

MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING

April 17, 2024 – 6:15 p.m.
Central Office (First Floor)

Presiding: Comm. Manuel Martinez, President

Present:

Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Rodney Henderson, Deputy Superintendent
Bryant Horsley, Esq., Souder, Shabazz & Woolridge, LLP

Comm. Valerie Freeman
Comm. Eddie Gonzalez
Comm. Della McCall
Comm. Joel Ramirez

Comm. Mohammed Rashid
Comm. Nakima Redmon
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, Vice President

Absent:

Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz

Student Representative:

Mr. Thaddeus Chestnut

The Salute to the Flag was led by Comm. Martinez.

Comm. Ramirez read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused adequate and electronic notice of this meeting:

**Workshop Meeting
April 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
90 Delaware Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

PRESENTATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Recognition of Solaris Paul, North 1 Regional Girls' Wrestling Tournament Winner

Dr. Laurie Newell: Good evening, everyone. At this time, I would like to introduce Ms. Solaris Paul. Solaris is one of our esteemed juniors at John F. Kennedy High School and is a decorated member of the Girls' Wrestling Team. Solaris recently made history by becoming John F. Kennedy's first female wrestler to win the North 1 Regional Girls' Wrestling Tournament and the first to secure third place in the state tournament in Atlantic City. We are so proud of what Solaris has accomplished. However, this is about much more than setting records. As a member of the National Honor Society, Solaris is an example of the tremendous talent our students possess, and she is an inspiration to all our student athletes. This is what can be accomplished through hard work and dedication. As Superintendent, it is my honor to present Solaris Paul with this certificate and plaque in recognition of her tremendous talent. On behalf of the Paterson Public School District, congratulations on taking the win in the North 1 Regional Girls' Wrestling Tournament, for securing third place in the state tournament, and more importantly, for bringing pride to John F. Kennedy High School Girls' Wrestling Team and the Paterson Public Schools. Thank you and we wish you the very best in your future endeavors.

Ms. Solaris Paul: I want to say thank you for having me. It's an honor to stand before all of you. This means a lot to me and to the City of Paterson. I'm glad I'm able to represent the City of Paterson and show people what Paterson can do. It means a lot to me to be the first in history to do this. Hopefully, I won't be the last.

Comm. Martinez: Ms. Solaris, on behalf of myself and all the Board members, congratulations to you and your family. Continue to excel and do great things for our city and for John F. Kennedy. Thank you very much.

Update on CaissaK12 Student Recruitment

Mr. Kemper McDowell: Good evening. I just stopped by to give you a quick update on the CaissaK12 Project where we are making an attempt to recruit students that have gone to charter, private, and parochial schools. This initiative is to speak with families and find out what it would take to come back to Paterson Public Schools where we can do a great job in providing a good education. At this point, as of last year they recruited 54 students back to the district. As of today in this new cycle, they have recruited 12 students. They have put a temporary pause on their operations at the moment until sometime in May and that's primarily due to the fact that many charter schools have completed their registrations. The school district has completed the School Choice processes and their registration for consideration to various schools to the district. The preschool will not begin until sometime in July. Are there any questions?

Comm. Martinez: Just for clarity, these folks are getting paid only for the students that they are recruiting, not a flat blanket rate.

Mr. McDowell: Right. The company was secured via a bid process so there's an appropriation with a ceiling on it. In addition to recruitment services, they are providing some PD services on various topics that would help us with recruitment and retainment. Their retainer is about \$850 for every student they recruit back. If they don't recruit back, there's no payment.

Comm. Martinez: Understood. Thank you.

Comm. McCall: Do we have any data on whether we see kids leaving once they come back? Do we see a revolving door? Is there anything that gives us the indication that may be happening?

Mr. McDowell: There's not a specific catch basin where we're looking at students that are leaving the district, coming back, and leaving again. Is that what you're alluding to?

Comm. McCall: No. We know most of our charter schools have waiting lists. When we recruit students back, are we seeing students going back out?

Mr. McDowell: The reporting is not that far out. If that's something that you want us to consider, we have some data in our registration database about kids that are coming and going. We may be able to give you some indication just from the data that we have here. I'll speak with Mr. Lenny Moore and see if we can come up with some kind of trend, if there's any.

Comm. McCall: Thank you.

Comm. Gonzalez: As it relates to looking at data to better analyze whether this is a successful program or not, right now the best way to look at it is in the beginning of the year how many kids did we expect to be in our school district versus how many are enrolled today. Next year we do the same thing, to have a comparison. The problem is, and I stated this when this contract came before last year, that specifically with charter and private schools, if a parent decides to take a child out of our school district and place them into ABC Charter School, for example, that information goes out and this company will try to recruit them back. Let's just assume that they're successful in bringing them back. What they just basically did was open up a seat for another Paterson student.

Mr. McDowell: In the charter?

Comm. Gonzalez: It could be any school outside of our own. The best way to measure that is to look at total enrollment. From some previous presentations, it shows that there was a decline in enrollment. When you say that they recruited 50 back, that doesn't tell me a lot because maybe another 50 left, plus some. Our numbers went down, as opposed to going up. Just because they recruited 50, it doesn't mean that's a good thing and I just want to point that out. There could be another 50 that left plus some more that went to other schools that weren't brought back. That's just a fact. The information is not being presented in a way that gives us the ability to say whether it's a thumbs up or down for this initiative. If we can work on that so there are more concrete answers when we ask these questions because it's going to be really hard to determine if you don't have that data in front of you.

Mr. McDowell: For the most part, any student that naturally flowed back without any encouragement from the company was not eligible to be counted. The 54 and 12 that are on the record were recruited. We didn't assume they were just going to come back. There was an initiative put forth and they were recruited back. However, there is data on the students that leave the district. There are status codes established of when they're leaving and where they're going. That's part of the process for students. For any student that goes to another school, that receiving school is going to require a transfer out document. We do have that data. I'll put that to the committee and grab some stats on the students that are leaving. If there's any reasoning that can go along with that, we will capture that and that will help you out with who's leaving and how many of those who are leaving we're actually recruiting back. Am I understanding that?

Comm. Gonzalez: At the end of the day, the goal is to retain as many kids as we can. But in addition to retaining the current status quo, it's bringing back those who had

already left to charter schools. At the end of the day when we look at these numbers, it should show an increase in student population if we're doing the job correctly. However, we've seen data that shows that we lost students in the district. Maybe we do know exactly what schools they're going to, but in general they are not in our Paterson Public Schools.

Mr. McDowell: The committee and cabinet did have discussions around having clearer indications as to why students left and why they're coming back. When the opportunity presents itself, whether it's through the agency or ourselves, if we're recruiting back we're gleaning information about why they left and why they're coming back so we can build a better mouse trap as far as retention.

Comm. Gonzalez: I think that's crucial. I believe we mentioned that before. We have to create a mandatory exit plan so when individuals are leaving, they have an exit interview to determine that when they're leaving. Maybe that's the opportunity to keep them on board if we can address whatever their concerns are. In reference to the \$75,000 that we pay for training, are we in need of continuous training? Is that a one-and-done thing? How beneficial has it been for your department? Do you need it?

Mr. McDowell: That training happened last cycle. It was geared around customer service skills, how to recognize if you're being open to parents and students. Sometimes there are involuntary things that go on within the week. You want to make sure that you're recognizing how you're approaching parents, how you're coming off to them, and making sure that the environment is inviting. A lot of training was around that. Staff would open up, vent, and come up with solutions around conflict resolution and how to have a great and open customer service orientated atmosphere in the district. A lot of training was around that. We had two trainings. I'm not sure if JT has had conversations about what will take place in the upcoming cycle, but when that comes about, we will report that in our subsequent updates.

Comm. Gonzalez: Thank you.

STEAM High School Options

Mr. Neil Mapp: Good afternoon, Commissioners, administration and staff. Today we're going to review and talk about the new STEAM High School conceptual plan. I'm going to step back a bit and bring everyone up to speed on where we are. We've been working with the New Jersey Schools Development Authority to develop an educational program for the new STEAM High School. It's going to be located and be a replacement school for the existing Paterson Catholic School. We are attempting to build in the back of the existing structure and then demolish the existing structure when that is built. We will then place a ballfield where the existing structure stands now. We presented a conceptual plan to the Board for their approval and the overarching concern was that there was no regulation ballfield associated with the educational program of the school. The school's educational program will include every option that currently exists in the STEAM High School as it is today. There's a medical portion of it, but also science, technology, engineering arts, and math will be included. The first slide you see is the original concept of the high school program. In front of you, you should have this document that shows the original layout of the educational program with the areas color-coded. Large volume spaces are in yellow. The classroom spaces are in blue. The ancillary spaces are in pink and grey. It shows that the field, which is inside of the 'L' shaped structure, along with parking, sat to the north of the yellow portion, which are all large volume spaces. That was not a regulation-size field. The NJSDA went back and revised the concept in order to fit a regulation-size ballfield within the

educational program. We came up with four concepts. The original was Concept #1, which had no regulation ballfield. The second concept included a regulation ballfield that was about 75,000 square feet. However, when we placed the regulation ballfield on the site, we lost a significant amount of parking. Option #2, which has a regulation ballfield, has about 157 parking spaces. On Option #3 we upsized the ballfield to 95,000 square feet, with about 150 parking spaces. However, we placed the auditorium on the third floor. We'd like to delete that as an option because the consensus was that we want the large volume spaces and the community spaces on the first floor of the building. On Option #4 the ballfield was approximately 95,000 square feet and the approximate parking spaces were 140. Today, we'd like to get your input on which option we should choose between Option #2 and Option #4. Option #1 was the original without a regulation ballfield so we will put that aside. Option #3 we're putting aside because the auditorium was on the third floor. The two design options that we would like to discuss are Option #2 and #4, and that should be in front of you. The difference between the two options are that Option #2 is 79,000 square feet of play space with 157 parking spaces and Option #4 is approximately 95,000 square feet with 140 parking spaces. Are there any questions?

Comm. Gonzalez: I'm in favor of Option #4, which is the larger field. This view is different from a previous hand-drawn one that we've had that looked like it had the lines designated as to the boundaries of the field itself. One of the concerns that was brought up in the past was it didn't show a space for bleachers. I don't know if this is to scale and I don't see the lines drawn on this image here, so I'm not sure how much space there may be.

Mr. Mapp: In front of you on the 8.5 x 11 you should see those schemes. The larger option, which is 95,000 square feet, will allow for more bleacher space than Option #2, which is 79,000 square feet. Both options have a regulation ballfield but there are just more available ancillary spaces around the field. You could possibly place bleachers.

Comm. Gonzalez: So there will be bleachers for the teams to sit at as well as spectators?

Mr. Mapp: There will be space to place bleachers. They are not part of the scope of work in this project because the SDA will not fund bleachers. Where we can place bleachers, we will. Would you like to donate?

Comm. Gonzalez: Sure. I just won't tell you how much.

Mr. Mapp: We can sell seats.

Comm. Simmons: I know the field was probably 79,000 square feet. What I was emailed placed the field between the parking lot and the building.

Mr. Mapp: That was Option #1. No regulation field. Because it was in between the parking lot and the building, we didn't have the square footage for a regulation ballfield.

Comm. Simmons: Got it.

Mr. Chestnut: Taking into account parking spots and that matter, how many teachers go to STEAM High School?

Mr. Mapp: We're anticipating approximately 250 professionals. It's not just teachers. They're food service employees, facilities employees, and security. There will be a number of professionals there.

Mr. Chestnut: I was asking because they need parking spots and spaces.

Mr. Mapp: Absolutely. Paterson has particularized needs and one of those needs is parking. Most of our facilities don't afford onsite parking for our professionals. It's a problem districtwide and we live with it on a daily basis. We're trying to minimize the impact to the neighborhood and our employees the best we can.

Mr. Chestnut: I understand. Thank you.

Comm. McCall: When we talk about parking, we can estimate we're going to need at least 200 spaces for our staff. Have we done any studies for parking to decide where they would park? I know in that neighborhood parking is a major issue. We have two complexes that are directly across the street from the facility. Option #4 gives us the square footage for the field. Option #2 gives us more parking. I'm really concerned about what impact this is going to bring if we eliminate parking to the neighborhood and residents. What are they currently doing as far as parking?

Mr. Mapp: The program is significantly smaller. Parking right now is being done onsite and on the street.

Comm. McCall: It's smaller because the program is smaller. We anticipate this program to grow where we may have about 200 spaces.

Mr. Mapp: Currently it's a medical arts program. You're looking at engineering. It's a larger educational program. We're in the conceptual stage of the project. No studies have been done as yet because we have not accepted the design for the school. That's in the process. We'll probably have to present to the city and those questions will come up also with city officials.

Comm. McCall: Will we have something for the community on this project?

Mr. Mapp: Paterson Public Schools is a community school district. All of our facilities are community-based. The way we're designing the school is to have all the community spaces on the first floor away from the educational classroom spaces. You'll have separate community entrances, much like Dr. Hani Awadallah or Joseph A. Taub. We have a community entrance and school entrance. The community entrance will be open to the community.

Comm. Simmons: I wanted to make a statement about Comm. McCall's question. Typically, during the day, 11th Avenue is empty. All three complexes over there have huge parking lots. For the most part, the parking that you see on the street during the day is employees. At night you'll see some of the folks that don't want to park in the parking lot use the street, but that's mostly at night.

Mr. Chestnut: A lot of our basketball games and different things are taking place over there. Parking would be a concern also for those events as well. What are your plans for those community events when it comes to athletics?

Mr. Mapp: It's going to be amazing. It not only has a gym, but it will have an auxiliary gym. There are two spaces for athletics and locker rooms. We will be able to host all of those recreation events and interscholastic events. It's going to be a great space.

Mr. Chestnut: You guys are in the conceptual phase. I know that we can't do studies and samples. Can we try to come up with some way of compact parking or working with the community?

Mr. Mapp: I'm sure those discussions will be had to maybe partner with the city. We will look into those options.

Comm. Simmons: Between Option #2 and Option #4, which way is the field situated? Is it north/south or east/west?

Mr. Mapp: North and south for both.

Comm. McCall: In your professional capacity, which one would you recommend to us as being the better option? We have two.

Mr. Mapp: They're pretty much the same. The difference is 17 parking spaces, which is de minimis in a conversation. I'd prefer Option #4 because it's a larger field. We can have more gym classes programmed at the same time. They have different stations for gym. You'll just have a larger field to afford that to happen.

Comm. Martinez: Essentially, it boils down to Option #4. Are there any other questions?

Mr. Mapp: For your information, the larger sheet has all the program spaces. It's going to be a five-story building and there's going to be a grade on each floor, 9-12.

Comm. Martinez: It seems like we have a consensus that Option #4 is where this Board is leaning. Can we put it on the floor for a vote right now?

Comm. Rashid: I'm curious. What is the difference in parking spots?

Comm. Martinez: 17 parking spots is the difference.

Comm. Rashid: I like Option #2. If all the professionals came at the same time and some game happens, there will be parking problems.

Comm. Martinez: As Comm. Simmons was explaining, the area around the school during the daytime is vacated because the neighbors are working. Those parking spaces are now available for staff to utilize.

Comm. Rashid: I understand. 17 is not a huge difference but thank you.

Comm. Freeman: Mr. Mapp, I see here with Option #4 you're saying that the auditorium to the main entrance is less convenient.

Mr. Mapp: It's just the distance. You'll have direct access to the auditorium from the outside. You don't have to go through the administrative wing to get to the auditorium.

Comm. Rashid: You mentioned earlier the auditorium will be on the third floor.

Mr. Mapp: No, on the ground floor. It's only on Option #3 where we showed it on the upper floor.

It was moved by Comm. Simmons, seconded by Comm. McCall that the Board chooses Option #4 as the design for the STEAM High School. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative, except for Comm. Ramirez who voted no. The motion carried.

Comm. Freeman: Good evening. I just want to make a few statements before we get into the Superintendent's report and the rest of this meeting. I have some things that are troubling me and I need to get them off my chest real quick. You will never hear me mention another thing about Hinchliffe Stadium. When the dust clears and settles, everything will be revealed. I'm sick of talking about Hinchliffe Stadium and not getting direct answers. But it's okay. You won't hear me ask another question. Whatever happens there will happen. When the dust clears, God is going to reveal everything that's wrong with that and we can address it then. But you will never hear anything else from Comm. Freeman about Hinchliffe Stadium. Council President Alex Mendez said yesterday in his debate that he has been meeting with the Board about the shared services agreement. I don't know who he's meeting with on the Board, but he has not met with us. I've been asking for a meeting for two years. Some people have been asking for a meeting for five years. Yet, we have no meeting. I don't know who he's speaking to on this Board, but those persons do not represent the whole Board. I'm requesting an immediate meeting with the City Council for the shared services agreement. We have been dodging this for so long. Why? It needs to happen ASAP. I want to address the news article that came out about the charter schools and the reading and math scores. What this community is doing is blaming our Superintendent, Dr. Newell, for these numbers. We all sit here. We have all been here. All of us who have been involved in the Board of Education know this is nothing new. This has been going on for years, the low-test scores. Yet, nothing is happening. That should be our main focus, finding out where the ball was dropped. I'm not going to allow the community or anybody in here to throw the blame on the present Superintendent. It's not fair to her. I'm not throwing her under the bus, but we all know how these numbers came and who it came under. It was never addressed. What I hear in the community and the chatter was never brought to her. She was never asked to be held accountable and she wasn't. That's facts. I'm saying to everyone here and the community out there that I'm not going to allow you to throw the blame on Dr. Newell because it's not fair. If we want to be fair, let's be fair. We all know why and where. What was done about it from everybody who was involved? Nothing was done about it. Still nothing is done, but people want to point blame. When you point blame, it upsets some people and I'm upset about it. If we're going to address it, make sure you address where it began and let's not act like this is something new. What we need to start doing with the Family and Community Engagement Department and committee is hold these parents accountable for their child's education, and on top of that the students as well. If a student went from being an Honor Roll student and now, they're getting F's or D's, find out what's going with the student. You can't place the blame on the teachers and the Superintendent. Yes, she's in charge, but this didn't happen on her watch so we can't throw her under the bus. We can't blame her. I place blame on parents who are not actively involved in their child's education. I place blame on the student because it is your job to want to do better and you should. If we see a student going from straight A's Honor Roll to Fs and Ds, there's something going on and that's what we need to ask the student. Why are your grades dropping? What's happening with you? You can't place blame on the teachers. The teachers can't do it all. It's a collective collaboration. From here on out, my focus is going to be on these test scores. How do we raise them? What do we do? What programs do we have? What's not working? What do we need to do differently?

We want to look at other districts and we want to say what other district are doing, but we have to look at ourselves first. What are we doing about it? That's all I have to say. I'm not going to allow people to throw my Superintendent under the bus. I'm going to say something to you because it's not fair. If you throw her under the bus, you throw all of us under the bus. You throw everybody under the bus. A lot of these things didn't happen on my watch. Some of you were here and stuff happened on your watch. Stuff still happens on your watch. What are we doing about it? You want to place blame? Blame yourself also. We know the scores now. What are we going to do? That's all I have to say. We can't allow the community to attack our Superintendent. How does it look for us? It doesn't look well. I'm going to defend her every chance I get against you, cabinet, parents, or whoever. You can't throw her under the bus and expect her to do things. We can't tie her hands and expect a miraculous overnight thing. It's not going to happen. It's been going on for decades. My son is 31. The test scores were low when he was in school. It didn't happen on Dr. Newell's watch, and we need to stop blaming Dr. Newell for everything. It's not fair. If you want to be fair, I have some things I can blame a bunch of you on, but I'm not going to do that because I don't throw people under the bus. But I will check you and I will let you know that you're wrong. Either we work together and protect her interests or we're not here for the right reason. That's all I have to say. Students and parents, you need to be more accountable for your education. When you have a parent who's not involved, the child suffers. You have to ask the child what's going on. Straight A's to F's and D's - it's not the teacher's fault. Somewhere she doesn't feel that she needs to still do the best she can, so we need to find out why. Somewhere the parent is not asking what's going. We need to find out why. The Family and Community Engagement Department needs to tap into that and reach out to these parents to find out what's going on. It's not the teacher's fault and it's not Dr. Newell's fault. That's it. Thank you for hearing me and we can continue with the meeting.

Comm. Martinez: Thank you, Commissioner. Is the request for the meeting for both bodies?

Comm. Freeman: Both bodies.

Comm. Martinez: Very well, duly noted.

Comm. Redmon: Have you guys been meeting in committee?

Comm. Martinez: No.

Comm. Redmon: What meeting is he talking about? What is he referring to?

Comm. Martinez: There was a singular introductory meeting between the Superintendent, myself, Comm. Simmons virtually, the Mayor, and Council President. It was a singular introductory meeting, and we haven't had a second meeting. Meetings, plural, didn't occur. The initial conversation was we need to start looking at the areas that we're going to identify as we move forward and start looking into the shared services agreement, but we never got past that introductory meeting.

Comm. Freeman: Is that just for the President and Vice President to decide what we look at? Or is it the full Board? Are you making the decision for the full Board? I need to have some clarity on this. We need to know what was said because we're in the dark. When you get up there and you say on TV live that you've been meeting, I'm thinking someone is meeting and just leaving us out. Then you want to come and say this is what it is. It doesn't work like that because nobody speaks for me. It's a

collective body and we must stay like that. Don't let the City Council reel you into some nonsense and have your Board upset with you. I'm upset. When he said that, I asked who he met with. Now he's quiet. We need to know these things before somebody says it. We look like we don't know what we're doing. We look like we don't know what's going on. I want to be in the loop of everything, especially that, but I didn't like the fact that he came out saying he's been meeting. I haven't heard one word from the President or the Vice President. There's been an initial meeting to figure out what we're going to talk about or discuss, but they can't dictate what we discuss. It's a collective body. We vote collectively. We have to do this together. If that's the case, I can't be a part of this because I don't work like that.

Comm. Martinez: Understood. To be clear, there was no dictating of what it was going to be. It was an introductory meeting where we openly discussed the areas that we have to look into. For example, recycling, plowing of streets, storage and use of salt in the event of snowstorms, etc. We just brainstormed the things we need to look at and never got back to anyone because we haven't been able to meet as a whole. It literally was a one-time meeting, and it was the Mayor, his two representatives, the Superintendent, and the Board leadership. I do apologize. It was never at the extent of trying to keep anyone in the dark. It wasn't shared because there was no real substance other than we just met and kicked around ideas of things we have to look at. It never went beyond that. It never was meetings.

Comm. Freeman: I think it's more than recycling and snowplowing. We need to have this meeting and stop beating around the bush. The meeting needs to be held. We need to set the date. Whether they come or not, we've made the first move. For five years I've been dealing with this, and you've been accepting that they just haven't given you a date. Enough! You set the date. If they come, they come. If they don't, they don't. We cannot continue not having this meeting because they're not ready. They're not ready for what's coming. That's the problem. We're going to keep it real. They're not ready for this meeting. We set the meeting up and send them the date, time, and place. However, many of them show will show. If they don't, then we know where we are. That's just my feelings about it. I want to be kept in the loop. I don't want to be knocked over the head. You've met with the Board? That's what he said.

Comm. Martinez: He misrepresented. He didn't meet with the Board. To be fair, I own the fact that I could have and should have shared that we had that intro meeting, but there was nothing more than a general conversation. It was not the Board. It was not the Council. It was both leaderships and that was it.

Comm. Freeman: Whose leadership?

Comm. Martinez: Council President and Vice President, the Mayor, the Superintendent, and Board Vice President.

Comm. Simmons: The Mayor has to be involved because it is a shared services agreement with the city. At the introductory meeting, the things that Comm. Martinez spoke about were things that were discussed before, things we already had in place that actually didn't work out. We just talked about how we were going to move forward. In terms of scheduling a meeting, it's not that simple. They have to give adequate notice. It's a meeting for them too. We have to convene, and they have to convene, so they have to agree. Otherwise, it will be just us at the meeting. They have to advertise and do the same things we do when we have our meetings. That's been the holdup with us not just scheduling the meeting.

Comm. Freeman: How many times have we sent a letter to the City Council requesting a meeting?

Comm. Simmons: Probably about four or five. I sent three.

Comm. Redmon: Under my leadership, I sent three letters to the City Council. The first two were never responded to at all. The only two that were responded to were, and this was not by the leadership of the City Council, was by the Council members themselves. The first person to actually reply to the email and send something in writing was Councilwoman Cotton. Then we had Councilwoman Mimms and Jackson. When leadership changed in July, another notice went out. Councilman Mendez reached out. We tried several dates and every time we came up with a date there were conflicts on both sides. After my last correspondence under my leadership in November, he said he wanted to wait until the new leadership came in in January and he would resume then. That was the farthest I heard from them. I don't know anything else about it, but I do know that the shared services agreement has been worked on by two previous leaderships. Under the previous leadership when I was Vice President, we met one time and that was with the administration at that time. I think the last conversation we had were things that were put in place, the salt, the snow machines, and also storage. We also talked about the storage for Hinchliffe Stadium because we had to remove our things out of there. That was the last thing I ever heard about a meeting. We did ask for, and still haven't had a response for, a joint education committee. That would be between both bodies and a committee to voice our opinions. That was never done. After that, I don't know what happened.

Comm. Martinez: Comm. Freeman's point is very well taken. There are no excuses for the fact that this meeting in full has not occurred. We will push back and try to get it. We will set the date. Whoever shows, shows. I'll fall on the sword and say that I should have communicated to the body that we did have that introductory meeting. It wasn't shared because there really wasn't any great substance that came from it. I'll own that. As far as Hinchliffe Stadium, that's another meeting.

Comm. Simmons: As everyone knows, there is a committee based on the agreement with Hinchliffe Stadium or the developer that's supposed to meet. We have been trying to meet. We have scheduled three meetings, and they have all been cancelled, not by us. I did ask the President to send a letter to the developer requesting the items that we need and that they're supposed to report on so that we can have that documented. We did try to meet so we could get ahead of a lot of the things that you have seen, but that just hasn't happened. The President will send a letter demanding the things that we need.

Comm. Martinez: To expand on that, as per the agreement of the stadium and its formation, the representatives on the School Board are comprised of the Superintendent, President, and Vice President. On the city's side, it's the Mayor's appointee and the City Council's appointee. To Comm. Simmons' point, three meetings were scheduled and none of them happened. It wasn't because we were not able to show up. I'll just leave it at that. You can fill in those gaps.

Comm. Redmon: We didn't get any open communication about the museum opening. I would have loved to have been there. We never got any correspondence.

Dr. Newell: I personally sent an email.

Comm. Redmon: Two days before the event? For real? Two days before the event, which we knew that this was going to be happening. We should all have gotten adequate notices. That's all I'm asking.

Comm. Martinez: This was organized and put together by the folks at Montclair State.

Comm. Redmon: Even though they organized it and they are putting their money upfront, at the end of the day our students are the ones who need to be part of it. They wanted to walk through there just like we did. Two days' notice is not adequate time. A lot more people would have attended and would have had a greater appreciation of what was coming, how it got there, and the history behind it.

Comm. Freeman: It is designed. I'm trying not to say any more, but when we see what it is then our eyes will be more wide open. Trust me, it's all designed. It was built off the backs of our children and our children get the short end of the stick. That's what angers me the most. Baye and all those great people who grew up in Paterson Public Schools came up with this bright idea to use our children to get it kicked up and running. Our kids get the short end of the stick. When are we going to get paid? That's not important? We could use that money. Nobody seems to care, so I'm not going to say another thing. I'm waiting and when it comes down, trust and believe me, I'm going to say I told you so a thousand times. The whole plan was terrible. The first page was terrible. Whoever did it, it was terrible. I don't know anything about real estate, but the first page I read I said this is a joke. It's clear that it's not for our children and I'm very upset about that. You used the children to get what you got, and you left them in the wind. That museum thing should have been filled with Paterson Public School children, just like Comm. Redmon said. The children are not important as far as Hinchliffe Stadium goes. I'm waiting for the next earthquake. Maybe it will shake it up.

Comm. Martinez: I also had some comments about the story that came out regarding the test scores and such. Stealing a little bit of Comm. Freeman's thunder, in my notes I also wanted to speak to the fact that it's a shared responsibility. Under no way, shape, or form should we put the current leadership under the bus for things that occurred in this district when she was not here. I was here. I will take that. She was not here, so she can't take that and it's only right. I said moving forward that we do not get a pass because we're on the ground now. Anything that occurs as we move forward is on us, but what occurred yesterday before she was here, she can't carry that weight. There are some factors that play into this, and you touched on it. The notion of chronic absenteeism is a huge part of why we're facing what we're facing right now. If you're not in school, if you're chronically absent and tardy, there's no way you're going to grasp the work. I had a conversation with a former Board member who reached out to me today. I said there's such a fine line for me as a Board member to sit here and say there's only so much, we can do. We're not in the homes to shake the beds and say, "Get up and get to school." We can't do that. We can put programs and everything under the sun, but we're not there. It is ultimately the responsibility of the parent and the child to decide that this is important. We can do everything under the sun, but if they don't take that ownership of their education and make it a point to wake up and get to school, there's only so much we can do. It's so timely that this is coming out right now because we literally had that conversation this morning. What occurred in years past is not Dr. Newell's responsibility. What occurs today and tomorrow moving forward is our collective responsibility. There's nothing more that we can say.

Comm. Freeman: I agree.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Newell: Tonight, I would like to focus my remarks on what we have been talking about, the recent release of the 2022-2023 New Jersey School Performance Reports. For those who may not know, this was an assessment that was conducted in the April-May timeframe of 2023. The state's performance reports are based on that assessment. Unfortunately, you can see that the district did not perform well. For some schools it was unfortunately quite dismal. It's very concerning to myself, Dr. Henderson, and cabinet. Shortly after my appointment as Superintendent back in July of 2023, I began evaluating the data to see what strategies would best address the academic needs of our students. This is a process that will take time. I have already begun holding meetings with members of my team and we're looking at the chronic absenteeism data that you have discussed, student attendance, the teacher vacancy impact that we're seeing, as well as other areas of school achievement. It is my hope that we can have a special meeting of the Board of Education where we will do a deep dive into the data and the results from the New Jersey School Performance Reports. In the meantime, I will be providing a weekly update to the Board on our findings. The assessment data has given me greater impetus to continue focusing on improving student achievement. I believe that our students have so much potential. We saw Solaris here earlier this evening and I'm committed to bringing the very best out of our students. Dr. Rodney Henderson, our Deputy, shares my same commitment. Dr. Henderson has a proven track record of raising the academic level of the school districts that he has served in. Having previously served as Assistant Superintendent, which is the Executive Director of Instructional Leadership at Baltimore City Public Schools, Dr. Henderson possesses knowledge and experience that will help us overcome the educational challenges our students are facing, and we have quite a few challenges that we see our students facing. We know it will take time, but we are committed to the work and since Dr. Henderson's appointment in December of 2023, he and I have been working on theory-based strategies to move the district forward. At this time, if you will allow me, I would like to turn my attention to Dr. Henderson and ask him to say a few words.

Dr. Rodney Henderson: Thank you, Dr. Newell. Good evening, Commissioners, parents, stakeholders, and staff members. Simply, the report emphasized the urgency of directly supporting our leaders in our underperforming schools so that considerable improvement can be realized for our students. Thus, a plan that is strategic for underperforming schools is underway. I firmly believe that in order to improve the state of our schools, clear goals must be defined, and team members must become more knowledgeable and proficient in what we do. Therefore, five levers of impact for the plan have been identified. Lever #1 is human resources. We must strategically employ human resources to address the achievement deficit directly. Lever #2 is data literacy. How can we aggressively accelerate the data literacy of our school leaders and staff members? We want to normalize the use of data to drive instruction, lesson plans, and respond to current student performance. Lever #3 is building staff capacity. We want to be able to identify the largest return on investment areas in terms of instruction. We want to quickly and aggressively provide targeted PD for our staff members and school leaders that can be turn-keyed. Lever #4 is principal capacity. We want to be able to support and strengthen our school leaders' capacity to lead, implement, and monitor the above-mentioned efforts. Finally, as we just talked about previously from the comments of the President as well as Madam Superintendent, parental support is vital. The first of that is we need to encourage optimum attendance and on-time arrival. We know that where there is great student achievement, attendance matches that, or we have a high level of attendance and on-time arrival. We also want to provide opportunities for our parents and caregivers to learn more about reinforcing foundational literacy and math

skills in the home. Identifying targets for each lever has already started this week. Over the next several days, impactful strategies will be developed by tapping the expert knowledge of our various Paterson Public School team members. As I alluded to before, improvement is steeped in getting better. That is the only way that we improve, we get better. Therefore, adult learning is paramount in realizing the student achievement we desire. Commissioners, I look forward to updating you on the plan through development, implementation, and eventual monitoring. We want to be aggressive in developing and implementing this plan, and we're going to make sure that we monitor it.

Comm. Martinez: Dr. Henderson and Dr. Newell, thank you. By the feel that I have right now and looking around I think everyone at this dais, and hopefully in the public, is feeling the same sense of urgency and confidence in having identified these levers and knowing that the targets are already being put in motion. We look forward to those updates. The urgency is fierce to turn this around and start to see improvement. I want to again say congratulations to Solaris and a belated Happy Birthday to Comm. Redmon. She celebrated her birthday yesterday.

Mr. Chestnut: I had a comment about Dr. Henderson's plan for the levers. The one area where I'm seeing a lot of students and teachers mention is about how data analysis is being more depended on than actual human interaction between teachers. One thing that we can do is sit there and create human innovative solutions that take into account the teachers and how we can leverage that. Instead of putting so much work into one, we can make it so there's more of an open communication between all the history teachers within the district. They can share and talk about lesson plans and different things like that. It makes it easier to be able to organize. We're not machines. I feel like that's a pitfall that sometimes we have.

Comm. Martinez: There's absolutely a balance that needs to be present. The data and analytics certainly have a place. To your point, there's also a gut feeling that sometimes you need to act on, your instinct, if you will. Marrying those two and finding the medium is spot on.

Mr. Chestnut: I just wanted to mention that to the Board as a reminder.

Comm. Martinez: Thank you.

Comm. Simmons: Comm. Freeman, you said you wanted to shift your focus to the test scores and what we need to do for student achievement. I'm sitting here and I'm trying to contain myself and not get angry.

Comm. Freeman: Get angry. It's time.

Comm. Simmons: I'm mad because given the articles that were in the paper, this room is empty.

Comm. Freeman: Exactly.

Comm. Simmons: I remember this distinctly because I was part of creating a policy where we wanted to increase the required GPA for athletes. We were at John F. Kennedy and that auditorium was full. The Board has been talking about some things lately, but this is what we need to be talking about. We have parents showing up for those things. We're talking about eighth grade graduation and kids are going to the ninth grade and they can't read. But the parents aren't here. I know that this staff has

done a lot of work, but if parents aren't involved, I can't go to your house and wake you up in the morning and make you get out of bed to come to school. We know they're not coming to school. We know that parents aren't involved because the meeting is empty. I don't know what the attendance looks like on back-to-school-night, but parents simply aren't involved, and you cannot keep blaming the school district. The district is doing everything it can, but we can't do it alone. I always tell parents when I see them because they ask me what I'm doing. I'm just your voice. If you don't show up, what do you want from me? A lot of times we don't like to say things because we don't want to piss parents off, but the reality is between the parents and the students they have to have skin in the game. They have to be a part of the solution. I expect to see the next meeting full. I don't do the Facebook thing. I really want to get on Facebook and become Val Freeman, but I won't. I really need to see parents start showing up because this is pathetic. When you look at the schools with 0% meeting the standard and 0% passing, parents have to do better. We're committed to doing our part. I know that the Superintendent and her staff are committed to doing their part, but parents have to do better. This is just ridiculous. If we can resolve the issues here we can resolve a lot of the issues that happen in the city. We're going to see some other numbers later at another presentation, but those things affect what happens in the city. When students are either not graduating or not meeting the mark, they can't find jobs. Someone didn't understand what I was saying when we talked about the budget and the need for us to raise taxes and have the funds for us to do the things we want to do. When companies look at locations, they look at whether or not you have an educated population. These numbers say we don't. When you look for a home, one of the first things you look at is the school system. These numbers say the district isn't doing what it's supposed to do, but a lot of this has to do with what the parents aren't doing. Parents are the first teachers. Many of you know me. My children went to school here. They could have gone anywhere. They could have gone to private school, but they went to school here because I believed in the system. All of them are college graduates. I believed in the system, but I did my part. I tell the story when my son was attending Alexander Hamilton, every morning I would take them to school. My son decided he wanted to be late or not get up and be ready when I was ready. All I said was, "When I get there, you'd better be there." He called his grandfather to get him there, but these are the types of things that parents have to do. I don't know what else to say, but I really expect to see the next meeting packed.

Comm. Freeman: Dr. Newell, I would want us to take a deep dive and look into the preschools. The money that we receive for preschool education is heavy. The fact that the children are coming out of these preschools not knowing how to read a basic little book or do basic math is astounding to me. I don't understand it because that's where it begins. We have to tap into that preschool. We get a lot of money for preschool. Something is not happening there, and we have to look at that. By the third grade you should be reading fluently and that's not happening. It's quite sad. People always say look at the surrounding districts. Look at the parent participation in the surrounding districts. That will tell you everything. If you take a child's phone here in Paterson, they are coming with everybody and the army to the school. You took a cell phone that wasn't supposed to be in school. You signed a contract and handbook that those things are not allowed in school. Yet, the parents still send them to school. If you need it for an emergency, leave it in the office. What do kids do? They hide it in their book bag, and they bust it out any time they want. When it gets taken, the parents come in here and they want to do some things. That mentality of the parents has to change. I'm charging the Family and Community Engagement Department to step this game up. We have to make some things happen. We have to place some demands on the parents. We have to get on that phone and talk to them. You have to find out what's going on. They're not going to come and tell you, but you see it clearly. You're there for

a reason. The conferences you have, step the game up. Change the people that are coming in. Bring people from outside of Jersey and other states that are making it work. You have to get together and collaborate because we're losing at an astounding rate. It's not cute and it's not nice. We're quick to blame our teachers, some who are severely underpaid and underappreciated, but we have to stop. We have to put the accountability where it lies. My first thought is to the parents. You are your child's first teacher. You set the standard for your child. Don't send your child to school to cuss me out or put their hands on me. Don't do that. You set the example in your house. We must be vigilant. When we make a policy, stand on that policy. There was a big debate about the eighth-grade graduation and prom. The problem is people don't understand the importance of tradition. That's what's happening. You want to take the tradition out of everything, like when they moved the Thanksgiving game. That's a tradition that's been going on for 80-90 years. You want to come and say you want to do it on Wednesday. People are cooking on Thanksgiving Eve. There's a tradition that these children must remember, and we can't let it die. What do we do? Because we think this is a great idea. No, it's not. Our kids will grow up and they won't know the tradition. They won't understand what it means. They won't understand it. Why? Because we think it's a good idea to take it. No. People work hard. Some of these children work hard and they should not be dealt with some of the things for children who just refuse to want to learn. I believe collectively we can get these things done, but it's going to take all of us. First and foremost, it's going to take for the parents to be totally involved in their child's education. That's all I have to say. We can be here all night on this situation because it's been happening for decades. This didn't happen overnight. You go back and look at these numbers from 10 years ago. They're almost the same way and that is totally embarrassing. You blame us? I blame you. We have to work collectively or we're in trouble. I can see the state coming right back in here. We're going to be in trouble and a lot of people don't want to understand that or believe it. If we don't get it together, the state is going to be right here. That was designed too, to give you local control because they have no trust or belief that we can turn this district around. We have the power to show them differently. There was nothing else that they could do for us. That's why they gave you back local control. They were failing. They didn't do the things that they said. Who held them accountable? Nobody! No parents. They got away with it red-handed. All I'm saying is collectively either we're going to do this or we're not going to do it. We have to make a decision. That's it. Thank you.

Comm. Rashid: Thanks, Comm. Freeman. I agree with her. In how many schools is the PTO active? This is very important. All Board members are responsible as well as the parents. I've been in this country 24 years. I firmly believe that parent involvement is very important. We all agree with that. I have two kids who went to the public schools in this country. My oldest daughter completed her masters in speech and language therapy. The little one completed her bachelors. Believe me, I was working in downtown Manhattan, and I took them to extracurricular things. I'm very happy with my two kids. The PTOs are very important, as well as principals. They need to be more proactive to involve the parents. We could start a club at every high school. They need to know what's going on in the whole world. That kind of thing encourages the parents. The parents should come into the classroom to talk with the teachers. In my community, I encourage the parents to join. We need to engage more as Board members. The school district can start Robo-calls. We can engage parents in different ways. That is my suggestion. We need to seriously involve the parents. This is a very crucial thing. I was surprised that the dropout rate at John F. Kennedy High School is very high, and other schools too. Our kids need to be better educated. The residents are paying high taxes in Paterson, so they deserve a good education and a better life. Thank you.

Comm. Martinez: To Comm. Rashid and to all the other members who spoke today, I think your sentiments have been heard and felt. The urgency is fierce, as we have recognized today.

Dr. Henderson: I just want to follow up with Comm. Rashid. Most recently we did an audit of PTO's in schools. We got some information as to which ones are active and which need more work. That is another focal point of the plan, to make sure that we have more parent engagement. Once we are able to take a better look at that list, I will have no problem sharing it with you, so you know which schools have thriving, active PTOs and where we need to work.

Mr. Chestnut: I feel throughout this entire conversation a lot of truth has been spoken. One of the main truths is that we are at the moment locally in control of our district. I feel as though one of the main things we should do is not blame anyone, neither the parents, or the students, or the teachers. I feel as though blame is not a good word for what we're doing. Instead, we're trying to reason on the reality that we have currently, and we have to create pragmatic solutions based off those variables. Paterson should be a nurturing disciplinarian. I feel one thing that was said that was very true is that we do put more emphasis on our sports than we do on our academics. One thing we should do is revisit the argument about raising the GPA. If that's what got parents into this office, then I feel that's a worthy discussion to bring back up to get their attention and then from there show them projects like International and how we're going to be using community space to create that linkage between them. Paterson isn't a usual city. We're very unique and different. A lot of students are going through things that not many students throughout New Jersey are going through. They're going through increased violence and are seeing things that shouldn't be seen by a child. Even though we don't have a very popular or catchy nickname, the violence is just as much as Chicago. A lot of these students have PTSD or things like that and they're dealing with it without even knowing. I feel that Dr. Henderson's plan to put in more human resources and guidance counselors would serve that purpose. I feel there are things that we're doing that are good. We should put the right amount of blame on the parents and not try to look for them as scapegoats. I understand we're not doing that currently, but I don't want to accidentally do that and then we don't get anywhere with the problem at all. We don't make an actual solution.

Comm. Martinez: Understood. I didn't hear that word being used. It's not so much about blame. I agree with your sentiment. It's about ownership, simple and plain. It was referenced here. The first lessons that a child learns is in the house from the parent. There is no greater personal influence on a child's life than that of the parent and the family. The ownership needs to be there first. I'll stand by that until the day I die. As a parent, as a man, it is my job to make sure that my family is doing what they need to do. I can't put that on anyone else. No one else should put that blame on anyone. You have to make sure your house is in order first. Blame is not the right word. It's ownership.

Mr. Chestnut: It's ownership. I also agree with Comm. Simmons. We need an educated populous. We need educated people. To get an educated community, we need to understand that a community is built out of many people. All of us are in this building currently, not just one person or one family. We're all together so we all have to make decisions that are best for everyone within the Paterson community. It's a solution that's not going to take one head but a lot of us.

Comm. Martinez: Agreed. I welcome the spirited conversations and debates. This was good. I thank the public who has been patiently waiting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Simmons, seconded by Comm. Freeman that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

Ms. Cheryl Coy: Good evening. This is just a reminder. We have the Ticket to Transition Fair this Saturday at STEAM, the old Paterson Catholic, for families of children with disabilities for ages 14-21. There will be over 20 vendors there with resources and supports. We will be serving breakfast and lunch. Parents can go to the parent website for Paterson Public Schools to register. Every parent should have an upload of the letter and the registration form in their child's digital backpack. Hopefully, we will get a good turnout. It's from 9:00 to 1:00. Please, parents come out and support for the Ticket to Transition Fair. Thank you.

Ms. Liz Geron: Good evening. My name is Liz Geron, proud Vice Principal of Eastside High. I'm here representing my son, James Geron, as I have his Power of Attorney. My son was very disheartened with the City of Paterson and Paterson Public Schools. He was unjustly terminated due to having cancer with Paterson stating that he had abandoned his job. In reality, he's medically unable to perform his job. He couldn't be here today due to his intense chemotherapy, causing his white blood cells to be extremely low, leaving him prone to life-threatening infections. I would like to read a letter that was sent to the administrators sitting around this table: "Hello. I trust everything is going smoothly for all of you. I am emailing you regarding your second job abandonment email. Just to clarify, I have not abandoned my job. I am currently sick with cancer, which is quite different from abandoning responsibilities. I am medically unable to work at the moment, as per doctor's orders. Although I am undergoing treatment for cancer, I have not received any outreach from Paterson regarding my cancer diagnosis. Given the abundance of vacancies in the district and the fact that it is April and school ends in June, I sincerely hope that Paterson can find it within their hearts to accommodate my situation and preserve my position until my return in September, as per my doctor's orders. The aggressive chemotherapy that I am receiving has rendered me unable to work due to severe side effects, such as nausea, dizziness, a compromised immune system, fatigue, vomiting, and more. I spend a significant amount of time in the hospital, including days in which I am there from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. I am firm in my decision not to resign as I have not abandoned my role. I earnestly appeal to Paterson Public Schools to exhibit empathy and consider granting me unpaid leave considering the unexpected challenges I am facing. Let me reiterate. I'm not seeking payment during my inability to work. I simply wish to cease the unwarranted threats and harassment conveyed through emails and verbal demands for resignation. I reiterate - resignation is not an option. If I could go to work tomorrow without the possibility of dying due to my immune system being compromised, I would go to work in a heartbeat. Nobody asked to be diagnosed with cancer and have to go through intense chemotherapy at the age of 29. I avertedly desire resolution and humane consideration for my circumstances. My dedication to my job, the students of Paterson, and the teaching profession remains unwavering. I aspire to fulfill my responsibilities and continue my calling without threats of Paterson wanting me to resign. I appreciate any assistance that you can provide in this matter. Best regards, James Geron." This was written on April 15. Not even 10 minutes later, he received a termination letter sent from Linette Gonzalez through Mr. Luis Rojas who has many times said if he doesn't resign, we're going to terminate him. Now my son was terminated for cancer, not because he abandoned his job. He never asked to have any money for an unpaid leave. Plus, Paterson doesn't even pay for his health insurance. His wife's health insurance pays because she's a North Bergen School District

employee. Not holding his job is something that I just can't imagine, someone who has brought to your district over seven employees from the North Bergen School District to NRC and Joseph A. Taub. You're recently getting a physical education teacher. How do we do this to teachers? To say, as his Power of Attorney, that emails were not responded back, I have a whole binder of all the emails that I sent to everyone, including Dr. Newell and Dr. Henderson. Dr. Newell had him call me on March 26 and took my phone number. He was going to call me right away and to this day no one called. Mr. Rojas never met with me. No one ever called me as his Power of Attorney before you terminated a good teacher with good ratings. On the contrary, you took him from NRC as a math sixth grade teacher with five years' experience and you right sized him to go to School No. 6 as a grade 4 teacher while he's on leave from February 20 to March 25. Then on March 25, you transfer him again until you terminated him as a grade 6 language arts teacher. Why? How? An excellent teacher and he was terminated. It's very disheartening. My son came here to fulfill my legacy of 40 years and his deceased father's legacy. His father also was not only a teacher, but an administrator just like me. For this to have happened, I really don't have any words. No one ever asked to meet with me. No one ever wanted to hear or even meet with him.

Comm. Martinez: As is the custom, we wait until the end of public portion and then we respond. I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my empathy for your son's diagnosis. I have no words to describe that. Since this is a personnel situation, it's not something we can openly discuss. If you would please bear with us, we can get to the end of public portion and any exchange can occur then.

Ms. Geron: Thank you. I also want to say a thank you to Assistant Superintendent Badawy who did reach out to him in an email and said that prayers are for him. I also want to extend a special thanks to Assistant Superintendent Espana who also reached out to me. That was my administrator at Eastside High School. She asked me how my son was doing, and I really appreciate that. Thank you for listening on behalf of my son, James Geron.

Comm. Martinez: We thank you for your patience. If you just bear with us, at the end of public portion Board members and others will be able to address.

Ms. Eva Razzak: Good evening, Eva Razzak. I'm here this evening because I really want this situation to take place and adhered as soon as possible. I congratulate you, Dr. Newell, for what you're trying to do. You sat in a chair that was dirty and was on fire. Now they're trying to burn you with the mess that they did, and they know. I hope they're watching. Shame on them and on everybody else who was covering them up! There are a lot of you guys who talk the talk, but the BS comes right behind it. I was an instructional assistant since 1998 to 2020. I was forcefully forced to retire. I was hurt while in school. To this day, I really want the legal team to reach out to my lawyer and handle this situation that they have me in. The disgrace that they have done and the things that they have lied about is a disgrace. You guys know who I'm talking about. You know me very well. I've been in this city for 55 years. I was a Commissioner for the Housing Authority. I was one of the best instructional assistants you could have, and I am very proud of what I did. That to me wasn't a job. I got up every morning knowing that I was going to make a difference in these children. Shame on you guys who have been sitting in these seats for years taking the BS and using these kids for the money. What Comm. Freeman said, she's not lying about it. You know you're not playing with the right one because I'm not the one. I don't lie. I don't take nonsense. I've taken enough. My life has been a mess since I got hurt. I would have never retired if you guys would have done your job, and you know who I'm talking to. Shame on those principals and staff members who use their kids! You're right about the parents

being in charge of the kids. That's the first thing. But I have something to say to defend the parents. Do you know how many parents call me to tell me that some of the staff members and principals don't care? I've worked with a few of them. I got moved around because I was a liability. Do you know why? Because if I saw something wrong, I would snitch. Call me a snitch. I don't care. If your child came in one way, I would make sure that child came out better than what he came in. I want the legal team that has my case to take the noose off my neck. It's been on it since 2016 to 2024. I'm grateful that Jesus Christ has had me here because in one of the surgeries that they did to me, I crossed over for three minutes. I shouldn't be walking with this cane. I shouldn't be coming up here. Do you know why I come up here? Ladies and gentlemen, when I call and they hear this voice, they hang up on me. I leave voice messages or tell so-and-so to call me back, no. You're playing games with the wrong one. I care. I'm not a thief. I'm not a liar. I've always kept it real. I'm honored to have worked in the Paterson Public Schools for my students. Not for the staff or principals because some of them are a bunch of crooks and they know who I'm talking about. The disgrace of things they have done and hide behind students. Some of you hide behind students. Let's build this and do this. BS! I want the legal team to get the noose off my neck. There's not enough money that takes care of my health issues. The living hell that I've been going through is a disgrace. I think I'm a fair person because I care about my kids. I would take a bullet for my students. Shame on you guys who sit on the Board or in the City Council. You're doing what? Robbing the money? Using these kids as shields? Some of the parents don't care because you guys don't care. They walk into the schools, and they have principals who remove staff members who really care, like me. How many times have I gotten removed? Shame! I was only an instructional assistant, but I took care of everyone, and I'm honored to say it here. When these students see me, I feel proud. I'm only 57 years old. Do you think I should be walking with this cane? Do you think I would be having the issues I'm having? I'm losing my teeth, hair, nails, and my body is going through hell. People are sitting in the district like, "Screw her." No, screw you because karma doesn't have an expiration date. What you do in darkness will come to light. There are a lot of you who run this city because you have a family member doing this or one who owns that. Don't play games. You're playing with the wrong one. Dr. Newell, I have much respect for you and all the new ones here who I didn't know, kudos to you. It's sad the BS that goes on behind the schools. You guys are good with your words, but you can't fool me because I can see right through the BS. Please adhere this. Let whoever is in charge to reach out to my lawyer and take the noose off my neck. There's not enough money ever to pay me for the hell that I've been going through. Do you know what? There's a purpose. I believe in God. When he removes you, he will place you somewhere else. For a lot of people who hadn't seen me for a while, they say finally that bitch is out. No, I'm not and when I say bitch, being in total control herself. I don't know who the legal team is. Tell them to get off my neck. Whatever you do in darkness comes back to light. You guys know me very well in this city. I don't stand at the microphone to get a show. I don't stand at the microphone to ask for things for myself. When I go to the City Council, I stand somewhere for all. This is a melting pot. I care. A lot of my Hispanics have done me dirty. Do you know why I defend a lot of my Blacks? Because they have looked out for me and I do it proudly. I'm a multicultural person with all. Comm. Martinez, you're the Board President now. I don't know who is a part of your legal team. Tell them to get the noose off my neck already. I want this case to be really resolved. There's not enough money to ever pay me for the disgrace that they have done to me. Dr. Newell, you have a lot of principals who are in schools for 10, 15 and 20 years. You have to remove them, especially when they're comfortable with their secretaries. The garbage that goes on between them is a disgrace. Yes, I'm saying it. I know a lot of people say let me put a hit on this one, but if it's my time to die, I go graciously. When I came out of my mom's womb, she didn't want me and I'm still here.

I'm 57 years old. I've been through hell and I'm tired. If I came to this meeting, it's because I'm tired of calling and people hanging up on me or people telling me no. Don't tell me no because when you needed me, I was there. Disgrace on people who retired, Ms. Shafer and Ms. Peron. Are you kidding me? Shame on them, too! I hope you're looking at me. Shame on you! They have their pensions and now they left Dr. Newell with the dirty chair. How dare them! In this town, the BS that happens with the politicians, you pay to play. Don't play with me because I don't get paid to play. I never did. I respect you. Respect me. Please have your legal team get the noose off my neck and handle my business. I shouldn't be going to food pantries to get food.

Comm. Martinez: Ms. Evie, I can tell you no one here...

Ms. Razzak: You know me very well, Mr. Martinez, for a long time.

Comm. Martinez: Absolutely. I wish you well. We wish you well.

Ms. Razzak: You do? Well, get the noose off my neck, Papi. I'm not breathing.

Comm. Martinez: I'm not being funny. I don't have a noose on your neck. I hear you and I will work with you. We can do what we can. There's only so much I can do. I can give the directives and I can follow through. I'd ask you kindly only because we do have other folks.

Ms. Razzak: My time is up, fine. Listen to me. Either they resolve this way, or I will take it to the news. I bet you 10-1 they're going to be wearing diapers after that. I'm not playing any longer. I've been kicked around. What happens when you tie a dog down and that dog gets loose? He's going to come after you like there's no tomorrow. I've had it. To my Paterson school kids, I miss them dearly. They don't know how much good they did to me. Mr. Ramirez, you know me very well. Ladies and gentlemen, I miss working with my students. At Christmas I sit down, and I look at pictures from 1998. I just found a letter recently thanking me for coming in at 7:00 in the morning. They don't know what they did for me. Let's stop being good with the words and take action. The BS smells already and the parents can smell it. Some parents don't trust the principals. They feel they're not being listened to. When you listen, you retain. Mr. Martinez, you know me very well. I know your family very well. I was kidnapped when I was a year and a half, and I was brought down here. I was molested for 14 years. I've been through hell and back, but I give a crap and I care about my students and anybody who needs it. Take the noose off my neck. Have your people in charge stop messing with me because if I bring it to the news, if they think I'm going through hell with my body they're going to be wearing diapers too, to see if they like it. I'm not threatening anybody because that's not my flow. For those people who are in charge of the schools, if you put your team in order they can reach out to those parents and have a good outcome. I know they can. I used to be one of the ones too. They removed me because I was a troublemaker. I'm not a damn troublemaker. I make things happen because I care. With that being said, I don't want to come back to these meetings and argue. When I call the district, shame on whoever hangs up on me. Some of the people who are working in the district shouldn't be because they're a bunch of thieves. They know I know what I'm talking about. I said it. If you want me to name names, I have no shame. If they want to put a bullet in my head and it's my day, Lord Jesus, it's my day.

Comm. Martinez: Nobody wishes you that. Nobody wants that.

Ms. Razzak: I know what I'm talking about. When it is my day, I take it graciously. Do you know why? Because I stood my ground and I'm not the person you can put in a place and puppet them. I don't do that. You guys who are in positions, get these principals and move them out. Secretaries that are comfortable and licking each other's butts, it's a disgrace. These kids need help. These kids are lost. Thank you so much. I appreciate you. I'm sorry if you guys felt some kind of way. After you tie a dog for so many years, he's going to come out and bite you. Mr. Martinez don't play with me. Just keep that in mind.

Comm. Martinez: No games.

Ms. Razzak: God bless and thank you once again. I appreciate it. Dr. Newell, you're doing an awesome job. There's only so much that you can do. Shame on the other ones who left and are taking their vacations now and enjoying! When they took the money that they were missing teachers and they went to Puerto Rico, it was a vacation for them. Susan Peron, how dare you? Don't play with me guys. You know I know. That's why I get in trouble.

Mr. Willie Peterkin: Good evening. My name is Willie Peterkin, founder of the Willie Peterkin Foundation. I have a program called "Rebuilding Dreams to Hoops." You have the schedule on the agenda under Fiscal Management for F-27. I know you guys are getting ready to discuss it now. The first basketball court that I built was in 2019. We're in 2024. I was trying to do one every year for the students. This gives the opportunity for the kids to have a safe place to play. I heard earlier everybody talking about why we discuss sports so much. To be honest with you, sports do a lot for the education department. We bring physical activity. It helps the kids feel happier. It gives them more confidence. They have fun. They develop social skills and coping strategies that are useful to home, school, and with their peer groups. This is an opportunity for the kids. The project that we do costs no money to the district. This is provided by donations. I have a shirt on that says, "Rebuilding Dreams to Hoops." This is how we finance the projects. Right now, we have School No. 12, School No. 26, and School No. 6. School No. 26 was supposed to be done back in 2020. The excuse at the time was the pandemic. We didn't need to build basketball courts because there was nobody around. I don't know why that wasn't done. Ms. Glover at the time did two resolutions. They were submitted and no one got back in contact to let us know the status. Now it's 2024. Only one court has been up. We have a process for the resolution that we just put through asking to do three courts in three years, so we don't have to keep coming back here. That's the only thing I have to say at the moment. I would like someone to contact me if you do a vote because I didn't actually know about this until I made a phone call to know that you had this on the agenda for tonight. There's no communication back and forth to let me know what the status is. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Comm. Martinez: Thank you, Will. We appreciate your efforts.

Ms. Greta Mills: Hello, everyone. My name is Greta Mills. I'm a Paterson resident and a teacher. Ms. Freeman, thank you for your words. Ms. McCall, whenever you have to say something, please just say it. Don't let anybody stop you from saying what you need to say. I may have missed that note that went out, but we can't blame any one person for the low scores that we are dealing with in the Paterson School District. It is appalling and sad that we are in this situation where the students are failing miserably. I have come up here many times saying that we don't need any more people hired that are not in the classroom. The classroom size is too big. The students need to be in a smaller classroom. That is the only way. I see now that they hired some more people

from this Inspire group to come in and observe teachers. We don't need any more people observing. We need somebody taking a group of kids and working with them at their level. When you have to have a vice principal standing behind a student and telling them what to say over a microphone because they're unable to read a paper, it is a sad way to be in. I cannot understand why we are continuously hiring people and they're not in the classroom. We need smaller class sizes. That is the only way that this is going to change. We have too many people sitting in a room and nobody is working with the students. The only person in the classroom is the teacher who has that roster. Everybody else gets to sit in their little cubbyhole and they're not taking a group of kids. This doesn't work. It's not going to help. It's not going to get the scores back up. You can't have 25 kids. I'm looking at the bilingual teacher and she has like 30 or 40 kids taking up the whole hallway. She shouldn't be struggling like that. You have the other one who was attacked by a student. She literally doesn't want to come to school anymore because there are too many kids in the hallway, and they are just taking over. We're going out for the fire drills, and we have fenders and glass on the streets. It's a hot mess. This is not just you because this is part of City Council and I'm going to the meeting to complain there too. You're walking on the streets and there's nothing but glass and car parts we have to step over during a fire drill. It is a hot mess the City of Paterson is in. It is sad that the kids are failing. They won't be able to get a job as a teacher, lawyer, doctor, pharmacist, or anything else because they can't read, can't comprehend, and the parents won't assist. We have kids sitting in a room who can't even spell their name. How do you give the child a name and you don't teach them how to spell it? How do you not teach them to sound out their name? Once again, it is a parent's responsibility to start at home. You can't tell me as a parent you can't teach your child the letter A. You can't do that? You can't teach a child one plus one is two? We come from a time when we had people who were illiterate and couldn't go to school. We had slavery and all that stuff. That's not going on right now. There's nothing stopping you as a parent from helping your child. Take a deck of cards. I don't care what you do, but you need to assist at home before you send them to school knowing how to spell their name, basic letter sounds, and being able to add. I used to walk down the streets of Paterson with my son and spelling the word b-u-s. Why can't you do that as a parent? It's not just the teachers. It's everybody coming out of the cubbyholes, taking a group of kids, and assisting with getting them back on a level that they need to be on. They're all below level. Not one. Not two. All! Thank you.

Mr. G. E. Soriano: Good evening, Board. It was very tough tonight listening back there to a lot of things. I had a recent meeting with the Superintendent, and she knows a lot of the parents. I don't know the parents Valerie is listening to, but a lot of the parents believe in you. That's why we chose you to be there. It's the same for the Deputy. Everything that has been going on has been going on for a long time. My oldest daughter graduated from college. She is 32 years old. I was raised in this district. I understand how we've gone lower and lower every year. A lot of things have happened under previous administrations, and everybody let a lot of things slide. You're absolutely right about that. There are a lot of things that I can blame on you guys too. But you guys are the new part too and there are other things that the older members dropped the ball on too. I don't want to stand here and point fingers. We can all do that all day. That was harsh about the parent's part. A lot of times, the parents are traumatized because the administration and principals don't care about us. Sometimes we feel like you guys don't care about us unless it's election time. When it's time when everybody needs to do the dance, you want to talk to the parents. A lot of parents feel like you just spit, not only in our face, but in our mouths. It's hard. I'm the president of a district PTO. I used to mind my business. Let me tell you what happened. My daughter's teacher pulled out her chair when my daughter went to sit down, a female teacher at that, Ms. Kravos. If she's still there, watch her. When I went and told

Principal Flores, she asked the teacher whether that was true. She never got written up. She never got fired. I get a lot of parents who sometimes the administration doesn't listen to. Guess who they come and complain to? Us! The teachers are calling them stupid and dumb. A lot of migrant families are here now. The teachers are goofing on the kids. When I'm dressed like this and I walk around the schools, they don't know who I am until I put on a suit and then it's something different. I see it from both sides. At times I may oversee myself and I've gotten in contact with certain Commissioners to speak about certain things because sometimes we're not listened to. Yes, we are the first teachers, but a lot of the hours rest in the schools with the principals and secretaries who say they don't speak Spanish and hang up on the parents. We have papers on file. We ask and request them too to let us know because we don't want to blame anything on anybody, but it's everybody's fault. A lot of times the parents don't know because administration doesn't want us to know. I thank you, Comm. Rashid. In a lot of the houses, the principals are the bosses. Whatever you say, they don't even follow. You make a rule up here but when you get there, it's something else. I'm sorry, assistant superintendents, because I know a lot of you do your work too, but it's a lot of things that go on that you don't know about. We all need to sit down together and talk about it. Even with the caps and gowns. This is something we have been waiting on for a long time and we still haven't gotten an answer for it. It's a little thing. If we can't get it for a little thing, of course we don't ask for a lot because you don't care. That's how we feel. I've lived here for a long time. This is my city. We just want to be heard, not just when it's election time. Thank you.

Ms. Amira Abdelhadi: Good evening. My name is Amira Abdelhadi and I'm graduating eighth grade at School No. 9 this year. I have been a straight-A student all my life and I have been looking forward to wearing the cap and gown. We have been fighting to bring it back for two years when it should have never been taken away in the first place. I believe that it should be the students' and parents' decision on whether we should wear the cap and gown. Yet, the district is now making decisions for our ceremony. We should not have to wait until next year to pass this vote. It should be up to each school this year to decide whether they're able to do it. If any school votes no for this year, it's only because they're lazy. A cap and gown shows that everyone is equal, like a uniform, because we will all be wearing the same thing. If you have to wear a uniform in school, why is it different for caps and gowns? Some can't afford fancy dresses and suits. The cap and gown makes everyone feel equal and special. I feel unappreciated and unacknowledged because me and many other graduates have been working hard for eight years, getting good grades just for us not even be able to wear a cap and gown. There are many more Paterson students who want to succeed in life, and you shouldn't have listened to a few parents' opinions to vote for about 25,000 students. Please vote to bring back caps and gowns. It will positively impact the district as a whole and make us all feel valued. Thank you.

Ms. Jamila Musbeh: Good evening. My name is Jamila Musbeh. I'm in the eighth grade at Charles J. Riley. I believe it's wrong to take away caps and gowns from the eighth graders. I think it should be the parents' decision to buy the caps and gowns. It's not like the district ever paid for them. I feel that Paterson keeps taking away from the students. No wonder they all have to leave to charter and private schools. Please vote to bring back caps and gowns. Let's show them we can be proud to be Paterson Public School students. Thank you.

Ms. Sanan Hmidan: Hello and good evening. First of all, I do expect everyone's attention the same way I give you guys the attention. The last time I was up here, there were a lot of side conversations, and I did not feel heard. With that being said, Ms. Freeman, I know you mentioned children's GPA being low and that they're paying

attention to sports. I agree it's the parents. It's the students as well. I come from immigrant parents. My parents could not teach me. I had to learn on my own and that comes from the school. You guys are cutting funding. School is boring. My child is not doing what I used to do. Every year we had a field trip. We went camping. We went to the beach. We went to the museum. That's not happening anymore. We had shop. We had home economics. We had art. We had music. We had world language. Bring that back. Make school fun for the kids. It's not and that's up to you. You guys are with all these budgets saying you want to do this and that. Of course, the kids don't want to sit there with a book and a computer all day. It's boring. With that being said, I brought my son with me today. We just came back from karate. He had an after-school program until 4:15. We went to karate right away and we came straight here. He didn't do his homework. My child is wearing short pants, unfortunately. I prefer to have money for a uniform. Uniform pants for my son who is growing, a second grader, is from \$17 to \$25. The shirts are the same thing. I cannot really afford to buy him a new shirt every three or four months, but I do. I prefer to have him look good in school so that the kids won't make fun of him. You guys are not allowing the cap and gown, which the parents pay for anyway. I'd rather pay \$15 and have my son wear sweats if he was graduating and not wear a dressy shirt or pants that I have to pay \$100 for. Please consider it. With that being said, my nephew never got the opportunity to graduate. During Covid, they never graduated, and he never got to walk in eighth grade. Unfortunately, he dropped out and never got the opportunity to walk the stage. He never had that feeling of graduating. Why is that a big thing? I went to trade school. I went to cosmetology school, and they gave us a cap and gown. That's nothing compared to what the kids are doing in high school and eighth grade. Why should that not be celebrated? Of course it should be celebrated. You guys are talking about parent involvement. Like Soriano said, you guys are not listening to us. I don't feel heard. Every single school has a parent coordinator. Our parent coordinator is out there in the morning, afternoon, on the playground and wherever she can possibly be. We're here all the time. The parents don't want to come. They don't feel heard. I have parent friends in every single school. We know. We don't know who our parent advocates are. We only know Bridget. We know Soriano. We know the school principal and vice principal. Who do we talk to? We don't know. I don't think that's our fault. I do believe that you guys have some blame. No offense. Work harder. Make it fun. Make the kids want to go to school. Don't make it boring and we will be involved. You're talking about a full room. I don't even want to be here. It's late. I'd rather be home. Please consider the cap and gown. Make something fun for the end of this year. That's my main thing. Thank you.

It was moved by Comm. Redmon, seconded by Comm. Freeman that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

RESOLUTIONS FOR A VOTE AT THE WORKSHOP MEETING

Resolution No. 1

WHEREAS the Paterson Public School District approves payment for the list of bills dated through 4/17/2024 in the amount of \$17,169,151.05 beginning with check number 241896 and ending with check number 242131, along with direct deposit number beginning with 2007 and ending with 2007 and

WHEREAS the Paterson Public Schools also approve wires in the amount of \$3,000,000.00 bringing the grand total \$ 20,169,151.05 and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that each claim or demand has been fully itemized, verified and has been duly audited as required by law in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:19-2.

Resolution No. 2

WHEREAS, the School Business Administrator, pursuant to 18A:22-8.1, has prepared and presented for approval the monthly transfer report 1701, for the month of February 2024, and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:23A-13.3 requires the Board Secretary and the Board of Education to certify that no budgetary line item account has been over-expended and that sufficient funds are available to meet the District's financial obligations, all transfers were fully executed consistent with code and policy prior to obligating funds.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves transfer of funds within the 2023-2024 school year budget, for the month of February 2024, so that no budgetary line item account has been over-expended and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations, as requested by various budget managers, and as identified in the list of transfers attached hereto and shall be made part of the minutes. Furthermore, the transfers were approved by the Department of Education.

Resolution No. 3

WHEREAS, the School Business Administrator, pursuant to 18A: 17-9, has prepared and presented the Board Secretary Report, A-148, for the month of February 2024, and

WHEREAS, the School Business Administrator certifies, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A-23A-16.10(c)(3), that no line item or program category account has been over expended, and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligation for the remainder of the fiscal year, and

WHEREAS, the Board Secretary's Report is in agreement with the Reconciliation Report, and

WHEREAS, the Board Secretary's Report is subject to adjustments following annual audit and Department of Education directions regarding Fund 15's School Based Budgets, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Paterson Public Schools acknowledges receipt and certifies the Board Secretary Report for February 2024 pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A-23A-16.10(c)(4), acknowledging no line items or program category account has been over expended and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligation for the remainder of the fiscal year, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Paterson Public Schools hereby incorporates the Board Secretary's Report for the fiscal period ending February 2024, as part of the minutes of this meeting and note the public discussion of same for the minutes; and, that the School Business Administrator be directed to forward to the County Superintendent the minutes together with Reconciliation Report, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall take effect upon its adoption.

Resolution No. 4

WHEREAS, the Board Secretary, pursuant to 18A:17-9, has prepared and presented the monthly reconciliation of bank account statements, for the month of February 2024, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Paterson Public Schools acknowledges receipt of the Reconciliation Report for February 2024 and acknowledges agreement with the February 2024 Board Secretary's Report, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Paterson Public Schools hereby incorporates the Reconciliation Report for the fiscal period ending February 2024, as part of the minutes of this meeting and note the public discussion of same for the minutes; and, that the School Business Administrator be directed to forward to the County Superintendent the minutes together with Reconciliation Report, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall take effect upon its adoption.

Resolution No. 5

WHEREAS, the Paterson Board of Education Policy Manual receives periodic revisions and additions, and

WHEREAS, the Policy Committee has reviewed policies and regulations for submission to the Board for first reading, and

WHEREAS, a public comment session will be held at the April 24, 2023, board meeting on said policies and regulations, now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the following policies and regulations for first reading:

P1140	Educational Equity Policies/Affirmative Action (M)
P1523	Comprehensive Equity Plan (M)
P1530	Equal Employment Opportunities (M)
R1530	Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Procedure (M)
P1550	Equal Employment/Anti-Discrimination Practices (M)
R2200	Curriculum Content (M)
P2260	Equity in School and Classroom Practices (M)
R2260	Equity in School and Classroom Practices Complaint Procedure (M)
P2270	Religion in the Schools
P2411	Guidance Counseling (M)
P2423	Bilingual Education (M)
R2423	Bilingual Education (M)
P2431.4	Prevention and Treatment of Sports-Related Concussions and Head Injuries (M)
R2431.4	Prevention and Treatment of Sports-Related Concussions and Head Injuries (M)
P3161	Examination for Cause
P3211	Code of Ethics
P3212	Attendance (M)
R3212	Attendance (M)
P3324	Right of Privacy
P4161	Examination for Cause
P4212	Attendance (M)
R4212	Attendance (M)

P4324	Right of Privacy
P5111	Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students (M)
R5111	Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students (M)
P5116	Education of Homeless Children and Youths
R5116	Education of Homeless Children and Youths
P5411	Promotion From Eighth Grade
R5511	Dress Code
P5570	Sportsmanship
P5750	Equitable Educational Opportunity (M)
P5841	Secret Societies
P5842	Equal Access of Student Organizations
P5860	Safety Patrol (M)
P7444	Use of Metal Detectors/X-Ray Scanners
P7610	Vandalism
R7610	Vandalism
P8210.01	Juneteenth Commemoration
P8500	Food Services (M)
P9323	Notification of Juvenile Offender Case Disposition

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS ARE ABOLISHED:

P1524	School Leadership Councils
P4432	Sick Leave
R4432	Sick Leave
P5460.02	Bridge Year Pilot Program
R5460.02	Bridge Year Pilot Program
P6361	Relations With Vendors for Abbott Districts
P5755	Equity in Educational Programs and Services
P8540	School Nutrition Programs
P8550	Meal Charges/Outstanding Food Service Bill

FINALLY RESOLVED, that in the event any policy, part of a policy or section of the bylaws is judged to be inconsistent with law or inoperative by a court of competent jurisdiction or is invalidated by a policy or contract duly adopted by the Superintendent or Board of Education, the remaining bylaws, policies, and parts of policies shall remain in full effect.

Resolution No. 6

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2007, the State of New Jersey adopted P.L.2007, c.53, *An Act Concerning School District Accountability*, also known as Assembly Bill 5 (A5), and

WHEREAS, Bill A5, N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12(3)f, requires that conferences/workshops have prior approval by a majority of the full voting membership of the board of education, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12(2)s, an employee or member of the board of education who travels in violation of the school district's policy or this section shall be required to reimburse the school district in an amount equal to three times the cost associated with attending the event, now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves attendance of conferences/workshops for the dates and amounts listed for staff members and/or Board members on the attached and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that final authorization for attendance at conferences/ workshops will be confirmed at the time a purchase order is issued.

CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP REQUESTS

STAFF MEMBER	CONFERENCE	DATE	AMOUNT
Quana Torres Teacher/School 2	NJSACC Annual Conference Princeton, NJ	April 26, 2024	\$259.97 (registration, transportation)
Laurel Olson Supervisor of Student Support Services	NJPN: "Connecting the Continuum of Care" New Jersey Prevention Network Atlantic City, NJ	May 17, 2024	\$673.49 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Sakena Thompson Program Manager/FSCS	NJSACC Annual Conference Princeton, NJ	April 26, 2024	\$259.97 (registration, transportation)
Yudelis Nunez STEAM COACH/School 2	NJSACC Annual Conference Princeton, NJ	April 26, 2024	\$259.97 (registration, transportation)
Tara Parker STEAM COACH/PS 16	NJSACC Annual Conference Princeton, NJ	April 26, 2024	\$259.97 (registration, transportation)
Kathleen Weissman Teacher/School 2	NJSACC Annual Conference Princeton, NJ	April 26, 2024	\$259.97 (registration, transportation)
Susan Ronga Teacher Coordinator/Paterson Adult School	NJASA/NJAPSA Leadership Conference Atlantic City, NJ	May 15-17, 2024	\$721.27 (transportation, lodging, meals)
Randa Saleh Teacher Coordinator/Paterson Adult School	NJASA/NJAPSA Leadership Conference Atlantic City, NJ	May 15-17, 2024	\$721.27 (transportation, lodging, meals)
Sylvia E. Ligon	National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc.- Eastern Regional Conference	April 26, 2024	\$0.00

Teacher/Business Education/EHS	Melville, NJ		
Ronald Jackson	Rutgers University Football Coaches Clinic	April 12, 2024	\$0.00
Teacher Coordinator of Discipline	Piscataway, NJ		
Donna Genovese	Subject to Climate "Climate Change K-12 Education Symposium"	April 19, 2024	\$0.00
Teacher, Math-Science/School 28	Union, NJ		
Pamela Holloway	NJPSA/FEA "Empowering Women Education Leaders"	April 30, 2024	\$0.00
Supervisor of School Counseling/EHS	Online		
Dr. Laurie W. Newell	NJASA Spring Leadership Conference	May 15-17, 2024	\$1,573.85 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Superintendent of Schools	Atlantic City, NJ		
9 Board & 16 Staff Members	NJSBA Annual Workshop 2024	October 21-24, 2024	\$2,100.00 (registration only)
Superintendent of Schools	Atlantic City, NJ		

***FOR RATIFICATION**

**Total Number of Conferences: 14
Total Cost: \$7,089.73**

It was moved by Comm. Ramirez, seconded by Comm. Simmons that Resolution Nos. 1 through 6 be adopted.

Comm. Gonzalez: I had received an update on the policy related to caps and gowns. I made a phone call to the school district just to make sure that we had language that specifically included caps and gowns. I just want to make sure that's what we're going to be voting on. This is Policy #5411 on Promotion from Eighth Grade. The previous policy just had a line in there that says, 'to prohibit caps and gowns.' That was removed. If you have an updated copy, it should read 'a stole, cap and gown to acknowledge the accomplishments should be worn.' What was there prior was the omission of caps and gowns. I just want to make sure that everybody has the copy that I have.

Ms. Williams: It was not added.

Comm. Gonzalez: I would like to separate this and put a motion to add that language, which is adding the cap and gown into that same sentence.

Comm. Simmons: I think we're just taking that line out, which didn't prohibit cap and gown. When you add the language that it should be worn, there are schools in the district that do not and have not. By putting 'should be' you're automatically putting those schools in violation of the policy.

Comm. Gonzalez: That's the reason I want it in. We can differ on the opinion, and we can vote on it. The reason I want to add cap and gown is because I have yet to hear one single individual tell me the opposite. When I read a report from the meeting that the Superintendent had with the principals on a Friday, it showed certain principals were in favor of it and certain principals weren't. I think there was a third option of just choosing to do it the following year. When I looked at some of those comments from some of the principals who said no, they said no because they didn't have it in the budget, but they're not paying for it. This is the parents' decision. It should not be up to the principal to determine what the parents want, especially when the parents are paying for it. The Board members approved at 5% increase. We've gotten money from the state. They're asking for something that they want. It shouldn't be controlled by a principal. I respect the principals for the work that they do, but I've also seen a note that said a principal has never done this. That may be the principal's decision because they might have a philosophy of not doing it. I'm curious to know if their parents want this.

Comm. Simmons: Actually, no. I need to clarify this. This isn't a conversation that just happened. It didn't just happen when I got here or when we passed it a couple of years ago. This has been a conversation for about 20 years. It was removed at one time and those schools continued to follow that. You have certain schools that don't. My only suggestion is we take out the language that prohibits the cap and gown, which allows schools to do it. But when you put in the language that they should, those schools that don't and have a history of not doing it – and that's what those parents have come to understand, especially if it's a neighborhood school where you have multiple generations – you automatically put those schools in violation of that policy.

Comm. Gonzalez: This is the problem. This is why we have this discussion, and we can differ on opinion. There were some schools that said no to caps and gowns, but those are some of the parents that we're hearing from today and when they come out all the time...

Comm. Simmons: It's not being taken away.

Comm. Gonzalez: I get it. That's fine, but the parents want it. The history of whether it happened or didn't happen is totally irrelevant. What happened 20 years ago, those students are no longer even in the district.

Comm. Simmons: I'm talking about five years ago.

Comm. Gonzalez: ...which is fine. The parents today are asking for it. I read it carefully and I want to respect what principals are saying and their input. I highly take that as a recommendation. Especially on a topic like this, when the parents are flipping the bill and are coming to us asking for this, it's our job to make it a policy that they do it. If a parent doesn't want to participate, there's a dress code. They can go in a nice shirt or whatever it is. That's fine. I'm not saying that they all have to wear it, but I don't want a principal to determine whether they're going to have a moving-up ceremony because parents want to wear the caps and gowns. You heard it from a parent here who actually said the same argument when I brought it up in the very beginning last year. It's actually more feasible for parents to buy a simple \$20 cap and gown and not have to worry about buying a \$60 shirt. You've heard it here plenty of times. It shouldn't be a big debate. We can differ on it. I would like to put a motion to add that in the language and then we can vote on it. If you're in favor of it, you vote yes. If you're not, you vote no.

Comm. Simmons: You have to make an amendment.

Comm. Gonzalez: What would be the formal process to do that?

Comm. Martinez: If I could just interject for a moment. Again, I want to be clear. It is not my opinion that anyone is against the notion of the caps and gowns. We discussed this ad-nauseum at our last meeting. We had a policy meeting the very next day to finish up and discuss it so when we came here today it was in order. Why didn't it happen in the policy meeting so that when we came here today the language was done and all we had to do was vote yes? Why did it not happen in committee?

Comm. Gonzalez: I wasn't in the committee. I attempted to log in. I wrote an email saying that I wasn't able to log in and I was not in. When I actually got in, the meeting was over. That was a really quick committee meeting when there was a lot to discuss. It is what it is. It's documented. This is where we are. We just passed an approval without a resolution. If you don't like the language, just vote it down. No one says that you're against caps and gowns. If you don't like the language, vote it down. I heard very clearly. You have a Board member here who's listening to the parents since last year. I've been hearing this over and over. We have a lot more important issues to discuss and this is something that sometimes seems a little bit controversial, whether it's language or philosophy. I just simply think that we should allow the parents to dictate whether they have a cap and gown on their child. If they don't want to have a cap and gown, that's fine. What I don't want is to have a principal dictate whether they're going to have their students have a cap and gown. That's what I propose. I want to know what the correct process is to do that. If we have the support for it, great. If we don't, fine.

Comm. Simmons: The process is you need to make an amendment to the current motion that's on the floor.

Comm. Gonzalez: I would like to make that amendment. The amendment is to correct the language on the second page.

Comm. Simmons: It's not corrected because you're adding.

Comm. Gonzalez: I would like to have an amendment to change Policy #5411 to include the language on an existing sentence on the second page that states 'a stole, cap and gown to acknowledge the accomplishments should be worn.'

Comm. Ramirez: Second.

It was moved by Comm. Gonzalez, seconded by Comm. Ramirez to amend Resolution No. 5, Policy #5411, to include the sentence "a stole, cap and gown to acknowledge the accomplishments should be worn." On roll call all Board members voted as follows:

Comm. Freeman: Yes.

Comm. Gonzalez: Yes.

Comm. McCall: Yes.

Comm. Ramirez: Yes.

Comm. Rashid: Yes.

Comm. Redmon: Abstain.

Comm. Simmons: Because I don't want to put schools that are not doing it in immediate violation of a policy over something that they haven't practiced, my vote is no.

Comm. Martinez: I normally don't speak before my vote. I usually cast a yes or no vote, but I want to be very clear about this. To the parents and to the public, I am not against caps and gowns. What I am for is procedure. There are proper ways of doing things. We spoke about this at the last meeting until we were bloody in our knuckles. The very next day we had a policy meeting in place. If the folks didn't attend the meeting or were late, if it was that important be on time to the meeting and get things done the right way. That is the point that I'm making. Do it. Let's talk about it. This is my point. Do things the right way. We talked about it last time. The meeting was set up the very next day to hash this out. Show up to the meeting. Hash it out. Get it right. Why are we doing this again? My vote is yes for the people.

The motion carried.

Comm. Simmons: Let's be clear. My vote is only no on the amendment.

On roll call all members voted in the affirmative on Resolution Nos. 1-6. The motion carried.

Paterson Board of Education Standing Abstentions

Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz

- Self
- City of Paterson
- Transportation (Bus Companies)
- Downtown Special Improvement District
- Celebrate Paterson
- Passaic County
- Passaic County Board of Social Services

Comm. Valerie Freeman

- Self
- Family
- Paterson Cares, Inc.
- Paterson Community Health Center

Comm. Eddie Gonzalez

- Self
- Family
- New Jersey Community Development Corporation (NJCDC)
- Community Charter School of Paterson

Comm. Manuel Martinez

- Self

Comm. Della McCall

- Self
- City of Paterson

Comm. Joel D. Ramirez

- Self
- City of Paterson
- Passaic County Community College

Comm. Mohammed H. Rashid

- Self

Comm. Nakima Redmon

- Self
- Historic Preservation of the City of Paterson
- County of Passaic

Comm. Kenneth Simmons

- Self
- Family

GENERAL BUSINESS

Items Requiring a Vote

Instruction and Program

Comm. Ramirez: We did meet on Monday. We will be presenting Items 1-16. The minutes should be in the drive by the meeting.

Operations

Comm. Ramirez: We met today. We discussed Items 17-24. O-17 is professional development for 14 schools. It's in-house on the job professional development for the teachers, including the principals. It is Title I funded. Items O-18 through O-23 are transportation routes, which are considered procedural. O-24 is the HIB investigations and results. I did request and Mr. Cozart is working on uploading them again because they're very blurred and you really can't make out some of the notes. Dr. Henderson was in the meeting and he's going to be handling that as well. The minutes have already been prepared and they will be on the drive.

Fiscal Management

Comm. Redmon: Fiscal meets tomorrow.

Personnel

Comm. Redmon: Personnel met on Monday. I was presiding. Comm. Ramirez and Comm. Simmons were present, along with District Counsel Ms. Shabazz. We talked about the appointment of an environmental regulatory officer. We talked about our teacher vacancies. As of Monday, we were at 131. We talked about our upcoming in-house job fair at Central Office here. It will be held on April 30 from 4:00-7:00 p.m. We also talked about a future virtual job session for May 14, 2024, and also for June 12. We're going to have another information session on May 12 and 14. If you know any

available teachers, please come to our job fairs. We're doing a lot of advertising for this district to make sure that we get quality and educated teachers back in the classrooms. If you have a friend, tell them to please come and apply. We're looking for those teachers to fill the classroom spaces. Our meeting concluded at 5:00 p.m.

Governance

Comm. McCall: We met prior to this meeting last month. We will be meeting on Thursday and will report in our regular meeting.

Committee Report

Facilities

Comm. Martinez: Facilities is scheduled to meet next week.

Family & Community Engagement

Comm. Freeman: We meet next week. I'll have the report from our last meeting next week.

Technology

Comm. Simmons: Technology meets on Monday.

OTHER BUSINESS

Comm. Freeman: Are you going to address some of the concerns that the parents had?

Comm. Martinez: We have to be very delicate about talking about that publicly. I will follow up with folks after we meet.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Comm. Redmon, seconded by Comm. Ramirez that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.



Mr. Richard Matthews
Business Administrator/Board Secretary