

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

August 14, 2019 – 5:35 p.m.
Administrative Offices

Presiding: Comm. Oshin Castillo, President
Facilitator: Kathy Helewa, NJSBA

Present:
Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Susana Peron, Deputy Superintendent
Robert Murray, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Emanuel Capers
Comm. Jonathan Hodges
Comm. Manuel Martinez
*Comm. Eddy Olivares

Comm. Joel Ramirez
Comm. Nakima Redmon, Vice President
Comm. Robinson Rondon

Absent:
Comm. Kenneth Simmons

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

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 notice of this meeting:

**Board Retreat
August 14, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Administrative Offices
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. Castillo: Good evening everyone. We just want to make sure that we get started. We do have training on Board roles and responsibilities. We want to make sure that we get through that first and we have enough time to have conversation before we go into our regular agenda.

Ms. Shafer: All of you know Kathleen from New Jersey School Boards. She's here to first go over roles and responsibilities of the Board and then move into the Board goals.

Comm. Castillo: Just to add on, during our last retreat we had a conversation with all three of our highly skilled professionals about how involved we are with the Board and with the reasons of why we're transitioning from State to local control. I think it would be a great reminder. It was Dr. Hodges' idea to come in and have that reminder of what the Board, administration, and the Superintendent roles are just so that we can continue to move the district forward effectively without being involved in everything.

BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ms. Kathleen Helewa: Because you don't have time to be involved in everything. It's not that you don't have a good intent. It's a matter of efficiency and moving the district forward, which is something I hear a lot when I'm in Paterson. Thank you very much for having me. It's a pleasure to be here as always. I know that you are on a timetable and that you need to go downstairs for your 6:30 meeting. So I have a lot of information that we'll talk about, but I also have a lot of supplementary material. If you read it over and you have questions, you can call and ask me about it. I'm always happy to serve you. What I wanted to start out tonight talking about is just to underscore something I think a lot of you know already. The public education in New Jersey is almost always second to none in the country. We can't seem to beat Massachusetts on occasion, but we are always number one or number two. With all of the challenges that we face is in this state that is incredibly impressive. That's something to celebrate. That's not something that we hear a lot about in the newspapers, but it's something that means an awful lot to me and to you I'm sure. There are an awful lot of things that go on to make it that way. There are a lot of factors to make us as successful as we are despite all of the things that weigh us down that we have to confront and try to overcome. One of those factors, the one that I work most closely with, is the structure of the board of education and its relationship to the superintendent and the rest of the district. That is something that when it works well it works beautifully and we are all on the same page in New Jersey. The structure is the same for districts in Sussex County as they are for Cape May and everywhere in between. It's the same for rural districts. It's the same for urban districts. It's the same for wealthy districts. It's the same for economically challenged districts. The formula works when we do it. We ensure student success by honoring our roles. What I really love about being in Paterson in particular is that everyone is so committed here. I know that you all want to take your role and use what abilities you have to advance what's best for the students here in Paterson. Speaking to Board members in particular, it's kind of hard to determine where your passion fits within your swim lane, to put it that way. There's a riddle that I use all the time with Boards because I think it's very illustrative. How many board members does it take to change a lightbulb? It's an oldie but a goodie. You may have heard this before. I am wondering in Paterson and everywhere else how many board members it takes to change a lightbulb. The answer is none, zero. The reason why is that it's up to the board to say let there be light. It is up to the superintendent to decide what type of lighting will be used, whether it's incandescent, solar, or even candles. It's up to the superintendent. You might say I don't know about candles, but it's really the superintendent's call. That's your educational professional. The educational leader of Paterson is the person that you are teamed with on your different roles and responsibilities. But the board's work does not stop there. It is up to the board to approve the purchase of the lighting that superintendent recommends after hearing her rationale for it and honoring her recommendation and then to evaluate the quality of the lighting. That last part of the sentence is extremely important here. It's something that we shouldn't lose sight of. Once you put a policy in place having gotten contributions from your superintendent,

what their perspective is, what's going to work in the district and what's not, what kind of challenges, what's easy, and what's the low hanging fruit, you approve something, you take it back to the superintendent to put it into place, and you get regular updates on whether or not the good work that you did, the policy that wrote, the initiatives that you are sponsoring, are actually working. If they are not, then you need to address it. Sometimes that means tweaking things. It might mean rewriting things. It may mean changing your goals a little bit or being a little flexible. It might not. But this really is the board's role in a nutshell. I'm wondering if that makes sense to you. Just because I love it, I don't know if it makes perfect sense to everybody else. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on something like that. It couldn't be that simple, right? It's a little richer than that. Honestly, at the end of the day, there are four functions of a board of education and I've narrowed them down to guidance through policy. You're a policy-making body. You are also to provide for a quality education for your children at a cost that the community can afford. You are also to provide for the effective management of the district. I underscored the word "for". We'll talk a little bit more about it because that's an important word there. You are not providing effective management of the district. You are providing for effective management of the district. There's a key difference there and we'll talk a little bit more about that. Also, you are to provide two-way communication between the community and the board. Out of all the things that you do and all of the things board members are supposed to do from the top of the state to the bottom, can be narrowed down into these four responsibilities. That's really what it's all about being a board member. When we talk about guidance through policy, here are some particular areas that you need to focus on and make sure that you have. You can read all of these yourselves. I actually have printouts. Commissioners can take one. I think I have a couple extras, but I know I have one for all of the Commissioners. Here are some areas that you need to address through policy. Also, there's quality instruction. We're laypeople. We are not necessarily professional educators and we are not necessarily professional administrators. We are certainly not administrators in our district. How do we provide for quality instruction? By adopting curriculum standards and assessing the needs of your district. Your needs are different from Sparta's needs and are different from Phillipsburg's needs. What are your needs here? You need to have your superintendent weigh in on that. She and her cabinet have a point of view that board members are not going to have. It's not your job description to go into the schools and find these things out. This is for your administration to bring to you, and also for your community to bring to board meetings and to bring to administration as well. Then, from all of that you provide the resources for the kind of education that matches with your vision and is still affordable and doable. That's difficult in Paterson, I know that, and that all lends into of course that and other things, such as critical issue analysis. What issues are out there? You need to know about what differentiated instruction is. You need to know what RTI is. You don't need to go into the schools and do it yourself, but you need to know what these things are and how they relate to Paterson and Paterson students. You will need help from your administrative team for that. This is my favorite part about being a board member because I was one myself. It's the board's long-term vision that overarches everything. In Paterson, we went to the community and we said, what is your vision for the next five years? We came up with a strategic plan and that is making it easy to incorporate all of that work into your annual goal-setting. As a board, you need to make sure that the goals that are set annually that you set together and are set forth in different buildings and different departments can align to that strategic plan. That is what your community and your stakeholders want of you. You participated in it yourselves. Everything came together. Take all that work and make sure that is a living breathing document. That's the Board's responsibility. I may have participated in the strategic plan as a stakeholder, but I'm done. It's up to you to keep that work alive and make that work for Paterson schools. I can't ignore supporting professional development of staff. If you

don't have the right PD and if you don't fund PD and you don't make that a priority, then your instruction is going to suffer. We don't have to identify the PD. We just need to make sure that it is happening for our educators. One of those other categories was the one where I underlined the word "for". You need to provide for effective management of the district. I thought it would be valuable to highlight this. I know I talked to you about this last time I was here, the code of ethics. In that, Subsection D requires that board members carry out their responsibilities not to administer the schools but together with your fellow Board members to see that the district is well run. You provide for effective management. You are not the managers. If that doesn't sound clear at first, what the nuances of that are or what they are not, you are not alone. All sorts of districts and board members need to find their sea legs on this, especially new Board members because you're passionate about improving the schools and making them the best that they can be. But it is not our place to go into the schools and make sure that that is happening. It is the superintendent's responsibility. The board has one employee, it is the superintendent. That's the person that you hire and it is the one person that you annually review. Your superintendent needs to make sure that she can prove to you that the schools are being run to the best of Paterson School District's ability. If there are shortcomings and shortfalls, it's her responsibility to tell you what she needs to fix that and why. Then the board needs to provide those resources to the best of its ability. Part of providing for effective management in the district, which the Board can only do, not the community or the parents or the stakeholders, is you provide the standards and expectations for your superintendent. You assess needs after hearing the recommendations of your superintendent to ensure that the groundwork is laid for student achievement and all students can achieve here. You need to ensure accountability. Luckily, you're there. You have your strategic plan. You use that to facilitate your goal-setting process and you use the goals that you determine annually to evaluate your superintendent. I know that you're on the right track there. I've seen it in progress. Also, approving relevant policies since those are your value statements right there in a way. You need to make sure that you have the kind of policies that provide for the effective management of this district, that gives the superintendent not necessarily the how, but the why and why you want it done and also requiring your superintendent's recommendation for personnel hires. You cannot hire without the recommendation of the superintendent. That's important for effectively managing your district too. I'm doing so much talking and I'm wondering if anybody has any points to make or questions that jump out at you. The other thing that's kind of tricky for board members and this something to talk about with your board and administration too is providing two-way communication between the community and the board. Here are some things that you do to require ongoing input and feedback and your public relations initiatives. Make sure that they are in place. You need to interact on all different levels of government to advocate for yourselves and inform your legislators and policy makers outside of the school district what your kids need. You have that kind of viewpoint that they don't have. Also, you have to provide the resources for robust communication throughout the district and building public engagements. I took this slide off of another program that we do that sparks a lot of interesting thought. As board members, you have a balancing act to do. You are representatives of the local community to administration to the schools and you are also the school's and the district's ambassadors to the community. A lot of board members find that's a little tricky sometimes. I'm wondering what your thoughts on that are. Are there any thoughts on how you guys accomplish that in Paterson or how you plan on accomplishing it? Maybe you haven't really talked about it. I know that your strategic planning process was a great success, but you only do that once every five years. What are some thoughts? Have you guys discussed this? What are your instincts telling you?

Comm. Castillo: I don't think we've discussed it as a whole. At least not that I remember. I do think that a few of the changes that were recommended by the highly skilled professionals do make sense for us to do. It also gives us the opportunity to receive more information and understand it, which will allow us to give the community that insight that they need or just regular general information that they might not understand. Us having a complete handle on that information makes it a little bit easier, as well as to understand what the community has to say. Now that we know what's going on and it makes sense and we've had the opportunity to have a discussion and ask the questions. Sometimes the community might not understand or have a different perspective that makes sense. I think us setting up meetings a little bit differently and scheduling a little bit differently supports that.

Comm. Capers: Talking about the board members dual role, you're totally on point. Our representatives and community elected us to do a job. The important part of another role is the school ambassadors to the community. I think that's really important because I'm on social media like crazy. A lot of stuff I probably don't even know as a Board member. There's stuff going on in the district that I get invited to like engineering programs that our kids are doing, stuff that they're building, science projects or science experiments that our kids are doing. Sometimes I would never be aware it. We're not aware of what our kids are doing and then we put it out there to the community and show them this is what our kids are doing and where our district is and what we can do more of. We are definitely ambassadors. I went to the summer ending of the STEM program and I was amazed by what our students were doing and what they created. I took a bunch of pictures with the kids. A lot of people were really excited by what our kids are actually doing and can do.

Ms. Helewa: District social media accounts are fantastic. They are a great way to get that message out there. It's a new way. It's not a traditional way, but school districts have embraced it and it's been very successful. One of the things that I really do applaud my board members for doing is to retweet and repost from the district accounts so that everyone gets that consistent message of district achievement. That's important and really great. In fact, if you don't mind, I took a picture of your arts education banner and I tweeted it out as I was walking in here because I think that that's really significant and I think that's wonderful. I'm sure you do feel that kind of pride and being that kind of ambassador is very important.

Comm. Capers: Since I've been on the Board, this administration has been really proactive on social media. They now have an Instagram account, which I am happy about and I see them tweeting things. They post more than I post now, which is crazy but great. It's great and it keeps the community involved.

Ms. Helewa: You do avoid a lot of landmines when you rely on the districts' accounts. When you're retweeting what's out there from the district that is terrific because you know you are giving the uniform picture. We're ambassadors. We all want to communicate the same strengths and the same message. That's one of the things that I absolutely love about having a district social media account. It really takes a lot of the guesswork out of it. I will tell you for all of the thoughts that you might have at the table tonight and that Manny shared and that President Castillo shared and that's probably going on inside your minds as you start to think about this, this is a long running conversation. This will be with you for as long as you're on the board and after you are on the board. Communication is something that you can always optimize. It will never be achieved. You can always do better. Your communities change and you need to reach out again. You need to come up with ideas and plans and that's one of the things that I love about being a board member. I encourage you to embrace that. If you don't

really know the answer to how to balance it out, that's okay. That's very typical. If you decide that together with your administration, you will get to where you need to be. I will also tell you that there is a difference between the board and the district.

*Comm. Olivares enters the meeting at 5:47 p.m.

Ms. Helewa: District rules can be different from board rules and that's another topic. I also took this. This is in your packets. I hope you can read the graphic but this is something I took from a program that we do for new superintendents. Field service just comes in and talks to aspiring and brand-new superintendents. Honestly, they don't know what the role is with them and the board. This is a very succinct way of looking at it. I probably shouldn't have made it white. The board's focus is the "what." What do we want and why? How much is it going to cost? How many resources are we going to need to bring all of this to fruition? You are the "what"? That's what your district goals are. That's the "what". Your superintendent, her cabinet, and all of the administrators on down to the teachers, they are the "how". She is the ultimate "how". How, when, where, and by whom. She recommends, you vote. She implements, you evaluate. I cannot emphasize it more. Trust and communication are at the bottom of everything. It underlies everything. If you don't have that, you don't have the kind of foundation that your kids need for you to have. You are modeling for your kids, whether they are at your meetings or not. I have seen kids at your meetings and I think it's great that you recognize them too. You're always on display. It's not a matter of acting the part. You have that kind of trust and when you have that kind of communication it drives your work forward. This is another graph that I took from that particular training. You can read through all of that when you have a chance. I wanted to examine what you might think. Is this micromanagement or is this your role as a board member? If a board member gives the superintendent his evaluation of a teacher, is that something that is your obligation? It's done all over the place, but that is micromanagement.

Comm. Redmon: It's micromanagement and it's inappropriate.

Ms. Helewa: What happens with ineffective teachers? That's the question for people to know the answer to. I don't think that board members are doing that for the wrong reason. I think they see something and they're concerned about it. My kid is in that class. My niece is in that class. My supporter's child is in that class. Who evaluates the teacher?

Comm. Capers: The principals or supervisors.

Ms. Helewa: You have the process in place for that to work. As long as the board ensures that process is in place and administration has the resources to continue that process successfully, then your job is done. Imagine if that was our responsibility. We wouldn't have the setup that we have. You would need professional educators on your board in every single seat. You would get a very limited viewpoint that may not be reflective of your entire community. That is one of the things that I think is beautiful about public education, especially in New Jersey. This is a good thing. A board member may ask to see the evaluation records of teachers who are up for tenure.

Comm. Capers: Micro.

Ms. Helewa: This is actually something that is your role. If you have a concern about this, this is part of the tenure process. Board members can look at the evaluation records. You may not want to. Your superintendent should give you the information you need in her reports. But you are able to look at those records if someone's job is on

the agenda. If there's going to be a transfer or up for renewal or they are going to be hired, you are able to see their personnel records. In a district like this, I'm sure you cannot do that every time. That is why your best resource is your superintendent. Everything is simplified this way. It is so wonderful to know you've got the right person in place. Some districts do not. I don't think that's the case here in Paterson. I think everybody here is pretty confident. Rely on it. A board member will ask the superintendent to prepare a report on math scores in each grade. He may be concerned about math scores. Are there any thoughts? That is micro. It's good intentions. I'm glad people are getting these wrong because if they're canned answers, I'm going to be like what. I found myself in this kind of a role. If you're concerned about scores, what do you do with that as a board? You bring it to the board table. That's what you were going to say, right? What were you going to say, Manny?

Comm. Capers: I don't think it's micro. I think it's a role because we can only look at scores and that's how we judge the administration.

Ms. Helewa: You used a great word there. You used the word "we". It's one board member. If I struck out "member" and I put the "board of education", that's fine.

Comm. Capers: I have a question. Let's say I ask the administration for this data. Am I micromanaging? It's for the whole board to make a deliberation and bring out an issue.

Ms. Helewa: Understood. You cannot make any changes as an individual board member. The board needs that.

Comm. Capers: It's kind of both.

Ms. Helewa: As methodical as it is, board members are not to direct the superintendent or any staff members on any particular kind of special project. The board can and the superintendent obviously can. If you're concerned about math scores, and a lot of boards are, it's incumbent on you to do that. First discuss with the superintendent and board president and say you'd like to talk about this at our next meeting. It should be a discussion. Here's one of the reasons why that should be a discussion. Let's say you are a brand-new board member and the board has gone over this fifty million times. Is it really proper for a board member to direct a superintendent to do something that they've done an awful lot of times? No, it's inefficient. There's no authority for one. You only have your authority when you're seated at the table. The authority comes from the board. If the board wants to explore this and wants a report, absolutely! But the board has to agree on it. Does that make sense? If it doesn't, please tell me.

Mr. Theodore Best: Specifically, for something like math scores or reading scores, any time that there's a mandated test or assessment that's done, the district has the responsibility within 60 days to give a report to the full board in a public meeting as in a public hearing. For example, you're due that report. Let's say the test scores came out on Monday and by the end of the week we want that report done. It's then incumbent upon the superintendent to say we have 60 days to put that report together for you. There's a lot of information that we have to prepare. Would you mind waiting until the next board meeting in order to get that information?

Comm. Capers: That's a different scenario. I agree.

Ms. Helewa: What if we changed that to say a board member asked the superintendent to prepare a report on math scores for the past seven years?

Comm. Capers: That's got to come before the board or the I&P committee.

Ms. Helewa: Different districts do it differently. The standard way of doing it, if you're concerned about math scores over the course of seven years, is to bring it up at the board table and the board says that's a good point. Let's send it to committee, or if that's a discussion that the board wants to have as a board of a whole. I'm getting the nod. That makes me feel good. If this comes up, let me know. If I'm not clear, I want to make sure that you are. If a board member receives a call from a staff member about a facilities issue and brings it into the facilities committee, is that okay? I will give you a hint- it's iffy. It is your role if you tell the superintendent because that's also part of the code of ethics that everything goes through the chain of command. If you hear something or there are concerns, you bring them directly to the superintendent.

Comm. Capers: If you had anything, you have to bring it to the superintendent.

Ms. Helewa: In a district like Paterson, I can only imagine what anything means. That is a lot. If we are talking about Lafayette in Sussex County, it's a lot different.

Comm. Capers: If a staff member is bringing an issue to a board member, as a Board member you can't deal with the situation. You have to bring it to the superintendent.

Ms. Helewa: Yes, you're exactly right. As long as you bring it to the superintendent, you bring it to the board, and then the committee works on it, that's perfectly fine. But you can't tell the staff member that you will take care of it and you cannot say to the superintendent make sure you take care of it. You just report it.

Comm. Capers: I took it to the superintendent so I took care of it.

Ms. Helewa: Don't even use that word. I don't mean to sound disrespectful, but using that kind of language is taken the wrong way. You become a ball carrier. You are seen as a ball carrier. If there's a problem, we'll go to this commissioner and they'll fix everything for us. That's just not the way it works. Going outside the line from that would give the impression that you are going outside the line. Avoid that language. I have just a couple of other things. That third bullet point is really important. A board member alerts us. We know that's your role. If you interview your administrators before evaluating the superintendent, that is micromanagement. That is not your role. Are there questions on that? Why would you need to interview administrators before evaluating the superintendent? The fact of the matter is you won't. Board members in the school questioning teachers about what professional development the staff needs. We know professional development is important. Is that your role? That's micromanaging. There are a few problems here. First of all, the board member is in the school. You probably have to go in the schools if you have children there or you are going into the schools for a performance or an event or something that you've been invited to. That's fine. But you need to follow the same protocol as everyone else in the district. Everyone away from the board table has the same protocol as everyone at the board table for visiting schools with one exception. If you are visiting the school, you should probably let the superintendent know. It's a little nerve-wracking to see a board member in your school. You would know better than me. You have to follow the same protocol. It's not your job to go into the schools and make sure that the copiers that you purchased are working, that the one-to-one initiative is going exactly the way the superintendent says it is, that our computer terminals are working, that our bathrooms are clean, or that the windows are not cracked. That is not your role. I know you are interested in that. Of course you're interested in that. The Superintendent brings that

information to you. You do not go out searching for it. That's important. I'm wondering if there are any questions on that.

Comm. Hodges: I have a problem with that. That has been a problem here. I have not been able to rely over the years on the administration telling us what's been going on in the district.

Ms. Helewa: So you have muscle, right?

Comm. Hodges: I certainly do and a lot of it. In fact, we've had to push that in order to make sure that things happen the way they have not happened in the past. Because of our role as a State-run organization, it was a major problem. We were told these things were happening when they weren't.

Ms. Helewa: Is it also a fair statement that it's a new day here in Paterson? Am I right? You don't have to answer that. You have a superintendent in place that you need to be able to trust. If you can't trust that superintendent, then that's a larger conversation than just going into the schools to pick out issues and make sure that they are solved.

Comm. Hodges: I can't always be sure that the superintendent gets the information that she needs.

Ms. Helewa: The superintendent needs to be sure. That's part of her job. I think you're up for it.

Comm. Hodges: Any superintendent. We've had police involved in what's going on and the FBI based on false information that is given to the leader of the district. It has happened here, which has tempered the approaches.

Ms. Helewa: If someone files an ethics complaint against you, this is an extreme situation. The School Ethics Committee is not going to say they've been lied to so many times. It's okay for us to suspend the rules for Paterson. But in Phillipsburg, those board members can't do that. That's just not the way it is. You need to make sure that your administration has the tools that they need to get their jobs done and be able to give you thorough, comprehensive, accurate reports on what's going on without you having to go in. Imagine if that was your job description as board members you needed to do that. That would be a tremendous disparity and I don't think public education in New Jersey would be what it is. Respect is too mild a word. You're concerned for your kids. It's too mild a word. By staying with our roles, we can advance what needs to be advanced without compromising your service. Does that make sense to you?

Comm. Hodges: I hear what you're saying.

Ms. Helewa: Okay. I'm glad it's clear. It really can be problematic. I have a bunch of these. I have all sorts of numbers up to 10. I'd be more than happy to talk about these with you all, but I've got to tell you that these are from other presentations that we give to other boards. One of them is pretty much exactly what we were just talking about. Let's see here. This guy Jim knows that we have to fulfill student learning standards. He makes sure that he goes into the school to see that they are being taught effectively. He talks to teachers, parents, and kids. He wants the full perspective of everyone involved to make sure. Not his role. This is said all over the State. I think it's becoming clear why it's not. Are there any thoughts on that? I've got to be honest with you, in other districts sometimes there are superintendents and the administration at the top

that lets you down. That's doesn't mean that you go underneath. That doesn't mean that you circumvent your role. It's only going to cause problems. It's an ongoing conversation. It goes back to that corny slide I had over here with the trust and communication at the bottom. I think that's really your primary role at this point, to make sure that you have trust and communication. It's really every board of education's primary role. In the workshop, we're going to be talking a lot about this. I'm working on a presentation right now about it. You don't have that. I don't want to say losing battle, but that's what's coming to my mind. You cannot get things done by yourself. You work as a board. You work together. You work within your roles that are established and protected by the legislature and the School Ethics Commission. You're here for a reason. You're here for your kids. You need to stick around for them. The best way of doing that is to make sure that what you do is unassailable and this is the outline for that. I'm happy to answer questions away from the board table. Give me a call or anything. We have a whole organization that is dedicated to helping you as board members with lots of departments, not just field services. We have policy and legal services. We can answer any of your questions and get you the help that you need, individually and as a board. That is why I am really happy to be coming to Paterson so much. We can put this to bed.

DISCUSSION ON BOARD GOALS

Ms. Helewa: You have your packets. Before we move on, I wanted to revisit what we were talking about here throughout the slideshow with your goals that you set as a board for the last time and what your thoughts are on that since we last met. I know you're still working on your district goals. Your district goals are done. We're still examining our board goals through the year. One of them was to complete the board self-evaluation by August 15. I'm not sure if you guys want to extend that deadline.

Comm. Capers: Yes.

Ms. Helewa: Okay. I think that's wise. Any particular dates that you want to identify? What's a realistic date for you?

Comm. Capers: September 1.

Comm. Castillo: Should we do it by the end of the month so everyone's good for the workshop?

Ms. Helewa: Is that workable? It's not a necessity. It's absolutely a best practice, but it's not a necessity. Do you think September 1 would work?

Comm. Castillo: If there are any changes, we'll talk about it. I think the idea was to establish all of this before the school year starts so we can all start with the school year.

Ms. Helewa: I think that's an ideal time to do it.

Comm. Castillo: I think it can be a point of conversation during our September workshop meeting.

Ms. Helewa: Before your September workshop meeting. Okay. I'll need a day to compile it and to send it on over to you guys.

Comm. Redmon: Did they fix the glitch? When we tried to log on to do the self-evaluation, it got to your email address but it wouldn't let me hit the "go" button. It was just stuck there.

Ms. Helewa: If you're having that problem, give me a call. I'm reachable all sorts of hours, not just business hours. Trust me. There is a trick to it. Sometimes when you click it, you have to look in a different way that is not instinctual an awful lot of times. I'm glad you brought this up. When you hit reset for the password, that stuff goes in so many spam folders. Check your spam. That solves a lot of problems. Not all of them, but check your spam and you may see the password reset instructions there. If you are having problems, give me a call. I think your popup blocker needs to be disabled also. A lot of people run into problems with that. Once you get going, you can move through it pretty quickly. The other thing that you guys were talking about is examining board committee structure and realign if necessary. My perception here is that as you're learning where those lines are in your roles, you'll have different levels of experience and different perspectives. How does that fit into your committee structure as you're working it now? I think that would be a worthy goal to retain. Is that something that you have thoughts on?

Comm. Castillo: I think that's definitely a conversation that we can expand on, the effectiveness of our committees and what we want to accomplish in each committee. After that meeting, we had another retreat and we got a few recommendations which were not 100% with the recommendations. We do have to have a discussion on how we make our committees more effective and the realistic thing of maybe reducing a few. I know there are some that were put on there that maybe have not met. We have 11 committees. It's a little crazy.

Ms. Helewa: Of course, this is not my board, but my advice is really to look at your four functions. If your committee is addressing something that's not here, then it's probably outside of your role as a Board. As well intentioned as it might be, a lot of times ad-hoc committees from days gone by solidify into a standing committee. Maybe that happened with you. That happens a lot with different initiatives.

Comm. Castillo: We've always had broken down committees. What used to be one committee has turned into two committees. In some ways, it's worked and in other places, not necessarily.

Ms. Helewa: You have to consider efficiency too. I don't know how many committee meetings you guys are going to. If you can make it work, that's great. But if you can't, that's understandable.

Comm. Capers: Do you see this Board on tract with other large districts throughout the state in terms of the amount of committees? Like Newark and Jersey City. How many committees does their board have?

Ms. Helewa: I don't know what Newark and Jersey City have because I don't serve. Clifton certainly doesn't have 11 committees. Clifton probably has five or six.

Comm. Castillo: Newark has six.

Ms. Helewa: I don't necessarily think that the size of your district should drive what committees you have because you have the same roles. You have the same roles as the people in Hamburg Township, with one school with five kids in their kindergarten. You have the same responsibilities. You have way more kids and way more

departments, but your role as oversight is still the same. I'm not saying that you should have the same committees as Hamburg, but I would say looking at this as a baseline might help you. You might keep your 11 committees or you might trim it down. You might maybe one day go to a committee of the whole. That's how a lot of districts do their work. I'm not sure if that would work in Paterson. My gut is telling me probably not, but I could be wrong. This is not my district. This is your district. You know better than me.

Mr. Best: A committee of the whole is essentially the workshop committee. Most school districts in the State of New Jersey don't have committee meetings, workshop meetings, and then a regular meeting. The workshop meeting for a lot of them is the committee of the whole. They're having a workshop meeting. They're not prior to that having several committee meetings leading up to the workshop meeting and then having the regular meeting.

Ms. Helewa: I think that's a fair statement. I think if you are having a lot of committee meetings before the workshop meeting, that's a yellow light. It could be. It depends on the issue. Some issues really flare up and they require a lot of work before a recommendation is made to the board. That's not a blanket statement, but if that's happening consistently with all of your committees all of the time, that's a lot.

Mr. Best: There are 11 standing committees, a workshop meeting, and then a regular meeting.

Ms. Helewa: That's a lot. I know you guys are up to the challenge. I know you're passionate about your service. I know it's important to you. But there are ways you can probably get it done more efficiently. You would know that better than me. I love committees. I'm a big fan of the committee system because you are able to take your talents and your interests and channel them properly. That's what makes board service rewarding. But if you are never moving forward, then that's what makes board service unrewarding for you as commissioners and also for your school district. Recognizing that there is a method, it's very methodical. Committees don't make decisions for the board. You have to make recommendations for the board. That's requires some work. You have to examine what's the best usage of your time to get that work done. I don't have that answer, but you guys do. You definitely do. It requires some conversation and examination. I think that's a good goal. Identifying options for full board professional development - does that align to what we were talking about?

Comm. Castillo: Yes.

Ms. Helewa: I wanted to wrap up our conversation about this and goals. Are there any other goals that you as board members see that this board may need? Are there any thoughts? You have three. That's a good number. Are there any other board goals that you think would serve you as a board of passionate and dedicated commissioners? What are you thinking? I'm wondering if you have any others questions, because I think this is good information for you all. I have other resources for you. You've seen this before I believe. It's the chart that I sent out with the other memo for the commissioners. This is pretty much what I talked about condensed in a wordy chart, but it's one of our resources that we give to board commissioners. Thank you very much for your time this evening. It really is a joy to visit you. I hope I got everything in on time.

Comm. Castillo: Thank you. We appreciate it.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.