



Photo credit: DDC

## Will Reported Merger Plan for City's Law Enforcement Training at NYPD Site Undo DOC's Planned Academy?

A May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, *Daily News* story, attributed to unnamed “knowledge-able sources,” reported that top mayoral officials are planning to merge at the current NYPD Academy site in College Point, Queens, all training of NYC mayoral agencies, including NYC DOC. One “knowledgeable source” was quoted as describing the rationale as an effort to “break down the silos, and that’s a good thing,” but added that “the devil’s going to be in the details.” While the *Daily News* appears to have been first with the story, other news media have echoed its report.

That unnamed source did not spell out those tricky "details." One that comes to mind understandably for this NY Correction History-dedicated website is an existing NYC Capital Budget item for the new NYC DOC Academy, the site for which has already been selected: next door to the current NYPD Academy.

Worth noting as to whether such a reported plan would impact the Capital Budget provision for DOC's new Academy is the one-sentence last paragraph of the *Daily News* story, which had been preceded by the paragraph about difficulties residing in the details. It reads as follows except for the italics (added by this website for emphasis): “*It’s also not entirely clear how much the new training structure will cost,*

*given that it'll likely require an expansion of facilities at the Police Academy.”*

The emphasis was added by this Correction History site because the story's second paragraph declared that, while the building now known as the NYPD Academy would remain in place, the “newly envisioned police academy with its expanded mission” would “get a name change” and that “monikers floated include Public Safety Academy and Public Safety Training Academy.”

For purposes of pondering the possible impact of the envisioned expanded mission on the currently budgeted planned Correction Academy, accept as a premise the article as accurate. If so, then there is a reasonable basis for projecting that those who would consider changing the name and purpose of the existing and funded NYPD Academy to fit their vision of enhanced mission might likewise consider changing the name and purpose the Capital Budget entry for Correction's planned new academy?

The circumstances are such to warrant mulling the possibilities without presuming them to be certainties.

If, as the newspaper's one-sentence last paragraph suggests, the expanded vision for the existing police academy will require additional facilities being built, does not the planned new Correction Academy as a Capital Budget item since at least 2017 present itself – from those planners' viewpoint -- as being excellently positioned logistically (with its site set next to the NYPD academy) as well suited bureaucratically and funding-wise for such re-visioning?

May 22, 2017, then Acting First Deputy Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann at recruit graduation ceremonies in Madison Square Garden's Theater announced that the administration of Mayor de Blasio was allocating \$100 million in its capital budget for a new Correction Academy. DOC's press release of that date, quoted her saying quite appropriately, “In our more than 120-year history, we have

never had a state of the art training facility, and we look forward to this new chapter.”

On August 6, 2021, the city announced, the site selected for the new Correction Academy to be built: in College Point, Queens, “right next door to the Police Academy,” to quote the DOC press release of that date.

“A new, modern correction academy is what our recruits and our staff deserve, and I am extremely pleased to see this plan on its way to becoming a reality,” the then DOC Commissioner Vincent Schiraldi was quoted saying. “The new academy will move the department further along the path of positive change by facilitating state-of-the-art training for a reform-minded, modern workforce. Our staff deserves a world class academy. This new academy will be a major step forward.”

The NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Commissioner, Jamie Torres-Springer, was quoted stating:

“DDC is already deeply engaged in creating a more equitable, fair and modern justice system, designing and building the City’s new and more humane borough-based jails and developing new police precincts that are generating connections between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

“The new Correction Academy will carry on this tradition adjacent to the Police Academy that NYPD and DDC opened in 2015, while being designed to rigorous environmental standards to help the City meet its climate change goals.”

The proposed program area was described as featuring 114,000 programmable square feet of space, with the proposed building itself four stories tall, and plans providing 240 parking spaces, “enough to avoid having to park in the surrounding community.”

Furthermore, the city was declared “committed to assessing the infrastructure needs in the surrounding area, including accessibility ramps and potential street redesigns.” What appeared to be an aerial view image that had a “DDC Photo” credit line appeared at the top of DOC press release. A screen-capture of that image appears atop this website page.

The origins of the Correction Academy was cited dating to 1927, when the then DOC Commissioner Richard C. Patterson called for the creation of its forerunner, the Prison Keepers School. It became the first correction officer training school in the U.S. The school’s first graduation occurred in 1931 with 50 new officers. The classes were first taught by NYPD until the 1930s when DOC began teaching its own curriculum.

Over the years, the school has called many places its home: Roosevelt Island, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Manhattan and various locations on Rikers Island. Currently it's at Rentar Plaza mall in Middle Village

The 2021 statement continued, “All along, the Department has continued to modernize its curriculum to teach skills to appropriately care for those in custody, and today these include de-escalation techniques and mental health first aid to recognize signs of distress in individuals.”

Regular readers of this website are generally history-minded. One of the disciplines history can impart to those who pursue its study is not to assume ill-will by those seeking change, but to exam the details and then try to calculate their potential impacts. True, not all proposed changes and reforms are necessarily good just because they’re new. Nevertheless, the best practices that modern Correctional agencies acknowledge and aspire to implement resulted from a very long history of arduous struggle involving changes proposed and reforms initiated. This website has detailed many of them. Right now the need is for seeking and obtaining details without presuming their contents or malicious intent behind them. #####