

RCSD rents space for All City High, Puerto Ricans

Justin Murphy

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The Rochester City School District will lease space in two former charter school buildings, including for All City High students who wish to leave premises at 690 St. Paul St. over contamination concerns.

The school board Saturday approved leases for the former Vertus Charter School building at Austin Street and Lyell Avenue, and for additional space at 30 Hart St., near 690 St. Paul St. There are already other district programs at Hart Street; the space in question was vacated when Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School closed last spring.

Both leases are for five years but have annual opt-out clauses, RCSD Director of Operations Michael Schmidt said.

It is not yet clear how they'll be used. All City High students and staff will be given the option of leaving 690 St. Paul St. and would go to the Austin Street building, Schmidt said.

At the same time, the district is lacking space for the influx of Puerto Rican students it has welcomed since Hurricane Maria. New bilingual classrooms will be opened at both Austin Street and Hart Street.

The number of students from Puerto Rico is now over 400 and expected to continue to grow.

"From a facilities perspective we can pivot pretty quickly, but we need to make sure to know what the students' academic needs are," Schmidt said.

Also Monday, RCSD released the results of water testing done at 690 St. Paul St. in late November, in part in response to student complaints about discolored water coming from the taps.

The test results showed four taps had elevated iron levels, which the analyst said is not dangerous but can make the water brown. One faucet had an elevated level of lead and was replaced.

Four taps had excessive turbidity, or cloudiness, likely the indicator of infrequent use and not necessarily cause for concern. Those outlets will be flushed, as will the ones with elevated iron levels.

JMURPHY7@Gannett.com



Shyhiem Rodriguez and Regina Harper lead fellow Rochester Prep High School students in chants outside the Rochester City School District office on Broad Street. They say the district knowingly rented

a building with toxins for use by their charter school. TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/@TYEE23/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Contaminated groundwater and soil beneath the building Rochester Prep High School leases on St. Paul Street is slated for cleanup by the state Department of Environmental Conservation. FILE PHOTO