

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

September 3, 2013 – 7:10 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

Comm. Chrystal Cleaves, Vice President
*Comm. Wendy Guzman
Comm. Jonathan Hodges
Comm. Errol Kerr

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

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

Comm. Irving read the Open Public Meetings Act:

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

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

**Special Meeting
September 3, 2013 at 7:00 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: As I was saying before, we have one item to discuss tonight. We're going to have a conversation about the movement of the election to November. We'll have that discussion amongst ourselves, but what I want to first do is allow for the public comments to come first. If all folks have signed up, I just want to make sure we're clear on that.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Martinez, 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.

Comm. Irving: I want to remind all the speakers who come up about the three-minute rule. When you hear the bell we're going to ask you to please finish up and be respectful for all the speakers who come thereafter.

Ms. Wanda Cooks: Good evening, Wanda Cooks, 511 E. 23rd St. I'm here because one of my kids came from Urban Leadership. It only goes to the fourth grade. I had a son at School 21 that I'm trying to get out and her into School 26, but they were saying my district was School 21. Last year there was a shoot-out. My son is scared. My daughter is already saying she doesn't want to go to School 21. I'm trying to get them into School 26. I spoke to the principal at School 26 and she said there are two openings for their grades.

Dr. Evans: What we need to do is connect you with Mr. Aubrey Johnson. Ms. Shafer will get your name and contact information. Aubrey Johnson is the Assistant Superintendent for both schools, and he can work with you, discuss options, and hopefully work something out with you.

Comm. Irving: If you see Ms. Shafer, the Deputy Superintendent, she'll take your information. Thank you for coming, miss.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm here to address the one agenda item that will happen at the public meeting, which is the proposal to move the School Board election to November. I ask you to consider leaving the School Board election right where it is. It is separate from the political election so that we as a community can focus on education issues and issues that affect our children and our schools. I know that several communities have moved it since this was permitted by legislation or by the state. We haven't heard that it's benefitted any of them and we have heard that it has detracted from the education issues that need to be discussed by School Board candidates. So I do ask you to consider voting that down or not taking a vote on that today. We can wait and see if there is benefit. There is a second round coming up. We can wait and see if there is benefit to other communities before we hurry into it. I also want to call attention that this resolution was voted down in 2012 on September 19. I don't know the answer to this, but do you need to wait a year before you vote again on the same resolution that was voted down by this Board? I hope you will take that into consideration. Thank you for the opportunity.

Ms. Irene Sterling: Good evening. I'm passing around a chronology of key dates on moving the School Board election from April to November. It's an update. I'm sorry that in my haste, because I was working on my website earlier today, I did not totally get this corrected. So consider this a draft. I want to point out to you, as Rosie just said, that the last time you took a vote on this issue was September 19th of last year. We're not sure whether it's required for you to wait a year once you have taken a vote, but you need to take a look at that. If this resolution passes the three incumbents who would be up for reelection this April - Cleaves, Guzman, and Hodges - would serve an additional eight months through December of 2014. I want to talk about cost because I know that some people have made the argument that the school district is spending money on an election. That is true, but what you also need to look at is that there are costs on the other side of this and they're financial costs. PEF normally puts out a voter's guide to

the candidates. We send it to every person who voted in the previous year's School Board election and we send it to every newly registered voter. That piece of information to our voting public costs us about \$4,000 a year to do. If you do this and move the election to November, we then have to send to every voter who voted in the November election the previous year before. In a presidential year that would be an extraordinary cost and it's going to be a cost to every candidate who runs for School Board election in November at this point. What you will end up doing because money has to come from somewhere is that you will then be taking up people's money who would be giving to you to run your campaign that would normally go to other things, hopefully to our not-for-profit organizations that support our kids. So I'd like you to consider that when you think about weighing the cost of having the School Board election in November. The other thing I want to talk about is the question of local control. That is a very precious discussion to this community because for the last 22 years we have not had local control. I'd like to point out to you that the chairman of the Democratic Party does not live in Paterson and has a habit of bringing to the members of the party slates that are already set up quietly and behind the scenes without the opportunity for the city members of the board committees to express their opinions by voting. You know that this has been history in this town. If you do this now and move this election to November and move it to a place where the resources required to run a campaign will essentially be controlled by the party and people who do not live in Paterson you are going to further give up local control for the next four years. If you pass this resolution you will not be able to rescind it for four years. We only know of one year's history of this voting in this state yet. You have until mid-February of 2014 to make this decision based on further information and I ask you to consider how you're going to keep the Paterson Public Schools in some semblance of local control affordably. Thank you.

Dr. Jessie Dixon: Good evening. I'm here because I think this is a very sad thing to be coming out for. I'm here to fight for our community and our children in this city. As you are aware, we voted for you to lobby for us and if you're lobbying this way we don't appreciate it. It's all about our children. It's not about a political deal being made behind closed doors. That's the way I see it and you know I can't see. But it's time for me to come forward and speak my opinion for what I'd like to see in our community. We're going backwards. We're supposed to be moving forward. This is not for our children. This is a political deal being made behind closed doors and we all know it. I'm going to tell you this, and this is not a threat, this is a promise. If you don't vote it down then when it's time for you to run don't look for a vote because we'll never put you back in that seat again. This is for our children.

Ms. Mary Johnson: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mary Johnson from the First Ward. I stand before you tonight because I have struggled very hard in the City of Paterson for our children, our community, our seniors, and everybody. It seems to me what I'm seeing now is very hurtful. Our city is going backwards. It's even going back to the 1950s and the 1960s. It's just wrong. You can play politics all you want, but in the end you're going to lose because it's a few of us left that are going to fight. We're going to fight for our city, for our children, and for our seniors. So play politics all you want, but you have to come back again.

Ms. Vera Ames: Good evening. I, too, don't come out much anymore. But when you see me coming before a podium you know something has upset me. For all these years that we have partaken in voting and getting things done, I have never seen it come to be a chess game. It's us against them, you against me, and all of this. Ms. Sterling brought something to my attention that eight months would be added on to the current sitting candidates.

Comm. Hodges: The whole Board.

Ms. Ames: The whole Board. I know you all don't love Jonathan Hodges that much to want to give him eight more months. I know that for a fact. I can't speak about the rest of you, but I know about that one. We have to make sure that there is a clear line between the political and the educational. Our folks cannot become confused and think that this is a political move. You only have one thing that helps you get through and that's your word. Every one of you sitting around here who was elected by those of us who vote on a regular swore to your god, whoever he may be, that you were going to uphold and look out for the benefit of the children. Regardless of who brings it to the table and if it's not benefitting the children of this district and helping this Superintendent move it forward, you are a liar to yourself and to your god. Believe me - I have nothing to lose anymore. So when I get to the microphone I can say whatever about whomever it needs to be exposed upon. I want to let you know you're bringing me out of the woodwork. I was trying to rest in my rocking chair, but I don't even have time to rock anymore. But I have time to fight. So you will be seeing me out there on the bandwagon and I will be calling the Education Law Center to find out if it's legal for you to vote twice in one year for something to be passed. There are some nice prosecutors out there that just love Paterson and I do have their numbers. Thank you.

*Comm. Guzman enters the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Ms. Waheedah Muhammad: Good evening. I'm here to plead with those of you who I have not spoken to because when I spoke to your President he told me to my face that this is what he intends to do. So I'm here to talk to the rest of you that I have not talked to yet. I'm going to tell you what I told him – that I was coming to the microphone against that and I was also coming to the voting booth against him. I just want all of you to be clear because we're not here to play games. I remember, Comm. Teague, your word to us was that you were going to be here for the parents and their children. If you think this has anything to do with the parents and their children I'm here to tell you that is wrong. This is nothing to do with parents and children. This has to do with people planning to politically stack a deck for themselves. I'm telling you all right here and right now I'm going to be there when you vote on this. If you try to do it again in a secret meeting like this one was called then we're going to know about it one way or the other. But one thing for sure that's publicized is when your vote comes up again. Thank you and god bless.

Ms. Nelly Celi: Good evening, Commissioners. I just want to take a few moments to say that I oppose moving the election to November simply because like every other terrific lady that has come before me has said who cleared the path for us, we should not move it. We should put the kids first. The kids always come first. If you lose sight of why you were elected then this is not the position for you. Move on to something else where your path and your skills can be better utilized. But I urge you to vote against the November election. Thank you.

Comm. Irving: I just want to acknowledge there are a few folks who came in. Does anyone want to address the Board before we close?

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

**PRESENTATION OF A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE
ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF
EDUCATION AS THE FIRST TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST
MONDAY IN NOVEMBER**

Comm. Irving: I just want to clarify a few things before we have our conversation. At that meeting on September 19, 2012 – I have the minutes here – we never took any formal action on a vote. We got the minutes. It's here. We can share it with you. I just want to be very clear we never took any formal vote. We removed it from the agenda at that point in time. I certainly hear. That's why I wanted to ensure and to make sure that we were certainly in order to have this conversation and to take this vote this evening. What I would like to do is I am going to go through the reading of the resolution and I'm going to ask someone to promote and then second the nomination for it and then we'll have our discussion. Then I will eventually at some point in time call the question and we'll take a vote on the item this evening. I do want to be clear that my intention was to have a very public conversation with the Board and the community on camera. That conversation was cut short, not by myself, but by two of our Board members who fell ill at the very last second. Because of that we were robbed of the opportunity to have that public discussion in front of the camera and in front of our community, which is why we subsequently are now having the discussion now.

**Establishing the Election of Members of the Paterson Board of Education
As the First Tuesday after the First Monday in November**

- WHEREAS, P.L. 2011, c. 202 authorizes a local board of education to change the election date of school board members from the third Tuesday in April to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November (the General Election); and
- WHEREAS, Such action requires the adoption of a resolution by the local board of education requesting the State District Superintendent to submit a request to the Commissioner of Education as set forth in P.L. 2011, c. 202; and
- WHEREAS, The Paterson Board of Education believes that the financial interest of its constituents is safeguarded by the substantial financial saving of the school board annual election; and
- WHEREAS, The Paterson Board of Education believes that more citizens will participate in the selection of its members at the General Election than on the third Tuesday in April and that the higher level of participation will foster positive interest in our public schools; and
- WHEREAS, The Paterson Board of Education is committed to the non-partisan status of school board membership and the non-partisan conduct of school elections, and believes this principle will not be compromised by conducting board member elections in November. Now therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That, pursuant to P.L. 2011, c. 202, the Paterson Board of Education changes the annual election date for its members from the third Tuesday in April to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November (the General Election), beginning in 2014; and be it further

RESOLVED, That, pursuant to P.L. 2011, c. 202 (S-3148), the annual organization meeting of the Paterson Board of Education will take place in the first week of January following the November General Election and that the board of education's next organization meeting will take place during the first week of January 2015; and be it further

RESOLVED, That, pursuant to P.L. 2011, c. 202, members of the Paterson Board of Education whose terms would have expired by May 2014 will continue to serve in office until the January 2015 organization meeting; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be transmitted to the Passaic County Clerk; the Passaic County Board of Elections and/or Superintendent of Elections; the municipal clerk(s) of Paterson; the school board secretary (or secretaries) of Paterson; the Department of State, Division of Elections; the Department of Education's Executive County Superintendent; and the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be provided to the New Jersey School Boards Association and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

It was moved by Comm. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Cleaves that the Resolution be adopted.

Comm. Irving: Let's have this conversation. Let's do it in a respectful manner. I also want to be very clear that we have other business to discuss this evening and we will get to that business as we should have done last week. Comm. Mendez, to your point I just want to let you know I had Cheryl investigate it and we can do it if the state mandates. The legislature is the only one that can change the elections to and where they are from. So the options are April and November. You can speak on that.

Comm. Mendez: I really want more participation from the community on this election, but not at this cost. I don't really think that moving the election to November is an option because we will not only lose sight of our duty, we will lose power. The political party will get involved and there will be a totally different atmosphere out there. Moving the election to the council or a major election was an option, but we don't have the possibility. We either leave it in April or we move it to November. In my personal point of view, I don't think that November is the choice for me.

Comm. Hodges: Let me first correct you about what took place at the regular meeting. There was no mention of any illness. What was told to you during the recess was that you sandbagged the Board by placing the agenda without giving us actual access to the resolution. That's what you were told in recess. Because of that, as you were also told about the resolutions regarding the school naming, we didn't vote on this last September because you didn't have the votes then. You pulled the vote off the table. The Board didn't ask to have the vote held then. It's the same type of carpet-bagging of procedure that we try to get away from that we're now heading back into. This is what you're asking for. This is what you're bringing us to, these kinds of games, where the respect for the rules and the procedures are thrown away and completely disregarded in order to get an end. What took place at the regular meeting was after consultation with the President where we explained to him our concern about the way this was being handled, about how you're coming to us pocketing a resolution until the last minute when you were sure you had the votes, and then bringing it out and putting it on the

table for a vote. It borderlines on being unethical and because of that we left. Had I taken the time to bring this into the public it would have left an even more problematic image for this School Board, which I did not want to do. And trust me I've done it in the past without a moment's hesitation. But we have some issues going on here, and you all know what they are, that I'm trying to preserve. So I didn't go as far as I could have, but perhaps I should have. But if this passes, don't worry. I'll be going to the City Council meeting and I'll be screaming about this until I have no more voice, and a few other places. Regarding the actions that we're being asked to consider tonight, I sat at the New Jersey School Boards Association when its members were voting on this and when they took surveys. The primary reason they voted to accept this throughout the state was because they had problems passing their budgets. The legislation says that if your budget is held within 2% of last year's budget you don't have to vote if you get a vote from your community and if you move to November. We don't have that problem. That's number one. Number two is the idea of having more voters. In the last election you had more voters, but the people who actually are concerned about the Board of Education already come out. Just getting people who are voting does not guarantee that people are paying attention to the issues. The ones who are paying attention to the issues are already coming out to vote. As I mentioned before, it is no different than the questions that we see come up on the elections. They come, they see questions, and they say let me go vote for it without doing any research, without putting any time in, without doing an investigation, and without even understanding what the issues are. When you move it to an election where you have a president or a governor or a senator or a congressman then the School Board, which I think is the most important part of the election, gets lost in that shuffle because that's what people pay attention, those monumental issues which you're not going to be addressing at the local level. They get stampeded in the face of that kind of momentous occasion. So when you put the School Board in that mix you're minimizing the importance of the School Board, not increasing it. It gets washed over in the total process that's in place. The other reason was saving money. We have a figure of somewhere around \$170,000 which we would save in that election. That's the last figure, which is .73% of our budget, less than what we pay for books or paper. It might not be what we pay to clear the ice during the wintertime, but weighed against the potential of having people who don't live in this town suddenly picking our leadership, and don't think for one second that's not going to happen because it already has, this Board escaped from that. In 2002 we had gridlock because there were people who financed political campaigns and stacked this Board of Education. People out there know what I'm talking about. Because they would not allow the members to move that superintendent sat on \$53 million worth of mismanagement and loss and the Board members would not open their mouths because they were told not to. It will happen again. It's politics and their positions had nothing to do with what the children needed. It's what they were told to do. I sat in these chairs and we fought them to say, "Just open your eyes," and they wouldn't do it because they were told not to. They hired people for ridiculous reasons because they were told to do it. That cost us money, time, and our kids' education. So I'm simply going to tell you or appeal to you this is not going to benefit our kids. It is going to benefit the political parties because that's who want to come here and take part in this process, not us. They'll control the votes. They'll tell them what to do and some of us won't even hear about it because we won't be in the room. There are millions of dollars at stake in patronage jobs and contracts. If you don't think that's not important, then you weren't here 12 years ago when people had to be carted away and locked up because the Board members would not open their mouths. They didn't dare because they were told not to. They had to hang their heads in shame. You can smile all you want to, but it's the truth. They know it's the truth.

Comm. Irving: Let's be respectful.

Comm. Hodges: I did not say who was smiling, sir. All I'm saying to you is this is extremely important. This is probably one of the most important decisions you've made on this Board because you can't go back. In four years the character of this Board could change to the point where you can't bring anybody back. They can stack the Board with people and once they have the five it's done. You'll never go back – never, unless the law changes again. So I'm saying that mostly for the community, but I wanted people to hear it so that they had an opportunity to listen to the facts. That's history. I'm not conjecturing. This took place here. This Board was locked and we had to turn it into a circus in order to break it up so people could actually see what was going on here. That may happen again.

Comm. Teague: I have a couple of concerns. I know we talk about moving the election to November is a bad idea and it's not for the children and that people won't get to understand or know the issues that are brought to bear with the city and with education. But even now with the elections being in April there are still many people who don't even pay attention to any of the issues on the Board of Education. I've had people come to me when I was running in April saying, "I was told to vote for this person by certain powers on the county level. I was told to vote for this person because we're in a certain party." This kind of stuff happens even in April elections. Let me tell you something. When I said that I was running for the School Board John Kerry approached me in April. It has nothing to do with these two months. Let me just play devil's advocate for a minute. If they really wanted to come and take over they could have done it in April. What's stopping them from doing it then? I think what we're doing is we're allowing our emotions to get the best of us and we don't want to have room for the change that needs to be made. I've been in this community fighting for many years as well as a young child and I've had time to look this over and to really see that it's time for us to make some changes in this district. One of the biggest things that happen in this city is that we're afraid to take steps forward. We're afraid to make any changes. We want everything to change, but we want to remain the same. Folks, that's not going to happen. Let me be personal for a minute. This seat that I'm sitting in right now does not pay any bills in my house. I don't make a dime from it. I'm not voting tonight to keep votes or to keep a seat. I will always be my children's father. I will always be a concerned parent. I will always be in the school system making sure they have what they need whether I'm up here or not. That's not even a part of the fraction. Number two, as I've said, I had the opportunity to review the facts and the evidence on this and I don't find a problem with it. Sorry, I understand what you're saying about the past. But at some point we have to make the changes that we can make now. If we're as good as we say we are, we can get the people out in November. We can make them understand what our agenda is, what we want to do, what our focus is, what our purpose is for being a Board member and we can get them there. You can't tell me that we are going to get smothered. As big as my mouth is and as big as I can get my word out and my voice out there's nobody who is going to be able to smother me in any month. Do you understand? It's all about getting out there. When I ran for the Board of Education it was not an easy thing. I had to campaign, knock on doors, and actually get out there and work. I think it comes down to that because when you go in November you have to actually work, to roll up your sleeves, and you actually have to prove that you're worthy to sit behind this table. I think it's time for us to make the decision to do what we need to do, not just for ourselves, but for the taxpayers. Folks that say, "It's not the taxpayers. It's the children," guess what? The children are being taken care of by the taxpayers. I'm a taxpayer. My children are being taken care of by me. If it's going to be something that's going to save me money it's going to be money that I'm going to be able to use to buy them clothes, books, and things for them that the school system is not going to be able to. So in my view, I'm for it.

Comm. Guzman: I think one of the good things about having a Board of nine members is that we all don't have to think the same. We don't all have to have the same opinions. We each are different individuals with our own minds. Unfortunately, I was not present at the last Board meeting that we had, but I did make notice of that. Weeks before I said I had a previous engagement and I could not make it. I heard several comments of that meeting which were a little embarrassing, but I'm not going to go into that. We're moving forward. Coming today to the resolution I stand where I stood back in 2012 a year ago. I don't believe we should move the election. That's my personal opinion as a mother and as a Board member. Sitting on the Board, I would actually be one of the incumbents that would have to sit here for another eight months. But if this is moved, trust me, I will do my job until the time I have to. It's not that I will not get it done. It's just that I don't believe in my personal opinion that it's the best choice for the city residents and for our children. Like I said, we don't have to agree. But I'm sorry. Political parties will get involved. They will. Why don't they get involved now? Because it's a non-partisan election, because it's in April, and because we only get 2,000 people to come out and vote. Guess what? When you're counting on a good number of people to come out in November I can assure you that they will get involved. Once again, this is my personal opinion. As a mother I don't think that's right. I'm going to put on my mommy hat right now. I've sat on this Board for the past six years. My daughter was two months old when I started campaigning for the Board of Education and now she's going into first grade. I see things much differently from the time I sat on this Board in April of 2008 to this date 2013. We've made a lot of changes to this Board, believe it or not. Yes, we are a takeover district. Yes, we have little say on what we can do. But we working as a Board collectively and with the little parents that we have involved here and there we have had a lot of changes. We don't owe it to anybody else, but to the parents that have gotten involved and to the work that we have done here in the district. My personal opinion once again – I'm speaking for Wendy and not for anybody else on this Board of Education – I don't agree with moving it. That's how I'm going to stick to it because that's how I did. Thanks to the Paterson Education Fund they reported that's exactly how I did in January 2012 and that's exactly what I did in February 2012. That's still where I stand today. Nobody is changing my vote because that's just the way I've been feeling. I feel the way that it should be. That's just my personal opinion. I had to get it out there because things will change, believe it or not, but only time will tell. Thank you.

Comm. Kerr: Much has been said about what transpired at the last meeting. I want to make it clear as I sit here tonight I have not made one public comment about what took place. I have not debased anybody. I have not criticized anybody. I just did what my conviction dictated that night. I'm here tonight again and I'm here, not because I want to be, but because I'm obligated to be here as a member of this Board. I remember last Wednesday after you came to the back I was there and I asked you the reason why we're going over this ground again. Your reply to me was it's your issue. I'm going to ask you a couple of questions and then we can move on. I know you have some relationship with the Department of Education in Trenton. Have you talked to anybody there regarding moving this election to November? Have you ever talked to anybody there expressing a desire?

Comm. Irving: I'm not going to answer any questions that you have. This is your opportunity to share and comment, but this is not an inquisition of me. This is your opportunity to share with the Board your opinion and thoughts. You can ask them, but I'm not going to answer you.

Comm. Kerr: Okay. You have the right not to respond, but I pose that question because I see how you drive this issue and I've seen many other issues that I believe

need to be driven with the same vigor and fervor and it's not being done. So I'm just wondering what the true reason behind this is when nobody has stated clearly the real benefit to the district and to the children of Paterson for moving the election to November. I dare say, Mr. President, I was fortunate to serve in the democratic leadership in Paterson. I can recall going to meetings and leadership would say, and I'm not calling any names, "Do you have all your School Board candidates for the next election?" So I know from my experience that there is a political component to people who are placed to represent School Boards. Fortunately, Paterson is a non-partisan town and because of that we don't have that problem. But if you pour milk into coffee the color is going to change. This is what will happen when you move a School Board election. April is dedicated 100%. We have our council election in May. Why? Because you're trying to keep these two elections free and separated from any political poison. If we move this election to November we might increase the numbers of people who vote because obviously there will be more traffic in the polling stations. But that doesn't say people are going to vote based on their knowledge of the issues regarding education. They are not. This is what I really want us to focus on. How can we get that information to our people and get them to respond to it in ways that they're supposed to, to make education better? How can we get the parents out there?

Comm. Martinez: When we're talking about taking an election like this, I agree with Dr. Hodges. It's a very important election. When you're taking these educational issues and putting them into a state and federal level by nature you're raising the awareness of these issues. So those folks who are going out to vote for the president or the governor can learn more about these issues and how they affect us on a local level. So you're raising the awareness of some of these issues. As Comm. Teague mentioned earlier, there is a very small percentage of folks who are going out to vote on these issues as is. If we can take these local educational issues and raise the awareness by linking them to how they affect us on a state and federal level, folks will be more informed. They can vote in a more informed way. That's my point of view. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

Comm. Kerr: That's okay. My response to that would be why can't we take those same issues and find a way to bring them into the booth in April? Why does it have to be an appendage to what is happening? The next question is if we're going to take it up there, who's going to pay for that? Is it the candidate who really wants to serve? Or is it the political directorate that has the bag to get those issues there? We're going to have to pay the piper. So obviously we are mortgaging. You can come here and I can come here and we can say anything because you are an independent agent. I can say anything. I am an independent agent. I am not tied to any political directorate. So when I come to this meeting here the way I feel about an issue regarding education I can speak freely about it and go home and still have my keys to get inside. These are the things that bother me. I really want to keep these things separate and apart that we don't shut out anybody. Anybody can come that wants to serve the School Board and they don't have to kiss anybody's ring to get through the door. They can come in and get it done.

Comm. Teague: I just want to point out one thing. Commissioner Tafari Anderson out of Clifton moved their election to November. He's the first African American male to be elected to the Board of Education there and this took place in November. He's not connected with anybody. He has no affiliations with any political party. He ran a strong campaign on autism. He got his word out and started working early the entire year. He ran in November and he won. That's it. The brother is an independent voice. They give him a hard time because they don't want to support him on the Board. But my point is if you get your word out there and you work hard you can win an election in any month. It's not even an issue about...

Comm. Irving: Let me jump in and first say Tafari would say if it were in April he would have had a much harder time winning that election because of how polarized Clifton is. But this is Paterson and the issues that we face are our issues. I want to make it very clear that the discussion of moving this conversation at the last Board meeting I did bring up at the workshop meeting. It just so happens that some folks knew and I guess you two didn't. But I made it very clear at the workshop that we were going to have this for discussion at that meeting. It was on the agenda and it was sent out to the Board members. I hear what you're saying, but in two instances and occurrences I made sure that no one got sandbagged because I made the announcement in the workshop and I made sure it was on the agenda and that folks got it. Nonetheless, let me share a little bit about the perceptions or comments I've heard tonight. For all the reasons that Corey and Manny have talked about for why the School Board elections in November are a much better incentive for this district and for this Board, aside from the cost savings, aside from the fact that it will allow more folks to have an opportunity to be engaged, aside from the fact that I believe it will bring more people to the table to actually run for elected office, I just want to make it very clear that I just personally think it's the right thing to do. I think it's unfair for folks to come here and to judge my decision for doing what I think is the right thing to do. We may have differences of opinion and this issue we're going to differ on. I made it very clear to Ms. Muhammad. She and I do not agree on the situation. But there are other issues in this community that we do agree on and I hope we will continue to agree on even past this day. I will continue to make sure kids learn and go to college. That's just what I do every October. That's just how I roll. I'll continue to ensure that I give and work with kids and make sure they have toys in December. My action today, in my opinion, shouldn't be the end-all of my political life and career. But if that's your choice to judge me for that, that is your choice to do so. But I will continue to work hard to prove to you otherwise. I think that this is the right decision to make. I think it's the right decision for our community, but I also support my colleagues who don't. I think that you have the right to voice your dissent and disapproval. My concern is that when we start going back to the shades or ghosts of School Boards past it brings this Board back to a point that we should never get to. I think that as colleagues we need to respect each other enough to sit down, discuss, deal with issues when necessary, and work with them. I'm going to be very frank with both of you. I'm very disappointed in two men who I have grown to respect – one more so than the other – and the work that you all do. For those actions to take place it really took me back and I was very disappointed that we had to stoop to that level. I never want our Board to get to that place. The shenanigans that took place when I was a kid, I remember being a kid and coming to these Board meetings. Corey, you were at some of those meetings. When T.J. Best and I were in the NAACP we were at some of those meetings. It was a fiasco and I'm sure glad this Board has come so far. Though we may disagree on policy and issues that are of the gravest importance it should never diminish our respect for each other, especially when we're up here. Folks elected us to be here, not to walk away from the table and to be upset. I certainly respect the fact that you felt you were sandbagged. I thought I did everything in my power to make sure it was clear and maybe from your perspective it wasn't, but for other folks it clearly was. So I'll just chalk it up to miscommunication. My intention is to support this initiative and I'm going to support this initiative with the same rigor that I supported the two resolutions that I brought forth to the Board to support Dr. Evans' reappointment. It was the same vigor that I put together when I talked about expanding early childhood beyond just preschool. I'm not taking credit for it, but that was something that I pushed. Writing those resolutions for Dr. Evans was something that I created and brought to this Board. So I think I've brought more and done more than just bringing this resolution before this body. I will not be pigeonholed that this is the only thing I'll be known for because it can't and it won't be. I just won't allow it. When I first proposed this there were folks who said I was doing it to extend my term on the Board. So I purposefully

pulled it off the agenda because I wanted to make sure that wasn't the intention that folks got from me. There are also folks who said that we should wait a year. As a matter of fact, Ms. Sterling, you said we should wait a year and assess and figure out for ourselves whether or not this is something that we want to do. Again, I think this Board acquiesced and did that. We were told to host a community forum and we did that. I just personally believe we have given a great deal of conversation and opportunity and it's now time for the Board to finally come to a decision given that year to assess how well the elections have done, given that year that clearly I was up for election and some of my other colleagues and didn't need to have to extend the elections to be reelected. This issue, from my perspective, is about what's right. I think personally that it is the right thing to do. If we have a disagreement of opinions on that, that's great and you can hold me accountable for that, but I also hope you judge me by everything else I do in this community. There are folks who sit at this table who do less for this community and just because they're right in this situation doesn't mean they're right always either.

Comm. Martinez: This is a tough conversation and it has been an ongoing conversation. It's something that I've been wrestling with for a long time trying to scale out the pros and the cons of this. We touched on several points. One of the points that I keep hearing being reiterated is this an elected position so by its nature that makes it political. So to say that it's going to become political by moving it to November is a contradiction. It is political. Let's be real. This is a political election. This is a political seat that we're holding here. By its own nature it is political. If these folks behind the scenes wanted to come in and put together slates and tickets it could just as easily happen in April as it could in November. That's my personal opinion. This is political. Everything is political. Let's not be naïve about this. That's number one. The deciding factor for me is when we talk about cost savings. Dr. Hodges, you mentioned earlier it's .7% and that's true. If you add this up over the course of the four years you're talking about three-quarters of a million dollars. To me that's pretty significant. I've heard folks up here say three-quarters of a million dollars is nothing. I've heard folks say over and over again that's a lot of money. You can't have it both ways. You can't have it be a lot of money for an issue that's near and dear to you, but then say that's nothing when it's not something that's near and dear to you. You can't have it both ways. You're talking about three-quarters of a million dollars. That's people's salaries. That's money can be reallocated a lot of different ways. Granted, we don't have the opportunity to determine how that money gets spent, but that's money we can save. We know that in the upcoming years we're going to be at a shortfall. We have to start saving money. We can't start making these huge cuts. So, if we can save a little bit here and there, this will go a long way to be able to keep people on the board and to hire more folks that we need for better resources. This is what it comes down to for me, saving money and getting more folks out there. The notion of it becoming political, it already is. It already is by its very nature political. So let's take that off the table. It is what it is. It is political. If folks wanted to come from behind the scenes and run slates they would be doing that in April as easily as they could be doing it in November. To echo President Irving's sentiments, we can agree to disagree. This Board has done a really good job, in my opinion, of working together, but we're not always going to see the same way. We can respectfully agree to disagree and go about our business and honor and respect each other without having to see eye-to-eye on this issue. That's essentially what it boils down to for me.

Comm. Simmons: As I've been sitting here wrestling with this actually Comm. Teague and Comm. Martinez have pretty much summed it up. By nature of the position it's political. I have seen political parties get involved and some candidates benefit a lot more than others. I know that in 2010 the elections changed. We were able to get

more people out, but that's because we worked harder and that was because I was committed to not allowing my colleague to my right to work harder than me. I don't see political parties getting involved to the point where we're running slates. That happens just from my colleagues around the table. When I ran I had to run against three people that were chosen by members of this Board. I was actually asked not to run by members that were sitting. So it is political by nature. It is what it is.

Comm. Kerr: We know that you get to this office because you run an election. But there's a difference between you running into a race that is not controlled by anyone outside of your person. Let me use the freeholder board, for instance. There's a difference between a party and government. A political party is the vehicle through which you come to power. When you come into government you operate based on the needs of the community. Look at the freeholder board. The freeholder board has elected people. You tell me if I'm wrong – the decision that the freeholder board makes is directed by the chairman of the political party. You tell me if I'm wrong. I dare anybody to tell me right now. Who becomes the director is directed by the chairman. Who becomes the deputy is directed by the chairman. That's a different kind of politics to what you're talking about getting here. You run, and Manny, you are an independent on this Board. Simmons is independent. We are all independent on this Board. We say what we want to say and we don't have to say I wonder what he or she is going to say after. We disagree among ourselves, but you are not held accountable by another force outside of the nine of us sitting here. That's what I'm talking about. It is political, but not in the sense that it is directed by a political machine. We need to understand that.

Comm. Cleaves: Can we call the question?

Comm. Irving: I'm going to let Comm. Hodges finish his last comment. When you come back we're going to call the question and start the roll call.

Comm. Hodges: There were some comments made about the last meeting that I just need to address in the context. I didn't want to hear about it either. Here's the situation – I did think that I was sandbagged. Whenever you hold the resolutions and you do not send them home to the people so they can read them you're in essence sandbagging them. That's the problem. I mentioned to you twice earlier in the meeting that that issue is part of the problem. It certainly lends itself to that analysis. But put that aside. This isn't going to be the last thing that we disagree on. We'll have other issues and I imagine in the long run we'll survive even this. But I'm going to say to you we have made a lot of mistakes on this Board in the last two years and then had to backtrack. In some of those cases we were able to do that. Others we haven't. This is a significant one. I sincerely hope that we can find a way to come back from this. I really hope that we can. If we can't, then it will be some time. There are people all around the state who run as independents. They don't run as part of a slate, a party, or a group. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the people in these little small towns are grandparents or parents who want to see their kids get through the system. For them going to a November election is exceedingly difficult because they don't have those resources, even in their little small towns. Some people struggle to get around in those little rural areas. In fact, in the last election 40% of the School Boards said that they felt political pressure in relationship to where the meetings were moved. That's just the first year. As it gets better and as the political parties begin to see their way it will go up. That's just 40% in the first election. So if you don't think that these things are going to have an effect, they are. I just hope that we can somehow maintain what we didn't in the past, to be able to guide our district to the benefit of our children. They are invariably the last

ones to get anything out of this and they suffer the most from our decisions. Thank you very much.

On roll call all members voted as follows:

Comm. Cleaves: Pass.

Comm. Guzman: No.

Comm. Hodges: No.

Comm. Kerr: No.

Comm. Martinez: Yes.

Comm. Mendez: No.

Comm. Simmons: Yes.

Comm. Teague: Yes.

Comm. Cleaves: Yes.

Comm. Irving: Yes.

The motion carried.

Comm. Irving: Thank you, Ms. Williams. If you can do me a favor and make sure this memorandum gets published and goes to our director of communications to announce that the Board has made its' decision. I want to thank everyone for coming this evening and expressing your opinion.

ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL

Comm. Irving: I now need the adoption of a resolution to go into executive session to discuss personnel. I will say when we take the adoption we're going to take a five-minute recess to allow the Board to go to the restroom before we discuss and do what we need to do in executive session.

It was moved by Comm. Simmons, seconded by Comm. Martinez that the Board go into executive session to discuss personnel. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The Board went into executive session at 8:25 p.m.
The Board reconvened the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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

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