

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

February 14, 2018 – 6:21 p.m.  
Administrative Offices

Presiding: Comm. Oshin Castillo, President

Present:

Ms. Eileen Shafer, Acting State District Superintendent  
Ms. Susana Peron, Acting Deputy Superintendent  
Robert Murray, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Vincent Arrington  
Comm. Emanuel Capers  
Comm. Jonathan Hodges  
Comm. Manuel Martinez

\*Comm. Joel Ramirez  
Comm. Nakima Redmon, Vice President  
Comm. Flavio Rivera

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:

**Special Meeting  
February 14, 2018 at 6:00 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: Can we all remain standing for a moment of silence for the death of the stepfather of Comm. Ramirez, and also for the shooting that happened in Florida and the students who were injured today?

***Moment of Silence***

Comm. Castillo: Before I hand it over to the Superintendent, I just want to wish each and every one of you a happy Valentine's Day. Thank you for being here today and spending your Valentine's Day with us. It's for the love that we have for our kids. I will just hand it over to our Acting Superintendent with some information about the budget.

## **2018-2019 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET UPDATE**

Ms. Shafer: Thank you, Madam President. At this time, I want to call upon our Business Administrator, Richard Matthews. We had promised the community and the Board that we would do an all-inclusive budget process and that's what we have been doing. He's going to give an update to us of where we are. We welcome any suggestions around strategies to close the budget gap as well as any other recommendations that you might have.

Mr. Richard Matthews: Thank you very much and happy Valentine's Day to you guys as well. I'm going to go through where we are as far as the budget deficit. Before I get into the actual numbers, I want to just talk a little bit about what we've done so far to close the gap that we had going back to the beginning part of February. Some of these things are already in place. Some are being discussed and worked out with other different entities like the city association. So far, it's a strategy to close the gap and you'll see it in the numbers later on. One thing we did so far was increase our local taxes by 2%. One of the things we did was talk to our auditors and I looked at other urban districts, like Newark and Irvington, and other districts outside of the state. The thing that we have to do in Paterson is definitely get that tax number up so that our local share starts to increase. We're actually going through a right-sizing right now where we're looking at all our schools. We have the business services, human capital, special education, working with the principals, looking at the student rosters, going through their class sizes, going through their schedules, looking at administration, and making sure that the Paterson Public Schools is at the right size in terms of handling the needs of our kids. Right-sizing is really important because if we had some excess surplus it gets us to a point where we can't spend our budget the following year. We have to make sure that we have the right overhead and the right people handling our kids. The right-sizing is ongoing and it's one of our strategies that we're going to use to help close this budget gap and help us move forward so that we can go into 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 fiscally sound and strong. Mentioning some other things, we're reviewing health benefits. We've talked about waiting for our numbers. We got our numbers from Aetna today. Our insurance broker is working up their numbers in terms of different options for health benefits. We're looking at a lot of the urban school districts like Newark, Irvington, and Camden. Those school districts have reviewed their health benefits. They've made some changes and they have created win/wins for their districts. We want to do the same thing. We're looking at prescription benefits. We're looking at worker's compensation. We're looking at increasing those benefits while at the same time being able to recoup some savings for the district. We're looking at increasing our reimbursements. We've made a lot of cuts over the past couple of years. We're making cuts to agencies and organizations that generate revenue. We want to increase some of our opportunities for increasing our revenue. We may put some money back into staffing for things like McKinney/Vento. We're meeting twice a week going through our fund balance. We want to definitely give you a balanced budget for next year, but we also want to make sure that we end the year strong and in the black. We have to sell some of our buildings. One of the things Newark did as far as putting money back into their schools is they sold a lot of their properties. When they wanted some things off the cuff, like maybe a certain gym or a pool, they paid for it through the sale of their properties. We have to do the same thing. We've hired a commercial person to handle some of our properties this year. Another unpopular thing we have to do, looking at

other districts like Paterson, using an additional tax on top of the tax levy. I know it's not very popular, but we have to look at all options. We're working on our new leases right now existing. We're having a meeting on Friday with 90 Delaware. We met with 200 Sheridan Avenue. We're talking to St. Paul's. We're looking at our leases. We have to look at special education and change how we do special education and look to be able to retain more of our kids instead of pushing them out of district. These are some of the strategies that we're actually using to close the budget gap. Again, I looked at other districts to see what they've done and I've found that they have been very successful. We're trying to model some of those best practices. What I'm going to do now is just go through an update on where we are today in terms of the actual numbers. If you look on this sheet here, the yellow is an actual change in the revenue. It's the final number as far as revenue. As we stand today, it's \$487,896,930. That revenue number went up. It went up because we've used our fund balance, not all of it, the \$3,000,794. We've added \$9 million from the ESSA contribution and our appropriations are now at \$526 million. As we stand here today, we're at a \$38 million shortfall. I know the number sounds a little daunting, but we feel that we have a path to a balanced budget. Not just a balanced budget, but a balanced budget with the fund balance. We don't want to repeat the cycle of putting together a balanced budget and then coming to the next year increasing the budget by adding positions. This budget is not just about cuts. We're also adding programs to this budget. We have \$9 million in our budget for new programs, reading programs, professional development, and one-to-one initiatives. It's not just cuts. We also have on the table waiting for Board approval the sale and leaseback of textbooks. That's going through the Board approval process. That \$10 million does not include the \$30 million shortfall. If that gets approved, that will give us \$20 million. Health benefits are being worked on. That's a union negotiation item. Health benefit plan design change is another one. Superintendent's priorities – that's the additional one that I spoke about earlier. Employee surplus is the right-sizing that was mentioned earlier. The \$6.5 million has already been dealt with. As we stand here today, our budget shortfall is \$38 million, but there is a path to get to a balanced budget. We feel really good about it. We feel real confident that we're going to get there and have a fund balance. We have a real strong team and we're just looking forward to getting the number down to where it's got to go. That's really it as far as the update. Are there any questions?

Comm. Hodges: You mentioned raising taxes. You're assuming that the Board agrees to do that.

Mr. Matthews: Yes. That's the recommendation from the auditor. That's looking at other districts like Paterson and what they have done to balance out their budget and move forward. When I come to you and say raise taxes, my mother is in this town too and she has two properties, so that tax increase is going to affect her as well. We're talking about having local control. We need to take more ownership in terms of our kids.

Comm. Hodges: I know what we need to do, quite frankly. I'm very clear of that. The question is, how much?

Mr. Matthews: That number is like \$800,000.

Comm. Rivera: You say you're still looking into the scenario of easing some of the levy cap. That's not part of the \$800,000.

Mr. Matthews: The tax levy at 2% is \$800,000.

Comm. Rivera: Not tapping into the cap bank.

Mr. Matthews: No.

Comm. Rivera: Okay. I just want to clarify.

Comm. Hodges: What is the cost of the expansion of the charter schools for this year?

Mr. Matthews: \$46 million last year and \$55 million this year, 2018-2019. I know you guys are interested in the PCTI number. That's \$19.2 million based on the actual enrollment and the out-of-district tuition costs. That's the actual number for 2018-2019.

Comm. Castillo: I just have a question before we even get to the tax part. Let's move that to the side for a second. The budget that you're closing is making sure that we're not cutting any teachers or anything that would injure the students.

Mr. Matthews: There are no cuts to schools or teachers in these numbers right here.

Comm. Castillo: I just need to make sure.

Mr. Matthews: We've gotten to the \$38 million and we have another \$10 to \$15 million that we can capture in the next couple of days without any cuts. We're talking about just pure efficiencies and money that's out there that we can gain. For instance, today we had a meeting with our workers' compensation people. The number for next year that we can put into the number is not in that number right there. That's going to impact that.

Comm. Martinez: First of all, thank you for doing your due diligence and for continuing to whittle that number down. The one thing that I would ask is that this sense of urgency that we're currently feeling right now to meet that number we shouldn't only be acting like this when we're up against the wall, when we're facing down this fiscal cliff. We should be behaving like we're in this crisis permanently to avoid getting to this point. I applaud the efforts and I'm glad we're whittling this down, but we shouldn't be looking at the edge of the cliff. We need to be having this same sense of urgency and be a lot more frugal. What concerns me is if we were able to identify \$78 million worth of savings that means there was a lot of money that was being misspent. Again, this sense of urgency we're having right now, we need to continue to act like this fiscally moving forward. We need to speak about this all the time. The changing of the culture is a huge part of it. We cannot wait until we get to this urgent state to start doing these things. We have to be in that state constantly to avoid getting to this point.

Mr. Matthews: I agree.

Comm. Rivera: That's some of the things we touched on in finance earlier. Also, to summarize what you just said regarding the charters and the expansion, did our enrollment go down at all? What's the enrollment number for the district?

Mr. Matthews: Our enrollment is pretty flat.

Comm. Rivera: Even with the additional students that went to charter schools?

Mr. Matthews: Yes.

Comm. Rivera: Okay.

Mr. Matthews: I have to give credit to my team. I have a really strong team and we're working literally every day. We're grinding and we're looking at everything. We're sitting down and we're going through all the POs and vendors. There are leaks out there and we're trying to plug them up. We feel real good about being able to get to where we have to get to, not just for this year, but going forward. We can go to 2018-2019, spend the money. If we can't spend the money, the kids suffer. Our team is definitely in agreement with what you're saying and we will definitely keep pounding to make sure that we get where we have to get.

Comm. Hodges: In the past we've been given to understand that our current finances did not permit us to provide a thorough and efficient education for children which was clearly borne out by our test scores. Obviously, we're adopting a stripped-down budget in order to facilitate getting a balanced budget. What does that say about our ability to make substantial progress given where we were educationally due to the loss of funding? We have 25 classes that are above 35 students. We've got 19,000 hours of compensatory training in special education. You also have to take this money out of the budget to address that issue. Even though it's nice to say we're there or we're making efficiencies, there are still some suggestions that we're going to have a problem educationally. I want people to be very clear about that. If we don't leap in bounds educationally, I don't want people to think that it's because we were wasting money. We're not doing the things we need to do educationally to make advances and that needs to be made very clear to the community.

Comm. Rivera: We have to be careful when we use the words 'waste money.' We did have a discussion and we've been saying in the finance committee that we have to be more proactive when dealing with the district resources. We need to measure things to make sure that every department is help accountable. Not to prolong the conversation, but the discussion we had previously is that the culture needs to be changed. I'm not going to give examples because this is not the place for it, but we need to do what we need to do to make sure that the kids come first.

Comm. Hodges: Madam Chair, I've spoken to Superintendent Shafer earlier. I've received a phone call from the Education Law Center and they have stated for the first time in some time they've seen some movement in terms of improving the conditions of special education. They're still a little concerned about our supervisor of speech, which I understand you have an interim in place, but they were very happy to let us know that they have seen some improvement. The actions that we are taking were suggestive that we are moving in the right direction. I want to make sure that I told the Superintendent and I told her I would tell the Board that today.

Comm. Castillo: I think that we've been doing everything in our power to make sure that a lot of our departments are working more efficiently. We do have to recognize Ms. Cheryl Coy in special education who has done a phenomenal job with not having a lot. She's made a lot out of nothing almost. I know we give her a lot of grief and I personally call her a lot, but it's the importance. We thank her for going the extra mile. Not just doing her job, but always going the extra mile.

Comm. Hodges: Quite frankly, the Education Law Center's comments about her were remarkable in what they saw recently. You all know I throw compliments around like lead weights. The interest here is that we make sure the students get what they deserve and need and that we fulfill our responsibility, particularly in this very important area. Having said that, I'm still very concerned about giving the false impression to the community that our budget is adequate given where we are to address the needs of our

kids. I don't think that's what we're saying and it is very clear, given our test scores and where we are and what's happening, we can't think that we are in the barn because that is not the case.

Ms. Shafer: Let me just also applaud Cheryl Coy and all of her department. The site-based supervisors, along with the Paterson Education Association, put together a special education committee that meets once a month. We partnered with PEA and they gave us additional hourly rates for the speech language therapist, our special education teachers, and our child study teams. I know you keep hearing me say the same thing, but it's everybody working together for the benefit of our children. You see it takes time to put the plan together and to implement the plan, but then it will work. So we're continuing to monitor. We have a lot of work to do. Even though we're receiving compliments and I certainly appreciate that, Dr. Hodges, we still have a lot of work to do. I just want to say thank you for PEA partnering with us, as well as our teachers and Cheryl Coy's department. Let me just comment about the budget. I think we all know we're \$280 million underfunded for a number of years and each year we were able to balance the budget, but at a cost. If you go back eight years, we used to have technology coordinators and they were cut. We don't have them anymore. Art and music were cut. We don't have enough of those. We need 19 music and 4 art teachers. We were not able to get up-to-date textbooks. The list goes on and on. In order for us to offer a thorough and efficient education we need those funds to come back. We're balancing the budget, but let's not forget the eight years of all the things that were cut and all the opportunities that our children missed out on that some of our neighboring towns did not. We all know professional development is critical. We used to have great professional development institutes in the summer. We haven't had them in years. We used to have intervention programs. All of that adds up and all of it harms the children. Even though we will have a balanced budget this year, and we will put some priorities in like having a pre-k-3 reading program, there are so many more things that we need to do and we will not be able to do it until we get the funding formula fully funded. Even then, we're still going to be playing catch-up for eight years. It's going to take some time. Thank you.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

Comm. Castillo: I just want to remind all of our visitors if we can keep it to three minutes just to be respectful of everyone's time.

Mr. Anthony Davis: Good evening. I was here the other night and I wish I had all nine of the Commissioners here. Unfortunately, you are not. My comment is going to wait until all nine of you are here. I need to speak to all nine of you. Thank you.

Mr. Miguel Sosa: Good evening everyone. My name is Miguel Sosa and I am currently the Vice Principal of the School of Government and Public Administration. Most importantly, I'm a Patersonian and I'm proud of that, just as I'm proud of my afro-Caribbean Latino roots. In this forum I plan to speak, not as vice principal, but as a citizen of my beloved city. Under the Bilingual Act of 1968, both my parents were recruited in 1970 from Puerto Rico as educators in the Paterson Public School System. Both retired as guidance counselors - My dad, Miguel Sosa Sr. from John F. Kennedy, and my mother Nieves Lina Sosa from Eastside High School. I was only four years old when they came to Paterson. Specifically, we lived in the fifth ward. I barely knew

English so from Memorial Day Care Nursery to School No. 11 to graduating from John F. Kennedy in 1984, being hired at Eastside High School in 2001 as a teacher, and currently working as a Vice Principal in GOPA and still living in the fifth ward, Paterson is all I know. Its culture, climate, people, and history, more importantly, my personal history, my vested interest in the Paterson Public School System is what I carry every day to work in my heart. That's why I believe I'm successful in serving our community. I'm not saying this to glorify myself. I just want to make a point of reference. It is under the same premise of logical thinking that I endorse Acting Superintendent Eileen Shafer to be our next Superintendent. She is by far the most qualified candidate. Don't get me wrong. All three candidates are qualified. They all have acceptable degrees and experiences. But Eileen Shafer is the only candidate I know that has served the City of Paterson for over 26 years and has served it well. This is not about Black, White, or Hispanic. It's about human relations. It's about knowing the culture, history, and climate of Paterson and understanding our specific needs. Some cities in Chicago might resemble Paterson, but they can never be Paterson. Cities are made of people and people are unique. It's about hiring from within qualified candidates that through their own outstanding service have proven through years of hard work that they have the best interest of our beloved city. The gentleman from Edison couldn't answer a simple question about our back-to-school challenges. The one from Chicago stated his experience with the bilingual population was minimal. Both candidates from the outside could not answer direct questions regarding technology challenges in our district, our district's bilingual need. As a Latino whose parents migrated to this country, I personally have huge reservations on that matter. Yesterday the question arose about the candidate's first 100 days. I can answer that. Both candidates will begin to try to understand our city's resources and needs while Eileen Shafer will begin putting into action her 127-page plan that is based on our people's needs, including teacher contracts and the growing population needs of Latino students through creating a port of entry for high school newcomers. We all know the definition of insanity. Let us not pursue insanity. Let us do something different for a change so we can reap better results for our community. We have a unique opportunity here to hire a highly-qualified candidate from within. So I respectfully request the Board to do what's right and vote for Eileen Shafer to be our next Paterson Public Schools Superintendent. My name is Miguel Sosa, a Patersonian "de corazon" and thank you for listening.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening. Thank you. Ms. Shafer, for the budget presentation and to you, Mr. Matthews, for working this through with the community, the staff, and the Board in a way that's public so that we all understand what's going on. We've been used to seeing the number at the end. This is different and a welcomed change. Kudos to you, Ms. Coy, on the work that you've done and the recognition that you've received for it! Hopefully we won't have to go back to court around getting our kids the services that they need. A special thanks to you School Board members for hosting the public forum that you did last night. That was very engaging. It was well-planned and executed. I had the privilege of meeting the candidates on the search team, but it was good for the community to see who the candidates were as you enter into this deliberation. Paterson Education Fund is ready to work with you and with our new Superintendent to bring this district to where it should be and where it needs to be. I do want to say around the budget, I understand the need to balance. But please also understand what Ms. Shafer said earlier. We've been shortchanged. We're still being shortchanged. We're still campaigning. The Governor said he's going to fund it, but he won't be able to fund it this year fully. There's not enough money, but let's continue this campaign to get as much as we can because kids are still failing and without programing. While we're not cutting, we're already behind the eight-ball. Thank you.

Councilman Luis Velez: Good evening, Commissioners, Madam President, Madam Superintendent, all those on the Board, and audience. I just came back from Barranquilla, Colombia. I had a lot of fun in four days.

Comm. Castillo: Next time, we fit in your suitcase.

Councilman Velez: I just want to say Happy Valentine. It's a day that we all show love all the way around the world. It's a day that people share cards and say we have a great friendship. We have a good unity between us. Starting from that, I wish that 360 days in the year would be love and not hate, everything yes and no's. I have to say something. This is the first time in the history of the Paterson School District that we're going to move forward. We're going to do the right election for the people, students, and those underserved in our district. Making that decision goes upon you, Commissioners. You have to sit down and think that you are the child that's being underserved, that child that does not have the right textbooks or resources and those teachers who don't have the right opportunity to teach the right students because they don't have the equipment. They don't even take the right lunchtime because they're dedicated in that classroom. It's time to make the right decision to move the district forward. I guarantee in my heart that the right decision is Superintendent Shafer. I believe she's going to move the district forward because she loves Paterson. A lot of people say they love Paterson, but they don't live in Paterson. A lot of people say they love Paterson, but they don't feel and they don't get hurt like the people that live in Paterson. I understand that you probably don't have the full quorum in this table to make the right decision, but I guess you have your mind and soul that the people in Paterson are trusting that you're going to make the right decision. I'm not going to bash anybody from the other state. I commend those who decided to come down and put themselves into the questioning and in the spot for this election that you guys are going to do today. I was a little bit frustrated when individuals said that to be able to be a Superintendent in the City of Paterson you have to have a doctorate's degree or something like that. If you have the heart in the students and the kids of Paterson, I think that's more than a doctorate's degree. Once again, I'm here representing the minority. Not the minority in color, not the minority in country, but the minority of those little children that don't get served the right way. God bless you. Thank you for the opportunity. The principal that spoke about the fifth ward, thank you and god bless you. That's my ward.

\*Comm. Ramirez enters the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Mr. Corey Teague: Good evening Board members. Corey Teague, former Board member and city education activist. First of all, I want to thank the Board for providing the community an opportunity to listen to all of the candidates. Having been there last night and sitting through that entire process, I was not impressed with the other two at all. I'm not shy to say that. The first gentleman, while he did present a very flamboyant and colorful presentation, he was ducking a lot of the questions that were being asked. The second gentleman just completely had this Donald Trump attitude towards our district. That completely just threw me off. It got to the point where Kemper had to come up to me and say, "Hey, stop following the guy around." I was really getting mad. I was on live and we have about 3,000 views. I was following this dude around to show them what kinds of people are trying to come here and take over our school district. I was following the dude around. I was seriously not impressed by any of their presentations, although they were nice. I'm not going to completely take credit away from them, but Ms. Shafer drove it home. I said that last night and I'll say it again. She drove it home. I'm not going to continue to harp on the process. We're over that now. We've gotten our opportunity. I think it's safe to say tonight that it would be a disservice



to this community not to bring Ms. Shafer in as the Superintendent. On a personal note, I will tell you that she has established an open-door policy with me, something I couldn't get with Dr. Evans. That's a shame. You're talking about a Black man. We want to talk about color and ethnicity? That was one Black man who didn't do a whole lot for Black people. I didn't have an open-door policy with him. He always shifted me to this one and that one and things would never get done. Sometimes I email Ms. Shafer three or four times a day and every single time she responds back and the parent lets me know that the situation has been resolved. That's the facts. I'm not presenting any fluff tonight. I'm giving you hard facts. When I get in touch with her about a situation regarding special education, it's taken care of. That, coupled with last night's presentations, I think you guys know what you need to do tonight. I'm here to support you 100%. Thank you.

Ms. Nikki Baker: Good evening. Happy Valentine's Day! This is where we are working hard for our students. My name is Nikki Baker. I'm an Instructional Assistant. I work at Dale Avenue School. I'm also the chairperson for PEA. I just wanted to say I appreciate everything that you're doing reaching out to each of our units. I want to just reiterate the emphasis on the importance of support personnel. Support personnel work with our special needs students. Support personnel work with the overflow of students that we have with the large class sizes. I know we're working towards filling the gap with staff members. I don't want to overlook the importance of just calling us aides because we're more than that. Most of us have degrees. Some of us are still working towards our degrees and I appreciate that, bringing in Pillar College. I just wanted to say thank you for that. I do have a question for the lay person. What does right-sizing mean? That was a concern. I know we said no cuts for teachers, but I don't want to leave support personnel as well. Can you just clarify that? Thank you.

Mr. Matthews: Right-sizing is matching the demands of the kids in the school with the proper staffing and head count. That's basically what right-sizing is all about.

Ms. Shafer: Let me also add that last night it came up if I would meet with the instructional assistants and the personal aides. Something did go out to principals today to send either an instructional aide, a personal aide, or two of each and I'll be meeting with you on February 26.

Reverend Michael McDuffie: Giving honor to our Commissioners, this great leadership staff, Dr. Cozart, Principal Sumter, and to these great leaders in our district. I'm looking forward to our Commissioners taking a full leadership role in our city. I have great trust in your leadership, and of course, our President. I'm very excited about the things that are unfolding. I came here the last time. Everybody knows where my stand is on Ms. Shafer. I believe she will receive this promotion. I also said that since January 31 there has been alignment. The sun, moon, and the earth all aligned. I'm not saying something spooky. I'm just telling you things are aligning and things are coming together. I'm trying to avoid being a pastor right now. I don't want to violate something here. I really believe that something is unfolding. We're seeing women leadership and promotion. There's a move of women being placed in power positions, including our President. Ms. Irma Gorham is the Executive Director of the Housing Authority, of which I'm the Chairperson. Councilwoman Cotton. Our new Mayor Jane. Can you imagine all five of these women working together, putting pieces together? How much cost would we save? I'm not assuming that you're becoming the Superintendent, but I am assuming you will become the Superintendent. All of them coming together in one team, I think it's an awesome responsibility and a great move. This is the very first time where the Commissioners can help to continue to make this district a better place. I wasn't here because I do a radio show in Englewood every Tuesday night, but I heard

Ms. Shafer say it is a calling. That was powerful. To work with our children in the district, you know have to be called to do that. To my Commissioners, I think we have great minds around this table. I've watched you battle each other and come back next week and do it again. I think that's great teamwork. I'm looking forward to seeing what things will continue to prevail. The reason I came here tonight, which is even more important, is the incident that happened in Florida today. Innocent lives of people shot down in a school building. I told my great leader, Mr. Robert Smith, we have to come up with a plan to protect our schools. It's my own personal opinion. I think we ought to have armed guards in every school. It's just my opinion. I did some research on this. Don't get mad at me. I'm only telling you what I feel. Even in Israel they have two armed guards in each school. One, you know who has the gun and the other one you don't know who has it. When you walk into these schools and you have open targets, you're just sitting ducks. Somewhere along the line we have to think security and be proactive. One of the things that Mr. Capers spoke to me about one time is we're doing an initiative in the city through the IAAM Initiative "A Prayer at the Stop Sign." We're trying to teach young folks to get to school 15 minutes before school, find the nearest stop sign, and pray and shut evil down before it comes through the door. I've been training my daughter and this move has been taken across New Jersey. The reason Ms. Shafer is good at this is because she knows how to bring peace to the table from faith-based, Pillar College, and these pieces are coming together. I want this Board to consider what our action plan is for security. I hope Mr. Smith has a plan. I'm very progressive on this. I'm tired of us being Johnny-come-lately. We get real spiritual after a tragedy. It's time to get proactive now. What are we going to do? Metal detectors? Don't wait until trouble hits us and say it's too late. God bless you.

Comm. Castillo: I just want everyone to know for the future if we can please not name the candidates from last night. These people are employed and we want to make sure to not give them any beef over that. We know the number they were in. You can refer to them by number, just not by their name.

Councilman Alex Mendez: Good evening Madam President, former colleagues, Madam Superintendent, and staff. It is a great privilege for me to be here. I came here, not as an elected official or as a community leader, but as a parent of three children, one teenager in high school and two elementary school kids, to support the right person for this position and endorse Eileen Shafer to be our Superintendent of the Paterson Public School District. We need to understand that and I have to say that. It was a privilege for me to be elected in 2010 to this Board. I was there from 2010 to 2014. I know Eileen Shafer. I know her leadership. I know her capacity. It was a privilege to work with her. I know she's the right person to move the city forward. This is the time to make the right decision and work together in collaboration with the city, the school district, and do the right thing for my colleague. Madam Superintendent, you have our full support. This is the time for us to do what is right. I remember that we started 2010 with the QSAC report to the state and now we're close to regaining full local control. That means progress. That means moving the city and school district forward and that means leadership. You have what we need from the city to be our Superintendent. Thank you so very much.

Mr. Charles Ferrer: Good evening, Charles Ferrer. I'll try to be brief. If not now, when? Think about that when you think about going into this vote to make a decision. Think about all the community forums that we had and what the people said about looking for someone that knows the lay of the land. As a history teacher, I did a little history and I pulled up Laval Wilson - paradigm, Edwin Duroy - mismanagement of funds, Mike Glascoe, and Donnie Evans - Doctors. What have they done for us lately? Absolutely nothing! Let's be real. The last doctor that we had that was from this district was Dr.

Napier. Key words - from the district. He started out and came up through the ranks from the district. What do we need to make this district right? We need someone from the district. We've done the outsider and they have failed the children of this district and the community miserably. That's undeniable. Those are facts. I'm going to make it real brief. Ms. Grant said something that we can't expect the state to give us the money that we need because they don't have it. They have it. I'm going to give you a simple solution, Mr. Matthews. Eight years ago, our budget was \$550 million. They had \$550 million eight years ago. If you tell them to give us our \$550 million back, that will cover the \$526,317,000 and leave us a surplus of \$23,682,179. You're going to tell me they don't have the \$550 million? If they really wanted to be nice, give us back the \$550 million that we were entitled to and if you divide the \$280 million that they owe us over eight years, throw us in an extra \$35 million that we entitled to. Now we're close to \$60 million in the surplus. This is not rocket science. This is reality. They owe us. Ask the Governor to give us our \$550 million back and we will talk about the extra IOU. Board members, there's only one thing to do here when you go in and vote. Make the decision. Make no bones about it. The community said someone who knows the lay of the land, someone who has established relationships. Come on. Let's not let the rocks fall on you. The die has been cast. Let's make this easy. Call the vote.

Mr. Henry Sosa: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Henry Sosa, for those of you who don't know me. I have been involved in advocating for education in district for the last 10 years. Dr. Hodges, we've been to Trenton a number of times when Chris Christie froze the funding for the schools. Day in and day out, we went there and testified. It's been hard. I know this vote is going to be hard tonight. I know, Comm. Ramirez, you lost your father this week. I saw you at the funeral home earlier and I see you here today. I want to offer my condolences to you and your family. You are here today, so this tells you the importance of this vote. I want to talk to you guys today about relationships. That's all I can talk about, relationships. For the last 10 years I've been to a number of forums around education. You name the school and I've been there. The person that we have always seen there was Eileen Shafer. Right now, you guys are in the process of getting back into local control and you need a steady hand at the wheel that has the right relationships at every level from the parents, to the Commissioners, and to the teachers. Every person that I see here today at every level supports Eileen Shafer as the next Superintendent. I'm adding my voice to it. Let's make the right decision. Let's do it tonight and let's get it over with so that we can start this local control process with the right person at the helm. My endorsement to you, Eileen Shafer. Thank you.

Ms. Marcella Simadiris: Praise the lord everybody. Ms. Shafer, I don't know if you remember when we had the celebration when you became Deputy Superintendent. I attended and I brought you a card from Ms. Emily Rome. I kept in touch with Ms. Rome years after she retired up until she passed, and after she passed with her daughter Elizabeth. When we found out you were becoming Deputy Superintendent we were very hopeful. We were full of hope. She was very excited and she said she was going to get a card and was going to mail it to me. She didn't really want me coming to her home. She thought she was putting me out and bothering me. I didn't really get to see her, but we talked a lot on the phone. She mailed me the card to bring it to you. I just wanted you to know that had happened. I also want you to know that I often wonder how Ms. Rome would have been evaluated under the new evaluation tools. That often crosses my mind because when we did first start using these tools, I watched physical education teachers that you and I both know were great go on caps. It's clear that there are issues with the evaluation tools. One thing about Ms. Rome is that she was real good about accountability. She was good about holding people accountable and making sure people did their jobs. I was very impressed with your speeches last night.

I didn't get enough time to go through all of your documentations, but I was a little concerned. I, too, want to thank the Pastor for acknowledging what happened today in Florida. This is happening all over our nation in all our schools. Social/emotional health and learning should be the priority everywhere. I'm a little concerned with the fact that academics still are the first priority. If we look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you cannot achieve until you have your basic needs met and you feel welcomed and loved. It's clear, especially with one particular group of children that they're not feeling welcomed, wanted, or loved. I know that's mentioned at a number of community forums specifically. I haven't really heard you repeat it the way it has been expressed at some of those forums. I'm really looking forward for you to entertain putting intention behind specifically boys of African descent. Not just boys, but boys of African descent. There are some more questions regarding accountability with emails. Maybe I wasn't clear in presenting myself, but I need to know how the Board Commissioner email functions. Commissioners are saying they are not receiving emails through that and they're also saying they're not getting hard copies that I give when I come to the Board. I'll get you next week. Thanks.

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

Comm. Castillo: Before we move forward, I want to notify the public Comm. Simmons and Comm. Arrington will not be able to participate in the Superintendent deliberation. They have not participated in the interviews as well because they have relatives that work for the district. Comm. Arrington, of course you're welcome to stay, but he won't be joining us in the deliberations. I also want to thank Comm. Ramirez for being here and for your dedication. I know it's been a tough week, but we stand with you and thank you for being here.

#### **MOTION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DELIBERATE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF STATE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

**It was moved by Comm. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Ramirez that the Board goes into closed session to deliberate on the appointment of State District Superintendent of Schools. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

The Board went into closed session at 7:18 p.m.

#### **RECONVENE**

The Board reconvened the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

#### **REPORT BY THE BOARD PRESIDENT ON THE DELIBERATION FOR STATE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RECOMMENDATION**

Comm. Castillo: Thank you for waiting. It was definitely a great executive session. I will read the resolution into the record first and then I will ask for a nomination.

## **RESOLUTION:**

### ***RESOLUTION TO APPOINT THE STATE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS***

WHEREAS, the Board of Education ("Board") began the process of selecting a new State District Superintendent ("Superintendent") due to the retirement of the former superintendent, effective July 1, 2017, and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education appointed an Acting State District Superintendent, and

WHEREAS, the Board met on July 29, 2017, to determine the superintendent's search details and format, and

WHEREAS, at the Saturday, July 29, 2017, meeting the Board agreed that a thirteen-member committee be appointed, by each Board member recommending 1-2 people to serve on the committee, as well as the two State liaisons appointed by the Commissioner of Education, and developed a proposed timeline (Attachment 1), and

WHEREAS, at a regular meeting on August 23, 2017, the Board voted on the committee members and to retain a firm/consultant to conduct the search for the Superintendent to ensure a thorough and extensive scope (Attachment 2), and

WHEREAS, the Paterson Education Fund (PEF) began to host six (6) Superintendent Search Forums throughout the community (Attachment 3), and

WHEREAS, the search committee convened on September 13, 2017, to discuss timeline, process/expectation, and confidentiality agreement (Attachment 4), and

WHEREAS, after the competitive contracting process, on October 2, 2017, the Board interviewed two firms as potential consultants to conduct the superintendent search, and selected Ray and Associates, Inc., and

WHEREAS, Ray and Associates scheduled four (4) meetings with the search committee beginning October 11, October 18, November 28 and January 23 to discuss the search process (Attachment 5), and

WHEREAS, during the process, the search firm conducted Focus Group Interviews with numerous groups throughout the community and an Open Forum for the Community at Large on November 8, 2017, to receive input on the selection of the next Superintendent (Attachment 6), and

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2017, the Board approved the Superintendent Search Suggested Process and Timeline, the Suggested Superintendent Search Advertising, and the flyer as prepared by Ray & Associates (Attachment 7), and

WHEREAS, as part of the search for a Superintendent, the search firm advertised an online survey to be completed by all citizens in the City of Paterson, as well as all staff members, on the thirty (30) qualities desired in a new superintendent (Attachment 8), and

WHEREAS, the search committee completed video scoring of the candidates selected in the first round, and held face-to-face interviews of the candidates who were selected for the second round, and then narrowed the field of candidates to three finalists, and

WHEREAS, the three finalists were presented at a Community Forum on February 13, 2018, to answer questions on their vision for the Paterson Public School District, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education deliberated in closed session on Wednesday, February 14, 2018, on their recommendation for the next State District Superintendent, now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Paterson Board of Education approves the appointment of Eileen F. Shafer to fill the vacant position of State District Superintendent for submission to the Commissioner of Education of the State of New Jersey, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this appointment will be effective contingent upon the approval and negotiations with the Commissioner of Education.

**It was moved by Comm. Rivera to appoint Eileen Shafer as the new State District Superintendent for the Paterson Public School District. On roll call all members voted as follows:**

Comm. Arrington: Abstain.

Comm. Capers: Yes.

Comm. Hodges: Before I answer to the resolution, I simply want to say that while I would love to participate fully in the merry going that I anticipate, and while I heartedly believe and wish Eileen Shafer a great deal of luck and success moving forward, to me the process is in fact very important. If your process is corrupted in the beginning, you cannot be certain of the outcome. I don't wish to further tarnish these proceedings or ruin her night because I think that she has worked very hard and put a lot of time into being the person that you see before you. But personally, I have to stand on my principles and I therefore recuse myself and I vote present.

Comm. Martinez: Resoundingly, yes.

Comm. Ramirez: Yes.

Comm. Redmon: Yes.

Comm. Rivera: Yes.

Comm. Castillo: Yes.

**The motion carried.**

Comm. Redmon: This process was a strenuous process. This process was a serious process. This process is now that this district can move forward with local control. We heard the public. We heard different people and vested interests. It is my pleasure and the President of my Board, to announce our new Superintendent, Ms. Eileen Shafer.

Comm. Castillo: I want to take this time, before we all leave, to thank the community. Thank you for coming out. Thank you for being part of this process. We're going to let Ms. Shafer have a comment. Thank you for being part of this. Please continue to join us. We have so much more work to do and we need every single one of you. We have worked hard. We did this together. We need to continue the rest of the year and

making sure that you guys are part of this process. Thank you to Ray & Associates. They did an outstanding job making sure that this all worked. I want to let all you guys hear from our new State Superintendent.

Comm. Martinez: I think she deserves to have the final word this evening. Thank you to everyone here. Thank you to the committee. Thank you to the community. Thank you to everyone. Tomorrow is Paterson Public Schools' 100<sup>th</sup> day. We are encouraging all students to show up. We want 100% attendance in our district tomorrow. Parents and students out there, make sure you get your kids up to school on time. We want 100% participation on our 100<sup>th</sup> day of school. #ppsshowup.

Comm. Rivera: To the residents out there and everyone that was present, I kept my word when I said that whenever I make decisions I will take what the community wants first. We had the same sentiments when it came to Ms. Shafer. I took the opportunity to speak to some community leaders. Former Commissioners, I just want to make you aware that this isn't just Flavio Rivera acting because you gave me the opportunity to act on your behalf, but I did my homework. Through my personal experience with Ms. Shafer being here for the past four years, like I stated previously, speaking to other elected officials, although they're no longer elected, I still feel they have a say just like every other resident and parent in this district. Publicly, I just want to congratulate you, Ms. Shafer, on being the new Superintendent.

Comm. Castillo: I also want to thank the 1,300 viewers that we had over Facebook Live. Thank you for being a part of it, for being present, and for joining us tonight.

Ms. Shafer: It's been a long journey. I want to personally thank each one of you who are out there, not only here at 90 Delaware, but those of you out there on Facebook, everyone who came out last night, the community, the parents, the students, the teachers, all of our staff members for your unending support throughout this entire process and throughout my entire career here of 26 years. I can't thank you enough. I see so many people out there from all walks of life, from reverends, to teachers, to the PEA, to the City Council, Ruby Cotton, and so many people out there that I have worked with and will continue to work with. I want to thank the Board more than anyone. I said something last night and I meant it. This is my district, these are my kids, this is my staff, and I am not giving them to a stranger. We have a lot of work to do and you know that we all have to work together in order to get that work done. There are 28,000 kids waiting for us and I will not let them down in more ways than one. We will change this culture. We will respond to parents. We will address the needs of our children just like you heard earlier. We changed what was happening in special education. It's not all right, but we're moving in the right direction and that's what we need to do. We owe that to our children, to our teachers, and to our parents. We're going to chip away at this one day at a time until we can transform this district into a high-performing district. Thank you all and please come and work with us so we can get the job done. Thank you.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Mr. Teague: You guys do know that this is the first time in history that women control the entire school district.

Comm. Castillo: Can we actually get a picture with our Council President as well? Can I have all the Commissioners back up here really quickly?

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.