

MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING

February 8, 2023 – 6:24 p.m.
Joseph A. Taub School

Presiding: Comm. Nakima Redmon, President

Present:

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

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

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

Absent:

Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz

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

Comm. D. 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:

**Workshop Meeting
February 8, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Joseph A. Taub School
202 Union 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 Security Staff at John F. Kennedy High School

Ms. Shafer: Good evening, everyone. I think we all know that on December 16 at John F. Kennedy High School there was an incident that involved a student with a weapon. All the individuals that you see behind me were all instrumental in making sure that both

our students and staff in the building were safe. They continue to do that each and every day as part of their job. I'm going to ask that you please recognize:

- Ronald Jackson, Teacher Coordinator
- Randy Walker, Instructional Assistant
- Donald Davis, Teacher Coordinator
- Dr. Kaara Lynder, Teacher Coordinator
- Mark Fisher, District Parent Coordinator
- Police Officer Wisam Salameh, Paterson Police Department
- Steven Mayrant, Board Guard, District Security Officer
- Shaqueeta Carter, Arrow Guard, Security Guard
- Vonetta Simmons, Arrow Guard, Security Guard
- Donte Wise, Arrow Guard, Security Guard
- Shamiek Sheppard, Arrow Guard, Security Guard
- Brenda Winfrey, Board Guard
- Ernesto Ramirez, Board Guard

Ms. Shafer: Again, thank you all for keeping our students and staff safe at John F. Kennedy High School.

Comm. Redmon: On behalf of the Board, we would like to thank you for your tireless efforts. We appreciate you keeping our students safe at John F. Kennedy High School.

Mr. Dalton Price: We all know what happened on December 16. Without the folks that were standing behind the Superintendent this could have been a lot worse than it was. I do believe that these persons who were involved saved lives on that day, and they made a difference. This was an act of working together. You had the police and the community inside the school. There was a weapon, but no one was injured. Even the young man with the weapon wasn't injured. This is what this is all about. This is how a community comes together. The police and the folks in the school know how to work together. We in Paterson have set the standard of how we can work together with law enforcement, the coordinators, and security to keep our students safe. I'd like to thank you for taking the time out for them. I'd like to thank them for taking the time out for our students. Thank you.

Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

Mr. Richard Matthews: Good evening, Board Commissioners. Thank you, Madam Superintendent and Madam President. Tonight, we have the outside auditor, Mr. Steve Wielkotz, here to give you a summary of the audit for this past fiscal year 2021-2022. Last year at the same time we mentioned that we would commit at least \$10 million in our reserves. If you've had a chance to look at the report, in that report you'll see that there's a \$9 million deposit into capital reserves. That's the commitment we made to you last year to protect our finances for the future. Steve is going to give you an overall report. I just want to thank my team that Steve worked with over the past seven months to bring you this information.

Mr. Steve Wielkotz: Good evening. I'm here tonight to give you a brief report on the district's June 30, 2022, audit. I'm very happy to say that we issued an unqualified, clean opinion on the City of Paterson Board of Education financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2022. In addition, everyone should have gotten a copy of the management report along with the audit. You'll see in that report that there are three findings. All three of these findings have to do with compliance issues, not financial issues. There are essentially no findings on the finances of the Paterson Board of

Education for the fiscal year. I'd like to thank Mr. Matthews, his staff, Ms. Shafer, and her staff for all the help they gave us, and always give us, during the course of the audit. Briefly, the three findings that we have in the report had to do with classification of expenditures, which is not a financial issue, but a compliance issue. In the application for school aid, there were four surveys missing from all the surveys that were required. In transportation, there were four students not recorded correctly out of 30,000 students that are bussed during the course of the year. These are all compliance findings that are not material to the financial statements. Also, as a side note, there are no repeat findings from last year's audit, which is a critical issue that the State Department of Education looks at every year - if you have a finding one year that the corrective action plan adopted by the Board and implemented by the business office clears that finding and doesn't happen again. That's exactly what happened again this year. With that, I open it to the Commissioners for any questions.

Comm. M. Martinez: Were the three areas identified corrected? I know that's not specifically your purview. I wanted to ask the Superintendent to follow up on that point.

Ms. Shafer: For the three findings there will be a corrective action plan that the district will implement.

Mr. Wielkotz: The only other thing I'd like to point out is that when the pandemic hit the Department of Education changed the percentage of maximum allowable undesignated fund balance. Any school district could have from 2% to 4%. We're currently at 4%. However, there are discussions ongoing at the State that now that will be reduced back to 2%. They might force you to use it in the budget in one year at one time. I spoke with the Superintendent yesterday and with the finance committee last night. It's just something that everybody needs to be aware of and keep in back of your minds as you go through your 2023-2024 budget process. Thank you very much.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Wielkotz. We appreciate all the work you do for the district.

Budget Introduction

Mr. Matthews: Another step in the budget process is going through the gap review. We started the budget process back in July by giving you a budget calendar. We said we would have the first draft of the budget in February. Today is our opportunity to show you based on the meetings that we've had so far with the district. We have 53 different departments. They all were given notification to have their budgets done by a certain time. We have central office and the schools. Today we're going to see a preliminary budget for where we are, what our gap is, and we're going to talk about our structural deficit and what that means for this year and future years. As Mr. Wielkotz mentioned, there are rumors about us going back to 2% so we have to plan for increasing our reserves at the end of this fiscal year going forward. We have to have a 2% fund balance and that may impact what we do as far as our revenues. A structural deficit means that our expenses every year are exceeding our revenues. As I go through the presentation, you'll see what our projections are for our expenses and revenues. You'll see where that gap is. Last year, we got \$18.6 million. We're in year 5 and the legislators said we were going to be fully funded by 2024-2025. Salaries and benefits are half of our budget. Charter and vocational schools are increasing at a high rate. For 2022-2023, that number was \$120 million, and the budget was \$605 million. Years ago, we were in what's called a fiscal cliff. We're not in that phase anymore, but we're still in a structural deficit. This means every year our expenses are going up at a much higher rate than our revenues. In closing the gap review we will see how that affects us,

but a structural deficit can be managed. We have frozen all spending for the rest of the year so we can prepare to put money into our reserves and manage this structural deficit that we're going to have for the foreseeable future. In 2023-2024, we have these district priorities – addressing learning loss and staffing to address our bilingual population. Our bilingual population is growing at a very fast rate. The code says that if you have 20 pupils of any language you have to staff for a full-time program. Our numbers are really growing, and we have to prepare for that. That's going to be a multi-year phase-in to address that population. We want to expand the middle school program with the robotics team. We have reading on grade level. We want to expand the sports program at John F. Kennedy. We're looking at the Urban Leadership Parent Center at School No. 17. These are some of the things in the budget as priorities for 2023-2024. We're trying to address our staffing at facilities. We have work at MLK. We want to upgrade windows and our HVAC. We want more Board guards, so we become less dependent on our vendor. These are our cost drivers. You'll see in the chart where these numbers have been over the last couple of years and what they're doing as far as the current 2023-2024 budget. These are the standard ones that we have been dealing with over the last couple of years and that impact our budget greatly. This is our actual cost for those drivers. In the 2022-2023 budget, the total number is \$172 million and \$161 million for 2021-2022. These things are going up every year. These are cost drivers that we can't get away from. We're looking at being more efficient on how we do transportation. We're reducing our dependency on the Motivated guards and hiring Board guards. There's an increase in facilities because we increased our federal contract and added more manpower. The substitute number has been flat. In 2020-2021 it went down because we were in remote. The class coverage number is going through the roof because we have a teacher shortage. Then we have PCTI and special education. These are the cost drivers. You have them in front of you. They impact our structural deficit. This chart is 2016 to the present. You see what the older number is for the charter schools and the actual cost in 2016 was \$34 million. For the current year, you can see how much that has grown. There have been new events that have gone through where this number is going to continue to increase. There have been some enrollment approvals for some of the charter schools in our city. It is what it is regarding the cost to the district. We have to combat it. The Board has asked me to come up with a flat budget. It's not totally flat, but there is no state aid. For the current fiscal year 2023, our tax levy is \$67 million, tuition is \$500,000, and state aid \$494 million. I highlighted that number because it's flat. The operating flat budget is \$610 million. If you go down to fiscal year 2024 projected, our same charter school costs are \$120 million. Over the past couple of years when we have done these projections, this report is close. Non-salary is \$167 million. Salaries are \$265 million. That's including bargaining. We're looking at \$653 million for appropriations. You have a gap of \$42 million. The appropriations went up \$47 million. The revenue went up \$5 million. That's why you have a gap of \$42 million. That's what a structural deficit looks like, when you have no increase in state aid. In the next slide, I did an estimate of \$10 million for state aid, which is below what should happen under S-2 legislation. Our revenue increased by \$15 million, and the appropriations increased \$47 million. This slide is showing a budget gap of \$32 million. Years ago, we had numbers like \$70 million on our first day of having this meeting. We're at \$32 million. It's not as high as it has been in the past because we've done some things to hold off that structural deficit so that we can have more excess surplus to balance the budget. \$32 million for a budget of our size is always a challenge, but it's a path forward to getting it to what we've had in the past. We have this gap. What do we do now? We have options regarding revenues. We have \$10 million in revenues from the state. We have options regarding Whole School Reform. We have contributions that we're planning for under Title. There are some things regarding preschool aid and carryover. I've had that conversation with people in the office. We're looking at all our revenue options to make

sure that we're putting the top number the right way. As much as we talk about bottom line, the top line is what makes or breaks a budget. We're still having meetings with central office on some of the numbers that come to us. We're looking at some opportunities for reducing expenses. We may not be able to do all our priorities, so we have to make decisions based on the numbers. I spoke to you earlier about tapping the reserves. For AMR, you see that there are reserves there for the future budget. There's \$24 million in excess surplus. A lot of stuff that we do we want to sustain throughout the future. We have funding of about \$100 million between ESSER I, II, and III. We can't sustain everything. A lot of things that we are doing we're trying to continue going forward and bringing it into our local budget. That's the path to balance out the budget. We talked about taxes. We get a report whenever our aid comes in. It gives us our state number, the charter schools, and local fair share. Our revenue comes from two main sources. It comes from the state, which is \$494 million. Our taxes for this current year are \$67 million. Local fair share means that Paterson should be at \$112 million. We're at \$67 million right now. It says that we can tax above 2% up to \$51 million. In years past, we never fully taxed the City of Paterson. We made some incremental increases to try to close that gap. We went many years without raising that revenue line. For people who know what this is if we were to go to full local fair share, that number will go to \$112 million as far as the tax levy for the next budget to close that gap without additional state aid. Some of you know about this, but we have new Board members and viewers who are here for the very first time. I just want to make sure that I talk through this. This information is not something we make up. It comes from the Department of Education. Every school district has this number. There are a lot of metrics involved in it. This is what the number is for 2023-2024 school year. The number keeps changing every year. At one time, it was \$135 million but it's down now to \$112 million. Here you see what we have done over the past couple of years. From 2007 to 2008 there was no increase. You see what we have done over the last couple of years to close that gap. When you think about this for a second, our 4% is \$24 million but we raised the taxes \$17 million over this period of time. This contributed to us having the unassigned fund balance that we have of 4% so it's very important that we raise this revenue and have this for our kids. That's the real budget number that has happened over the last couple of years. Again, in my presentation you can see that we have projected 7%. Everything here is still kind of fluid. We can go back 20 years and you can see there have been a lot of years where there has been no increase. More recently we're doing the right thing. Not just for the kids of today, but for the kids of the next 20 years. 2007-2008, that stuff is impacting us right now. What we do today helps us for today and long term. This is a simple calculation. After you minus out all your interest, tuition, and expenses, your tax levy should be a plug number. We haven't really plugged it in because we've been compassionate. We're doing other things to make sure that number hasn't gotten out of control by increasing our fund balance. That's a very critical thing that we're doing as a district to offset getting to doing something like this. We never want to do that, but if we don't do what we did today that number will go up. This is a pie chart of the contributions of Paterson Public Schools as far as property tax share. Paterson is at 21%. Jersey City is at 37%. They are losing state aid so they're really pumping their number a lot. Elizabeth is right with us. Newark is at 31%. I have some slides coming up that are busy for you. I'm going to go through them quickly. This is a summary of what I'm going to show you next regarding how we stack up against other cities. I actually did this for Trenton, Irvington, East Orange, and Garfield. I went through 20 cities, and I still can't find a school district that taxes lower than Paterson. This is based on the Department of Consumer Affairs website. It's updated through calendar year 2021. They're a year behind. This is that other chart that has all that data. We can say to you that we are doing it based on a home value of \$197,000. We use these tax rates. We're pulling all our data from the Department of Consumer Affairs. We're not just pulling it out of a hat. One day I'll do the math for you

for the tax increase. These are preliminary numbers. Last year we came up with a lower number. If we cut our number down from 12% to 11%, we lose \$200,000 in revenue, but the taxpayer saves six cents. This is what it would be based on 7%. We're still waiting for the numbers from the state regarding charter schools. There are still some unknowns here regarding the budget that we have to wait for. The Governor has his address in February. We should have our numbers by March 1 or 2. Once we get to that number, we're able to better say here is a balanced budget. We're not going to wait for the Governor. We're going to make some progress before that. Are there any questions?

Comm. Gonzalez: Thank you for the presentation. Looking at the comparative tax share pie chart, the key difference that I see right away is that Newark and Jersey City are hubs for big corporations that contribute to the tax base. We don't have that. We have a lot of nonprofits in the City of Paterson. When we look at this and we talk about increasing taxes, we have to think about the residents, homeowners, and those who are already struggling in our city. The school district is also taking a burden. A lot of these new developments that are coming into our city are massive buildings with tons of new families and we're covering that cost. I just want to point out that in these comparisons there are major corporation headquarters in these cities that are covering a lot of these taxes.

Comm. Hodges: Unfortunately, this is not an option for us. You were on the Board when we were fighting for the funding. We had the Education Law Center and Corzine that came in and established the state formula. On that formula, it says there's a local component to the funding. Every school district has to provide a certain amount of money for the funding. What the state did not do was raise taxes when they were in control. As you recall, I told people it was coming. Once the Board was under local control, they were going to make the Board raise taxes even though they knew the city could not afford it. If they could afford it, they would have raised taxes when they were in charge. They never did that. One of the things we have done is allowed a lot of developers to open up apartment buildings. It used to be 22,000 people who paid taxes in the city for their properties. It's down to 18,000. The city is not bringing in businesses to take a larger share of that property tax, so we don't have the ratables and this is a major problem. We have to have this discussion with the city about making sure that there are new businesses coming in here to pay taxes because we can't afford it. The state is giving us funding for municipal taxes, but the city is not bringing in the ratables to supplement what has to happen. As far as the state is concerned, the school district has a debt that they have to raise, and we have not been doing it. You won't get any support from the Education Law Center because their position is we owe \$112 million and we're not doing it. We're not paying our fair share. If there's no support from anywhere, they expect us to raise it. My complaint has been why didn't the state raise taxes when they were in charge? Why dump it on us and make us do it? This conversation about our business practices, what we're doing with our development, bringing in all these new residents without having any funding for schools coming through our planning board and board of adjustment, it has to change. We have got to be doing things a lot differently in terms of bringing in taxes. If we don't do it, then we're going to be raising taxes through the Board of Education because we don't have any other choice. If we don't raise taxes, then we're going to be laying off teachers. It's one or the other. Until we have that conversation with the City Council and the Mayor, something has got to change in terms of bringing in businesses to this city and getting new ratables that can balance our budget so we can pay our fair share for the education of our students. That's our obligation. Those are our kids. But raising taxes is a major problem. I know we don't have the money and taxes are really high versus the income of the people who live here.

Comm. Simmons: I want to echo the same thing. Beyond that, this is why we wanted to have this conversation with the City Council. We knew this was coming. It's not just the city not bringing in businesses. We also have to deal with the fact that they give out these tax abatements for 30 years. Then folks come back, and they extend it for another 30 years. Just so people understand - when the city approves tax abatements, 95% of that money goes to the city and 5% goes to the county. The school district doesn't see anything. The only reason the county gets their 5% is because they sued to get it. Unfortunately, we don't like the conversation where we talk about these double-digit tax increases, although the BA does a good job at explaining what the effect is for the homeowner. It affects me as well. When taxes go up, I have to pay too. We have to have this conversation with the city so that we figure out how we deal with this. I know the city has financial obligations coming up over the next two years. I'm pretty sure they're going to raise taxes. It's just me saying this, not the Board. A lot of the pushback for not having this conversation and blaming us for tax increases is because of their debt service coming down the line. I'm pretty sure they're going to have to raise taxes.

Comm. M. Martinez: The overwhelming share of the tax burden is being put on the 17,000 homeowners in the city. They're the ones who are shouldering that burden. When you have comparisons with Jersey City and Newark, they have big corporations that help them offset a lot of the tax burden. We don't have that. We don't have the ratables and big businesses that help shift that burden. There are apartment buildings being constructed across the city. That's families and students. There's no concern for how it affects our infrastructure and even less for how it will affect our schools. That burden just comes back much heavier. It's not an easy conversation to have with the folks in the city, but a necessary one that needs to be had sooner than later.

Comm. Redmon: (Inaudible)

Comm. Gonzalez: I would just ask for the Board to consider after sending the notices to the City Council to also schedule a date strictly for the community and taxpayers to get a presentation here or at John F. Kennedy High School and articulate all this so they fully understand what is happening.

Comm. Redmon: The school district has several presentations... (Inaudible)

Comm. Hodges: (Inaudible)

Comm. Redmon: (Inaudible)

Comm. Simmons: I know the last time they were virtual, and they were really well-attended. I don't know if we need to look at doing it in-person and virtual at the same time. I agree with Comm. Gonzalez that the community needs to be aware of what's happening and why it's happening.

Comm. Hodges: They need to understand this is our responsibility, unfortunately. We owe this money. We've not been asked to fulfill it because the state recognized that they have to give money to our municipal budget. They know that, but they didn't raise taxes when they were here so now it looks very bad for us because we have to do it. People are getting angry because we're raising taxes and they're asking where this is coming from. That's a problem. If I don't vote to raise taxes, there's a problem with that because of the very issue that the state didn't do what they were supposed to do. They didn't explain it. They didn't raise it. Now they're saying we're in local control and we

should figure out a way to do it. Here's the formula they've put in place and we're required to do it, even though they still give us millions of dollars for the municipal budget. That is a problem. We need to push back in the best way possible and encourage our City Council and our Mayor to change their master plan. They need to look at bringing businesses in here because that's where the taxes are. As Comm. Simmons has mentioned, they have to do something different in terms of managing the city government.

Comm. Redmon: (Inaudible)

Comm. Hodges: Some of the practices on the part of our city are very disturbing. They took the Leder Dye property, a full lot, and they sold it to a company that's building charter schools. That means that the money they get comes off the tax rolls. There are no more taxes being paid on that property. They had a bid for \$5 million from one of the local developers. They bypassed that for \$7 million and sold it to a charter school company so now it's off the tax roll. They get no more taxes from it and that money is gone. Plus, they will build a charter school which further aggravates our problems by getting money out of our budget. I can't understand that. It doesn't help us at all. That lack of communication is a problem for us and we have to change that. We're all one city and we can't do this to each other. Now they have to raise taxes and they get mad at us because they say the district is doing it. When you don't take proactive measures, then you put us in a position where we have no choice. This is a problem so we need that discussion in a critical fashion so we can talk about how this city needs to move ahead educationally and in terms of funding. When we can't raise taxes and we don't have the money, we lay off teachers and that hampers our ability to improve how our students learn. You can't do it without teachers. By the way, you're giving buildings for housing, but we can't even open up new schools. We were supposed to have a new school addition by School No. 12. If you build all this housing over there, you can't do it anymore. The new addition is supposed to take place in the playground and go across the whole street. Now there are new houses there and you can't do it. It's this kind of lack of communication which hurts us and puts us behind the 8-ball when it comes to building facilities and the education of our kids. That's why this conversation is so terribly important and long overdue.

Ms. Shafer: Mr. Matthews has been working with the Family and Community Engagement folks and does have some community events around the budget and taxation schedule. We'll look at doing that perhaps hybrid. We'll have those dates on our website. Information will go out, so everyone knows about it.

Comm. Redmon: Thank you, Mr. Matthews.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Ms. Shafer: Recognition of Board of Education Month was last month in January, and we only had one meeting. I'm going to ask the Board members if they would please go down on the floor to watch a video in celebration of Board recognition month.

(Video Presentation)

Ms. Shafer: On behalf of the district administration, we ask that the President and Vice President come forward. This is School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey. The resolution reads:

School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey January 2023

- WHEREAS,** The New Jersey School Boards Association has declared January 2023 to be School Board Recognition Month, a time when all residents can acknowledge the contributions made by our local school board members; and
- WHEREAS,** The Paterson Board of Education is one of 581 local school boards in New Jersey, which sets policies and oversees operations for public school districts; and
- WHEREAS,** The Paterson Board of Education embraces the goal of high-quality education for all New Jersey public school students; and
- WHEREAS,** New Jersey's local school boards help determine the educational goals for approximately 1.4 million children in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade; and
- WHEREAS,** New Jersey's 5,000 local school board members, who receive no remuneration for their services, act as advocates for public school students as they work with administrators, teachers and parents for the betterment of public education; and
- WHEREAS,** School boards strive to provide the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs; and
- WHEREAS,** Boards of education provide accountability to the public; they communicate the needs of the school district to the public; and they convey to school administrators the public's expectations for the schools; and
- WHEREAS,** New Jersey can take pride in its schools, which rank among the nation's best in key achievement indicators such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, and the preparation for college through advanced placement offerings and SAT assessments; Now, therefore, be it
- RESOLVED,** That the Paterson Board of Education, does hereby recognize the services of local school board members throughout New Jersey as we join communities statewide in observing January 2023 as **SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH**; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the Paterson Board of Education urges all New Jersey citizens to work with their local boards of education and public school staffs toward the advancement of our children's education.

Ms. Shafer: We do have a token of your appreciation for all your hard work. We also have a cake for celebration. For our members in the audience, we have cupcakes in the back as well. Please take advantage and thank you all for all your support. It takes all of us to educate all the children in Paterson. Thank you.

Comm. Redmon: Thanks again to my colleagues. If it wasn't for you guys, we wouldn't be able to do what we do. The public doesn't realize how many hours we actually

spend working on behalf of our children and we don't get paid for this job. Anybody who puts their name on a ballot to become a School Board member, thank you for your tireless service. Let's continue to do the work.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Mr. Luis Rosado: Good evening. I have a question on the new Jackel's stadium. I'm planning to do a baseball team with the high school players between June and July. The facility is booked up right now and they don't have an answer yet.

Mr. Akkheem Dunham: Madam Superintendent, Commissioners and staff, let me first thank you for having this meeting in person. I believe interaction with each other from either side of the table or streaming is a recipe for building and accomplishing goals. We wish to adhere to our issues. I'd also like to take a moment to thank personally those Patersonians who voted for yours truly, as well as to each and every Patersonian who just wants to better their children's lives. I would also like to offer two comments. My son came home yesterday, and he said he didn't eat lunch. I'm well aware that the Board has decided to roll out a new company. When will that rollout be? How long will it take to reach all the schools? My son goes to Roberto Clemente. He loves Mr. Robertson. He's the security guard. He lights up every child's day, as well as the staff there. Today he was absent, and a lot of the children were looking for him. When a member of the security team is absent, is there any substitute that will come behind him? Did we get to that point yet? I'm not sure if a security guard was there. I'm just saying that where Mr. Robertson usually is, that security guard wasn't posted at the start and end of the day. Those are my two comments. Thank you.

Mr. Assad Akhter: Good evening to members of the School Board. Congratulations on your recognition this month. It's a very difficult job. I know personally that it takes a long time. Unfortunately, most of the time you hear from people who are frustrated or angry about problems instead of ever congratulating you on the things that are well done. I want to tell you that my daughter starts kindergarten this year. We explored every possible school option, whether it be private school, religious school, or charter school. We were surprised to find School No. 1, which is a Choice school in Paterson near our home. We walk there when the weather is good. Our daughter is enrolled there and she's very happy. I say that because we hear all the negativity around Paterson schools. My wife and I are very happy with our daughter and how she is performing. The teachers there care a great deal. We have a great principal who communicates and works with us. The only thing lacking at the school is that the facility needs some love and investment. It needs a playground. These are k-5 students. These are young children. They need physical activity. They need space. There isn't a great deal of indoor space. They need a playground. School No. 26, which is connected, has a playground but it can't accommodate School No. 1 students because of the number of students between both schools but also too it's a liability because that equipment is built for much older children. School No. 1 needs a playground. I was here with a fellow PTO member. We're an engaged PTO. We have engaged parents. We invite all of you to come. You have to consider many facility requests and needs throughout the district, but I hope you'll consider a proper playground. I want to thank the Board President, Ms. Redmon, for helping get quotes for the playground. The principal had requested those quotes. People have visited and they have not submitted quotes back for that playground equipment. We're still waiting to get quotes to start that

process, but I appreciate the work of the Board. I'll be reaching out personally to invite you to the school because I believe if the school gets a little more investment it could be one of the high-performing schools in this district. I'd love to convince more parents who have the ability to send their kids out to keep their kids in Paterson Public Schools. Thank you very much.

Councilwoman Ruby Cotton: I just want to say to Madam President Nakima Redmon, Madam Vice President Dania Martinez, all the Board members sitting here, and to our Superintendent Eileen Shafer and everyone, especially Dalton Price, it was very nice of the school to recognize the situation that happened a month ago. I find that to get morale back up we need to recognize and thank them for what they do. When I look at a school, I look at not just the teacher and principal, but at the cafeteria worker and security person. Those are the ones that I want also to look after my kids. There are a lot of parents here who are worried about their children. Thanks to Mr. Dalton, Ms. Shafer and the School Board. It was a bad situation, but I'm so happy that you stepped in and helped. Sometimes people just stand back and let things happen. You have to do your best to make sure you do that. A school is not just the principal and the teacher. It's everybody in there, from the cafeteria worker to the security person to the substitute teachers. I just want to thank the Board for recognizing that situation. I also want to bring out that I don't think we're ever going to get a meeting with the City Council and the Board of Education. I'm going to say it again. A good city is run when we are all on the same page. We all need to understand how everything operates. I've been around here through five superintendents. I remember when we had Abbott and Dr. Duroy. Abbott money was flowing here like I don't know what. All of a sudden, as Dr. Hodges said, the state was here, and they never did what they were supposed to do. They never raised taxes. I try to say to people in the community that what the City of Paterson pays for school taxes will maybe only cover two schools and we have 54. We as a city would never be able to fund our own school district. I'm still going to work to see if we can get that meeting. This city is never going to be run right if we don't get together. We're going to have to get together. People just don't understand what was before and what is now. What was here before did not work and they need to understand that. People need to understand why the taxes are back up. Comm. Simmons, you just sent three letters. Nobody is answering emails. Just say yes or no! I always answer no matter what email is sent. Whatever I can do to help to get this thing rolling, I'm willing to do. I go way back in the 1980s with the kids in the schools. I say to the community that you need to make friends. You need help with your kids. There are so many kids out there I see walking by themselves. You need to have friends. You need to have a community. You need someone to help you. It's a two-way street. Don't expect anyone to help you if you don't help anybody. Thank you for recognizing those people today who did what they needed to do. I know how to come up to someone and say I thank you for looking after my child. There are a lot of parents here who are worried about their kids. We have people in the community who love our kids. We staff here in the schools who love our kids. Thank you, Commissioners, for doing this. Superintendent Shafer, Mr. Price, our BA, thank you because a 'thank you' can go a long way. God bless you all. Thank you and have a good night.

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

Comm. Redmon: (Inaudible)

Ms. Shafer: We want Kennedy High School to be using the new stadium and right now we're trying to work out the schedule to make sure that our students have the first option

to use the stadium and everything else works around that. That is something we're working on at this point.

RESOLUTIONS FOR A VOTE AT THE WORKSHOP MEETING

Resolution No. 1

Whereas, the Paterson Public School District approves the payment of bills and claims dated through February 8, 2023, beginning with check number 235200 and ending with check number 235269, in the amount of \$3,284,073.09, and direct deposit number beginning with 1591 and ending with 1612, along with a wire in the amount of \$19,791,525.04, for a total of \$23,075,598.13;

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.

It was moved by Comm. M. Martinez, seconded by Comm. D. Martinez that Resolution No. 1 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
- Downtown Special Improvement District
- Celebrate Paterson

Comm. Valerie Freeman

- Self
- Family

Comm. Eddie Gonzalez

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

Comm. Jonathan Hodges

- Self
- City of Paterson

Comm. Dania Martinez

- Self
- City of Paterson
- Ilearn Schools
- Paterson Arts & Science Charter School

Comm. Manuel Martinez

- Self

Comm. Della McCall

- Self
- City of Paterson

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. Hodges: I originally had a question regarding I&P-4. I raised a question about the orientation students would be receiving and also the criminal background checks. I have since spoken to Mr. Morris. He wants a background check, but not a formal background check. He just wants to ensure there is no serious criminal activity. The other important thing was that the program be open to all high school students, not just for HARP. I'm still waiting for a discussion about the Bible study club and whether or not that's a permissible activity.

Ms. Shafer: We have pulled that item and our attorney is looking at it.

Comm. Hodges: Then there's the TCNJ A.T.O.M. and STEAM group. There's no resolved statement attached to that, just several whereas. (Inaudible)

Comm. Redmon: (Inaudible)

Ms. Joanna Tsimpedes: I believe that's a typo. It should say therefore, but it says within that last line to approve the donation of services from the program. We just started this program this year. We sent kids earlier and we're continuing it with our middle school population.

Comm. Hodges: Then there are tutorial services.

Ms. Tsimpedes: That's Family and Community Engagement. The Parent University was going to have tutoring services for students in elementary. They solicited teachers. I believe there was a posting.

Ms. Shafer: There was a posting, and this went through Family and Community Engagement to provide tutoring services for ELA and math.

Comm. Hodges: What are the measurable goals and objectives? There are none listed.

Ms. Tsimpedes: We have to go back to Kemper. We can get you those goals.

Comm. Hodges: The reason I raise that question is because we've had tutorial services in the past and we've gotten very little out of it. That's why I want to make sure we have some measurable goals so we can see this is what's happening.

Ms. Tsimpedes: We can ask what they're using as a requirement for students to be entered into the program. They may be looking at report cards. I'm not sure if that is something under Kemper's watch, but we can definitely get you that information. I can speak to Dr. Peron and Kemper to provide you that baseline data.

Comm. Hodges: The same thing is for the Earl Brown Education Consulting.

Ms. Tsimpedes: That's also Family and Community Engagement. We'll ask Kemper to provide that and we'll send that out to the full Board.

Comm. McCall: Are the tutoring services throughout the district? Or are they happening at the actual engagement center? If so, how are our students getting there?

Ms. Tsimpedes: I want to defer to the Department of Family and Community Engagement for that response because that is under Kemper and Dr. Peron. We can get you that information. Usually when it's tutoring, it's after-hours. From past experience, the parents bring the children to the centers. I'm not sure if it's at Paterson K, but we can provide that information for you.

Comm. McCall: How do we accommodate students who may not have that opportunity to get there but still need the services?

Ms. Tsimpedes: These can also be virtual services that they're providing to families as well because we do know that transportation can be a hindrance for families. We'll put that request in to Family and Community Engagement to provide that response.

Ms. Shafer: It's going to be at the Full Service Community Center and also at the schools, just in case they can't get transportation to the center.

Comm. Freeman: On I&P-13, can you relate to Mr. McDowell the basis for the workshops and what it entails. I would like to know about that because workshops, to me, are very important to get the parents involved. I just want to know what it entails and what they will be discussing. It's very important to hold their interest and keep them engaged in their child's education. It's really important to me what they will be discussing.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Absolutely. We will get that information for the entire Board.

Comm. Hodges: The last three resolutions have to do with DECA and FBLA field trips. What's the chaperone schedule for these trips?

Ms. Tsimpedes: I believe Eastside had one in there. There was one that was sent from the school. It should be in there. John F. Kennedy usually has one. We can get that for you. I know that's something we've had in the past and that has been requested. I know for Eastside there was definitely a chaperone schedule because it came across my desk.

Comm. Hodges: I've been on those trips and chaperones are definitely important.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Absolutely. They're a must around the clock.

Committee Report

Facilities

Comm. Redmon: Facilities hasn't met yet. A meeting should be scheduled.

Comm. M. Martinez: We're scheduled to meet on the 16th, next Wednesday or Thursday.

Family & Community Engagement

Comm. D. Martinez: We're scheduled to meet next Monday.

Negotiations

Comm. Redmon: We just had a tentative agreement. We have not met. (Inaudible)

Policy

Comm. Simmons: Policy meets tomorrow.

Technology

Comm. Simmons: Technology met yesterday. I'll have the report at the next meeting. I do want to give (Inaudible) a heads up. There are some questions around AI and chat software. How are we going to deal with it?

Items Requiring a Vote

Instruction and Program

Comm. D. Martinez: We met yesterday. We had a presentation from McGraw Hill. We went over the items.

Operations

Comm. D. Martinez: We met today. I'll give the report at the next meeting.

Personnel

Comm. Redmon: Personnel met on Monday. We discussed the vacancies. The total number was 154. We also talked about litigation that we had settled. We discussed in-person job fairs for the first time. We also have upcoming job fairs.

Governance

Comm. M. Martinez: There's nothing scheduled as of yet. We're going to meet and we may have some things coming up soon.

OTHER BUSINESS

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. D. Martinez 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 7:55 p.m.

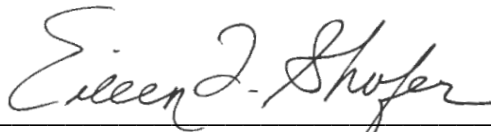
It was moved by Comm. Simmons, seconded by Comm. D. Martinez that the Board reconvenes the meeting. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The Board reconvened the meeting at 10:26 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eileen F. Shafer", written in black ink.

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