

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

March 7, 2016 – 6:07 p.m.
John F. Kennedy High School

Presiding: Comm. Christopher Irving, President

Present:

Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent
Ms. Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent
Joanne Butler, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Oshin Castillo
Comm. Chrystal Cleaves, Vice President
Comm. Jonathan Hodges
Comm. Errol Kerr

*Comm. Lilisa Mimms
Comm. Nakima Redmon
Comm. Flavio Rivera
Comm. Kenneth Simmons

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

Comm. Cleaves 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
March 7, 2016 at 6:00 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. Irving: I want to welcome everyone and thank everyone for coming out. I know this is the third meeting in a series of meetings and I want to thank everyone who has been coming to discuss the budget. For the agenda tonight, we have a discussion of the 2016-2017 school year budget. I want to jump right into it. Dr. Evans, as I indicated to you and to be transparent, I just want to make sure I know for the record is there a presentation on the budget prepared for the Board tonight to review?

Dr. Evans: The budget document is with the Executive County Superintendent in electronic form and he is reviewing it. When he finishes and releases it, then it can be made public. Indeed, there's a meeting scheduled later on this month for that purpose once he releases it for which a public hearing is held for an extensive review. What we have tonight is information that was requested to be made public. There is a two-sided document over on that table that has on one side proposed 2017 budget reduction strategies. I know that was one of the items that the public wanted. On the other side are personnel that are being reduced as a part of this budget reduction exercise, mostly central office staff. It has 82 staff at the district office that would be reduced as well as 15 non-instructional staff at school levels that would be reduced. There are 33 of those. Again, that document is over on the table. Our staff is ready to provide an overview of the budget, but until the Executive County Superintendent releases it then we can't have that public discussion, as I mentioned to you earlier today.

Comm. Irving: I want to be transparent. The Superintendent did indeed tell me that. I subsequently called every single Board member to inform them of that. I'll let you all share some of your comments with me so we can figure out how to proceed.

Comm. Simmons: I'm troubled because I've been here six years and every year we've received a budget presentation sometimes as early as February prior to what gets sent to the County Superintendent. To date, yet again for the second time in a week, we're asked to vote on something and we have no information other than what we received when we walked through the door. I'm flabbergasted. We're wasting valuable time. We're wasting my time and the public's time. I don't understand why we're here.

Dr. Evans: The process really hasn't changed. I know that in past years the business administrators have discussed various elements and considerations with the finance committee, but not the budget in totality. The budget as a single document has not been made public and discussed with the Board that I recall until the Executive County Superintendent reviews it and determines that it is correct in form. Up until the end of the month, changes can be made to the budget document itself. But he has to approve it in form and make sure that we are meeting requirements of law as it relates to the structure. That's not new. It has always been that way.

Comm. Simmons: That's new. Last year prior to that budget being sent to the County Superintendent we had a full budget.

Dr. Evans: I'm not knowledgeable of that.

Comm. Irving: And the year before that.

Comm. Simmons: And the year before that. It's our budget. I don't understand why it has to be approved by him first.

Dr. Evans: By law the Executive County Superintendent is required to review the budget. Then he releases it and there is a public vetting of it. That's the law. That's been the requirement.

Comm. Simmons: I understand that he's required to review it, but if we're asked to vote on it before it goes to him, then we should have the full budget before it goes to him.

Dr. Evans: You're referring to Items 1 and 2?

Comm. Irving: Items 1, 2, and 3.

Dr. Evans: That's not the final budget. In fact, I would call on our Business Administrator to explain what this is.

Ms. Daisy Ayala: Good evening, Commissioners. What you have in front of you is the revenue. What we're asking you to approve right now is the revenue. Attached to it is a summarized budget of what we submitted on Friday. Until the County Superintendent reviews it and gets back to us, whether it's okay for us to move forward, we don't print the full budget because some changes are going to take place. For example, you may have recommendations and that budget is going to change. Until we're actually saying this is what we're going to agree on, then you'll get the full budget. Last week I was here we had a \$10 million increase in taxes. The budget has changed all over the place because we reduced that now to \$5 million. Until we get to a place that we say we're okay, when everyone agrees, that's when you get the full budget. In reference to that, between March 22 and March 29 is our window to do our public hearing and to provide the full budget to you for approval. Obviously, you'll get it before then.

Comm. Simmons: I'm a little confused because I can't make recommendations if I don't have the information. How am I supposed to do that?

Ms. Ayala: You have a summary of the budget.

Comm. Simmons: A summary is not good enough.

Dr. Evans: Again, what you have is only revenue, not expenditures. It only shows how much we anticipate in revenue.

Comm. Irving: Any other questions for the Superintendent?

Comm. Hodges: I'm going to reiterate the same concern that I mentioned last time regarding the moving of School 11, which the Board has not said it wants to do yet. There's not been any Board commitment to that and here it is in the budget. It was pointed out at the last meeting that it was in the budget and it should not have been and now it's back here again. So in essence, you're creating facts on the ground. The act of closing a school is a serious one given the conditions of our schools and our basis for requiring new schools. It's not simply a budget issue. So I don't understand why that's in there again.

Comm. Simmons: Last week when we were here we were assured that the budget that was going to be submitted to the County Superintendent on Friday was not going to include the tax levy.

Comm. Irving: I think the Superintendent might agree we kind of jumped the gun a little bit when that statement was made.

Dr. Evans: Taking something out means finding something else to put in to replace it. We partially fulfilled that request. We found \$5 million to replace \$5 million of it and we're still looking. That door has not closed.

Comm. Rivera: I understand what you just said, Dr. Evans, but the budget is a process. If we're in a situation that you're supposed to send something to the county office and all of a sudden you need to make late changes, then it's poor planning. A budget is a plan and it takes place a few months before it's due to the County Superintendent. I understand you need to make adjustments and whatever else you need to do, but this is

very important to the kids of this community. Budget is very important. For us to just start making changes at the last minute tells you a story that it's poor planning. This comment that you made that this is just a budget and we'll fix it later reminds me of what's been going on in the city for the past 10 years. I hate to hear this is just a budget that we're introducing but it's not going to be the final budget. The introduced budget should reflect what your actual budget is going to be. That's why you plan ahead. It's just poor planning. That's my opinion.

Dr. Evans: The only two comments I have are (1) the changes we made were changes you asked for. We appealed to the Executive County Superintendent to at least let us make those changes and we did. He actually opened the books, so to speak, to allow us to reduce the tax amount and we're still looking for ways of continuing to reduce it. He allowed us to do that because you asked us to. I told him you asked us to and I think that was the only reason he opened it and then he immediately closed it. We haven't really made other changes other than what you asked us to. Point number two, the law drives when the budget is prepared. It drives when it goes to the Executive County Superintendent. It drives when there are public hearings around the budget in its entirety. What we've had thus far are public conversations about items to reduce from the budget. Those can be public as long as we don't mention specific names of individuals who have not been notified. But educational law and the process that's spelled out by the New Jersey Department of Education is clear.

Comm. Rivera: It is also very frustrating that we're in the process of getting local control in finance and we were actually less inclusive in this process this year than in prior years. I just don't understand it. It bothers me.

Comm. Cleaves: I understand the responsibility and duties of the Board and of Board members to pass the budget. I truly do understand that. But as I was quoted in the paper by Mr. Malacano, I cannot vote on an incomplete budget. We keep being provided the revenue side, but we don't know what we're spending the revenues on. So how can we vote on a budget when we don't know where we're actually spending the money? It really doesn't make sense. As Comm. Simmons said, we're wasting everyone's valuable and precious time because that is something we cannot get back.

*Comm. Mimms enters the meeting at 6:21 p.m.

Comm. Castillo: I agree with Comm. Cleaves. We've sat here three meetings already and we've asked for a complete budget. We were told we were going to have a complete budget and we were going to give our parents a complete budget. We're sitting here again and my question is, what are we doing here? We don't have a complete budget. You said you were making accommodations in the budget for what we asked for. We said that we weren't going to accept a tax increase, yet there's a tax increase. Comm. Mimms, please correct me if I'm wrong. I think she asked for a complete list of consultants to see where else we could cut from so we don't have to increase the taxes in the city.

Comm. Mimms: Good evening, my apologies for being late. My uncle had major surgery today. I apologize for being late. I'm very disappointed in the district this year as it relates to the budget. Last year we were prepared to look and to be able to outline and provide oversight and insight as it relates to the budget. We were able to give recommendations and base our comments on what we felt would be responsible according to the vision that is outlined in this district to provide a thorough and efficient education to our children. However, at our last meeting on Wednesday when we found out that we did not have all the details, I proposed that we extend the meeting until

today so that we and the community would be properly prepared. We were told emphatically that we would have that data readily available. We were internally texted with regards to the tax levy and we were told that there would not be any tax increase to the homeowners. On the document it said it was a \$10.6 million tax increase and then we were told that there would be no tax increase. Now on this document we're being outlined with a \$5 million tax increase. The City of Paterson cannot take another tax increase from anybody, the city, the school, or anybody. We cannot afford it. We're not going to have it. We're not going to vote on budgets that we cannot really speak to. It is absolutely absurd that we are sitting here once again where we have to apologize to the community for not being properly prepared. How many more meetings will it take before the community gets a budget? How many more meetings will it take before we receive a budget? We need to have all the data in our hands so that we can properly assess what is being given to our children. Our children are suffering. The test scores identify it and we need to make sure that our decisions are rational and will speak to what's happening. Yes, we're legally underfunded. Yes, we are. We still have some other things in the district that we need to look at, but without having that information in front of us it's hard for us to make decisions. I'm here tonight to find out when we will have it. I want to make sure that we have a date. I want to make sure we have a time. Once it's solidified and it's in our hands, then we ask the community to come out. It's not fair that the community continues to come out to these meetings and we don't have information to provide to them so that they can come to the microphone and speak. So when they come to the microphone we get beat up week after week. We're sitting here with an opportunity to serve the community to fight for our children, but we can't fight for our children without having information. It's not fair to anybody on the Board. It's not fair to you as community residents and taxpayers. Your children go to the school. I have a child in the school. I'm not just fighting because I'm sitting on the Board. I'm fighting because I'm a parent. I'm making first things first. I'm a parent and I'm a parent to every one of your children. We need to get this document and we need to get it ASAP.

Comm. Kerr: I'm just going to say that we are really not out of character in terms of how the budget is presented. I think this has been the process over the years. The problem that we face this year in particular is the reason everybody is present here tonight. It is the draconian cuts that we face in this district. When you look at our operating budget, a little bit over \$400 million, and then the State Department instructs the Superintendent – please remember that the Superintendent works for the State Department of Education – to cut \$45 million out of the budget that is exactly what he is doing. We are here to tell him and the State that it is totally unacceptable. So we are not here contending the process. The process is okay. We are here contending that we have to live with a contractionary budget which will totally stifle the further development of education in this district. That's the reason why we're here and I would love for us to keep our focus and our thoughts to the idea that we're losing \$45 million. Ask the Superintendent if losing \$45 million out of his operating budget will give him a budget that is adequate enough to educate over 30,000 kids in this district. That's where we need to go with our conversation tonight.

Comm. Hodges: Mr. Kerr is actually quite correct. If you recall, last year we had a joint meeting with the City Council that was on March 13, which would technically be next week or something like that. The budget was actually printed in the paper that Monday because the City Council found out about the tax increase that Tuesday and they went crazy. So we're not out of compliance in terms of how the budget is being presented. He's actually opening up a window for us to work on the manipulating of these cuts. So that's not where the problem lies, at least not for me. I am very mindful of that and Mr. Kerr's point is one that I would wholeheartedly embrace. What I'm troubled by is the

elimination of the school, which is a major problem. I'm going to take a couple of minutes to explain why that's a problem. I'm an old man and it is quite true that should one of my colleagues use that appellation themselves toward me I might have a more pugilistic response - just a warning to the wise. However, it gives me the ability to say with authority that if you don't study history and learn from it you will repeat it. I was here during the tail end of the Abbott decision court battles. We, along with Rosie Grant, met with David Sciarra and Steve Bloch. Some of you don't even know who Steve Bloch is. We met with him to discuss strategy as to how we were going to force the state to deliver on the services that this community was cheated out of decades ago. One of those services was school construction. The argument that was presented was very clear. We had overcrowding. We did not comport with the state's laws on classroom size. We did not do it, and we had the worst facilities in the State of New Jersey. This is not Dr. Hodges saying it. This is what the state itself has agreed to. So, on that basis we were able to hold their feet to the fire and make them build new schools. The people on this Board were not down with us when the parents and I drove down to Trenton month after month after month to fight for School 16 and the Hani Awadallah School. They weren't in that position and I'm not blaming them for that. They weren't sitting in those meetings across the table from Mark Larkin and Charles McKenna battling them and making them do what they're supposed to do, using the bludgeon of crowding in our schools and the worst facilities in the state to make them do what they didn't want to do. We made them do it. If you now turn around and sell or close schools, what is your argument going forward? What is your argument? What do you do to address the other needs that are coming forward? We're not shrinking as a district. School 14 and School 17 are unacceptable. These are tiny buildings that were built many years ago, another century ago. So if you turn around and close those schools before you have gotten commitments from the state to rebuild them, you're taking away your ability to get that done. I really want you to listen. I don't want the applause. I want to make sure that they are directed by what you do then. The Superintendent of Schools has twice put it in here, so he's not hearing it. If you voluntarily shut down the schools, where is your argument? Mind you, next year we're going to lose more money in the flat funding. So far this district has cut \$240 million over the course of seven years. Understand that - seven years, including this year. \$240 million was supposed to by law come to this school district. By 2018 the district's audit said that you're going to have a \$186 million shortfall. When are you going to be able to build new buildings or even turn the lights on in the ones that you have now? This district cannot volunteer to close down buildings. It can't do it. You just can't do it. Here's what makes it even worse. By the way, when you shut down a building you still must turn on the lights, electricity, and heat because your pipes will freeze in the winter. Therefore, you're still running the building. Walk around any building in the school and the lights are still on. You're paying for that. We can sell the building or lease the building. Who is coming in there? Someone will come. You get a charter school. Who gives the money to the charter school to open up? We do. It will come out of your children's pocket and they will turn around and pay you your lease with the money that you give them, which you take from your kids. Each year when they increase in size you'll give more and more money to them. That's the problem. That's the dilemma. That is why, Dr. Evans, this closing of schools should not be in this budget. There's no other argument for that. You can say whatever you want to, but the long-term argument is clear. It's not just my argument. Ladies and gentlemen, I don't know what else to say to the Board. I don't know what else to say to you. I pointed this out twice already and it's still there and it's now sitting in the county office, which I'm really upset about. This Board cannot let this stand. Mr. President, since my conversation hasn't been sufficient, I'm going to put a motion on the table that there be no closing of schools as part of this budget process. None!

Comm. Irving: There is a motion on the floor. Does anybody want to second it?

Comm. Kerr: Second.

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. Kerr to not close any school within the budget.

Comm. Irving: I'm not prepared to entertain any motion until I get a budget. Dr. Hodges, while I understand where you're coming from, I need to see the full budget. I need to understand the rationale for the Superintendent to even propose this. I think to do it prematurely is only premature. It is premature and reckless for the reasons you just named. Until we have a viable working budget, it does not make sense for me to entertain it. The motion is on the floor, so the Board has full authority to vet it and discuss it. But it's just not something I feel I want to support right now.

Comm. Hodges: The only problem I have is the Superintendent has put it into the budget and sent it to the county. He was told last week that was a problem, he was told the week before it was a problem, and it's still being put forward. So I have no choice but to make sure the message becomes clearer.

Comm. Irving: Fair enough. That was your request and the Board never took any formal action on it like we're doing now.

Comm. Redmon: We don't have a complete budget. I do understand where you're coming from, Dr. Hodges, as far as closing schools. But I do agree with Mr. President. We should not jump the gun yet. We should see what we have on the table first. I agree with you about not closing schools, but right now our hands are kind of tied at this moment anyway.

Comm. Kerr: I think what the Commissioner is mentioning are not schools. He's talking about physical structures. He's not talking about a school that is in a leased building and you're moving it out of a leased building into another building. We are talking about buildings that are owned by the Paterson Public Schools. Am I correct?

Comm. Hodges: You're absolutely correct. I'm sorry. I was inaccurate.

Comm. Redmon: Now I understand. As you spoke last Wednesday when we were here we thought that it would be premature that we were selling buildings that we owned. I got that point, but we do have to move some schools around because some of the facilities are old.

Comm. Hodges: Again, the issue is that the Superintendent is moving forward with it. This is the third time that this discussion came forward and it's still being moved forward and the Board has not had a chance to decide. Now it's sitting in the county office. That's why I don't want this to go forward if the Board is in agreement that we don't want to close down its buildings. The old schools are fine. I have no problem with the leases. But you can't close down buildings that we own and then lose them forever because there's no new real estate coming in this country.

Comm. Redmon: That was your point at the last meeting we had.

Comm. Hodges: Exactly, and it's still happening.

Comm. Mimms: The reason I have a problem is because if we as the governing body who represents the people in this city as it relates to education made a decision on Wednesday that we chose not to close any schools and now we're submitted with a document that's been sent to the state that we're choosing to do that, that's a problem. That means that whatever our recommendations are, they are not being heard. When we make a decision at one meeting we have to stand on it in the next meeting. We can't shift our decision. We made that recommendation to Dr. Evans and he took note of it. That was the recommendation that was brought to the table. When it was presented he said he was going to write it down and make some adjustments and that's what happened. Now we're at the table and it's still here. That's a problem. That's what was stated on Wednesday because I wrote it down and it was written down by Dr. Evans. So for us to come back with this on the table is a problem.

Comm. Rivera: We have to understand when we say 'we' recommended it has to be as a Board. Just because two or three people recommend not doing something doesn't mean that the whole Board agrees with that recommendation. That's one thing. The Superintendent is looking into every possible scenario without reducing services. For example, the closure of some of the schools is not going to reduce staffing at all. It might be a little inconvenient to some of the kids, but you have some schools that are over 100 years old. We're building two new schools right now. All we're doing is just consolidating. That's the plan that was in place. I don't understand where Dr. Hodges comes from saying that if we close a school down we lose it forever. It's still our property. Some of the schools we have on the list have leases and there are maybe one or two on that list that we have gotten on every document that we have gotten here. That's why I'm a little shocked. Every time there's a crowd we have to talk about something just so people can hear that we're fighting. If you look at every email that we've gotten regarding possible cuts, those schools have been on the list the whole time. I didn't hear any objections in the emails at all. The BA is here and you can bring her to the podium. I want her to let us know here as a Board if she has heard any emails going to her questioning the closure of those schools as a Board. Maybe one or two members feel that way, but you have to let the administration explain the reason why they're planning to close those schools. We have to stop playing politics here. Let's cut it out. Seriously!

Comm. Castillo: I think we agreed when we had the meeting at 90 Delaware that we didn't want to sell any of our buildings. We agreed as a Board. We are talking about education and we are talking about being flat-funded. It says here to move teachers and students to the new schools. If we're talking about educating our kids, these schools that we want to remove these kids from are falling apart. We want to give them a better education. If we can move the kids and the teachers – so we're not losing any jobs – to a new location so they can get a better education, why not do it? Why would we have children in a school that's falling apart with substitutes and not a working program? If we're talking about the education, then let's talk about it as a whole. We have flat funding. Let's make sure our kids are getting educated with what we have now. Why aren't we moving? If we have the opportunity to help our kids, why not just move them over? We're not getting rid of the building. We'll figure out how to use it and make it better. It's our property. We're not selling it.

Comm. Kerr: The question is that we cannot afford to close our buildings when we are still leasing spaces to operate schools. That's a problem. We're trying to cut down on our costs and we're closing buildings to let them sit there to rot. Yet, we're leasing other building space. That makes no sense. In January this Board voted on an action item for \$45,000 for Paterson Public Schools to rent space from the City of Paterson. That has not even been consummated yet. \$45,000 and you're talking about closing

buildings. Come on. It's not politics. It's just a fact of life. We cannot still be in leased buildings and shutting down our buildings to leave to rot and talking about being frugal people. It can't happen.

Comm. Irving: To that point, that's the exact reason why I don't want to take any action on this until the Superintendent has presented to the Board. I know we've discussed in this document the closing and consolidation of leases. I would not want to lock us in to keeping poor facilities and then having to keep other leases without having that conversation presented to the Board. Dr. Evans, this is the absence of not having the document in front of us to review. This is exactly the conundrum we're in right now. I understand where Dr. Hodges is coming from, but I'm not prepared to lock this district into a decision that would handcuff us in facilities and then put kids in even poorer facilities because this district and this administration has not done its due diligence to ensure that the Board has the information it can to make the best educated decision possible. It's not fair to us and it's putting this Board in a very precarious situation, not just on this dais, but also with the community and the people who've come here time and time again. I'm going to tell you the truth. You are going to be coming back again because we're going to have to meet again to discuss the budget when we finally get it. It's not fair to everyone who's come out tonight. It's not fair to the Board members and people who have families to do so.

Community Member: Then boycott and cancel the meeting until they're ready and we'll come back then. That's what we'll do. Step down tonight. I feel you. We all feel you. This is a joke what they're doing to you guys.

Comm. Hodges: I have no problem removing my motion as long as this is removed from the budget. You can't tell me that you're uncomfortable with us making a decision when he's already done it by putting it into the budget. He's creating the facts on the ground. I'm only saying that you can't be comfortable with facts being made on the ground and then ask me to say nothing about it and wait for a temporary budget when he's already put it together. It's already in the budget. All I'm saying is just take it out of the budget and I'll be very happy to wait until the full budget is in front of us and discuss this further. With regards to playing politics, I've been here 13 years going in 14. I am very fond and hated for telling people what they don't want to hear. If they don't like what I'm telling them and they don't want me to tell them the truth, then they can vote me off tomorrow. I don't have a problem with that. I don't sugarcoat anything. I never have and they know I don't sugarcoat anything out here. I don't have time for that. This gray hair affords me the opportunity to say it. If I leave here I go work and get rich. Right now I'm broke. I'm not here because of politics. Trust me.

Comm. Irving: We're all in the same boat.

Comm. Hodges: No, you're not. Trust me. You're not. All I'm saying is if this is removed from this budget, I'm a happy man and I will wait until we have the full budget in front of us and then I'll bring it again to your attention. It makes no sense to close schools given the Abbott decision. If I need to, I will go ask the Education Law Center to come here and tell you that themselves as they've told me already.

Comm. Rivera: This is what we have and this is why we need the entire document. We have a \$5 million tax levy increase proposed by the Superintendent. We're telling him to remove potential savings without actually looking at the whole budget. If we remove this right here we're in the hole now \$5.6 million. That's what we're looking at. Keeping that school that Dr. Hodges is saying to remove from here, just overhead costs are almost \$600,000. The responsible thing to do, Dr. Hodges, like the President said, is

let's sit down and look at the whole document and analyze the situation. It is not responsible to just remove things from here without having a budget. It's just not responsible.

Comm. Irving: I'm just going to call the question because I'm ready to vote on this.

Comm. Hodges: I may pull it because I don't want the motion to fail, but I will say I do want this out of the budget.

Comm. Irving: I understand you may want it. I'd rather it stay and the document remain the way it is until it's fully presented by the Superintendent to this Board. Everyone keeps asking when. That's a great question. I will pose that question.

Comm. Hodges: Rather than have the motion fail, which I feel is going to happen, I will withdraw the motion tonight, but when the budget comes forward I'm putting it back.

Comm. Irving: That's fair. The motion has been withdrawn. Let me ask you what you want to do. What's the pleasure of the Board? Do we want to adjourn the meeting and reschedule?

Comm. Hodges: No. They want to talk.

Comm. Simmons: I think what we should do is go into public comments.

Comm. Irving: The folks don't want to stay here.

Comm. Simmons: Let the public speak.

Comm. Irving: We have over 30 speakers, Kenny.

Comm. Hodges: Let them speak.

Comm. Simmons: You have to let them speak. I also think that we should not take any action on anything tonight.

Comm. Irving: Comm. Rivera, what do you want to do? Do you want to adjourn the meeting or go into public comments?

Comm. Hodges: Public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Simmons, seconded by Comm. Redmon that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative, except Comm. Cleaves and Comm. Mimms who voted no. The motion carried.

Comm. Irving: We're going to do public comments and hear from the community because at least we need to hear from you even though the information hasn't been brought to us. I want to remind everyone of the three-minute time limit. I'm going to call people up in order by threes. We're going to ask everyone...

Comm. Hodges: Mr. President, please tell them that you are suspending the agenda so they'll understand that.

Comm. Irving: I want to make it very clear we are suspending any other action at this meeting until the next time we get together. We will not meet again until we are comfortable as a Board that the Superintendent is prepared to present the budget in its totality for this Board to be able to evaluate. With that said, there is no one else more ticked off, besides the folks in this audience, than the people who sat here and who have sat in these seats for the last three out of five days to not get the information that this community deserves. We collectively are upset. So I want to make sure we get through the speakers and after the speakers are done we will adjourn the meeting and we will all go home and wait for the next meeting.

Councilman Andre Sayegh: Good evening, Andre Sayegh, 215 Dundee Avenue. I'd like to have your attention, please. The taxpayers of Paterson cannot take another tax increase. In addition, the children of Paterson are being shortchanged. I say that because, as Councilman Goow will attest, on our side with the City Council we have a budget battle that's ongoing. I invite everyone tomorrow night because supposedly the Mayor will be there at 8:00 p.m. to face the music. A major part of our problem is controlling overtime costs within the Department of Public Works for a select few employees. We have a resolution tomorrow on the floor to take charge and take control of reining in those costs as far as DPW and all overtime is concerned. The reason I say the children of Paterson are being shortchanged is because for too long our schools have not been fully funded. There are signs behind me that are stating we must fully fund these schools. Governor Christie has abandoned his presidential run and has endorsed Donald Trump and apparently is back in the Garden State. He has to be held to task. As long as there are segments of this school district that are still under state control, they're responsible for a thorough and efficient education for all children in this city. So I'm calling upon the Council and the School Board to stand in solidarity with the Superintendent and make sure that we send that strong message to Trenton that our schools must be fully funded. So I'd be willing, with our Council President who has just arrived, to introduce a resolution to put the demands on Trenton to get what our children deserve, full funding for the Paterson Public Schools. Thank you very much.

Ms. Patricia McNeil: Good evening. We can't afford any more taxes in Paterson. I am so sorry. We cannot afford all these cuts. I came out here tonight. I thought I was going to go home with some good news, or some type of solution, but it's not going to happen tonight. I can see that. 32 children in a classroom in high school, stress on a teacher. I have two students in Kennedy High School. 32 students, that's like a college classroom. No one is learning anything. Then you're talking about more cuts? How can you cut and you're not even doing what you're supposed to be doing in the first place? I don't even know – I didn't have time to research it – what's legal for these children. When I went to visit that classroom one of those children didn't even have a desk. They were sitting at the teacher's desk. Trust me, when I waste my time to come up here I already went to inspect the classroom. This is too much. Please go back and stop wasting our time. We need a solution. Closing these schools is only going to overcrowd the other schools. Do you understand that? It's already overcrowded enough. Someone needs to do research in the high school to see how many classrooms have 32, 33, 34, and 35 children in there.

Ms. Valerie Freeman: Good evening. I don't want to come back here again. I'm trying to be as calm and as humble as I can be, but this is a crock of bull. A few years ago when Ms. Anna Taliaferro was the parent coordinator here, she took us on some parent conferences. Dr. Donald Clark did a workshop and he said if you want to know what's going on in the district, follow the money. I'm going to say this to you, Dr. Evans, and I'm going to continue to say it. I'm trying to be as respectful as I can. Because you

have not given this Board a full budget, I'm starting to believe you got something to hide. If you have something to hide and if the budget is not done then I would respect it more if you said it's not ready yet. She has no reason for it to not be ready. She gets paid very well. Six figures and you don't have a complete budget to give to the Board to vote on? Are you serious? Absolutely ridiculous! I want to respect the Board members that are sitting here. I'm not going to respect the Board member that every time the public portion comes you have somewhere to go, Flavio Rivera. I'm not going to respect that. But I will respect the ones that remain here and listen to the community instead of trying to tell us what you think it is. I respect you for sitting and I respect you for adjourning the meeting after this public portion. If you don't take a stand and you want us to stand behind you, I'm telling you it's going to be a war. These parents have the power. You can shut meetings down just by simply making some noise. Simple as that! It's our children and some of you have children. So you have to fight. When we say don't do it, get up and walk out, get up and walk out. The budget sits in the County Superintendent. Some of the parents don't know, but I already knew Wednesday that the budget was going on Friday whether you voted it down or not. It sits on that desk. Things that were said that weren't going to be in this little one-piece of bull crap paper is still in this paper. They still don't have a full budget. How can you tell them to look at this and you don't know what you're spending? What are you spending? What are you doing with the money? Ms. BA, unlike the Council who won't call the Mayor to the carpet, this Board needs to call that BA and make her answer some hard questions. I saw on here that you want to combine the athletic programs. Combining the athletic programs for football may be good, but what about basketball, soccer, and the other athletic departments? There's no way you can combine the basketball program together. I'm saying to you guys you have to take a stand. Dr. Evans, I implore you to put some fire under Daisy Ayala's feet and make her give them what they need to pass the budget. Plain and simple!

Ms. Lavonne Jones-McEachern: Good evening. It's Lavonne Jones-McEachern. I come before you tonight because we are trying to reinvent the wheel it seems. We keep going over the same thing. I came out of a corporate business world and there are a lot of intelligent people I see sitting up here. There are a lot of people with degrees behind their names. You're in this fraternity and sorority. Nothing is wrong with that because I was in one myself. But the point is we need to bring out some business skills and we need to protect our children. We need to roll up our sleeves, everybody up there. I don't know why we're waiting on one specific person, but the Board of Education is supposed to do that, protect our kids' education. It shouldn't be just one person coming up with a budget. Anybody that's been on any type of board of directors or whatever when you do a budget we pull an all-nighter. I'm on the board of directors. We pull all-nighters. We sit down and go line by line and we figure out. I was in a multi-billion dollar corporation very strong today. I hate to say it, but they started at the top. The people that were needed at the bottom to do the work were the last to be considered. They started at the top. They offered professional courtesy. If you had enough time to go, please go graciously. We eliminated same jobs everywhere. If you got 10 people at the top doing the same thing and you know the number ratio does not call for that, start there. Let's not start at the bottom with our teachers because 32 kids in a classroom is utterly disgusting. We need to go in other school districts if we have to. Look at models. Look at best practices. See how they do it. We need to do it here. We're talking about the Paterson community. If we don't give our kids anything to work with, yes they're going to be on the street and on the corner. They're going to be robbing, killing, and what else because they're trying to survive. We need to use our heads or we wasting our education. We need to roll up our sleeves. We need to pull an all-nighter. We need to bring it all out, lay it on the table, and figure out what money needs to be spent where. It's nothing against vice principals. I love them dearly. But if

the school population doesn't require it, then maybe we have to give them another job. Maybe they can go in the classrooms. I'm not saying get rid of people because everybody needs to live, but we need to look at this from a practical and educated standpoint. We call ourselves the Board of Education. Let's set the rules to get this town up and moving.

Councilman William McKoy: Thank you Mr. President, Board members, Dr. Evans. I came tonight to join with the chorus of taxpayers and city residents to echo our voice that tonight the taxpayers of the City of Paterson cannot afford to pay more for a district that is broken. We believe that rather than looking to the taxpayers to pick up the slack, we ought to look at the state and hold them accountable for the underfunding that has been going on in this district and others for years. Dr. Hodges has been echoing that along with Mr. Kerr, but I don't think we have fully grasped that. Let me remind you that I'm a graduate of John F. Kennedy High School and so is my daughter. I come to tell you that our responsibility under the constitution is provide a thorough and efficient education to every child. That means meeting every child's need. The budget does not start with a number or trying to balance the budget. The budget primarily starts with what is required for a thorough and efficient education. Coming in and cannibalizing the district is not the answer! I'm sure there are issues that can be consolidated and savings that can be made, but we need to look at every child as if they're our child because they're in fact our children and make sure that they're provided with every tool they need to be successful. We know the ills of our society and our community. We know the path that they will go to if they're not properly educated. This budget is saying that we don't really care about children and that we care more about adults and what the state thinks about us than what is our obligation to our children. I'm here to remind you, Dr. Evans, that you're either part of the solution or part of the problem. I know you sit in a difficult seat because you report to the state and they hire and pay you. But I remind you as an educator what your first and primary obligation is, to educate children. This budget does not do that. We're attempting to have our children drink from a cistern that is broken. We're giving them a straw basket and asking them to draw water. We're asking them to do the impossible. I don't want to sacrifice my children on the altar of convenience or the budget. I want to make sure that they have every given opportunity to live out their true meaning and constitutional ability to succeed. That means giving them a thorough and efficient education. Consolidating and cutting teachers is not going to do it. The State Constitution requires it and tonight we're here to demand it. Let me say that I'm disappointed that we're back with a one-pager. We've had the conversation before and I think tonight we should have been prepared. Not only should we have been prepared, we have already submitted the budget to the county. So why is it that the Board can't see it? Why is it that the public can't see it? I'm just saying tonight that we have an obligation and a responsibility. Our job is not to balance the budget. As a Board and as parents our job is to make sure that our children get the education that they need. I say to you a child in Paterson as it is now will never grow up to be an Olympic swimmer. Do you know why? We don't have an Olympic-size swimming pool. But if that child goes to Passaic County Tech, they have a chance because at least they have the pool. Let's make it ready for our children. Let's give them what they deserve and not look to cannibalize the system, but to demand that the state and Governor Christie live up to their constitutional obligation to every child. Thank you very much.

Mr. Rashon Dixon: Good evening, Rashon Dixon. Dr. Evans, you may not know me. You may never have met me before, but let me give you the flip side of what's going to happen. I'm an advocate for the youth in the City of Paterson. I'm a volunteer outreach worker for the youth in the City of Paterson. I just won a community activist award from the City of Paterson for doing work in the streets of Paterson, New Jersey. The flip side

of this is I speak in a whole lot of schools in Paterson, regular schools, high schools, alternative schools and charter schools. Wherever they allow me to come and speak, I speak. Every time I went to an alternative school, the amount doubled. Once these cuts take place and when you start doubling up on these classes and these teachers and their caseload gets so heavy the kids are going to lose interest in learning in the schools. Guess where they're going to end up? They're going to end up in the streets. They're going to end up in the streets because they're going to lose interest in the school. They're going to feel that they can't get that attention that they need from a teacher because their caseload is too heavy. I'm one of the ones that are responsible for squashing beefs in the streets and telling the youth to put the guns down. I'm that man. I'm one of the ones in the streets going up and down the hill and when the shootings happen I'm trying to go on the scene reaching the parents. This is what's going to happen when you start making those cuts. A lot of those kids are going to start dropping out and they're going to end up in the streets. That's where they're going to end up. It may not be important to you and you may not see what I see because you're sitting on that side. The murders are going to double. The robberies and shootings are going to double. It may sound like it might be nothing to you, but it's something. They're going to lose interest in these schools. If you start closing these schools and you start doubling up, these kids are going to lose interest. If you take the recreation and you start mingling that together, a lot of them are going to start beefing because they're not used to being together. They're not used to playing basketball together. They're not used to playing football together. We need to keep these kids first. We need to think about these kids in the streets. Remember my name, Rashon Dixon. I am a street keeper and I'm about bringing peace in the streets to these youth. I just went through this last week because I work for the Department of Public Works. I was just at City Hall. I had to take a day off and it wasn't my choice. The city locked down. They made us take a day off. I just went through this last week. I find the strength to still come here and fight for these youth. If I don't have a job next week, guess what I'll be doing? I'll be fighting for these youth. Are you going to hire me? No. I know you don't have a job for me. I'm going to fight for these youth until I can't fight any more because I see the bigger picture. I've been to prison before. I know where they're headed. If they lose interest in school, they're going to hit the streets and they're going to end up in the prison system. There are more prisons opening than schools. It's supposed to be the other way around. I don't know if we're making the connection right now, but I hope and pray when you go home and lay down tonight something that I said tickles you and you find the power to bring out a budget and you save these kids. Thank you.

Mr. Bilal Hakim: Good evening, Board President and Commissioners. After my brother Rashon came to the microphone all I feel like saying is if we don't fall in line I need to call on the slap squad. Earlier today I took a look at a video clip of Yellowstone Park. It was about wolves that were removed from the environment and they reintroduced them back. When they removed the wolves from the environment, the entire environment was affected. When the wolves were brought back to that environment it began to stimulate the entire environment. Before the wolves were there the deer took over and all the other wildlife began to disappear. When the wolves came back it began to stabilize and bring life back. I mention that story just to say that according to the New Jersey Constitution in order for a child to receive a thorough and efficient education you have to have what is needed in that formula. If that's not there, as hard as the teachers may be working, they are still not receiving a thorough and efficient education. I was here last week and you said that you were going to have a budget. I read something in the paper about \$27 million and then I hear something about cutting that in half. What the hell is going on? Are you playing games with people? Our children are very important to us and we will continue to come here. We're not going to stop. I don't

know if this is a tactic, but I've been through tactics like this dealing with court cases where thousands of people come out to court and as soon as you get there they adjourn. People are coming from all over the country. I'm saying we are all ambassadors, every last one of you. I'm so happy to see these young people here because the future is theirs. But we are all going to have to be the ambassadors. I contacted folks and I'm glad they showed up here. Stand up. I know that you are the State-Appointed Superintendent. What I didn't mention last week when I was at the microphone is two friends of mine called me and both of them had conflicting stories about you, Dr. Evans. One said, "He really cares about the children." The other one said, "He doesn't give a damn about the kids at all." I was fired up ready to come blow this microphone up last week until I heard the message from that teacher. Remember the teacher last week said it was her last year? I took another route. If your hands are tied, then you still have the moral and ethical obligation to stand up and express yourself to us. Stand on the right side of history and defend these children. Stand with us to fight to make sure that this district is fully funded. Thank you.

Ms. Willa Mae Taylor: Good evening to all of the Board and Dr. Evans and to all our parents and teachers who are here. Last time I was very emotional and I'm still emotional. My doctor told me not to get too upset. But every time I hear you say you're going to do something against the children in Paterson or in any urban area in the State of New Jersey or this country it bothers me. I know under the sub way of life there are people who do not want to educate this population, a population of color. They don't want it to happen. But we're going to have to stay vigil and stay together. A state superintendent is just what it says, a state superintendent. It's not a City of Paterson superintendent, but a state superintendent. We gave up the right over 22 years ago to run our own schools. We asked them to come in. They came in. They said they were going to stay for two or three years and they're staying forever. I've been here three times now. How will we know when the next budget meeting will take place? If you can't tell me today, send me a robo-call like you usually do to tell me when school is closed or when there's something horrific happening. Send me a robo-call with the correct time and place. Usually after we do three times in a baseball game you're out. In this district how many outs must we have? Thorough and efficient education has been spoken of since the 1970s and even before that we called it something else. T&E came about, quality for all our children. From the federal government they took it throughout the United States. We've been changing our process over and over again. We don't even give children and teachers a moment to digest one program for another one. It takes a long time to inculcate what you need to teach and also what you have to learn in spite of the situation in which you live. We're always being told more taxes and we're going to take away your schools and teachers. Thorough and efficient education has missed us and I'm not sure if it's not because of my color. I am a person of color. I was very lucky that my parents made me stay in school. We lease buildings because the state says we cannot buy or own educational buildings or facilities. In a lease we must put in electric, gas, windows, replace pipes, walls, and all items for a safe educational building. Why can't we use this rehab money to restore our own school buildings instead of leasing? I'm going to stop right now because I can just go and on with this. I believe in charter schools and I wanted to have a charter school, but I did not want to use public money. I wanted to go out and get my own corporate foundation money and have my own school. Then I found we were raped at the Board of Education with the public money for charter schools and that hurt my heart terribly. I think we're going in the wrong direction using public money for charter schools. We need to look at that. Please give us a budget. I want to see more than one piece of paper. I used to get a whole pound of paper here. Thank you.

Mr. Corey Teague: Good evening Commissioners. Here we are once again dealing with a budget crisis. Over the last three years, since 2008, I was out there hitting the streets and trying to tell people about this crisis and that what was coming was going to be horrendous. Now we're here. In cities like Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and many others there have been walkouts by thousands of students who are protesting what's going on with the budgets in their districts. On March 15 we are doing a walkout of our own in Paterson. That's happening on March 15. The basis of this walkout is to wake up the community. The fact that everyone is here tonight is a beautiful sign because for too long we have had thousands of people at the voting booth on Election Day and only two people at the Board meetings to actually see what they're doing. So I'm encouraging you to continue to come out. I don't care how long it takes for the budget to be brought forward. Continue to come out. Continue to ask questions. Continue to demand results. Continue to do what you need to do to bring other parents with you. If you do not do that, you are putting your own child at risk. You need to understand Dr. Evans works for the Governor. He works for the Commissioner of Education. The Governor and the Commissioner of Education want to take away and destroy public schools. They want to destroy towns like Paterson, New Jersey. They want to come in, take them over, and wipe them out. His boss has a rope around his neck almost like a lynching. He's telling him, "If you move, I'm going to pull that rope." So he can't do but so much, but we can. The Governor and the Commissioner don't have a rope around our necks. Neither does he have a rope around the Commissioners. We put them there not to play nice with the Superintendent. We put them there not to play nice with the administration. The fact that there's no budget on this table today, I would encourage every single Board member to tear 90 Delaware in two, to go to 90 Delaware Avenue and tear that place up because it's an embarrassment to the district, to the Board, and to the community. This is the third meeting that we have come to and we haven't heard anything yet. We don't know what's coming. If you look at the table to my right, you probably have \$1 million in salaries over there. There's no reason why the budget should not be made available. \$1 million is salaries. There's no excuse that can be possible at this moment. No excuse could be satisfying right now. Our children are in trouble and we have to do something as parents. We can't leave it up to them anymore. Just like I told you at the last meeting, these are our babies. These are our children. We can't leave it to them anymore. We have to stand up and fight for our children. One person can't do it alone. Two people can't do it alone. We have to do it as a community.

Ms. Victoria Oquendo: Good evening. I came here with a whole script, but after hearing a few of your comments I think I need to flip the script. Providing an equal educational opportunity for all students required funding public schools at a level sufficient to provide a rigorous curriculum and a broad range of subject areas delivered by well-trained teachers and supported by effective school district leaders. This also requires sufficient funds for schools serving higher numbers of low-income students as well as with other special needs. How we fund our public schools is therefore fundamental to the national effort to ensure that all students have access to high-quality opportunities and that prepare them to assume responsibilities of citizenship. Had you not removed civics from the school system they would know what citizenship is. There's a 2008 New Jersey legislative act that ensured what is called SFRA, School Funding Formula Reform Act. The United States Constitution is being breached. There is an Abbott vs. Burke decision that was made ensuring and argued that the state's methods of funding education was unconstitutional because of significant expenditures and disparities between poor urban and wealthy school districts, and that the poor urban school districts were unable to adequately meet the educational needs of their students. The way you came to this meeting today unprepared is the same way we send our kids into the schools to learn, unprepared. Today I went to Eastside High School because

my son was given an F in algebra and I needed to know why. He got the F because he's cutting algebra. Cause and effect is a universal law. Things don't just happen for no reason. The cause of him cutting class is he doesn't even have an algebra teacher. He's losing interest in going to class and he's cutting class. Also, I went to Eastside today to visit. The climate and culture of Eastside is like the department of corrections. I felt like I was going to a prison and not my son's school. Then the principal wanted to brag about all the surveillance systems, which showed me one thing. You spend money on security more than you do on education. They have 60 cameras but no books or teachers. You're talking about taking athletics away from the kids, an outlet. Just as brother Rashon said, where are they going to go, to the streets? We send our children into these schools every day and the quota that needs to be met is them coming up with your standardized testing score? That doesn't equal intelligence.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening. There was one thing missing from today's conversation overall and I want to challenge this Board. Every decision you make ask yourself the question how will it affect the children. I hear of budget cuts, building closures, and staff being let go. What I don't hear that's very missing from the conversation is how it will affect the children. This is the reason why we're all here. I feel like a broken record, but I have to say it again. It's the responsibility of the State of New Jersey to provide a thorough and efficient system of education. The responsibility lies squarely with them. As our elected representatives, we need you to fight to hold the state accountable to demand the funding that we're not getting from them. We shouldn't be squabbling over what to provide and what not to provide for our children. They have needs, and it's our responsibility and the state's responsibility to make sure that those needs are met. So let's join together and take it to the state and make sure we get the funding. \$242 million over seven years is a lot of money that is owed to us. I'll say it again. It's worth the time. \$242 million! I want to take this conversation to a place where I haven't heard a lot of before. Some people referred to it. Are we meeting the kids' needs? Right now of our senior class, what should be the Class of 2016, there are 691 students who don't yet know if they have met graduation requirements. 691 haven't met it so far. I know the district has put some things in place. One of them that I'm concerned about is the Armed Services Vocational Assessment, or the ASVA. The district is trying to put many sittings of this so that our kids can meet at least one of the requirements and graduate. We can't send all our kids to the military. What happens with ASVA is the district doesn't administer the test. The military administers the test. This is because the records then belong to them and there's no law preventing them from sharing it with the recruitment centers. So please be conscious that parents have an opt-out option not to have their children's information sent. So I'm asking the district to please make sure that as we administer this test parents are aware of Option 8 which is to say that their children's record does not get handed over to the military without their knowing about it. I also want to make a point about the facilities. Paterson parents went to Trenton every month for four years. That's at least 48 trips to Trenton. That was to get the buildings that we did get built over the last 11 years done, starting with PANTHER and continuing with NRC and International. Paterson parents did it and if you talk to the SDA they will tell you the only reason they're building the two new schools that are opening right now is because our parents were there meeting after meeting hearing after hearing testimony after testimony. We did that because we knew our kids were in overcrowded facilities. Data says that our enrollment has gone up every year over the last eight years. If they were overcrowded 11 years ago, they're still overcrowded now. Thank you.

Ms. Elizabeth Elias: Hello everybody. You all already know me. I don't even know where to start from because it's the same thing. It feels like I'm having a nightmare or de ja vu. It's the same thing. No budget. No answers. Thank you, Dr. Hodges. I

served you at Mr. G's. You've come a long way and I will fight for you. I'm happy there are people like you to fight for us. Thank you. Make sure you people vote for this man. He's great. First of all, I'm here again with no proper answers, against loss, with no information. Like I said earlier when I shouted to the police officers, you have to understand I have a son. I don't want my son to be arrested by the police out here. I would rather get arrested to stand for the voice of our people so it won't happen to my children. Dr. Evans, I know it's about you and Ms. Shafer. I'm speaking to you too because you're looking down. I went to a meeting and I felt like I didn't get anything from the meeting that I went to. I don't do this for pay. I've been advocating for the children for the past four years - for my Latino and Black parents. It's a lot. Chris, if we were going to war you are handing us a knife and they're fighting us with guns. Do you understand that? We don't have the proper tools of education. We don't have them. My son is one of those children. I could be teaching him something at home but you are not even up to date for what I can teach him. Mind you, I didn't get the proper education, but its logical thinking of what's going on with the numbers. It's not right. You don't need a genius. You have kids that were autistic. Is that how you say it? I have a little accent because I'm Spanish. I would remind you I learned Spanish in three years and I had the proper teachers back then. I hope that a lot of people that pay their taxes and send their children to school will get the same opportunity. Do not give Christie the satisfaction. Like my best friend said, we get discouraged to not go out and fight. They're going to do system setups so we can give up, kill each other, and get miscommunicated and misguided. The city and the state should be working together for our children's education. It's all a system. It's like a game. If we were to go play ball everybody has rules. Let me tell you they don't have any rules for us. They just have one thing only and it's for us to not win. It's a non-win thing with our children. The city is part of the state. Dr. Evans, it's seven years. How do you sleep at night? I even feel bad for you. I pray for you. I became a Christian and I actually pray for you that god gives you the strength and nothing happens to you. If it was me, I would be getting heart attacks and strokes with all the responsibility that you have on your hands. That's for everybody up there. I'm a waitress and a lot of people know that. Everybody will have their opinion and that's how the human works. But if I get cut, I bleed. If you get cut, you bleed. If I learn, you learn. I want one of my kids to have your opportunity just like my kid. If we don't have the proper tools, it's not going to happen. We're going to keep having other people from other cities to take our spots. Why? On March 9 there's a meeting. We're going to go to the state. This is where it starts. We just started now. You know what they're doing. They're discouraging us. We have to come together and educate ourselves. When we're on Facebook, pass it on and let Chris Christie know we're not going to give up. It's against him. He doesn't want to do anything. We're going to do something and vote for the right people.

Mr. Luis Dominguez: Good evening. My name is Luis Dominguez and I'm a senior here at John F. Kennedy Educational Complex. I'm proud to say I'm the valedictorian of the ACT Academy. I currently hold a 4.1 GPA and I'm the President of the National Honor Society here. I'm not here to talk about my educational accolades. You see, I'm a senior and I'm getting ready to graduate in about three months. I'm here to express my worry about what's going on here in the district. I'm worried about the underclassmen coming after me. I'm worried about my younger brothers who are here in the school district. The way things have been going every year I see it gets harder for me. My classes get more packed. There are less teachers. It becomes so difficult for me to be able to take in a better quality of education. I can't even imagine what's coming up for my younger brothers who are coming up after me. My mother is worried. My mother is already considering leaving the district because she knows what's coming for us. She knows what's coming for my bothers. She knows that the quality of education here is diminishing and we can't have that. We need to be able to fix our budget. We need to

be able to come together so we can fix the quality of education for all the students coming up after me. Like I said, it's over for me. I'm going on to college. I've been accepted into Rutgers University for engineering. I can move on, but I'm here because I truly have a deep concern for the students who are coming up after me. It needs to be fixed for them. Thank you.

Mr. Jeslomar Gargot: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. In light of the recent debate over budget cuts, I've become worried about the impact it will have on my fellow students. I'm a student here and the quality of education here I feel is weak. I want to be somewhere. I want to go somewhere. I have dreams and aspirations of going to a good college and getting a good degree. How can I say that when things only get worse? The Board members before me, you have a commitment to all of us to at least tell us things will get better. But they don't. It's a bad feeling because I want to go somewhere. How am I supposed to dream when all I have to worry about is the bottom line of the district? It comes down to you're either helping the students or you're hurting them. I want to be able to say you're helping us, but it doesn't seem that way. I implore you to just think about the impact it will have. I'm a sophomore so I have two more years left. I want to say I graduated from a strong district, but I can't say that. There are people who are younger than me that are coming to my high school and it only gets worse for them. I want to leave this school district saying it got better, but it won't. I implore all of you when you go to sleep just think about what students like me are going through. Just think of solutions. There's only one thing to say here. It needs to get better.

Ms. Julie Pagan: Good evening. I'm coming here as a mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, cousin, aunt, friend, and as a Patersonian. My kids are finished with school right now, but these are my kids. You guys are failing them. I haven't been to a meeting for a long time. My last one I remember was when my child was in school. They were going to cut Paterson recreation and this was packed. I don't know if you remember that. I know Dr. Hodges remembers because he said this would be nice if everybody would come here to all the meetings. I remember that. We need that again. We know. We weren't here, but we're here now and we need to continue to get our families here. If we don't care about our kids, nobody else will. Look what happened. It slipped and we let it happen, but we're not going to do it anymore. I'm a taxpayer who's in danger of losing my house and the taxes are going to increase. I'm going to be gone. I'm going to be homeless and I work two jobs. I can't afford the mortgage. We're going to have a ghost town here. We're going to have boarded up houses with graffiti all over and nobody is going to want to come in here. Forget about people moving here. Businesses don't want to come here now. I'm so frustrated and the only thing I know how to do when I'm frustrated is pray. I'm going to pray because that's something that we have not been doing in our schools. That slipped from us, too. Father god! Holy spirit! Please come down here. Our kids need you. Touch every child. Continue to cover them. Lord, we don't want our kids in jail. You created them to be kings and queens and they deserve the best. Lord, we have elected officials that are here. Please lord, we know you've done it before and you're going to do it again. As a community, we're more than coming together. Lord, we need you here. We need you. As a mother I do not want my child in jail. I do not want my grandchild in jail. Their only option is to stay on the street when I'm not here. I'm not going to let it happen. Lord, touch these people at night. Get into their dreams. Talk to them. Let them have the courage to stand up for our children. Please, Dr. Evans, I know everybody is coming down on you and we know why. Lord, touch him. Let him be the mouthpiece for us because he's the one who's there now who will stand up for them. For Ms. Shafer who is assisting him, be his backbone and maybe even tell him we need to do this. If you have to overpower him, give them the strength. For our Commissioners, give them the

mouth to yell at the parents to come down here for their kids. We want to come down here for a meeting. We don't want to come down here to talk about a child that has been killed on our streets. I'm begging you, lord, in front of all these people to please come down for the children. He's not forgotten us. Lord, we love you. I love you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reverend Staton: Good evening, Mr. President and Board. It's always a privilege and an honor to come before you and my beloved people. I truly just want to say off the bat I want to thank that young lady that said a prayer. It's so important because that's what it's come down to and has always been there at that particular point. If we ever needed prayer, we need prayer right now. You know who I am and being a pastor it behooves me. I know there are many lanes and I've been in many lanes. As I stand before you from the pastoral point of view, many of us proclaim that we know god, have god in us, are Christian or have that knowledge that we care for people. When I look down through the years I just want to thank those of you who have been there and how this all came to be when the state came into our beloved city. It is important to remember that there were five points that the state said this district wasn't doing. As I stand here before us, the state has been here approximately 25 years, two decades plus, and hasn't corrected those five issues that they said that our Board at that point did not and could not meet. Within two years we were informed of those five and we had those two years to correct them or the state was coming in. We've been sold a bill of goods and that bill of goods is those five things that we hold up. The County Superintendent came in as Reverend Dr. Frank Napier was exiting because of that and some of the Board members that were there at that time. So the game of manipulation begins. We started with a variety of programs that we were going to initiate as it has been said time and time again. Now it boils down to the reality of the manipulation. For the last seven years the money has continually been pulled back in spite of the fact that the courts said we were due that. In spite of the fact that every time we go to court it gets turned around by our beloved Governor who says he cares for us and those of us who sit in office who say they care for us. Time and time again, Mr. President, we look down and we see that we've been hoodwinked. We only understand that it's by design. The design is for us to fail and fail horribly. Then the state says that they're doing the best that they can. In 25 years they have proven to us that they can't do a job that they said we can't do. We were doing that job much better with a smaller budget since the state has been here. I don't need to say to you what you already know. The budget that you currently have and had in previous years doubles that of this city. I don't see why we can't recognize that if money was due us then that bill of goods that was sold to us hasn't been returned to us. It's an embarrassment to sit on a Board and a budget leaves out from your presence and somebody else's presence that you don't even get a chance to get a look at.

Ms. Carla Harris: Good evening. First, just let me start off by saying this. At the last meeting that we had here Monday you guys passed Comm. Irving a note telling them that they had to vote on that one page I don't know what to call it. There are either two things that happened. You purposefully misled the public or you don't know your job. You had to have known at the beginning when they first agreed as a Board not to vote or even entertain that one piece of paper that you gave them. You knew then that they had to vote on it. Who do you work for? Don't pass the Commissioner that we elect anything after we leave. Give it to him in front of the people who elected him. As a Board, I know we're fighting. But let me just tell you guys whenever you come to a meeting and you have to sit before us as a Board, if you aren't on the same page, don't entertain anything. I was duly corrected by the security last week that when you abstain, it's a no vote. If you decide as a Board no vote, all of you abstain together. Divided we fall. We didn't abstain. We voted you guys in. If we abstain, you wouldn't

be sitting there. Nobody votes for elected officials. I know that parents should come to meetings and we should come without having to be told or asked, but even if not one parent came to this meeting we elected nine people to stand up for us. I'm going to take a guess and I'm going to stand with the people who I elected and say you are all in the corner. You asked us to come out here. We came out here once. We came out here twice. We came out here three times. If I have a job to do and I don't do my job, you had a job to do to get that budget ready. That was your job and you didn't do it. It's one thing not to do your job, but it's something totally different to laugh in the community's face. I don't know what you're laughing at, but if you're on your phone and you're laughing at something, this isn't the time. I'm humble when need be, but let me just tell you I'm not playing. I told you before. I don't have any kids in this district. I have a granddaughter that's going to be in this district if I had a say. But every child sitting right there, guess what? They're my babies. I'm from the old school. It takes a village to raise a child. Shame on you! I don't even want to hear anybody saying anything about parents not coming. You cannot ask people to come and try to break them and turn up the heat so we can get too hot. Have us stand not even in the hallway near the meeting room, but in a room that leads to a hallway to the room that you're actually meeting in at 90 Delaware. That's where we were. Shame, shame, shame! I remember some years ago there was a lawsuit about this mess. I'm going to say it again. If the state doesn't want to sue the state, then guess what Board members? You may have to come out of your Board member roles and come into a parent role. If you can't do it, if we can't get a pro bono lawyer, guess what? We're going to get this done. If you keep on saying illegal, when you do something illegal you go to court. Good day.

Ms. Greta Mills: Greta Mills, Paterson teacher, resident of Paterson, born and raised. My son came through this district and I came through here. I'm sitting here. I graded all my papers as I sat and listened. I didn't get to finish last time when I came up here. That budget we know we need to get rid of. I told you before we have one nurse in two schools. I have a desk that fell on the kids. She's sitting in her desk. What's going on over there? The desk is falling, Ms. Mills. The leg fell off the desk. I don't understand why we even have to sit here and debate about whether or not we earn and deserve the money. The money belongs to the students. Give them the money. I'm looking at this piece of paper that you came up with and it has teacher, technology, and all these different positions of people not having a position. How are you going to take technology away? 2016 and we're not going to have technology? In my classroom they took the laptops I was using away because they have to get ready for PARCC, that beautiful word PARCC. Okay. That's nice. About my students who are sitting in a classroom that's supposed to be doing SuccessMaker. I put up the 10 marks for them so they can do 10 marks. We can't do any of that because the computers are needed for PARCC. Meanwhile, the teachers were not trained on all of this and get to really teach these kids what they need to know. I'm telling you that you have to decide now that you are going to go back and tell Christie, not ask him, that the money that this school district deserves is now wanted. We want it now, not later and not next year. The money that we're supposed to have we need to have now for the computers, desks, and the heating system that we've had a conversation about. My room stays at 69 sometimes lower than that. Meanwhile, if you go to another part of the building they're in a sauna and the teachers are here with their shirts off. They're ready to strip because it's too hot. You need to make sure you fix the heating system. We need to fix the electrical system. Buildings are falling down. Get the money that we're supposed to have to fix the schools. Get the money that we're supposed to have to have new schools. Just like the man said, that is true. When the state came in they were supposed to fix and bring in new schools and all that other stuff and did not do it. Stick to your word. All those who voted for Christie ought to be ashamed of themselves because he doesn't care anything about Paterson and he's dragging all these kids

down. Every last person in Paterson needs to be out here fighting because it's a sad day when that man sits there and runs for President and he hasn't been back here to do anything about what's going on. Now he's standing behind Trump. Does he care about Paterson kids? No. Go back and tell him we want the money that we deserve and if you have to, somebody find out how we can get a lawyer to sue. Then we can get our money. We're not addressing IEPs or anything else. Therefore, we do need the money to do what's needed for our children. We need the money. Don't keep telling me thank you. It's not enough. We're not doing what's needed to be done. We can push people off, but we can't tell Christie to put the money where it's supposed to be? Get out parents. That's enough. Your three minutes are up, Ms. Mills. Okay. That's nice. What are we going to do for the children? What are we going to do? We're going to keep sitting here and letting him take the money all these years? Come on.

Mr. Charles Ferrer: Good evening, Charles Ferrer. I guess the reason why we don't have the emails talking about not closing the schools down is because as far as I'm concerned an intelligent person can't write those emails without seeing the budget. I don't understand what the problem is. I guess the County Superintendent is more important and better than this Board. I just want to show you something on my phone. If you go to the Newark site for last year, not only do they have the entire budget, they break it down by school. If the parents wanted to see just their school, it's here - every school. We just can't get the user-friendly budget. I don't understand that. That's a problem. The right thing to do would be to give the Board members the same budget that the County Superintendent got. What makes him better than the nine people up here? That's an insult to the nine people sitting up here that you have them come out time and again to do things for free because of their love for the children and they can't get the budget that you want them to make decisions on. That's crazy. How do I even know all of the consultants that are in the district? These Board members are on chopping block. I've looked at the budget, the one that's in the air. I didn't see their names. Again, no budget at this time? It's ridiculous. Maybe we need to have a session where we have all the stakeholders come. We can go line item by line item and discuss what should be cut. Once again, the state is in total violation of Abbott. It's clear that regardless if the formula changed or not you still have to follow and honor the court mandates. That's just simple basic reading. We can't do that? Tell the state what you want. Provide a budget that makes sure that there are no classes with outrageous student sizes in them, that there is a teacher in every class, and a nurse and librarian in every school. Here we are on this one sheet of paper that I'm looking at. During the PARCC we're talking about not bringing technology teachers into certain schools. I guess those schools better take the paper version of the PARCC, which according to the Washington Post, those students scored better. Maybe we might want to think about doing it for all of our students because that's what they're used to. Now we're going to combine the sports program into one. How many students is that going to affect that won't have an opportunity? I can tell you stories about my students. I remember the ones that were D and F students in grammar school but when they realized they had a talent when they got to high school they got their acts together. Not only did they finish high school, but they went on to college and got that degree. For the people that are outside the area, I can't tell you how many of our students from Paterson through Mr. Carey Jenkins we sent to Syracuse, Cornell, Penn State, and Notre Dame and many other places. Don't let it get twisted as I had to tell my son's principal at the Catholic school. I could bring a group of Paterson students that would run circles around the students that you think are the top ones in your building. Let's not get confused with what we're about. Parents, don't fall for the game because they're going to try to wear you out and they figure sooner or later you just won't come. The last thing I want to say, Dr. Evans, is because you're slightly a little younger than I am, but my grandmother always told me that two wrongs will never make it right. You

already know that the quitter, because that's what he is to me since he quit the presidential race, is breaking the law. He took an oath as an attorney to uphold the constitution of the State of New Jersey as the Governor and he's asking you to do something that you and everybody else knows is wrong. Two wrongs will never make it right. Dr. Evans, I know you sent the budget. Get it back. Send a real budget that makes sure that when the students walk into this building in September there will be a teacher and everything that they need in every class. Send that budget and let them send it back so that when we take them to court the judge is going to ask them why. The Superintendent followed the directions according to the law. Two wrongs will never make it right.

Dr. Talena Lachelle Queen: Good evening. I'm Dr. Talena Lachelle Queen. I'm a parent in the Paterson School District by choice. Some of you might know that I recently moved back here from Seattle where I taught in the Shoreline School District Middle School. My classroom had every imaginable thing that a teacher could ever want. My whiteboard was very smart. I touched the whiteboard with my finger and I get internet. When I came here to Paterson this summer to teach some poetry, which is my passion, here at this building there was chalk dust, broken tables and chairs and things were peeling up. It's here in this building actually on this floor. This is a problem. When I talked to the folks about it, I said, "How does this thing work?" She said, "This is Paterson." I don't think she knew that I graduated from School 4 and was the second graduating class from Rosa Parks High School. I don't think she knew that I went to Montclair State University where I graduated as one of the only Black females with a broadcasting degree and went on to the University of Washington where I have two master's degrees and a certification from Notre Dame. I am a Paterson kid. My daughters went to school in Washington State to the best private and public schools. My daughter right now is in an all-girls boarding school which is very expensive. My son is here because I choose to have him here. I'm a student from here and I believe in this district. I find it very disrespectful to the legacy that lives in my body that you would even consider showing up here without the information that the parents asked for. That's the only word, disrespectful. It's painfully disrespectful. It's disrespectful to have people say, "This is Paterson. It is what it is." That's not true. It's not okay because this is an inner city. When I go around the country and I get to speak to students because they want to know what it's like to be a person who graduated from many universities, who is from an inner city, who had a single parent, who's from a poor place, all of the different things that say we're not supposed to be here, they want to know what that's like so that they can too be the first person in their family to go to college and so they too can go on to do things that they consider great that make them happy. I'm doing what makes me happy. The reason why I can choose to be in Paterson is because I had a great quality education here in Paterson before the state took over. So we need to get it together and please stop being disrespectful.

Ms. Marcella Simadiris: Peace and blessings. In 1991 the state gained oversight of schools in Paterson, New Jersey where then Education Commissioner John Ellis said he had no choice because local leaders were inept, meaning incompetent and lacking skill. What you all are dealing with tonight with the lack of a budget is what we teachers have been dealing with for years. Just the total disconnect by design so that we're ineffective, so that these children can't get the education that they deserve. It's not that we aren't effective, but we're nowhere near as effective as we could be. We are resilient because we know how important our job is. It's way more important here in Paterson than it is in the suburbs. I don't know if any of you are familiar with Jitu Brown. He's an advocate from Chicago. They've been dealing with these issues a little bit longer than us so they're ahead of the game. There's an African proverb that he always uses and I got it from him. "It is far better to be free to govern or misgovern yourself

than to be governed by anyone else.” Basically what's happening here is apartheid. They're coming in ruling over us and they're setting us up for failure. I'm so glad, Dr. Hodges, that you brought up that joint meeting last year. At that joint meeting I challenged Dr. Evans to speak truth to power. I said you just got your contract renewed. You're in a better position than ever before to really speak truth to power, to go to the state and demand the money that we need. It's just a design for our children to fail so that they can fill jails. It has to stop. Dr. Evans, a lot of people say I need to stop coming up here because it's like I'm always complaining. I wish I didn't have to complain, but I can't continue to come here all the time and take like everybody else and be complacent. What I see on a day-to-day basis is just wicked and I'm imploring you to please stand with us. Please tell the state anything less than what the law requires won't be acceptable. I don't know what it's like to be in your position, but I know our children need you. Please, Dr. Evans. Thank you.

Ms. Waheedah Muhammad: Good evening, Waheedah Muhammad. I just stopped by today to say to all of us that if we believe that it is only Dr. Evans that can make things happen for our children then we have missed the point. Chris Christie is in charge of this district and we don't hold him accountable. We don't go in front of him and point our finger and let him know that this won't go. We come here and do it. I want to see what we're going to do on March 9. Then you'll be talking to the state and his people that he has there to make sure budget things happen. We can't continue to say we want what's best for our children if we don't make that happen. To say that this is a great turnout when we have over 30,000 students in this district? We should have at least 3,000 parents in this building. I can't wait to see what we're going to bring to Montclair State on Wednesday morning. See how much we then realize that we have to fight for our children. That's where it begins. I say to you, Board members, I know you're in a tough position. I've been there and done that. One thing we know for sure is that it is not Dr. Evans that you all have to be mad with. You know where he comes from. You know that he has no control except whatever Chris Christie tells him to do. I don't know one of us that's going to give him a job when Chris Christie fires him for not following his directions. Thank you.

Councilman Aslon Goow: Good evening, Mr. President and Commissioners. What is it going to take? The City of Paterson tomorrow night is proposing a 6.1% tax increase. I didn't know until I came to the last meeting what you were proposing. Yet, you're quoted in the paper as saying now you've cut what you were asking for in half. We don't seem to be hearing that tonight. You've been beating up the teachers. You've been beating up the children. You have a Governor that's lost control of the state. You have people like yourself, Dr. Evans, sitting here doing their bidding. Clearly you know this is impossible, the cuts and the increases. Yet, you have the nerve to come here and not even present a viable budget. You give them a piece of paper? I thought the City Council was bad. At least they presented a budget and there as a process. You hand them a single paper and say here. What is your attorney doing? How does your attorney and business administrator sit there and try to justify what you're doing is right by staying silent? What is going on here? This has become a circus. I have to tell you that I applaud the Commissioners because at least they're representing the people to a certain degree. Based on what I have seen in the last two meetings, they're with the people that have elected them and put them up there, unlike yourselves. How many directors do you have? How many assistant directors do you have? How many administrative leaders do you have? Here's part of your staff. How much money are you guys making? Let's talk about your salaries. The sad thing is on a local level, a state level, and a federal level the people that are being paid well have to go along. If you don't, it's time to go. They get rid of you. But do you know what? As an African American in a predominantly African American city where Latinos are minorities, I would

have thought a man like you would have understood that more. It's obvious and it's sad to say you have fallen in the trap. Now all the kids not just in the City of Paterson, but in all the cities, are falling in the trap while you sit back and you advocate for the things that you want here which don't benefit anybody but your self-interests. More jails are being built. Funding is being found to build those jails, billions of dollars, and you guys just sit here and try to get a measly bunch of crumbs. Before you came the biggest scandal was the construction that was going on where a lot of money disappeared, millions of dollars disappeared. Only three contractors went to prison after that. The end result was it was much more than the \$20 million that they claimed. It was as high as \$90 million, if not more. I'm only concerned now that the same stuff is going on with the contracts and the change orders. That's where all the money is being lost. Paterson cannot afford your 27% on top of our 6% tomorrow night. I applaud you, Commissioners, that from here on in if you're not prepared and they don't provide the information you need, don't hold a meeting. Don't waste our time. We're going to start coming down here. We're going to hold people accountable. The most important thing you can do, we know Christie destroyed the state, but don't let his cronies do the rest of his work. Let's do a resolution of no confidence on Dr. Evans and his people. That's what you need. It's time. We'll do the same thing tomorrow night with the Mayor of the City of Paterson. Thank you.

Mr. Eddie Gonzalez: Good evening, Commissioners. This evening obviously it's very disappointing to hear that the Commissioners are not prepared with what they need to vote on something as significant and important as the budget which addresses what the children really need inside the classrooms. As many of you know, in 2009 I was also on that chair with you as a Commissioner on the Board of Education. I know what it feels like not being prepared sometimes with what you request, but I applaud you for taking a strong stance. I advocate for you guys and I ask that you continue to do what you're doing because it's the kids that are suffering. That said, I'm not here to put blame on anyone because I'm a man of solutions. I think we've heard a couple and the first thing I want to mention is that there was a beautiful lady who said a prayer. I just want to thank her for that because we need God in our schools and at this moment I truly feel that everyone here and at home and those that are watching sit for five minutes and say a prayer. This city really needs it. It needs it bad with the City Council proposing an increase in taxes. I'm a homeowner in this city paying nearly \$11,000 for a one-family home. I don't get any additional services. Streets are all beat up. Crime is going up. Some of our schools are proposing to be closed down and there's also talk about increases. Where are the additional services that I'm going to be getting if taxes go up? That being said, talking about the school district, I also served on the five-year facilities plan and I appreciate the opportunity to have done that with the school district. But we spent many weeks and months talking about the 52 plus schools in this district and their conditions. Unfortunately, our schools are in terrible shape. I've heard that some Commissioners might not be in favor of School 11 being closed down. Then you need to go to School 11 and take a look at that school. That school is falling apart. That school doesn't have AC. It's inadequate. I'm surprised it even has a COD. I just don't understand how that school is still open. It's being proposed to go to a very local school that's being developed right now, which is the new School 16, which is something that over 60 professionals sat with us around the room and discussed over and over and everyone agreed that this is the best possible solution. I see that here today being recommended as an option. I just want you to stay to this because we spent a lot of time reviewing the capacity at each school in the district and we made sure that when schools closed kids have a place to go and it's better than where they came from. So please pass that as well. Lastly, School 27 is being hit really hard. It's being hit double time. We're closing Don Bosco. We're lucky enough to have the approval of the SDA to build a new Don Bosco. It's about time. Thank God. Then in another area you're

proposing to close down St. Mary's in the same area that affects School 27. So you're looking at proposing to put preschool kids at School 27. The residents that live there don't want their kids being bused out to Paterson Catholic because they're right there. That's their school. They shouldn't be pushed out. Being on the facilities committee we saw that Dale Avenue has more than enough space and that is an appropriate space for the students who are leaving St. Mary's, as opposed to taking them to go to School 27 and relocating all those children from a school that they have already set there. I highly recommend that you take a look at that and move them to Dale Avenue.

Ms. Katherine Garcia: Good evening. My name is Katherine Garcia and I'm here to plead with you and ask you to stop destroying Paterson Public Schools. In 2015 the district laid off more than 350 employees, which included 170 teachers, to try to close a budget deficit. With the cuts made last year the budget problems were supposed to end. Instead, the problem is persisting. You implied that you are trying to raise the taxes, but by raising the taxes homeowners will not be able to pay off their housing. This will cause people to lose their homes. I personally do not want to lose my house. It seems like you're trying to deprive us of our education. Is this how bad the budget has gotten, thinking about confiscating professional development and the athletic program? The school budget went from \$38.9 million to \$49.5 million from the 2016-2017 school year. The way you're trying to solve the problem with the budget, the possibility of the budget cuts happening again seems imminent. It basically feels as if you're blindfolding us because we do not even know what's going to be cut next. We are already fighting for LGBT rights, black rights, and women rights, but we do not deserve to be fighting for our educational rights when it should already be given to us. We do not want to argue with you, but the way you are handling the situation you've given us no choice. We will not back down without a fight because we are one city and one voice and we are going to stand united. Thank you.

Ms. Savannah Vargas: Hello again. To all the people who were here on Wednesday, hello as well. I don't know how to put this, so I'm going to start off strongly. I was going to start off with numbers and facts, but I'm not going to tell you stuff you already know. Please hear me out. I want to state that these kids are not here just to speak on microphones. These kids are not here just to do research. We're doing this for something. We teens have a voice. We are going to make noise despite what you think about us kids. You can't shut us down. No matter who tries to stop us, we are here. We are doing this because we care. I was going to include that there were not a lot of teens here, but I was mistaken. Now we are here complaining to you guys, but I had this crazy thought while I was getting for school. I kept repeating we need to make noise. That's exactly what we have to do. We need to spread the word about what's going on and what Chris Christie is doing. Come on. We all know what Chris Christie is doing. He's setting us up for failure. Me and my colleagues refuse to let that happen. You say kids are our future, but you're not giving us a future. We need to come together and do something, anything, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and go viral. We can't do this on our own. For the people who want to change this, I say we all come together and make noise. We start off by stomping our feet, clapping our hands, and screaming from the top of our lungs. We will not be stopped. Take this into consideration. Thank you.

Ms. Jean Silva: My name is Jean Silva and I'm here to discuss the problems that you have caused to the district as a whole. Chris Christie raised the taxes by 6% and he claims that we still don't have enough money. This is already going to be too much for homeowners to afford thus forcing them into position where they have to move away from Paterson. Paterson gets \$400 million in state funding, which is said to provide students for our education. It was also stated that last year almost half of the teachers

were laid off because of the budget that was \$45 million. As I stated before, Paterson gets \$400 million funding to provide us the students in Paterson for our education. You could have used the money we supposedly get for our education to support our teachers because now students won't get the education they need. Dr. Evans, you have also said this in your interview. We really need to stop and think about children. We're here to educate the children. That's what we're about and that's our focus. Through the years you have not shown any improvement. Now Dr. Evans, I would like to say that I spent a good amount of time researching information on this topic. I don't need anyone saying that a teacher provided me the information because I'm capable enough to research my own information and doing what is right for this community. Thank you.

Dr. Joseph Atallo: Good evening members of the Board and members of the public. My name is Dr. Joseph Atallo. I'm a former Board member and proud Paterson resident and taxpayer. I am so insulted by the outcome of tonight's meeting. I was here last Monday and Wednesday. I spoke and now here we are again with no hard numbers. I have a couple of questions. Instead of having the administration sit there, maybe they can answer them through the President. I called the Superintendent's office and I told his staff exactly what questions I would ask so they can't say we don't know. I told them I would ask them tonight. Through the chair, I'd like to ask the Superintendent exactly as of March 1, 2016, what is the free balance of the budget of the Paterson Public Schools?

Comm. Irving: We'll wait until you finish, Dr. Atallo. Continue.

Dr. Atallo: I called your office and told them I was going to ask this question. Do you know, Dr. Evans? Does somebody on your staff know?

Comm. Irving: Once you're done we'll let the Superintendent respond.

Dr. Atallo: Okay. I'd like to know the exact amount as of March 1 because I keep hearing numbers. Now, remember my background. I was the business administrator here. I was a Board member for nine years. I teach school finance. I've never seen this. My students ask me what's going on in Paterson. I say I have no idea what's going on. They're talking about a \$45 million shortfall. Where is that? Is that the wish list and then you're not getting that? You're all over the map. Earlier this week the administration came in with a one-page statement with a 28% property tax increase, which is ridiculous. It's insulting. Then I read in the paper we're going to cut that in half. This is not the way to do business. There's no accountability here. I don't see the Board members being involved. As a board member and as chair of the finance committee, Errol and Jonathan know that we would not tolerate from any administration being handed a one-page piece of paper. The reality is nobody knows how to read a budget better than me in this room. Nobody! You don't hand out a open-page piece of paper saying this is it and we need to support this. This is not going to happen. I'd like to get answers. In fairness, I called your office and told the secretary exactly what questions I was going to ask. If you can't answer my questions, then I'm going to call the County Superintendent tomorrow morning and let him know. Can we get a response, please?

Comm. Irving: Thank you, Dr. Atallo. You're actually the last speaker.

Dr. Atallo: Am I going to get an answer to my question? I'll call Bob Davis at 8:00 tomorrow morning.

It was moved by Comm. Redmon, seconded by Comm. Simmons that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative, except Comm. Mimms who voted no. The motion carried.

Dr. Atallo: Mr. President, my time is not up and I have another question.

Comm. Irving: Sir, the bell rang. Your time is indeed up.

Dr. Atallo: I'd like an answer.

Comm. Irving: I'll let Dr. Evans respond.

Dr. Atallo: With all due respect, I think your time is up.

Comm. Irving: He's going to answer your question, Mr. Atallo. I'm going to give him the opportunity, but you're done speaking. I'm going to let the Superintendent respond to the comment that you had and any other comments that he has. I'm going to say thank you while the Superintendent addresses the audience and the Board for what has happened.

Dr. Evans: I have only two comments. One I've already noted and that's the fact that the normal process is for the County Executive Superintendent to get the budget and he release the budget after he reviews it for form. He doesn't change anything in it. He reviews it for form and makes sure that we represented every category that needs to be represented. He then usually gets it back to us in the middle of the month. Dr. Hodges alluded to a date from last year and that's the approximately time of year that we get it every year, around the middle of the month. I expect to get it and at that point we'll make sure that it's available to the Board and anyone else. Actually, we usually send out an announcement inviting people to come by and take a look at it once we get it. We will repeat that process again this year. With regards to Dr. Atallo's question, you indicated that if you don't get it from me you'll call the Executive County Superintendent. I would rather you call the Executive County Superintendent.

Dr. Atallo: I'm asking you, sir, what is the free balance. It's a public record. Answer the question.

Comm. Irving: Dr. Atallo, we're not going to go back and forth.

Dr. Atallo: I asked a question and I want an answer. You're hiding things. You're playing games with the money.

Dr. Evans: We're not playing games with the money.

Dr. Atallo: Then answer my question.

Dr. Evans: If you're referring to the unspent fund balance, and Ms. Ayala can correct me, it's roughly \$15 million. Ms. Ayala?

Dr. Atallo: Is that right, as of March 1, Ms. Ayala?

Comm. Irving: Dr. Atallo, I'm going to ask you to have a seat now.

Ms. Ayala: We're in the process of closing purchase orders and reaching out to employees that have a purchase order out there and no activity. That number changes

on a daily basis. I'm not giving you a number as of a certain day because I said that is a number that changes constantly.

Ms. Sailus Cabral: I'm going to respectfully ask to please allow me some time to speak. I didn't come from shopping. I came from Emerson and then I had to take my son to an appointment to an ENT in Paramus. My situation is very important and it affects students in our schools. At my son's school, as I've addressed on several occasion, at School 19 there's no nurse. I addressed this on Wednesday when I came. After that date, on Friday when he was sent to go back to school again the ambulance had to be called for him to be sent to the emergency room. There is no nurse in the school and I was advised that he cannot return to school. No one can tend to him. Do you know why the nurse wasn't there? When she finally arrived to our school to do her rounds she was called to go to the other school because a student needed insulin. When my son was bleeding out she wasn't there for him. I don't know what more I need to do, but I've been coming here since October. I came last Monday, I came this previous Wednesday, and I'm here again. I don't come from around the corner. I come from Emerson. I took my son to his appointment to make sure that I got that from the physician to say can he or can he not go to school if there's no nurse. I'm being a responsible parent. Do I not count? Does he not count? You're going to have one student less going to your school district, meaning less budget and less money for you to play around with because he won't go to school. Let me tell you something. I'm going to say something very important. If we don't stand for something we fall for everything. That's what's been going on here. Nobody has been standing up for these children or for anything at all. I've come here on numerous occasions and you saw me leave early last Wednesday. You know I'm always the last one to leave. Do you know why I left early? Because my daughter was being rushed to the emergency room and she was hospitalized. I always make every sacrifice to be here. I have three children with disabilities. I work full-time. They have appointments beyond appointments and I'm here. I'm sick and tired of getting the runaround and getting false statements that never come to fruition. Yet my son on Tuesday has a nosebleed where he had to get sent to the emergency room because he bled over 20 minutes. On Wednesday I was told not to send him to school in case it happens again. Thank god he didn't go to school because it happened again. On Friday we sent him back to school and it occurred again and again with no nurse. What am I supposed to do? I stand here before you numerous times asking you what am I supposed to do and I always get no answer. Do you remember the child that I'm talking about, the one that stood here before you asking you to please not discriminate against him when he had that disability? You wanted him to stay out of school for no reason. He asked and begged you. He's seven years old. At the time he was six and he said he needed to go to school because he wants to become a scientist and an engineer. It's still his dream. He came here and educated every one of you on what he had. It wasn't contagious so there was no reason for him not to go to school. He asked for you to put some rails up and to just make the school safe. That's all. The same student is now being jeopardized of not going back to school.

Comm. Irving: Would you like the Superintendent to give you an answer?

Ms. Cabral: That would be lovely, but one that would actually be real and make sense, one that says there's actually going to be a nurse in school.

Comm. Irving: Just so you know, I gave you the three minutes.

Ms. Cabral: Thank you.

Comm. Irving: I appreciate you coming up and you deserve a response. Dr. Evans, is there an answer we can at least try to give or let her know of a staff member that will reach out to her or something?

Dr. Evans: I'm hesitating because...

Comm. Irving: Of course. We're talking about a child and there are confidentiality issues.

Dr. Evans: Exactly. There are serious confidentiality issues. We will get help. What I hear her asking for is a nurse. In fact, in all of our schools nurses are shared because we don't have 54 nurses in the school district and we have 54 sites. What we can do is one of several options. We can make sure that he is in a school where the services are more readily available. Or make sure that when he needs a nurse that one can be there either onsite or get there quicker. I hear that's a major part of the problem.

Comm. Irving: Thank you. I need a pause because if we're going to be doing this all night...

Community Member: That's what you're here for.

Comm. Irving: No, it's not actually, no sir. I'm going to allow you to speak, Mr. Gilmore. You'll be the last person and you have three minutes.

Mr. Lou Gilmore: I understand. Good evening. What we have here is a classic bait and switch. When the budget was put forward at \$27 million and come back two days later in half. Every used car salesman goes to that school. We need to understand that we deserve better. We're looking at the classic schoolhouse to jailhouse. We're talking about sending these kids out unprepared. The few times that I do come and speak to the issue of the 60 minimum passing grade, we have not done anything with that. I graduated from Eastside High School 43 years ago. The passing grade was 60 then and it's 60 now. How are we preparing anyone to compete not only locally, but regionally, nationally, or globally with a 60 minimum passing grade? I don't mean to offend anyone here in terms of what your aspirations are because I still want to continue to have cordial relations with most of you. But jumping from the School Board to the City Council in the middle of this crisis is something that I really can't get behind. Everybody has a right to do whatever it is they do in terms of their political aspirations, but at what cost. These kids need your full attention. This situation is abysmal. Dr. Evans, you've failed us. You continue to fail us. I was around last year when Dr. Hodges came and championed the issues in the joint meeting related to then saying that it wasn't about a budget increase. He said it was coming and it's here. These are the facts and the figures and we understand that. But at the end of the day, these schools that you're talking about closing will be snatched up by charter schools coming because that's the Christie agenda. We know that. You're feeding right into it and it has to be challenged. I want to say, and I'm going to say it again and I'm going to continue to say and raise the level of concern to these black and brown children who are here. We have a local branch of the NAACP in the state level to Camden, Jersey City, Paterson, and the other Abbott schools that we should bring suit. Why are we not bringing a suit? We can win this. I don't understand what it's not being done. We know you can't do it. You have a family to feed. You have obligations and you are the Governor's guy. I'm not here to lambaste you for that. I understand that. We need representation on the legal side. Somebody has to help us. Thank you.

Comm. Irving: Here's the deal, Dr. Evans. I think everyone can agree that tonight has been embarrassing. Tonight has been unfortunate. It has been a disgrace. The Board, the community, the district, and everybody deserves better. I hope the next time we get a date we'll be able to be presented with a thorough budget that we can then weigh with the reductions that we have. Until that time happens, I'm going to ask that we respectfully do not schedule anything until we are confident that we can intelligently have a budget presentation. The Board can get the budget ahead of time as well and then be able to leverage the respective cuts with the budget itself. Then of course that information will be made public for the community as well. We just have to do better. As a community, as a Board, and as a district collectively we just have to do better.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.