with our money – public tax dollars – and you should answer our questions asked in a public forum in public. Instead of spending money on high priced private law firms like

you are doing right now with the APPS lawsuit charging you with violating the state Sunshine Act. Negotiate with us. We don't want money wasted on private law firms. We want you to follow the state Sunshine Act. We want you to answer questions asked in these action meetings. With a new chair you now have the opportunity to institute a new policy of answering questions. So, chairman Neff, is this going to happen under your leadership?

So, is the public still shut out of Great Schools Compact meetings. The Great Schools Compact that is managed by the private Phila. School Partnership, where decisions are made that directly impact on the Phila. School District. It feels like we are pounding at the gates to say "Let us in." We want a voice. As a member of the Great Schools Compact are you going to demand that meetings be open to the public?