

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION
PUBLIC HEARING**

March 29, 2017 – 6:48 p.m.
John F. Kennedy High School

Presiding: *Comm. Christopher Irving, President
Comm. Chrystal Cleaves, Vice President

Present:
Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent
Ms. Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent
Robert Murray, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Emanuel Capers
Comm. Oshin Castillo
Comm. Jonathan Hodges

Comm. Manuel Martinez
Comm. Lilisa Mimms
Comm. Nakima Redmon

Absent:
Comm. Flavio Rivera

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

Comm. Martinez read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused notice of this meeting:

**Public Hearing
March 29, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.
John F. Kennedy High School
61-127 Preakness 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. Cleaves: I would like to thank you all for attending this meeting this evening. We will get started because we are already a little behind schedule.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE STATE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Evans: Last week in the workshop that we held on March 22, I provided an overview of where we were in terms of identifying budget reduction strategies.

We talked about some of the cost drivers and then ultimately how we were closing the gap that emerged between what we anticipate as revenues as compared to projected expenditures. You may recall I gave you a memorandum to that end that detailed that information. What I want to do is take a second or two, simply provide an update to that memorandum, and then introduce Ms. Daisy Ayala to come and present an overview of the specifics or particulars within the budget document. I will say at this point in time the budget has been reviewed by some people – I'm not sure what the exact number is – in the community and the Board has been afforded a copy of the user-friendly version. Some of you had asked specifically for the detailed version of it and we've provided that to you as well in preparation for tonight's meeting. In fact, I've memorialized the brief comments that I'm about to make and it should be in the Board members' email as well. In that memorandum, I shared that anticipated cost increases or cost drivers were roughly \$33 million. In fact, it was exactly \$32.9 million. The items that we had either reduced or otherwise adjusted to offset that totaled roughly \$34 million. Since that time, we've continued to look at options and engaged in various conversations as we attempt to continue to identify items with which we can enhance the budget and add to the amount of funding that's available. Along the way what we've discovered is that one particular activity is going to provide or require that we look for additional funding. You may recall, and in fact you may have read about it in the newspaper or seen reference to it through other venues, that a complaint was filed by the Education Law Center to the New Jersey Department of Education about our special education programs. To that end, in recent conversations with the staff at the Department of Education, I was informed that the investigation has commenced within recent days and any time that happens if a program in question is being considered for changes of any type then there is a hold-harmless. No changes can be made to that program during the investigation. That is standard operating procedure regardless of the program. In this case, because it focuses on special education and we had planned to bring a small percent of the youngsters that are served by outside vendors back into the district and create programs to serve them, provide the same services that are on their IEPs but do it in district rather than contracting for institutions, schools, or entities outside the district to be able to educate them, that change cannot take place until the investigation is complete. Our fear is that that's going to take us past the budget development season. What that means is that the funds that we're planning to recoup from bringing youngsters back in and serving them in our schools as opposed to in private providers outside the district has to be secured from other sources. What we've done is try to identify other sources to be able to cover that. The memorandum I just circulated among you lists those sources to cover the roughly \$4 million. Recall that the gap that we had previously had had an excess of about \$900,000. By the time you add that \$900,000 to those items then roughly we are closing that gap. If indeed the activity the Department of Education is engaged in concludes sooner, then we can look at options involving special education. When I say options, I'm not talking about compromising the services that are on IEPs. We're required by law to provide the services to youngsters that are included on their IEPs. The question is do we do that in-district or out-of-district. That was really the issue. Having said that, I will introduce Ms. Daisy Ayala, our Business Administrator, to come to the microphone and provide an overview of where we are more substantively with budget development.

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

Comm. Irving: Dr. Evans, is Ms. Ayala going to expand on what you just talked about? I think there are some questions relative to what you just said.

Dr. Evans: Some of the items that I've talked about in terms of budget reduction and those kinds of things she may. But if you want to go ahead, I'm open to questions now.

Comm. Irving: Let's let the Board ask any questions of you relative to clarity and based on what you just presented. Then we'll have Ms. Ayala do her presentation.

Comm. Hodges: I'm still a little confused, Dr. Evans. Do we have fiscal control?

Comm. Irving: Yes.

Comm. Hodges: If we have fiscal control, this is the budget schedule for districts that are still in state takeover. The regular school districts don't submit their budgets until the end of April or May. I spent an hour with the School Boards Association today trying to make some sense of what's been going on. This schedule alone says March 22 is the last day for the State District Superintendent to present the budget to the Board of Education. This is the 29th. This didn't happen then and quite frankly I'm trying to figure out why we're even on this takeover schedule if we have fiscal control.

Dr. Evans: Every district has a schedule like that. The dates may be different, but every district has a schedule that includes all the dates where significant events happen. You may recall last week that the 22nd you mentioned was pushed back. It's built around when we are required to submit the initial completed budget to the Executive County Superintendent. When I say completed, even that requires definition. That date typically is in early April. This year it's April 5. Up until then there can be modifications and then once it's in place and working through typically mid to late June when the final appropriations from the state are awarded to us, at that point additional modifications can be made. But once the Executive County Superintendent gets the budget by April 5, he literally removes our capacity to go in and actually change it. I'll ask Ms. Ayala if she would come to the microphone just to confirm that I'm saying it accurately. The reference is locked down. There may be ongoing discussions and within parameters we can move some things within certain categories, but making major changes to the budget cannot occur.

Ms. Daisy Ayala: Yes, that is correct. By Friday or Monday morning whatever changes are going to occur will occur. Some changes I know will definitely take place and once we've done the final budget then he'll open it up on Monday morning to make the changes and close it up again. Then that becomes the final budget.

Comm. Martinez: Essentially, when do we Board members and community members get to actually see it?

Dr. Evans: People have been coming in and looking at it.

Comm. Hodges: No, Dr. Evans. 9:00 to 3:00 does not permit working parents or Commissioners who are the bulk of the constituency here to come and view a budget. The Board has not seen it until today. This is the issue that I have. In

speaking to the legal department and their legal/budget department down at the New Jersey School Boards Association we went through the law. They took me to the Department of Education's financial site and we went through the various calendars. There are two sets of calendars. One is for takeover districts and one is for regular school districts. The dates extend all the way from April into May when they have to submit their budgets, unlike the takeover districts. If we are in local control, at least in terms of fiscal, then I don't understand why this process was being followed and why our budget was submitted by you and not approved by the Board. If you say it was approved by the Board, the Board never saw it. So how did it get approved by us when we didn't see the final product?

Dr. Evans: The final budget has not been submitted.

Comm. Hodges: I understand that. The tentative budget...

Dr. Evans: Let me just finish. The final budget has not been submitted. We are required by April 5, as you just heard from Ms. Ayala, to have completed the development process. That's not a process we created. That's a process that we are told to follow. We have to have it in by April 5. Mr. Davis will lock the system down and our capacity to make changes cannot occur after that until the final appropriation up or down and it's only to make adjustments to work within what the final appropriation is in June. That's always been my understanding whether you're state controlled or not.

Comm. Cleaves: We're talking budget and we're talking finance. Finance is a committee. The budget falls under QSAC. Where does the budget fall under? Does the budget fall under QSAC or finance? Where the budget lies is where we need clarity.

Comm. Hodges: That's the issue.

Dr. Evans: That is a good question. I need to go back and do some research on that question. That's the first time I've been asked that question. The budget is fiscal. However, there are some aspects that are governance. It's both, but I need to get clarity. That's where Dr. Hodges' question is answerable.

Comm. Irving: Let me make a request to counsel to get a decision or to render an opinion relative to the discrepancy. I just got here so I apologize to everyone for running late. There has to be a clear indication for what purview the Board has relative to this process. As I interpret fiscal, I believe that when this Board indicates that there will be no increase in taxes that needs to be removed from that minus the Superintendent going through the protocol of appealing to the Commissioner with a request to do so. This is a clear impasse, especially if we disagree relative to certain aspects of the budget that need to be addressed and clarified real quickly. The expectation is that this Board is going to vote on this budget next week. But if the Board indeed makes its wishes clear and stated under its perceived authority of having fiscal and then we're told we don't, I think next week is going to be a little more tumultuous than what we all believe.

Comm. Martinez: If I'm not mistaken, although we do have fiscal control, until we have governance we are somewhat limited in our fiscal...

Comm. Hodges: I'm not sure about that.

Comm. Martinez: That's what I believe it to be, but to your point I still think we need clarity.

Comm. Irving: I don't want to speculate on that.

Comm. Hodges: Me either.

Comm. Irving: I think there needs to be a legal written decision or opinion that comes from either the state and/or our legal department.

Comm. Hodges: I don't surrender anything until they tell me I can't do it.

Comm. Irving: I agree. That's correct. That's why I'd be very cautious with that statement.

Comm. Hodges: I still have more. This is my problem. The tentative budget was submitted and I'm going to read the resolution we voted on, or at least as it was identified to us. It says, "Approve the tentative budget submitted by the State District Superintendent of Schools from March 15. The State District Superintendent of Schools be affirmed and approved by the Board of Education." Number one, we never saw the tentative budget. We never had a presentation about that for the 2017-2018 school year. According to the School Boards Association, once the Board approves an item that now becomes a public record. It means nobody can sit there and tell you, you can't see it or have a copy of it. It's a public record. If the Board can't see it and they supposedly approved it, then that makes no sense to me. If we're being told that we voted on this, which was irresponsible for us to do without seeing it, they made that clear to me too, it should become a public record. All resolutions that we vote on become a public record. Nobody should sit here and say the Board of Education can't see it. The public who's directly affected by that budget can't see it and it's their children. It's the roadmap for how we intend to address these issues going forward for their children. They can't see it. They're being told to come here between 9:00 and 3:00 in the daytime to look at whatever they're allowed to see. That's my issue. It's a tentative budget that we never saw. If we voted on it and approved it, which we were irresponsible for doing, then why is that not a public record?

Comm. Irving: Dr. Evans, I need a point of clarity at this point in time. I'll get to the other questions that I have. First and foremost, is the entire budget now available to be viewed?

Dr. Evans: Yes and folks have been coming in to review it. The user-friendly version was emailed out to Board members. Actually, more than the user-friendly budget was provided to some Board members as they requested it.

Comm. Irving: Can we make accommodations to ensure that there are flexible hours between tomorrow and next week to allow folks who work during the day or may not be able to attend to view the budget in off hours?

Dr. Evans: Sure. We can do that.

Comm. Irving: If we can have that prepared and have either a statement or something to that effect go out tomorrow first thing in the morning that would be preferred.

Comm. Mimms: Let's go back. To be at a point to say that we need to determine whether it's fiscal or governance, to me is ludicrous. I have to say being on the School Board for three years we've never had this issue. We had the document. We were able to take it home.

Comm. Irving: It was normally a PDF.

Comm. Mimms: Right. We were able to review the actual packet. We were able to highlight, have questions, and be able to speak intelligently to the budget. Last year we had some concerns with not getting it on time. When I looked at the agenda I saw that you wanted us to vote in fiscal on something we had not seen. I had an open dialogue before the vote to this entire Board that we should not vote on something we had not seen, touched, or had.

Comm. Hodges: Absolutely.

Comm. Mimms: I openly stated that on March 15. It's on the record. Still some voted yes and some of us voted no. I'm not voting on something I haven't seen and touched. Then we come back on March 22 and we had this list that was provided to us. We made recommendations. We talked about some things that were on the table in January, which we said in January did not make sense. We came back and they were still on the table. Closing schools does not make sense. How do you close schools that we own? That does not make sense. We own the buildings. You're closing buildings that we own to lease buildings. That just does not make any financial sense. We're leasing. We have to identify ways that are strategic, cost effective, and that make us accountable. We're not doing that. This budget is not doing it and if we allow it to go through, we're not doing it as elected Board members. It's not effective. Before the week came I openly sent out an email to every Board member to stand down against the tax levy. I openly sent an email out because it was a 2% tax levy. The county has identified a way not to raise taxes. The Mayor of this city has identified a way not to raise taxes on homeowners. Why would he do it? Last week we put forth a resolution and we unanimously voted not to raise taxes. We come back tonight and I know we'll talk about, but not only is it 2%, it's up to 2.8%. We're sitting here and we're voicing our concerns of what on this list does not make sense when we had issues with lead and asbestos. We don't have nurses in every school. We don't have music and art in every school. We're not doing analyses to identify if programs are working or effective. Are we wasting money? Are we saving money? We're coming back to these meetings week after week and it almost looks like what you want is already on the table. There's no relevance for us to come. Last week there was no meeting scheduled for tonight so I made a recommendation that we needed another meeting. I said we need to meet again. We talked that night and it was agreed upon that we would have that budget by the next day. Tonight is when we got the budget within an hour and a half of coming to the Board meeting. If you didn't take time out of whatever your schedule is to go from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., despite the fact that you have a life, you have to go sit in this Board room and go through 416 pages by yourself. No one is there to guide you. If you don't know what you're looking at, you're just looking through pages with no education, not being informed, and sitting there still with no information. It's not fair to parents that they have to be inconvenienced to get up out of their homes and leave their children to come to a Board, or take off work, or leave early to come to look at something that they should have by law. It's a law. It was voted upon already on March 15. This is a

document that we as Board members should have had already. We should have had it after March 15. After it was submitted we should have had it in our hands so we could look through it and identify to make sure there is security in schools, to make sure every school has a nurse, to make sure there are textbooks and paper in classrooms and all kinds of stuff. These are just some of the things that we should have done. But here we are again tonight with a similar document. Last week I had to come in and it was two pages. Tonight it's three. We have one extra page tonight with some of the similar things we had talked about last week. I know you hear us, but are you listening? That's the question. It's like we're fighting for our kids. We're fighting for parents. We're sitting here and we're almost like begging at this point to ensure that we see the documentation so that we can fight for a thorough and efficient education for all our children. We sit here representing all 30,000 kids, all ethnicities and nationalities. We represent them all as we sit here. When someone speaks, they represent those concerns for our children. To sit here and to see what's being done and we're being blindsided after fiscal has been given back to this district is a disgrace. It is absolutely a disgrace and it's enough already. What are we going to give our kids? This list does not show me what more we're giving to our children. I see what more we're doing administratively. I see what we're not doing. I see medical. Some things we can't go around, but what do our children get? That's my question. Are they going to get penmanship? Is the Amistad Act going to be fully executed by law that should have been here already? Is that going to be fully enacted? There are so many things. Is this going to happen? When Daisy comes to the microphone, are we going to get a clear analysis to this budget so we can understand what we're getting, what we're not getting, and we have time enough to make these decisions by next week? By next week, there's nothing we can change. Once the budget is submitted, there's only a 10% variation. Community, listen. Once the budget is submitted, you can only do a 10% variation to change it.

Comm. Hodges: That's it.

Comm. Mimms: Only 10% to what has already been submitted. You can't do 20%. You can't do 30%. It's only up to 10%. At this point we're already at a disadvantage. That's why on March 15, I stood out and said to this Board do not vote on that budget. If you have not touched or seen it, stand down. When you don't listen to the instructions this is where we are. This is exactly where we end up and our kids suffer. They have suffered long enough. They can't sign paychecks. It's horrible. It's unacceptable. Somebody has to say something. There's no need for us to sit here. Why are we even here tonight? What is the reason? Parents are here. Community members are here. Board members are here. Why are we here? I'm just trying to understand. What is the purpose of sitting here at the dais? No matter what decisions are made, whether they're made at an administrative or committee level, we all will be blamed for these. That's why we have to make sure we educate the public to what is happening. We're telling you. You have to listen to us. When we're on Facebook and Instagram and telling you to come to meetings, you have to be here. We can't fight by ourselves. This is the last meeting before this budget is adopted. There are no other meetings. The decisions that they made are already stacked up in here. If you don't know how to read a budget, then you're lost. It's 416 pages. You know we're not going through that tonight. I'm going to tell you right now, they're not doing it. You have to sit here and somebody has to say something and say our kids are not having it. Get some signs. Go stand on the steps of Trenton. Protest! Say something. Do something. If you want change, you have

to be about change. You have to make your voices heard. Write some letters to the Commissioner of Education, Ms. Kimberly Harrington. Send some letters and say this budget does not represent the interests of our kids. What's happening in Paterson is unacceptable. Send a letter. Send an email until your voices are heard. Until you do that, what we're doing here is of no substance. We're just sitting here, coming in the back, eating a nice meal, and sitting here at the dais with nothing happening for our kids. It's unacceptable to not be able to fully come and sit here having a full view of the budget after we asked for it last Wednesday. We got it tonight, an hour and a half before we got here. Unacceptable, Dr. Evans! Inappropriate and unacceptable!

Comm. Hodges: The reason I brought about this whole discussion is because as you know I was exceedingly upset with this budget and the whole process. I've been screaming all month and the month before about this process. What I want to ensure is that there's clarity. Dr. Mimms is absolutely right. This is too late. If the other regular districts who have local control can submit their budget in April or early May, I need to understand why we can't do that so that we have time to go through this budget. That's why I started the question in the first place. I need to make sure that this process that occurred where we did not receive the tentative budget or at least the presentation at all, which has never happened in my 14 soon to be 15 years, this is the first time this has happened. I've been freaked out and poor Dr. Evans has been forced to get an extra set of Roloids because I've been annoying him on a regular basis over this process. I've been down there talking to people down in Trenton about the same thing. What is the process? This calendar is only for takeover districts. This is not the regular school districts that don't have local control, at least in the area of fiscal. As Comm. Cleaves asked, is there a difference between QSAC and being in local control, which would allow this to take place? Even if it had, this calendar wasn't followed either. The other thing I'm concerned about is that I asked this afternoon that all the Board members receive the full budget. Not the user-friendly budget, but the full budget. I have it and if I have it they're supposed to have it. It would be unfair. I'm a little concerned that they only have the user-friendly copy. That was not what I requested. They were supposed to have the whole thing. That's number one. I'm doing this for next year to make sure that no Board sits here and goes through this again. You can't have this happen to you where you vote for any budget that you don't see. You should at least have a presentation of that. Your job is to protect their interests and the Board. Not you personally as a politician, but their interests. If you don't see what you're sending out to the County Superintendent, you can't protect their interests, or more importantly their children. Dr. Irving asked for a legal opinion. I don't know if it can be rendered tonight, but it has to be rendered in a timely fashion so that we can decide how we move forward and when we have to move forward so that we can take a look at this budget and take it apart. We've never seen it.

Comm. Irving: Dr. Evans, in the role of Board President there's a certain level of trust that I have to have in you in our relationship. I'm just concerned about the level of transparency that this process has unfolded. I'm sure there are 10,001 reasons for why it has unfolded, but it still puts us in this position for where we are. The position is still unacceptable. It's unacceptable for any Board at this stage to not have received the budget in the timeframe that we have been accustomed to barring the issues. If the County Superintendent has any issues with it being released, then the County Superintendent should have communicated with myself and the Board relative to his concerns. At the end of the day, it's affecting the folks who elect us the opportunity and the right that they

deserve to see the budget in its full form and incarnation. The challenge we have now is twofold. I think Daisy still needs to come forth and talk about the suggestions and recommendations we have. But if the Board does not have control of finance and voting the budget up or down, my issue philosophically is if that 2.8% stays I don't think anyone here in good conscience is inclined to support this budget next week. I don't know under the current agreement we have with the state whether or not you appeal to the Commissioner or under governance you just override that veto. I do agree with Dr. Hodges. I think a level of deference has been given to you from many of the Board members. I know I certainly have given the relationship that we share. I think that deference is starting to be eroded because at the end of the day the Board ends up looking like fools. It's unacceptable. It's not fair to us because at the end of the day people are asking us why we haven't seen the budget. Why have you voted on a budget you didn't review? I felt quite comfortable voting on it knowing that the budget would be forthcoming the next day and then we didn't receive it. Then we didn't receive it again and again. Then we were finally told it was available. There's a level of trust many of us want and need to put in you, but I'm just concerned about the level of transparency and making sure that what's presented tonight is final. If it's not final, I just need that to be shared and for someone to say we're still working on it and it's still ongoing. A lot of this you and I have talked about behind the scenes, but I feel compelled to at least share that publicly because I think this is eroding public trust.

Comm. Hodges: More than that, I'm not sure what the County Superintendent can say that goes contrary to the laws.

Comm. Irving: I agree.

Comm. Hodges: The County Superintendent is a very nice man and I know him well. But if he says you can't see this budget and the law says it's a public document that we're responsible for because we voted on it... And by the way, I'm not blaming Dr. Evans for us voting on something we didn't see. We should take ownership of that. I voted against that budget, but we should take ownership of that because you never vote on a document that you don't see. That's dangerous. You can't do that. You simply cannot do that. I want to impress that upon people. I also want to say that we have to protect the Board and never give them or allow to hit the agenda any item that we have not seen. Ever! We can't ever do that. It never happened again and it never happened in the past. I'm not sure the County Superintendent can tell you that you can set up a process that runs contrary to what the law says. I'm not sure that this calendar, which is already not being followed, is accurate for us. We're supposed to have fiscal control. If that's the case, we can have other meetings between now and April and go through this entire thing and make the appropriate changes instead of being under the gun. If you're saying next week Friday we're locked in...

Comm. Irving: Last year we got a waiver to extend that deadline.

Comm. Hodges: We just did for this week under this regimen.

Comm. Irving: I'm saying last year they pushed it back even further.

Comm. Hodges: Because there's no rush. The rest of the state isn't doing this before May. I don't understand what the rush is because I want time to look at this and figure out what we're doing for our kids and to challenge some of these

things. Those are the three things that I need to have answered and clarified. I also want a definitive understanding of what this process is for this district. Where are we? What is the process for next year? Is this calendar correct? If it is, okay let's move forward. Do we follow the regular calendar that everybody else has? I believe we're supposed to. Then I want to make sure we never submit a tentative budget, which is supposed to be a legal document that we're approving and should be an open document to the people of the community and the city.

Comm. Martinez: There's a point that I want to speak to that Dr. Irving brought up in speaking about the erosion of this public trust between Board members and folks in the community who entrusted us and voted for us. Needless to say, this process has not played out well. I'm not going to speak for everyone else, but personally I felt like I've been kept in the dark and not knowing exactly how this was unfolding. We haven't seen the information in a timely manner and I think that has affected to some extent the sense of trust. I want to put it back in context a little bit and just speak to this cloud that's hovering above us. I say this only because oftentimes we sit here and at times we take heat for doing things and the public frustration comes geared at us. Let us keep in mind that no matter what, at the end of the day, if we vote up or down on this budget, we can be vetoed and the state is going to do what they want to do. I say that only to say that instead of this infighting and folks standing there saying you guys aren't doing this and we're giving it back to you saying all these things, instead of fighting each other, we should be facing out to the real enemy, the folks down in Trenton. It's the Governor who is ultimately pulling the strings of everything that's going on in this district and things that are happening with the Superintendent. Let's be real about this. We spend a lot of time going back and forth at each other when ultimately at times we don't have the power to override what the Governor wants done in this district. I say that so we can be reminded that we have to work together. When we in fight nothing gets done. We go at each other. I understand where it comes from. It comes from frustration and the place we're at. Again, let's redirect the frustration, not at each other, but at who this fight needs to be taken to. It's a tough fight because it's hard to go down to Trenton week after week. It's tough to pick up the picket signs and do all those things. That's where the fight has to be had because we're not the ones who can ultimately override these things. The Governor is the one that's going to say what's going to happen and we have to take it until we are in total control, which at this point we're not. I want to just put that out there. We have to work together with each other and not at each other. I just wanted to put that out there.

Comm. Castillo: Manny, even though I agree with you, I understand because I'm frustrated. I understand the frustration. We can't expect for them not to point their fingers at us as part of this if we're not giving them all the information that they need. Don't get me wrong. We're sitting here and we work on finance. We've been here on Saturdays and at night for hours. We do an excellent job, or so we think as we walk out of the meeting. Then we come back and we see taxes that are not only being voted down but are now increased. We're not even getting all the information. How transparent can we be? We can say we're being transparent, but the parents and the people who elected us see us as part of this administration. If we're not getting all the information, they have the right to come back and lash out at us, even though we're not getting all the information that we need. We had a great plan of how this was going to work out. We would do the right thing and we're going to do the best for our parents and for our children, but right now I'm just as frustrated as any one of the parents out there.

Comm. Irving: Thank you. Ms. Ayala, can you come up so we can actually get into the nuts and bolts of your presentation? Alan, I'm going to step to the side and allow Ms. Ayala to do so, so the Board can take copious notes relative to what you're presenting. After that, we'll take questions from the Board members.

Comm. Hodges: Mr. President, I do want to apologize. When I was in medical school as a medical student on the floor I was with a resident and we looked at a patient who on an EKG had several runs of V-Tach. V-tach is an extremely dangerous rhythm. As a medical student I said, "That's interesting." As a resident, he was terrified because he knew that could be the impending death of his patient. While I appeared to be blasé about it, he was freaking out because he saw. What you saw over the last month or so was me freaking out because of what I'm used to in the process. My aggression, deep passion, and fear was because of that, my more experienced understanding of just how dangerous this process was. I want you to understand that.

Comm. Irving: I can tell you man to man that my hope was that you were wrong. This process is helping to bolster a lot of the comments that you made. I can tell you that categorically. I can tell you I'm absolutely disappointed with where we are because we shouldn't be. This is such a preventable process and it should be preventable because it's just a matter of us dotting our I's and crossing our T's. If the budget isn't prepared or if there are sections that are available, even by law, then you provide what you have and say that we're continuing to work on this process and inform of the process as you move forward. At least that needs to be communicated. I can tell you in the finance committee we were assured the budget was prepared to go, which is why I'm still so surprised that it wasn't released in a timely fashion and disappointed. I agree with you.

Comm. Hodges: That's why I was so terribly angry. You can't do that. You can't do it to us and you can't do that to them. Nobody can do that.

Comm. Irving: I agree.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2017-2018 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET

Ms. Ayala: Good evening Commissioners. I just have our mission up there. We're all pretty familiar with that. These are some of the budget priorities that we used for the development of the budget. These are some of the budget goals that we utilized to develop the budget. With all the fiscal constraints that they've had for the past eight years there has been continual improvement in the annual audit resulting in a decrease in audit findings. Increase in NJQSAC scores resulting in local control for the fiscal operations and prolong the fiscal cliff. As you know, we've been talking about the cliff, which actually happens when you have flat funding. You have flat funding and no matter what we have expenditures. As long as you have flat funding expenditures will always exceed your revenue. These are the five pillars we use – planning, preparation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. We monitor the budget on a year-to-year basis. As you know, the budget is just a roadmap of where we want to go. As you know even at home, that changes. If something comes down the pipeline, the budget we prepared has to change while we're living in it. The budget began in November. In December we met with the principals. We talked about their budgets from last year. We look at their budgets and some of the interventions. We also look at the enrollment. We look at some of the scores

and take a look where the needs are. We make sure that they budget for special education students and bilingual, and when they're working with their budget that they're actually allocating according to their population. Then we meet with the assistant superintendents and we review the budgets that they have from the schools. On January 28 the fiscal committee shared the budget and some of the concerns in closing the gap. Some of the cabinet members were brought up to the microphone to talk about how they were going to do that reduction in the area and how that was going to impact. In December through February the Superintendent, the Deputy and the fiscal committee met. We talked about some of the gaps. As long as we continue flat funded we're always going to have a gap, but we'll talk about that a little later. On March 9, I submitted the budget application to the County Board of Education for review. The community was given the opportunity to share their concerns with the DOE on March 8-22. On March 22 a budget was presented by Dr. Evans. On March 23 the application was approved by the County Superintendent. March 29 is where we are today and next week is the budget hearing adoption. With any budget moving forward it's important that we understand what flat funding does to the district. As a result, the district faces the challenges in preparing a balanced budget. Significant cost drivers are salary increases, health benefits, pension increases, worker's comp, and transportation to Don Bosco and charter schools. The last week Dr. Evans presented the same information. The strategy was basically working with the principals to ensure that how they allocate their funds for their school is in line with our priorities and goals and it's data-driven. Another big item that we did is we looked at consultants. More than 15% have been reduced. Three years ago we had almost \$2 million. This budget only has a little over \$250,000. We reviewed some existing leases to terminate possible when it's cost effective for efficiency. We reviewed and streamlined process to eliminate redundancy and promote efficiency. We reviewed and reduced administrative positions and consolidated positions where ever possible. For example, human capital director is no longer with us. That position has been consolidated with labor relations. We have actually looked at a position in payroll. We have eliminated that position and spread the work among three individuals. That's a process that continues to move forward. We have not stopped looking at that yet. We reviewed and eliminated programs that when evaluated did not give us a return on the investment. We eliminated the Twilight Program because it wasn't efficient. We consolidated the Credit Recovery from three sites to two sites. This is a trend of student enrollment. This you can find in any budget, whether it's an advertised budget, a full budget, or a friendly budget. If we were funded adequately, our budget should be \$482 million. That is according to the School Funding Reform Act of 2008. According to this, the district is \$70 million short. We are underfunded by \$70 million. How is that \$72 million broken up? Equalization aid was underfunded by \$27 million and according to the formula local aid was \$42 million. According to that, it comes out to the \$70 million. This is how the revenues are collected. The first line is \$15 million. That is what we utilize to balance the budget. No matter what, I have to submit a balanced budget. Out of that, we'll talk about fund balance a little later. If you're thinking of your household, that would be the money you would put aside for a rainy day. That's the money that's being used as well as the \$2.2 million. Local tax is at \$42 million. We get extraordinary aid. You'll see that in 2015-2016 it was \$2.7 million and in 2016-2017 it was \$2.5 million projected and we may get a little more. However, we had an OFAC finding so I have to pay almost \$400,000 back. That's why we have that. Next year is the first year of repayment. The state aid, as you see, has been pretty flat. That has not changed. SEMI is at \$1.8 million. This year we budget \$1 million and next year we budget \$1.1

million. Miscellaneous is just bank interest and things of that nature. The other component of our budget is state grants. We have the preschool grants and other restricted state, as well as federal grants. That gives us a total of \$553 million. A better display is in a chart pie with 73% million as state aid, miscellaneous is not even 1%, preschool is 9.9%, fund balance is 3.2%, federal is 5.1% and local taxes is 7.6%. This is just a chart for tax levy increase per household. This is just a sample because some people didn't know how that worked. This is just a sample based on a \$100,000 home. This is the appropriation and general fund. We have two funds. We have school-based and regular, which is mostly 90 Delaware. We have instruction at \$9.2 million, support service at \$34 million, transportation at \$20 million, facilities and security at \$33 million. You'll see that in most of those lines there has been a reduction since 2015-2016 to the projected 2017-2018 budget. Again, that is because we continue to be flat funded and expenditures continue going up. We have to find other ways besides fund balance because we don't have enough fund balance. Central office has decreased from \$6.1 million to \$4.8 million for the next projected budget. Employee benefits are something that we really can't control. It is pension, health benefits, prescription and things of that nature. Capital is money that we want to use to fix some of the roofs and boilers. We reduced some of the Adult School. We tried to go to the schools at the last minute. The biggest piece here is 35% of charter schools. There's a slide further up that will give you a little more detail about the charter schools. We went in this year that we're in from \$34 million to \$46 million projected for next year. Our school-based budget has increased the last couple of years. That goes directly to the schools. Debt service is at \$1.3 million, but we have about another two years left of debt service. That pretty much is the same thing. As you see, the big piece of that pie is school-based budget, support staff, charter schools, and the out-of-district. This is a trend of the last five years of charter schools. In 2013 we were at \$24 million. In 2017 we're at \$34 million. We've had over the last five years a \$10 million increase. From this year to next year we have an almost \$12 million increase, a significant increase. If we continue to be flat funded that's additional money that we don't have to go and get anywhere else. This is a school-based budget. That might be a little different than what you see because if you look at the school-based budget the only thing that's not allocated is about \$54 million of employee benefits. I allocate that to have a better picture of what each program is costing. We have the alternative program that has been decreased. Some of that is increased by \$5.1 million. We have at-risk. That's increased slightly. The athletic has pretty much stayed stable. Before and after school programs have actually increased because they moved from local to school-based. Bilingual there's a small reduction there. Co-curricular has increased by \$15,000, which is not much. Custodial has increased at the school level. We have two custodial. We have facilities that's local-based and we have at the school and that's mostly custodians. Regular instruction has increased and there's a slight decrease next year. School administration is at the building level. That's decreased by a small amount. Security, as we know, is one of the areas that we've been cutting not to touch instruction. Special education has pretty much stayed flat. Summer school has increased slightly. Support staff has increased a little bit. Then we have transportation. Not to confuse anyone, that transportation is used by the school for field trips and things of that nature. Here we have the administrative costs. The budget comes out with a formula for the north region and says this is basically what your administrative costs should be per pupil. You will find that information as well in any budget documents that are provided. As you can see, the north region is at \$2,138 and the district is at \$1,519. Let's talk about fund balance. Fund balance is the money that we keep aside for a rainy day. If you

go back to the 2013-2014 year, we had about \$74 million that we can tap into in order to support our programs. In 2014-2015 we used \$30 million of that and left \$43 million. In 2015-2016 we used \$11 million. This is when we started tightening the belt realizing that we were not getting any more money and we had to live off whatever we had put aside for a rainy day. In 2016-2017, the first column is based on our projected budget for last year. Then Lerch, Vinci & Higgins did a year-end projection. We had stopped spending in order to add some money to the fund balance. Our projection is to be at \$22.6 million. That's a projection and we're hoping to exceed that in order to help support the subsequent budget. Once we put the \$50 million and the \$2.2 million of fund balance, the only thing we have left is \$4.9 million. Out of that, \$1.5 million can only go to capital lease improvement. \$1 million is an emergency and that needs Commissioner approval. All we have in reserve is \$2.3 million, which means that we are out of compliance by law. The law says that we should have a little over \$9 million for any kind of emergency. However, we've tried to do as little reduction as possible in staffing and programs. This is basically the same information. Future budget cost drivers and concerns are collective bargaining agreements, health benefits, pensions and worker's comp, increase in labor relation costs, litigation, grievances against the district, substitutes due to staff absences. These are things that we cannot control. Charter school enrollment increases dramatically. The new upcoming addition to PCTI, technology, much needed infrastructure upgrades, and continuous change. We have the oldest school buildings in the state, meaning that it's going to break down. If we continue to cut facilities, that's going to be an issue. As we continue to have students moving around we will have to supply transportation. Reality check – we're actually living that cliff that we were told we were going to face three years ago. Limited increase in state aid, resistant to increase local taxes, and unsustainable financial model. Dependency on use of fund balance reserves is no longer available. We've been living above our means. Protection of assets necessary for program - Paterson has some of the oldest schools in New Jersey and increasing operations will continue to be a challenge. Our desire is to have civility of operations. I just want to make one last comment. This is the 2017-2018 budget. Keep in mind that moving forward before we even start the 2018-2019 budget if we continue to be flat funded we're going to have increases in salary which could be somewhere between \$5 and \$6 million. Health benefits can be somewhere between 8% and 10%. That's another \$8 million. As you read the newspaper, they keep saying they're going to fund the pension. Who do you think is going to pay for it? That can increase another \$2 million. Charter school is continuing to grow. That could be another \$5 million. Before I even think about planning for the 2018-2019 budget, we have a gap of \$20 to \$25 million if we continue flat funded. That's what we face year after year. Again, I will offer my service and be available, as I did last year, to review the budget in detail. Some of you took me on that offer and came into my office and we met so you could have a better understanding of the budget detail to detail. That offer still stands this year if anyone is interested.

Comm. Irving: Let's get started relative to the questions for the Business Administrator. Daisy, this is a very thorough report. I wish this was given last week or the week before. This is contextual information. I don't think any of this is anything new for many of us, but it might be new for the community. This is good contextual information, but I do have some questions about some of the specific school-based budget requests. If anybody has any comments, feel free because I don't want to hog this.

Ms. Ayala: Just keep in mind that as we speak right now the budget is a preliminary budget so we've already made some changes because we had a \$4 million gap. I had a placeholder that I have to reallocate funds.

Comm. Cleaves: I was looking through the user-friendly budget. I have an accounting background, but I was a little confused with one section. Maybe you can clarify it for me. On page 3, you made a statement about grants in your presentation. When I look on page 3 it says 'grants and entitlements,' but there are no dollar amounts there. It says other revenues from local sources.

Ms. Ayala: That's the total of everything. That's the \$83 million in the last column.

Comm. Cleaves: I still don't see what you're talking about. It says zero dollars here.

Comm. Irving: Daisy, indicate what the figures are again.

Ms. Ayala: Are you looking at 20-5200?

Comm. Cleaves: On page 3 where it says 'grants and entitlements' and 'other revenues from local sources.' It says for 2015-2016 \$274,000, and then for 2016-2017 it says 0.

Comm. Irving: Then for 2017-2018 it says 0.

Ms. Ayala: Is that the \$2.3 million?

Comm. Irving: No. Comm. Cleaves, what's the question?

Comm. Cleaves: I want to know why there are no dollar amounts here. She mentioned grants in her presentation.

Ms. Ayala: That's a local grant and that may be a lot of little grants. I can give you a list of what that was at that time.

Comm. Cleaves: It still doesn't answer my question.

Ms. Ayala: We may not have those grants anymore. They're local.

Comm. Cleaves: Okay. Also on page 3, if you move down to 'revenues from federal sources' Title I, Title II, and Title III, IDEA, you have dollar amounts from 2015-2016 then 2016-2017 revised and then anticipated 2017-2018. If you go to page 7, you have those same categories but the dollar amounts are different for Title I. Title II, Title III, IDEA and everything else listed are exactly the same. But under Title I there's a big difference in the dollar amounts.

Ms. Ayala: Page 3 is revenue, so that might be just one lump sum. Apportion is going to have to be broken as required by the grants. If you add everything up, it will add to one of these lines.

Comm. Cleaves: But it doesn't make sense because the bottom line doesn't equal. If one section is saying one thing and another section is saying something totally different...

Ms. Ayala: If you go to page 3, for 2015-2106 you have \$90,465,438. If you go to page 7, you have \$90 million. Do you see it?

Comm. Cleaves: Look at the Title I line. Do you see the dollar amounts? They're not the same, but all the rest of them are the same. I can show it to you.

Ms. Ayala: We can do the detail at a later date.

Comm. Cleaves: I'm talking about the Title I line item.

Ms. Ayala: This comes directly from the DOE. It's going to take time because I think I know the difference between the 52 and the 54, which is all the way at the bottom, \$2.2 million.

Comm. Irving: Is it okay if we go to the public portion and then come back?

Comm. Hodges: I wouldn't mind that. Let them go ahead. They should have a presentation in front of them so they can follow us to see what we're saying.

Comm. Irving: Were there copies provided?

Comm. Hodges: No. They don't have anything. They don't know what we're talking about.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Comm. Irving: Dr. Evans, I'm going to request that Ms. Ayala's presentation be made available on the website tomorrow so folks will be able to download. Contextually it provides great context for where we are. I just don't think it goes in depth to the level that some Board members were recommending or suggesting. I just want to remind everyone there's a three-minute time limit. When you hear the bell, please wrap up your statements. We'd certainly appreciate it. Mr. Teague, before you come to the microphone, I just want to say publicly thank you so much for attending the hearing today to support the parents in the school district. I wanted to recognize that.

Mr. Corey Teague: No problem. I stand here in a different capacity. I was once up there and I know how tedious the process can be. I know how aggravating it can be, but I also know how disturbing it is when you present something to the Superintendent and he just ignores you and does what he wants. I've been through that. I've had that frustration. It's nothing personal, but when it comes down to the children and the things they needs, when I saw the budget today I saw some things in there that I was told wasn't there. For instance, the cuts to the IDEA were almost \$2 million. There were several other cuts to special education that I saw in the budget. I'm still being told that there were no cuts made and that it was flat lined, but I'm still seeing it there listed. It's not confusing. It just seems like someone is playing around. I know we're still under state control. I do realize that. Dr. King said there comes a time when man's laws break the moral code and at some point you have to say we know what the

law is and we know that you can override us, but morally we cannot pass a budget that we have not seen. You can take whatever you want to take to whoever you want to take it to, but I will not have my name attached to it. I know there are laws there, but at some point we have an obligation to disobey unjust laws. This doesn't add up. They're making you vote on something. By the way, the chairman of the finance committee is not even here tonight and this is a budget hearing. The guy that's supposed to be discussing the money is not here. Parents, I understand that you might not know about the budget, how it works, and the intricacies of it. But you still have to come and get involved. They can't do it alone and there's a system in place that's even hindering them from doing what they need to get done on the state and local level. I'm not here to take sides, but I will say I'm still keeping my eye on special education. I still feel like there are cuts being made even though Ms. Coy is saying there are no cuts made to special education and that it's a priority. Right now there are 17 lawsuits against the district from parents whose children are not receiving services under their IEP. An IEP is a legal document. Once the district and the parents sign it, it's now legal and those services have to be carried out. For the most part, a lot of them aren't being carried out and it looks by the budget that there are also going to be cuts to special education instruction. Yet, when I got in the elevator today there was an ad on the door that said special education teachers' workshop where they're trying to get new teachers. If you're cutting the salary, why do you have positions up for new special education teachers? Something is wrong. There's too much confusion and god is not in the midst of confusion. Something has to change. Good night.

Ms. Nikki Baker: Good evening. My name is Nikki Baker and I'm a special education assistant at Dale Avenue School. I was originally a general education assistant for several years. As you heard, we're concerned about privatization of our jobs. It's not a new issue. It's been coming up throughout the years. I'd like to ask what your plans are for instructional aides, personal assistants, and special education assistants. When we speak of privatization, what does that look like? Can you tell us?

Comm. Irving: At the end of the public portion we'll certainly get your question addressed. I want that dispelled.

Mr. Baker: I'd prefer if you did it publicly so we all have that understanding.

Comm. Irving: We will.

Ms. Baker: Thank you to all of our essential support professionals and custodians, instructional assistants, secretaries, and all of our support staff that work in conjunction with all the certified staff members. We work together for the benefit of our kids. We are part of the community. We are voters. We're parents. We're grandparents. We're aunts and uncles. If no one else says thank you, I'm saying it. Thank you.

Comm. Irving: Thank you and we'll make sure we get that addressed at the end of the public portion. I promise you that.

Mr. Charles Ferrer: Good evening. There's been some confusion and hopefully we can clear it up because there are all kinds of rumors out there that you want to privatize the chiefs and lump them in with the custodial staff. I've heard that's not so, but the people that are concerned need to hear that because that's their

livelihood. They're also concerned over the fact that you're continuously cutting the facilities budget, which hampers them from doing their job making sure that the buildings are secure. I know for a fact because my wife was told in her building that she had to take the locks off her closets because the kids could put a stick in them and put somebody inside. So you have to put a special type of lock on now that won't allow students to do that. The problem is the facilities don't have enough funding to complete that task. Meanwhile, the closets are not secure and they have laptops in them and anything can happen. We have to be conscious of that. I'm really trying to get a handle on the timeline for the budget because after Ms. Grant talked about when it was supposed to be provided to the public for review I went and found 6A:23A-8.1. It said budget submission, supporting documentation, website publication. Are there other sites out here? Are there different timelines? In this statute here it said annually on or before March 4 each district board of education shall adopt and submit to the Executive County Superintendent for approval, together with such supporting documentation as prescribed by the Commissioner, a budget that provides a thorough and efficient education. Then it's supposed to be available even at that point, but definitely once the County Superintendent gets it, for the public and everybody to view. I'm a little disappointed in the County Superintendent that I emailed him because I wanted to know if this is what is required by law why aren't we following it. Because of the news article where Dr. Evans said the County Superintendent said not to release it, I needed to know from him if it was true that he gave that directive and why. Why is it easy to follow the laws sometimes and then not follow them other times? It's just unacceptable. We're playing with people's lives. We're playing with the children's education. It's not acceptable. Maybe you need to post that timeframe, if this was the correct one, by March 4. Why aren't we following it? The stuff that I'm hearing up here about everybody not seeing the budget up here but you're voting on stuff, I'm sorry. I learned a long time ago you don't vote on anything and you definitely don't sign anything that you haven't read. You might have signed all your property away to the district. Do you really know? Dr. Evans, we got your letter. I hope that when the truth comes out you'll send another letter out quickly that will adjust those alternative facts.

Mr. Derrick Watson: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Derrick Watson. I thank you for the time to share my thoughts with you. As an instructional assistant for 13 years, I'm very concerned with the idea of privatizing vital components of our school district. The idea of eliminating the positions of support staff, like my colleagues and myself, many of whom have dedicated many hours alongside our co-teachers to ensure that the quality of education is improved for our children, is unacceptable. I say co-teachers because when you walk in our classrooms, other than the sign on the door, there is no evidence of which adult is the teacher and which one is the assistant. If you took a minute to ask one of our children who their teacher is they will tell you without a second thought Mr. This and Ms. That. Our role in the classroom is a vital role that my colleagues and I take very seriously. This is evidence every time we clock out as our children's teacher at the end of the workday and begin our transition as students. We pursue more knowledge so that we can offer more to our co-teachers and our children. I myself wear many hats in my every day walk. I am an IA. I'm a husband to one beautiful wife. I'm a father to six beautiful children. I'm involved in my community as well as a deacon in my local house of faith. I'm also a Christian comedian. I have been blessed to travel up and down the East Coast sharing the joy of the lord through laughter and during those opportunities I often make sure I point out two things. One, that I'm a teacher in Paterson and

two, to tell how god blessed my family with a house last year right here in Paterson in the Fourth Ward. Where I live is very important to me. Growing up I had a sixth grade teacher. Her name was Ms. Jones. I remember every morning walking to school and I would see Ms. Jones. I would go to the store to get a sandwich and I would see Ms. Jones. I'd go to the park with my parents and I see Ms. Jones. Ms. Jones worked in the community she lived in and because of that she had a deeper investment into the lives of every one of her children. Over 20 years has passed and I still remember Ms. Jones. When I was blessed with a position in this district I wanted to have the same impact. I look forward to my children saying, "Hey, Mr. Derrick. What are you doing around here?" Or, "Mr. Derrick, I saw your car on my way to school." It's important that they see positivity in their neighborhood and connect it with who they see in school. Ms. Jones wasn't a rapper. She wasn't balling. She was a teacher. That's who we are. We are way more than a way to balance the budget. We are parents, taxpayers, students, and stability in an unstable world. We are homeowners, community activists, and most important, we are Paterson. We have families and children in this very district. We impact their lives every day. I ask that you Commissioners take this into consideration. The fact of the matter is when these children walk out these doors the reality is the people that are closest to them are being taken away by drugs, violence, and anything else. Please don't let the reason somebody close to them is taken away be because of money. Have a blessed one.

Mr. Errol Kerr: Good evening, Mr. President. Good evening, Superintendent Evans. Good evening Board. I'm here this evening to express my displeasure and by so doing I'm not beating up on the Board. I've spent enough time on the Board to understand how difficult the job is. But I must let you guys know that I was very displeased to know that we voted on a budget and sent it to the County Superintendent, a budget that we had not seen the numbers. It was quite distressing to me. We know that a budget basically does three things. It outlines our priorities, it identifies the revenue sources, and it also outlines our appropriations for the programs that we want to pursue. This is basic for a budget. But if you cannot tell that the budget meets your demands, how do you know that it will address the real serious issues that we have in this district? Let me tell you a few things that really struck me about the process this year. I've been to a few Board meetings and as I sat in the audience and listened I was very pleased of the quality discussion that you guys had regarding the priorities that should have gone into that budget. Let me just quickly go through a few of them to remind you. You spoke about art and music. You spoke about improving the ratio of nurses to schools. You spoke about technology. You spoke about reading intervention programs. You spoke about media/librarians. You spoke about a stronger science curriculum. You spoke about all that and all that should be in your budget as priorities. But who can tell me if these issues that I recalled for you have been addressed in your budget? They have not been addressed. None of them have been addressed, and that's the issue. We are settling for whatever we get from the Department of Education and we are not really advocating for anything more. That's the real issue. We need to be real advocates. While I was there I would go anywhere because I wanted to make sure that our kids were not shortchanged. Mr. President, our district is contracting faster than we are sounding the alarm. Recently the Department of Education approved 1,500 additional charter schools. That equates to \$21 million to this district. I did not hear any word from this Board or any advocate in this district, except a few, who talk about the serious impact that it will have on our ability to provide a thorough and efficient education for our kids. Coming

soon will be another 1,000 seats at PCTI that we will have to address. That's another \$15 million. We need to start talking about these things. These are cost drivers to our district. These are what are driving the cost. If we don't talk about them, we are going to make this district insolvent in a few years. Thank you.

Ms. Victoria Oquendo: Good evening. Before I speak, I want to let you know what I'm referencing. I have here Title 18A Education Laws. I'd like to clear up a couple that I see that are being violated. With respect to preparation of the budget, Article 2 18A22-7 states on or before March 22 every school board member is supposed to have a copy of the budget. Not finalized, whether it's preliminary or whatever you have. On or before the 22nd, every Board member was supposed to have a copy. I would like it to be stated for the record. On or before March 22, did every School Board member have that copy? With respect to Comm. Mimms asking why we are here, that's to fulfill statute 18A-22-10. We had to do this before March 29. We did it at the cusp. The problem with quickly scrutinizing the budget today is I had to wait. It was not readily available. I had to wait to see it. Two, quickly glancing I've seen some things. With all due respect, Irene Shafer makes over \$200,000 a year. You can't pay your own cell phone bill? Cheryl Coy, you can't pay your own cell phone bill? According to the budget you don't. If they do pay their own cell phone bills, then find out where the 605 is for cell phones on the budget. If the children have to make sacrifices, you certainly can as adults. I think you're being compensated very generously where you can pay your own cell phones. Today I went to Felician University on an invitation where it said on your flyer you needed parents to speak up. I was not able to speak up. They had scripts and they had their preferential parents. Stop playing with people. Everybody is not playing and I'm definitely not. I showed up today. I gave you time I can never get back. To get there and not be made fully aware of what the real deal is. Then to get there and find out you have your preferential speakers. They're speaking according to a script. That not right. That was a violation today of my freedom of speech to advocate for the free and appropriate education that our children are entitled to. Kemper McDowell, you took things personal on that bus today. You need to man up a little bit more. Thank you.

Ms. Elizabeth Elias: Good evening everybody. I'm Elizabeth and I'm a PTO. I was one of the parents who went this afternoon to Felician College. Today, I have my two youngest children with me when I should have been at home doing something else. Again, I almost got discouraged today because I feel like I'm having dejavu. I feel like every year it's the same thing. There shouldn't be one dollar cut. I said the same thing last year and still we're lacking flat funding. When we went there today, Dr. Evans, the chairman seemed like he was lost and not understanding why Paterson doesn't have a lot of the programs that the other schools have. We were there today. He even came out of his chair and after we were done for some reason he went on break out of the door. He went to speak to people out there. We hired them. They work for us. If our children do not go to school, they will not get paid. This is some serious stuff. We have the power. (Spoke in Spanish). I don't care if you're an immigrant. If you're being taxed and you go to the store and I sell you the same basic things, we're going to be part of a city and of our kids' education. It does not matter. I don't care if you're from Africa. It's not about a Black thing. It's not about a Spanish thing. It's about the basics. My daughter goes to Rosa Parks and do not go to her again because you did it last year. My daughter is an honor roll student and my son for the first time made honor roll. I wanted to cry because I'm a mother. I'm playing a father part for my circumstances and nobody's perfect. I have three kids and one baby

father. It's nobody's business. I'm doing my part. They want to arrest my kids. I try my best. I'm out here at night and I don't need anybody to applaud me. I'm not the only one. Ms. Ayala, I told you last week communication. The budget is not here today. I was correct. Everybody was on me on that meeting that day when I said let's communicate and let's do things on time. Paterson is always last for everything. I am frustrated. Last year you had Mike Jackson, councilmen, and police officers here when it was voting season and none of them are here today. I'm saying every councilman. It takes a city. I don't care if it's the state. The police have to be here. Education is the first thing you use wherever you go. Common sense! I keep telling you there has to be unity. You're here because you have to work. Pass it on. Do you want to keep seeing these kids dying? Do you want to keep arresting and going to funerals? Give me another minute because you guys didn't have the budget on time. I'm demanding it. You have to understand it's an 'everybody' thing. It's not just me. (Spoke in Spanish) This whole country is based on taxes. That's what it comes to, money. My kids are not going to have your type of money if the education is not given to them. Rosa Parks is an art school. Are you going to do another charter school? There's no art and music. Isn't it clicking with you people? Our kids are being set up to fail. I don't care about them. This is something personal. This is something personal. I shouldn't have to run to another city with this background. When I go they get spooked because I'm coming from Paterson. It's common sense. I told the Mayor last year, I told the cops, I told Berdnik, and all those councilmen you have a ward that you have to attend. Unite with that teacher. Unite with that principal. I'm in the Fourth Ward. Do you need me? Should I do it for free? Should you all put a can and pay me? I'm broke, but I take my time.

Comm. Irving: I'm going to have to ask you to finish up.

Ms. Elias: It seems like you keep hiring these counselors to teach other people what they already went to school for. You need to stop it. Dr. Evans, I keep telling you when you leave from here your résumé is bad. I'm not talking to any of them. I'm talking to you. Ms. Shafer, you're the one getting paid. You should be ashamed that our kids have to go through this and getting shot because you guys are not giving them enough activities because you're not doing your jobs. That's all I have to say.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening Commissioners, staff, and community. I'm pleased the Paterson Education Fund released our school budget report today. It was a little bit harder to do this year because Linda Reid and I had to spend a day in the school district pulling the numbers from the budget. In pulling the numbers we did use it to raise some questions and we hope the community will also use it to raise some questions. I won't ask them today. I already did get some answers from the BA. Thank you for your answers. We weren't happy to see that there are cuts to 29 school-based budgets this year, but we were happy to see that there were nurses in almost all the buildings. I thank you for that. I recognize the limitations of state funding. This is why I've been to the Senate and the Assembly and today I changed my testimony a little. After I saw the charter monies I recommended to them that they consider funding charters independently because the money has been following the child out of the district, presumably, when it comes to charter schools. However, district enrollment has not decreased. District enrollment has increased. While we're having to send money for kids who are increasing in the charter school, we also have the public school enrollment increasing. So it really doubles the loss of what we're sending.

I planted a seed for them to begin to consider funding them independently by student rather than out of district budgets. We get our money for 28,000 kids and they get theirs for however many their enrollment is. Also, I looked up the New Jersey School Boards site while you had your fiscal conversation today and they do have a publication entitled "*Who Does What in Public School Governance.*" I suggest to the Board members that you read it. It's not a long publication. The publication says the conversation you should be having now should be about the 2018-2019 budget. You should have already settled this upcoming budget with the Superintendent starting this conversation now with his staff and then over the summer with principals and central office bringing you supporting information in December or January for the following year. I say again that you're very late with this school budget conversation, even if that's how we've done it in the past. Comm. Martinez, I have to respectfully challenge that we sit back and take it because that's what they give us. It's our duty to fight. Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your eyes and your attention, please? It's our duty to fight. It's why you were elected. You were elected to serve the Paterson Public School District. Please push back at the state every opportunity you get so that we can get the money that our kids are entitled to so that they can get the education that they're entitled to. Thank you.

Mr. Daniel Rodriguez: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Daniel Rodriguez. I was born and raised here in Paterson. I went to the schools here in Paterson. My fiancé teaches in Paterson. I just wanted to ask a question. About a week and a half ago the rumors started about privatizing the chief custodians. I've talked to some Board members. They have no knowledge of it. I've heard that Dr. Evans was asked last week and he said he has no knowledge of it also. I just want to let you know that I understand that the budget is what it is. We have the President we have now. There are some cuts coming along the way. We can't stop that. It's the times. I just want to let you know that privatization doesn't resolve the issues. You've seen the fiasco we've had for 10 years just with the cleaning companies. Nobody up there can say it's been a success because it hasn't. Especially this year after more cuts, you can't even go to a school building that you can really say is 100% clean. 90 Delaware might be clean. They have a full staff, but the schools don't. All I'm saying is I have my grandchildren who have been through these schools. I'm more than just a guy who operates a boiler. This year our department saved the district \$250,000 during the summer. We opened up the boilers and we cleaned them. We used to have a contractor do that. If this comes you'll have to really think is the money worth it. Like I said, you know what's going on with the cleaning contract. We're more than just a guy who operates a boiler. We do the minor maintenance. If that kid is walking down the hallway crying or upset about something, I ask him what's going on. I've had more conversations with kids here than I did with my own kids because I was busy working. I've become almost like a part-time counselor also. Just think about it before you do it. We're more than just that guy who pushes the button, opens up the building, and makes sure that the heat's on. We live in this community. We take pride in this community. We have one gentleman here, the chief from Eastside. He started a Jujitsu team in that high school out of his own time. He has students that were F students and are now honor roll students. That's what we have here. Like I said, just keep in mind privatization doesn't solve everything. I have to say to the young woman that was here, the passion that you ladies have, if we had that passion everywhere we'd be one of the top schools in the whole United States. Congratulations.

Ms. Julie Pagan: Thank you everybody for being here. Commissioners, I want to thank you for what you do. You do it for free and I thank you for that. I have some questions. Last year I started coming here around the time of last year's budget and it does seem like the same crap is happening again. It's a little worse now because you just got it an hour or so before you came here. That's ridiculous. I can't believe it. Where's the common sense? You guys are all educated. You're educated people. I'm not a college graduate, but I know that's wrong. There's a question I have. I'm a Patersonian born and raised. I'm sick of our kids being treated like crap. That's what they're treated as. I work for a company and when they hear you're from Paterson, there's nothing good said about Paterson. I'm from Paterson and I'm good. She's from Paterson. You guys are from Paterson. Stop letting them treat our kids like crap. Stop it. Look what time it is right now. Parents can't come here with their kids. Look at this baby right here sleeping. Make it a time where parents can come. Make it a Saturday morning. I couldn't do it when my kids were in school, but I helped my kids more and I was involved in the school. The parents knew me. All the teachers knew me. It took one time for them to call me and tell me my son was acting up. I left work and went to the class. I surprised my son and sat right next to him and never had a problem again. Parents can't all do that. My son graduated out of this school and got the NJSTARS scholarship. He got to college and the math that he learned here was not up and he got frustrated. His GPA went down and he lost that scholarship, but he still kept going because I pushed him and he sees everything else going around. He knows has to go. He's in Montclair now. Our kids graduate from here and they have to go to remedial classes. They have to repeat a couple of times before they even get over. This is ridiculous setting our kids to fail. They're failing. I'm tutoring a kid that is a neighbor of mine. The grandmother is raising him. The Young Men's Academy, is that a school? Come on. Who made that up? Up to sixth grade? What happens when they graduate? He's in fifth grade reading at second grade level. What the heck happened? What happened? I'm tutoring this kid once a week for free. I'm saying this because parents we have to do this. Community, we have to do this. Take a kid and read with him. The teachers don't have time. They have 20 kids in their class. We can't blame everything on the teachers. We can't. They have 20 kids for eight periods. How many kids is that? The security is down in the budget. Are you getting rid of more security guards? Are you serious? What is going on here? Where's the common sense? You can't keep doing this to our kids. You can't. Parents, you need to start fighting. We're sending them to get baby sat. Paterson a couple of years ago said that we are the highest in disability in the nation. That means there's a whole bunch of people sitting at home. What are you doing? This is ridiculous. Board members, when this happens, you should walk off. What's going to happen? You guys don't get paid. When your stuff is not here, leave. Say we're not having this meeting and this is why. Then you go talk to the parents out there and tell them what happened. When it gets to the state you tell them what happened. And this charter school mess, it said \$2,138 per kid in the north region and we only get \$1,519. Do we have to give charter schools \$2,138 for each kid? Do we have to give that much? Are we giving that much to them? That's what they're supposed to be giving us. Stop giving them the money. When they state come back to us say we don't have it. We can't give it to those kids because we're still taking care of ours. Common sense! Cut it out. Dr. Evans, you need to stand up. You need to stand up and stop saying these are kids. How can you sleep at night? There isn't that much money in the world. You're hurting kids, babies. There are babies dying. When they graduate from

high school, they can't read, they can't fill out an application and he's graduating from honor roll, what the hell is happening?

Councilman Andre Sayegh: Good evening, Andre Sayegh, 215 Dundee Avenue. Today, I testified before the assembly budget committee and I didn't do so only as a public official. I did it as a parent. I expressed my dissatisfaction with the fact that for the past eight years the Paterson Public School District has been underfunded by about \$272 million. I'm sure that the Board members can figure out the correlation. The last eight years we've had Governor Christie. Much has been made of the no confidence vote yesterday before the City Council meeting. But the real confidence level that has waned is in the Governor that we currently have in Trenton today. The only way to get this resolved, and it's been mentioned before, is to ask what's fair. That's fair funding. Something that was raised earlier by Rosie Grant relative to charter schools and independently funding them is certainly a salient point. Very often, and it's unfortunate, charter schools are pitted against public schools and you have to think of the common denominator – they're all our children irrespective of what school they attend. I believe under a new administration next year as far as a new Governor is concerned perhaps fair funding will be on the agenda. Perhaps independently funding charter schools will also be a part of it. Dr. Irving, if we're going to identify cost saving measures, I firmly believe we have to revisit the shared services agreement that we broached. A city is suffering as far as our cash strapped coffers are concerned and a school district that's suffering financially can come together. We have bright minds, eager hands, and individuals who are willing to roll up their sleeves to identify cost saving measures in areas whether it's purchasing, plowing, or whatever it may be so that we can save our children and save essential staff members. I'm here to join in the fight because if we want to preach about a thorough and efficient education, it's not achievable unless you have adequate and equitable funding. That should be the rallying cry. Thank you very much.

Ms. Marcella Simadiris: Peace and blessings. On Monday night I said something. I just wanted to correct myself because when I saw it on Mr. Teague's post I realized I read something wrong. It was in reference to the issue regarding the Paterson Education Association President. I was basically speaking about how the civil rights movement and the labor movement joined forces. I read a quote from an article by Thomas O'Higgins. It was, "That is why the labor hater and the labor baiter, which is the act of accusing, denouncing, attacking, or persecuting an organization or individual member, is virtually a twin-headed creature spewing racism." When I spoke I said anti-racism, but it's "spewing racism labels from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from another mouth." I just wanted to clear that up because I didn't want to confuse anybody. Regarding the budget, I've been advocating for the full budget to be placed online for everybody to look at, at their will. I had to go and make appointments over the summer twice to go look at the budget and see what was allotted for my school, Dr. Napier Academy School 4. When I did that, I discovered that we had new money that wasn't there two previous years for a librarian. I brought that forward, but it took so much energy and so much time for people to even confirm and agree with what I was saying. Everyone was saying that's not true. I said I was there and I saw it twice. That lack of transparency is a barrier, Dr. Evans. It's a barrier to our children. I keep coming up to this microphone and I keep begging you. I can be full of pride. It can be a flaw sometimes, but I don't have a problem coming to this microphone and begging you to stand up for our children. You are in the ultimate position to tell the Governor and the Commissioner, "No.

This is wrong and I'm not doing it. I understand there are federal requirements under the ESSA, but you're not funding this. This money is going here first. If you want us to fill these requirements, provide the funding." We need you to do that, Dr. Evans. Our children need you to do that. I just want to come up here and say Dr. Frank Napier Academy still doesn't have a librarian. Where is that money going that was budgeted for this school year? I believe it's like \$57,000. Is that money going to be there? Is it going to be doubled for next year? What happened to that money? A lot of you sit up there and you talk about the community. We're tired. You're wearing us down. Please stop. When I bring things forward, please do that work. My children are home alone. My kids don't even like Paterson because I'm Paterson too much. They don't even like Paterson. I'm not trying to be funny. My kids are home alone. Can you do that work, please? Dr. Evans, please stand up for our children. Fight. Please fight for our children. You're going to be okay. Your family is going to be okay. You're good. Our children are not.

Ms. Raquel Soto: Hi everyone. My name is Raquel Soto. My son attends School 7. I was given this budget today and it states that School 7 is going to be cut about \$400,000. I don't know if that's correct, but I need someone to explain to me if School 7 is barely making it right now, how are you going to cut \$400,000? The school barely has books, supplies, special education teachers, aides. My son attends that school. I refuse to let what happened to Genesis Maisonet happen to Mark. I promise you, Dr. Evans, what happened to Genesis in Rosa Parks High School that she did not get the education that she deserves is not going to happen to Mark. For me to look at this budget and you're going to cut \$400,000 out of School 7, what do you want us to do? Do you want me to go in there and teach the kids? Do you want me to give out of my time to be a resource for these children? Somebody has to answer. Look at this budget. \$400,000! We're barely making it in School 7. I give you my word that what happened to Genesis is not going to happen to Mark. That's all I have to say.

Ms. Sylvia Ferrer: Good evening. I think the young lady that spoke just spoke for me very passionately. That's how I feel about what's going on here with the city. It's all based on union busting. I'm retired, but I'm still pro-union. I'm sure the teacher's union will handle the situation on this privatization as it has in the past. I'm here before you because unfortunately I called the different schools and there's no band and no music. I'm 60 years old. When I was in school we had music at the grammar school level. All of that has been taken out. As was said, there's no music in the schools. That's by design too because if a child picks up an instrument they can't pick up a gun. If there's something to interest the child, they will stay in school. They wouldn't be dropping out of school at the fifth grade level. So here I stand now with the Don't Shoot I Want to Grow Up prayer for peace in the city. I want permission from Ms. Shafer to present these to the schools so the principals can share it in the schools. I would like to give the Board a copy of it as well. If some of you are able, this is Palm Saturday to march with us. This year's theme is "Bridging the Gap." We've asked parents of deceased loved ones that have been killed by gun violence to walk with us and carry pictures. Every student in the schools right now has two or three t-shirts with someone they've known, a family member or friend, who has been murdered by gun violence. Why? Because those children stopped going to school and decided the community was their friend. They were bored with school and got involved with the associations. Now they're going through this little craziness again. I need permission to put these in the schools. It's on Palm Saturday at 10:00 a.m. We will be meeting at Cole Cobbs Park. We're going by Nazeera

Buggs Park and Tyrone Collins Park. We're going to take that way and then we're going to cross the bridge into Montgomery Park. That's even an issue. There are people in the First Ward by Lower Main that may not cross over that bridge. The sheriff's department and the police department will be walking with us. We need to let it be known that we will not tolerate this anymore. We're going to let the Governor know that we will not tolerate this anymore. We cannot continue to fill the jails and the cemeteries with our young Black men because they're not getting an education. Christie has an agenda to bust the unions. Don't you cringe when you get your bonus check? Don't you know there's blood on that bonus check? It should make you cringe to think how many students are not coming to school. How many of those students who should be coming to school have been shot dead in the street because they got involved with some foolishness when they could have been learning. The classroom could have been interesting. There could have been arts and things they may relate to and learn from. We looked forward to going to high school and getting in the band. We looked forward to that. We knew we had to keep our grades up to even be a part of that. It's something to look forward to. You've even taken it out of the elementary schools. Where is home economics and wood crafting? Where are those things? Everybody can't go to college. Maybe they can do that and learn a trade. I do community gardening. I try to encourage the young men. They aren't going to get dirty, but they will get me supplies. I do community gardening and give the vegetables out. I try to talk to the young men. You call yourself Blood. I'm Black Panther straight up. I come from that era. We had examples. We had the Nation of Islam. We had Black Panthers. We had Dr. King. We had all these things to encourage us. We had teachers that talked to us, spend time with us, and encouraged us. We don't have that anymore. People are afraid to even approach the young men on the corner. They want somebody to take time with them. They're not that tough. Once they hit St. Joe's cut up and bullets all in their behind they calling for their mom. They're crying. They get down there in the county jail and they're calling for Kenyatta to get them out of there. It's not that serious. We have to prevent the next generation from making these same mistakes. We thank you.

Comm. Cleaves: Mr. McDowell, can you please come and get a flyer? Do you have the flyer? You can just give us a stack and they will pass them over to us. Thank you.

Mr. Anthony Vasquez: Good evening everybody. I don't know how to start what I have on my mind. My mind is winding around. I want to address you guys. Everybody that wakes up every day to do a job, I want to thank you when you do it with honesty and dignity. That's what we wake up to do every day and every morning. I am the chief at Eastside High School. My slogan is the best building in the district. That's right. I love my job. I love what I do for the community here. I love what I do at Eastside. I love what I do for the administrators that I work for. I learned very quickly that my heroes are those guys in the back, the chiefs. My heroes are the guys that do electrical work and carpentry. My building is old. I'm not a tradesman. I didn't know trade work. They taught me everything that I'm learning every day. They joke with me. They do wherever they have to do. We get through the day. They help me out. Today we had to put down a hot water heater down a flight of stairs like this. If you know my building you know what I'm talking about. My boiler room is like this. It weighs 1,000 pounds. Who's going to help us? I don't know who's going to come help us, but we have to get it down there. We have to get the job done. Those guys get the job done every day. I want to thank you guys and I appreciate and love

you. I want to tell you a story. I don't know about privatizing. I don't understand budgeting. I don't know numbers. I don't know these things. I'm trying to learn it. I told Jonathan Davis yesterday we have to go take these classes. We have to learn what we're doing. We have to educate ourselves so we can come back in three years and run for president, sit somewhere, and reach the higher limit. We have to keep climbing. We're not stuck in this chair. We have to keep rising. My boy Danny that spoke earlier put me on the spot. I am Anthony Vasquez. My life outside here is Brazilian Jujitsu. Check YouTube. Look for my channel. Motivational thoughts! My 10-year-old son did all my videos. I have a kid at Eastside High School who's continued to do my videos. Watch him. It's happening in Paterson. It's happening at Eastside High School. We're working here at Eastside. Hopefully you guys will find and watch what we're doing. Please watch what we're doing. Watch what the Eastside High School jujitsu team is doing with the kids in the school. One of my kids told me, "Chief, I'm not going to my graduation because my parents never showed up." I said, "Come join us and see what we can do. I don't know what to tell you about your parents, but if we can help, leave the parents up to me and you train." The parents showed up every day. The parent went to Brooklyn to a tournament to watch him compete. His parent bought him a t-shirt that costs \$40 that this kid wears like a superman suit every day in school. I told him he had to wash the shirt and take it off. I'm sorry. Hold on a minute because I'm edgy. What we do is amazing. You guys have a team of staff back there that I appreciate. I tell my principal at 7:00 to go home. I didn't remember this when I went to high school. I don't remember a principal being there at every event watching these kids. I don't remember this. I went to high school. I wrestled all my life. I have a gift that's in my hand. It's here. I can only give it to you if you come train with me. I can only give it to you if you trust what we do for the district. Those teachers in the building, I didn't understand how those teachers come to work every day. My son tells me every day that Paterson is crazy. He loves it. He comes here every chance he gets. He goes to every tournament. He's the best friend that I have. I want to see him get an honest pure education. Give these kids, us, and the parents the tools we need to keep rising these buildings up. That's all I'm asking.

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

Comm. Irving: I just want to clarify two things on the point of the instructional aides and the maintenance workers. Do you feel comfortable sharing that?

Ms. Shafer: There are two things that I want to just clear up. There were some budget strategies that the Board and the district looked at. One of them was the privatization of instructional assistants and one was the privatization of the custodians. We are not doing either one.

Comm. Irving: Thank you. I wanted to clarify that because that conversation came before the Board in finance in our finance committee. The Board made it very clear that the instructional aides and the janitors are in no way to be touched, especially in this round. Rumors start that way and they circulate, but I want to make sure we clarify that.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2017-2018 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET

Comm. Irving: I want to get back to the conversation that the Board was having with the Business Administrator. Daisy, can you come back so we can finish our discussion together? The young lady in the back had a question. Dr. Evans just stepped away, but I want to make sure your question gets addressed. As soon as he comes back I'll stop. Whatever question you have I'll make sure he addresses it. He just went to the restroom. Are there any questions for the Business Administrator? When Dr. Evans comes back, I want to just take a point of personal privilege to get her question addressed.

Comm. Capers: I'm just trying to put this budget in laymen's terms where everybody can understand it. Take this analogy, for example. It's like living in a mansion, but we can't afford to live in it. Correct? Somehow we have to downgrade and consolidate. The ideas we had to consolidate I don't see anywhere. At School 11 we can move one of the academies in there. We can get rid of some of the leased buildings we own. I don't see it in this prepared budget that we talked about in prior meetings.

Ms. Ayala: The consolidations are taking place more at 90 Delaware. You will not see that at the school because we did not go into the school at this point. We're trying not to impact the schools.

Comm. Capers: Moving one of the academies into School 11?

Ms. Ayala: Yes. They are making that consolidation.

Comm. Capers: When are we going to see that strategy? Where is that strategy? In the last two workshops we said that was going to be available and we haven't heard anything about it.

Comm. Irving: I think that's a question more for the Superintendent or Deputy Superintendent to address about the strategy relative to the consolidation, the moving of School 11, and the Alternative Schools going in there.

Comm. Capers: Are we going to have that strategy tonight?

Ms. Ayala: Dr. Evans should have that strategy.

Comm. Capers: We brought it up at two meetings and we never had the answer.

Ms. Ayala: The property will not be in the budget simply because unless I have a signed contract legally I cannot make that part of the budget. However, it is part of the strategy to close that \$4.9 million that we only have in fund balance.

Comm. Capers: Got it. I'm a pretty big stickler on this and I've been raising the issue since day one since I've been on the Board. It's about the security situation that we have throughout our whole district. This is the big agenda of mine in making sure that fully staffed security is in all of our buildings. Also, I'm waiting for the list of how many schools we have without surveillance. There are no cameras or surveillance in the buildings. Where's the technology? How are we going to increase that? In your prepared budget it says that we're stabilizing it.

Ms. Ayala: That is correct.

Comm. Capers: We just went through an incident today in our district with a whole security issue. I don't want to bring the whole issue up. Everybody knows about it. It's all over the news. We're going through security problems. Why is that not a main focus in this budget?

Ms. Ayala: If that's the main focus, if something goes in or any of these appropriations goes up, something has to go out. If you look at the slide, there are only \$2.3 million left and that's what we call the savings. In order for me to increase any of those lines another line has to decrease. The problem is that we're running out of lines to go into to decrease.

Comm. Capers: We have to make this important about school security. Tomorrow could be something else. The next day could be something else. We don't know. We have to make some hard decisions. I understand that, but this has to be a focus. Our focus is to educate and we have to ensure all of our parents that their children's safety is under control. In this budget, it's not there.

Ms. Ayala: If you go to slide 14, in order to get everything that you talked about we need \$70 million in this budget.

Comm. Capers: I know the unions will be mad at me about this one. Did we think about districtwide furloughs? The city does it. Different cities do it to save money. Did we ever take that into consideration? If we do, let's say for one furlough day, how much would the savings be?

Ms. Ayala: The answer is yes. That was entertained last year and your colleagues up there can tell you that it was not received very well.

Comm. Capers: But we have to make some tough decisions to make up some of the budget costs. How much of a savings would that be for one furlough day?

Ms. Ayala: That would be a couple of million dollars.

Comm. Capers: What's a couple, two million?

Ms. Ayala: I'd have to go and do the math because it varies. Every contract has a different calculation to it.

Comm. Capers: When can we get that?

Ms. Ayala: Tomorrow. Do you want two days or just one?

Comm. Capers: I believe it should be depending on how much it is. If it's a \$6 million savings, we should do two furloughs. If it's \$2 million, we should do one marking period. I don't know. I'm just bringing up an idea on how we can save. Thank you.

Comm. Hodges: I want to be very clear Comm. Capers asked that question.

Comm. Irving: He said furlough and I turned my head.

Comm. Hodges: I want to be very clear on that. It was Comm. Capers, not Comm. Hodges.

Comm. Capers: I'll take it. We just have to make the tough decisions. We don't want to cut teachers, technology, textbooks, and all this other stuff. We just have to come up with ways and somebody is going to get cut.

Ms. Ayala: It was a consideration last year. I had to be escorted by two police officers to my vehicle.

Comm. Capers: I get it.

Comm. Hodges: It's not just an issue for teachers. It has to be administrators too.

Ms. Ayala: It would be everyone. Keep in mind that this is a collective bargaining issue.

Comm. Hodges: Absolutely. I just want to put that on the table. I said that one.

Ms. Ayala: That's why every calculation is different.

Comm. Hodges: Mr. President, I can't ask some of the questions because they were for the Superintendent.

Comm. Irving: You can do the business questions for Daisy and as soon as he gets back we'll go right to the Superintendent.

Comm. Hodges: Okay. Are we cutting special education?

Ms. Ayala: We are not cutting special education and right now in order to submit the budget it was part of the budget. Like I said, that has been taken out and I'm looking for something to replace it with.

Comm. Hodges: Say it again please.

Ms. Ayala: What I had removed is going back in in the new modification of the budget and I would have to find other avenues to reduce that line. Right now, we're looking at 90 Delaware.

Comm. Hodges: We had talked about bringing students back. Dr. Evans had opened up this conversation about we weren't going to be able to do that and there were some savings.

Ms. Ayala: There are two components to that as I met with Ms. Coy. One is we have approximately 20 students graduating from out of district. Then we have about 30 coming back, which they're reviewing, and then again with the education law that's kind of stabilized. Again, that's something that could happen and something that may not. As we go into the budget these are things that on July 1 we need to address and start looking at the budget, making allocations in different areas, and making other changes to accommodate for that not realizing.

Comm. Hodges: Mr. President, did you want to go to Dr. Evans to answer this lady's question?

Comm. Irving: We have to answer it. It was about the instructional aides.

Comm. Hodges: I'll resume. Dr. Evans, does this budget adequately cover the instructional needs of our students? That's considering how we're supposed to be moving forward, how we're supposed to be making achievements on our transitional phase to local control, and trying to make substantial progress on the PARCC to actually allow us to close the gap that we have with the rest of the state. If you have some question marks, it's good to know because then that's an area where the parents can assist us in appealing for more money when we're saying to them that we're not absolutely certain – and I certainly have my doubts – that this budget is going to provide the ability to do all of those things that we're required to do.

Dr. Evans: The complete answer to your question will keep us here all night. I'm being very serious. Let me start by saying that our youngsters present a wide variety of instructional needs. Many of the programs that we have had in the past and that we continue to offer but at significantly reduced levels are designed to address some of those special needs. I'm not talking necessarily about special education. Our youngsters come to us, particularly if they have not been enrolled in a structured pre-k program, behind. Unfortunately, many of them fall further and further behind.

Comm. Hodges: When you say behind, what do you mean? Some of the parents don't know.

Dr. Evans: Academically they are behind. Structured pre-k programs provide a head start. That's a name afforded to some federally funded structured programs as it relates to learning the basics. I'm getting into an area now that probably Ms. Peron could talk about better than I in terms of what kids learn in pre-k. It prepares them for kindergarten and the basics as it relates to counting, numeration, reading, writing, the alphabet and those kinds of things. Pre-k programs provide them for that. Youngsters who enter kindergarten without the benefit of that are behind. They start out behind and unfortunately they have a tendency to fall further and further behind. The youngsters who have the benefit of a pre-k program obviously are able to in many cases keep up, but even many of those youngsters are behind. That is the function of extended learning programs that we have offered. They provide additional opportunities for them to learn how to read and for math. That's what those programs were designed for. Those programs don't exist anymore. The opportunity for youngsters to catch up, if they're going to catch up, is no longer there. That's the biggest difference. Obviously when we increase class sizes for youngsters who are predisposed to at-riskness already, then that's another strike against them. There was some research a decade or two ago that suggested that the optimum class size for youngsters who are primarily economically at-risk shouldn't be any more than 18 or 19 kids. Federal funds usually were used to close that gap. That doesn't exist anymore. Class sizes are on average much larger than that. You see where I'm heading with my answer. The things that support our youngsters and help them to catch up and keep up aren't there. While we may be able to provide, at best, the requirements of thorough and efficient education, it takes a lot more than that for our youngsters to succeed because they come to us so far behind. I would say to you we need a lot more and I've communicated that. We need a lot more to be able to help close the achievement gaps that exist between many of our kids and kids who are reading and numerating on grade level.

Comm. Hodges: I'm particularly concerned about the cuts in the summer school programs and the after-school program, which strike at the heart of what has been our major remediation efforts. If we don't have that and those programs that you just talked about, then I'm at a loss to understand how we're going to close that gap or even do some of the things that we're supposed to do in terms of the transition period for curriculum and instruction. That's what really worries me. That has to be made very clear that we're in danger in those areas.

Dr. Evans: We are. Without additional funds, there's no way to do it. It requires additional funds.

Comm. Hodges: I'm glad you're on record with that.

Ms. Ayala: Can I just answer that? If you go to slide 21, you'll see the school-based budget is \$159,000 this year. It increased to \$860,000. We switched that. The funds went from one place to another.

Comm. Hodges: One of the problems that we've had with after-school programs, at least when we had the SCS process, the schools that needed the most help were the ones that had the least amount of attendance. I don't know how you address that even if you put money there. That's a critical problem, finding a way to get those kids who are struggling the most in those classrooms to receive those services. Something has to be done to fund that effort in addition to providing the additional monies at the school level, which may or may not go to those particular programs, as well know. That's my concern.

Dr. Evans: There is a double whammy here. Many of the after-school programs and summer programs that we've offered were funded by federal dollars as well and federal dollars have also been reduced. In fact, for this year it was \$2 or \$3 million.

Ms. Ayala: That is correct.

Comm. Hodges: How many schools are without nurses?

Dr. Evans: Probably one or two. Most of our schools have a nurse. We have roughly 50 buildings and 48 nurses.

Comm. Hodges: The ones who are without nurses are in close proximity?

Ms. Ayala: They share services.

Comm. Hodges: I'd like to look at where they are in the future.

Ms. Ayala: I did do an analysis on that. In order to give a nurse to each school we need to hire two new nurses. I'm willing to have that information for you, Dr. Hodges.

Comm. Hodges: I appreciate that. Is there anything in the budget to support increased vocational training to compensate for what PCTI is not providing and the needs of our children in that area? As you know, there's a growing cohort of students who are not going to be competitive. You identify them by saying 19 kids are prepared to go to college and so forth. You had a parent come down here tonight to tell you what her child struggles with in college. You had a

professor here at the last meeting who told you what we was experiencing from our children in his classrooms. We're going to need an additional channel through which to direct those children and vocational training for those kids who are not college oriented has to be established in some way. I know you don't have any additional money, but I really want to say on record that you don't have the resources to address that.

Dr. Evans: Actually, you're going to be unpleasantly surprised at my comments. The academy structure that we set up in our high schools is doing great. It's not perfect. There are needs. Don't get me wrong. We don't have everything we want, but it's doing a superior job. I know, even before I mention this particular school as an example, what your response it going to be. Culinary Arts, for example, is the most popular draw in the district. If you look at the youngsters who leave that school, go to college and succeed, that school is known for doing that. Not to mention STEM and a number of others. I think one of the better things that we did was to create the academy structure that we created.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans, with all due respect, I know that the Culinary Arts School has its fine points. However, our students are competing in college for engineering degrees, accounting degrees, and biology and science degrees. We just had new information that robots are taking over. The jobs that you had before you're not going to have anymore. Rather than working on a factory line or whatever, it will be programming the robot to do that job. Your job is to fix the robot or to program it. We have very little in place to address this new era. This is what all the data is showing coming from programming, engineering, on and on. Those are fields that are burgeoning, not culinary arts.

Dr. Evans: I would argue with you on that. Everybody eats.

Comm. Hodges: Everybody eats, but they don't pay very well.

Dr. Evans: I will tell you if you go to the culinary arts program and ask every student you see what they are going to do when they graduate, they will tell you they're going to Johnson and Wales University. Not to be a cook, but to be the head chef, to own the restaurant, to manage the restaurant. That's what we're training. I don't disagree with what you're saying about the technology part because you're right. But don't undersell a program that gets kids in college and they graduate.

Comm. Hodges: Again, I said it has its fine features, but we have 5,000 high school students and they can't all fit in the culinary arts program. There are a number of other students who have to develop some competitive skills and a cohort of them is not going to go to college. We're going to have to do something to compensate for that. What was supposed to happen is they were supposed to go to Tech and get vocational training. That door is slammed by Tech. They're still our students and we have a responsibility to put them in a position where they can earn a living. At some point we're going to have to make a decision. Either we convince Tech to do what their original charter was set up for them to do. Or we're going to have to find a way to provide those services here, even though, quite frankly, I want them all in college. I want them all to graduate from college. I know that's not realistic, particularly where we are now. We have to do something else to provide services for those children. I don't know how we do it within the budget, but that's not there now. Somehow that has to be addressed.

Do the enrollment projections on page 6 include the SPED program that you talked about? Was that afterwards after you pulled the program back?

Ms. Ayala: If you look at the detail you'll see that out-of-district is pretty much flat.

Comm. Hodges: On page 6 you've gone from...

Ms. Ayala: If you go to the advertised budget on page 1, it will show you the out-of-district. It's \$150,000 instead of \$162,000 this year.

Comm. Hodges: Which budget is that?

Ms. Ayala: The advertised budget that you got.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans, the whole Board needs the same budget so that we can communicate together and we don't have that. I just want to put that on the table. The whole Board needs to get the same budget.

Dr. Evans: It's available.

Comm. Hodges: So that we can sit here and talk to each other. Hopefully they'll receive it by tonight or tomorrow at the latest.

Dr. Evans: Our Board members were emailed the user-friendly and if they want the longer version that you have, and I think at least one other Board member has it, we'd be happy to provide it.

Comm. Hodges: I can't follow what some people are saying. I don't have the same thing in front of me. You're saying that does not include the part where you're bringing students back.

Ms. Ayala: It does include the reduction.

Comm. Hodges: It does include that. Okay. What about the PCTI proposed expansion? Is that factored into these projections as well for 2018?

Ms. Ayala: We have an agreement between PCTI and Paterson Public Schools on the number of enrollments.

Comm. Hodges: That's factored into this.

Ms. Ayala: Yes, it is.

Comm. Hodges: Excellent. I'm going to stop there. I have other questions, but I'll let somebody else go.

Comm. Martinez: I don't want to belabor this point or continue to beat on this dead horse, but I do want to say that this whole process has been beyond frustrating and quite frankly embarrassing. For us to sit up here and have to endure this to not have answers to give folks who are asking us simple questions and we have nothing to respond to them and pretty much have to beg for copies. If it's available, why are you not giving it to us? We should not have to come and seek it out. It's not that difficult. If you have a copy of the budget, give us a copy

of the budget. It's available. If you want it, go there. If you need it, just look it up. No. Give it to us. It's that simple. We're going through this whole debacle because we haven't been given the information that we're supposed to be given. It's beyond embarrassing and frustrating that this is where we are right now, having to beg and plead for information that should be given to us and made available readily to folks in the public. I have questions about this year's budget, but that ship has sailed. We're very limited in what we can do, but I'm going to say this for the record. Daisy, you spoke about some of the challenges we're going to be facing in 2018-2019. We're going to focus our attention there. Outside some of the cost drivers that you've outlined, and those are very valid, there's the rising ELL and special education populations. If we don't get out in front of these things now and start planning and budgeting accordingly, this is going to feel like a massage compared to what we're going to be facing in the years to come.

Ms. Ayala: Dr. Irving did say as soon as this budget is over we're going to focus on the subsequent budget.

Comm. Martinez: It's imperative that we do that. We talked about October being that starting date. I think October is a late start. I think as soon as we submit this budget and get past it we need to dive into this immediately to avoid this embarrassment, frustration, and lack of transparency. This whole thing has been a show that is unnecessary. We're held accountable by those folks who voted us here and you tie our hands because we're not given the information we need to share with them. What does that make us look like? What does that make this district look like? We do this every year it seems like. Every year we go through the same exercise in futility. We sit here, we shake our heads, and we go through the motions. Here we are again year after year. For this year coming up I give you my word, this is not going to happen for the next budget. I'm going to be the biggest pain on everyone in this district to make sure that we're planning accordingly for 2018-2019. This is absurd that we have to go through this again year after year.

Comm. Mimms: If we think we have problems now, just wait until we get local control. I just want to put that out there. If we think we have issues with the state being in control, we have some bigger fish to fry when we get local control. We're going to have to find some of the money that's being provided now. We're going to have some bigger issues. I have so many things. I have already slaughtered this horse tonight. My concern is the tax levy, which we've already talked about. I know Ms. Shafer is working on the exhaustive list of recommendations that I've made. This is a cost, so I asked what the costs are. We need music and art in every classroom. I know there are only two nurses, but only two is too many. There should be nurses in every school. Period! We have to identify what those costs are, what it will take for us to do these things, and make sure within this budget we can do it. That's your assignment to do. In technology there is a 19.3% increase according to appropriation. There's a -32.5% in instruction. I need to find out how many teachers that equates to with that reduction. Also, there's a -23.8% for the Adult School. Are we disseminating? Are we shifting this program? I just need to get answers on that for teachers, technology, as well as the Adult School. What is our plan as it relates to those two nurses? Are we going to start with that soon to ensure we have that in place?

Ms. Ayala: When you're talking about instruction in the appropriations line 18, you're talking about 90 Delaware. The teachers are in the school-based. Anything directly in the building of the school is in the school-based budget, which is \$250 million. This is more improvement of instruction and things of that nature and assistants as well. It's not directly into the classroom.

Comm. Mimms: Do we have a number associated with how many teachers will be reduced?

Ms. Ayala: No, we don't have a number on that yet.

Comm. Mimms: Will we have it before next Wednesday?

Ms. Ayala: Yes.

Comm. Mimms: Will it be emailed out? What date? What time? We need to identify what we're going to lose. We need to know what that looks like because that affects our children's education. We can't say it over and over. This is so frustrating. I don't even know what to say. To sit here and go through this, we don't have answers. Then there's an adoption of a budget on Wednesday. It's ridiculous. It absolutely is. I believe I'm a pretty thorough person and I look at everything. But when we don't have it to look at, we're at a disservice to our kids and the community. When people are asking us questions and we say to them we don't have the information, they're looking at us for answers and we cannot respond.

Ms. Ayala: I can offer you the same thing I offered you last year. You and I sat down and went through the budget and saw what shortages there were and why. That level of detail takes a lot of hours and I'm willing to do that.

Comm. Mimms: It was great that you did it last year, but I've been to the district office. I went there yesterday. I sat through that whole process because it wasn't available, but today it was given an hour and a half before the meeting. You can best believe that I'm going to go through it and have questions. Then I'll send them out so all Board members can see them. I'm not talking to one person individually. I'll send them out. I don't know what it's going to mean to that 10% variation because we've already submitted a preliminary budget.

Ms. Ayala: What you submitted was an application.

Comm. Mimms: What does that mean in this process of variation?

Ms. Ayala: That means that you'll get a Board resolution saying we increased these lines, we decreased these lines, and I have to provide a justification why.

Comm. Mimms: How soon will we get that before Wednesday?

Ms. Ayala: I'm working on that. I'm going to try to get that done this weekend.

Comm. Mimms: It can't be the day of adoption. We need to see that before so that we can be able to come on Wednesday. The problem is if you work on it over the weekend there's no other meeting before adoption. We have no leverage and no grounds to fight because it has to be openly publicized. We can have questions and we can sit down and talk, but all of our recommendations

have to be openly publicized and next Wednesday is the day of adoption. That's my problem. We've made recommendations, but they're not all implemented here. We don't know what the dollar amounts are. We don't know what cushion and we need to prioritize things. I was happy to hear that you took some of the programs and you saw they weren't working and reduced them. That is a great start, but we have to do better. We have to ensure that what we're doing away with is something that we really don't need and then what we're keeping, how do we make it more effective and allow our kids to be able to leverage from that? We have a lot of kid in this district. We have a lot of concerns. Paterson is pretty much in the newspaper absolutely every day. We have to fix it at this level educationally. Those are my concerns. I can actually vote tonight because I know my vote will not change by Wednesday.

Comm. Redmon: How did you guys come up with the proposed levy percentage that you presented in this budget?

Ms. Ayala: The budget software has a formula that says this is what you're supposed to do when it comes to tax levy. It's 2% and that's what we took.

Comm. Redmon: You took the 2%, but what's sitting in front of us now is 2.8%. Where did that come from?

Dr. Evans: That came from me. In my comments earlier in the meeting referencing the memorandum the fact that special education is being investigated we had to remove from the reduction line that was in place that really was a cost savings when we compared the cost of providing in-district service versus out-of-district service. We had to remove that. When we remove something we have to replace it with something. That's how it got there.

Comm. Redmon: So the cost savings that we saw last week, which was \$873,000, what's the difference with the 2.8%?

Dr. Evans: It was \$829,000.

Comm. Redmon: So what is the difference now with the 2.8%?

Dr. Evans: An additional .8%. Ms. Ayala can probably tell you the exact figure, but that was in part to help make up that difference that we lost by having to remove special education from the reduction line. I want to qualify that. It's not reducing services. It's simply changing the location of services from an outside contractor or a private vendor that provides services to special education youngsters to creating and doing it ourselves in-house. That's the difference. Services on the IEP wouldn't change. That's against the law and we know better than that. Because it's being investigated there's this thing called hold harmless in some contexts and it's like that. You don't change a program while it's being investigated.

Comm. Redmon: That's basically all the questions I have on the budget at this particular time. I would just like to say that it is disheartening just sitting here. Two weeks ago when I got that financial budget that was on our table for us to vote on, which was in finance, I sat there and saw that it was going to be presented to us. I voted no on that because we hadn't seen any figures. I really thought tonight we were going to present the budget to the public. They could have questions for us. I really thought we were really going to have an open

dialogue. Tonight it was like a waste of time. I sat here and just listened. It's a waste of time. It becomes ridiculous because when you speak to the public they ask you a question and you keep telling them it's a working document. Maybe I just don't know the process and I'm trying to understand the process, but every time I think that I understand it, the process seems to change a little bit. Maybe as a Board we need to sit down and have a financial training on the budget itself so then we know what we're going up against. We can sit here and say this time of the year this is what we're going through and this is what we're going to propose for next year. Then all Commissioners who are sitting at this table don't have one reflection on one end and another reflection on the other. We're all on the same page. I think we should have some type of workshop on the financial process of this district. That was one of my recommendations.

Dr. Evans: We agree wholeheartedly and at the center of that workshop should be training on this little booklet from the New Jersey Department of Education, budget guidelines and electronic data collection manual. It spells out the processes, procedures, and laws as it relates to budget development in a school system. I think this should be a part of that professional development. I think everyone needs to be schooled on that. The President has already indicated and has already asked if we would work with him in developing a process to address the specific concerns that each of you have communicated.

Ms. Ayala: Keep in mind that on March 3 was when we got the state aid. We didn't know which way we were going. March 9 was the date that I had to do the application and submit it to the county for his review and approval. Yes, we have all been on a crunch time. We have gotten the state aid in late February and then we've had more flexible time. From the beginning of getting the state aid moving forward some rumors were we were going to get more and some rumors were that we were going to get less. We weren't sure where we were. We had a small window in order to complete and submit a balanced budget.

Comm. Redmon: My next point is it should be communicated to the Board members. You guys at the district level should say, "We're waiting on state aid, so we have not begun working on the budget process." So when we sit down at the table and we're making suggestions about what's going in the budget process we'll have a clearer understanding of what's going on. You're actually getting numbers based on state aid. If we're not understanding that at that particular time now we can get a clearer picture of where we're going and what's the process that we need to be focusing on. It's not like we're sitting here saying Daisy has the money, she has the budget, she put this process together and now we're going here to talk to her. Then when we get there something has changed. It looks like we're going back and forth with you. It seems like you're doing more work than you need to do. Maybe if we're all on one accord then we wouldn't have to keep going back and forth and you wouldn't have to do a friendly version budget. You could just give us the whole budget at one time so we wouldn't have variations of this budget that are going back and forth. Dr. Hodges had a couple of questions on the budget and I don't have that full budget. I have the friendly version, so I couldn't even follow along with the questions that one of my colleagues here was asking. It's embarrassing because now you're sitting here in front of your audience and peers and we can't answer the same questions. It's not pointing the finger at you or anything like that. I just think that it should be a better process and we would not have to be here at this time each year. The public is not getting frustrated. They would know the process too because then we can relate to them you guys need to come at this specific date, this is when

the state aid was issued, and this is what was going on. It's nothing to you personally. I just think that it was a waste of time sitting here today.

Comm. Mimms: I recommended three years ago and last year again that we need to put together a 3-5 year financial plan with trajectories of what things will look like even if we don't have definitive numbers. I think this is long overdue. We should have done that previously. I'm going to recommend it again. I think we need to, especially as we're transitioning and looking into going into local control. The only thing I want to put a charge out is that I would like to see from you, Daisy, what it looks like when we transition to local control. I don't think people really understand what will happen when we get into local control. We're talking about numbers and budget now. When we get into local control there's not going to be as much to go to the state to say this is the aid that's coming through. We're going to have to find that money locally. Even if it's in that workshop or whatever, I would like this Board to see what that looks like. If we don't know what that looks like, this process is peanuts compared to what it's going to look like with local control. I don't know if anybody understands that, but I think that would be a great in-depth experience for everyone on this Board. We're frustrated, but this is nothing compared to if we were sitting here at a local control level. I would love for the Board to get that information or just an overview so that they can come up to speed so as we move closer to that we're not all in a state of shock.

Comm. Cleaves: In QSAC under governance indicator 3 it states the district's budgeting process and its allocation of resources are aligned with the instructional priorities and student needs to provide for a thorough and efficient education. I don't think that this budget is doing that. Any time that we're taking something away from our children as opposed to giving to them, we are not providing them with the thorough and efficient education that they deserve. I'm like Comm. Mimms. I know what my vote is going to be for this budget today, next Wednesday or the Wednesday after that. I already know what my vote is going to be. Any time that we take anything away from the children, we're not providing for them. That's what we're supposed to be doing, providing for them. I am a little disappointed because I did make the motion last week to remove the 2% levy and now it's resurfaced at 2.8%. I don't even know what to say about that. I understand the explanation that Dr. Evans gave, but it is still not acceptable. Comm. Mimms gave Daisy a charge. I'm giving Dr. Evans a charge and I hope that you are doing this now. The action plan on this budget, could we have this expeditiously because we need to see the actions that are going to go along with this budget, whether we vote it up or down. We need to see that action plan sooner than later. Those are my comments.

Comm. Hodges: Let's not just put the blame on Dr. Evans. We were fighting on this Board about the number of meetings, having meetings, and not having meetings. The Board was doing that. Though I like to beat up Dr. Evans as a hobby of mine, and he blows it off because he usually totally ignores me, it's the truth. We own a substantial portion of this. Some of us were trying to get more meetings around this issue. The problem I have here is we're supposed to have a category-by-category explanation before it gets voted on. We have not had that. The Board should say we want more of a priority here versus there. Or we need to push this or cut that or do less with this. That's absent from this process. That's the reason why we're here. That's supposed to be our input. It's nice to have this description, but our job is to exercise oversight. It's to say our priorities are A and B, but not C and D. That's absent from this process. I can't accept

this discussion tonight as a prelude to my voting. I can't do it because I haven't done anything. First of all, I haven't even read the budget. The Board members don't even know what's in the real budget because they don't have it in front of them. I need to be able to say the Board decided this is a higher priority. Dr. Evans just talked to us about summer school and after school. Maybe we need to put some money back in there and take it away from something else. We don't have a chance to do that here. I don't know what this calendar means since apparently there's no rush between now and May. I don't know whether the Board can sit down to have a meeting to have that substantive discussion about what our job is, to exercise the oversight we're supposed to exercise before we vote on the budget.

Comm. Irving: Let me address that because I was in the back thinking heavily about that. If it's okay with you all, my impression is to call the state tomorrow and let the Commissioner and her designees know. I think uniformly all of us share a huge level of disgust, regret, and disappointment on multiple levels, but I do agree with you. Even last year with the challenges we had in the process, there was a meeting by which the Board looked at all the different recommendations and either voted them up or down. We had a line-by-line item analysis. Again, that's the oversight of this Board. I will ask the Commissioner relative to what flexibility there is and try to communicate that back to you all as soon as possible. Then there might need to be another conversation at the workshop meeting next week about whether there is a hard-pressed deadline to adopt. If at that time the Board feels this is just not a process or a budget we can get behind, the decision will have to be made based on our own experiences and/or we'll have to potentially extend the period to allow for that session for the Board to do that line-by-line analysis. I thought by tonight that would be the conversation. I felt the presentation tonight was good, but I felt like that should have been last week to give a context and talk about the cuts. The budget gets released and the Board has the opportunity tonight to go through the line items. Comm. Capers' point of where schools are moving, while I may support that, the majority of the Board may not. If the Board votes that down, that means it gives the Superintendent time like we did last year. I remember last year at this stage we had that conversation and then the recommendations of the Board were put into the budget to adjust for the final adoption. We are not at that space yet. Dr. Hodges, I will respectfully disagree and say this is on the Superintendent and on his staff. I think that this Board has provided a great deal of oversight. It has informed the Superintendent of its expectation. I believe the administration has not held up to its end of the bargain to adequately and transparently provide the Board with the information needed to truly vet and have a substantive conversation. Not just the Board, but the community at large. I hold firm to the fact that I think that conversation still needs to happen. That's not what's happening here. We're still in the theoretical of what is, what can and should be, and what we want. We really do need to have a conversation about what's in there. We just have not had that conversation yet.

Comm. Hodges: I do want to finish my point. But I would suggest to you, Dr. Irving, a style difference. I wouldn't ask the Commissioner. I would explain to the Commissioner that the Board is in a situation that it requires an additional conversation amongst itself.

Comm. Irving: I yield to that. That makes plenty of sense.

Comm. Hodges: We don't want her permission. We want her to understand...

Comm. Irving: To respect the Board.

Comm. Hodges: That's right, given the current circumstances.

Comm. Irving: I think that is more than fair.

Comm. Hodges: I'm very concerned about the delayed maintenance. In your initial presentation last week, Dr. Evans, you mentioned that in there. There's not a monetary figure, but now it becomes real to us in one of the cost drivers the delayed maintenance to facilities. That number needs to be quantified so that we can take a look at that. That might get a higher priority for the Board once they see that number and what that's actually going to mean long-term for our facilities. We have some very challenging facilities. I'm thinking of School 7, School 3, School 8, School 14, and School 11. I'm concerned about this delayed maintenance, what that actually amounts to, and the cost there.

Dr. Evans: We actually have that information. Mr. Morlino has that information.

Comm. Hodges: I'm hoping we can do that. The state doesn't need this budget before May 4 or whatever it is. I think we should have time to go through that presentation and have a discussion with the public so that they can see what our issues are. As I was talking to Comm. Martinez, they don't know what we're concerned about. When we ask them to go to Trenton and wherever for these hearings, they think consultants or we're top heavy because they don't have the real information. When they go and they present that viewpoint to the Senators and the Assembly people, they're more than happy to hear that. They don't know that we lost 14 administrators last year and we can't afford to match the salaries of some people who are leaving to find higher pay in smaller districts. They don't know that because we don't have those discussions here in front of them. Which is why it's important when they hear this discussion in the budget then they can frame their questions and comments and then go and advocate in our behalf with that information. They don't need a script. They will be better informed as to what they need to ask for because we can't sit here and tell them. We covered this extensively. I'm going to stop. I want to get the questions when we see the budget.

Comm. Irving: Dr. Evans, I just want to recap a lot what has been shared and communicated tonight. There needs to be a PDF version of the budget available.

Comm. Mimms: I remember last year we had some options. It wasn't just one final this is it. We had a few options that we could look at and then we could kind of vote accordingly to that. I think that would be a great addition if we get this extension, versus it just being this. Maybe there are some options like last year we were presented maybe we'll do this. That might be another idea since one of our biggest issues is that tax levy. Maybe there are some options that can be looked at like we did last year in addition to if this extension is granted.

Comm. Castillo: Why has the process changed? I feel like we did so many other things last year and this year we skipped a big portion of it. I know we had options. We voted on schools. We voted on a bunch of different things. Even though we were given different numbers and ideas throughout the last few months, a lot of the process compared to what we got here was completed eliminated from last year.

Dr. Evans: I don't think the process changed. There are a couple of dynamics that impacted on it in a negative way and in one case a positive way. The negative way is that March timeline for initial submission was a week earlier last year.

Ms. Ayala: Keep in mind that the state taxes didn't come in until March 3.

Dr. Evans: Exactly. Things happened this year later than they did in terms of us getting information, us ultimately doing something with it, and having to prepare what we needed to get to the Executive County Superintendent. I remember it was during the first few days of March that it was due last year. This year it was due March 9. Then we didn't get the approval to actually make it public much later than we did last year.

Ms. Ayala: March 23.

Dr. Evans: Those things impacted in a negative way. The positive thing that happened that has already been alluded to is that because of the change in the committee structure there were conversations with many of you very early in this process.

Comm. Irving: ...which is my frustration. I think that after the Board had the exercise in December, after the meeting in January, after the finance committee gave its suggestions and recommendations, part of that oversight in committee talked about the removal of the tax levy. I felt and still feel and believe that the budget should be prepared. By this time a decision should have been made and there should be a solid document that is being presented to the Board. I agree with you. I felt the process in committee made sense, but it only made sense if the work that the Board was doing in committee was going to be translated into a final product that was prepared in a timely fashion. Dr. Evans, in all fairness our expectation was that we wanted to start early. We wanted to vet it in committee so that we wouldn't find ourselves here. Nonetheless, we still find ourselves here. Personally it is just frustrating to sit here after months of asking my colleagues to take time out of their schedules to have special meetings and to have two or three meetings a month to help mitigate an issue that we believe was mitigated. There have been surprises along the way, but I truly believe that we had contingency plans in place to be able to present to the Board a series of recommendations, as Comm. Mimms had indicated, to either support or not support to balance the budget and to have strategies to balance the budget. Again, I yield to the fact that in the last week or two there have been some hiccups along the way. But those hiccups have caused major problems for where we are. It's embarrassing. I'm just really annoyed and baffled by where we are right now because I really feel like we shouldn't be here. Given the work that I know has been done behind the scenes, we should not be in this position right now. I'm just speaking very frankly and transparently. I think we shouldn't be here and I don't know how the heck we're going to move forward. I know the expectation is we should. I will certainly communicate to the Commissioner the expressed interest of the Board to have an additional window to have another hearing to discuss the reduction strategies in concert with the actual budget line items themselves. I think, Daisy, if we're able to do that it's the next part.

Ms. Ayala: That is correct. The next window which we already have a document that we're working on is to do the reallocation of funds. Then we call the County

Superintendent and ask him to open the system. We have one day in which to do it and make sure that the budget is balanced. Then we can give you that.

Comm. Hodges: No fault to you, but I can't possibly live with that. I simply cannot live with that. There are 416 pages. I have to run through that and I need a discussion with you and my fellow Board members to hash out what we need to see differently in the budget before we even get to the point where we can decide what the changes are going to be. That's not going to occur between now and next week. It won't be enough time. I simply cannot live with that whatsoever. Some of them don't even have the real budget yet. There are too many problems with that to be realistic. Additionally, I think we need to have either a policy or bylaws changed. This Board should not vote on anything that's put on the table unless they have had a chance to read it ahead of time. That should be a practice because nobody should be able to give us anything with any expectation that we're going to vote on it unless there are extraordinary circumstances that will require that. That goes on frequently and it has got to stop. Comm. Irving, I don't know about anybody else, but I can't live with that. I need to hear what your arguments are. I need you to hear mine. I need to see what the line items are, where they are, what the priorities are. I can't do that before a budget hearing when I'm supposed to vote the same night. I can't do that. There needs to be back and forth. There needs to be give and take. We have to do all of that before we vote on the budget.

Comm. Irving: As Dr. Evans has indicated, I'm going to call you in the morning so you and I can have a conversation about processing all of this and where we are. I'm also going to reach out to the Commissioner's office and hopefully by tomorrow I'll have a memo to the Board through the Board secretary relative to the next step and where we are. Daisy, I have to agree with Dr. Hodges. I think before you can do that, the Board requires and needs the opportunity to go through the line items in their present form relative to the balancing of the budget reduction strategies that have been asked of staff even as early as today.

Ms. Ayala: It is on the agenda for tomorrow night's finance committee.

Comm. Irving: Right. Again, I appreciate that and we're going to talk in finance extensively about this process, but even after finance gets to weigh in, the entire Board has to weigh in on that process. That needs to happen prior to whatever updates that you will put into the system and submit to Bob Davis. I just think we need to figure out, if the Commissioner will grant us an extension, when that next meeting will be of the Board to discuss the next step, which are the reduction strategies relative to the line items and the budget. The Board will make its voice known relative to supporting or not supporting those specific strategies. I'm also going to get a clarification of where we are relative to who has authority in what.

Comm. Hodges: Those questions that I asked earlier about...

Comm. Irving: Legal should be working on getting that opinion. That needs to be the next phase of where we're going and then the final adoption makes sense, if that works with everyone here. I thank you all for being team players because it's 10:20 and we've been at this since 6:30. It looks like we're probably going to be at this at least two or three more times before the season is over. Let's buckle in.

Comm. Mimms: I want to ensure that even with the extension that our considerations will be taken in. If it's not, there's no need to call the Commissioner. If what we're recommending is not going to be considered, there's absolutely no need for an extension. That's something that we have to identify with the recommendations and all the things we're looking to do and to ensure that this budget represents a quality education for our kids. If that's not the case, then what good is it to extend meetings if that's not going to happen? We need to identify that because calling the Commissioner and making requests is null and void. We have to identify will our requests be made known. We came and made recommendations and still we're here at this point. Extending it, what will that do? The preliminary budget was submitted and we made recommendations. At this point before calling or anything I think tonight we need to hear that if we call, whatever these recommendations may be, they will be heard. They may not all be heard, but we will take them into account. If that's not going to happen, then we might as well just vote no next week for the budget. It just doesn't make sense.

Comm. Irving: I will have that conversation with the Superintendent. He and I will talk tomorrow morning and I'll get back to all you and let you know what the conversation entailed. I tend to agree with you.

Comm. Cleaves: My comments have nothing to do with the budget. I just want to say as we close out this month on Friday this was Women's History Month. I'd like to say to every woman in this room that I appreciate you. I appreciate your work. Ms. Grant, your crew over there, the women that come to this meeting, Cheryl and Tineish. I appreciate Eileen, Comm. Castillo, Comm. Mimms, and Comm. Redmon. I appreciate the hard work that you do as women on this Board and for this district. I don't know if anyone has acknowledged you this month because this is Women's History Month, but I am here to say thank you to all of you. To all of the women in this room I say thank you for all that you do. Things don't happen if we don't make them happen.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 p.m.