Protests fail to slow planning for East Boston magnet school

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in East Boston, a district high school rather than a magnet middle school—a task of persuasion that Sullivan said "doesn't have much of a chance."

"My personal opinion is that Garrity won't change his plan," Sullivan said. "But we're having a hard time explaining that to people here."

Another Eastie complainant, Sullivan said, concerned lack of information. Russell, however, maintains that planning efforts for the conversion are "on schedule," and that he and other school administrators are "satisfied" with the pace of the process. But, Sullivan said, "the number-one cry is that we don't know what's going to happen to us and our kids," and frankly, neither do the people in the schools."

While the protesters aren't likely to change the plans for East Boston High, community feelings aren't going to be ignored, Russell said. He and his counterparts in the school administration have been preparing a "human relations committee" composed of MIT, Wentworth, MassPort, and school officials, along with local community leaders. Plans for that committee are now awaiting approval by the East Boston desegregation steering committee.

"We hope that this committee can do three things," Russell said. "First, by discussing the changes with people, it could help dispel the enormous anxiety the community is feeling now. Second, it would also increase the community's confidence in the overall educational program—confidence which is pretty low right now."

"Finally," Russell said, "the group would provide a mechanism to deal one-on-one with confrontations that arise. That's something that was lacking in South Boston and Hyde Park."

No one is sure how long the protests will go on, how well organized they are, or whether students are serious about their actions, or just out for a lark. But planning for the new East Boston technical high school and middle school will go on "full force," as Sullivan said, unless the protesters manage to convince Judge Garrity to change his goals.

"We have to make East Boston right up to the fact that change is coming," said Walter Milne, Assistant to the President for European Relations. "I'm actually glad that this is all coming out in the open now—it might make everything easier later."

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