

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING BETWEEN THE
STATE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION, AND THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF PATERSON**

January 15, 2014 – 6:41 p.m.
Administrative Offices
90 Delaware Avenue

Presiding: Comm. Christopher Irving, President

Present:

Dr. Donnie W. Evans, State District Superintendent
Ms. Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent

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

Comm. Alex Mendez
Comm. Kenneth Simmons
Comm. Corey Teague

Absent:

Comm. Wendy Guzman

Comm. Cleaves read the Open Public Meetings Act:

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

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

**Special Joint Meeting
January 15, 2014 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.

Present:

*Councilman Kenneth McDaniel
Councilman Andre Sayegh, Council President

Absent:

Councilman Mohammed Akhtaruzzaman

Councilman Ken Morris, Jr.

Councilwoman Ruby Cotton
Councilman Anthony Davis
Councilman William McKoy

Councilman Rigo Rodriguez
Councilman Julio Tavaréz

Madam Clerk read the following Statement of Compliance:

Meeting covered by 48-hour notice. The time, date, location and agenda of this meeting were mailed to the North Jersey Herald News, the Record, the Arabic Voice, the Italian Voice, the Passaic County Pulse, the New Jersey Pulse (formerly known as the Paterson Pulse), Rumba Dominicana (formerly the Rumba Latina), the Paterson Press, the Quisqueya Internacional, El Especial, and the Christian Heritage newspapers at 11:00 a.m. on January 9, 2014, posted on the bulletin board in the Offices of the City Clerk at said City Hall, and mailed to the offices of the persons who pay the fee of \$25.00.

Public Notice for the Special Joint Meeting:

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, be advised that the Paterson Municipal Council has scheduled a Special Joint Meeting with the Board of Education Commissioners to be held on Wednesday, January 15, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria, 1st floor, at 90 Delaware Avenue, Paterson, New Jersey, for the purpose of discussing the following matter: Public Portion.

Discussion:

"Discussion with Dr. Donnie W. Evans, State District Superintendent, the Board of Education Commissioners, staff, and city officials regarding the following matters: Hinchliffe Stadium, recreational spaces in the city, and November School Board election 2014." No formal action will be taken.

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

INTRODUCTIONS

Comm. Irving: I want to welcome everyone this evening. The intention of this meeting was to bring together the two elected bodies of our city, the City Council and the Board, to discuss issues and actions that we've tossed around and discussed respectively in our different bodies. Unfortunately, members of the Council, with the exception of the Council President, have elected not to show tonight, leaving there no quorum. I'm under the opinion as several of my colleagues are that the discussion of these items is a moot point without the colleagues who said they were going to be here. So what I'd like to do is give Dr. Evans an opportunity to say some words. I'd like to hear from the public, if that's okay with you Council President, do the public portion, and then adjourn the meeting until we can reschedule a time for the Council and the Board of Education to return together.

OPENING REMARKS/OVERVIEW

Dr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, welcome to President Sayegh. Each Board member and Council President has in front of them a packet that I simply would

like to orient you to. Board members have seen this material in a different form. Annually the school district is required to provide an annual report of our progress to the State Board of Education and to the Commissioner of Education. The material you have in front of you includes the actual annual report that we made to and handed in hard copy to the State Board of Education and the Commissioner. Again, the Board has seen the PowerPoint in an earlier draft of this document. This is the final product. I wanted you to have it and I wanted Council members to have it as well. There is a packet for each member of the Council that we will ensure obviously that they get. But I just wanted to briefly summarize some of what's in there. Again, we've had this discussion with the Board and it's more for the public and the Council President's benefit. We are experiencing a tremendous amount of success as a result of the hard work of a lot of people in our school district. In short, that includes significant improvements in our HSPA scores. Indeed, our students are performing at the highest levels that our district has experienced since HSPA began as the high stakes test of choice for our high schools, which was in 2003. You'll see that reflected in that document and in fact the PowerPoint that I was going to briefly allude to has in summary that information. You have a copy of that PowerPoint in that packet as well. It also has graduation data included and it demonstrates significant improvements over the past few years from roughly 45% of our students graduating on time or with the cohort that they entered with in the ninth grade to 72% for the class of 2013, again looking at the cohort that they entered the ninth grade with. There are also the New Jersey ASK scores there along with the HSPA scores. The story to tell there is the fact that while the State of New Jersey remained flat because the new State Common Core was integrated into New Jersey ASK you can expect some depression in the scores initially until obviously both students and teachers become more familiar with the test and what it's testing. But across the State of New Jersey while the data indicates that school districts were flat, we grew. We were the anomaly for the state, particularly among the former Abbott districts and we're very proud of that. We didn't grow as much as we wanted to, but we grew nonetheless and we were given significant credit for that in the press last week when we demonstrated and actually had the presentation that showed that data. It's in the folder that you have. I can go on and on to illustrate the successes, but again I just wanted the Council to have this as well. The Board has it in one form and now you have the final form to be able to look at. Thank you.

Comm. Irving: I'll make sure we get a packet in the mail to each Council member for their information. I'm sure they may not want their presence here, but I'm sure they definitely want to know at least what's going on in the school district and I think it's important to be informed of that.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Mendez, seconded by Comm. Simmons that the public comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

Comm. Irving: We invite all members who signed up to come and speak. I want to remind each person who comes up there is a three-minute time limit. When you hear the bell, then that is the end of the three minutes. We welcome the first speaker.

Ms. Malukah Abdullah: Good evening, my name is Malukah Abdullah. I'm a community activist. I've been in Paterson a long time. I haven't been out for a while because I've had some personal problems and I'd like to apologize to the community for that. But I am back and I'm here tonight because I heard something very disturbing. First of all, let me say that I'm not in favor of the School Board election taking place in November. The

reason is that once we put it in November then our citizens no longer have control. To you young people that are on the Board, I've been involved for a long time and I've always been an advocate for children. What you don't understand is you have to know who the political players are and what the parties are doing to us, republican and democrat. If that election is held in November it's an election where you have to side with the party. It usually says vote for Row A and all democrats for Row B. That's how it's going to go. The community is going to lose control. We can't afford that. I can only say that tonight because the Council is not here. Maybe what they're doing is boycotting it. I can't be sure, but I'm hoping that they're not in favor of it. Your President is here and maybe he can speak to that. It can be of no good to us. Also, I heard that it was not allowed to be televised tonight. So what is that about? It can't be genuine if the public can't see or know what's going on. You might say it was on Facebook and on this and that. I don't have Facebook. I don't want to participate in Facebook right now. You have other people who don't have computers at home. They don't know what's going on. The public needs to know. I'm asking if there's some way that we can rescind it because it needs to be done. If the public can understand what is happening and what the reasoning is, with the parties being in control I'm an independent person. I don't care republican or democrat. Whoever is doing the right thing by the citizens of Paterson, that's who I'm going to go with. When I say doing the right thing I mean making sure that the community gets what it needs and to move the community forward. Thank you for your time and I hope that the public will consider this. I want to let you know tonight that I will let the public know what's going on. Whoever decides to go along with it then there will be other consequences for that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bilal Hakim: My name is Bilal Hakim. It's interesting that a bell is used to stop. From the circle that I come from when a bell rings it is a sign that a devil is present in spiritual terms. That's one of the principles that we talk about in our circles of knowledge. The first thing I wanted to say is that I don't know why it was reported that Chris Irving did not want the meeting televised. The issue of the election being changed from April to November, I'm in total disagreement with that. I use that not loosely because I've watched many young people rise into all types of positions and you lack knowledge of history and experience and you're being used as pawns to destroy something that people have sacrificed tremendously. I know because I'm a child of people who have struggled in this town. Take your pens and write down the name Nina Gray and look that name up in the history of this town. She's my aunt who raised me here. The other thing I want to say to Comm. Teague who was a former member of the Power Coalition, I do understand that there are some things that you want to speak to me about. It was brought to my attention that you had some very ugly things to say in my absence. I am present. At any time you'd like to speak with me we can speak to the side or you can call me and we can rectify these matters, whatever you have on your mind. I speak straight to the point. To our Councilperson in the Third Ward where I live, I requested my Councilperson to trump the meeting. I'm hoping that others did trump the meeting because a meeting under the cover of darkness and secrecy is no meeting at all. Why? In the words of Waheedah Muhammed, words that have become very famous, a person who has nothing to hide hides nothing. So why would we not want to televise it? Many people need to be informed about this process. I voted for many of you. After we voted for some of you, you treat us like we have spiritual AIDS now. But when you needed the vote you were there. I'm talking to every last one of you that I voted for. You treat people like they have spiritual AIDS. You should be consulting with the people and find out what's on their mind and hear what the people are saying. But no, you're going with business. Education is big business. I wanted that to be on record. There's a process that you know that is in place. You're smirking. Don't smirk, because it's nothing funny. There's nothing funny. I'm not here playing. There's nothing funny. So don't sit there and smirk as I'm speaking straight from my heart.

That's one of the problems. You have contempt for the people. The people come here to express themselves and it's a joke to you. It's no joke.

*Councilman McDaniel enters the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening. Rosie Grant, Paterson Education Fund. I was looking forward to tonight's discussion and I'm very disappointed that the discussion is not happening as was planned. I don't know what the reasons are, but whatever the reasons I think our leaders need to find a way to work out their differences so that they can do the jobs which they're elected to do, in this particular case to take care of our children. If our leaders can't get to that point, how do we expect high standards from our children? How do we expect discipline from our children? So I urge you to keep trying at it because the children are waiting. This affects their lives. Your service affects our children's lives. Thank you.

Dr. Jessie Dixon: Thank you. Good evening and happy belated New Year. I wish you the most prosperous, healthy, wealthy New Year to come with a good mind and good deeds and everything. I'm here representing Grandparent Relative Care and Soul Center, Inc., Passaic County African American Women 100 Plus, and myself, my family, and all who are attached to me through this county. I'm here on behalf of the Paterson Public Schools. I'm not only speaking for myself. I think each and every one of you up there who know me know what I'm all about. I'm straightforward and honest and I tell the truth. We know the situation here in our city. We know that if we move this election, just like they said before, it's politics. We always say we'll keep the politics out of our school district. We know politics are very strong in this town and we know who is who, not in America, but in Paterson. So I'm asking you. You know how I feel. You know what I represent. Consider not moving the voters from April to November. We lose our power and you lose too. It's a losing matter and the things that happen in our school today are not supposed to even happen. You're letting the schools become political. That's a no-no. I don't care who sits where. If we're going to do something let's do it right. Go forward. Say we're here for our children, not for our pockets. We're here for our children so they can learn. We know each and every one of those kids out there can learn. We know that. So let's not cut it off. Let's try to empower our children and help our parents to go forward. If you go in these homes, you're talking about voting in November? You need to put your concerns in the homes and see where these children come from, not moving from election to election. What is that going to do? Just give the people who sit behind the desks more power to do what? Nothing. I heard the bell ring, but I'm not going to stop.

Comm. Irving: Take your time, Ms. Dixon.

Dr. Dixon: I'm not going to stop because this is not the place to have this kind of meeting with these people right here. We're going to be here. You're trying to reach the whole district and this is not how you do it. If we're going to do it, let's do it right, not in a corner behind closed doors because like you said, I think we're hiding something. We're not here to hide nothing because I can step out and say what I have to say and mean it from my heart. I work from my heart, not from what he thinks. I have a mind. I thank god for my mind. I thank god for my movement because without god we can't do anything. We can run behind these other political people. You see what your Governor is into. So take from him that when you try to rule something yourself it's not going to work. But you better sit back, think, let's come together, and stop using our schools for politics and use it for the right thing - so all our children can learn. That's what we're here for. That's what I'm going to fight for and I'll fight you until I'm dead. I will fight you. If you want a fight from me, let's do it. I will go out and that's what I campaign against.

I'm campaigning for our children, our district, and our parents. Let's campaign to get some of these parents out here to these meetings. Let's campaign to get them to the polls in April and not November. Let's do that and I'm with you 100%. Thank you very much and have a prosperous new year.

Ms. Waheedah Muhammad: Good evening, Waheedah Muhammad, Paterson. First of all, let me say that. Although I think it is very unacceptable for my Council to not be here, I'm going to tell you I understand why they're not here. Because you know what? I too was upset when I heard the meeting was coming all the way out here. That might not be that far to you, but for a lot of us it is way out here. I said to President Sayegh and I thank you for responding, but I also texted you, President Irving, to find out why we were moving the meeting all the way out here when more people would be able to come if it was at the City Council chambers. I heard nothing from you, but I heard from Council President Sayegh that it was your decision to do this. I want to poll the rest of you. Was it your decision? Did you not know this was going to happen, that we were coming all the way out here to have a meeting that could have happened in town? Did you get a call saying would you think about it? None of you. Nobody. You're not going to answer. Thank you, Dr. Hodges and Comm. Kerr. Thank you so much for being men enough to say what you didn't know and I appreciate that. Okay. You're going to respond after. We will be waiting for your response. As Dr. Dixon said about this election mess, because that's what it's going to be, it's going to be a mess. You all can sit there all day long and say it is not going to be political, it's not going to do this and that, and we're still going to have control. You know better, especially if you've been in the field of politics any amount of time. As Malikah said, when it's Row A, Row B or row this, people need to have their own decision as to where they're going with their children and you're taking that completely away from them. I see some of you looking like, we've done that. Guess what? You think like Christie thinks, like what I do in the dark isn't going to come in the light. But I'm going to tell you take a page out of his book because all that crap that he's doing in the dark is coming and so is yours. We're going to be there with the flashlight to show you out. I'm going to tell you like Jessie. I don't mind a fight. That's what we have to do. We're not here just for a season. We're here for a reason. I'm not going to let you just take what I have worked my butt off. My children and grandchildren are coming up and you're taking away from them to be men and women enough to stand and say this is not what I'm going to do. But you're not going to do that because you're going to look around and we're going to be there. Like I said, you think it's not going to come. But I'm telling you right now, it's coming. As Christie's came so is yours. Thank you and god bless.

Mr. David Gilmore: Dave Gilmore, Paterson. Thank you for the opportunity. Councilman Sayegh, I knew you would be here. First of all, before I get to the meat of the matter, I get very rare opportunities to address some of the people in this crowd. Dr. Evans, I still don't know you yet. I have to get to know you because I've got mixed feelings in terms of your position being a state-appointed superintendent. In fact, the old cliché of serving two masters in terms of the outcomes for our children versus the agenda of the Governor and Cerf and some of the things that are going on that we read about. So I really would like to take the opportunity at some point to meet with you and sit down and share some of your vision. I'm very encouraged by the numbers that you just spoke of a few moments ago in terms of the outcome on the graduation rate. That's very encouraging. I'd like to know more about that. I don't want to say I want to admonish our Council, but I'm really not understanding why they would not be here. You have to take the opportunities as they come, although we would have liked to have seen the meeting televised or the information distributed without suppression. Although we have esteemed press here to cover the meeting it would have been a much more opportune time to share with the community at large if it was televised. Unfortunately,

they chose not to be here. I'm not going to judge. I just think it's unfortunate that they're not here. I do want to add my two cents in to the feeling that has been expressed in terms of the moving of the election to November. It is a political outcome. Whether you were well-intentioned in terms of your thought process, in terms of what I heard was getting more parents out, that is the biggest challenge in the world, to get the parents out to the PTO or the election or whatever. If you're not serving food at the election sites they're not coming. You have bigger challenges to get them there. So I don't think that moving it was the answer for that outcome. It does tend to make it more political because of the line voting and the promotion of the parties to vote a line or a party and we know that. To not recognize or understand that is either naïveté or you've been co-opted. It's one of the two. So that evaluation needs to be made or if there's an opportunity to rescind and go back and say maybe we made a mistake. Maybe the public at large has said this is not what we want. You may not even get that groundswell of a response because the people don't respond here. They really don't. You're looking at a community that trusts too much the people that they put in. They're not participatory in the process because of trust. I try to keep it positive. I think that's what it is. I don't want to call it other things that people may have categorized it as too negatively. I don't want to say that. I think they trust too much and that trust is misplaced. So we need to look at this, give it another shot, forgive those that didn't come, and try it again in another venue. Maybe we can get a better outcome. Thank you very much.

Mr. Haythan Yonnes: Good evening. My name is Haythan Yonnes. I thought I was going to see 200 or 300 people at least and all the Councilmen sitting here. I don't see any one of our Councilmen. They are not responsible or they don't care about our kids and our education. It's a big shame. When I saw the ad three days ago that there was a meeting between the Board of Education and the Councilmen in the city, I said great. Now we have two hands together to handle the problem in our city. The Board of Education by themselves can't educate the kids and give them knowledge and then go outside in the street. We have an environment like hell. I saw just two Councilmen here. It doesn't make any sense if we say anything. Those legislators represent us here now. We know the Board of Education in our town has no power. Our education is controlled by the state. It's a fact. We can't change anything. Orders come from Christie, "Do this. Do that. You have this \$400 million budget. You have to spend it in this project only." No tutoring. Don't do gym. No sports. No facilities. No this and that. Zip your mouth. The Board of Education can't say anything. We have legislators that have the power to call Christie and say, "Stop. Our kids need gyms. They need facilities. They need schools." Why do you need you see 36 or 38 kids in a class? Kids who live in the Third Ward go to school in the First Ward. I don't see an agenda to talk about why we came here today. Just for the election in November? This is not a big deal. If it's going to be in November we need some party to represent us, not to come to the Board of Education all the meetings sitting here and not saying anything with the issues. We need someone to go to the schools to see what's going on in the schools. I live and I have property across the street from School 18. I see kids everyday at School 18. It's a crowded school. Three years ago I went to the Councilmen and I told them the field next to the school must be for the school, not for those alcoholics that hang around the corner every day. If we have a Councilman here he could walk there and drive and see the alcoholics when the kids play in the ground over there. But he doesn't care. He has a job as a part-time job. He earns \$42,000 and he doesn't care about his ward or his district, whether he's a Councilman by ward or at-large. I know the Board of Education is weak. They need help from the Councilmen. If the Councilmen support our Board of Education we will have a great and strong Board of Education and we will get stronger schools and good education in our schools. We have weaknesses in our education. We have a problem. We have the crime. We need

more security in the schools. I'd love to see something from our Board. Where is the weakness in our school? Where is the weakness in our education? If we don't know where is the pain, if we have a sick person, we can't give them the right prescription. We need to know. They are eligible to represent us. They are visiting our school or not. You have to go visit. Also, it's not just for the Board of Education. Our Councilmen if they have a part-time job and they earn \$42,000... I mention that because I spoke with someone today. I called her to the meeting...

Comm. Irving: Sir, your time is up.

Mr. Yonnes: There's nobody behind me. Just one person.

Comm. Irving: Sir, your time is up.

Mr. Yonnes: Alright. I'm finishing. You should publish the meeting because in the Council website...

Comm. Irving: We'll make sure we publish it. Thank you. Have a good night.

Mr. Michael Duggins: Hello everyone. My name is Michael Duggins. That's the name that was spoken before I came up. Some of the things I heard before I came up coming from the public sound a little awkward. I'm staring at a whole bunch of professionals. Should we tell everyone that are the professionals how to do their job? Should we sit here and act like there's a conflict? Or should we be bonding? Should we be saying here's a certain way we can do this? Maybe I can get your phone number and we can connect. I'm a little concerned about this or that. But no. I'm hearing the word fight. There's no fight when we work together. Dear powerful men of Paterson, I say only a statement. It's just the fact that I'm young and I'm seeing a whole bunch of grownups not agree with each other and this is tragic. Dear powerful men of Paterson, I say not only as a statement but also a fact that we must give to the poor more than ever. We must teach our kids and teens that integrity is more important than money, power, and respect. We must honor our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, no matter the situation. No matter what we should not choose pride over love. As you look left and right, up and down, Paterson stood strong before we were even born. If we do not save the next generation, just like the other count of poor and homeless people on the streets, I'm sorry to say our kids will live the same lives. I have seen kids my age and when I was growing up jump off a bridge, die from a broken heart, have a heart attack and then die, blow their brains out in a mall, and then even swallowed by the devil religiously. This is not good for this country. If we have freedom to act stupid, then we don't have freedom at all because we have fear on the streets, at the same time still holding to things that people don't need. We're still holding onto things people don't need, like a pathetic gun store and a liquor store in front of another liquor store, to the point where there's no reason to wonder why people get shot at night. Why? Because you can't even trust the man behind you even if they tell you they have your back. But let me get to the source. Our kids see this every day and roll with it. Okay, here I go. I need a phone. I need a new pair of shoes. I need dollars. I need money. I need fast cars. I need the whips. I need the big life. If we lust for money we want to kill. And if we want to hurt and cry, die, and keep asking why, don't teach your kids anything. Just whip their behinds and keep telling them to live the right way. I'm going to whip your behind, but I'm not going to teach you anything.

It was moved by Comm. Mendez, seconded by Comm. Simmons that the public comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

Comm. Irving: What I'm going to do is I'm going to take comments from the Board and the two Council members who are here. I'll give folks an opportunity if they want to respond or state their case and after that I'll take a motion to adjourn. I'll certainly clarify some things when my turn comes around. But I hope the Council President will also clarify too that we had agreed to actually televise and tape this meeting but somehow there was a miscommunication on the Council's end why it wasn't being filmed. There are a lot of stories going back and forth so I just want to make sure moving forward we clarify that. But this was indeed to be filmed. It was the responsibility of the Council to do so. The Council President can help confirm that. It's not my own opinion or thought. Let's start with Dr. Hodges and we'll work our way around.

Comm. Hodges: You normally start on the other side, Mr. President, but I thank you for this unique opportunity. I think my comments are going to go beyond the three minutes. I'm just letting you know right now because I really want to address in particular that young man who just spoke at the microphone. I really want to say disagreements is not an issue. It's how you handle those disagreements. Out of disagreements have come many of the compromises that have led to great changes and advances in this country. As a matter of fact, the people who wrote the Constitution that endures to this day, many of them didn't like each other. John Adams and Benjamin Franklin couldn't stand each other. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson used to be friends but had problems all through. So you just need to understand that having a disagreement is not an issue. But not being able to resolve your disagreements and not being able to put beside your positions to make those compromises, that's the problem. I also heard someone say – and I really must comment on this – that the Board doesn't have any power. That's not true. The people who say the Board doesn't have any power don't have the power. You bring the power with you and if you choose to use it, that's where the power comes from. When you decide that you're going to sit here and accept what goes on, then you in fact don't have any power. But when you come here and you commit to making changes, you find a way to turn whatever your energy is, your time, and your public status into power. So if you see power not being used, then it's because people have committed themselves to not using it. But there is power. Let me go on record as saying I was not in favor of this change of the election from April to November. But what I'm really concerned about was the inability of the community to participate in the discussion. The City Council also has the right to hold that vote. They didn't know it. As a whole they did not know. The vote was taken before they had a chance to find that out. The community has a chance by referendum to express their feelings on the same issue, but you didn't know. To this day because of lack of publicity people are calling me wanting to know whether or not I'm running in April, because it's not out there. That's the real issue. I heard tonight that an independent producer was not allowed to film this meeting over and above what the City Council did. That's what I heard tonight. Don't know whether it's true, but I was told by a senior official they were denied the right to film this meeting. What you need to understand is the last time that I'm aware that happened was when Dr. Duroy did this. He did it twice. He refused to film the meetings because he did not want the public to know what was going on. Mr. Sayegh, you know just what happened then. I took that film and I walked over to the City Council and I had them play it, and they did. It wasn't my meeting. It wasn't Dr. Duroy's meeting. It was the community's meeting. What this Council asked for was a discussion of those issues. The votes had already been taken, but the community needs to know what those issues were. I'm coming to a conclusion, Mr. President. Those issues were not on the table diffusely and that's the problem. So the Council, when they were made aware of the vote, then expressed to their Council President their desire to have this meeting in the City Council chambers so that they could have this discussion in front of the community. Instead, we're here tonight. So I'm hoping that the community will have

that opportunity, at least to have the discussion so that they can know and determine what's in the best interest of their children and not have nine people or five people decide what's going to happen for 149. Thank you, Mr. President.

Comm. Kerr: Good evening everybody. It goes without saying how disappointed I am tonight. I really came here with the hope of discussing the issues that were laid out on our agenda tonight. The fact that the City Council is not here tonight to me is sad, but I did read in an online paper that the President of the Board said if it was not held here the reverse would have happened, we would not have had a quorum from the Board to attend the meeting at City Hall. Where does that leave us as a community? What it is saying to me is that the issues of our kids are not important. It takes second place to our own personal agendas and desires. That's sad. I take particular note this evening that almost all of our speakers it was almost like everybody is fixated on the elections moving from April to November. That is to say how burning that issue is with these members of our community. I've sat through a couple of meetings where we had this kind of discussion and I don't recall at any time one single member of the public came up and supported moving our election from April to November. Not one. So I think that there is strictly politics at play in moving the election to November because we cannot quantify in any way our savings both politically and financially for moving the election. So my reading of this is that there is a boogiemaster somewhere behind a door somewhere that we're not seeing but really giving the instructions. We have to get beyond that and we need to start looking at what the real issues are and how best as a community we can address those issues without beating down folks who are really concerned and want the issues that we face in this district to be addressed. So that's where we are. We are not acting as mature individuals or people who are worthy of the positions that we hold. I trust that as we schedule this meeting we'll find some common ground, we will respect what compromises, and we will respect the needs of our community, and find a way to set our meetings that both sides can come in a spirit of cooperation to address some of the issues that we face. Thank you, Mr. President.

Comm. Martinez: Thank you all and good evening to all of you. Thank you all for coming out. I'd like to take the chance to express as clearly as I can some of the miscommunication that has led to this confusion that we all find ourselves in right now. Let it be clearly stated that from the onset, from the first joint meeting that took place between the Council and the Board of Education, we agreed from the very first meeting that we would do this in a way where the first meeting would be here, the second meeting would be there, the third meeting would be here, the fourth meeting would be there. We were following a simple pattern that we laid out from the first meeting. This was not an issue. This was not a question. This was not a matter of discussion until at one Council meeting about a week or so ago someone brought up the notion that somehow some way we are trying to keep the public in the dark and we're trying to keep folks unaware of what was going on. It couldn't be farther from the truth. The way that this played out it happened to be that this next joint meeting was scheduled to be here. We should honor our commitment and we should be here. Do I agree with the notion that we should have this information out there for the broader public to consume? Absolutely. Do I agree this place should be packed? Absolutely. Should it be shared information? Without a doubt. But the fact that we leaders of this city, elected officials in this city, have decided to not come together under the guise of this misinformation that has been spread and using egos and misinformation to now stand behind that and really put on the backburner what is important. We cannot separate the work that we do as Board of Education Commissioners and the work that they do as Council people. They're interconnected. They affect each other on a daily basis. Decisions that we make as Commissioners affect our citizens every day. The decisions that they make as a Council affect our students and our people every day. You cannot separate them.

The fact that we have allowed this petty nonsense to come between us working towards resolving the real matters at hand is sad. Here we are talking about this nonsense instead of focusing on the issues. We've lost sight of what we're actually here to do. We've lost sight of why we were elected in the first place. It's not to bicker amongst each other and say, "I'm not going to belittle myself and go down there because I will not have it my way and you won't come over here." That's ridiculous. This is the attitude and behavior of children, not of grown men and women, not of elected officials who have been put in place to move this city forward. So we're talking about all these other guises and everything like that. This is the guise. We are losing track. We are not focused on what we are here to do. Look at what we're doing. We're wasting an evening talking about things that are so petty when we should be focusing on the work that we're here to actually do. Instead, we're focusing on this. And why? For what? Because someone raised an issue when they weren't supposed to. They didn't go about it the right way. Had it been gone about the right way and you actually speak to the President of the Council and speak to the Board President first, away from the scene and have that discussion, then maybe we could have done it. But here we are and I regret that we are here in this situation.

Comm. Irving: Mr. Hakim, in this body we don't do those comments. We're going to finish and go through. I'm going to go to Council Vice President Mr. McDaniel.

Councilman McDaniel: Thank you, Comm. Irving. First of all, I just want to say that Council President, do you see these mikes here? It's a lot better than what we have. Take note. I just want to try to lighten the mood just a little bit. I came in late. Excuse my tardiness. I was at another affair that was arranged and scheduled prior to the scheduling of this meeting. However, I am here because I believe that it's my duty and my responsibility. I was elected into office and this is a part of the job here. This is a part of what I'm responsible for. That's why I'm here and I'll be at every meeting that I'm physically able to be at sharing my ideas and my thoughts about the matters that affect our city. I'm hearing a lot that the Council is not here, but there are two Council members here and we are concerned about this particular situation as we are about everything that has an impact on the lives of the citizens, especially the children of Paterson. Now, for the record I'm sure everyone here knows that this decision was a Board of Education vote. This wasn't our vote. We're not in control. We don't have authority over the Board of Education. We're not here to tell them what to do. We're not here to admonish them or anything of that nature. We're here to share ideas and discuss the business at hand. In my travels and speaking to constituents, I haven't run across a constituent who has raised this point here who has decided that this was in the best interest of the city. I'm not in agreement with the Board's decision. I do fear the impact and the influence of larger political bodies taking over our Board of Education's election process. I don't think that's going to occur next year. I don't think it's going to occur the year after. My fear is that down the road a decision made now is going to have an adverse effect where we the people at this table are not able to control it. I'm not speaking on behalf of the total Council. I'm speaking on behalf of myself, Councilman McDaniel. I want to urge the Board to consider rethinking this. Consider talking to more constituents. If that will not come to fruition, I want to encourage everyone here and everyone in the city to take Dr. Hodges up on some of the things that he said because there are still options on the table. I want to look at the opportunity here. Maybe something like this is what's needed when we think back to what Mr. Gilmore was saying as far as too much trust or things like that. He wanted to frame it in a positive way, but I think the flip side of that would be that there may be apathy among some people. Maybe something like this is what's needed because when they had the hoses and the dogs out people responded to that. There are no hoses and no dogs any more and people have become more laid back about conditions and different things. So

maybe something like this will light a fire under the voting public and wake up a sleeping giant.

Council President Sayegh: First, on behalf of Councilman Anthony Davis, I want to express his regret for not being here today. He not only lost his aunt, but he also lost his brother-in-law as well. So I ask that you keep him in your prayers while he is mourning the loss of his family members. There are only three Council members that expressed disappointment in the fact that this wouldn't be held in the Council chambers and wouldn't be televised as far as attending this evening and the reason why they have decided not to be here. Those Council members actually asked me to express that this evening, Councilman McKoy, Councilman Morris, and Councilman Tavarez. When the Board President and I originally sat down to negotiate the meeting he had brought up something that Comm. Martinez alluded to earlier. The last time the two bodies had convened it was at the City Council chambers. So I had agreed we could meet here at the Board of Education. Last week Dr. Hodges visited the City Council workshop meeting and a number of my colleagues said let's have the meeting at the City Council chambers. We tried to revisit. Clearly Mr. Irving wanted to stick to the original agreement. I just wanted to have the meeting so that people can have that opportunity. For anyone that knows me when I served on the Board of Education in my four years, I never missed a workshop meeting nor did I miss a regular meeting. As a City Council member for four years, I never missed a regular meeting. I only missed a workshop because I was on my honeymoon. So I'm hoping that the public will excuse me for that one, because my wife wouldn't have if I came back for that. Nevertheless, I think the most important issue that we face irrespective of this election and whether or not you agree or disagree is the matter of local control. Malikah Abdullah brought up earlier as far as the community losing control. The community lost control a long time ago, August 7, 1991. We're entering the 23rd year of the fact that Trenton is determining what's happening here in this district. We have a state-appointed Superintendent. The Board does have powers. The City Council may exert some authority over the Board of Education. But ultimately we want you to be able to make decisions pertaining to personnel. We would want you to exert more of your authority. We don't necessarily want a Superintendent to be able to veto things that you do. So if there's one thing that we can rally behind as a community is the issue of local control. It's happened far too long. We've heard about QSAC and scores and reaching certain benchmarks. Yet, we don't see Trenton necessarily loosening the reins as far as the level of control is concerned. So community, what I'm asking is that going forward I'm not quite sure if there's anything that needs to be done about this issue. But there's a more pressing issue and that's the issue of local control. It impacts children even more so in this district than any other matter. So I want to thank you for attending this evening and I'm sure I'll see a number of you next week at our televised regular City Council meeting, especially you Dr. Hodges. Thank you.

Comm. Mendez: Good evening residents of this great city. Let me just say that I think that using a location as an excuse to not come to this type of meeting is unacceptable. I believe that this type of meeting should be a monthly meeting with the City Council and the Board of Education. I came very excited tonight to talk about a specific topic about recreational space in the city and about some options. I just finished my meeting just to put some ideas together to be able to use the school buildings as some type of recreational area for our kids. That's one of the biggest issues that we have. There's no rec center in the City of Paterson. For our youth there's nothing here. I went to the City Council three years ago and I said that our kids are killing each other in the streets. I remember one of the Councilmen told me that was not true. I told him yes. Now we can see what's happening in Paterson and we have to take action. It's unacceptable for the Councilmen not to be here at this table and I hope that we can move forward and

have this conversation to have a monthly meeting. I had the pleasure to be at Union City. The Mayor of Union City invited me to one of the meetings but the meeting was with the Board of Education, the chief of police, and the fire department. It was a huge meeting. They have a monthly meeting to talk about the issues that the city is facing. We should be doing this in the City of Paterson. I have a very good plan and idea that I shared with the facilities committee and with the Board about using some of our school buildings as recreational centers. We are on that conversation and I think that is really a great idea. The truth of the matter is that the city doesn't have any money to build a rec center. There's no money in the city. Now we have the school buildings. We have to put a plan but the City Council, the Board, and the community has to be on the table. We have to be able to talk and have that communication because it doesn't happen in Paterson. It's very clear that we have so many personal issues in between. We have to leave that on the side and be able to sit on the table. Just for the record for some of the residents, I voted no on the resolution to move the election to November twice. I really think that this meeting should be recorded. The community should be aware of the discussion that we have. I think, President Irving, that we should reschedule this meeting and have it at the City Council if that's the issue. But we have to be able to sit on the table and have the conversation about the violence. I've been going to the City Council for the past two years requesting school signs in some of the school buildings and they're not there. How difficult is it to install a school sign, a stop sign, or a drug-free sign outside the school? How difficult is that? I've been going for the past two years to the City Council and it's not there. It's time for us to really sit down and have a real talk and have effective communication. That's one of the main issues that we have. We don't have effective communication. We have to fix that in order for us to move forward. Thank you for the opportunity.

Comm. Simmons: I'm not going to be long because Comm. Martinez basically stated it very eloquently. There's a lot of miscommunication. We did agree initially to go back and forth and rotate the location. As many of you know, the last meeting was held at the City Council chambers and we waited 45 minutes. That we did. Thank you for reminding me. So I think that this body is willing to meet, but we also want to keep the commitment that we set out in the beginning, to rotate the meetings. I'm not sure what the issue was with the meeting not being recorded, but I'm pretty sure there was a good reason for that. At least I'd like to think so. I don't think that this body has an issue with the meeting being recorded. There is nothing to hide, as I've said before, with regards to the vote for moving the election to November. I am willing to sit down and have a discussion with anyone. I am prepared to defend my vote and I'm not going to back away from it. But I'm also prepared to understand that we will have to agree to disagree. With that being said, I will say it again. Anyone that wants to have a discussion with me concerning the vote to move the election to November I am always available to have that discussion. I think I've had it with a few of you here. Like Comm. Mendez, I was looking forward to having discussions around some of the issues like recreational spaces. As you said, our children are killing each other in the streets. At our meeting last week the Board President told me that I looked like I was thugged out. That was because after that meeting I knew I was going to the Fourth Ward and I knew that I was going to the First Ward. I'm still able to walk those neighborhoods and that's something that I do regularly. My work isn't just here because being concerned about education and our children doesn't just take place here. It takes place in the streets. So I like to go where the people are and I don't have a problem doing it. I'm not afraid to do it and fortunately for me I'm still welcomed. So I'm able to reach some of them. I look forward to the next meeting wherever it is and hopefully we can have the discussions and do the work that we need to do.

Comm. Teague: Good evening everyone. First, I want to say to my elders that were here at the last meeting that I want to apologize for the way I said something. I made a statement in the last meeting and I'm not apologizing for what I said, but how I said it. I said that this is not a paid position. I wasn't saying that to say that I'm looking to get money out of anything or cut a deal with someone. If you were to come into my house right now and look in the refrigerator you'd be able to tell that I am not getting any money out of any deal. You can ask my kids and they'll tell you there's no money coming through here. So there was no deal made. I have to make that clear. The second thing I want to say is that in speaking to parents in the community I've been letting all the parents know that the School Board election for 2014 will be in November. You can come with me if you'd like and I'll show you. It's not that they're not concerned about it. There are a lot of parents who said, "Why did you do that? It's just confusing." Then there were some parents who said, "Whatever." Then there were some parents who said, "Why are you telling me about a date of an election when I can't even walk my child to school without worrying if I'm going to be mugged or shot? Why are you telling me about an election when my children don't have school supplies? They're in classrooms with no heat in the winter and no air conditioning in the summer. Why are you telling me about a school election when our district is not providing the resources for my child to have the best education they can possibly get?" So it's not that they don't care about the date of the election. But they feel like there are other issues that trump that issue. I'm not putting it on the backburner. I'm just saying that there are more issues as a School Board member that I'm concerned with right now. It's not easy, but my commitment will be to the parents and to the children. I have two kids that go to this school district as well and one of the things that my father taught me is that even in running my household there are times when I have to make decisions that my wife may not necessarily agree with and my daughter may not necessarily like, but it's a decision that I have to make to push our family forward so that we can survive from month to month. I'm not saying anything, but I don't get any side checks. We have to survive month to month. So there are times when you have to make tough decisions and a true leader is not identified when they have it easy. A true leader is identified when they can make the tough decisions. Those of you running for office, I promise you you're going to be in a position where you're going to have to make a tough decision. Whether you go to the left or the right, you're going to have people on the left and the right arguing and screaming at you and you're going to have to make a decision. So if you think that it's easy sitting behind this table, I hope that you get elected. I want you to see how it feels to be in a position where no matter what decision you make people are threatening you and yelling at you. I want you to experience that for yourself. That's all I need to say.

Comm. Cleaves: I'd like to say to the audience here this evening thank you for coming. As Ms. Muhammad said, it may have been a task or a chore for some of you to get here. But don't think that I take it lightly that you've taken time out of your busy schedule to be here. To Council President Sayegh and Councilman-at-large McDaniel, thank you for being here. Yes, there have been words around this table about the City Council that have not shown up and you are here. So I appreciate the fact that you are here. They say that your word is your bond. I am a woman and my word is my bond. I am not much of a speaker. I'm a doer. What I do I put to action. Every day that I do something in this district I do it with the children in mind first and then my mom in mind second. My mother is a retired educator from this district 38 years. What I do I do to make sure that children have the opportunities that I did when I was growing up. I know that times change, but maybe because I was not so much involved in it I didn't feel the tension that children have to feel nowadays to go to school, get into a building, and sit into a classroom. So I take this job – because it is a job for me – very seriously. Every decision that I make it's my decision. It is not anyone else's decision. It's Chrystal's

decision and Chrystal stands by the decisions that she makes. Do I always make the right decisions? No. Do I always make the wrong decisions? No. Am I open to discussion and reprimand and all of that? Yes. But I'm also open for you to just sit and have a conversation with me. I don't think anyone in this room outside of Mr. Joe who has really tried to reach out and have a conversation with me – and he and I are always playing phone tag – has reached out to me and has had a conversation with me. I'm open for conversation with anyone. But just know that what I do first and foremost I do for the children of the City of Paterson. To those people who want to keep the pot stirring, let's stop it. I don't know and I don't care who you are. Let's stop it. We're all supposed to be working here in the city to better the city whether it's with our children or recreation. My time is up.

Comm. Irving: I'll end just by reiterating the obvious. Clearly, I think we've established the fact that this was a procedural process to hold the meeting here. The Council President can also acknowledge that due to some technical difficulties with the City Council they were not able to have their photographer and his equipment was not working, which is why this was not televised. Clearly, the intention of those sitting here was to hold the Council and the Board's commitment to work with each other in order to do so. I will freely admit I am disappointed in my elected officials and colleagues for taking their balls and going home, but in my opinion that is indicative of the spirit of leadership in our city at this point in time. We have leaders who are so brass and callous, who make over \$40,000 a year, who refuse to show up and do the work of the people whether you agree with it or not. There are times where I sit on this dais and disagree with folks who happen to sit around this table quite often, but I show up every single time and they do too. These folks who sit around here with me don't get any compensation. So I implore and ask although we may differ at times, please do not ever question the integrity and the commitment of the people who sit behind this table, all of us collectively, even the ones I may disagree with and/or may not like. Quite frankly, some of us are the ones giving out toys to children during Christmas. We're the ones giving scholarships to young people. We're the ones educating our families on how to get kids into college and get scholarship applications. I know quite frankly that's the work that I do in this town. So you may disagree with me on this issue and you just will and I respect you for it. But I also ask you to respect the level and the commitment of work and the 20 plus hours that I give, that Dr. Hodges gives, that Corey Teague gives to the people of this city. These decisions we make we do not take lightly, but I respect your opinion. I respect your opinion to differ and I ask you to respect mine the same way I respect yours.

It was moved by Comm. Mendez, 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 8:00 p.m.