

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING**

March 7, 2024 – 6:12 p.m.
Central Office (Cafeteria)

Presiding: Comm. Manuel Martinez, President

Present:

Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Rodney Henderson, Deputy Superintendent
Khalifah Shabazz-Charles, Esq., General Counsel

*Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz
Comm. Valerie Freeman
Comm. Eddie Gonzalez

Comm. Della McCall
Comm. Joel Ramirez
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, Vice President

Absent:

Comm. Mohammed Rashid
Comm. Nakima Redmon

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

Comm. Martinez 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:

**Special Meeting
March 7, 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.

Comm. Martinez: Folks, I want to thank you and welcome you to tonight's meeting. We have one presentation and then we're going to jump into a nice discussion specifically about School No. 3 and our STEAM High School. I know folks in the audience are eager to hear the presentation. We are eager to hear your feedback and have a discussion about that when we get into public portion. I want to get through the quick resolutions for a vote so we can take care of that and then jump right into our presentations.

RESOLUTIONS FOR A VOTE AT THE WORKSHOP MEETING

Resolution No. 1

Approval of: Attendance of New Jersey High School Division of DECA State Career Development Conference and Competition in Atlantic City, NJ from March 4, 2024 - March 6, 2024

WHEREAS the DECA students enrolled at the Eastside High School Educational Campus are competing in the New Jersey High School Division of DECA (Distributive Education Council of America) State Career Development Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey

WHEREAS, during the three-day, two-night trip from March 4, 2024 - March 6, 2024 a maximum of eight Eastside DECA student members will participate and compete in various events as one strategy used in assisting students to develop the competencies needed to prepare and advance in marketing, merchandising and management careers.

The NJ DECA competitive events program and leadership workshops are congruent with sound educational practices and address cross content workplace readiness skills. They support Standard 9.4 - Career Technical Education (CTE) Marketing Center Cluster. Furthermore, they are also aligned with the District's Strategic Plan, Priority 1: Effective Academic Programs, Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement by providing Extended Learning Opportunities:

WHEREAS the trip will include a maximum of eight students and three teachers and is being organized by the Eastside High School DECA Chapter with lodging and planning guidelines being provided by the New Jersey State DECA Organization.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Paterson Public School District approve this educational opportunity for the DECA students of the Eastside Educational Campus with cost not to exceed \$3000 for transportation, to be paid by the Carl D. Perkins Grant.

Resolution No. 2

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
Dr. Elizabeth Caccavella	Georgia Tech STEAM Leadership Conference	March 8, 2024	\$75.00 (registration)
Director of STEAM Education	Virtual		
Lakisha Kincherlow-Warren	Georgia Tech STEAM Leadership Conference	March 8, 2024	\$75.00 (registration)
Supervisor of Science	Virtual		
Dr. Hafiz M. Saleem	Georgia Tech STEAM Leadership Conference	March 8, 2024	\$75.00 (registration)
Director of STEAM Education	Virtual		
David Scala	Georgia Tech STEAM Leadership Conference	March 8, 2024	\$75.00 (registration)
Pathway Associate Supervisor STEAM/ International H.S.	Virtual		
Diana Slopey	Georgia Tech STEAM Leadership Conference	March 8, 2024	\$75.00 (registration)
Supervisor of Mathematics	Virtual		
Michelle Van Hoven	Georgia Tech STEAM Leadership Conference	March 8, 2024	\$75.00 (registration)
Supervisor of Mathematics	Virtual		
Kenneth Garrabrant	NJ Educational Computing Cooperative Annual Conference	March 12-13, 2024	\$185.00 (registration)
Mathematics Teacher/Paterson STEAM High School	Montclair, NJ		
Tororris Hill	DAANJ State Conference	March 12-15, 2024	\$1,126.02 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Supervisor of Athletics/Eastside High School	Atlantic City, NJ		
Ryan Taylor	NJ School Buildings and Grounds 2024 Conference Expo	March 17-20, 2024	\$992.68 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Facilities Carpentry Supervisor	Atlantic City, NJ		
Dr. Laurie W. Newell	NJASA Women's Leadership Conference 2024	March 18, 2024	\$320.63 (registration, transportation, meals)
Superintendent of Schools	Somerset, NJ		
Althea Brown	OSG Transformational Leadership Conference	March 22-23, 2024	\$705.00 (registration, transportation)
Principal/Senator Frank Lautenberg School	New York, NY		
Valerie Freeman	2024 NSBA Annual Conference	April 5-8, 2024 (traveling on April 5)	\$4,139.28 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Board Member	New Orleans, LA		
Kenneth L. Simmons	2024 NSBA Annual Conference	April 5-8, 2024 (traveling on April 4)	\$5,348.08 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Board Vice President	New Orleans, LA		

Jaclyn Dickerson	Bureau of Education & Research Dyslexia Conference	April 15, 2024	\$300.26 (registration, transportation)
Reading Specialist/School 19	West Orange, NJ		
Randa Saleh	Future-Ready Brains: Teaching Students to Think, Create, Innovate, Learn and Adapt for an Age of Anxiety and AI	April 18-20, 2024	\$1,394.23 (transportation, lodging, meals)
Teacher/Paterson Adult School (NJYC)	New York, NY		
Michele Gordon	NJTESOL/NJBE 2024 Spring Conference	May 29-30, 2024	\$176.28 (transportation)
ESL Teacher/Alexander Hamilton Academy	New Brunswick, NJ		
Dr. Hafiz Saleem	International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Live 2024	June 23-26, 2024	\$3,199.21 (registration, transportation, lodging, meals)
Supervisor of Instructional Technology	Denver, CO		

***FOR RATIFICATION**

**Total Number of Conferences: 17
Total Cost: \$18,086.67**

Resolution No. 3

WHEREAS, the Paterson Public School District recognizes the need for complying with the New Jersey purchasing laws for obtaining the most competitive and responsive bid for goods and/or services; and

WHEREAS, the District determined that there is a need for performance and educational consulting and provided the specifications for the formal public competitive contracting process; and

WHEREAS, vendors were mailed/e-mailed RFP specifications and the RFP specifications were posted on District's website, to which three (3) vendors responded to the district's solicitation; and

WHEREAS, this solicitation was made by advertised public notice appearing in The Record and The Herald News on February 7, 2024. Sealed bids were opened and read aloud on February 27, 2024, at 11:00 AM on Zoom live stream at 90 Delaware Avenue, Paterson, NJ 07503 by the Purchasing Department resulting in the attached RFP summary; and

WHEREAS, the District recommends that Hazard Young Attea Associates is deemed the most responsive vendor with the highest technical criteria score and is awarded a contract; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Paterson Board of Education approves the awarding of the contract for RFP-400-24, to Hazard Young Attea Associates for the 2023-2024, 2024-2025 & 2025-2026 school years, not to exceed \$250,000 annually.

It was moved by Comm. McCall, seconded by Comm. Simmons that Resolution Nos. 1 through 3 be adopted. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. 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

PRESENTATION ON DISTRICT FACILITIES

Comm. Martinez: Before we get started, I want to say a huge thank you to Mr. Matthews and everyone who has worked diligently on this presentation. As it pertains to facilities, there is so much ground to cover, but I really want to streamline tonight's meeting to focus on School No. 3 and to give an overview of what we're looking at as far as our STEAM High School. Understanding the tone and tenor of tonight's meeting, I wanted to focus on School No. 3. I'm glad that you're all here and I really want that to be the focus on tonight's facilities portion of the meeting. Without further ado, I will turn it over to Mr. Matthews.

Mr. Richard Matthews: Regarding School No. 3 and the STEAM High School, I just want to mention that there was a much larger document to be presented tonight regarding facilities. I want to thank Stephanie Gales, Tracy Williams, and Chris Coke who worked with me during this whole process, as well as Alamo who is our real estate broker. I collaborated with them over the last couple of weeks to put this all together to give you a document for reference and for us to be able to have discussion tonight and in the future. Yesterday, I went over to the SDA and had my monthly meeting with them. We had a conversation about Paterson Public Schools and our facilities, and I submitted them a building age breakdown. Did you know that Paterson Public Schools has three buildings over 150 years old? We have three buildings 125 to 149 years old. We have six buildings over 125 years old. 22 are over 100 years old. This is something that I have given to the SDA to let them know and ask for more funding. Even though we got the \$3.5 million last year – and we appreciate that funding – there are still greater needs regarding the district. They said they have heard us and we should get some more funding. Jumping into what happened with the SDA, these are the projects that we with the \$3.5 million have earmarked for SDA funds. For the Eastside High School corridor doors, the price tag is \$600,000. We did the Kennedy blacktop last year and half of the Eastside High School parking lot. Right now, we're doing makeup work that's not really fixing the problem. School No. 6 entrance doors and building envelope, the blacktop at School No. 5, the playground and basketball court, School No. 28 needs some new doors, EWK needs a new vestibule, and the fencing at School No. 12 is a health and safety issue. I'm going to go into more about School No. 3 because what happens there is going to impact what we can do with these projects right here. We have been allocated \$3.5 million. There are two options with School No. 3. Option A is called the abatement and reconstruction with no building code update requirements. I'll go into detail later on. Option B is an abatement and reconstruction to satisfy building codes that come from doing the abatement and opening the walls and ceilings. There's work that may be done that's in greater detail than putting things back in status quo. We may have to upgrade fire alarm systems, HVAC systems, IT data, phone lines, and electrical. They have to be upgraded based on what comes out of the abatement. What is the cost for Option A? At a minimum, it's going to be a \$3 million price tag. After the \$3 million price tag, the reconstruction is \$1.6 million. You're looking at \$4.6 million for some reconstruction. After that work is done, you're not sure to what extent you're going to have to make repairs to any systems, whether it's fire alarms, HVAC, or security. We're not sure what's going to happen. Once you open up everything, there's no guarantee what's going to happen. The estimated cost for Option A is \$5.3 million. There are contingency costs of \$350,000. We're looking at an estimated cost of \$5.7 million. Even when you throw in some fluff on some of these numbers, you're looking at a minimum cost of \$5.7 million. That's just doing the abatement and reconstruction. Option B is the same as Option A regarding the abatement of \$3 million. The reconstruction cost is \$1.6 million. Now you go into the system, open up the walls and ceilings, and you have to do upgrades. You have to make new the fire alarm systems, panels, sprinklers, electrical, HVAC, IT, security, and PA system. All these things have

to go into an upgraded status and that price tag is \$7.2 million with contingency costs, so let's just call it \$8 million. We looked at everything. We started to map everything out in terms of what we would do as far as time is concerned. If we were to do abatement only for this year, we have to pay for the abatement, which we said was \$4.6 million. For 2024-2025, we would start doing building renovations. Those renovations are currently not funded in the 2024-2025 budget. Then we're looking at a tentative opening of school year 2025-2026. How would we pay for it? The initial plan to pay for the abatement was to use three funding sources. We want to use ESSER 3. That money is American Rescue Plan money, which expires in September 2024. We felt we had enough time to use \$1 million of ESSER funds for the abatement. SDA funds would come from the \$3.5 million that we have been allocated. We have local funds of \$1 million which would come from a project that's being scrapped, School No. 17. That's how we would fund the \$3 million abatement costs. Once you do that, an additional \$2.7 million would be if no building upgrades are required. That would be in addition to the abatement. If we do Option B, if we have to do upgrades to the building equipment, that would be an additional \$4.8 million on top of the \$3 million. We met as a committee in early February. If we were going to move forward, we needed a PO by February 20 to do the abatement. That timeframe is here in front of you. We would appeal to the vendor, and they would need six weeks to start the project. They would have a PO and the timeframe based on receiving the PO. We thought that we would have phase one done by the end of June. That was to make sure that we could have the work done using the funding source of ESSER 3. We have to have that liquidated by the end of September so we wanted to make sure that the abatement work was done by June so we could get a bill and pay it so we could meet the liquidation timeframe of September 30, 2024. Obviously, if we have the PO...(audio goes out from 11:56 to 12:31) 2025-2026 for School No. 3, which would mean that the displaced students that are in MLK, School No. 28 and Dale Avenue under the best case would never return back to School No. 3. We're looking at a whole new body of kids for School No. 3. Part of a larger conversation with School No. 3 was the middle school model. You guys had the presentation, which will have another conversation later on. School No. 3 was part of the middle school model and was not included in the model. It was the opinion of the people who were in those meetings that that facility was educationally inadequate. We feel that the kids who have been moved to MLK have received additional services. They're in a place where they have a full cafeteria. It's a very clean school. There's a full gymnasium. In terms of School No. 3, those are my points in terms of presenting to the Board, Options A and B and any other considerations you may have. Do you want me to go into STEAM directly? Or do you want me to stop here at School No. 3?

Comm. Martinez: I know the majority of the audience is here for School No. 3. I'm going to ask Mr. Matthews to go into the STEAM portion of the presentation. When we go back to public portion, we will have the information up for School No. 3 so we can refer back to it. I want to allow him to get through his presentation and then we will go back to the School No. 3 component and have all that information for your reference for you guys to speak off.

Mr. Matthews: I'm going to talk a little bit about the STEAM High School. Myself, Ms. Badawy, Ms. Espana, Ms. Tsimpedes, Ms. Coy, and the SDA had a meeting. I also have invited them to our facilities meeting on March 20 to do a final presentation on different options. At our meeting in February, they had given us three options. We scrapped one of the options. One of the options included to knock down the existing structure and find swing space. That was something we never heard or talked about before. It was never in the conversation, and they admitted that in the meeting. That was presented to us, and we scrapped the whole plan to find swing space because we don't have swing space to bring those kids to. We landed on two more options

regarding the property. Those two options include the regulation-size football field. To be clear, the community felt we were increasing the size of the space that we're using for STEAM, STARS, and TIES. For high school, a regulation-size field is 60 x 90 for baseball and 100 yards for football. When you see the term 'regulation-size' football field, this is all regulation size for baseball, softball, and football. It's not an increase in the size of the play space. Option 1 given to us was a 79,000 square foot field. It would come with 157 parking spaces. Of note, the first floor would have the cafeteria, gymnasium, and auditorium. The second floor has the auxiliary gym. There's no swing space. It tells you the parking spots and also the size of the field and where we would put the large spaces. Option 2 is 95,000 square feet in the size of the field. The parking spaces go from 157 to 150. The first floor would have the cafeteria, gym, and auxiliary gym. The auditorium would be on the third floor. None of these options require swing space. That's something that's totally new to us. We told them to scratch that. When they come back to us at the March meeting in facilities, they're going to have these two options for our consideration and that would be it. In terms of the timeframe for the schedule, you see that in front of you. I talked to them yesterday at the meeting and they're saying that we need to move on this thing. When you sit in those meetings at the SDA, there are buckets of money that are coming out every couple years. For us to get into the other buckets of money, I think we have to get this project moving. They're looking at doing the package schematics and design phases April through December. Advertise, December 20, 2024. Start the buildout and contract award in May or June of 2025. The bottom line is we're looking to have this thing substantially completed by June 2028. The grand opening would be some time in August or September of 2028. That's it for the STEAM, TIES, and STARS School. It's a very condensed report, as you requested.

*Comm. Castillo-Cruz enters the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

Comm. Martinez: Absolutely. Thank you so much. I want to open up the floor to all the Commissioners. If we can just focus on STEAM and get through this portion of the presentation, we can then open up the conversation as it pertains to School No. 3. I think that's where we're going to put most of your focus. Mr. Matthews, thank you for the presentation and I'll open up the floor.

Comm. Simmons: In Options 1 and 2 there's a difference in size of the regulation field. What's the difference between 75,000 square feet and 95,000 square feet?

Mr. Matthews: They're saying that both are regulation-size fields. I guess maybe foul territory or something like that. I was going to look into that a little further and have that for us before the next meeting. We will get that differential to you. I see the parking spaces are increased. I would imagine it's probably either foul territory or sideline area that's being impacted to provide the additional seven parking spots. I'll confirm that with you after I double check with Mr. DaSilva.

Comm. Freeman: I don't know if these little two white things on the side in Option 2 are where the bleachers and seating is going to be. I don't see any seating.

Comm. Martinez: Mr. Matthews, perhaps you can put that on the list.

Mr. Matthews: That looks like a sideline bench for football on both sides. That looks like a sideline bench and seating over there.

Comm. Freeman: For the team, but not for the spectators.

Mr. Matthews: It looks like there's a line between. It looks like that would be for seating. There's grass around there. I would imagine that would be seating. There's seating on the field right now. I would imagine that would be the area for seating. There's a line between the sideline and the next square box on both sides.

Comm. Freeman: My only concern is, having visited several times for several games, there's no seating for the spectators and the parents. They would just bring their chairs. Will some sort of seating be implemented? I can wait for that answer. It's just something to think about.

Mr. Matthews: We will make sure that seating is included. I know what you're talking about because I know the football field that's there. There's seating for the baseball games, but not for the football games.

Comm. Martinez: Any other questions pertaining to the STEAM School? Commissioners, if you catch anything else, feel free to communicate that.

Comm. Simmons: I'm not sure if this is for Mr. Matthews. Have we started talking about programming for the STEAM School? Just so that we can have everything connected, if we can...

Comm. Martinez: That's another good catch, based on the type of programming and such that can have impact on the layout and construction of the building.

Ms. Joanna Tsimpedes: Currently, STEAM High School is running with the programs that would be at the newly built program. The difference would be that we would be able to accommodate more students because the capacity of the space would be larger. At this point, we are limited to how many students we can take with every incoming grade. Everything has been planned out and is based on sustainability, engineering, medical arts, and everything that's there now. It's just that now we will be able to take on more students because the capacity of the building is approximately 1,200, inclusive of the STARS/TIES program, which will also be housed with us at the STEAM facility.

Comm. Martinez: If I'm hearing this correctly, we just have to get a little bit of clarity on if Options 1 and 2 still allow for that 1,200-student capacity. It does. The building will remain intact. It's the field that will be impacted due to taking away different parking spaces.

Comm. McCall: Would the 150 or 157 parking spaces be enough parking for the staff at the school? Currently in that area parking is a major concern.

Mr. Matthews: I'm going to double check that and confirm with the staff before I give you an answer. I believe we did talk about it, but I will double check and confirm.

Comm. Simmons: If it's not the same, it has to be pretty close to what it is now.

Comm. McCall: If we're talking about increasing because of the size of the school, will 150 be enough parking? Is Option 2 with an additional 7 spaces going to be enough parking? In that particular vicinity you have buildings. Most of the street parking is already occupied by the people who live there. You're talking about multiple buildings, and we continue to build here in the city. We don't know what else may be coming up in that area. I just want to make sure that even if something else is being built that we have enough parking to accommodate our staff. In a lot of our schools some of our staff is not accommodated with parking and it's difficult for them to park if they're not there

early or not assigned to park. For me, parking is a major concern. We can barely keep our staff here and I would hate for parking to be a reason why staff doesn't want to work in Paterson.

Comm. Simmons: I live right down the street. During the day most of that parking on the hill is empty. All of 11th Avenue is basically empty.

Comm. Martinez: On the weekend it gets a little packed.

Comm. Ramirez: Are these designs still contingent on Planning Board or Board of Adjustment approvals? They have to go to the Planning Board. They may ask for changes. There are members of the Planning Board who live in that neighborhood. They're going to have concerns.

Comm. Martinez: Another good catch. I see Mr. Matthews is taking copious notes.

Comm. Gonzalez: I'm just observing the outside of the field. First of all, this is not to scale. I assume this was put together. Do you have actual blueprints?

Mr. Matthews: No. This is the document that they gave to us for review. Once we give them approval, they would give us...

Comm. Gonzalez: On page 12 Option 1, if you look at the building on the right, it says 'auditorium with a stage.' It's the third building to the right. In Option 2 you eliminate that and just have a smaller facility and it says, 'auxiliary gym.' You'll get rid of the stage with an auditorium.

Mr. Matthews: Option 1 has a regular auditorium with an auxiliary gym. Option 2 has just a third-floor auditorium. No auxiliary gym.

Comm. Gonzalez: Option 2 here shows an auxiliary gym.

Mr. Matthews: Yes, I'm sorry. Option 2 has an auxiliary gym. I apologize.

Comm. Gonzalez: I care more about the auditorium.

Ms. Cheryl Coy: They have two. One is on the first floor, and one is on the second floor. The one that we were pushing for is the first floor. When the community uses it, they go right into the first floor and don't have to travel upstairs. The second one shows the auditorium on the second floor. It wasn't eliminated. It was just moved to accommodate the community, and the auxiliary gym also.

Comm. Gonzalez: Okay. Because this is not to scale, I'm going to assume that they are both the same size on both options.

Ms. Coy: Correct, yes they are.

Comm. Gonzalez: Thank you.

Comm. Martinez: Comm. Gonzalez, I'm actually amazed that you were able to see that because I can't. Are there any other questions that pertain to the STEAM School?

Comm. Ramirez: Can this be sent to us in a more clear way so that we can actually identify what's written on this?

Comm. Martinez: Sure, we can accommodate that request.

Mr. Matthews: I will request something from them that is more... I usually zoom it in.

Comm. Martinez: Mr. Matthews, if we can zoom in and print out those for us middle-aged and older folks?

Mr. Matthews: With my glasses I still can't see it. It's in the larger presentation. I can send you a soft copy.

Comm. Martinez: If we can zoom in on it like that and email those copies for us folks who don't see quite as well as certain other individuals. Thank you. We had a pretty good list of takeaways as it pertains to the STEAM School. Any last thoughts before we move into School No. 3? Good question. I don't think there's a drop-dead date for when we have to do it. I would assume that the sooner we're able to come to a consensus the better. To your point, Comm. Castillo, maybe we should put a timeline on this so we can make a decision. When is your next meeting with the SDA?

Mr. Matthews: They're coming to the March 20 meeting and they're going to be asking us for a decision.

Comm. Martinez: At our regular meeting they will be attending. For all intents and purposes, we can put it on the agenda for a vote on the 20th. Right now it is scheduled as virtual. I understand your concern, Commissioner. The location of the meeting is to be determined, but it is virtual. It's safe to say that for the 20th we should be prepared to put it to a vote. The SDA will be at a facilities meeting prior to the regular meeting. Mr. Matthews, if you can enhance those images and send them to the Commissioners as soon as you can, and then between now and the workshop come back with any questions pertaining to it. If we can get some clarity on those questions that the Commissioners have at the workshop, I think that gives us enough time when we get to the regular meeting on the 20th to put it to a vote.

Mr. Matthews: The invite went out for a virtual meeting to the SDA.

Comm. Martinez: So, we have to hold it virtually.

Mr. Matthews: I'm sure they can pivot.

Comm. Martinez: For the sake of the SDA.

Comm. Ramirez: Comm. Castillo and I had a question. Has the community been asked for their input on this yet? Was there a community forum?

Comm. Martinez: We should do that before we vote. Did I hear you volunteer to attend that meeting?

Comm. Ramirez: I will attend.

Comm. Martinez: Okay. Let's look to schedule that meeting for some time next week. Right now, with budget being at the forefront of what we have, how about we put this conversation in the parking lot and then revisit it? That's another good catch. It's safe and fair to get community input for folks who live in that neighborhood. Are there any final thoughts about STEAM? If anything comes to mind, feel free to reach out to any of

us by phone, text, or email. If we're all good with the STEAM presentation, I would ask if we can go back to the slides. Folks in the public, in keeping with our agenda, we're going to have an open discussion about School No. 3 and then we will invite you to join us when we get to the public comments. I just want to kick off the conversation as it pertains to School No. 3 by offering my thoughts. These are my individual thoughts. I'm not speaking on behalf of the Board. You'll hear from them, and you'll hear their thoughts. Hopefully, we will come to a consensus. I spoke to some of you just prior to the meeting. As the presentation outlined the options that we have in front of us, the first number came out to about \$5.8 million, which pretty much brings the school back to its barest, simplest form which would allow the students to safely use the building as they have in the past. Some of the concerns that we collectively have about that is once we start doing work in the building, knocking down walls, and moving things, because of the age of the building we can realistically expect there to be additional costs. For any of you who have done work on a house, you do a project, and you knock down a wall you find out you have to adjust that. In a school of this magnitude and this age, it's inevitable that we're going to find other things that need to be remedied as well. That \$5.8 million price tag that goes with the bare minimum option we can anticipate to be higher. How much higher? We won't know until we actually get into the work. The second option is between \$7.8 and \$8 million. It allows for sprinklers and some other safety concerns that would be alleviated. With all that being said, we would still have students attending a school that's over 125 years old that doesn't have some of the facilities and amenities that we would like for them to have. The struggle we have internally is, while we want to get the school up and running and we're advocating to the SDA to give us more funding for a new school and such, if we put the money into the school the SDA will say, "Why do we need to give you money for a new school when you've demonstrated that you can fix it on your own?" If we don't fix it on our own and wait for them to actually fix the school, you guys and the students remain displaced. I say all that to give you the context of what we're juggling and dealing with. In a perfect world, we would have unlimited funds to fix that school, get everyone in there, and it solves all the problems, but the reality is that's not the case. This is what we wrestle with. Our struggle is nowhere near your struggle as parents who live in those neighborhoods and have students going elsewhere. There's uncertainty and such. I offer that as context to kick off this conversation. I'm going to open up the floor to the rest of the Board members. Once we get into public portion, we will be more than happy to hear your feedback. I open up the floor to the rest of the Board.

Comm. Simmons: Mr. President, can you translate that?

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: (Translated Comm. Martinez' comments into Spanish)

Comm. Gonzalez: You mentioned the new school option. I don't see that as part of the presentation. That was part of our retreat. We had that as an option. I don't see that here. A third option was if we were interested in advocating for a new school. That would be keeping the kids where they are today and not doing a new school for these middle school kids. This is just a preschool.

Comm. Simmons: I thought when we discussed that the last time the consensus was that we didn't want that option. The thought was if we did a preschool, which would be a new school, then we can do the construction that was necessary to bring those students back. Even if those students remained where they were, we have a lot of development happening. There are going to be new students in that area. We could bring those same grade levels back into that building.

Dr. Newell: I think a part of the issue was the space was not enough to accommodate what's considered an educationally adequate facility. A new building would require upwards of 125,000 square feet. Right now, the footprint there is 56,000 square feet. We're bordered on each side by buildings that we have no control over. That was the issue.

Comm. Simmons: We understood that we couldn't do a new building because the new building has different requirements. If we are going to do construction internally to accommodate a preschool, which would mean you'd have to add another bathroom, you can do the construction to bring in the same grade levels.

Comm. Martinez: Anything else specific to School No. 3? Just for clarity, the context that was shared here was that if the notion of a brand-new school was to be considered, the 56,000 square foot space that we currently have would have to be adjusted to 125,000 square feet. Because we're bordered on both sides of the school, we don't have the opportunity to expand so the option of a new school is an impossibility. The options remain to fix the school as it currently is and use it for a preschool. If we're going to spend the money to make it a preschool, we might as well spend that money to fix it to bring back the current students. If the volume was low, that's essentially what this conversation was. If there are no further questions or comments from folks here, we can wrap up this portion and then open up public comments to allow the public to share their thoughts. Are there any last thoughts?

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Comm. Martinez: As we jump into public comments, I just want to say thank you for being here and for your patience. Your time per speaker is limited to three minutes. Just for ground rules, if you have any questions that you're going to be presenting to us, we don't answer at the moment. We do not engage in back-and-forth. We will hear your questions and write them down. Once we close public portion, we will be able to answer and respond to your questions. Some of the things you may be asking we may have to do our research to get you the proper answers. I offer that just for context as we jump into public comments.

Ms. Melissa Muniz: Good evening, Commissioners, educators, and parents. I have two children. One is in Dale Avenue and the other in School No. 30. The one at Dale Avenue is only six years old and they do not have recess. Other than that, Dale Avenue is fine. You keep saying how wonderful School No. 30 is. School No. 30 is wonderful for the students of School No. 30, not for the students of School No. 3. My son in September had no heat in his classroom. Since September, my son is sick every month. My son has asthma. My son is an A and B student who now has attendance issues because he's always sick. He was in a school with asbestos and never had issues with his health like he does now. Please make that make sense to me. School No. 30 is unsanitary. It's not clean for the students. His teacher has to sweep and clean the classroom. We parents have to send in Lysol wipes and disinfectants so she can clean the classroom. Why are the classrooms not being cleaned for these students? But for School No. 30, it's clean. This does not make sense. Why are these students going through this? My son went back to school yesterday and is worse in his health. His classroom has 24 students. Right now, there are currently 12 kids attending because everyone is sick. If School No. 30 was so wonderful and being kept clean,

there wouldn't be so many sick children. There are children still wearing masks. Why are they so sick in a school that doesn't have asbestos? That's something you guys should think about. You're stating that you still haven't gotten an abatement contractor. Can we work on this? Plan A sounds perfectly fine to me. You're saying the school needs to be updated and doesn't have a gym. These children don't care about all that. They have been attending the school with no issues. They're happy. They're like a family. Right now, you split up your family. How do you have kids going to one school and another school? They're no longer a family. They're no longer together. The kids are miserable. They're unhappy. How many parents have kids missing school because they missed the bus? It's across town. When my children are sick, I have to go all the way to School No. 30 and across town to Dale Avenue. I'm a single parent. I'm constantly missing work to take my son to the doctor because he's sick. Something needs to give. You guys need to do something about this because this is getting out of control. Thank you.

Dr. Petula Harden-Brown: Good evening, everyone. My name is Dr. Petula Harden-Brown. The reason why I come here this evening is I did send an email to administration, and I directed it to everyone here, including all Board members, with the exception of Mr. Ramirez, as the email came back that they could not find a sender. I did not send it to Ms. Tsimpedes, Ms. Badawy, Ms. Coy, and counsel. I want to read to you my email that I sent, and I respectfully request a response. I'm going to start backwards. What criteria are required for advancement within the Paterson Public Schools? This communication comes to your attention two weeks following to allow sufficient time to diffuse an announcement by Dr. Cicely Warren on January 30 to advise the newly appointed principal of Alexander Hamilton, Mr. Cosmo Braico. She stated that Vice Principal Braico was coming from School No. 13. I inquired why I was not considered for an interview. Dr. Warren stated the Superintendent, Dr. Newell, has a new hiring system and she was unaware of the exact procedures. I shared my absolute dismay with the Paterson Public Schools' hiring system. To be exact, I characterized the process as a shit show. I want to be clear. This is not a rant, but enough is enough with the blatant disregard for my years of professional service and lack of advancement. Favoritism and nepotism are out of control here. As things change within the district, much remains the same. I struggle to comprehend the rationale but have a deep understanding of why this situation persists within the district. I am well aware of the district's prerogative to interview and hire whom it pleases. However, the hiring system at face value is subjective and does not afford a graduate of the Paterson Public Schools, a former 50-year resident, senior administrator, community involved, and I would consider and expert in school leadership, the opportunity to obtain principalship. I have had the distinct privilege of mentoring new leaders, to name a few, including Dr. Sandra Montanez Diodonet, Passaic School Superintendent, Dr. Tiffany McBride, School No. 5 Vice Principal, and Ms. Shakina Hill, former Vice Principal, and yet I remain unrecognized in my own district. The lack of consideration for principalship brings additional scrutiny to the new hiring system as I was originally transferred to Alexander Hamilton for my veteran k-8 skills and ethnicity. I challenged the reasoning but was advised the district may transfer at its discretion. I also requested a pay increase for my value of skills, but this was denied. Conversely, there are administrators with far less time receiving significant pay raises in newly appointed positions. I have email threads and I'm not going to read them, but I will highlight an email that I sent to Dr. Cozart on November 17, 2021. He stated that the reason I was being transferred to Alexander Hamilton is because I provide "veteran k-8 leadership skills and knowledge that will compliment Dr. Petretti's skill set." He also stated my presence will provide diversity among the school staff. In closing, he stated "your overall skill set was the primary reason and ethnicity is an asset to the community." As a Black woman I can tell you I am racially exhausted with being used

when it serves the district's purpose. There's another email that I followed up to Mr. Rojas on Wednesday, December 1. I again stated during my discussion I presented the issue of a salary increase. His reply was no promises can be made. Although I still hoped for a favorable outcome, I did not receive any communication following that email that was sent to Mr. Rojas. The other vexing circumstance in this recent hiring practice is Dr. Dante Petretti, now retired Alexander Hamilton Academy Principal, formally announced his retirement to the district on November 30. I subsequently completed and submitted my application for Job #9557 – Anticipated Principal, via AppliTrack on December 1. At no time during my submission was an inquiry or any contact made directly regarding my interest in the impending vacancy. Be advised, I was transferred to AHA where I served as a vice principal for two and a half years. I think I would have known what was best for the building at the time as I was the vice principal. To my students when I was not granted the principalship, they wanted me to provide a rationale and explanation as to why I was not selected to be the principal and I was serving there.

Comm. Martinez: Ms. Brown, not to interrupt you, I do want to afford you time, but I'm going to have to ask you to please wrap it up.

Dr. Harden-Brown: I am wrapping it up and thank you so much for allowing me to do so. I understand that some parents come down and they're given unlimited time. I'm bringing it to a close. Much to my chagrin and AHA community, I'm unable to provide a logical explanation for not being considered principal. I did request a transfer on January 30 because the situation was not going to be ideal for me. I find it to be professionally insulting to stay in a building and have someone else assume leadership. I have worked in several elementary buildings within the district – School No. 10, School No. 5, School No. 4, School No. 21, MLK, School No. 25, School No. 20, School No. 26, AHA, and now JAT. This brings my total to 10 schools. I am wondering with these years of experience and training why I'm overlooked. Be advised, this is one of the many times I was overlooked by the district hiring procedures. I have stellar evaluations and mentoring expertise with staff as well as students and I'm highly respected. Please be on notice that I recognize and acknowledge the unfairness and unequal opportunity for advancement, and I'm outraged by this vicious cycle of promotions based on who you know and not what you know. Again, my question is, what criteria are required for advancement in the Paterson Public Schools? I will continue to solicit your feedback in this forum until my inquiry is properly addressed. Thank you so much for allowing me my time.

Ms. Mercedes Davidson: Good evening. Two weeks before this school year was to start, we were told that School No. 3 would be unsafe to enter. Until this evening, we have had little if no information as to what the future holds for School No. 3. This has caused great emotional distress for all parties concerned. For me personally, it drove me to take my own destiny into my hands. After 15 years of service to this district, I left. I am no longer an employee of Paterson, a district that has a shortage of teachers. One more now! I ask you in the future to inform all School No. 3 stakeholders of what is going on with our beloved school. I say 'our' because School No. 3 will always be a part of me. It is unfair to keep them in the dark relying on rumor and innuendo to form decisions. Those decisions at times may not be informed decisions because this Board has not informed them. Not the students, not the parents, and certainly not the staff. School No. 3 deserves better. On their behalf, because it is too late for me, I ask that you follow up with your options and decisions and keep everyone informed as to what the future of School No. 3 will be. It is the least that they deserve. Thank you.

Ms. Viviana Jimenez: Good evening. My name is Vivian Jimenez and I'm here to represent School No. 3. I'm a School No. 3 graduate. My kids were attending School No. 3. When this whole closedown happened, I was unfortunately unable to transfer my kids to where they were split up. I'm a single mother and I only have support from my mother. She doesn't have a vehicle. Unfortunately, I was unable to split my kids up because I knew that if anything went wrong in either school they were assigned to, I would have to leave work and accommodate to go pick up my kids, which was impossible for me. At the moment, I transferred my kids to where I'm currently working, and nobody has reached out to the parents to see how the kids are doing. Nobody has asked about what's going on with the kids' mental health. This is a whole new district to my daughter. She's been going to School No. 3 since she was in kindergarten. For me to just sit there and explain to her as a single mother she can't go with her friends on the bus and no longer be a School No. 3 student, it broke her down. This is why we're here, because we want answers and solutions. My daughter wants to go back to School No. 3. It was beneficial for me as a single mother for my kids to attend School No. 3. Thank you.

Ms. Elizzet Torres: (Comments made in Spanish) Good evening. We come for the same reason. When are you opening School No. 3? My daughter didn't want to speak because she's shy. We heard the two options. We don't know in what timeframe it will be opened. We understand you, but we want you to understand us. Right now, it's very difficult taking them to another school. Just as we have understood you all this time, we want you to understand us and try to accelerate the process. Thank you.

Ms. Ana Leal: (Comments made in Spanish) Good evening. We are all here for the same reason. When are you going to open School No. 3? It would be very convenient for me if you were to open it because I have five kids. Three of them attend MLK and two Dale Avenue. The oldest kids had a lot of difficulty. They would tell me that at MLK they were discriminated against by the other students. For a time, they didn't even want to go to school because the other students would tell them that their school is better and all the kinds of things that adolescents say. Another reason is that I have a baby who was born with issues. These past few weeks he was hospitalized. For me it would be convenient if they opened School No. 3 because it's closer and I don't have a vehicle or any type of transportation. That's all. Thank you very much.

Mr. Francisco Almonte: Good evening, everyone. I hope everybody is doing well. First and foremost, I'm not originally from Paterson. The first time I brought my kids to that school, I liked it. It felt like family. It reminded me of where I came from. Seeing everything that's going on, it has to be fixed. Everything starts in-house, not out of the house. The lack of communication is sad. Like you said before, it's true when you have a house and you try to fix something, you don't know what's behind it. I agree with that because that's what I go through in my house every day. It's rough. What other option do you have for these kids and everybody else here? It's not fair. It's March. School is almost over. We just want to do so something about it. I'm not here to judge anybody. I'm just here for a solution, for something to be done. Life is life. Let's work together and let's make Paterson better. I never thought I'd be living here, but I'm here. That's all I have to say. Have a good night.

Councilman Luis Velez: Good evening, Commissioners, administration, Superintendent, and staff. As you are aware, I'm the Councilman for the 5th Ward. I know a lot of the parents behind me because they live in that district where School No. 3 is sitting right now. I'm the type of person who instead of creating negative commotion and stress I try to get solutions to work with my parents and those individuals who are on board regarding School No. 3. There are two options, A and B. Option A is \$5

million plus, and Option B is \$7 million plus. One does not have a standard of putting the school up to code. The other one has to put everything in code and the needs that the parents have been requesting for many years for that school. Requesting a new school, for those who know the process, would cost more than \$30 million. Based on the wishes of the SDA, the place where we want to put it is not fitting because construction codes would not allow it. The Planning Board and Zoning Board would not allow a lot of things. That's my last option. I want to see parents and students back in School No. 3. Option B is the one accelerated to have a facility that the parents can come back into. It wouldn't put the burden back to the students, parents, or teachers going all the way around the city, a city that is congested. Everybody knows what's going on in the morning and in the afternoon. That's not even counting the weather that is a factor in this situation. I will push, if I was the one making that decision, for the \$7 million to renovate and put it up to code. Those parents and residents who know the history of that school love School No. 3. Those who knew me in 2015, knowing that the parents needed it I donated 15 AC's for those students who were in that school at that time. I was not a Councilman. I'm talking because I know the communication the parents have with me, and I can bring them some highlights of where we are. There's a piece that I'm a little bit concerned about. I know Superintendent, with all due respect, you are a communicative person. I know you always take my calls and communicate with the people. The district puts communication to the staff. Is the staff putting that communication to the teachers and the parents? I don't see the principal in the audience. He's the one responsible to have that communication with the Board to make sure that the parents feel comfortable and are getting the right information. Communication is key. I'm glad that tonight I heard the President of this Board recommend having a community meeting. Before the 23rd when you have to make a decision for the SDA, you want to do a community meeting.

Comm. Martinez: That's for the STEAM High School.

Councilman Velez: I would also recommend doing it with School No. 3. A lot of the parents are here. There's a language barrier. I was back here trying to translate to them. The estimated opening time the BA gave was between 2025-2026 and that's if they don't find something else. That's if the funding comes for this project. When the pandemic was going around the city, Mayor Sayegh allocated ARP money for the district to buy boards. I will talk to the Mayor to see if we still have that funding. If we can put ARP money on top of the \$7 million for renovation of the school, it will help the district to make this happen. He can do it. We still have money that we can use if it's directed to the needs of the parents and the school. Don't say anything is impossible. The rules are there, and he has done it in the past. He gave \$1.2 million to cover boards. I think we should take that approach too if the state comes a little bit short on this. Last but not least, the communication is important. With all due respect to this Board, send me an email with the progress and status of School No. 3. I found out about this meeting because a parent called me. I'm here because I love what I do for the community, and I love to work together. If I have to be the mediator between this Board and the community, you know you can call me to make things happen. I want to see parents, teachers, and students going back into School No. 3. God bless you all. Thank you.

Ms. Minerva Zamora: (Comments made in Spanish) Good evening. God bless you all. My name is Minerva Zamora. I'm the mother of the four children you see here. I'm interested in knowing when you will open School No. 3. When it was closed, I know many students were transferred, but I never received the option of putting my kids together in the same school. When I made arrangements to put them together, because I know I have another five-year-old who is going into kindergarten, it is now

difficult for them to be in different schools. There are a lot of issues with the transportation the students are receiving. There are lots of arguments and cursing in the school they're attending. I've heard that there's discrimination at MLK. My oldest son has always been one of the best students and about a month ago the school called me to tell me that he was hit by another student. On another occasion, that same son told me he wanted to die. I asked him why and he told me that school is very stressful. They cannot play the way they did in School No. 3. They don't have the same ease in transportation as they had at School No. 3. They have to listen to the screaming and witness fights of the other kids. When it rains, they have to wait outside for the bus. During snowfall, it was the same situation. Please give us a date of opening or allow us to transfer our kids to another school where they can be more secure. Thank you. That's all.

Ms. Nancy Perez: (Comments made in Spanish) Good evening. My name is Nancy Perez. I would like to share the displeasure of all parents. I have children and I should be at home with them bathing them and getting them ready for tomorrow. It is not the first time that I come to a meeting like this. It is not the first time I hear your words. The ideas sound good. Whichever the option, the important thing is that you think about the education of our children. I think it's incredible that there are estimates for other schools here in Paterson, Passaic, and Clifton. There are better constructed schools. Many husbands work and we are taxpayers. We hear many rumors that those in charge don't really want to open the school. As a mother, I came here to listen to you and try to understand you. I'm putting myself in your place. I don't really know whether you are going to do it or not. We are here so that you can see us and see that we are interested in reopening School No. 3. The children are the ones who suffer, not you. You are comfortable in your homes. The children who live in that community are the ones suffering. If they have the opportunity, they would want to go to school in peace, to clear their minds. It was good that you closed the school when you saw that there was a problem. I applaud you for that. It was for the safety of our students. I do not applaud you for abandoning the project. I hope that tonight there is a difference and by the next meeting you should tell us you have the opening date for the school. We will see the building and we will truly know whether or not you're repairing it. The community lives there and we will know whether you're fixing it or not. I hope you understand us and we will try to understand you. We don't want any more lies. We want a commitment to repair that building for the future of Paterson's children. We hope you will have told us the truth and that your commitment is to open that school. If you're not going to open it, tell us. Tell us the truth. That's what we hear. I hope that everyone here tells us if you're going to make repairs. If not, we understand. But there should be a real change. Thank you.

Ms. Mirna Lozano: (Comments made in Spanish) Good evening. My name is Mirna Lozano. I have two children attending School No. 3. Next year, my youngest one will attend. I have four children. Of the four, three go to School No. 3. When are you going to start repairs? I leave my house at 5:40 in the morning. I pass the school every day. I have seen various street people inside the school grounds. It looks like our school is abandoned. We need our school back because it helps us mothers who get up to go to work early in the morning. Our children walk to school and I'm afraid that when my youngest goes to school, they will send him to another area. My oldest daughter won't be able to walk with him. My daughter goes to International High School and it's on her way. Of my two children, the boy was very intelligent. Lately, his grades have suffered, and he has become violent. I don't know why. I wish you would start the work soon so things can settle down. Thank you.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Comm. McCall: Can we provide translation for all our meetings? We never know who is going to come and when the information needs to be translated. I know years ago we used to have the headsets. I'm going to ask that if we do have them that we utilize them. Not only should we have it in one language, but it should meet the needs of our population. Thank you.

Comm. Martinez: Thank you for bringing that up. We do have the equipment. I know the person who was formerly handling that has retired. It's just a matter of getting folks to fill in those positions. Thank you.

Comm. Simmons: I was talking to the President about how long this has been going on with School No. 3. I know that they started in September in different locations, but I think we knew about this in the summer. It was in the summer or late June when we found out that the building was going to be inhabitable. We've been going round and round with this for a minute. From the outset we've always talked about reopening the school and making sure that students get back.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: (Translated Comm. Simmons' statements into Spanish)

Comm. Simmons: From the outset, we've always talked about making sure that students got back into those buildings. We talked about transportation costs with students going back-and-forth. I don't think we need to see any other options. As we have been hearing from the parents since last year, we know that there is only one option. The question is, what needs to take place at this point to make sure that happens?

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: (Translated Comm. Simmons' statements into Spanish)

Comm. Simmons: At this point, we need solid numbers on what it takes to get it done and a solid timeline on when it gets done so that people aren't expecting it to happen next week, next month, or even at the beginning of the next school year. That may not be the case. We just need to move forward. I don't want to come back to another meeting and we're talking about options again. I think this is the fourth time we've been talking about options. I don't want to do that again. We just need to make sure it gets done.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: (Translated Comm. Simmons' statements into Spanish)

Comm. Freeman: Please tell them to do everything that's possible for them to not listen to the rumors that go around the city. If they have anything, they can always call the Board of Education and I'm sure someone here will give them some information. The worst thing that they can do is listen to rumors because it will drive you insane. They lie. They conspire. Some of them are very corrupt. They will say things to get you riled up. Trust me, here they're working very hard to get it open and we will come back with a decision. As a parent, I do understand the struggle. I'm a single parent of three. Please don't listen to the whispers and rumors in the street because it's going to drive you insane. I'm telling you. It's done for a reason. Speak to your councilperson because I'm sure he's going to stay involved. Don't listen to the rumors. Any question

you have, you can call the Board of Education. Demand an answer and you will get it. Don't listen to them.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: (Translated Comm. Freeman's statements into Spanish)

Comm. McCall: I'm concerned about a few things. I know the parents feel that they were not communicated with. I know it's because we were working really hard trying to come up with these options or what we were going to do. I get that part. One of the things I'm concerned about is all the concerns that I heard tonight. I don't know if anyone was keeping notes about children feeling uncomfortable or things going on. I just want to make sure that the children feel safe and like they're a part of the new community that they have now. I think it's really important that we follow up with that. We have a responsibility, not just to put kids in a setting so we can say they're being educated, but to make sure that they're in a place where they're getting what they need and also enjoying it in some form or fashion. I want to make sure that someone was taking notes on those parents who were giving us some of the issues that they felt were going on or being told were going on. They have to be addressed. Again, I'm with all of you, especially Comm. Simmons. We know where we are now. It's time to take action. It's time for us to do what we need to do.

Comm. Ramirez: I've heard my colleagues. We've heard the community loud and clear. I was just talking with Comm. Castillo-Cruz. My concern is that during the last facilities meeting where this was presented to us I asked if there were concerns and I was told there weren't any. That's not what I'm hearing today. We need to be very clear on how parents communicate with district office and voice their concerns. It seems like that's not getting to the community and we serve the community on both sides of the table here. It's very concerning that I was told there were no complaints about transportation and culture and climate. Now these parents are all saying something different. You have students who are borderline being bullied and getting sick. We should have been made aware of that. That's very important. I think we need to be very clear to the community on how to communicate when things like this happen so that we get that information.

Comm. Simmons: Through the President to the Superintendent, can we make sure that the principals are communicating with the parents? It sounds like that's not happening. As Comm. Ramirez said, we should always be aware of the complaints or concerns and that those are coming back to the district so they can be addressed.

Comm. Freeman: Is it at all possible to do an immediate walkthrough of MLK? The concerns with no heat are absolutely ludicrous. A walkthrough needs to be made. We need to know what is actually happening in that school and what's not working. The concerns are serious, and we should want to know what's going on. They're not here for nothing. The kids feel how they feel, and they are expressing how they feel. We have to jump on it and make sure that the things they're saying, if that is happening in that school, need to stop immediately. It's a serious thing. Not having any heat, we have to correct that. We had some very cold days. For her to say her son sat in a class with no heat and we don't know about it, that's concerning. If we can get an immediate walkthrough to see what's actually going on at MLK, how clean it is. If it's not being sanitized, it needs to happen as soon as possible. We have to listen and act. That's all I'm asking.

Comm. Gonzalez: I do want to thank the parents for coming out here. I know that the audience has been coming out constantly on School No. 3 at all of our meetings to advocate for their children. It's unfortunate that there are rumors saying we don't

support that idea. That has never come out of any of us here at this Board. We're very supportive of School No. 3. As Comm. Simmons has said, we've been very supportive since day one to reopen the school. Obviously, we have to be responsible in making sure that all the steps are followed properly and safely. That being said, I also want to encourage you to continue to come out. Your voice doesn't fall on deaf ears here. I take down notes. I have notes of every single person who spoke and their concerns. I ask questions and I ask for follow-ups. I think that School No. 3 is a good way to get you to come here, but we need you to come here more often on any issues pertaining to your children. I'll say some of that in Spanish. (Comments made in Spanish) I'm proposing that we put a notice on the fence during this whole process because once construction starts they can't actually get into the property. Whatever we do moving forward on a monthly basis or even sooner, we can update that notice so that the community walking by can read it and they don't have to listen to rumors about what's happening. They can get the information in English and Spanish. Thank you.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: We're having a community forum for STEAM. I think we need to have one for School No. 3. What I'm hearing the most is that families need to understand the process. We can pick an option. That sounds great, but it's absolutely meaningless to the families unless they know what that entails. I think I've said it a few times. I don't think they expect a strict timeline, but they want an approximate. What should they wait for? One year? Two years? What does that look like? If there are any changes, the principal should be involved. That community forum with the administration, with the plans, what that would look like, and their expectations is something we need to have. Then we need to follow up with the principals and the assistant superintendents. (Comments made in Spanish)

Comm. Martinez: Any final thoughts before we adjourn for the evening? I want to say thank you to all the parents for taking the time to come out here this evening and for expressing your concerns. As the Commissioners just stated, this has not fallen on deaf ears. Our pledge is to make this decision sooner than later and to continue to keep you all informed. Thank you all for coming out.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.



Mr. Richard Matthews
Business Administrator/Board Secretary