

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

March 17, 2015 - 6:43 p.m.  
Administrative Offices

Presiding: Comm. Jonathan Hodges, President

Present:

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

Comm. Chrystal Cleaves  
Comm. Christopher Irving  
Comm. Errol Kerr  
Comm. Manuel Martinez

Comm. Lilisa Mimms  
Comm. Flavio Rivera  
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, Vice President

Absent:

Comm. Corey Teague

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

Comm. Mimms 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 17, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.  
Administrative Offices  
90 Delaware Avenue  
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

**UPDATE ON THE FIVE YEAR FACILITY PLAN**

Dr. Evans: There are two items on the agenda for this workshop tonight. The first is an Update on the Five Year Facility Plan and the second is a Discussion of Board Priorities for the 2015-2016 School Year Budget. The first item, as the agenda suggests, is an Update on the Five Year Facility Plan. I think everyone is aware by now that we've been engaged in a massive undertaking to develop a new five year facility plan. We've

been meaning to do this now for a couple of years and we're finally doing it. Ms. Shafer is going to introduce the leader, at least in our district, from DeJong Richter, Inc. who actually is guiding us through this process.

Ms. Shafer: Thank you, Dr. Evans. We have a steering committee of about 45 individuals from the community as well as the district and the schools. The chair-people of the steering committee are Rosie Grant, Irene Sterling, Eddie Gonzales, and Al Moody. We've been working diligently since July with the DeJong firm. If you recall, we had three community forums in January and we have another three coming up next week where we elicited feedback and information from the community as well as all the schools. At this time, I want to introduce David Sturtz, who is going to give you an update of where we are, what we've done up until now, and where we're going over the next couple of months so that in June we can bring to the Board the five year long range facility plan for the district.

Mr. David Sturtz: Good evening. My name is David Sturtz, Project Director with DeJong Richter. I've had the pleasure of working with your district's steering committee and community on this plan for the past several months. Tonight, I'd like to give you an overview of the process in whole as well as some details. What you have in front of you are two documents. One is a draft background report and the other is a draft facility options packet. The draft background report just shows enrollment data historical. We just released the projected. We sent it this morning. It has information there that helps to understand the state of the district demographically and what we need to know when we're planning before we get into the development. The draft options packet which you see in front of you details options that have been developed in draft form. I want to underscore the term 'draft.' That's intentional. I'm going to go through these few brief slides to explain how the options came to be and how they're organized. I gave you some samples there and then I will address questions that you may have about the process or about options in particular. Who are we? We are an educational planning firm. It's all we do. We're not architects or engineers. We do planning. We've done over 260 of these nationwide in 48 states and in over 1,800 districts. What's involved in a master plan? Quite simply, master plans have assessments, incorporated, and vision. The assessments look at conditions, capacity, and adequacy. When we walked the facilities our team looked for the adequacy and capacity. We looked at room standards to see if the rooms you all had were present. Do you have a gym? Do you have a library? Do you have a dedicated art room and music room? If so, is it equipped in a way that we believe is the best practice model for a facilities standard based on our work nationwide? Then there was a separate consulting team that has done a capacity report. From the district leadership we looked at what are the initiatives that the district wants to consider for the district as a whole. I'll review those in a few, as well as citizen feedback in the form of the steering committee, which is an advisory group. They help be a liaison of sorts for me and our team to the committee so that as we're going through the process we're making sure that we bring that national perspective and the steering committee can help localize it in terms of content, verbiage, and so forth. They've been helping edit all the documents that you see in front of you. The community dialogues are an opportunity for folks to come out and lend their voice first to planning questions and then to the options themselves. Here is the process as an overview. The first step is the plan for planning and we're right in the middle of it. The plan for planning sets the scope and sequence for the plan, what happens in what order, and what dates. The steering committee reviewed the background report in its current form at that time and prepared for the first community dialogue. That preparation is largely focused on making sure that there's a questionnaire that we call an education framework which has guidelines for planning, questions about school size, programs, technology use and needs, athletics, music and arts, so and so forth. The

committee helps to edit that and then we have the first committee dialogue, which is a futures conference where it tees up a few minutes of some things for folks to think about when they're considering master planning. Then we do the questionnaire to get their feedback. We take their feedback in an options development. We go through and create draft options for all of the facilities in the district, which we have done. We're in the midst right now of steering committees three and four. We had three and what you see in front of you is the options as edited by the committee for the first time. They will have a second time to edit it tomorrow between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. in the room next door. After we receive their edits we'll be finalizing this document that you see for the community in the second committee dialogue. Let me tell you that what you see will change in front of you because that's the steering committee's role, to help edit it throughout the process. We're going to take it back one more time, look at it with your leadership, and prepare it for the community at large. This will be next week between the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup>. That will be a very simple meeting where I introduce the options and then the steering committee members will help orient the folks who attend to the options packet so they can provide their feedback. The feedback will be in a very organized format. The way we do it most times is we ask people for multiple options for each planning area. We ask folks to arrange their support for each option individually, rank their preference, and then explain if they like any changes made to their preferred option. Lastly, after we take the recommendations or the draft options to the community, we receive their feedback and see what their preferences, thoughts, and comments were both in tabular form as well as written form, and then we will go into a recommendations development where we pare down the options that you see from multiples to one. That will become what you will receive in June as the final recommendation, however not before receiving two more full meetings worth of attention by the steering committee. So we make sure that once it's done the steering committee has vetted the options over four different meetings starting with steering committee three. Some upcoming dates, we have March 18. That's tomorrow, steering committee four. Then the community dialogue is from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>. The recommendations meeting will be April 16 and 17. Steering committee five is the 29<sup>th</sup>. Steering committee six is on May 21 and then the final Board presentation will be in June. So when we look at the background report there a lot of it is concentrated on demographics. What we look at are enrollment history and projections. You can see that between 2005-2006 and the present, the district has declined by 925 students. Based upon the projections that were just completed by a demographer we're projecting another approximately just under 1,400-student decline in the next 10 years. For a district of your size, this is a slight decline, flat in most areas. But it's mixed. So you'll see in this map that there are areas of relative growth and relative decline for your district. These are districtwide rollout numbers and not specifics to geography. In every master plan we develop options for each individual school, but we also like to have districtwide initiatives that are considered for all schools. Without saying that all schools will receive the plan, the idea is that schools receive the condition updates needed to take care of keeping kids warm, safe, cool, and dry. That's a baseline initiative. On top of that, based upon committee feedback from the first committee dialogue we saw three things. Folks wanted more technology in the classroom, to make sure that there are clean, safe, and comfortable schools, and that there are expanded partnerships with local community colleges and different agencies to enhance learning beyond the classroom. The three focal points that we're looking at for a districtwide initiative are building 21<sup>st</sup> century modern schools, classrooms, and technology. You should see on your options packet near the upper right there is this blurb for districtwide initiatives. In this case under the building 21<sup>st</sup> century modern schools, classrooms, and technology there is the desire to make sure that all schools have one to two science labs, one 2-D or 3-D art room, one music room, one library, access to gym or play space, whether or not it's directly on campus – we want to make sure that kids have access to it – and

flexible furniture in the classroom. This means that during the day and between periods teachers are able to configure their room as they need to, to deliver the instruction. They're not confined by heavy desks sitting in a row, which impedes a lot of the learning pedagogies that teachers are trying to implement today. Also, increased bandwidth to allow students to access the internet in a meaningful way, increased laptop parts to improve technology access, and all classrooms with interactive projection technology, and whiteboards. Just as a point of clarity, when we say one science lab, art room or music room, when we look at it if you're recapturing a room in an old school that was not meant for an art room, it's not an art room. It's a classroom that you're using for art. It doesn't have utility sinks with clay traps, day lighting and worktables. We say you don't have it. You're making do, but you don't have it so you need it. From an educational equity and adequacy standpoint that's a standard we're putting out there. Building safe, clean, and comfortable schools - districtwide initiative two is increasing signage, making sure that folks who are visiting the campus clearly see entrance, exits, bus routes, drop-offs, lighting and camera updates, making sure there's safe drinking water and accessible drinking water in all our schools, and a buzzer system for safety as visitors want to enter the campus. Third districtwide initiative is building expanded partnerships with area resources to develop the whole child. We're looking at some partnerships with St. Joe's and with local churches, parishes, and community organizations. These are initiatives that we set forth in options developed. They are in draft form and we'll likely receive some edits in the process as we move forward. Just a couple more slides here and then I'll look forward to discussion and your questions. Just to give you an example of the options, if you flip to planning area five here, when we developed planning areas we look at districts in terms of where schools are related to each other geographically and where they're cut off by natural geographic boundaries such as major rivers and roads and those kinds of things. The planning areas do not follow your wards precisely. They do not follow feeder patterns precisely. They follow looking at where schools are geographically. For example, if we have an underutilized elementary school and an over-utilized elementary school, under-crowded and overcrowded, if they're close to each other without a major road or river we consider a boundary change and moving students from one school to the other to balance enrollment. If there's a major highway or river then we can't do that. So we'd like to group schools that are geographically close in planning areas so that it helps us develop viable options for every school in the district. For example, planning area five has Martin Luther King, School 13, School 20, School 24, Rutland Center, and Early Learning Center. We looked at it and we see that School 25, School 9, and School 20 are at or near capacity. When you look at the appendix you can see the enrollment data relative to capacity. You can see that they're either 99% to over 100%. There is a new school already planned in this area because of the growth and that will help relieve capacity. But one of the districtwide initiatives is to expand the Full Service Community Schools districtwide. So we're looking at an option to put the Full Service Community School in the new School 16. School 20 was built quite a bit ago, in 1898, and is a candidate for reconstruction. So there's an option for reconstructing it a little bit larger than it currently is because it currently has a capacity, according to our walk, of about 520 students. It's at capacity so we want to build it a little bit larger to give the kids a little bit more room. We have three options here that we have in draft form and that is finish elementary School 16 construction, which will be in the fall of 2016, redraw boundaries of adjacent elementary schools, which means we're going to balance enrollment with those schools, and then use School 16 for one of more of the following – a Full Service Community School, a dual language academy, a newcomer center, or maybe a combination thereof. Option two would be to do that option one, but also raze and rebuild School 20 at 600 capacity. Option three would be to raze and rebuild School 20 to house Rosa Parks and Garrett Morgan programs in addition to the elementary program in there. This is just an example of some of the options that were developed in the options

development meeting and at the steering committee. Folks have reviewed once and will review again tomorrow. That's just a fast overview of the process in general, the logic behind it, where we are to date, and how some of the options are organized. You see the options packet in front of you with lots of data on it. We tried to put a lot of the granular data in an appendix so that folks didn't have to weed through that to get to what the options are and weren't lost in tables and those kinds of things. With that, I'd like to turn it back to you all and ask if there are any questions that you may have about the process at all.

Comm. Hodges: What is a so-called a music room?

Mr. Sturtz: When I look at a music room it would have acoustical treatment on the walls for sound dampening. It would have physical treatment on the floor. It would be carpet or something of that nature. There would be storage room for instruments that would be either built in or auxiliary. It generally would be isolated within the building away from your core classrooms for sound reasons. Those are generally what we consider for our music room. Plus depending upon the program, be it choir or instrumental, it would need to be a bit larger than a standard room.

Comm. Hodges: Is there a sense that this is an important feature as you're developing these options?

Mr. Sturtz: I would say that the music rooms in particular are a factor but not a deciding one. We have tracked for each of the schools the presence or absence of such things as music rooms, art rooms, and so forth so we have that as a reference as we went through the options development. We saw there were enough schools that didn't have them and there was enough of a need that instead of considering it as a school-by-school option it was decided that should be a districtwide option. It should be a standard that all schools have - a dedicated music and art room.

Comm. Martinez: How many schools currently in the district meet the requirements which are determined to be a fully equipped music and art room?

Mr. Sturtz: I would have to get back to you with the exact number. I can send you our summary file and make it available to all of the Board that shows a breakdown of every school with the major qualifiers that we noted for all of the special rooms like art, music, and so forth. You'll see a listing of whether it's present, and if it is how adequate it is relative to our metrics. For example, art rooms have 22 different standards that we assess when we walk a facility. So if it's 10 out of 22 it will be a little bit less than half, 47% adequate just relative to our standards.

Comm. Martinez: So the next step of the steering committee is to meet again tomorrow and then the final submission. Do you guys meet tomorrow and then submit a final plan? This is a lot of information to absorb right now to be able to present some good questions. That was a lot to take in and I'd like to be able to read through this more thoroughly as I should. For the next steps, do you guys meet tomorrow? What happens afterward?

Mr. Sturtz: I think there are six steering committee meetings and we're in the second grouping. They come in pairs. The first grouping is an orientation of the process for the committee plus prep for steering committee one. The second set, which is what we're in now, is a review of the draft options and prepare them for the community dialogue next week. After the steering committee reviews it tomorrow, I'll go back, make final edits based upon their comments in consultation with district leadership. Then next week will

be the community dialogues which the community will have those packets printed and we'll have them available electronically. Then they'll have a questionnaire where they rate their support for each option individually. Then they'll be asked which is your favorite, rank them, and are there any changes that you'd like to make to your preferred option and if so please explain. It's that repetitive questioning that we ask for all the planning areas. Then we take that data from the community dialogue, be able to quantify that, go back into executive session in mid-April for the recommendation session, and the next step is to take the multiple options for most groups. Sometimes there's only one but oftentimes there are multiple ones. We condense it down to one recommendation, make any further edits that we believe are necessary based on the steering committee review and community dialogue. We come back to the steering committee for two more meetings through May 21 to make any final changes to the recommendations before we present it to you in June.

Comm. Martinez: Can we get a timeline of all the calendar of events sequentially so we know. I don't know if we can have that information forwarded to us so we know when the steps are happening.

Dr. Evans: We actually have it and we can give it to you.

Mr. Sturtz: It's a document that actually has a narrative explanation of all the steps.

Comm. Cleaves: Going back under planning area five, option one, can you elaborate on the Newcomer's center? What do you mean by that?

Mr. Sturtz: The Newcomer program is for folks who have just entered new to the country and perhaps got educated in another country and don't speak the language. Hopefully I'm not being too elementary on this, so stop me if I'm saying something that's already known. The idea is to educate the students in the full curriculum of their grade level and accelerate it as fast as possible to reintegrate them into the school of their choice or where they live. The idea is to open up that program for more migrant families to fast track their students to full integration into their area schools.

Comm. Cleaves: We have that already at a school. They're saying to not have it at the school where it's at right now and move it this new school?

Mr. Sturtz: Move it to this school. When you take a program of that kind or an alternative program typically the rationale for moving a program of that nature is capacity. So if you have a school that is tight on capacity that houses a program that has more space, moving it helps to relieve some pressure off one and better utilize another school.

Comm. Mimms: Do we have an estimated cost of what this project will entail? If I'm not mistaken, this is in collaboration with our Mayor and the city.

Mr. Sturtz: We coordinated the first community meetings so that we would speak after the other. In the options development themselves, I do not believe we had a representative from the Mayor.

Dr. Evans: No, the facilities planning effort is a district initiative.

Mr. Sturtz: We've put together the plan that makes sense for Paterson Public Schools and then working with the Mayor's office to see what kinds of partnerships are available, those that are identified as needed by the committee and the citizens. To go back to

the question of cost estimates, we have not done cost estimates at this point. In the options development we've focused on getting everything out on the table. It's a lot of options and what we're trying to do is just see what could be done. Then as we refine this we'll get into cost. With community dialogue moving forward as we get to the recommendations, that's when we're going to start to quantify it. Part of it will be determined by further work done on the condition assessment, which is not by my firm but by a local engineering firm. That's going to constitute a large chunk of that as well.

Comm. Hodges: I'm heartened by what I see. However, I don't see much of a role for the Board in terms of input before June. I'm a little concerned about that. I see some heads that are nodding. In the previous facilities plan we did have a lot more representation with regards to the Board members. So we're going to have to take a look at that.

Dr. Evans: There are Board representatives on the committee.

Ms. Irene Sterling: They've never shown up.

Comm. Irving: Actually, I've been to two.

Ms. Sterling: Steering committee meetings?

Comm. Irving: That's the one that was in the big room over here to the right, Irene.

Comm. Hodges: We can take care of that moving forward. One of the problems is when you bring a group of people to the table to have a discussion, depending on which group shows up you have different discussions. What happens is there may be some people who may come out that may not truly represent what the overall concern of the city is. That's part of our responsibility, to make sure that we do have a firmer grasp and understanding of that. If we're not participating in the way we should, we want to make sure that we fix that.

Mr. Sturtz: That's an excellent point and I have two general responses to that. The first one being that we very much respect and appreciate all the steering committee's input. It is in an advisory capacity. We recognize that our job as consultants to the district is to consult with the district to make sure that the final recommendations as presented are those that are in the best interest of the district as a whole, not necessarily swayed towards a particular niche. The committee has been very helpful in their edits and what I would say as a secondary follow up is the timing of the Board presentation here is to allow you all to have the options in a format that's digestible and then to let you know that if we need to schedule a Board work session or something like that between now and recommendations or shortly thereafter, I'd be happy to do that.

Comm. Hodges: It's certainly not fair to the committee to do all this work and at the last minute the Board comes and says, "We don't like that." We should actually be at the table making sure that our concerns are registered in a timely fashion. We'll make that change if necessary.

Comm. Mimms: I know it's a draft document, but it identifies old Board members.

Mr. Sturtz: I'll take a look at that.

Comm. Hodges: You surveyed all of the schools as to what kinds of facilities were in place?

Mr. Sturtz: Yes.

Comm. Hodges: Labs in the elementary school. It's hard to generalize overall, but that is an area of great concern.

Mr. Sturtz: The summary document that I can send, which is really a condensed version of what we used in planning, you can see what we noted as present, not present, and inadequate. That's a factor of the age of your schools. They were built before you had science labs in elementary schools. In fact, schools change purpose over time as you well know. It is something that from an educator's perspective we think ought to be the standard all things being equal. Life gets in the way and things are complicated sometimes. If at all possible, for elementary kids to have access to a science room that has wet labs, sinks, and worktables - that's pretty much an elementary science room. More elbow room. It's pretty basic there, but requires a little additional plumbing.

Comm. Hodges: We've captured that concern?

Mr. Sturtz: Yes.

Comm. Hodges: This is in the area of a wish list. I'm certain that Dr. Evans and his team are moving rapidly into the area of engineering. That kind of curriculum, particularly in the elementary area, requires a different kind of setting. Given where you are that might not have come up in conversation. Is there still...

Mr. Sturtz: Those kinds of things are precisely, and particularly in the districtwide initiatives, where we really need that Board input, on the specific options themselves and those districtwide initiatives. Looking at STEM opportunities - just off the cuff a STEM lab in an elementary school is quite similar to an art room. It's larger. It has big worktables and some utility sinks with some stuff to trap all the sand and stuff the kids would use if they were doing erosion tables and those kinds of things. The name of the game when it comes to classroom configurations today is flexible. That's part of the reason the flexible, furniture, fixtures and equipment is in there so that a well-equipped classroom can go from art to STEM to a regular classroom to an open space for who knows. The ability to move furniture in and out with enough equipment to have multiple functions is really the key. Over time your programs will change, your demographics will change, and you ideally want a room that can flex their use as time goes by.

Comm. Hodges: Another area that keeps Dr. Evans awake at night is his yearning for computer programming and languages. That calls for different kinds of setups for computer systems that we have in many of our older schools in particular.

Mr. Sturtz: I would say that generally speaking when it comes to computer classes today the best bet in most circumstances is to go to mobile technology with high bandwidth. The general rule of thumb used to be back when the internet was born and early in 2000's was that for every three students you anticipate one device connect it to the internet. So you need the bandwidth accordingly. Today you reverse that. For every one student having three devices connected is a good rule of thumb. You shouldn't go wrong with that. It may be a bit aggressive in some cases, but that's a standard to be aimed for. Then go to mobile technology because if anything is changing fast it's computers. The idea of going to the computers over there is restricted typically to certain types of cad work, and even that's on software now, or special animation software that needs a robust tower and so on. From a cost perspective if



dollars can be shifted to equipment and bandwidth in a room situated so that they can flex use quickly and students can work in small groups and individually and listen to a lecture all within a 60-minute period without taking more than two to three minutes to reconfigure the room while having the technology and the bandwidth, that's a computer room.

Comm. Hodges: I hear Dr. Evans breathing easier now. Thank you very much. Are there any further questions?

Comm. Mimms: How was the steering committee selected? I see some names on here, but my concern sometimes is that we don't have an actual parent, maybe a single parent, that has different struggles than some of the people identified. That's my question. How did we select the steering committee? What is the thought process in those individuals that we do select?

Mr. Sturtz: I think we can answer that in tandem. We present a sampling of a profile of a steering committee that we generally recommend. There are parents on the committee. There are local representatives from the clergy. There are teachers and some administrators and folks from local committee organizations that we have. Then the district approaches those organizations and folks within them to make the invitation. That's sort of a general answer.

Ms. Shafer: I'll get the Board the complete steering committee. This was only a sampling. There are about 45 individuals. Like he said, we have clergy, Board members, community organizations, teachers, parents, school district employees, and folks from throughout the city. I'll get you the original list.

Comm. Mimms: He talked about the profile. But what is the description of the profile? What are the requirements to say this person is a good candidate to be on the committee as far as upgrading facilities or adding new schools to the district?

Ms. Shafer: I had a list of organizations and groups that I worked with when we did the high school renewal. That had about 80 individuals on it. I met with the Superintendent, we deleted, we added, and that's where we got the composite of the steering committee.

Dr. Evans: Then we asked individuals who represented certain groups to identify. You mentioned parents. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think we did discuss that with Mr. McDowell and he suggested some parents. We had some conversations with some principals and others. We didn't identify them ourselves. We asked others to identify them for us.

Comm. Hodges: Any further questions? Thank you very much.

## **UPDATE ON RENAISSANCE ONE**

Dr. Evans: The next item is an Update on Renaissance One. I'm going to ask Mr. Johnson to come to the mike. As we had indicated in a recent workshop, we were expanding our elementary Choice options, vetted the options with the Board, and the Board gave us some feedback on those options. One of them was for a single gender school focusing initially on males and then on females. Mr. Johnson has been in the lead in the development of the single gender school for males. We identified some potential sites. School 1 was identified as a highly potential site for single gender

males. Mr. Johnson has had conversations with parents and I'll turn it over to you at this point, Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Aubrey Johnson: Would you like me to discuss single gender, which is at YES?

Dr. Evans: Dual language at School 1.

Mr. Johnson: Good afternoon everyone. I'll just give a brief update with regards to the locations. I'm going to discuss some of the conversations that we had regarding the dual language program. We have had some minor issues at School 1 with regards to the trailers that are at the site. We'll start to look at some other things that we can probably do in the surrounding areas to accommodate the trailer situation at School 1, as well as to incorporate the potential dual language program because School 1 is a Choice program. We decided last night to go to the community and speak to the community to get some feedback. We got some very good feedback regarding the possibilities of alleviating some of the issues at the trailer as well as the dual language program at School 1. We have not really sat down and had a chance yet to speak with Dr. Evans to share the feedback. But originally we were thinking of taking the dual language and placing it at School 1 starting in pre-k and moving up to kindergarten and then 1, 2, and 3. That decision really has not been finalized yet. We're still in discussion phase at this moment. Also, there are other sites that we may be looking at.

Comm. Hodges: The reason I raise this issue is because the parents were very focused. I attended that meeting and they had a lot of concerns about the possibility of having their school broken up. They consider the entire school to be a family and they want it to remain a family. The other issue for them was they weren't even part of the planning. They also were concerned that this short notice does not allow them to go to other Choice schools. Additionally, they were afraid that this was a done deal and they would have no say. Those were most of the points. I said to them since this has not come before the Board that I certainly think it wasn't a done deal. We hadn't had any further discussion and as the representatives that was a major problem. That place was packed. It was standing room only. They were packed. They were not happy about what they were hearing and they did give a lot of suggestions, which I thought was food for thought. But clearly, they don't want anything to happen before the district goes back to them and has another discussion about what are the potential possibilities. They're not very receptive to having a fourth and fifth grade. I'm just putting that out there because they've been calling all of us and repeatedly. I wanted you to understand that.

Comm. Martinez: The notion of if it's not broken don't fix it is an understatement here. We've all been fielding calls. Even Dr. Hodges mentioned the notion of it being a family. Not only is this a place where folks feel comfortable, the culture and the climate and everything is working extremely well there. Folks don't want that disturbed. While we support the Choice schools and the programs and we want to see that happening, please try to get creative and find somewhere else because the feedback has not been good as far as disrupting that. Selfishly, the music program just started there too and the folks who are going to that music program that has taken off in a phenomenal way. I hate to see that service being disrupted and families are concerned about that.

Comm. Hodges: It was pointed out to me that it was a \$93,000 investment and they do not want to see that disrupted. They're very happy with that program among others. They love the teachers in that school and the teachers were there.

Comm. Martinez: As a matter of fact, the other night before the meeting they had an evening where they came out and they made instruments. They had over 100 families that were in attendance there and they were just thrilled for the opportunity to create these instruments and to keep this program moving. So again, let's not disturb what's really working over there if we can avoid that.

Comm. Hodges: Certainly, there are some challenges with those trailers and something has to be done with those preschoolers. But I'm telling you with the upper grades, there needs to be some other option looked at and they gave a number of suggestions.

Comm. Irving: As far as the boys' academy, you said you were going to put it in YES Academy? Is School 1 in the budget for next year?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Comm. Irving: Under which line item?

Dr. Evans: Ms. Ayala would have an answer.

Comm. Irving: Come on up, because I don't see it.

Dr. Evans: While she's coming forward, I will point out there are two factors that prompted this conversation with the parents. One is not mentioned, the portables that have to be replaced. They are no longer functional. We're going to have to find other options to those portables. The other was that as we monitor the numbers of students enrolled in School 1 we're seeing a noticeable drop in enrollment. We're not sure what that means yet, but just know that there's a drop in enrollment.

Comm. Hodges: They're hoping to take in more students. The other thing was they were hearing there was overcrowding in School 26 and they did not want to have their kids being moved into overcrowded situations. It seems to me that you have a solution in the making by having some of the students from School 26 shifted over to School 1. All I'm saying is the discussion needs to continue. We're not going to solve it around this table. The parents wanted to be assured this was not a done deal.

Mr. Johnson: Let me just clarify that's exactly where the miscommunication may have happened. I didn't want them to think that it was framed as if it was a done deal and it was not. We did go to the community last night just to speak to them and we did assure them that we were here to have a conversation and also to garner some solutions. There were two conversations happening at the same time. One was about the trailers but also about the potential for the dual language. Of course, we really didn't get into a lot of conversation about the dual language program. There were some other issues they wanted to throw at us.

Comm. Hodges: I want to commend your staff because they were extremely professional in a very difficult environment. They handled it very well and they did the district proud. I want to say that for a fact. There were a lot of question marks on the part of those parents, unfortunately, feeling that we were there to dismiss their concerns. Mr. Johnson, Ms. Santa, and Ms. Peron were very helpful and outstanding in being able to calm those fears. I told the community that I would make sure the issue was raised and that we were not going to have this rammed down their throats. We would take this into consideration and Mr. Johnson would get back to the community with other options and more discussion. I'm just trying to make sure that that in fact happens.

Comm. Cleaves: I had a different question. I echo what Dr. Hodges said. I was there briefly. I stood in the doorway because that's as far as I could get in. The turnout was great. To piggyback on what Comm. Martinez said, some of the parents that had been contacting me also stated that they had made sacrifices with their children at School 1 because when they wanted to bring the music program there wasn't much space. Some of the classes had combined so that they could bring this music program in. The parents said they don't mind accommodating if you're going to give their children something. They gave them this music program and they're excited about it. Now they're saying we want their children to be pushed out to somewhere else to bring in another program. Why can't this program just go somewhere else? We've already made some sacrifices for our children to allow this music program to come in. Now you're talking about moving our children out. I think some of the parents were feeling that their children were going to be displaced and that's because of the lack of communication. Now to get to Chris' point, Dr. Evans, you said it was in the budget but we're just finding this out. Parents are just finding this out. How can it be in the budget if we don't know about it? No decisions have been made for it yet, but it's budgeted.

Ms. Daisy Ayala: We already have the location and the staffing in place. We might need a different kind of staffing. It's just like moving people around. Other schools are here, so it's more about curriculum.

Comm. Irving: With all due respect...

Ms. Ayala: Some of it is also funded by preschool.

Ms. Susana Peron: Can I just bring some clarity? I worked on the budget for dual language. Dual language requires a dually certified teacher in bilingual and elementary and also in preschool if we started in preschool. Any expenses that come out of curriculum for dual language will come out of ECPA. Then we would need to interview and transfer a teacher that is dually certified that is willing to teach the program and we would do those interviews. In terms of curriculum, it's the same curriculum as the district curriculum. It's just presented in the native language. So we did budget for materials such as library books and other resources that come in Spanish.

Comm. Irving: So within line item 705 the books, materials, and staffing have all been budgeted for?

Ms. Peron: Yes. You would see it under instructional materials.

Comm. Irving: And staffing as well?

Ms. Peron: Yes.

Comm. Irving: So the books and staffing are all okay?

Ms. Peron: Even under instructional materials you can order desks or tables and things like that. That falls under instructional materials.

Comm. Irving: I just want to make sure that all these elements have line items affixed to them. Can we get a copy of the 705 breakdown, please?

Ms. Peron: Sure.

Comm. Irving: Thank you so much.

Comm. Hodges: The only concern that I had from last night is I don't think Mr. Johnson had an opportunity to fully develop the dual language concept the way he wanted to. The parents were so focused on not losing part of the students to other schools I don't think he had a chance to really flesh out what that could mean for them in addition to what they were already getting. That may be the basis for another conversation. I just wanted to point that out. I told people and gave them my word this was not going to be a done deal. I will speak on it. I've done that.

Comm. Mimms: How are the applications coming along for either of the programs?

Mr. Johnson: The last time I checked they were pretty low. We have extended the deadline and based on past patterns we know most don't come in until a little bit later.

Comm. Mimms: Do we have any numbers?

Mr. Johnson: I can get back to you. I don't know off the top of my head.

Comm. Irving: Just a clarification question for the BA, is it a school or a program?

Dr. Evans: It's a program.

Comm. Irving: So the program will be within the school budget for whatever school it's going to move to. If it is indeed a school, then the school code and the school budget would have to be included in the budget. If not, then the program should be included in the line item budget for whatever school it's going to be applied to. At this point in time that decision has to be made where it is. All I'm saying is the program costs should then show up either in 705 or whatever other area you've identified. That's why I asked for a copy of 705 to make sure we're very clear what costs we're appropriating through that program moving forward. Eventually it may have to be moved from finance or from your area to whatever school to receive those funds.

Ms. Ayala: Fund 20, Early Childhood, doesn't really matter with the school because it's a federal grant. It's not so much allocated to the school.

Ms. Peron: It's a state grant.

Dr. Evans: I would also add that typically when there's a new startup of a program those one-time startup costs are typically absorbed by the district office and we only put the continuing expenses on the school's line.

Ms. Ayala: Like we did with Gifted & Talented. Most of the funds came out of local funding and then as it went on it was on the school.

Comm. Hodges: I would ask Mr. Johnson if you're trying to start a dual language program is it your goal to start in preschool?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Comm. Hodges: That's a problem. If you get rid of the trailers where do you put things?

Dr. Evans: That's a good question. That's what we have to go back and revisit.

Comm. Hodges: One of the options was to repair the trailers, but I don't know whether that really makes sense.

Mr. Johnson: We may just have to look for another location. We're just going to look at everything again.

Comm. Hodges: You really have to start with the preschool, which actually I kind of like.

Mr. Johnson: That was the plan. I thought it was presented to the Board before, but I might as well speak about what I know for all three programs. We did present about the single gender school for this year. We have been looking at the location of the different schools that have been bouncing around. Just based on some of the stuff, some of the research as well as from our steering committee it may be best to start the program in its own location grades 3-5. The final location in the district has been a challenge. However, we do know there's a location where YES Academy is at this time. I really didn't want to make this public because I haven't had a chance to speak to those parents yet. If you start getting phone calls, as they say, you have to stand in line. I did speak to Dr. Cavanna last week. We're going to have a meeting with the parents and the teachers there next week with regards to the idea of possibly using the YES Academy. Currently there's about 56 students left there at the end of the year. The conversation was just trying to find a location for those schools and then using YES Academy for grades 3-5.

Comm. Irving: So the thought is to move the remaining 56 students into another location and bring in a fresh new school into that building.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, that's the conversation now.

Comm. Irving: Fair enough.

Comm. Hodges: You also presented the school-within-a-school concept.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, we have. Some of the schools are growing as well and in order for the program to really expand we found that over the next two years it will be too tight. It may be smarter to start here in grades 3-5. I did a walk-through and there are about eight classrooms that we can use. There's another auxiliary room that we can use as well. There are a couple of computer labs. Then we can look for another location in two or three years where we can actually take it into middle school. With the opening of the two new schools in 2016 this may free up some flexibility.

Comm. Irving: Have we identified where the other 56 students may end up? Are we looking at Destiny Academy or Great Falls? In terms of capacity, I just want to make sure that we can absorb those students.

Dr. Evans: Simultaneous to this conversation we're also revisiting how we have our alternative education programs.

Comm. Irving: I remember the conversation. It makes sense.

Dr. Evans: We haven't brought closure to that yet. We're examining all kinds of options internally and at some point we're going to have a conversation with the Board once we have some sense of what the options are. That conversation holds strong likelihood for freeing up the facility that Mr. Johnson is referring to.

Comm. Irving: I just want to make it very clear because it hasn't been said that my initial trepidation is that we're putting a school in with YES Academy. At least that's the way I heard it. I want to apologize for that. Where in the budget is this program reflected?

Mr. Johnson: I just provide the numbers to Daisy. I don't know.

Ms. Ayala: I don't know off the top of my head where it is. I'd have to go look at it.

Mr. Johnson: Roughly in terms of curriculum we're looking somewhere around \$336,000. Then we had another \$300,000 for stipends. We presented to the Board before. But I don't know where Daisy actually has it.

Comm. Irving: We can't be asked to adopt a budget with three new programs coming on and we don't know exactly where this program is going to be funded from.

Ms. Ayala: I don't have every detail up here, but I will get you the detail exactly where in the budget that resides.

Comm. Irving: Thank you.

Comm. Simmons: Can you speak to the population for the single gender school that is going to be targeted?

Mr. Johnson: Right now we're just looking at students entering grades 3-5. Initially we were thinking just grades 4 and 5, but we expanded to grades 3-5 to catch the young men at a younger age and also the older cohorts in terms of registrations. We will take a look at those numbers and see where that population is coming from. There may be a lot of students enrolling from grades 4 and 5 and not for 3. Then we'll alter the program based on that. We're looking in grades 3-5 and each year adding an additional grade.

Comm. Hodges: My particular concern when we talked about this program in previous years was we were hoping to build a program that address the lowest performing students and try to isolate them and give them focused attention and change the educational environment they were in. I'm still hoping that we're going to be able to in this context do a lot of that. That was identified as a consistent need, that if nothing else, we create a laboratory to work to create some possible solutions for that repetitive problem we're having for lowest performing students. We don't seem to be having too much success in changing that performance. I sincerely hope that will be and I will be looking to weigh in on that and try to see where we are moving forward. Are there any further questions?

## **DISCUSSION OF BOARD PRIORITIES FOR THE 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR BUDGET**

Dr. Evans: The next item is a Discussion of Board Priorities for the 2015-2016 School Year Budget. We handed out an initial draft of the budget last week for the Board to take home and digest and come prepared to either ask questions and/or share with us your priorities. Since that time you should know that Ms. Ayala, myself, Mr. Lee, and members of my cabinet who are responsible for budgets within their own divisions have continued to make adjustments, reductions, and ultimately changes and hope to be able to have those changes available in the form of an updated budget package. Since last

Thursday the budget software that the state has made available for that has been closed and we have not been able to input anything. I think it reopened today.

Ms. Ayala: I got a call from the county today at 3:30. They reopened the system for us to make the changes. Until then, they're not valid changes.

Dr. Evans: So an updated hard copy won't be available until we are able to input into that software. I have no idea why it was closed. Typically it's open until the end of the month when the final budget is prepared. But we've continued to make reductions along the lines that we had shared with you within the divisions and some at the school level and we're getting closer to our goal.

Ms. Ayala: The reason they closed it is because they review it. The county did review it and if there are some problems they'll address it with us. Otherwise they said everything seems to be okay. There are no technical issues. Some of the questions that were asked of me today I was able to answer. With that being said, they opened the system for us. But they always close it after we submit for their review.

Dr. Evans: Once this new information goes in, then we will have a different bottom line in terms of our different gaps – let me put it that way – between the budget and what we expect in terms of expenditures versus revenue. That's the gap we've been trying to close and we have been successful in making tremendous progress towards closing it. But until we see the printout, it's hard to speak to that. Anyway, the focus of this meeting is to hear from the Board. What are your priorities? What kinds of things would you like to see, particularly as you reflect on what you reviewed in the draft that you received last week and the discussions that we've had? I know the issue of local taxes is on your mind and we've been seeking to close that gap too. I think we've made tremendous progress. The goal is ultimately to completely close that gap. Until we get the printout based on what's been inputted already it's hard to say exactly what the gap is now or if there's a gap at all in terms of our revenues not being enough to offset our anticipated expenditures. Again, my goal is to completely close that gap so there is a difference and we don't have to deal with the tax issue.

Comm. Martinez: If the system was only available at 3:30 today and we're scheduled to meet tomorrow we're not going to have an appropriate amount of time to review this by the time we're supposed to vote on it tomorrow.

Dr. Evans: You're not being asked to vote on it. You don't vote on it until March 30.

Comm. Martinez: Until we see it, does it make any sense if you just verbally walk us through what was done to close that gap? If we don't have the numbers on paper in front of us, can you describe at least verbally some of the actions that were taken?

Dr. Evans: The two biggest actions actually were further reducing the division lines, looking at each division, such as academic services, the administration line, that is the assistant superintendents that the principals report to, my line, and reducing them. This means less revenue is needed to offset those costs. That's one big item. We've also taken a look at the number of anticipated reductions that may be required in terms of reducing staff. We've made tremendous progress by reducing the number of school-based staff, but increasing significantly the number of district-level staff that will be cut. It's all with the aim of closing the gap that exists between revenues and anticipated costs. That's been the nature of the exercises that we've participated in. Staff has been meeting regularly. We met on Thursday. A subgroup of us met on Friday. Ms. Ayala and I were here over the weekend putting it all together and making additional budget



reductions. Those are big reductions in terms of the divisional lines, and then we made some hard decisions in terms of position shifts in the district office. That actually occurred on Saturday. We expect to realize some significant savings there.

Comm. Irving: Did you get an idea of what the projected number for the reduction in force is at this point in time?

Dr. Evans: I hate to write numbers because once we get the printout it may be different from what we're thinking.

Comm. Irving: Will there be a reduction in force?

Dr. Evans: There will be a reduction in force. Our initial target was in that memo that I circulated on February 17 with 75 folks, which we could easily absorb through attrition. We typically lose roughly 150, sometimes upwards of 200, per year. We were targeting 75. My guess is that number is going to be a little low. It may be twice that number. If it is, then we still can look at attrition as a mechanism for absorbing most of it if not all. That's somewhere in the 75 to 150, perhaps even as high as 175 range. I'm speaking without the benefit of those actual numbers represented in dollars right in front of you.

Comm. Irving: In all fairness, that's what makes this conversation a very difficult one to have. I can throw out three priorities that might be moot if indeed you're closing that gap. I don't know how we can measure them until we have those numbers.

Dr. Evans: The conversations that we've had annually are that, but also what the Board would like to give high priority to not touching. You've made that clear in the past as well.

Comm. Irving: Got it. That's a good point. Are we meeting before the 30<sup>th</sup> to discuss the budget again?

Dr. Evans: I believe the next meeting is scheduled for the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Comm. Irving: That's troublesome. Not ready with the version of the budget now and then having a week and a half before we get together again on the 30<sup>th</sup> is dangerous and irresponsible. This group can decide how we want to move forward with that. While I respect that, and you're sensitive about preserving what's there, I need to see what's there. I don't think you can expect us to tell you that without measuring and looking if these numbers have changed. I made a whole bunch of suggestions and scribbles on my budget sheet, but I don't want to waste my breath if we do this again. I don't want to put myself out there as saying I recommend to cut x, y, and z and there's no need for it either. I don't know. I think this is kind of tough.

Comm. Martinez: That speaks to a point I was making earlier. It is tough to have this conversation in detail when we don't have the actual numbers. I wouldn't be against meeting again perhaps next Wednesday so we can have that discussion before we actually come to a vote. We will have had the opportunity to vet this more thoroughly.

Dr. Evans: I would like to give Ms. Ayala an opportunity to add anything that she'd like to add. She was prepared to make some comments, but even she's limited in what she can say because she doesn't have the printout either because the system has been closed.

Ms. Ayala: Some of the areas that even Dr. Evans doesn't know is we received an email about the charter school that was going to open with 212 students is not opening. I was able to recover \$2.1 million there.

Comm. Martinez: You said it's not opening.

Ms. Ayala: It's not opening. That sort of reduced some of my expenditure by \$2.1 million. We're looking at that. We're also looking at NCLB and making sure they give us the indirect costs. I'm looking at the open purchase orders that we currently have from last year to see how much money that's going to bring into miscellaneous revenues. We've been looking at that. We have about \$115 million, which are the operating costs of this building. 38% to 43% is out-of-district students. 28% of that is facilities. Another big chunk of that 8% is security. A lot of that doesn't have a lot of room for us to take because of the direction from Dr. Evans is we're not touching school instruction. We need to look elsewhere. We're at bare bones right now, but his directive was to try to get money to not increase the tax levy.

Comm. Martinez: You touched on one aspect that I do want to ask about, more so as it pertains to schools. Is this going to affect in any way security throughout the schools?

Ms. Ayala: I haven't analyzed that. I'm not in a position to respond to that.

Comm. Kerr: Dr. Evans, what is happening presently is we are just managing a bad situation. We are really not fixing the problems that we face. There are a couple of things that we can do that will help to move us from where we are. We have made recommendations to you regarding what we can do. What I'm not hearing is a report back from you that you have actually embraced them and presented them. I've not heard that. As far as I'm concerned at this point, I can only say we're just managing a bad situation that's going to get worse with time. Let me jump off that and just make this point. Last year we sat right in this building and we talked about the Board's priorities regarding what we would like to see the budget do. That was last year. The central discussion we had last year was about arts and music in our schools. We said at that time that the quality that we are presenting was woefully deficient. We thought that there would be an improvement between last year and this year. We made the case that it was so bad and so poor. What I cannot say tonight is that I've seen a drastic shift in the resourcing of those programs in our schools. We're talking more about further cuts. What are those cuts going to do to our arts and music programs in the district?

Comm. Hodges: Before Dr. Evans responds, let me just say that I'm not worried about this year's budget. I'm worried about the next two. You're fervently trying to make sure that we cut down to where we're supposed to be, but that's not the issue. The issue is we're not being funded appropriately. We have these unpredictable additional expenses that come in the way of charter schools and the ADA, which wreak havoc with our budget. While we're trying to be diligent in doing what we're supposed to do in terms of the law, the State of New Jersey is not. They can frankly care less. They want us to sit here and cut. What basically happens is as we're cutting we're eating away at the educational foundation of the school district. The services that we provide students are being undermined and eroded, period. Dr. Evans, we sat here and we had parents come here and tell you that you have substitute teachers in your classrooms. You don't have English teachers. You don't have science teachers. You don't have math teachers. We can't compete with the staff that's being taken away because we can't find them the salaries. We can go ahead and cut, cut, cut and what you're going to have is a shell that can't perform and can't compete with the next round of charter schools who are going to take more money, which will then drive us to cut some more. I

really want you to come to grips with that understanding. That's the major problem here. We're \$173 million short and counting. So as we're busy fervently trying to put this together, we all need to realize this is just part of the game. And by the way, this is not when you have your priority discussion. Your priority discussion comes in May and June, and then follow-up to make sure that the curricular imperatives are in place starting in October late September. That's when the Board says we want music and art dedicated. Now you put the money in the budget at that time to make sure it's there. We're running around just snipping at the edges. The Superintendent can't take his budget now, turn it around, and put in a whole new approach to art and music when you're trying to close the \$5 million gap. You can't do it. Where does he get the teachers from? Where do you get the instruments from? Let alone the art supplies, on and on. You just can't do it. As we have this discussion just keep in mind that this is not when you do your budget priorities. You're closing a gap and you want to try to find out what are we eliminating in terms of cuts. What are we trying to hold harmless as opposed to what priorities we can establish? We can't make priorities here. We just can't. You can probably say what we cut less of in whatever area, but not the budget priorities. That's the wrong place and the wrong discussion. We will have that in May and we will have a further discussion in late September/October. But right now what you're doing is basically saying who is getting hurt the most, that's it, until we do something about the funding problem, which is the real driver.

Dr. Evans: You're asking specifically about art and music. I think we added one or two positions here or there but no substantive changes. There hasn't been funding to make any additional changes. Anything that we decide we want to change that requires additional money means we have to stop doing something else to be able to do that. That's our reality.

Comm. Kerr: All I'm saying is it's our reality because we make it our reality. If we don't do anything about it and don't say anything about it, then it's going to be our reality. But we can say something about it and we can do something about it and something might change. But if we don't say or don't do, then nothing will change. That's where I'm at with that.

Comm. Hodges: I think the Board has made clear through its discussion with the City Council that we can at least attempt to do two things – slow down the costs to charter schools coming in and remove that weight of that \$19 million for the attendance. If you can get \$19 million for the attendance then you're back in the game for at least a year. But if you're flat funded next year you have 6% increase due to energy costs and everything else. So you're going to be right back here doing the same thing. There's a penchant here to say let's go through the budget and cut this and that. You can go right ahead, but that's just a placeholder for next year's activity when you begin to take out program after program until you have nothing else to cut. You can cut people. You can empty the building here, but then you can't export services and control functions from the central office. You can do it. It's not realistic. In the last six years almost 25% of your budget has been short-fall. You can't provide services like that when your costs are going up. You can't.

Comm. Irving: I have one follow-up to Comm. Martinez and one to Dr. Evans. To Comm. Martinez' point, I just think it behooves us to have a conversation again with the actual figures of the budget before we meet on the 30<sup>th</sup>. At that point in time there may be suggestions, recommendations, and questions that the Board has after receiving the budget. What Comm. Martinez asked was a great point about security. I know you just took a reduction in the security. What does that mean for us? At that point in time, Capt. Smith or somebody should prepare a report and just make that very clear for us

what that looks like. For special education what does that look like? For early childhood what might that look like? There are some key line items that I highlighted here such as legal, finance, repair and maintenance services. There are significant reductions and I think it's important for us to know what does that mean for the operations of those departments moving forward. With that said, Comm. Kerr brought up a very good point. In the last conversation two weeks ago there were some very specific recommendations given about how to plug that hole. I'm glad to see the \$2.1 million we found from the charter school. That might eat into that \$5 million that you're talking about. Again, what happens next year when the charter school goes live? We're automatically starting at minimum \$2.1 million behind. Where do we find that money? I made specific recommendations around our ability to privatize areas like substitutes and instructional aides, looking at the function of a child study team and finding out ways to do that. I wanted to know have we done a cost benefit analysis. Have we explored that? If we're ready for this year, which seems you're saying we might be able to do, that data has to come before the Board. As Dr. Hodges said, that analysis has been done with health benefits. Again, that conversation has to be had and that research has to be done. I have to be very frank and say this is the second time I've given four very specific and tangible recommendations and it feels like they're just falling on deaf ears. Nobody here is going to like me, but I'm just going to say it. Athletics is another conversation. We have two athletic programs, but we're finding ourselves in dire needs and dire straits. There has to be a conversation around what does that cost really look like. We saved on one athletic director, but we ended up going to two and back to that model. For this year it seems like we're going to be okay. It seems like between you and the folks in the business office you're going to be able to work this off. But next year it's going to get real and the year after that it's going to get even realer. My concern is that the work has to be done now for the 2016-2017 budget. I'm not trying to say it's a great idea. All I'm saying is it should be explored.

Dr. Evans: They are being explored and have been explored in one case. In fact, I'm waiting for figures on the substitutes now. That has been done. I don't have the final figures to hand to you now.

Comm. Irving: It seems like this \$2.1 million for the charter schools is actually a saving grace. Dr. Hodges and I disagree on just one thing. While I do believe the state is definitely underfunding us, I just don't see them giving us anything else any time soon, at least while this Governor is here. At least on the interim you have to prepare for what additional flat funding, another 5% increase and expenses may look like and have those plans in place. So that when you start performing the budget next year in September we're saying we looked at this last year and we can put this and that on the list. At least there's a bank of potential savings in different areas that happen to be in the district.

Comm. Hodges: That headline should be "Chris Irving talks about cutting athletics and the Board President backed away from that."

Comm. Irving: All I'm saying is that all these areas have to be on the table. You have to have these conversations. I don't have a problem. It's my personal philosophy. I don't profess that on anybody else. It's just Chris Irving's personal philosophy.

Comm. Martinez: What you're saying is so spot on because we want to avoid being here next year scrambling the same way we're doing now and the year after scrambling the same way trying to put a Band-Aid over a gaping wound. We don't want to be doing this again next year.

Comm. Hodges: You're not listening. You are going to be here next year. You're going to be in the same position next year. They're flat funding you and they're undermining your budget. You're going to be here next year and you have less to cut.

Comm. Martinez: Let's prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Comm. Hodges: Or fight back.

Comm. Martinez: And fight back.

Comm. Rivera: Dr. Evans, you mentioned previously you don't want to touch any funding or any school budgets in your approach.

Dr. Evans: We've actually had discussions as late as today about further reducing school budgets. When we cut at the district office, it doesn't always mean just in this building. It does have an impact on the schools. But Ms. Ayala and I had a very brief conversation about an adjustment that we can and are looking at making to school budgets.

Comm. Rivera: I just want to point something out because me passing this comment someone is going to interpret it as me asking the district to cut services. That's not what I mean at all. If you look at the document right here that was passed out today, there are a few schools that I notice from year to year where we budget a certain amount for them and they don't spend over \$1 million. Then I look at this year's budget and you actually gave them more money on top of that. Just to point out a few and I did this while I was here, they might have a special situation why they didn't spend the money, but we're giving them more this year. It's not the one we're building. It's the one we're on right now. Let's just go to School 9. They all have increases. The majority of the schools have increases, but I just want to point out the ones that have big increases. If you go to School 9 and see the purple columns, that's fiscal year 2014. We budgeted \$11.8 million. We spent \$10,172,926 and left an available balance of \$1.6 million. The next year, which is the current year right now, we budgeted \$11,878,000 for this school. That's an almost \$2 million increase not from budget year from budget year, but on what they spent last year from actual expenditure to budget. That's almost \$2 million. We're looking at the green section, which is the current budget we're on right now. We budgeted \$11.8 million and so far we still have five months left. You're going to get last month's bill coming forward and so on. So far we've spent \$5,282,000 out of that \$11.8 million. We have \$6,383,910 in encumbrances, which probably includes positions that haven't been filled. I'm just giving you an example. The way I see this, more than half of the year has gone through and we haven't even spent half of the money. When I suggest looking into these budgets, it's not to reduce the services that we provide our students. It's to actually shift the funds. A budget is a plan to execute a curriculum and to teach our kids what we're planning to teach them. But if we have all this money left, one of two things is happening. They're not executing what we're telling them to execute or they have a lot of money. I'm just basing it on numbers. It's never enough money for the kids, but I'm just basing it on numbers. That's one school. If you go to School 18 it's something similar. There are a few schools like that. If you go to Martin Luther King, it's the same thing. You spent \$8.5 million in 2014 and this year we're budgeting \$9.8 million. So what I'm saying is let's take a different approach and I don't just mean about cutting. Maybe we can shift the funds to other programs in other schools. I asked the administrator at one time how these budgets are assigned to the schools and I was told that it was based on per-student. I don't know if that's a good idea according to these numbers here. Let's just change our budgeting approach. It's just a suggestion for one of your members.

Ms. Ayala: I don't have a reason, but I do know what happened. The purple area for 2014 was based on what was actually paid. If you are aware, in 2014 we did not have a negotiated contract so it does not reflect people's increases. In the green, which is the current year that we're in, you're going to have that significant increase because people did get all their money for this year.

Comm. Rivera: It's not reflecting what we've spent so far. That's my question. It's not reflected.

Ms. Ayala: It is reflected.

Comm. Rivera: No, it's not. Look at the budget amount and look at the expense. The salaries should be up to date. We have three and a half months left. Salaries are up to date.

Ms. Ayala: March is not there.

Comm. Rivera: I spoke to you. You told me it was today.

Ms. Ayala: March is not there. We have up to February.

Comm. Rivera: You told me March back there.

Ms. Ayala: I read it today, but that doesn't mean that March has been posted.

Comm. Rivera: Salaries don't get posted? It should be posted.

Ms. Ayala: We have four months left.

Comm. Rivera: Salaries get posted, just so you know. You have to charge the budget, right?

Ms. Ayala: I'm not going to have this conversation here because I'm not going into that level of detail. The March salary is not posted. The only salary that's posted year-to-date is February.

Comm. Irving: The point Comm. Rivera is trying to make is the increases that we've seen in some of the school-based budgets, whether they were encumbered this year or last year and a school will absorb \$500,000 and have a surplus of \$40,000, do our schools truly need these exponential increases that have marginally gone up and have added? The other piece is if you give it to somebody they're going to spend it.

Ms. Ayala: There are two folds to that. We have salaries included. For me to truly answer that I'd have to look at how many vacant positions were there throughout the year. That's why we have a significant leftover, because we weren't able to fill that. Every school is a case that we need to look at for that type of analytic work. Yesterday we were open and available to drill down because this goes really far down to the level of salaries and non-salaries and I shared that with the Commissioner. I made it very clear that to that level of detail at the finance committee we're open to share that information. Also, what was requested yesterday was they want the same thing by FTE.

Comm. Hodges: I also understand there's a question about whether increments are being reflected in this information. That's why the unpaid increments are all part of that end-of-year data. You're not just seeing where we are and this is just leftover money. Some of that money is encumbered.

Dr. Evans: Let me just make sure we're all reading this the same way. The very last column that tells you what's available for any given school for this year, not the column that's three or four from right to left.

Comm. Rivera: Encumbered doesn't mean spent. You can close that out. You can award a contract today. You can set up today an encumbrance for utilities for \$500,000. If you only use \$400,000 you close that encumbrance at the end and that money becomes available.

Dr. Evans: I understand that.

Comm. Rivera: Daisy also told me earlier that all the salaries she budgeted for by law she's supposed to encumber... I don't want to entertain the notion that what's available is at the end. Daisy told me earlier that she encumbers anything that they budget for salaries. Even if the position is vacant, it's encumbered. But what I'm saying is the encumbrance is not a reflection of the expense. That's just money that's being held for a purpose.

Ms. Ayala: That is correct. That's why you have a column year-to-date actual.

Dr. Evans: My only point is I think you're reading this differently. I'm hearing two different interpretations. It's the very last column. Encumbrances mean graduations coming two or three months from now and the money has already been set aside and obligated for that. It's subtracted out of the initial dollars that were allocated. What's left over, what's unspent, what's unencumbered is that very last column.

Comm. Rivera: Let me rephrase. You have to take your encumbrance and your available balance, combine them both, and that's unexpended. The money you have available to award any additional contract is your available amount, which only gets reduced when you open a purchase order.

Dr. Evans: I understand that.

Comm. Rivera: On the first line you grab the \$1.9 million you have there, plus the \$35,000 and that's your unexpended. Your encumbered is the \$1.9 million.

Dr. Evans: I don't think there's a misunderstanding on how to read that. I understand exactly what you're saying and you're right. All I'm saying is if you take School 1, it's \$35,995 that's available, that's unencumbered, that's unspent. That's all I'm saying. It's unaccounted for. That's another way to say it. That's my only point.

Comm. Kerr: I see what Comm. Rivera is saying. I just can't understand why we're arguing about what's encumbered. If it's encumbered just take it off the table. Let's not even talk about that. We don't know what the exact outcome will be. So for right now it should be off the table. If you look at the extreme right column, if you're running a school and this is what you have left out of your budget, \$35,000, that's not a very large amount of money as a balance after you've budgeted for a complete school.

Dr. Evans: That's my point.

Comm. Rivera: Explain School 9, School 18, and Martin Luther King. I don't mean every school is in this situation.

Comm. Kerr: There are some schools where the available balance is very small and there are some that are large. There might be something that is happening there that causes you to have that size of available balance. I understand what you're saying, but the question we should be asking ourselves is what that school is going without to have that balance.

Comm. Irving: Or what do people over-budget.

Comm. Hodges: Before we go much further, we have some guests here. I want the public portion to be handled and then we can get back to this and we can be here all night. I don't have a problem with that.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

Ms. Irene Sterling: Good evening Board. Good evening Dr. Evans and staff. Interestingly enough, I don't want to talk to you about the budget tonight, except to say to you that it is your obligation as members of this Board to see that our schools are adequately funded through the end of the year and to be sure that all the way through the end of June there is enough money in these budgets to meet the needs of our schools, not only the projected needs, but the needs that may come up in the meantime as well. You have to be accountable for unexpected things as well as expected things in your budget. I do now want to talk to you about facilities as one of the chair people of the committee that is looking at this work. We have hired an outstanding firm. You may know that as a community member I have worked on every long range facility plan that this district has put forward and this is the first time that this community has seen the level of detail about the conditions of our schools that we have ever had. So I look forward to you taking a look at the information, both what you've been given tonight, and things that are subsequently to come because they're very important. One of the things that we wrestled with as members of the committee is the notion that we really do not have a standard for what goes in schools. That's not only for us, but statewide. That means that across the state our facilities are allowed to be very different. You will not find schools in suburban communities that look like our schools and that will be permitted to be named and say the circumstances are okay. The difficult number that isn't in play yet is about this whole notion of the standards. We have many schools who are not handicapped accessible. It means that a school like School 28 where we have a special program for gifted kids which is on the third floor is not accessible to a child who is handicapped by needing a wheelchair. Ladies and gentlemen, you could be sued for this if someone wanted to get in there because you would not be able to accommodate them currently. The bad news is that through all these times that we've done this work around the facilities no one at the state level has said you must accommodate this. There needs to be elevators in every school so that handicapped kids can access all of your programming. The more that we go to Choice in our schools, the more the requirements for the facilities to be adequate to those needs becomes very important. I look forward to your continue participation in this process. We've got lots to go before we get there. The other thing that I want to say is that this is not a process about what we're going to do next year because we know darn well this



Governor is not interested in building the schools for us. But what it is about is getting ready to talk to everyone who is running for Governor in 2016, both about the school funding issues and about the facilities issues. Both of them, particularly for us, are critical and we need to have solid information out there and solid relationships in place to make sure that our voices are heard and that our needs are met for our kids. Otherwise, we're going to keep building more prisons and we don't need that pipeline any stronger than it already is. Thank you.

Comm. Hodges: As the next speaker comes, I've been told those elevators we have to pay for out of our budget. I'm just letting you know. We have 54 schools and about two or three have elevators.

Dr. Evans: More than that. It's about 10.

Comm. Hodges: Oh, so that's only 40. Sorry. No need to worry.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening. About a week and a half ago, I got invited to go visit a charter school in Newark. I accepted the invitation, went, toured the building, and talked to the people who run the charter school. They invited me because they are developing a proposal to open a charter in Paterson and wanted to talk with me about it. I told them PEF can't support the opening up charters. But I want to share with you that I loved what I saw. I saw children actively engaged with each other. I saw a rooftop garden. I saw a living art room where they were creating natural materials. I saw classrooms with chairs on wheels so that the setup is flexible and kids can roll around and react with each other. I saw classrooms where desks are movable so that kids can stand while they work and move into whatever position, some that look like lounges. I saw a cooking kitchen with meals served family style where each child at the table had a specific role to get the meal or to begin passing the food or to clean up. They grow their own vegetables and herbs to prepare the meal and kids are helping in the kitchen also. I say all this because I really loved it and I really think this is what kids ought to be doing. I saw robotics kids working in the hallway doing their thing and kids in the art room excited about what was going on. As we cut the budget, I'm not hearing a lot of conversation about what our kids need. I'm hearing a lot of conversation about money. These people are thinking about what kids need and what parents want their kids to know and do and learn now and in the future. If we don't have that conversation at this table they're coming and they're taking the public schools' money and our parent and kids are going to flock to them. They're so attractive and they're pumping out kids who are ready to go to college, ready to go into a career, and excited about learning. So I ask you to please channel your conversation here thinking if you have to struggle with cutting the budget, whatever we don't provide as Paterson Public Schools someone else will. The kids will leave and the money will leave with them. We'll keep cutting and the system will continue to disintegrate. Thank you.

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

#### **DISCUSSION OF BOARD PRIORITIES FOR THE 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR BUDGET**

Comm. Hodges: We're still in the middle of this discussion, but the last speaker underscored the point I was trying to make earlier. This is deliberate, folks. This is deliberate. There is a philosophical agenda to undermine public schools in favor of private schools. While we're busy racing with our pens to cut, what we're having here is

a larger problem that's not going to go away with this budget. Next year we're going to be flat funded and 6% in the hole, not including the opening of Tech and the forecasted two charter schools opening up. That's \$5 million for Tech and another \$2 to \$3 million with a new charter school. That's \$8 million plus the 6%. Now it's more than a \$5 million shortfall. And the extra \$19 million that's off the top, too. Add all that and that's what you're going to look to in terms of the shortfall. That's going to decimate your educational programming. That's the whole point. Yes, we have to do this because by law we're responsible for creating a budget. But let's do other things and get serious about them aggressively. Otherwise, what do you do with that next year?

Comm. Rivera: Ms. Sterling, I heard your comment regarding facilities. Dr. Hodges, I understand what you're saying regarding the budget. But you have to understand the budget is not just money. When a budget is put together that is the plan we're going to follow to execute. That's the plan of the Superintendent. That's what he wants his staff to do. The whole time I've been here we use the word 'cut' and you're cutting the overall, but I was just telling you specific lines. Regarding facilities, we all know that our facilities are in poor condition. If we go to line 680 it says 'repair maintenance service facilities.' Let me just give you a brief summary and that's what I'm trying to say regarding the same schools. In 2012 we budgeted \$29 million for improvements to the facilities, repairs and maintenance of the facilities. We spent \$22 million. We didn't spend \$7 million of it. Does that mean that our schools are good? Do we have the best facilities? No. We just didn't execute the plan. That's one. That's what I mean, going to those people that are handling the schools and asking them how come we didn't spend \$1.6 million last year. Is it because you didn't do this or that? Then if they can't provide you a good answer then we reallocate the money. In 2013 we budgeted \$35 million and we spent \$28 million with \$6.6 million left. In 2014 we budgeted \$35 million and spent \$30 million with \$5 million left. That's what I'm saying. That's my thing. That's why I'm a little passionate, because it's not just about money.

Comm. Hodges: We've closed the public portion. There's no need to respond.

Comm. Rivera: We have to work with what we have. That's my point. It's a little frustrating when I'm seeing that year after year a few of the lines – and I'm going to be responsible with my comments – if those funds are needed in those schools, then tell me why they're not being spent. That's my question.

Comm. Hodges: That's a very valid point and, as I said, this is the wrong time for discussions about budget priorities. This is really the wrong time. This should have happened in May and then again in October. What we can do now is focus on closing the budget gaps. That's it, the short-term closure of budget gaps. That's all we can talk about here and trying to mitigate any serious impact on the educational programs that support our students. One thing I'm going to ask, Dr. Evans, is I want to know every single area that is affected by a cut this year.

Dr. Evans: That's everything.

Comm. Hodges: Good. I need the whole list.

Dr. Evans: You can have it.

Comm. Hodges: I just need a clearly detailed explanation. I need to have a detailed list of what we're cutting - programs, people, and everything else that's being cut. Comm. Simmons and I are meeting with the Commissioner on the 27<sup>th</sup> before the adoption of

the budget. I'm just going to ask you for that detailed list of everything that's being cut out of the budget.

Dr. Evans: Just to be fair, that means I'm going to have to hire somebody to come in and do it. I'll do that if that's what you want. That's how it's going to be produced. Every resource in this district is dedicated to administering PARCC or preparing the budget or something else. So if I pull somebody off to prepare this just know the outcome. I can get it for you, but I'm going to have to bring someone in to do it.

Comm. Hodges: How about if I ask you for categories. You ultimately have that information someplace.

Dr. Evans: Ultimately yes, but you just set a deadline. You mentioned you were going to be talking to the Commissioner and I think that's coming up next week. I'm just telling you that next week is ambitious with PARCC going on because it's all hands on deck. I'll have to bring someone in to do it. I can accomplish that. I can get it to you in time.

Comm. Hodges: Okay. I want it.

Comm. Irving: I'm going to recommend that on some level that document might have to be prepared outside. I think that's important for the Board to consider, what's the impact on security, Sped, facilities, and maintenance? What will the staff have to cut out? I don't think this Board can vote on the budget without being able to understand what that impact is so that we can continue to measure how best to plan accordingly in the near future.

Comm. Hodges: You can't.

Comm. Irving: The only thing I would ask the President is if the Board can meet again before the 30<sup>th</sup>. I think it's absolutely imperative.

Comm. Hodges: On the 25<sup>th</sup>? Dr. Evans, are you part of the facilities committee meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup>?

Dr. Evans: It's not on my calendar. Oh, the community forums? I'll be attending that.

Comm. Irving: Can we do the 25<sup>th</sup>?

Dr. Evans: I can do it.

Comm. Hodges: We're setting the 25<sup>th</sup>. Okay.

Comm. Rivera: What type of report are you asking? Are you asking which programs specifically, or just the budget lines that are being reduced?

Comm. Hodges: I want the particular areas that are suffering cuts.

Comm. Rivera: Programs not budget.

Comm. Hodges: Everything. I don't want to know about the budget. I just want to know the areas that are being affected.

Comm. Irving: And a copy of the updated version of the budget, specifically how we've been able to close the gap on that proposed tax levy. I think that will come with a much

more rich conversation for how we can support the Superintendent's office and make more recommendations moving forward.

Comm. Hodges: Absolutely. You can all see what's happening here. You need to see what's going on in this district. You really need to see what's happening around these cuts. Are there any further questions about the budget? Are there any questions about the chart of accounts and the information? We were kind of hoping to have a continuation of our training around what to do with the budget. Are there any other further concerns about how to look at the budget? Is there anything further to discuss this evening? Tomorrow at 9:30 there are legislative hearings here in Paterson at the college from 9:30 until 5:00. I think this was announced at the City Council. There were opportunities to sign up. I did avail myself of one of them. I will be speaking. I don't know if the opportunities are still open.

Comm. Cleaves: About 25 people signed up thus far.

Comm. Martinez: There's a morning session, which I think right now is up to about 30 folks and then the afternoon session is about 15. I don't know what the late afternoon session is, but I will be at the afternoon session.

Comm. Hodges: I'll be there between 2:00 and 4:00. There might still be an opportunity to come down and raise some concerns. I will avail myself of that opportunity. At least you have the ability to do so. You might want to take a look and come by. I'm having a rough time getting my messages out. I'm going to have to do it louder. Is there any other business?

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.