

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BOARD RETREAT**

December 2, 2014 - 6:07 p.m.  
Administrative Offices

Presiding: Comm. Christopher Irving, President

Present:

Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent  
Ms. Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent  
Lisa Pollak, Esq., General Counsel  
Ms. Robynn Meehan, Field Service Representative,  
New Jersey School Boards Association

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

Comm. Manuel Martinez  
Comm. Flavio Rivera  
Comm. Kenneth Simmons

Absent:

Comm. Wendy Guzman

Comm. Corey Teague

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

Comm. Martinez read the Open Public Meetings Act:

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

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

**Board Retreat  
December 2, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.  
Administrative Offices  
90 Delaware Avenue  
Paterson, New Jersey**

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

Comm. Irving: I want to welcome everybody this evening and I want to just jump right in in doing our mandated School Board retreat. We have a representative from the New Jersey School Boards Association here with us this evening for a delightful night of conversation and goal-setting. I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Evans to briefly talk about some of the introductory remarks. Then I want to turn the reins over to our representative from the New Jersey School Boards Association, Ms. Robynn Meehan, who is a Field Service Representative who's been with us several times in the past. Robynn, welcome.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

### **Academic Targets**

Dr. Evans: Tonight, we typically engage in discussion that ultimately leads to the establishment of district goals that the Board ultimately adopts and embraces moving forward. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, that has included a healthy discussion around academics and a reflection of our test scores and ultimately the establishment of targets moving forward. However, this year is different in that both NJASK and HSPA have been sunsetted and moving forward PARCC is now the state's test of choice, as you all know. We've been engaging in much discussion around our preparation for PARCC. So as I thought about it and engaged in some discussion with my staff and reflected on issues that the Board has continually raised that they wanted us obviously to make sure we were taking steps to make improvement in some key areas, I've identified five or six different ones that should include much of what has been said, whether it's SAT, attendance and some other issues, school culture. So what I've proposed to do after we give Robynn a chance to begin by reviewing the goals from last year and asking some questions with regards to our attainment of those goals, then share with you what I have, which is in very rough draft form and discuss briefly the items that I'm including in this document which represents my initial suggestions. But the important part of this exercise is obviously for the Board to weigh in to tell us what they want us to focus on and then for me and my staff to take that back and craft a document like we have in the past that represents those goals, the metrics, illustrating how we're going to measure them, and then ultimately what the targets are moving forward. I think it's more appropriate for Robynn to begin with last year and then I'll get into what I'm putting in front of you for consideration for this year's goals.

## **BOARD GOAL SETTING WORKSHOP**

Ms. Robynn Meehan: Thank you. Good evening everyone. I just wanted to share with you that I scraped snow and ice off my car before I headed this way so obviously you know I'm northern. Down here it's like 10 degrees warmer, much nicer. We're back to do some more goals. What I wanted to start with is to say to you that I wanted to discuss the five goals you had from last year. Just tell me if you thought you've achieved these or not. My thing is to say to you if you've achieved these goals they do

not go away. They become your norm and the goals you set for next year you'll work on and they become the norm. So, they don't just disappear and go away. It's part of the governance cycle and I did put that in front of you. It is a very repetitious cycle. It goes from setting your goals all the way up to evaluating your Superintendent. It just continuously is a vicious circle. So tell me what you think. Number one was to close the achievement gap and increase student achievement for all students. Was it achieved? Obviously we know that student achievement is always going to be in progress.

Comm. Irving: It's a work in progress.

Ms. Meehan: Always. But did you hit any of the action plans? When you write these goals the administration is then responsible for coming up with an action plan on how to get to that goal. Did you hit those action plans? Did you achieve those?

Comm. Irving: Great question. I know everyone has a different perspective for how they were acted. Dr. Evans, I'll let you just talk briefly about how you and your staff sought to rectify that.

Dr. Evans: If you remember correctly we had and still have a large table that includes the major initiatives that we're implementing to have an impact on achievement overall, but also including the achievement gap. My short answer to the question is we hit the mark in some cases and we missed it in others. I'll probably say if I had to conclude we missed it more often than we hit it. There were some instances, particularly including special education and ELL youngsters, where there was data to support that we did close the gap. But we're nowhere near where we need to be.

Ms. Meehan: The other piece to this that I honestly want to go back to is part of the Board responsibility in the governance piece is to expect – and I'm not throwing anybody under the bus but I'm just telling you the best practice – to get updates on the progress towards district goals. I'm going to skip ahead for just a minute because I want to show you that your Board goal was to actually set a schedule so that you would get progress towards district goals from your Superintendent. It was to collaboratively set a calendar for progress towards district goals for the year. Did you achieve that?

Dr. Evans: Achieve the establishment of a calendar?

Ms. Meehan: Yes.

Dr. Evans: The dates that we had were the test dates and reporting the test results. Those were dates that we focused on. It wasn't incremental throughout the year as that would suggest. I alluded to the fact that we met some and didn't meet some. The data is represented in a report that Dr. Newell did that has all of our test scores in it. When you look at that data you can see where the gaps closed and where they didn't.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. So we're going to say it's in progress. You may want to still continue working on it, but the action plan changes. The goal may remain the same, but the action plans will change. It all depends on what you go through and what you tell me that your need is for student achievement. The need may not be to close the achievement gap. That's huge in any district. It may be something a little bit smaller or a little bit more focused depending on what your data shows. The other piece is why you want the progress towards district goals through the year is because it's not just all data on test scores. It's also the next one, create healthy school cultures. How did you do on that goal? Did you change the culture at all? What was the action plan on that to create those better or healthy cultures?

Comm. Irving: I would venture to say by and large the Superintendent's staff has done a significant job. We have a program called PBSIS, Positive Behavioral Supports in Schools. In addition to that, the additional work and training we're doing with HIB, the new HIB software we purchased, and the Breakfast after the Bell program. I see that as being one that we probably hit a heck of a lot better than others. I think we can certainly expand the work we're doing with PBSIS in other schools, but I think that's indicative of some of the initiatives that we had. I don't know if anybody differs on that one.

Comm. Kerr: If I was to judge it based on those numbers we have not move the needle. But as you have mentioned some positive programs have been initiated and they are a work in progress. So we hope that at some point we'll start to see real results from those programs.

Ms. Meehan: This is another reason why the report from the action plans from the Superintendent is really important. You need to know going through the year how you're doing on this and how you're progressing. You need to know if there's a discussion if perhaps it has to be tweaked a little bit or what else you can be doing or if you're still seeing those numbers that was a part of the action plans. I don't know what your action plans are. I don't see those. The administration writes those. Those are what you need the reports on to see how you're doing to know if you accomplished those and if you've achieved those. There's data on that part also. And just like you were saying that that's a great point, those are different specifics things that might have been part of the action plans. But the Board needs to be made aware of those, whether or not you're achieving those. We're going to say again in progress. Improve internal and external communication.

Dr. Evans: I don't think we've made much progress on that one. Much more work needs to be done, whether it's internal to the district, whether it's external to the larger community, a lot more work needs to be done.

Ms. Meehan: Build internal capacity to support school improvement.

Dr. Evans: I think we made tremendous progress on that one. When we look at the work that's going on in our classrooms as it relates to teaching and learning and ultimately introducing more rigor to our curriculum, for Board members the work of the

IFL more specifically is aimed at that. When we look at the impact of the new teacher and principal evaluation system, it's a huge impact. When we talk about teachers being more serious now and paying attention in ways that they haven't in the past and principals also holding teachers more accountable and assistant superintendents to whom principal report holding them more accountable, it's been a huge positive impact on student achievement. There are a few other initiatives, but those would perhaps be the biggest.

Ms. Meehan: So we're going to say that seems to be almost achieved.

Dr. Evans: It's a work in progress, but we've made huge achievements.

Ms. Meehan: Expand Choice options for students in grades k-8.

Dr. Evans: It's on the Board's agenda for tomorrow.

Comm. Irving: It's a work in progress.

Ms. Meehan: Do you think that you've made progress on the action plans, though?

Comm. Irving: The action plan calls for the Superintendent to create an actual plan to present to the Board and that process has been followed. I think in times past it just might have shown up on our desk to vote on. I would say the progress has been made to now bring it for the Board's conversation and ultimate adoption of the actual program in the forthcoming future.

Dr. Evans: That occurs tomorrow night. It's on tomorrow night's Board agenda for presentation and discussion by the Board.

Ms. Meehan: So probably this is going to be two years in the making.

Comm. Irving: Without a doubt.

Ms. Meehan: So it's in progress. Overall, I think that setting these goals has moved you forward. Am I correct in saying that? It has moved you forward. Or has it not? Do you need to relook at these?

Comm. Kerr: It does not move us backward, but in terms of forward...

Ms. Meehan: You're in a holding pattern. Is that what you're telling me? That's not what we want to hear. I want to move you forward. Obviously, I wanted to look at the Board goal. We know that you probably did not do this so this is something that I would like to see you put into place this year. I also left by you a Board responsibility calendar. Really read it at some point. You don't have to read it right now, but at some point really read it and go over it with the full Board so that you know what your responsibilities are month-by-month. The other piece of it is when I send you back your

memo I also always send a calendar. I'd like you to really take the calendar into consideration. It's an evaluation calendar and it will put you right on target where you need to be so we can bring you back to setting goals in the summertime. It's ideal to get them set at that point so that they're ready to go. You can approve them in September and then the Superintendent has the whole school year to be working on it. That's my personal goal for you guys, just to get you back on target with the calendar. I will set that but I need you guys to take responsibility and just do the calendar. It's really simple. I'll give you a sample. I want you to follow that, but I'd really like to see you do that. Having said that, if we set new goals tonight you do have to realize and take into consideration that we're now in December. So there are about 5 months before you'll have to evaluate the Superintendent on the progress towards these district goals. It's almost like a half year. Really take that into consideration when you do that because it's a whole year's worth of work you evaluate the Superintendent on and honestly it's really only six months that he will have had to make progress towards these goals. Setting new ones just keep that in mind. If you want you continue any of them, then that's just a continuation and hopefully you will be accomplished by June. I say June because the evaluation process has to be done by July 1. Having said that, Dr. Evans, I'm going to turn it back over to you because you wanted to go over a few things.

Dr. Evans: As I was indicating earlier, I have taken into consideration many of the conversations that the Board has engaged in with me and members of my staff that reflect concerns, issues, and priorities that the Board wants us to focus on or focus on more sharply. We may be focusing on them already, but not sharply enough. Again, the difference between this array of goals and the goals of the past, particularly as it relates to achievement, is we've had academic targets that were a major part of this. Those academic targets have focused on anticipated increases in NJASK and HSPA performance. As I mentioned earlier, those two have been sunsetted. PARCC replaces both of them. This year, as the Department of Education has communicated to us, is a benchmarking and norming year for PARCC since it is the first year. We really don't have data or information at this point sufficient to establish a target. We have to have one year's administration for that norming and benchmarking to occur, and then we can establish targets from that point forward. However, SAT has been a huge issue that we've been wrestling with as a district and the Board has clearly communicated its concerns in that area. So it is an academic target and it's the first target on that list. I had noted the target itself. I actually had a number there and then I removed it because the Board really needs to tell us what they would like for us to do as it relates to aiming to increase our SAT scores significantly. Improving attendance has been something we've been focusing on. I've put the data reflecting our reality from last year, the 2013-2014 school year, for both elementary and high schools and then the combined attendance district-wide rate that includes both elementary and high school. But similarly, I know that's a concern of the Board as well and we've engaged in a number of very thoughtful conversations around that. The graduation rate continues to be an area of challenge. To a very great extent since youngsters, at least in the past, have had to pass HSPA as one of the criteria for graduation there's a lot of discussion now about how PARCC is going to be considered in that requirement. My last information from the Department of Education has indicated that there is consideration but they

really haven't decided that PARCC would be the primary measure. Dr. Newell who's sitting over there may have more recent information than I do reflecting whether or not PARCC administered to high school students would become the measure to determine that. But that's a big question mark for us right now as we continue to strive to increase our graduation rate. We talked about improving school culture. It's one of the ones on the list there when we say create healthy school cultures. That continues to be a challenge and as Mr. Kerr's comments suggested it does continue to be a challenge. We've done a lot and you can interpret the results in different ways. When we get for example HIB data that is going up or the numbers are high, there are two ways to interpret that. One is at least people are sensitive and it's being reported and people aren't turning a blind eye to the realities of what's happening in the school. I think if they weren't being reported we'd also be concerned. There have been some cases where the numbers are unusually low and it's a valid engagement to question why the numbers are so low when they think they might be higher. That can go both ways, but we know we need to continue to make improvements in that area. I have that included on the list. Improving district responsiveness is one of our priorities – efficient and responsive district operations. That's an area that presents some serious challenges for us right now in some very specific areas. The Board and I have engaged in discussion around some of those areas and some things that we need to do, changes that we need to make and challenges that we continue to have that if we don't make changes we have to do something to address those. Obviously one of the ways to address that is to go to our customers and get a better understanding and we think we have a good understanding. Our customers, by the way, include teachers and principals out in schools who take advantage of services that are available to district office. They need for that to be in a responsive and responsible manner. But we also ought to talk about parents and others in the community. When parents call us with a problem we don't need to shuffle them from one phone to another trying to get to the right person. We need to get them answers or get them connected to the right person the first time. All of those are indicative of challenges in that area in terms of improving district responsiveness and measuring that using a survey instrument. In fact, there is a potential instrument that's attached to the information that's given to the Board. One of our staff members drafted that and obviously taking that kind of an instrument, vetting it, subjecting it to scrutiny by the psychometrist to make sure it measures what we want it to measure. That's an example of the kind of tool that will be used, but that's only step one. Step two will require some other significant actions to get us to where we need to be. Lastly on that list is increasing parent involvement. We are doing some things differently in that area this year, but that continues to be a challenge. So identifying that as a goal for the Board's consideration is there as well. The question then for the Board is, are there other things that you don't think need to be on here? But ultimately we need to arrive at consensus on an array of goals and then I will get to work with my staff to identify the appropriate measures to use to determine whether or not we're meeting those goals over time.

Comm. Irving: Thank you, Dr. Evans. I'm going to ask for a quick five-minute recess. I just got some pretty disturbing news that Quincy Battis just passed away. I want to give everybody a few minutes to soak that in. Quincy was a well-recognized community

member. I know Chrystal went to make a phone call, but it just happened about 10 or 15 minutes ago. Let's just take five minutes and we'll reconvene.

The Board took a five-minute recess at 6:35 p.m.

The Board reconvened the meeting at 6:44 p.m.

Comm. Irving: Sorry about that, but for those of us in this room who know Quincy, he's a very influential community member. He lost his fight with cancer about an hour or so ago. He's going to definitely be missed by a lot of people for sure. I think we left off with Dr. Evans going over his proposed goals. I think at this point in time it makes sense to try to figure out and parlay if these goals can mesh in a new system and/or taking from some of the preexisting goals we have here for the next six months or so.

Ms. Meehan: Something really big that I'm seeing is attendance. Obviously, if you're not addressing the attendance student achievement is not going to go up because they have to be here to learn. I would say that I would try to fit that into something. I think it's huge. It's on here in a couple of different areas. If you disagree that's fine. These are your goals, but you have to speak to me and tell me what you're thinking about these. I think the SAT is student achievement based, which in my theory they should all go back to student achievement in some way, shape, or form - all of your goals. If you want to reword the culture piece it is in progress. You've done quite a few things and improve school culture is on here. When I heard you speaking about the survey, then that may even fall under that also. The survey may be part of that action plan to help with culture. But you have to let me know. What I wrote on the second page was actually I wanted to hear from the Board what do you think needs to be done this year. You've heard Dr. Evans, but tell me is there something that you think needs to be done this year? If you guys don't mind, we have all these wonderful resources. Can I just throw out a question and say is there anything that just jumps out at you that you guys think maybe we haven't hit on? Is there anything?

Comm. Kerr: I'm just going to address this based on some of the things that I've been asking for over the years. I've always maintained that it's important that the school develops a relationship with parents. We can do that through the establishment of parent/teacher associations in every school. This is not new. We've been at this for a long time. I believe that could be a measuring stick in terms of some of our goals to see how effective we can be in that area. If you establish relationships with parents and teachers through these organizations then I believe the good will that you get from that relationship could affect the development of the school, how things are taught, and so on. I believe that is a vital piece and we should have it listed so we can use it as a tool as to how we'll we're doing in that area.

Ms. Meehan: So from what I'm hearing community communication, attendance, relationships. These are just a parking garage that we're going to throw the ideas in. Is there anybody else? Is there anything that you feel really needs to be worked on?



Comm. Irving: I think our district getting a handle on the impending fiscal cliff in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 fiscal years is really important, that we somehow deal with that.

Ms. Meehan: What else?

Comm. Kerr: I think our customer service relationship needs to be improved. A lot of parents don't interface with the schools because they are fearful of being put down and dismissed. Therefore, they try to keep away from getting involved. The culture of the schools in that regard should be improved.

Ms. Meehan: What else? Facilities are something everyone brought up? Let's work with these. When you're talking about your culture and climate you have the goal. What do you want to do? Do you want to change it? Do you want to leave it the same? Do you like the wording of it? Do you want it to say something different? Obviously the action plan is going to lead you towards it. But what is it that you want to see happen?

Comm. Irving: I think the goal might be creating schools where children and faculty are safe inside and outside the school. I think that might expand that concept to include the fact that the grounds outside of schools are absolutely important to the safety and welfare of our children than just the grounds they step on as well.

Ms. Meehan: Improving culture and climate and relationships?

Comm. Irving: What I'm speaking to has more to do with the school environment itself. I think what Comm. Kerr was talking about had more to do with the family and community engagement and improving our connection in relationship with those in the community at large.

Ms. Meehan: Do you want two separate goals?

Comm. Irving: I know they're not the same. The verbiage you're about to add isn't connected to that.

Ms. Meehan: I'm just throwing it out there. You guys need to work with it and tell me what you want it to say. You can combine the culture climate with the relationship and the community piece if you want it to be one big goal. Or you could have another one. That's absolutely fine.

Comm. Irving: I think there should be a separate goal relating to our engagement – Comm. Kerr, I'm just trying to paraphrase what you mentioned before – our ability to connect and engage parents with the community at large.

Ms. Meehan: So you want to include community engagement. What about the first one you were saying about the safe and secure learning environment?

Comm. Kerr: The security and safety of the environment needs to be looked at. I think that should be a separate goal.

Ms. Meehan: So if we leave that I believe that would encompass facility.

Comm. Irving: No. I think that is related to public safety and security of our schools.

Comm. Kerr: Not of the facility.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. That's fine. Do you want to leave that one like it is? Improve community engagement. Is that okay just as it is?

Comm. Kerr: That's fine.

Ms. Meehan: Then the action plan will delve into how to achieve that. We have relationships. Would you consider that we've hit that? Was that part of the action plan to improve community engagement?

Comm. Kerr: Maybe improve community engagement encapsulates all of that. We could cross that out.

Ms. Meehan: How about the culture and climate? Do you feel that falls into any of those two?

Comm. Kerr: I'm talking about culture and climate for each specific school. Sometimes you approach the building and it's a turnoff. The customer service is not good at that particular school and therefore it hinders parents from coming in and wanting to be a part of what's happening there.

Ms. Meehan: Should that be part of that community engagement?

Comm. Irving: Maybe adding on and creating welcoming and accepting schools.

Comm. Martinez: That's kind of a low-hanging fruit. That's an investment that can be made at no cost to make sure that when students and families are coming into those buildings that someone is there to greet them with a smile, welcoming them. In turn what that creates is an environment where folks feel they'll be more prone to come to these meetings when they know someone is going to be there. In my opinion, every time a child walks up there, there should be someone there to greet them by name.

Ms. Meehan: So you want to improve community engagement through...

Comm. Kerr: We improve it through parent/teacher associations. So, all of that.

Ms. Meehan: That's part of the action plan. What else is the goal? You want to improve that community engagement, but there's another piece to that.

Comm. Martinez: I think that's the goal, but there are subsets to that. There are steps that we need to take in order to achieve improving community engagement.

Ms. Meehan: That's the action plan. We're leaving this as is then?

Comm. Kerr: Right.

Comm. Martinez: The bullet points are what we need to do to achieve improving community engagement.

Ms. Meehan: That has to be communicated to administration from the Board so that when the action plan is written it's what you're talking about. You want to make sure that the administration and Board is on the same page with what you're talking about. What else? What about the attendance piece? Is everybody on board with that? Is that something that you don't think so? I know Dr. Evans thought it was. Is that something that the Board is concerned with?

Comm. Martinez: Absolutely. You're not able to teach the kid if they're not in the building and there are financial implications that can affect us without our students showing up there. Getting the kids to the school is of paramount importance. There's a model in place that we were all made aware of at School 5, the use of success mentors, external folks who were touching base with these students. I don't know if it's on a daily or weekly basis to check in on them. Did you get that homework assignment in? How did you do on that test? So those students know when they get to school it could be something as subtle as an email or a phone call. But these students have something to look forward to so there's more incentive for them to come to school that day because they get to speak to that mentor and the mentor is checking up on them. Again, there's so much overlap in all of these areas. They're so interconnected.

Ms. Meehan: Absolutely. My school has a buddy system. We have a seventh and eighth grade attached to the high school. So when they come in they get a freshman or a sophomore that's specifically assigned to them in seventh grade and that's their buddy. Whether they're touching base on a weekly basis or even if it's every couple of days that older kid is seeing that they're looking like they're a little sad or maybe they not liking school and we've got to catch this right now. It's a brilliant idea and it doesn't cost you anything. It's getting buy-in from the kids to help one another. That's brilliant. How do you want to word the attendance piece?

Comm. Irving: Improve attendance in our schools district-wide.

Ms. Meehan: What I didn't see on there is staff. Are we talking about staff attendance also? Or are we just talking about student attendance?

Comm. Irving: We're talking about students.

Ms. Meehan: To improve attendance throughout the school district?

Comm. Irving: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: We have attendance and relationships. Culture and climate - yes or no? Do you want a separate one? I have to tell you that you have five but they weren't all achieved. Do you want to have four really heavy goals that you can really work on?

Comm. Irving: I think the last goal should do something with facilities. It should relate something to our ability to get our facility ducks in a row. I'm not sure specifically how best to codify that.

Ms. Meehan: What exactly do you want to see happen? What's the vision that you see? Remember, these are one year. So what do you want to see in a year with facilities?

Comm. Kerr: At least improving them and making sure that they're as safe as they can possibly be.

Comm. Irving: Improve school facilities.

Ms. Meehan: Here's the question that we always have to ask when you go back and look at these. Number one, we ask the Superintendent can you write an action plan for them to make these come to fruition. The second question is can you afford that. I don't want to set you up for failure. I want to see you guys move forward. To set you up with goals that you can't afford is not realistic. So you really have to know what's realistic. Get the involvement of the business administrator because that's the person that you really need to know from what can you do this year.

Comm. Irving: Comments? Feedback?

Comm. Rivera: I was just thinking about the long range facilities plan. I didn't say anything because I didn't know if we had one in place. It's just a matter of checking with the administration to make sure we get a status of where we stand. Maybe on a monthly or quarterly basis just letting us know what we have accomplished. That shouldn't be difficult.

Ms. Meehan: That's what I was talking about. That was your goal last year as a Board. That was your goal that I'd like to see you keep to get the progress. He was just asking for the progress towards these goals so you know where you are.

Comm. Kerr: I think because our facilities are so old it will always be an ongoing situation to make sure that they are functioning to the best they can. We should keep the lid on it and we should never take our eye from that ball. I believe it should be a rotating part of our goals.

Ms. Meehan: We probably would fall under the long range facilities plan. So perhaps what you're saying is that if you have updates on the standing of the long range facilities plan, is that what you're trying to say?

Comm. Kerr: No. A long range facilities plan is just putting the plans in place. When you're talking to the BA, I don't want later on to hear that we don't have the money to support the long range facilities plan. It's one thing to have a plan, another thing to fund the plan, and another thing to execute those plans that you have. What I am interested in is having the plan but also making sure that whatever needs to be done for the security of our kids gets done.

Ms. Meehan: So is the Board voting on a long range facilities plan?

Comm. Kerr: Ultimately we will.

Ms. Meehan: You will. Are you going to ask those questions?

Comm. Kerr: We have asked many questions and sometimes we get answers.

Ms. Meehan: Those questions should have answers even before you vote on it, right? You should have answers because you're voting on that so that you have a say in what's happening. But to get to the bottom of facilities is there something specific? Is there a roof or something very specific that you're looking to have done?

Comm. Martinez: The need is so large. I don't know the exact number, but we have several facilities that are well over 100 years old. Just think about the infrastructure of those particular buildings. Then the regular maintenance and upkeep of our buildings that are up to part. There is always regular maintenance that needs to be taken care of. You have to balance out which in the moment is more pressing. They're all significantly important. But if you have a building that's over 100 years old that needs major overhauling and if you have a more modern building that needs new boilers where do you.... It's a fine line.

Ms. Meehan: I think it would be really beneficial for the Board to understand what the plan is if there's something in place so that they're not concerned with certain things that may already be in there. Dr. Evans, do you have anything that you could add to that?

Dr. Evans: The confounding variable here is called the SDA, the School Development Authority. They fund renovations, new construction, and emergent needs. That's the wild card in this discussion.

Ms. Meehan: Which we have no control over.

Comm. Rivera: We do have some control over the resources that we do allocate towards the maintenance of those buildings. My main concern here is that we're establishing a goal that we cannot monitor. If we don't have a long range facilities plan,

which should work hand-in-hand with the resources that we're allocating, I just don't see the purpose of establishing that goal. As a Board we all want our buildings improved. But to establish a goal for us to monitor is imperative that we have a long range facilities plan.

Ms. Meehan: Let's let Mr. Kilpatrick give you just a brief discussion on what's in it or whatever he'd like to say.

Mr. Richard Kilpatrick: What I was going to say is that this is always on our minds about what we're doing. Over the last year for sure we've improved the method of communication about what our needs are. I think it's absolutely necessary to put something in here in the goal because it's a priority and it costs us a lot of money. It's over \$35 million in the budget about facilities. So I think some goal about improving facilities and the amount of space that we need, we're doing things like that. Hope 6 is about to be approved hopefully tomorrow in the budget in reference to a project that's going to bring more capability for early childhood children under our roof. It's ours. We'll manage the program. It's things like that that are occurring that are continuous that are part of the facilities. Maybe increase in the space that we have and improving the space that we do have and increasing the security within the space that we have all pertains to facilities. I think that's pretty much always our focus when we're always looking at things, not to mention improving the infrastructure of any of those old buildings. The long range facilities plan will prioritize a lot of that for us. But when the boiler breaks tomorrow morning because it's too cold out we have to address it and deal with it.

Ms. Meehan: Those are unfortunate situations that come up in any district. A refrigerator goes and they are expensive. Tell me what you want to address with the facilities.

Comm. Kerr: I'm going to be specific. HARP is one of our schools. It's downtown in the mall where it's not conducive to good learning. It's very bad in the winter and also bad in the summer. If we're talking about long range facilities goals I want to be specific with getting a proper facility to house HARP. I would like that to be on the board if that's the way we are going.

Ms. Meehan: You need to talk amongst yourselves because that's one opinion. There are six others. You need to talk and discuss because collaboratively you need to build this goal.

Comm. Hodges: I think that there has to be an improvement in that particular facility, or at least the setting for those students. Unfortunately, it's going to have to be done without the assistance of the SDA. I think one of the goals has to be that we do something about that building and that environment for those students whether or not we get assistance from the SDA. If you make that goal that causes you to do a number of things to move that project forward. That may force you to aggressively deal with legislation that says that you can't sell a building and keep that money. It may force you

to aggressively move in terms of what you do with the diocese. It may force you to aggressively get into conversations with St. Joseph's Hospital. It's not just a simple goal. It's a set of actions if you make that commitment that we're going to do something about HARP this year. It commits you to do a number of different things aggressively. That's why he gave the goal. That's what I raised my hand for, to address HARP or get a new facility. It should be HARP, but get a new facility this year whether or not we get the assistance of the SDA.

Comm. Rivera: I agree with you, Dr. Hodges. I heard the comment that you made, Dr. Evans, regarding why certain things we can't accomplish because a lot of things are funded from the SDA and the state. Let's worry about what we have here. Anything that's additional from the SDA is welcome. The BA just said that we have about \$35 million budgeted for maintenance. Let's create the long range facilities plan around what we have, not around what we potentially could have. That's it. I don't want to say anything else right now.

Ms. Meehan: So you maintain what you have.

Comm. Hodges: That's not quite the way it works. There's a reason for getting the long range facilities plan. What it does is it obligates the SDA to do certain things and the capital funding is not made for new buildings. What I was talking about was forcing the district's hand rather aggressively in moving to force the SDA or us to a set of actions which will get a building here or to commit us to a set of actions. We've had some fits and starts that have not panned out for a variety of reasons. But to make it an actual goal it means you can't allow fits and starts to happen again. You have to pull the trigger on something. That's the whole point. There are a set of things that we've not done or have not gone through with that have cost us buildings in the past.

Comm. Rivera: Understood. What I was referring to was what has happened in the past years, us budgeting for maintenance repairs and the money not being utilized. That's what I meant, using the resources that we allocate and budget for and make sure we keep up with the facilities. If we leave it all for later then it cannot be accomplished in a year or two. That's what I meant.

Ms. Meehan: Let's word this. What do you want it to say? I'm not hearing improvement from you guys on this side. I'm hearing more improve here but change. Am I confusing what I'm hearing? You have to tell me.

Comm. Hodges: I'm clearly saying that we need to establish a new building. I don't mean the current projects.

Ms. Meehan: That's what I'm really hearing. But I want to hear that from the majority because collaboratively you have to all agree on what you want this goal to be. Is that what all of you are saying? You want to see change in this? These are really important. These are what are going to pull you through to next year and move you forward. So you really have to collaboratively agree on what you want to happen. I

could write it for you, but I'm walking out of here. It's not my goal. It's your goal. So you have to take ownership of it and you guys have to tell me what you want to happen.

Comm. Martinez: Is change the word we want to use? Or is that too...

Comm. Cleaves: I think change is what we want, but I don't think we want change specific for just one set of students. We want change for all the students. We don't want to tie ourselves into a goal for just one particular group of students. Something may happen within this year that we need to make changes for other students as well. We need to make the goal and it needs to be change, but we don't need to make it specific for just one group of students.

Ms. Meehan: One area.

Comm. Cleaves: Even though this particular group of students Dr. Hodges is speaking of needs it desperately, we don't want to fall into another group of students needing that desperately also, but we only have this goal now for this specific group.

Ms. Meehan: So can this change be in stages? Can the first stage be this year?

Comm. Kerr: Facilities improvement would be the goal and underneath that we are targeting HARP as a project. That's going to be the measuring bar to whether or not we succeed in our goal. We want to improve our facilities.

Ms. Meehan: So do you want the goal to just say improve facilities? It's very broad and it's very vague.

Comm. Kerr: It's very broad.

Ms. Meehan: And that's the action plan that will be written by the administration.

Comm. Kerr: We are not done yet. I think improvement of our facilities is a general statement. But relocating HARP as a school is something specific to achieving part of that action.

Comm. Cleaves: That's stage one.

Comm. Hodges: I think that you're always looking to improve your facilities. That's the problem. That's our responsibility - to every day make sure that there are no leaks, that the walls are painted. That's all part of the job. The goal is what particular thing you want to say you're going to absolutely drive home. That's why I said HARP. If you're going to build a building you're not going to get HARP in one year. But if you're going to put in place the funding or the circumstances or whatever it took to say we're going to begin to move an apparatus in place that will enable this school which has been an itinerant school on its' fifth or sixth location. It actually was the first academy in the district and one of the last to get a site. If you're going to say we're going to make this



happen, it's a substandard facility and we have to change it, we've had fits and starts and we're going to commit ourselves to doing something that brings this about for whatever school year it is. That's the goal, to make sure that HARP gets its' building.

Ms. Meehan: Can I make a suggestion? We're circling. If you say that you want to create safe and secure facilities to improve the learning environment of all students you're going to have your action plan that can include what's going to make it secure and safe. It could be the beginning of what you're saying. Part of the action plan could be that you investigate new locations.

Comm. Hodges: I don't want to investigate anymore. That's the problem. I want there to actually be substantial movement toward the building. It's been investigated.

Ms. Meehan: Is there a plan? Is there some type of plan already?

Comm. Hodges: That's what I want in place. I want in place a definitive plan to move to create a facility for HARP. I know I'm not going to get a building. Again, it was in 1994-1993 when HARP came into being. It was at Eastside High School. It's been all over the place. It's been looked at and investigated and planned. I'm saying I want a concrete approach to dealing with their facility as a goal.

Ms. Meehan: Is everybody else on board with that?

Comm. Hodges: I'm not excluding all the other things that have to be done. Over the course of our responsibility we have to do that anyway. But as a goal this is a...

Ms. Meehan: I'm starting to get some head nods, but I really need you to tell me if you're all on board with this. This is going to be a goal that you're proposing that your Superintendent take to the bank and work on this all year long. Is this something that you really want to see happen?

Comm. Irving: I can certainly see us supporting it and driving this point home. The only reason is we've been at it since I've been on the Board. But we also know the conditions of that school compared to all our other schools are not the most apropos. I think if we're talking about low-hanging fruit and what can be achieved between now and the next six months identifying a particular site and maybe securing a lease in another place, I think that might be worth driving home.

Ms. Meehan: So tell me how you want to word that. This is something that you're all seeing...

Comm. Irving: Secure an alternative location for HARP high school. I'm trying not to oversimplify this.

Comm. Hodges: I'd say make sure that there's significant improvement of the overall facilities with a particular attention being made to substantially upgrading the location of HARP. Hopefully the goal will be to get its own building.

Ms. Meehan: So you want to secure an alternative location. Do you want me to write that for HARP Academy?

Comm. Hodges: And significantly improve our facilities. That's a concern of the rest of the Board, obviously.

Ms. Meehan: If you're looking for an alternative place why do you want to...

Comm. Cleaves: You want the goal to be...

Comm. Hodges: Just one thing?

Comm. Kerr: He wants the overall facilities to be improved with...

Comm. Hodges: HARP being a major goal.

Ms. Meehan: You're talking about for just that building.

Comm. Hodges: Overall.

Ms. Meehan: Can that action fall under this?

Comm. Cleaves: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: To create a safe and secure learning environment in all buildings?

Comm. Hodges: That's fine.

Comm. Irving: I think that works.

Ms. Meehan: Is it a safety issue? That's what I'm getting at.

Comm. Irving: It's safety, quality of life, and quality of instruction.

Comm. Kerr: 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment.

Comm. Cleaves: It's not even a school.

Comm. Hodges: It's a mall.

Ms. Meehan: Do you want another goal?

Comm. Irving: Let's stop there.

Ms. Meehan: You have a lot of really heavy duty pieces here.

Comm. Irving: Let's stop there.

Ms. Meehan: I'd really like to see you work on them.

Comm. Irving: I agree.

Ms. Meehan: I'd really like to see your attendance worked somewhere into here. That was huge and that will be the piece. For QSAC you have to have one goal that says something about student achievement. To me they're all leading back to student achievement, but you need something that says that. So the attendance piece would actually bring it all back. Create a safe and secure learning environment to improve student achievement says it also. That's up to you guys, but for QSAC you have to have one that specifically relates to student achievement.

Comm. Irving: Isn't number three on attendance?

Comm. Hodges: You don't have anything about student achievement.

Ms. Meehan: Can we add something to this to say 'to improve student achievement' just so we cover all bases?

Comm. Irving: In an effort to improve student achievement. For number three just add 'in an effort to improve student achievement.'

Ms. Meehan: Okay. So you have create a safe and secure learning environment, improve community engagement, improve attendance throughout the district in an effort to improve student achievement, and secure an alternative location for HARP.

Comm. Hodges: The only problem I have is our latest assessment calls for a much bigger focus than that. It just does. Something has to be said about improving mastery of the material as opposed to SAT and PARCC.

Ms. Meehan: Are you talking about curriculum?

Comm. Hodges: I'm talking about curriculum and teaching. That's our issue. If you master the material you can do well on PARCC, NJASK, SAT or whatever it is. We're not doing that and that's what we're supposed to be here for. I don't know whether you want to put one more or somehow wordsmith that. But in view of what we're dealing with now I think that something substantial has to be said about addressing ourselves to a significant improvement in the mastery of our material by our students.

Ms. Meehan: Any comments?

Comm. Irving: I don't think anybody is opposed to it. Let's put it up.

Ms. Meehan: Okay.

Comm. Hodges: See significant improvement in the students' mastery of the curricular materials.

Ms. Meehan: Is everybody okay with these?

Comm. Irving: I think we are.

Ms. Meehan: Can we keep this one as a Board goal so that you can set the calendar? You'll get progress towards district goals from the administration and also set the calendar so that you can have your evaluations done.

Comm. Irving: You say you're going to give us a tool to help organize that. Am I correct?

## **REPORT ON BOARD SELF EVALUATION**

Ms. Meehan: Absolutely. I will send that to you. The other piece that I just need to do with you is I have in front of you your self-evaluation. Every year we ask you to do this. I will tell you that there were only five people that participated and one is no longer on the Board. I'm not really sure what this means to you, but there were really only four members that did it. I included the other member because I need a majority to compile it. It is compiled. It is in front of you.

Comm. Hodges: Let me state that I have made three attempts, including today, to get my password changed. I can't get into the system.

Comm. Cleaves: I had difficulty as well.

Ms. Meehan: Can you please check your emails to make sure that School Boards have the correct email address. I was emailing Chris all summer but it wasn't the one that he was using the majority of the time. We weren't communicating because he didn't even know really that I was sending an email. If we don't have the correct email address it could be just because they're entered by people. There's error. I will say that we just need to make sure that we have all your correct email addresses. We'll start there. If there's still a problem, I will have call center help you.

Comm. Hodges: But I've used my password in the past to schedule sessions and then suddenly I couldn't use it anymore. Again, three times I've called Penny and Kurt and all kinds of people.

Ms. Meehan: Either call me, call center, or email [callcenter@njsba.org](mailto:callcenter@njsba.org).

Comm. Hodges: I did that, too.

Ms. Meehan: I will help you.

Comm. Hodges: In fact, one of them called call center for me to get that done.

Ms. Meehan: I'll work on it with IT.

Comm. Hodges: They told me today that they had used the email that they got from our BA, which none of us use. But I don't have a password for that.

Comm. Cleaves: I changed mine last year.

Ms. Meehan: I'm going to tell you that you all should use the school email address because it just protects you and your attorney will let you know this. You should all be using your school account as opposed to personal emails. It's best practice. I will work on that and help you with that. Let me just draw you to page nine of this self-evaluation. You will notice that there is a little red stamp on the bottom and it says 'confidential.' The reason that I did that was because this is a self-evaluation and even though it's a very nice comment it's evaluative in nature to someone else. So this can't be on there. The confidential stamp actually gives you the authority to go ahead and send this to your attorney before it would ever be sent out to anyone because it may need to be redacted. So if you all understood what I was saying, that that's an evaluative in nature comment to someone else not the Board. That can't be on there. If you guys want to take a look at this and just go through it I did the charts for you like I do every year for you. Chart number one compares how highly you rate the nine areas that you evaluate yourself in against how well you think you're doing. You rated student achievement the highest, which I was so impressed at. That's fantastic. But you also rated student achievement in the lowest that you were doing and how well you thought you were doing. Chart number two plots how well the Board thinks it's doing as a Board against how well you think you're doing individually. Your strengths were in staff and Superintendent relationships, and your opportunities were in finance, planning, and policy. Those are areas that you probably want to look at. Chart number three compares last year to this year. There were four areas that you felt you decreased in, four areas you felt you improved in, and one area stayed the same, which is finance. With that, I will leave you. I will compile a memo as I always do and send it back to you. I will also send you the charts and all the documents necessary to go forward. There will be a blank action plan for the Superintendent. Also, when the Board does their own goals you also should be doing action plans and following through on them. Again, they will make you a stronger Board. I know sometimes it's difficult to get everybody together and to sit tight and try to get these together, but these are huge. I will tell you the four functions of a Board member. Actually, I'm going to ask you what they are. What are the four functions of a Board member? Then I will release you and I will let you go. But tell me what the four functions are.

Comm. Irving: Policy, evaluation of the Superintendent/Chief School Administrator, and governance.

Ms. Meehan: The evaluation is part of oversight and appraisal. What else? What are we doing tonight?

Comm. Cleaves: Planning.

Ms. Meehan: Planning. One of the biggest parts of your job as Board members is planning - setting policy, oversight, and appraisal. Does anybody want a stab at the last one?

Comm. Kerr: Superintendent's evaluation.

Ms. Meehan: That's part of the oversight. It's communication. These are the four functions of a Board member. Try to focus on that and the Board governance cycle will keep you in tune. I gave you the Board responsibilities and with that I will say have a lovely evening. I will email you this to the correct email address. Dr. Evans, I'll send it to you also and to Cheryl. Thank you for having me in and have a lovely holiday.

Comm. Irving: Thank you for coming. We appreciate your time.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

No speakers.

**It was moved by Comm. Simmons, 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.**

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Comm. Irving: I just passed out to everyone the narrative for the Elementary School Choice Plan. We have a presentation tomorrow night. I think the Superintendent has given us 24 hours to have some time to look at it, read it, and come prepared tomorrow to ask and have this conversation as we move forward. I just want to make sure we pay heed to it.

Comm. Hodges: I'm hoping that we can schedule the meeting on assessments. There was a mention of December 9 and I'm extremely anxious to be a part of this since it was my request. But I can't be there that night because I have to be in Trenton. Is the 11<sup>th</sup> a possibility, which is a Thursday?

Comm. Cleaves: Did we set a date?

Comm. Irving: Cheryl had a date.

Comm. Hodges: I called her to ask because...

Comm. Irving: The 11<sup>th</sup> I can't do. You said the 10<sup>th</sup> isn't good either, right?

Comm. Hodges: The 10<sup>th</sup> is fine. No, McKoy has his thing.

Comm. Irving: What time does McKoy's thing start? 7:00? Can we start at 5:30? Would that be too early for everybody?

Comm. Hodges: I don't think we have enough time.

Comm. Irving: That's what we're racing against right now. Chrystal, you said you're out from when?

Comm. Cleaves: From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Comm. Hodges: We can do this in January.

Comm. Irving: Let's do it in January. Cheryl, can you just poll the Board and maybe the day before the first workshop meeting? It probably has to be the day after the reorg meeting. The reorg is the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Comm. Cleaves: Is that the only meeting of the month?

Comm. Hodges: Yes, only one that month.

Comm. Irving: So maybe the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Comm. Hodges: You may have all seen the email about the 19 students that are floating all over. There are 19 students who passed the SATs. There's a local story and then there's a statewide story. I haven't seen the video. I'm going to ask Cheryl to send you the article. It isn't the article but the comments that need to be taken in. It does paint a picture about us deserving or not.

Comm. Irving: That we need to change.

Comm. Hodges: Yes, that's why I want people to read it. There are some nasty things said. Just take it in.

Comm. Irving: Perception.

Comm. Simmons: I think with that I think what we also need to look at is that those 19 are just 19 who were considered college-ready according to the College Board, which means they got a 1550. But we also need to look at how many students we actually had that went to college. 1300 still gets you accepted to pretty good schools. That's other information that we need to look at also.

Comm. Irving: It allows us to inform the community of the big picture. But the conversation still needs to be had.

Comm. Hodges: Exactly. That's the point.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.