

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

April 5, 2016 – 6:43 p.m.  
John F. Kennedy High School

Presiding: Comm. Chrystal Cleaves, Vice President

Present:

Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent  
Ms. Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent  
Lisa Pollak, Esq., General Counsel

\*Comm. Oshin Castillo  
Comm. Jonathan Hodges  
Comm. Errol Kerr

Comm. Nakima Redmon  
Comm. Kenneth Simmons

Absent:

Comm. Christopher Irving, President  
Comm. Lilisa Mimms  
Comm. Flavio Rivera

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

Comm. Simmons read the Open Public Meetings Act:

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

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

**Special Meeting  
April 5, 2016 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.

**DISCUSSION ON THE 2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR BUDGET**

Comm. Cleaves: The purpose of this meeting tonight is to have our second-to-last discussion regarding the 2016-2017 school year budget. This is our opportunity to give whatever final recommendations we have for the budget. We've had numerous meetings and joint meetings with the City Council. We've had one-on-one meetings

with the BA. Now this is our opportunity to give recommendations. This is not a meeting for us to hash out the budget line by line again. We've done that numerous times. It is time for us to make recommendations to the Superintendent so that we can get the best out of this meeting and be prepared for our final budget meeting tomorrow. With that being said, Dr. Evans, is there anything that you would like to say first?

Dr. Evans: Madame President, I think you summarized it very well and gave the charge very well. I know Ms. Ayala has had one-on-one meetings with each Board member and individual members from the community have come in beyond the Board and have asked questions as well. We've continued to take a look and refine what we have even better and continue to look at ways of streamlining or reducing the budget in the effort to try to minimize the impact on instruction. I know a big issue of concern of the public is also taxes and we've continued to look at ways of reducing that as well. However, the biggest way of doing that is a way that is problematic for us as well, and that's impact more on staff, particularly school level staff. That was a commitment that we made to not impact on them. We're here to listen and take into consideration your recommendations and come back tomorrow night with some decision around what you've recommended to us with the budget in a form that can be submitted, depending on the outcome of that meeting.

Comm. Cleaves: We'll jump right into our recommendations.

Comm. Hodges: I want to put a motion on the floor. The motion is it will be the position of this Board that we do not close any schools that we own.

Comm. Cleaves: Is this coming as a recommendation?

Comm. Hodges: No, as a motion. A recommendation can be changed by the Superintendent. This is the position of the Board.

**It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. Simmons that the Board does not support the closing of any schools owned by the Paterson Public School District.**

Comm. Hodges: This will create a framework in which the budget can then be discussed. It's not part of the budget because part of the budget would be under the control of the Superintendent of Schools. This is a position that the Board is taking framing in general what should happen given our situation. I'll entertain any questions that need to be asked.

Comm. Redmon: I wanted to know what he's saying as far as closing schools. It was suggested in our budget that we condense some programs not actually closing the facility. I just wanted to make sure that was one of the recommendations, not to close the school itself but the facility.

Comm. Hodges: At this particular point I'm focusing on the school. We'll get to the programs at another time because that's going to involve having the programs brought before the Board to have them discussed, which hasn't happened yet.

Dr. Evans: I understand Dr. Hodges' concern and it is relating to a building that we have. In some of the material that has been published it said closed. The intent is not to literally close the building but to move the program that was there and then relocate other programs. In fact, there has been one request even before we got to that point to relocate one of our programs more centrally from our building in 90 Delaware closer to

downtown to make it more accessible to our parents. In that context, looking at programs such as that to house in that building instead of closing the building should have been the reference that we've used from the very beginning.

Comm. Cleaves: So if we move the program out of the building we will still have control of that building. We'll move another program into that building but we'll be moving the students out of that building.

Comm. Simmons: When we're saying moving another program, we're saying another district program.

Dr. Evans: That's correct.

Comm. Redmon: The reason I'm saying something is because we've noticed that we have gotten a memo regarding a charter school using that address. That is out of the district. It's not a district program.

Dr. Evans: That's correct.

Comm. Hodges: That's extremely important. One of the reasons I'm putting that on the table is because a charter school has listed one of our buildings that we've been discussing as its proposed address for the coming year. In its application to become a charter, it's listed one of our buildings, one of the very buildings that we were discussing closing. Let me just clarify this further. I'm not talking about schools that are in substandard facilities like that church. I'm talking about school buildings.

Comm. Redmon: We have two.

Comm. Hodges: It's school buildings, as opposed to schools that are located in a building that we don't own.

Comm. Redmon: I know St. Mary's was one of the schools that were discussed and I really don't have a problem with that facility because it needs to be updated. Our students need to be removed out of that school. I know we also discussed the Boys Academy for them to be moved out of the school they're currently in because that building is substandard, too. I just wanted to make sure those are the two programs we were talking about.

Comm. Hodges: I wasn't talking about those right now.

Comm. Redmon: You're talking about just the facilities right now.

Comm. Hodges: Yes. We own the facility but it's not a school. It's a substandard site.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more discussion on this motion?

**On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

Comm. Hodges: I recommend that the all boys' school be moved to School 16 because that will enable us to avail those students of the latest technological advances in this district and give them a site that they deserve, which has not been available to them in their current facility, thereby making that site available for sale.

Comm. Kerr: Where are they presently located, St. Theresa's?

Comm. Hodges: It's a church on Smith Street, St. Paul's.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more recommendations, Commissioners?

Comm. Simmons: As I've stated before, in terms of athletics, I am for the consolidation of the program because a true consolidation of the program actually expands the program. But I am actually against having this conversation around consolidation during the budget cycle. I do understand that the recommended cut would just do away with the program at one entire school. I would like to see that conversation take place with a lot more community involvement and bringing more people to the table. In my opinion it is a conversation that should take place over the course of a year or longer so that we ensure that we are doing the right thing by our children and truly consolidating but also expanding. I wanted to also go on record and say that we'd be surprised at the number of coaches and schools outside of this district that do not want to see that happen. If it doesn't happen, they continue to pick our children. I've had to chase high school coaches away from little league games that weren't coaches from either of our schools. I just want the administration to take that into consideration and let's take a long hard look at the right way to do that consolidation.

Comm. Cleaves: To add to what Comm. Simmons said, I think also when you do this consolidation of the athletic program it's going to cost us money to do this consolidation, as opposed to us saving money. We're at a point here in the budget where we're strapped for cash and I think when you consider the consolidation of the athletic programs we're going to have to be in a position to expend more money to make sure that the program is going to run the way that it should run effectively for our athletes.

Comm. Kerr: Let me be upfront that I'm not a proponent of the consolidation of the program. I've always maintained that it is a very shortsighted consideration and we should never have given it any real credence in the first place. However, the administration believes that by consolidating the program, according to the figures that we have received, they will save \$700,000. I believe that \$700,000 has been a part of the calculations of the district already. I believe, as Comm. Simmons mentioned, that we should get the full thought of the district before we do anything. That would mean that we need to go back out there and have a discussion. The problem I have now is this is part of the calculation in this budget. What do you do with that? If we postpone that decision, what do we do to fill that \$700,000 hole that it's going to create? That's a decision for the administration. Let me be upfront that I will fight as hard as I can not to see that happen because I'm not a proponent of it. I just need to know how you're going to fill that \$700,000 hole if we do not execute.

Comm. Hodges: I've been rather firm and I've tried to help my younger colleague down there understand just how shortsighted that is given the fact that, as he acknowledges, there will be an increase in costs and a significant loss of opportunities for our students to participate in sports, along with the fact that we're taking away other opportunities for self-expression with music, art, and everything else. These students are losing opportunity after opportunity. I do understand why he as a former coach may have that understanding that they want to consolidate schools. However, I need him to post his address online so people can come talk to him about that. But the real issue is that we should not have this discussion in a budget time when we're so financially strapped. Number two, it will cost us more money to start a new program. It will not save us money, which is the intent of the issue. Number three, I just think that our kids deserve what's left of an opportunity to express themselves.

\*Comm. Castillo enters the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Comm. Cleaves: Thank you. Is there any more discussion on this recommendation? Are there any further recommendations?

Comm. Castillo: I'm sorry. I just apologize for being late because I came out of work. If you don't mind just telling me what the recommendation was.

Comm. Cleaves: We have two recommendations thus far. The first recommendation is to move the all boys' school into School 16 thus making this site available for sale. The second recommendation is that Comm. Simmons is for the consolidation of the athletic program. However, it should not be taking place now during budget season. There are further discussions that need to be had and hashed out regarding the consolidation of this program. Now the floor is still open for further recommendations if Commissioners have them.

Comm. Hodges: I recommend that we not entertain any tax increase as part of this budget. I know that Mr. Kerr wants to vigorously disagree with that position, but I'm going to try to talk some sense into him.

Comm. Cleaves: Any discussion on this recommendation not to entertain any tax increase?

Comm. Kerr: Yes. For the past seven years we have all sat here talking about the fact that our district has been underfunded by the state. From the last information that I received in terms of the numbers I think it was said that we have been underfunded to the tune of over \$240 million. If we had half of that \$242 million we would not be in the position that we are in today. For those of us who have been following the city government and the School Board would realize that in the past three to four years the citizens of Paterson have been taxed over 30%. Last month a further 5.8% was levied on the tax paying public of Paterson. We have reached a point where we cannot afford to pay any additional taxes. If you look at the type of education that children of Paterson are getting it's far substandard to places like Hawthorne, Elmwood Park, and the more affluent communities that surround us. I look at the fact that this year, based on the present budget, next year we will literally start at point zero. We will not have any money to start our funding for the next year's budget. There is no reserve going forward. What we're doing this year is literally eliminating because of the short funding that we've been getting. We have literally eliminated courtesy busing in our district. We have some of the oldest buildings in the state. In some of these buildings from time to time there are emergencies that we have to deal with. Our deductible is about half a million dollars. We do not have that half million just in case the roof caves in or anything happens to some of these buildings. We just don't have that money. We've been talking to the PEA concerning the compound drugs. We started out at something like \$10,000 and continuing in the same trajectory we will be looking at \$30 million next year. Where's the money going to come from? We all got the report that in the past month or so there were three charter applications that were presented to us. For just the initial outlay of those three charters, not to talk about when you start adding grades, we might be looking at between \$12 and \$15 million.

Comm. Hodges: Off the top.

Comm. Kerr: Right. I was also informed that PCTI is expanding their seating capacity to about a thousand. Where do you think those students are going to come from to fill those seats? It's going to come from Paterson. The great majority of those seats will

be filled by students from Paterson. Where will that money come from? We're not only faced with a problem this year. We are faced with a problem going forward and therefore that's the reason we need to not talk about a \$5 million tax levy on the people of Paterson. If you put a \$5 million tax levy this year, what will you do for next year and the year after that and the year after that? The problem is we need to make sure that the state understands our predicament. This is something that needs to be fixed at the state level and not just taxing the people of Paterson. The issue is I cannot support a \$5 million tax burden on the people of Paterson when the State Department is not fulfilling their obligation to this district. I think we need to stand our ground and say it's time you do what you're supposed to do by law, fully fund the district so our kids can get a thorough and efficient education.

Comm. Redmon: I also agree with Mr. Kerr. At this time, I know that we're on a fiscal cliff regarding our budget, but I do not support the tax levy of \$5 million for the taxpayers of the City of Paterson. I just think at this time we can't afford it as a community. I just don't agree with that. I think we need to go back to the table, as Mr. Kerr said, and make sure that the state funds us the way that they're supposed to. I will have recommendations from any of the parents that are sitting out here that will give us some of the ideas that we can go with to the state and recommend that they start fully funding us properly like we're entitled to by law.

Comm. Simmons: Just to piggyback on what both Commissioners said, in an ideal situation I can see cutting the budget, but we're not in an ideal situation. I know that there has been a lot of talk about consultants and we really haven't talked about the academic impact on our students. I know my colleagues have heard it and there's this thought that the district is top-heavy and we have consultants that aren't needed. Although we haven't talked about the academic impact, some of those coaches and consultants provide professional development for our principals and teachers. So if you take that away there is an academic impact. It's something that we're not talking about, but it's something that we can't afford to lose realistically. Secondly, with regard to assessment, and I know some people will probably flip out when I say this, if we use the STAR assessment I'm not a proponent of the way that we were using the STAR assessment. Since the time that we have gotten it, we have also purchased the intervention piece. So the STAR assessment is supposed to tell a teacher where a student is and the intervention piece helps to get the student where they should be. We have to think about all of those things. We're just in the situation where realistically we can't afford to cut. I know that people have asked about cost benefit analysis for programs and ideally you would ask for that in the beginning of a program before it starts. So to ask for it after, I'm not sure that you can get that. But there is a risk and the risk is if you take away needed programs we don't produce the most productive student. That ultimately takes away from the tax base. All of these things go hand in hand so we have to be careful about what we cut. When we say we want to cut programs we have to realistically take a hard look at whether or not those programs have been successful. Last year we had the opportunity to put a tool in place to measure, what Dr. Hodges has been asking for since I've been a member of this Board, the compendium, and put all of those programs in a database. The Board voted it down. So you have to be careful on the things that you do and pay attention to the things that you do because they have a long-term effect. We wouldn't be asking for cost benefit analysis if we hadn't voted down the tool that could put those programs into a database so that we can see whether or not they're successful. Thank you.

Comm. Cleaves: Are we still on the tax recommendation? I just want to make sure that we're staying on target.

Comm. Hodges: I want to praise the enlightenment of Comm. Simmons.

Comm. Cleaves: We're smarter than you give us credit for. I just want to let you know.

Comm. Hodges: He's agreeing with me. When you frame the overall situation, and Mr. Kerr gave a reasonable synopsis, we're cutting nurses and I've already talked about the danger that presents. I would never have gone public with that kind of concern had I not been very serious about having that corrected and adjusted. The liability is substantial given the health concerns in this community. The SACs we've cut. The social work, when you're talking about dealing with children and making them more effective students. When you look at our population and understand the behavioral challenges that our students have, when you cut social work you're undermining the ability to help those children to function in the classroom, the very thing that we're trying to do. I haven't gotten to the whole academic side of it. I haven't even touched that. Mr. Kerr, Ms. Castillo, and I were at our curriculum meeting last night and we looked at some of the daunting challenges ahead of us in terms of providing a response to the PARCC testing. When I say response I mean we have to be able to put curriculum in place that addresses the low test scores we saw. Even though they're meant to be baselines they're still a low baseline. We're talking about over 300 more curricula that have to be written. It's 421 all total, but we have over 300 more that has to be written. You're laying off 83 people in your central office staff, some of those who are involved in that work. You're laying off other personnel. You're not giving stipends to teachers. Who's going to write this material? Who's going to put together this response? Who's going to do it in a timely fashion? The thought that we can accept taxes and budget cuts is absurd. If you say to the state that you're willing to do it this year then you've established a pattern and a precedent. Why wouldn't they come back and ask you to do more? You're at the bone. You cannot undermine your educational infrastructure. You simply cannot do that given the fact that we're already way behind everyone else in this state, substantially behind. We were supposed to be using the money that the Supreme Court says we were entitled to in order to catch up. That's why the money is here in the first place. Let me just speak to taxes in particular. I heard a lot of people complaining you get so much money now. 72% of the budget is personnel. 84% of all teachers in this district don't live in Paterson, so all those salaries and all that money leaves Paterson and does not circulate in this city. So we're not getting that money. Paterson isn't getting that money. The way things are set up, the money leaves our city and our community and goes everywhere else and they benefit. They pay for their taxes. They pay for their amenities in their home towns using the salaries that we pay them, not you. People don't understand that. They don't understand that at all. The contractors have to be state contractors and state approved. Those people don't live in Paterson and often their bills are larger than our local contractors by two to three times larger. I'm simply saying to you when you look at the overall scope here we're not getting that much money. The money is leaving our city and circulating every place else, so to come back now when you already know that we're a distressed city and you want to tax us, absolutely not. You owe us \$242 million right now. Pay it and we wouldn't be having any of this discussion. Thank you.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more recommendations?

Comm. Castillo: The only thing I would have to do is agree with Comm. Simmons. Going over the budget I think just cutting makes it impossible. I think we haven't looked at all the benefits or the needs of some of these contracts or outside services that we have and how that would impact our students and sitting down and going through the actual list and seeing exactly what is the service that they're providing. Then you would see a bigger impact on it and what it would be without them. I think just cutting the

budget is an impossible task. Even though a tax levy is hard on the Paterson citizens, just cutting it is not going to work.

Comm. Kerr: I must let you know that I did sit down with the BA and we did a very exhaustive search. I did ask her let me see the list of all your consultants. This is something I've heard just about everywhere - on the street, in this building, and everywhere - that there were just too many consultants here. When I went through that list and I looked at what we're facing, I did ask the BA to further get me some information regarding a couple of the consultants. Based on what I was given, there is nothing there. I went there and sat down because I want to make sure that this is not second hand information, but this is real so I can speak to it with conviction. That's the reason why I went there. There was nothing there. I just want to let folks understand this is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we're living in and we have over 50 schools. I checked for technology. There are only 26 of our schools that have technology. We always believe that music and the arts are not that important. We just have to get to the basics, language arts, math, and science. But music and art opens up a different world to kids and some kids will find it easier to learn through music and the arts. Math and language arts are very dry subjects and you have to have that discipline in order to get ahead. Some kids find it very difficult. In our district there are some 25 schools with music. Our district is burdened with something called drugs and we're a depressed community because of some of these things. We should not be a district that just reacts to it. We should have preventative maintenance to ward or protect us against some of these things. There were only nine schools that I checked off that had Substance Abuse Counselors, just nine. If my count is wrong you may want to add two more to it and make it 11 if you have to, but that's how bad it is. You look at librarians and the media and kids need somebody who can show them how to do research work and what footnoting is and all that kind of stuff. 13 of our schools have that available for our children and you're cutting \$38 million out of our budget and then you're taxing the residents of Paterson another \$5 million. When you look at the budget per school you see how deficient it is. I understand the Superintendent. He can't say the things that need to be said. But do you know what? I live here. I pay taxes here. I have my grandkids here. So I'm at liberty to talk about the deficiencies of the system. We have a tendency to say you have \$560 million. But as Comm. Hodges just told you, 72% of that is fixed in salaries. We have to send our kids out to PCTI. They get \$20 million. To maintain some of these old buildings over 100 years we're looking at another \$40 million. When you add these things up they do add up very quickly and they add up to a sizable amount. The only thing I need to ask Dr. Evans about tonight is that some of our schools have two vice principals. I just need some clarification on those vice principals. You have 12 of our schools with two vice principals. I just need to know the necessity of all of the schools that carry two vice principals, and whether or not some of those could be broken down and sorted out. I don't know how much savings we can get there, but you will have to determine that.

Comm. Cleaves: You want that as a recommendation?

Comm. Kerr: Yes.

Comm. Cleaves: Out of all that you said, the recommendation is for him to...

Comm. Kerr: Don't knock what I said. I have to lay the ground clearly.

Comm. Cleaves: That's what I was trying to make clear. Your recommendation is you want him to look into the double vice principals at some of the schools?



Comm. Kerr: Yes, I need that to be looked into.

Comm. Cleaves: Okay.

Comm. Kerr: I made sure that I prefaced all of that with something else.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more recommendations from the Commissioners?

Comm. Hodges: We are laying off nurses, central office staff. You heard Comm. Kerr talk about looking at principals. Security doesn't seem to have come under commensurate scrutiny. I think that we all have to feel some pain. I'm not one who's interested in putting our children at risk. However, if cutting is going to take place, I'd much rather have the substitutes in place as opposed to a security person. I'm not talking about our security, but retired police officers or whoever who are already getting a very nice pension. They're entitled to it and they should enjoy it, but we need the money for our kids. That's one area. I'm not going to consider cutting anything else because I'm not going to vote for cuts. I'm not entertaining cuts because we can't afford it. I'm looking at students who can't read. Mr. Kerr has talked about the lack of librarians, when reading is a challenge. Your children can't write their names. They can't write their names in cursive. They can't sign a check. They can't sign a mortgage. They can't open a bank account. We don't teach financial literacy. The adults have to get their fingerprints stamped at the end of checks to cash checks in their own city. This is disgraceful. Part of the function of the school is to build a better life for our kids and for this community and we're not doing that. So when we come and we cut these functions that are so crucial to the existence of this city, it's damaging. More money has to be devoted to the curriculum. I'm not talking about cuts. More money needs to be devoted to curriculum. You have to do something to make sure that our kids learn to read. The parents need to make sure that they read well, which means in your homes you need to make sure that they're reading on a regular basis. We'll teach them how to read, but you need to teach them how to read well. We have got to make sure – and Dr. Evans, you're an educator so I don't have to tell you this – that by the third grade they're able to read. Quite frankly, the third grade is too late. It is way too late. If at the end of two years of preschool or even preschool and two years of kindergarten if 70% of our students aren't reading then we need to close our doors and you should be outraged. More money has to be channeled into figuring out why we're not reading well. Is it the mechanics? There are several components to the mechanics? What part? Are there one or two parts? There are five different parts to the mechanics. Which particular part? We don't look at that right now. We don't check that. We have no way of testing any of it. But if your kids still can't read, then that's the foundation educationally that we're trying to build on. If we can't put that foundation in place we're not going anywhere. Money has to be devoted to that. When we're talking about hands-on experiences for our students we need to expand our curriculum to coding, pre-engineering programs so that our kids cannot learn to be engineers, but learn to solve problems like engineers do. These are important pieces that you have to build in and you can't wait until they're in high school to put them in place. They have to go earlier. That takes money. It takes forethought. When you have 15% of students who pass the end of year biology test then it is clear that what we're doing in science is not nearly enough. We have to find ways to infuse science and get kids engaged, to develop and inspire them to explore what's available in science. We're not doing it. That may mean pieces of equipment. That may mean scientific experiments. That many mean a whole range of approaches that we're not currently employing. They all cost money. All of those things have to be put on the table and you can't do that when you're cutting. That's what I need to see in the budget. I need to see those areas

addressed. There's more, but I'm going to stop right there because I'm sure other people have things to say.

Comm. Redmon: I just wanted to add to what Dr. Hodges was saying. I think that when it comes to security the School Board should look more in-depth into our shared service agreement with the city. I think that can be addressed and that can be some ways we can save some money. One of my recommendations is that we explore our shared service agreement with the city for security purposes.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more recommendations?

Comm. Hodges: Comm. Kerr just reminded me last night we learned of the dental coordinator who's at HARP. The dental coordinator runs the dental program at HARP. There is some concern that that coordinator will lose her job. Apparently she writes grants, runs the program, coordinates the activities with the medical center, and provides the entire dental program at HARP, which is extremely important. We could lose that individual under these cuts. That's far too important. You're stripping away one of the important components of that program on the altar of budget cuts. The recommendation is obvious. We can't do that.

Comm. Castillo: Without her there is no dental program. She is the only one that teaches it. If I understand, they also provide services for all students from k-12 free for the entire city and the enrollment of people that attend has gone up from a few to almost 1,000 from January until now.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more recommendations?

Comm. Simmons: I think we should give the public an opportunity to speak.

Comm. Hodges: Before we close it out they might have something they might want to amplify on. The community might have some concerns.

Comm. Cleaves: The Commissioners will finish with their recommendations and then we'll move into public comments. I'm not going to play ping-pong back and forth. You guys are doing great. If you have more recommendations, let's get them out so that the audience can hear them because a lot of times the audience will leave after they make their comments. At least they get to hear your recommendations.

Comm. Hodges: We'll do that. I just don't want the meeting to adjourn if they present something which causes us to think of something else and then we don't have a chance to add that on. That's all I'm saying.

Comm. Cleaves: Okay, but I want you to get all of your recommendations out so that they can hear them. A lot of times, especially if they have smaller children, they usually leave after their statement. I want them to hear the recommendations coming from the Board.

Comm. Hodges: There are two more areas that need to be enhanced. Obviously we'll start with the attendance. Our students can't learn if they're not here and we've cut all our attendance officers with a promise that there was going to be some change in that program. I'm not quite sure that change has happened yet. I used to attend the court hearings. I'm going to go back to take a look at what they are, but we still have kids who are missing 50 days of school and more. What happens to those students? This brings in the area of guidance. What happens to those students and how do those

students compensate for that loss of time? We can't cut guidance counselors. That's the area. You have to do something about enhancing the attendance department. Lastly, we need a working compendium so that we can have clear information in front of us so that we can intelligently discuss these issues and looking at programs, the benefits, and who's using the program. We can then ask better questions as to why we have the programs in place, who is benefitting, and what the cost benefits are. We can't do that now because we just have this snapshot of what's in place.

Comm. Kerr: I have a recommendation about the legal department. From the numbers that have been presented it seems like we're moving in the direction of outsourcing our legal services and abolishing our in-house counsel. My recommendation is that we look at the figures and before we make a move to present to the Board – I'm going to use Comm. Mimms' argument – a cost benefit analysis before we make a definitive decision to where we're going regarding the legal department. I need that because I can remember the days when our legal fees were just a burden to us. We did not know where to go. We made a decision to have our own in-house counsel and we saw from that a tremendous savings. Because of that I just cannot see now the need with all of the issues we have to outsource our complete legal needs. It would be catastrophic to this district. I think we need to revisit the issue and do our analysis of it before we make any decision regarding it.

Comm. Hodges: My recommendation is that we don't do it. Period! Quite frankly, I hate to beat a dead horse, but I was here through all of that as was the Deputy Superintendent. She knows very well the battles we had and the cost was astronomical. This was the measure that we put in place to bring it better in line, and more importantly, under our control. You can't control if somebody else is doing it. You can control it when it's in-house. When it's out of the house, you can't control it. You can't tell someone from School 15 who needs a legal opinion we went over our limit and you can't have that opinion. You can't go to court but because the clock just ran out you can't prosecute that case because we've reached our cap. We can't do that. We cannot have people need legal advice and we can't give it to them because we can't afford to pay for it. That was the problem before. You can't control the cost when it's in somebody else's hands. Period!

Comm. Kerr: I just want to add this caveat to the discussion. This is outside of the realm of personnel. It has nothing to do with personnel. That's not my consideration. It never is and it never will be. My consideration is the need to protect this district and to save the district unnecessary expenditures. I'm sure that's Comm. Hodges' basis of argument.

Comm. Hodges: Absolutely.

Comm. Simmons: I don't want to beat a dead horse, but I have to echo the sentiments of both Comm. Hodges and Comm. Kerr. I have chaired the legal committee pretty much since I've been on this Board and I have watched the legal costs go down since we've had in-house council. I would recommend that if there is a need to restructure the legal department that we do that. But we have to have someone on site to be able to answer questions. I know particularly with special education that there are questions that are asked daily and we need our people to be able to walk down the hall to ask those questions and get those answers. If you just look at our Board resolutions, all of those things have to be signed off on by legal. We need in-house council. Again, if there's a need to restructure it, then I say we do that.

Comm. Castillo: I think we're going on and on. For the legal department, I think there is a way to restore it and fix it in a way that we can include more things or get more out of it and still have in-house council at all times and still have savings to the district. I think right now if we do a cost benefit analysis we're going to end up with the same position. I think we're spending a little bit more than what we need and a little bit more than what we're getting. I think there's a way that we can restore that idea so we can still get better services, some savings to the district, and still have the legal counsel. I think it can all be managed and done very easily.

Comm. Cleaves: Any more recommendations?

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**It was moved by Comm. Simmons, 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. Cleaves: We welcome you all to take this time to express to us your concerns, opinions, and thoughts. Just be mindful that you have three minutes to speak per person. The buzzer will ring when it is time for you to conclude your comments.

Ms. Patricia McNeil: Patricia McNeil, Paterson, New Jersey. \$242 million in underfunding - how long did it take to get to that amount? Who was speaking up for the children and the taxpayers of Paterson to let it get to that point? Who? Who was helping us? Who came forward? Did the Board members come forward? Did the parent coordinators go out and rally our parents to go to the state to help? I'm just hearing about that. I haven't been active coming to these Board meetings, but I'm starting to come now. It blows my mind away. \$242 million that the State of New Jersey has not given to this school system! How did it happen? Can anybody answer? Are we just here for recommendations?

Comm. Cleaves: Use your time.

Ms. McNeil: All these charter schools coming in here, I have a son that goes to Passaic County Tech. They're building another school up there. Trust me - they're not taking children just to teach them a trade. They're taking the brightest and the best of our students up there. When I tell you I know what I'm talking about. I'm not the one to say anything about security because I'm 100% in agreement that they need security, but those retired police officers, especially at the high school level, take a walk through that school. Do any Commissioners go through that school? I walk through there at least once every two weeks. Those guys are on the side. They're drinking coffee. They're socializing with the teachers. The other security guards are saying they just sit and get a paycheck and they have to do all the work. That's all I wanted to say. I have one other thing unrelated to the budget. When are the parents going to be notified about this lead in this water? I was told that we were supposed to get notices about lead in the water in the schools that we have children in. Nobody has sent a notice out, not one notice. The only thing we have is what we read in the newspaper and it's not even right. Even the parent coordinators said the schools don't have the right information. When are we going to be notified? All the schools that got the lead in the water are the oldest schools in the lower performing areas of the city.

Mr. Corey Teague: Good evening. I'm a bit frustrated tonight specifically because I can't seem to understand for the life of me how we could be discussing budget cuts and amendments when we're not even being funded properly or legally. That doesn't make

sense to me. What part of that can't we really understand? We have a Governor that doesn't care about Paterson. He couldn't care less about what goes on here. He's proven that time and time again. Even when I was on the Board, I spoke very boldly about the fact that this is the constitution. This is a law that was passed by the New Jersey Supreme Court. I've been speaking about this since 2009. That's when I really got involved in it. Here we are year after year and we're still facing this same hurdle. I have to bring attention to another issue. In our city alone we have a congressman, a senator, and two assembly people who live here. How come we keep hitting this same bump in the road year after year? We have all of that power in those four folks. Somebody should be able to force the Governor's hand or make some moves in Trenton to get something going. Seriously folks, we can no longer just sit around and fold our hands and hope that things get better. When I served in the School Board, I was on the fiscal committee for that entire time and I can tell you that the sliding scale with the flat funding is going to take us into a careening situation where we're not even going to be able to bounce back. It's going to get to a point where we're going to have a shortfall of nearly \$200 million by the year 2019 or close to it. We know that there are many different factors that can be involved when we're talking about the budget. But the key thing here is that the constitution provides that the state is supposed to do everything in its power to see to it that our children receive a thorough and efficient education. When you look at that ballpark number, that \$500 million, you see that big number but you don't look at the line items and the expenditures and you're not really sure of how all of that money breaks down. When you compare those numbers to the actual formula that was put in place in 2008 you will see that the money the district is receiving and the funds that it actually needs to function are nowhere close. So we have to remind ourselves and keep our minds focused on the fact that we are being illegally underfunded. With regards to this water, I've been speaking about this since December, sharing videos and everything. You guys have to get on my page because I share a lot of information. If you're on Facebook, and I think everybody is, visit Corey L. Teague. If you're not, start an account and come to my page. If you want to know what's going on in this city, come to my page. I don't cut any punches. Lastly, tomorrow morning I will be in Trenton with various activists from around the state. We're going to be protesting against the State Board of Education because they're trying to make this a graduation requirement. We will be there tomorrow in Trenton. Thank you.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening. In 1874 there was a constitutional commission and the members recommended to the State of New Jersey that they should provide a rudimentary education for all children in New Jersey. The legislators rejected that saying rudimentary was not good enough and that's when they came up with the language 'thorough and efficient' and voted it as an amendment to the constitution. About 100 years later in 1973 the legislators again decided in *Robinson vs. Cahill* in the Supreme Court that a thorough and efficient education is what is mandated by the constitution. Since then the state has found every which way it possibly could to avoid a thorough and efficient education. I wasn't there for those early decisions, but I have lived through CIFR, SFRA, Abbott, the Bacon Lawsuit, and several other attempts. The people keep going back to court to get the state to uphold what is in the State of New Jersey constitution. To this day, the children of Paterson are not getting a thorough and efficient education. We see it in the test scores. We see it in the outcomes. We're seeing improvements, but we're not there and we're far from there. This budget does not provide for a thorough and efficient education. There are lots of sites and resources online that tell us what that is and many of us here listening are parents who went through our schools ourselves. We're educators and administrators and we know what it constitutes. I think it is your obligation as the Board of Education and you Dr. Evans as our lead administrator to do everything in your power to get the funds from the state

to provide a thorough and efficient education. Our children are suffering and all the conversation here comes right back to putting the child at the center. We're failing our children because we're not providing it. We've been going to court with this for many years now. Let's keep going. Let's get other people to join and let's keep pressing until the state meets its obligation to provide Paterson kids with a thorough and efficient education. They're our future. Without doing that, we're all going to suffer for it. Please stand by our children. Thank you.

Ms. Linda Reid: Good evening. Today I had a Fannie Lou Hamer experience. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. \$34,947,320 is the 2017 proposed budget for charter schools. There's another charter school starting in September. There are four new proposed charter school applications out now. If all these charters are approved by the state, because there's no community input, how many additional funds will our public school children continue to lose? I need someone to help me understand that. I know there are a lot of pros and cons about charter schools and I'm not pro-charter. Trust me, I'm not against them. But I'm opposed to the fact that they take public school money from the children and we still have to educate them here. Everyone deserves a good education. But does a charter school make it necessary? I looked at the district's Brighter Futures and I went to see those applications. I went and read every last one of them. Everything I saw in those applications was the same things that I read in Dr. Evans' Brighter Future plans. There's nothing new or different. Why can't that be incorporated? Full Service Community Schools is what this district needs, not individual charter schools. I did my research on those charters and I looked at them. There's some controversy around all four of them. One is for-profit. One follows a Christian-based mission. One is a dual language, but from kindergarten to second grade it's self-contained. What is self-contained? They want all the kids to stay in one class to learn one language for three years. Then they do a side-by-side comparison. How do you do that? That's not dual language. That's a mess. Then I was really surprised when I saw, like Dr. Hodges said tonight, that the application listed School 11 as one of the charters. This is a charter that is listed as a for-profit charter. My surprise went deeper when I saw that we had public school members that work in this district as founding members of these charter schools. Some pastors and School Board members were writing letters in favor of these charters. I leave you with this. The way I see it, the state is not the enemy. The enemy is living among us in our schools, in our churches, and in our community. How dare you say that you have a love for this community and you are adding to its destruction? To all the public school employee who want to start their own charters, give up your paycheck and start your charter. I say shame on them because we trusted them to educate our children but now I'm wondering if they're not a part of the divine scheme to destroy public education.

Ms. Melissa Elliott: Good evening, Board members. My name is Melissa Elliott. I am representing the Full Service Community Schools and the health clinics. I'm here with some of my team members and I wanted to just present some of the important work we do. We offer services. We're in five schools in Paterson, five schools that are not doing very well and in some cases have been failing. We are in School 6, School 5, School 4, NRC, and School 15. NRC, Napier, and School 5's grants have already ended and we're still continuing our programming there. We provide dental, optical, pediatric, nutrition, and behavioral health. I'm the director of behavioral health. Our programs have been very important and very preventative to the team. We support guidance beyond belief. Guidance comes to me every week. They're so overloaded in these schools. We support them. I have four licensed clinical social workers on our team and five interns from three graduate schools - Columbia, Ramapo, and Rutgers. Two of my interns are Paterson residents and are very interested in becoming a part of this community and helping the community. We support the SAC counselors. There are

only two and they come one day a week. We support the school social workers. We support the teachers and faculty. Just to speak quickly on behavioral health, we are running individual counseling. We run groups. We run bereavement groups and we've been running them for three years for kids whose parents have died or are incarcerated. We run girls groups, social skills, and behavioral groups. We're now running one-day workshops this year that have been very successful on healthy relationships and understanding relationship violence and hygiene. These schools have come to us and asked for help with their kids with hygiene and daily living skills. It's just been a real big support and we want you to understand that all of our programs are so preventative and important. It's just important to understand that the Superintendent has supported us. Our attendance has increased since we've been in these schools. We're so easy to access. We're right in school. The parent comes in and drops their kids off at school. Most of these kids wouldn't get outside counseling if we weren't there. Two weeks ago Helen Keller came at NRC. We gave 100 kids glasses. That affects reading. These are very important things. I'd just like to introduce Margi to talk more about the program.

Ms. Margi Dihora: Hello everyone. My name is Margi Dihora. I'm the nutritionist that works with Full Service Community Schools' health clinics. I work one-on-one with children that need nutrition education. I also work with parents. I give monthly workshops to parents. So far, we've covered cancer prevention, heart healthiness, nutrition and learning. Since PARCC testing is coming up, I've worked with children trying to improve their learning and memory skills and how food affects their daily life and in the future. Other services that we've also helped with are dental and optical. As Melissa was saying, all of New Roberto Clemente was tested for eye exams and a lot of the students did receive glasses. We do provide preventative care. Students are seen twice throughout the year for dental and every year for optical. That way parents don't have to make or miss appointments and students are seen during school so they're not missing a lot of their school time or the whole day of school. We also have a pediatrician that comes in who also sees the students for emergency cases or checkups. It helps the parents and it's beneficial for students as well. It's also helped with absenteeism. There are about 600 students in the five schools that are being serviced right now. We would hope that more students would be serviced as well, but a lot of the parents don't understand the benefits of the Full Service Community Schools. However, if the budget cut was affecting the health centers it would affect over 600 students that are serviced right now throughout the whole school year and also during the summertime. That's all. Thank you. We have other members as well.

Ms. Nicola Grover: Hi. My name is Nicola Grover. I'm an intern with the Full Service Community Schools and I live in Paterson. I have children that are being educated in Paterson and I was also educated in the Paterson School District. I provide counseling services for individuals in School 6, NRC, and School 15. I'm at three different schools. I do individual and group counseling. It's been a successful service within the school district with so many children with so many behavioral issues. We are having parents come in more. We are engaging the parents and helping them understand what's going on with their children and what services can be provided for them by different things in the community. We provide them with information about services in the community that may help. One thing about this program that I've learned and enjoyed the most is involving the parents, having them come in, making appointments with them to let them see what's going on with their child, doing the research for them if they don't know how to. It's really unsettling being a mother living in Paterson as a graduate student and being educated in Paterson seeing what's going on with the test scores and everything. I know I'm here to talk about Full Service Community Schools, but in order to impact these children's behavior issues they have to learn how to read and write. They can't do that if they're frustrated. They can't do that if they have stuff going on and no one to

talk to. That's where we come into play. We've seen a success rate of teachers by engaging the teachers and talking with them about if they're doing better, getting them to focus more, and understanding there is someone there if they need to talk before it becomes a bigger problem within the school or the police or security is called or before they're suspended. Most of the students I have I've seen a jump in their grades. Some of them are focusing better and they are able to sit in the classroom and want to learn. When I meet with them I see how excited they are to come down just to spend that little time to go over what's going on or why they're acting or reacting the way they are. I talk to the parents about becoming foot soldiers. A foot soldier means you put your boots on and let's go to Trenton. I'm trying to engage the parents. We're not just there for the children as far as behavioral health and groups. We're also there to help them as a family, the mothers and fathers, and bring them all together, and help them understand this is a struggle right now and we all have to stick together in these neighborhoods and go help and fight these budget cuts. I just had to say that. I think Full Service Community Schools clinic is a great program.

Ms. Jennifer Hutchinson: I'm Jennifer Hutchinson. I'm also from Full Service Community Schools and I'm speaking for Nargish. I'm not going to take up too much more time. I just want to say one more thing. One other program that we also have piloted this year at School 6, which has been really successful and great, is a mindfulness program that our behavioral health team is bringing to two classrooms, a third and fourth grade at School 6. It's working really well. We'd love to bring it to more classrooms and schools. I think that is the only new thing I need to say. 600 kids, 5 different schools, and we're bringing the families into the schools, which I think is very important. It's a great way to connect the families to the school community. I hope we can stick around and do some more good work. Thank you.

Pastor Carolyn McCombs: Thank you for the opportunity. I want to just share that our experience at School 6 has been one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had in serving the community here in Paterson. When we came in and opened the Full Service Community School at School 6, I remember it was in the fall of 2013. One of the children came to us and said, "How long are you going to be here?" We said we're never going to leave. He said he didn't believe it because every time we bring in something that's good for them it goes away. Sure enough, we came back the next school year in September and we could see the children at the Full Service Community School like, "Oh, my gosh! They came back. They kept their word." Now we have been there for three years and hope is being restored in the students and the community. There is a community in School 6 that did not exist before. We have parents with us here tonight from School 6. Just stand up parents. What have we been able to accomplish? We've brought in a mentorship program where men from all over the area have come in to mentor our young men and women have come in to mentor our young women. It's been an incredible connection. These parents are now connecting with others who are partnering with them to help them bring their children up in a way that is healthy. We have field trips for autistic children. We have an after-school program. At one point we had to stop receiving children. We had over 66 children in an after-school program and we are being bombarded with our first through fifth graders. They are so enthusiastic to learn and now we're going to have to go back to these parents and students and say we're sorry. There's no more full service after school. We have volunteer tutors from Hawthorne Gospel Church who come in and tutor in the classrooms with teachers during the day. These are professionals. These are retired engineers and teachers. We have women who come in every week, retired pediatricians, and six senior citizens. For three years they have kept a clothes closet for our children so that if they have a need for anything they can come in and get what they need. We have teacher appreciation. We have ESL. We have GED. We have



community involvement. We have partnerships with family and community engagement. We get together. We pool our resources. We work as a family. We are a family and we want to stay that way. We want to keep hope alive that has been restored and we don't want to disappoint our families and least of all our children. Thank you.

Ms. Desiree King: Hi. This is my first time speaking at a Board meeting. I have to agree with Ms. Carol. I have a story to tell. I don't get assistance from the state. I work part-time. One day my refrigerator broke down. I called her and asked her was there any way to help me get a refrigerator. The next day she got me a refrigerator. They are like my second family. On my day off I go straight downstairs and I help with whatever they need. I help these kids when I'm at School 6 as well. Getting back to School 6, my son has been going there since kindergarten. He's in the third grade now. He has a little problem with his language arts. Ever since first grade I've been asking teachers and principals about my son needing one-on-one with language arts. Dr. Evans had this lady from Newark, Shonda Davis. You paid her twice the salary. That's why all that money is gone right now. You paid her twice the salary and that's what the lady did. She's not there anymore. She took the salary and left. You paid her more salary than you could have given another principal. On top of that, they have a beautiful library upstairs in School 6. The kids never went to the library. Like I said, my son has been going there since kindergarten and he's in third grade. They never opened that library for those kids to go get a book or read a book. I take my son to the public library on Broadway to get free library books there. It's a shame that they have a big library upstairs and they're not even using it. It's taking space and collecting dust. Teachers are using their own money to buy supplies. Dr. Evans came into our PTO meeting last year and I had to ask him, when are we going to have supplies? We have no spelling books, no math books, no social studies books, or no science books. This is why I say with the PARCC test and STAR assessment test, that's why School 6 is a failing school right now. These kids go home and they don't know what's going on in their homes. They come to school and they're frustrated because of all these tests. It doesn't make any sense. Now my son is back on track with his reading and I want to keep on track. You fired all those teachers, but you have substitute teaching. Substitutes don't have the credentials to teach. A substitute teacher called my phone when I was at work and said my son did not do his homework. I told her she doesn't have the credentials to teach so why are you sending my son home with homework. Thank you.

Ms. Margaret Padilla: My name is Margaret Padilla. Chris Christie, this has to stop. Paterson has been going through this for a long time. Life is like a pyramid. You climbed up this pyramid. People held you up from the bottom whether they voted you in or not. You did not start Paterson's money and school issues. You don't know what is happening. This is a mental and emotional ride. You have unkindly climbed this pyramid. You have done it with a lack of reasons for the future. Please fill this void you have been a part of before you leave as Governor. Bring Paterson Public Schools this money, all of it. You will be able to sleep in the long run with your conscience. We all want to raise the children in Paterson Public Schools up. Your time is almost done as Governor. Come to Paterson with the money owed to these children. Clean your conscience or you will have the guilt in your life. There are enough tests in life. You have the power to bring that money to Paterson and the door is open. Thank you.

Dr. Joseph Atallo: Good evening, members of the Board of Education. I give you credit for all these meetings. I wish you could consolidate them into one night. We're looking at these programs. I said it last week at the joint meeting with the City Council and I'm going to say it again. The planning is not being done correctly. You start these programs with federal funding. They run out of money after a couple of years and they

expect to be picked up with local taxes. We don't have the money for that. As Board members have pointed out, we have educational basics. It's nice to provide social services, but that's not the role of the school. We can debate that, but we need to put teachers in classrooms. We need to have books. We need to have computers. This is what we need to have. Number two, we're talking about libraries. I find it very offensive when the administration says they didn't close any libraries. That may be true, but you don't have any librarians that are manning the libraries and it doesn't help the children to expect a classroom teacher to go up there and expose them to reading and research. These are basic skills. Reading launches students on the sea of knowledge. If you get a book, it turns you on to reading more. This is what we should be doing. Utilizing our libraries and librarians is very important. I don't like to make corrections on people, but Dr. Hodges you had a letter in the paper and then you said it again tonight about bids, contracts, and vendors. The school district may be a state-operated district, but by law it's not restricted as to who they can do business with. That's simply not true. As a business administrator and as a board member who chaired the finance committee for nine years we went out for open competitive bids. The state doesn't tell you who to hire and who to contract with. Are there state public contracts? Yes. Those are open. You can look at those. You can also go out for competitive bids. If that price is not competitive, you are not mandated to move in that direction. That needs to be corrected. We live in an open competitive business environment where you can go out for bids. If you're going to buy paper clips, rubber bands, or widgets, whatever you're going to buy, you go out for open competitive bids. If you opt to go to a state contract, that's there for any district and any governmental entity, whether it's state-operated or not. You're not obligated to go with that bid. Many times I noticed the state bid was higher just because the business is out of town. If there are people in town who want to bid, they're certainly free to bid. We used to organize minority contract conferences to teach people how to put up for the bid process and how to put up bonds. I haven't seen that done in quite a while. In conclusion, you want to look at some expenses? I'm not going to put him on the spot. I look at the vocational school and I say to myself each year it goes up by millions of dollars. We all know that's the 800-pound gorilla in the room. The vocational school should not be there to compete with Eastside, International, and Kennedy. They should be able to complement programs. They arbitrarily raise their fees millions of dollars. The other county institution – we've had this conversation privately and we'll say it again – is the County Community College. It's a 96% failure rate. 96% of the students who start there do not finish the program that they start. We need to look at that. Why? Because our kids are not prepared to go! We have a program here which is a sham and a scam called Credit Recovery. Nobody wants to say it. The kid can't pass, they get to senior year, you put them in front of a computer, and in a couple of weeks suddenly they're graduating. They get a diploma. They can't read it, but they have a diploma. This is wrong and it's an injustice to our students. It's a fraud and that should be addressed. Until you start addressing these issues the Board is going to have a lack of credibility. There is an election coming up. There are four seats up on that body. You don't think the community is upset? There's a tax increase. They have program cuts. There are four seats. There are people who want to run. I've been asked to run. You're going to see changes on that Board, my friends. It's going to be a different group of people making decisions. The district is moving towards local control and we're going to address this administration and the way they arbitrarily move.

Comm. Cleaves: Thank you.

Dr. Atallo: I thank you, Ms. Cleaves.

Ms. Marcella Simadiris: Peace and blessings. I just wanted to bring awareness to the fact that Dr. Frank Napier Academy is scheduled to have our Full Service Community School Advisory Board meeting tomorrow. I'm looking for some oversight just because it's been taking a long time in getting clarification regarding how we lost funding through grants for our playgrounds. There was supposed to be a whole bunch of things that happened. I have been probing and I have been questioning and I still haven't gotten answers. Through the resolution that you passed for Sustainable New Jersey I'm planning on trying to acquire grants to do things. I have three kids at home and I'm neglecting them. I'm going to be honest. I'm neglecting my children and I don't want it to be for nothing. I'm coming from a mindset that my children won't be all that they can be until all children are all that they can be. I think right now they have a little bit of an advantage because their school system is a little bit more funded than my students. I'm going hard for my students, but I don't want to do it for nothing. I don't want to go and put all this work and try to acquire grant money and then it all falls through. I don't know who's to blame because everybody always points the finger at each other and I can never get everybody in the same room. I'm looking to get everybody in the same room. I know I've been emailing Ms. Knehr. I think someone else should also be in attendance. She indicated she might be coming tomorrow, but if someone else could come – maybe you Dr. Evans – just so we can have more people at the table and there could be more accountability. I just get the feeling that when it comes to Dr. Frank Napier School 4 people are loose. They don't think they're going to be held accountable. As much as I try to hold people accountable I can't be the only one. I'm looking for help. If any of you would like to come and attend, I'd appreciate it just so we can start getting the ball rolling and we can try to make some things nice for the kids at the school. I don't really like the playground. I don't even think it is safe. I want some nice things for the kids. If you could come out, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

Comm. Cleaves: Ms. Simadiris, you didn't give us the time.

Ms. Simadiris: 3:10. There have been moments where the meetings have been cancelled. It's not clear how the oversight is supposed to happen. I just don't think it's feasible for someone to just always be cancelling meetings. I think there needs to be some oversight and I want to make sure that we meet once a month. People have enough time to plan for it and it's not something that can just be easily cancelled. We had something scheduled for tomorrow and as far as I know it's on for tomorrow. I just want to let you know if you come and it's not happening, I forewarned you it's a possibility. As far as I know, tomorrow in Room 103 at 3:10. Thank you.

Mr. Charles Ferrer: Good evening. Originally, I wasn't going to speak, but when some things were said I said I needed to address that. I'm going to start this out by referring to A.L. Williams. A.L. Williams' theory was pay yourself first. Maybe that's what this district needs to think about. The law says that we have to send millions of dollars to fund the charter schools. The law says that they're supposed to fully fund the education of the Paterson students. Why is it that we have to follow one law and send money to the charter schools which takes money away from our students being able to get their education? The charter school students can get their thorough and efficient education but our children can't get it because we don't get all the money we're supposed to get from the state. The state made the law about the charter schools. So why don't we do this? Let's keep the money that should go to the charter school for our children that we're responsible for by law and then tell the state to give the money to the charter school that you won't give to us. We don't have it. We're still following the law because our obligation is to fund the education of the students in this district. They go to the public schools of Paterson, New Jersey. Let's follow the law and tell the state we're following the law. We're just not following the law that you want us to follow. We're

following the ones that are best for us. It's time that we take the stand that we've been afraid to take. I was so happy at that joint meeting that both boards have decided to bring the lawsuit. I'm ready. Let's go. We need to deal with that. I look at a lot of my friends that post on Facebook that are all former Marching 100 band members. Because they were band members at Eastside and we had a partnership with Florida A&M some of them are professors and music teachers down there and all over the place. It was exciting to see Villanova win yesterday and I think about Rory Sparrow who graduated from there because of a sports program. When I think about the opportunities that can be taken away, like music, I'll never forget one of the last plays that was put on here at Kennedy High School before we dismantled all of this here. I think it was Guys and Dolls and this young lady was up there singing and her mother just happened to be sitting behind me. So I turned around and asked her who her daughter was studying with. She said, "My daughter doesn't study with anyone. She just sings." Her voice was close to being classically trained without having a trainer other than what she was getting here. She had that quality in her voice. We're looking at all the things that we're depriving. I'm a little concerned about this nursing issue because we're sharing nurses as it is. We have a lot of asthmatic children. Let's say the nurse is covering School 6, School 27, and School 7. A child has an asthma attack at School 6 and the nurse is at School 27. What's the plan? Is that in the budget? Has that been ironed out? What's the plan? We can't afford to have a nurse not be in every school. I'm so glad we have these defibrillators in the schools. I remember a couple years ago at School 13 if we had a defibrillator in that school we might have saved one of my colleague's life that was a very good friend of mine. We didn't have it. Could you imagine if a situation happened like that? We have the defibrillator now, but the nurse is in another school. Are we really thinking here? These are some serious issues. If we don't have the proper services and something happens to someone have you gotten opinions from legal about the potential lawsuits that can come down behind this? I guess the state will find the money then to help us pay the lawsuit, but it could have been prevented if they just gave it to us in the first place. So I don't think this is being thought out. We need to move on this lawsuit. I know it's not going to get us the money here right now, but at this point, Board members, I really don't think any of you should vote for this budget. I think you should all demand that we'll pay the charter school when it's practicable. I'm sure you remember that word from our contract. When it's practicable and when we get that money we'll pay them. Right now, I don't have it because the state won't give it to me. I have to take care of my children first. Do you feed your friend's kids? Or do you feed yours first? We're going to feed ours first.

Mr. Bilal Hakeem: Good evening. I too was not going to say anything tonight, but after listening I just thought I'd write down a few points. That issue of reading is of paramount importance because reading is a process skill. If you learn how to read you can do almost anything. All children can learn given the tools. Our children right now are being academically molested and they're not receiving a thorough and efficient education. There was a clause in the New Jersey assembly some years ago where they wanted to remove that clause. You can go back and research it. There should be no cuts. Vote no! I remember in Paramus, New Jersey there was some contamination in the soil. So the parents and everyone in the community came out, got together, and demanded from the superintendent. The superintendent said he didn't know and they said tomorrow you will know because the whole community came out. That superintendent was no longer there. You can research this. It's online. I just say that in the context of following what Ms. Reid had mentioned earlier and this will lead right into charter schools. The enemy is within. When we look around we don't see some of these stakeholders who we think are supposed to be here and not here. It's because they're making deals. They're skunking around making deals. I'm going to say it again with the issue of charter schools. When it comes to forcing competition, I'm all for it. Two of my

children went to a private school. Money was not diverted from the public treasury. We're in full support of that, but charter schools that are taking money from the public treasury which should rightfully go to fund the public schools, I'm totally against that. We have people that come and sit in these meetings lobbying for this. Not only is the state-appointed superintendent's tongue tied to speak, they're tied too. They can't speak. So I really appreciate when we have Board members raise the decimal points and not take a pacifist role. The pacifist has a role, but in a case like this it's not time to be passive. Our voices have to be heard on these issues. The charter school movement is designed to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy public education as we understand it. Dr. Evans, I beg you from a spirit of decency, do not be the economic hit man for this man in Trenton. Don't be his hit man. We are calling for full funding and I ask this question to all of you. Are we out of compliance? Is this district out of compliance? That's a question and when you get ready to answer it, then answer it. That's my position on that. Someone came to me the last time we were here saying that I spoke out of turn. I don't think I spoke out of turn when I mentioned the statement down in Trenton. I've seen the assemblyman. I looked him straight in his face today. He didn't correct me. If he wanted to correct what he said he had the opportunity and he has the opportunity right now. I know for a fact, because I've had personal conversations with him, that he's interested in opening up charter schools. I had this conversation with him personally. I didn't get this from somebody else and it's all good. Any of them that are sitting up here that want to do that, you can do that but you should find your own source of funding. Our children are hurting. I'm fighting for my children. My children are in the school district and that's why I'm here. I fight hard for them. Years ago there was a cartoon called Ricochet Rabbit and Droop Along. I want to say to all of you sometimes we need Ricochet Rabbit because what's coming across is from Droop Along sometimes. We need somebody to make it plain. You have to speak in a language that people can understand. I thank you for allowing me the leeway. Thank you.

Ms. Victoria Oquendo: Good evening. My name is Victoria Oquendo. I'm a PTO secretary of School 6. I'm here this evening with the PTO President of School 6. Tonight I thought I was here to speak about the budget. But since I've been participating in my own investigation and sleuthing into the Paterson Public School System, I'm coming to realize that the problem is not a budget problem. I'm sure we could use more funding, but what we could use more is people who care about our children. I have never encountered so many callous, coldhearted, high paid salary people to work around our children who give me the impression as a parent that they don't give a damn about our children. I went to 90 Delaware Avenue because I know due to the Freedom of Information Act that I have the right to an open document request on this so-called lead situation that's supposed to be going on. I was met with a woman who spent a few minutes trying to deter me from what I was trying to accomplish. She was trying to convince me saying, "You can take this number, but you're not going to get anybody but this or that." I asked her to stop doing that and just give me the information I'm seeking and let me make the resolution of how this is going to turn out when I do my due diligence and reach out to the people I'm seeking to talk to. Then she commenced to say the parents knew about the lead in the water and then she said Anna Taliaferro. I said, "Hold up. Stop right there, because if you're even trying to throw Anna Taliaferro's name out, that goes to show how antiquated this issue is. So you're better off shutting up." Then I said, "Better yet, I don't like your attitude about the children of Paterson Public Schools and this potential issue that's going on. Let me speak to the parent resource coordinator down here." Lo and behold, I was speaking to her. I couldn't believe it. Woe onto you if you knew that there was lead in that water. School 6, School 9, and School 28 scored the highest levels. Flint Michigan water comes in at 158. School 6, School 9, and School 28 come in at over 200. Lead damage is

irreversible. You keep our kids hostage in School 6 on an extended day until 6:00. In every case in every situation there's cause and effect. Did you ever stop to think that maybe they can't learn because they might be affected by lead in the water system in that school? According to the article it says that they rectified the issue by replacing the water fountains and spouts. We all know that lead poisoning and corrosion cannot be rectified with removal and replacing a water fountain. It's a pipe issue. If we don't spend money on books to properly educate our children, then I have little hope that money is going to be put into this potential water crisis that the public school has. The salaries are too top-heavy. When you go in Eastside you're trampling over principals and vice principals. All the money is going towards salary and nothing going towards educating our children. I know you know just like I do when we walk out of the high school doors, 99.9% of what you taught our children we don't use in life anyway. They're not being prepared for life. I agree with Dr. Hodges that they need to be taught financial literacy. I dropped out of high school, but you know why I'm so intelligent? Because I am a book reader and a book lover! School 6's library is closed, but they have book fairs that they bring in expensive books to sell the children in a poverty area, books costing anywhere from \$5 to \$30. Open the library back up. My grandson came from School 28 to School 6. That's two exposures to lead. I'm coming for you. I'm telling you. Woe onto the watchman who knows the sword comes and warns not the people, for their blood I will require out of your hands. But if you warn the people and they do not do anything, then their blood is not on your hands. You did not warn us.

**It was moved by Comm. Hodges, 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. Cleaves: Dr. Evans, can you address some of the issues that were brought up this evening?

Dr. Evans: One particular issue that was just raised again for the second time involving the water. I will say to answer the question directly, there is a letter prepared that will go out to parents tomorrow. It was given to me today for editing and I've gone through it. You'll get it tomorrow in your meeting. I would also say in relation to that that we started testing water two years ago, long before anyone else ever thought to test the water. Actually, it was Mr. Morlino's initiative when he first came in. One of the first things he did as an employee of the district was to make sure the water was tested. Nonetheless, he started it and I'm very happy that he did. As a result, we are ahead of the curve. We've addressed all of the issues. There were some schools, as was mentioned, that were higher than others. I'm not sure yet, and I'll find out tomorrow, how those levels compare to what's required. The test took place. All of the remediation took place. Again, I thank Mr. Morlino for actually calling it to our attention a couple of years ago before anybody else apparently in this area was doing it. We are in very good shape now. The one thing that did not happen, as has been called to our attention by some of you, is that letters didn't go out to parents. That's should have happened. There's no question about it. It should have happened. That was a mistake that we made, but the corrections have been made. I would invite Mr. Morlino if I've left anything out in terms of factual information that needs to be shared at this point. If not, if the letter covers it, then we're fine.

Mr. Steve Morlino: I think you covered it very well, Dr. Evans. People need to understand that the only testing required by law currently is on the municipal water supply, which is the Passaic Valley Water Authority. There's an annual report done. That's been distributed to all the schools as required by law. It's posted in all the schools. The Paterson Public Schools went above and beyond starting in October of

2014 to test for lead in the water. It had never been done previous to that. Testing was done and as the results came in any fixtures that were found to be above 15 parts per billion, which is the regulation that was put into place in the 1990s, and prior to that it was 20 parts per billion, the regulations have been met. Wherever it exceeded 15 parts per billion, that particular water source was secured, shut off, repairs were made, retesting was done, and results were within the required 15 parts per billion or less. We've made a concerted effort to insure that's taking place. We're now in the second round of testing. School 6 was talked about. School 6 was tested for the second time on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March. We do not have the second results yet. We expect those sometime this week or early next week to see how the readings are progressing. People need to understand that they also need to test in their household. Up until 1996 it was okay to solder copper pipes together with solder that contained up to 50% lead. The law changed in 1997 and it was reduced to 6%. Recently it was changed to .25% lead allowance in solder when you join pipes together. The district has gone out and we no longer solder pipes together. We now use compression fittings and other types of fittings that no longer require any solder. But if your home was built before 1997 you should probably have it tested because the pipes were soldered together with lead. The schools in Paterson average 80.2 years old. The infrastructure is quite old and the school district has lead soldered joints in the piping system within our school district, as does almost every school in the State of New Jersey and I dare say across the country. This is not an issue just in Paterson. This is an issue that needs to be explored further. The EPA is doing testing now and there are some recommendations as to how they proceed testing school districts. I can tell you I can count on one hand the number of school districts that have aggressively done testing such as Paterson.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans, I think at this point it would be helpful if you posted the lab results online so that the community can access it and so those parents can take appropriate steps even at this point. It would be helpful if you did that.

Dr. Evans: Sure.

Comm. Cleaves: Is there anything else you'd like to address?

Dr. Evans: Not at this time.

Comm. Kerr: I wasn't quite sure as to why the folks who provided the Full Service Community Schools were here.

Comm. Cleaves: They were just coming to give you an update on their...

Comm. Kerr: Is it a situation where their services are being considered for reduction?

Dr. Evans: Actually, they were cut initially last year. Additional cuts are being proposed this year. Fortunately, we were able to find some additional money to close some of the gaps from last year's cuts to add some things back. But this year some of those same cuts have been subjected. The programs haven't been cut out. Some of the services have been cut back and the services they were describing are among those that are being considered for cutting back. That's why they were here. In each case, as I think one of the individuals accurately represented, Full Service Community Schools were initially fully funded by grant dollars. Those \$2.3 million grants, and we've received three of them now, fund the program for three years. At the end of that three-year period it's the district's responsibility to continue to fund if we're going to continue to operate the program. That's what's happening now. We haven't cut any out, but there have been cutbacks.

Comm. Cleaves: If they were fully funded by grants, have we not applied for the grants? Have we applied and not received the grants? What transpired?

Dr. Evans: We've applied. When you apply initially and get the grant, there's no guarantee that you will be funded if you apply again. We've tried, but the only grants we've gotten since then are new grants for new schools to create new programs there. That's how we started, with two schools. Then we added two more and two more. They were all on new grants that came in because the federal government didn't fund the continuation of those that we had.

Comm. Kerr: It's a big question because if these are services that impact the school and our community in a positive way, we need to find a way to make the argument and demonstrate that it's going to decimate any progress that we have made in those areas. This is a model that I think we were pursuing because of the impact it has on our community.

Dr. Evans: Comm. Kerr, if you recall, I shared with you correspondence in a meeting I had with the Commissioner. In that correspondence, and I think I provided the Board a copy of it, I specifically mentioned Full Service Community Schools along with some other programs.

Comm. Hodges: Dr. Evans, is it your position that the Full Service Community Schools provide a benefit to this school district?

Dr. Evans: Benefit doesn't do it justice. Full Service Community Schools serve not only the needs of the child, whether it's social/emotional or academic, but it also provides services for the entire family.

Comm. Hodges: Is it an extravagance to have the program?

Dr. Evans: No.

Comm. Hodges: Are you pushing it closer to the need category?

Dr. Evans: Yes. It is a need. Our parents and students have needs that are important if we expect to effectively educate them.

Comm. Hodges: So any move back from our full level is actually causing us to lose a service for our students and our parents.

Dr. Evans: A valuable service.

Comm. Hodges: Okay. Cutting that would be in effect detrimental to the needs of the children and the parents.

Dr. Evans: Detrimental is an impactful statement. It would effectively minimize our effectiveness with the child and the parent.

Comm. Hodges: Our effectiveness in providing educational experience that is thorough and efficient.

Dr. Evans: Yes.



Comm. Hodges: What we're doing is we're diminishing our ability to be effective at doing our responsibilities. Okay. My recommendation is that there not be cutting of the Full Service Community Schools. Because of what the Superintendent has just said that would be detrimental to the educational experience of our children.

Dr. Evans: I would also add those of you who attended the State Board of Education meeting where we presented our annual report there were comments from the State Board of education expressing support and encouragement for continuing to operate the programs.

Comm. Hodges: Then they have to fund it. It's nice to applaud it, but let's see some tangible results put forth. That's the thing. Are there any cuts to special education?

Dr. Evans: No. Actually, if there are they are cuts for things that are not effective. There are more additions to special education, especially from federal dollars. Special education is one of those programs that is supported by state, federal, and local dollars. So where we made some adjustments from state dollars we were able to use federal dollars to make up the difference. I'm not going to say we're doing what we should be doing because there's a lot of be desired as far as the services for special education students and we're aggressively working on it, but there's a lot more work to be done.

Comm. Hodges: Someone mentioned something about my categorizing the contractors. I might have misspoken in terms of there being higher cost than local cost. There are certainly vendors that we are constrained to use which are definitely a higher cost than what occurs locally and those vendors don't live in this city. I'll make that perfectly clear. I don't think there's any question about that. If I used the wrong terminology, then I apologize. But that is in fact the case. I need some information about School 6. Is School 6 going paperless? Is that what the plan was? I don't understand why they won't have workbooks.

Dr. Evans: I know that School 6 was purchasing computers to access textbooks for students to use.

Comm. Hodges: The problem with that is that the students, in order to master the material, have to do it at home. You can't give them the computers in the classroom and then take it away from them as they walk out the door because there's no way to build on what they've learned in the classroom to reach the level of mastery. We also have to make sure that there's some way to have internet access, particularly that school in that neighborhood. So if you're going to go to tablets, and I heartedly embrace the technological approach, those kids of all children need the ability to take the materials home so that they can study. We can't train them not to study by taking the tablets away from them. That's what we're doing. That has to be looked at and that particular approach. Youth in government, key club, chorus, band, chess club, French club, poetry club, photography club, science club, pre-engineering club, physics club, young Rotarians, student council, and student board members. These are some of the things that you do not have in the City of Paterson, that your students are not exposed to, that you can find all over the place, but not here in the third largest city. As a matter of fact, these programs and more could be found in a town of 5,000 people. In fact, they had 22 programs. I went to high school and I went online and saw what they had in place. These things aren't here for your children. When those kids go out and they're socialized via these programs and these kinds of exposures, when they apply to colleges they're well-rounded individuals. These experiences reinforce what you learn in the classroom, as does the French club and the pre-engineering club. We don't have them here. What they did was they put the amount of money they contracted with their

union as part of the contract to find ways to have teachers stay and become advisors after school. Those teachers live in that community by and large. Without this our kids suffer by comparison. The loss of these programs... Excuse me, not the loss. We don't have them at all. We didn't lose them. We never had them. They're basic. Chess club, band, the Marching 100s – tremendous! But if you don't have music in your elementary schools, you're not going to have any high school Marching 100s. You won't have a high school Marching 5. They don't learn to play the instruments. The lack of librarians, our kids can't read and the opportunity for additional help and exposure. The PEF was instrumental in putting libraries in schools.

Comm. Cleaves: Comm. Hodges, is this a recommendation?

Comm. Hodges: I'm coming to it.

Comm. Cleaves: I need you to get there.

Comm. Hodges: I'm going to get there. I'm framing the issue.

Comm. Cleaves: I need you to get to the recommendation.

Comm. Hodges: These things are important to the overall educational experience. So Dr. Evans, what I'd like to see is an enhanced social program set to help keep our kids in school and engaged - things along these lines which other communities find so terribly important for their kids. They know the value of them. As a matter of fact, we have proposed youth in government to go countywide. The proposal came from Paterson. I'll repeat that. The proposal for youth in government came from Paterson and we will probably be one of the few districts that don't have it. Thank you.

Comm. Cleaves: Enhanced social set, but it included all of that - chess, music, art, and student government.

Comm. Kerr: I don't know if in the budget based on the numbers we're looking to outsource our substitutes and instructional aides. I don't know if that was a consideration in the budget. I know we have had problems with our transportation. We farm it out and then it ends up costing us millions of dollars over which we had projected. I would like to say now that if we were thinking of outsourcing the substitute department, I would like that to be taken off the table and retained in-house. All we would have to do is be real managers, tighten it up, and have full control over that program.

Comm. Cleaves: This is a carryover from last year.

Comm. Hodges: I have two more recommendations. A parent came and asked about not hearing the information about the \$242 million. Quite frankly, we have been reporting that yearly at the City Council and at these meetings.

Comm. Cleaves: But she also said that she wasn't as involved as she was before.

Comm. Hodges: That's true. To that end, I'm going to recommend that there be some sort of critical issues report established, either online or as part of a television show. Quite frankly, it would really be helpful if the students produced it so some of these issues could be discussed. The fact that the students were doing it will draw in some of the parents. But they need to be made aware that these things are going on. That would be extremely helpful. We have a revamped TV studio. Let's make use of it and

turn it into an educational tool where they can discuss some of these issues and bring them in. Some of these things should be online. I know that might be of concern to the state, but the community should not be in the dark about what's happening to their children's schools. Those are some recommendations, all of which cost money, which means we have to find more money or push back against these so-called cuts which are illegal.

Comm. Cleaves: Thank you Commissioners. Dr. Evans has a lot to chew on this evening and tomorrow morning before he gives us his final budget. These were great recommendations, very well thought out and discussed. Dr. Evans, we will await what responses you have back for us and we will meet here again tomorrow evening at the same time and same channel.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.