

MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION BOARD RETREAT

June 5, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.
Remote Meeting (via Zoom)

Presiding: Comm. Nakima Redmon, President

Present:

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of Schools
Khalifah Shabazz-Charles, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Valerie Freeman
Comm. Jonathan Hodges
Comm. Dania Martinez, Vice President

Comm. Manuel Martinez
Comm. Della McCall
Comm. Kenneth Simmons

Absent:

Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz
Comm. Eddie Gonzalez

Comm. Redmon 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:

**Board Retreat
June 5, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Virtual
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.

GOALS AND VISION FOR THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Comm. Redmon: I asked the Board to submit some of the recommendations for the vision of the new Superintendent. This was added to any recommendations we received. Comm. Castillo-Cruz hasn't submitted anything at this time. Comm. Freeman has six recommendations. The first recommendation is to increase and strengthen existing community relationships. It's so important that we keep the community informed to show transparency. The second one was to redefine school policies. Some are outdated. They should be aligned with the values and mission of our district.

Number three, improve student outcomes and create a culture that puts academics first and holds students more accountable for their education. We must ensure that our students with IEPs are celebrated as much as those who don't have IEPs. Create a system that values the success of every student. Number four is to increase the safety procedures that protect the teachers and students. Number five, improve parent satisfaction when visiting the schools and interacting with the staff. Customer service is a very important piece when dealing with parents and stakeholders. Reduce disciplinary actions for non-violent situations and use of Restorative Circle programs. That was Comm. Freeman. Comm. Gonzalez did not submit anything. Both Comm. M. Martinez and Comm. D. Martinez didn't. Comm. McCall had as number one to develop a new five-year strategic plan of staff, administrators, parents, Board members, and students. Number two, continue with Confidence Closet initiatives for students and expand the partnerships the district already has in place. Number four is to continue High School Restructuring. Number five is an open-door policy with staff and parents. Meet the Student Government Associations at the high school level to hear the student voices. Number seven is to continue with the positive perception of the district on social media and in the press. Attend community events. Support student performances, games, and National Honor Society inductions, etc. In an effort to celebrate students, meet with parents when necessary to assist in solving problems for their children. Continue with equity that has gone on in the district with staff and students. Address low test scores. Continue addressing learning loss with technology-based programs, after-school programs, Saturday programs, summer programs, and tutoring programs. Number 14 is to monitor the new food service program company. Involve the Board and community in the budget process. Meet with stakeholders in the city, including pastors, PEF, Boys & Girls Club, public library, New Destiny, etc. Meet with all the union leadership officers. Ensure all staff in the district is evaluated. Number 19, know what work needs to be completed in the summer, plan for the new boys high school, plan for the new alternative middle school, and plan for the opening in September. Monitor and cleaning of schools for summer preparation in September, fill key vacancies. Monitor teacher vacancies in the district. Review standard operations and procedures of policy. Conduct cabinet retreats over the summer. Conduct community forums to introduce self as the superintendent to parents in the community. Continue the trajectory of the special education department. Continue safety initiatives in the district under Full-Service Community Schools. Create partnerships to address student and family needs to apply for grants that lead to healthy community financial. Expand bilingual programs for non-English speaking children entering the district. Conduct Administrative Institute in August with administrators in the district, and work closely with the Paterson police and probation department. Meet the Mayor, City Council, and administration and schedule monthly meetings throughout the year. As far as sharing a vision, I'm interested in seeing revision for our district, children, and families.

Comm. McCall: That's because I think there is so much that I found to be so successful inside our condition for the Superintendent. I felt like there are some things that we're doing to make our district better and they should be continued. I also think that our new Superintendent has to develop her relationship with our community, administration, stakeholders, and the lives of our children. I know my list was really long, but I looked at it from every aspect. When you have someone coming in, you have to make it real clear to them your expectations. I had a few other things, but I'll send them to you. It is important that this new Superintendent develop the relationship with our community. That's going to be a key factor. I know everybody works differently. When we talk about vision, I'm very interested in learning about her vision for our district. I know we heard a little bit about it in the interview process. I know it's a lot, but you said dive in and I did. We have to be very mindful of what we have accomplished and what we still need to achieve in the upcoming years for our children.

Comm. Redmon: This is a working document. I asked for this early because when Dr. Newell gets here this is some of the information that needed to be provided to her so she can see the Board's vision and expectations coming into the district. This document will change several times and we will also have a Board retreat with Dr. Newell to discuss her vision and plans.

Comm. Freeman: I saw the email. I looked at all the goals. A part of me feels like we should listen to her goals first. That would make me feel better. Those are the goals that I'd like to see, but I would have loved to hear what her goals and vision were before I came up with what my goals for her are. A lot of this may be some things that she's thinking of being that she has worked in this district before, and she does know how things run. Before we did this, we should have met with her and saw what her goals were.

Comm. Redmon: Comm. Freeman, I hear you.

Comm. Simmons: Typically, there are two sets of goals. There are goals for the district that the Board sets in conjunction with the Superintendent. Then the Superintendent and Board work together to create the strategic plan for the Superintendent to meet those goals. Then there are the goals that the Board sets for the Superintendent that she will be evaluated on. I'm not sure when that process will take place. We'll probably need to do it shortly after she starts. Comm. McCall is also correct. The Superintendent should have been doing their research on what's been happening in the district. This is a very different district than when she left and a lot has changed. Hopefully she has been doing her research. With the Superintendent and the Board working together the Board comes up with the vision and how we want to see the district move forward. Essentially, the Board charts the path and she drives the ship.

Comm. Redmon: Dr. Newell is following along. She has received all the information that has been going on since our appointment of her. She is aware of what's currently going on.

Comm. D. Martinez: Being that I was part of the search committee and I was part of the process when we were interviewing her, I was wondering if we can share what some of her goals are that she provided us. I didn't provide goals at this time because when we did the search I was impressed with what she wants to do with the district. I think that would be beneficial for the other Board members who were not a part of the process to have this information.

Comm. Hodges: Mr. Simmons is correct in general. There are two sets of goals - the district goals and Superintendent goals. There should be a conversation about where we are. We then turn around and make goals for the Superintendent as to how she moves forward from here. I didn't submit any goals because there will be a conversation I want to take part in once I've heard what she wants to do. I will certainly suggest some additions to that. There are some concerns that I want to make her aware of. That will factor in as part of the goals. I'll bring this to the Board now because we had this conversation in the I&P committee. I've been approached by parents over a number of years who have told me that if you're born in Paterson you can't get a job in Paterson because you can't speak another language. That's a problem and we have not addressed it. Increasingly as it becomes a bilingual community, if you're born here you are not part of that community because you can't speak another language. That has got to be fixed. I've raised that issue and I've asked the Superintendent's staff to address a plan to begin to look at how we bring languages to students in the preschool

and early elementary grades where language is not as much as a problem to learn and will be rather expensive. We have to teach our kids to communicate in their community of their birth. That's going to cost some money and we're going to have to establish some priorities around that. If you're born here, you can't go to certain businesses and get a job. They won't hire you because you can't talk to their clientele. That can't continue. It's things like that that I would put forward to the new Superintendent. That involves a significant amount of money. There was a school district in Chicago that began to address this with one of the programs that we are looking at now in the elementary school to introduce all their kids to languages by a distance learning approach. We have a partnership with that company and it means looking at how much it would cost to begin that kind of program throughout the district. It's things like after-school programs. We had a problem with the PEA negotiations where we're not able to get additional time to offer after-school programs that facilitate turning the school into a very useful and enjoyable educational experience for students. Computer clubs, chess clubs, language clubs, science clubs, and things along those lines. We need to find a way to do that. It does occur in other places and it needs to occur here. We're precluded from doing that because of cost and the teachers' contracts. There are things like that. You have a huge computer usage in this district, but none of our kids are involved in any of that process. Every student has a computer but there's repair, refurbishing, and returns. None of our kids are involved in any of that and they should be. There are a lot of student-centered activities that could take place and aren't taking place. We need to get into that business of giving the children a holistic approach to education. Those are some of the things that I would talk to the Superintendent about. But I would like to hear what she has to say before I say we want her to do this, that, and the other. Obviously there are some concerns that we need to take a look at, but I would do that in conjunction with our conversation with her.

Comm. McCall: I'm curious about the transition. Has the new Superintendent and our current Superintendent had transitional meetings? Are they frequent? Has there been just one or two?

Comm. Redmon: To my knowledge, they have met once. There was another meeting set up and there were some scheduling issues. They have met and discussed. Dr. Newell has a copy of the same transition plan that was presented to the Board. That is the recommendation of this current Superintendent. I want to make sure that we're clear. She is going to have a right to review the transition plan that she has seen and dictate what she wants to do when we get there. The information that you have received at this point is the same information that Dr. Newell has. I know the Board has also gotten a reorganizational chart. It's just an FYI. At this point, it's unfair to the new Superintendent for us to approve an organizational chart she doesn't have any input into. She's also going to receive this. I wanted to make sure we're on the same page. I know they're setting up meetings to come into the district. I don't know if they actually took place, but that's where we are.

Ms. Shabazz-Charles: The one thing I don't want us to shy away from is remembering that the new Superintendent works for you. These are your goals. I applaud people wanting it to be collaborative and I think it should. Legally I want to make it clear that you dictate to her what your expectations are. If you're reasonable, you allow her to explain to you at a later date why perhaps your expectations are a little outside what she can achieve. You can choose to alter them. We have to look at this like any other job. They don't alter what their expectations are for you. They just give you some leniency to make sense out of why you're not meeting them at the level they set. As you look at bringing in a new Superintendent, you unify your strength as to what you want. Then you decide how you evaluate her based on what evidence she brings

forward to make you say we know what we want, but we are not going to score her harshly in her evaluation or we will listen to her and tweak them. This is an exercise about the Board's goals. Please don't make them flighty. Be specific because I think that's where a lot of issues often arise as to whether or not you're happy with your Superintendent. I'm sure you know most times boards of education end up paying out superintendents to leave even if they don't like them. It's because the goals are a little too loose. This is about the Board setting their goals for your employee.

Comm. Redmon: Thank you. I'm glad you said that. That's the reason why I wanted to start early. She will have some kind of direction from the Board. These are my goals. The first one is the five-year strategic plan. We're now in our last year. Two, review the High School Restructuring and monitoring the programs the district will be implementing for the next two to three years. Three is an overview of the ESSER fund programs and the positions that we created. How will we be able to maintain them without the ESSER funds? Make sure she's increasing the graduation rate higher than what we have set thus far. Bring in new partnerships to the district. Expand dual enrollment. We have the Board and Superintendent yearly review and update of the policy manual. Update the Board norms. This is an example of what the Board norms are. You guys can read it at your leisure. This is a working document. Improve peer-to-peer communication between Board members by call chains. The Board of Education will receive information from the administration by acknowledging receipt of requested information within 24 hours. It's essential. Board of Education review and update all policies of the district. Comm. Simmons, if you want to jump in to read your own goals, you can. You can explain why.

Comm. Simmons: I'm on, but I can't see it.

Comm. Redmon: Articulation and dual enrollment in partnerships. Address low test scores and provide solutions with proven strategies and timelines. Revamp the Credit Recovery program. Revamp the ESL Newcomers program. Many students arrive unable to speak or write in their native language. This should be addressed prior to or in conjunction with the students learning to speak English. Create a program and evaluation process with timelines to determine if programs are effective. Create partnerships with charter and private schools. Maintain in some places and create in others a climate of transparency and accountability. Employees should not be afraid of retribution for speaking out. Ensure the district is up-to-date with technology and maintain access of staff to technology. The district website should be kept up-to-date and should be a resource for the family and the community. I know we're going to be working on this document. If you have not done so, you can also submit this to Cheryl at any given time. When we meet with Dr. Newell in person as a full Board she's will understand where we're coming from.

STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

Comm. Redmon: My focus is also on the strategic plan. I know it took the Board a while to come up with the strategic plan. I know one of the main concerns is our facilities so we need to come up with more things to be added to that. Comm. M. Martinez is the chair of the facilities committee. A lot of this will be brought through that committee. We also have other goals. I would ask Cheryl to send the entire Board the strategic plan in its entirety so you can review it and change things.

Comm. Simmons: I also had a sample about goals and how those goals should be specific. I think I listed seven or eight. It gives an example of what the district goal is

and then what the Superintendent's performance goal should look like. I'm not sure if you have that.

Comm. Redmon: I don't have it.

Ms. Williams: I just uploaded it.

Comm. Redmon: Can you send that to the entire Board?

Ms. Williams: Yes.

Comm. Simmons: One of those examples is we have a 98% promotion rate from third to fourth grade, which in turn should mean that 96% of students should be reading on grade level. That's 2% less than our promotion rate. That's an example of a goal. If they're not reading on grade level and not proficient on NJSLA or at least close to 98%, then there's a huge problem that needs to be addressed.

Comm. Hodges: You can't wait until third grade. You have to do it earlier.

Comm. Simmons: I'm just using third grade because that's the first grade where they get tested. But I agree with you.

Comm. Hodges: That's okay. As long as you understand that by third grade you should be there already.

Comm. Simmons: I completely agree. It's just that I know at third grade is where you're able to get the evaluation. It can be before third grade, but at least by third grade if there are 98% of students going to the fourth grade and 40% of the students are proficient in reading in NJSLA, then we have a problem.

Comm. Redmon: Comm. Simmons, I appreciate the additional information that was provided. I will make sure that we're working on the strategic plan so we're ahead of the game. If you have any other questions or suggestions, please feel free to email Cheryl so we can add this. This is going to be a working document. Those Commissioners that haven't added anything to it, if you're on the call and you want to respond to something that you see, please send it to Cheryl or we can discuss it here while we have a few more moments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, 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.

No speakers.

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. McCall that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative, except Comm. Simmons who voted no. The motion carried.

Comm. Hodges: I've asked Chairman Martinez to request of you an opportunity to have the I&P committee put together a presentation on languages for the whole district, for students who are native born and don't speak the languages. It has become an increasing issue. When they leave here they can't get a job because they don't speak

the language. They can't service the people who live here so they won't get hired. That's a problem. They were born here but they can't get a job in the town where they were born. We need that skill taught to them at an early age. I've asked the administration to put together a presentation to talk about what that would look like and what it would cost so we can establish a long-term priority.

Comm. Redmon: You're asking for a presentation for the entire Board?

Comm. Hodges: Yes.

Comm. Redmon: Was this discussed in I&P?

Comm. Hodges: Yes.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. McCall that the Board goes into Executive Session to discuss issues that warrant confidentiality, as consistent with NJSA 10:4-12 for matters of Attorney/Client Privilege, Contracts, Legal, Litigation, Negotiations, Personnel and Student Matters. The minutes will be made available to the public upon request, when the confidentiality of the subject is no longer warranted. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The Board went into executive session at 7:21 p.m.

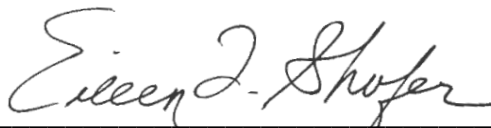
It was moved by Comm. Simmons, seconded by Comm. D. Martinez that the Board reconvenes the meeting. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The Board reconvened the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.



Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools/
Board Secretary