

APPROVED  
Bd. Mtg. 7-18-13

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
(Official)

June 20, 2013  
Elizabeth, New Jersey

A special meeting of the Board of Education was called on June 20, 2013 at 7:00 p.m., in the Multi Purpose Room, Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education, 544 Pennsylvania Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Board President Tony Monteiro presented the following statement at 7:20 p.m.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is a special meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting was sent to Worrall Community Newspapers, The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on Friday, June 14, 2013. In addition, this notice is posted on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of 500 North Broad Street, and pursuant to this act, a copy has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth.”

“I wish to extend a warm welcome to everyone present to this June 20, 2013 meeting of the Board of Education. We are here to govern, provide management oversight, and make policy for the district. The Superintendent manages the district. This is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

“This meeting is being recorded and will become part of the Elizabeth Board of Education permanent record. In order that the recording will adequately reflect the proceedings, please refrain from talking while others are speaking. I also ask that you silence the sound on your electronic devices. Since it is legally mandated that these proceedings be accurately recorded, I may have to ask for order periodically should noise begin to interfere with our recording capabilities. I am pleased that you have taken time this evening to join us. Thank you for your interest in the Elizabeth Public Schools.”

“There will be a public portion for citizens to address the board. Participants for the public portion must sign in one hour prior to the advertised start of the meeting so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The sign-in sheet states the name, address, telephone number and reason that the person wants to comment, whether it is an agenda item or a general education comment.”

Present: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Padlo, Perreira, Trujillo, Monteiro – 7

Absent: Mr. Nazco – 1

Assistant Superintendent for Schools Jennifer Barrett, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Interim Board Counsel Marvin Lehman, Assistant Superintendent for Family and Community Outreach Jerome Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Olga Hugelmeyer, Assistant Board Secretary Donald Gonçalves, Comptroller William Greene and members of the public were in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance  
Pledge of Ethics

The President requests a motion to go into Private Session to consider matters exempt under the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically for discussion of personnel, specifically administrative vacancy. The Board will reconvene in public to take formal action.

A motion was made by Mr. Trujillo, seconded by Mr. González, to go into private session at 7:24 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Padlo, Perreira, Trujillo, Monteiro – 7

Negative: None

The Board reconvened in public at 8:25 p.m.

Mr. Monteiro presented the following public participation statement.

“At this time, the microphones are open for public comment to those who have signed in prior to this session. I shall call individuals to the microphones based on the order of the sign-in. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to sixty minutes. No individual is able to yield their time to another individual. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually. The following rules for public participants shall apply: time limits will be strictly enforced, no personal attacks on individuals, no vulgar or indecent language, a person may address the Board no more than once during a single meeting, speakers should refrain from naming individuals, and comments or questions posed during public participation will not be debated. As a reminder, this is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

Mr. Monteiro called upon the first public participant, Maria Echavarria, to address the Board.

Maria Echavarria, 321 Westfield Avenue, asked for clarification of an amendment for special services from the last meeting and stated that out-of-district tuition is paid for her son but you have no authority to say how that school is run and spoke about a problem with her daughter.

Mr. Monteiro thanked her for her comments and called upon the next public participant, Pia Carbajal, to address the Board.

Pia Carbajal, 19 Dehart Place, thanked the Board for their help with Joseph Battin School No. 4, requested an additional security guard and stated that everyone is working hard at School No. 4. Ms. Carbajal stated that music and piano are a good consideration if you have special needs children.

Mr. Monteiro thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Monteiro called twice upon the next public participant, Maria DaRassi, to address the Board. Since Maria DaRassi did not come forward and there were no other citizens signed in to address the Board, Mr. Monteiro declared this portion of the public meeting closed.

Ms. Bathelus responded to the first public speaker and stated that she recalls the resolution but doesn't know the full clarity and will look into it and talk to Mr. Monteiro and Mr. Kennedy and get back to her.

Mr. Monteiro stated that the next item on the agenda is the applications for the candidates to fill the vacancy on the Board of Education. Mr. Monteiro stated that a committee was formulated to review and screen the applicants. Mr. Monteiro stated that each applicant will have

the opportunity to present their statement not longer than four minutes in duration and the Board may ask questions.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Kennedy to read the list of applicants.

Mr. Kennedy stated the applicants are Stefano Calella, Stanley Neron, and Jose Rodriguez. Mr. Kennedy stated that the fourth applicant, Luis Rincon called his office today to withdraw his application.

Mr. Monteiro stated that we have three applicants here tonight and called upon the first applicant, Stefano Calella, to come forward.

Stefano Calella thanked the Board for the interview and presented his statement.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Calella and asked his colleagues if they had any questions.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina asked Mr. Calella if he had any children in the school system in Elizabeth.

Mr. Calella responded that he does not have any children in the school system but does have two nieces in the school district.

Mr. Padlo asked if he graduated from the Elizabeth Public School system.

Mr. Calella responded yes and he graduated in 1991 and played basketball for Elizabeth.

Ms. Bathelus asked what is his current community involvement.

Mr. Calella responded that he is part of the Ribera Club which is an organization that gives back to the community in the sixth ward and does fundraisers. Mr. Calella stated that they just did a fundraiser for a friend of his who had cancer and just passed away a couple of days ago and they raised money for his family.

Mr. Perreira stated that Mr. Calella was born in Elizabeth and went through the Elizabeth school district. Mr. Perreira stated that Mr. Calella mentioned he was a business owner and asked what kind of business he owned and what he does now.

Mr. Calella responded that he owned a sports club and now he works for Local 3 at Exxon Mobil in Linden.

Mr. Perreira stated that most applicants presented a resume and asked if he had a resume.

Mr. Calella responded that he has a resume with him and presented it to each of the Board members.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Calella if he sees the school district going in the right direction or the wrong direction.

Mr. Calella responded that the Elizabeth school district is going in the right direction and as a former student of Elizabeth High School from back then to now he has seen a big change. Mr. Calella stated that the school district is going in the right way especially with the younger generations.

Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Calella to give three examples of how the school district is moving in the right direction. Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Calella why he is aspiring to serve in this public office.

Mr. Calella responded that as a resident of Elizabeth and his nieces are in the school system and he would like to dedicate his time to his community to help the children.

Ms. Bathelus asked if he was running for this position in November and if this is his first time applying for this position.

Mr. Calella responded yes to both questions.

Mr. Perreira stated that when Mr. Calella presented his statement he said he wanted to listen and asked him what he meant.

Mr. Calella responded that he wants to listen to everybody's opinion and what they have to say so he can make the right choices.

Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Calella what is his definition of team leadership.

Mr. Calella responded that to be a team player means that if we have to make decisions we have to talk about it and decide to do what is best for the children.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Calella and the other applicants for being here tonight. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Calella is he is a politician and if he ever ran for office before.

Mr. Calella responded that he is not a politician and never ran for office.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Calella if he ever gave public speeches before an audience before.

Mr. Calella responded no.

Mr. Monteiro stated that this is nerve wracking like being before a Senate panel hearing and he understands his trepidation and being nervous so don't take that as a sign of anything other than that and he commended him and the other applicants for being here tonight. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Calella if he loves this City of Elizabeth.

Mr. Calella responded yes and that he grew up in the City of Elizabeth and is a taxpayer in the City of Elizabeth and there is no other place better.

Mr. Monteiro stated that the fact that he is here today would demonstrate that he has a passion for the City and to see that the City goes forward in a positive direction.

Mr. Monteiro stated that we both understand having grown up in the City of Elizabeth in and around our school systems you could probably agree that the Elizabeth Public School system has certainly made a turn for the better and asked if he would like to see that continue.

Mr. Calella responded that yes it is better and he wants it to continue especially since his nieces are in the district.

Mr. Monteiro stated that there is a lot of work that goes with this job and we get a lot of arrows thrown our way constantly. Mr. Monteiro stated that none of the Board members get paid to be here and obviously if you were chosen or selected tonight that would apply to you as well as

the other applicants. Mr. Monteiro stated that we have a City administration that is extremely critical of this Board and he is very critical of them having served as City councilman for 8 years. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is very proud of the work that this Board does. Mr. Monteiro stated that he gets questioned about his own role on the Board and he doesn't have children in the school system and he loves his City and loves what is going on here in the Elizabeth Board of Education and that comes out in the fact that you are here tonight. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Calella if he agreed with the school uniform policy.

Mr. Calella responded that actually that was the best thing the Board ever did because it makes everybody equal when they are wearing uniforms. Mr. Calella stated that if their parents have money they dress better than kids that are poor and wearing uniforms makes all of the children in the schools equal.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that Mr. Calella speaks from his heart and to sit here you don't have to have an extensive resume, you just need to have the desire and be willing to work with us and oversee the needs of the community, the children. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that we are here for the children and we are not here for anything else. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that we do put a lot of time into this to serve here and it is not only on Thursday night, we also attend committee meetings, attend training, and we volunteer our own time to go to workshops, and we don't get reimbursed it is all voluntary. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that Board members do not need to have a college degree and that many districts don't have that and some have appointed Board members so they can have any type of education. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that she sees that he is speaking from the heart and a very genuine person.

Mr. Calella stated that if he is chosen he will give 110%.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he knows the work of the Ribera Club and has participated in a lot of their fundraising. Mr. Trujillo stated that he has seen people with this administration who worked in this school district for many years and even in their interviews to get promoted got nervous and that makes you human. Mr. Trujillo stated that he came to this because one day he decided he wanted to make a difference in his community. Mr. Trujillo stated that is what this community needs people to step up from the community who live and love Elizabeth and dream about a better Elizabeth every day and that's who we have here on this Board. Mr. Trujillo stated that is who we have here on this Board and we may not always agree but there is a sense of love and passion for what we do. Mr. Trujillo stated that in the six years that he has been here he hasn't seen anyone that doesn't have that love and drive for Elizabeth and for the children the possibilities are endless with the work we are doing here in Elizabeth. Mr. Trujillo stated that he knows Mr. Calella to be a community man and a good man and he's glad that he has the courage to apply for this office. Mr. Trujillo stated that the process doesn't excel unless people get involved and that is democracy with people from different parts of the City who want to get involved and do the right thing and thanked Mr. Calella for interviewing with us.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Calella if he is a property tax owner.

Mr. Calella responded that he is a property tax owner.

Mr. Monteiro asked that question because not everyone in Elizabeth obviously has children in the school system so as a Board we represent the entire constituency in the City of Elizabeth both the parents who have children in the school system as well as the taxpayers like himself who have inherit interest that we govern and manage the school system correctly. Mr. Monteiro stated that it is probably one of his roles for applying for this position tonight. Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Calella.

Mr. Monteiro called the next applicant, Stanley Neron, to come forward.

Stanley Neron thanked the Board for the interview and presented his statement.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Neron and asked his colleagues if they had any questions.

Mr. Padlo commented that Mr. Neron stated that he went through the Elizabeth Public School system and asked him what are some of the best changes that he has seen since he has been in the school system.

Mr. Neron stated that it is night and day from when he went to school so it's not the same system and one thing that he sees is the sign for Number One Urban School District, Elizabeth High School is No. 2 and three Blue Ribbon schools which is great but he wants to see that all the schools actually become No. 1 and actually can rank here in the State. Mr. Neron stated that he wants us not only to be the Number One Urban School District but to be the actual No. 1 school district in the State of New Jersey. Mr. Neron stated that some of the improvements that he sees are in the high school, a tremendous impact and change and the centers that have been provided for our students. Mr. Neron stated that uniforms was a phenomenal idea as was discussed earlier, but he thinks there is so much more improvement that can be done and there is always room for improvement and that is why he is applying to be an asset and just try to take it to another level so we can become the No. 1 school district.

Mr. Perreira commended Mr. Neron for coming and applying for this position. Mr. Perreira stated that Mr. Neron mentioned that he went through the school system and has seen positive changes. Mr. Perreira stated that words get twisted when we talk about the achievements and that people think that all we are accomplishing is the achievements or we are only accomplishing in the gifted and talented schools and we don't care about the rest. Mr. Perreira stated that we have specific plans in place and a lot of data that we sort through to make sure that there is some guide as to how to make sure these schools move forward. Mr. Perreira stated that his children do not attend the gifted and talented school and are in the neighborhood school and he wants to make sure that every school and every student gets the fighting chance that they deserve. Mr. Perreira stated that the unfortunate fact is that this position becomes somewhat politicized too much and that is what hurts the district in all honesty. Mr. Perreira stated that he doesn't work in the City and doesn't earn his living from anywhere in the State of New Jersey and growing up he didn't understand politics and before he had children he didn't know why it was so critical to be involved in not only your children's lives but in your community as well. Mr. Perreira stated that being part of this has opened his eyes quite a bit and what he hates to see is that these positions become politicized. Mr. Perreira stated that he is not saying that Mr. Neron is politicizing it but that is what he has seen since he has become a Board member and it just becomes a haggling of who is going to run the district based on managing a budget or figuring out whatever they are going to do with the money that the district has instead of thinking about what is the betterment for the 23,000 children in the district. Mr. Perreira stated that Mr. Neron understands the politics in Elizabeth and asked Mr. Neron if his commitment, appointment or desire to be in this position in no way, shape, or form does he feel that he may be conflicted in any regard when it comes to taking the helm at a seat such as this.

Mr. Neron asked if that was a question and asked what is the question.

Mr. Perreira asked if Mr. Neron feels he will be conflicted because he works for and his income comes from the City of Elizabeth.

Mr. Neron responded not at all and that is why he stated earlier that with his work starting at the age of 16 seeing the needs of school children in the schools and the need for mentoring, guidance and social services at an early age. Mr. Neron stated that everyone who knows him knows the work that he does with families here and abroad and the work that he would do

whether he was on the Board of Education or not or whether he was with the City or not. Mr. Neron stated that he is a humanitarian and he believes in the work of helping people. Mr. Neron stated that one of the mistakes when people do run no matter what the city is when they run for a Board of Education position they think it is a political position and it's not a political position because it's not and you are making decisions for the lives of our youth, students, children and families. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't view it as such and he views it as being a public servant as that and not as a political position. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't think that should be the topic at hand and when we discuss the Board of Education we really need to be discussing the issues related toward education. Mr. Neron stated that one thing is clear that people move into a city because of education and they move out of a city because of education. Mr. Neron stated that it is our responsibility as taxpayers, as elected officials to make sure that accountability is there.

Mr. Monteiro stated that just for point of clarity Mr. Neron stated that the Board of Education position is not a political position.

Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't view it as such. Mr. Neron stated that he views it as a public servant that comes to serve the community and it is not like running for governor, senator, congressman, or city official.

Mr. Monteiro commented that he respectfully disagrees because it is a government position but he understands his context.

Mr. Neron stated that it is a government position but when you look at serving and talking about the lives of the children you can't politicize it.

Mr. González stated that Mr. Neron mentioned the high school and his passion but also mentioned changes that he would like to bring into place and asked Mr. Neron to elaborate on the changes he said we need to make at the high school level.

Mr. Neron said that there is always room for improvement so no specific changes at this time. Mr. Neron stated that before he talks about making some changes he would need to be privy to the information as to what exactly is going on with our curriculum, how an extended school day is actually affecting our youth, how is it benefiting them, what are some of the additional programs that are offered. Mr. Neron stated that he remembers at one point in time and he thinks it still is that students from all over the State are talking about Elizabeth High School and are interested in coming to Elizabeth High School because when they come to Elizabeth High School leave with a career and leave with a path to success. Mr. Neron stated that to improve upon the things that we already have is most important.

Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Neron for the definition of team leadership.

Mr. Neron responded that team leadership is being able to galvanize the people that you are working with to come on one accord, being able to be open minded, and four principles being honest, never assuming, doing our very best as a team and not taking anything personal. Mr. Neron stated that those are some good qualities that a team can have that can lead towards team leadership. Mr. Neron stated that being open minded at the end of the day, coming with a clean slate and understanding what are we trying to accomplish and having a common goal so that we can get to that common goal.

Ms. Bathelus asked if Mr. Neron were the leader of a team how would he get the team to move toward unity.

Mr. Neron responded finding what our common goal is and rallying our troops around the common goal. Mr. Neron stated that he knows that everybody may have a common goal and here it is our youth, our education, it is becoming the number one school district in the State of New Jersey and he thinks that you can always rally the troops around that and at the end of the day we can be united to understand that this is our end goal in mind, starting with the end in mind.

Mr. Trujillo thanked Mr. Neron for coming and applying. Mr. Trujillo stated that he really appreciates the fact that he seized the opportunity to apply and it is important that people from the community not only talk about it but step up and show leadership. Mr. Trujillo stated that not to question his motives but we can't be naïve and asked Mr. Neron if in his position in the City of Elizabeth if the Mayor is his boss and if answers directly to the Mayor and how does that structure work.

Mr. Neron responded yes that he does answer directly to the Mayor as a director and that everyone works for the Mayor in the City of Elizabeth.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he asked that question because the Mayor is very critical of everything we do here and asked Mr. Neron if he is aware of that.

Mr. Neron responded yes he is aware of that.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he is in support of the Mayor's view of this Board.

Mr. Neron did not respond.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he did not have to answer if he can't.

Mr. Neron stated that he thinks the Mayor has his views of the Board and he has his opinions of the Board.

Mr. Trujillo asked if Mr. Neron agrees with the vision the Mayor has and the discontent that he has constantly perpetuated towards this Board and the animosity he has built towards this Board because he is your boss. Mr. Trujillo stated that he is putting Mr. Neron on the spot and asked Mr. Neron if he is okay with that and if he understands that the Mayor does not like this Board and he would do anything he can in his power to destroy this Board politically.

Mr. Neron responded that he is clear about that.

Mr. Trujillo asked if he agrees with it.

Mr. Neron responded that he is clear about where the Mayor stands with the Board of Education. Mr. Neron stated that given the opportunity to be able to work with the Board of Education he will do so.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he is another bridge builder because Ms. Bathelus is a bridge builder but he has yet to see her put one stone across the bridge. Mr. Trujillo stated that he says this because he knows Mr. Neron is supported by the Mayor and he is not naïve. Mr. Trujillo stated that he has a vested interest here because his children go to school in the Elizabeth school system and he owns a home in Elizabethport and raises his family here so he is very vested and very passionate about the fact that this seat is open and who we give it to. Mr. Trujillo stated that he needs to know that if you are the one that he can work with and that you can check at the door all that stuff that your boss thinks of us and be his own man. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he can be his own man and disagree with his boss.

Mr. Neron responded that the statements that he has made prior to this question he thinks he made himself clear that he is not here to politicize this and he is not here to politic the lives of our children and he is not here to come and create a battle. Mr. Neron stated that he is here to make decisions best for our children and doesn't want to go back and forth about how the Mayor feels and how he feels and how you feel.

Mr. Trujillo stated that it is important to understand how you feel.

Mr. Neron responded that he doesn't think it is and he is not here to take anything personal either so the reality is at the end of the day let's do what is right for our children and that's what is important. Mr. Neron stated that he thinks that anybody who is a leader of any organization would understand that whether it be the City or the Board of Education we have to have the best interests of our citizens in mind first.

Mr. Trujillo asked if Mr. Neron thinks the Mayor has the best interest of our children.

Mr. Neron responded yes.

Mr. Trujillo asked why and what makes Mr. Neron think he has the best interest of our children.

Mr. Neron responded that he happens to be the Director of Youth Services for the City of Elizabeth and he knows the amount of work that they have done with youth throughout the City and we have been doing for so many years so that speaks for itself.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron what the budget is for the programs you currently administer.

Mr. Neron asked if he means the budget that we expend on our children.

Mr. Trujillo responded yes what is the budget for the programs that you administer.

Mr. Neron stated that they spend approximately \$1 million in our youth department to service our youth that covers our staff, our programming, and a number of free programs that we provide to the citizens here in this City. Mr. Neron stated that all the programs we have are free, the residents have to pay no fees for our programs, we have after school enrichment programs, special events, leadership programs, curfew program and all these programs are free to the citizens in the City of Elizabeth.

Mr. Trujillo stated that the budget is approximately \$1 million and asked if it is Elizabeth taxpayer money or is it combined with grants.

Mr. Neron stated that it is combined with grants, combined with tax dollars and combined with special initiatives.

Mr. Trujillo stated that it is a substantial amount of money and a big responsibility and asked how many employees he has under him.

Mr. Neron responded that he has approximately 60 employees.

Mr. Trujillo asked if they were full time or part time employees.

Mr. Neron responded that there are full time and the majority is part time.

Mr. Trujillo stated that the math doesn't add up, 60 into \$1 million, someone is not getting paid well and asked Mr. Neron how much is his salary. Mr. Trujillo withdrew the question.

Mr. Trujillo stated that the truth is his own salary is public record.

Mr. Neron stated that his salary is also public knowledge and information so if you need it you can look it up. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't think this is the forum to discuss that and he came here to apply for a Board of Education position as a public servant which is a free position that's not going to pay him so he is giving up his time, his life just as he does so please respect that.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he does respect that.

Mr. Monteiro asked the members of the audience to show respect and courtesy to the Board and to the applicant and stated that the Board members have the right to ask the applicant the questions they see fit and certainly the audience may agree or disagree with the line of questioning but the Board members have the right to ask questions.

Mr. Trujillo stated that the question was not to disrespect Mr. Neron in any way. Mr. Trujillo stated that his line of thinking is that Mr. Neron is a City employee who works for the Mayor and is getting paid by the local taxpayers and he will be making decisions for the local taxpayers and asked how he will not be conflicted in voting on certain agenda items. Mr. Trujillo stated that is his concern and that is a reasonable concern.

Mr. Neron responded that he is very well aware that there is board training that takes place so he can understand the code of ethics and that he can understand what he can and can't vote on if it poses a conflict he will understand what he can and cannot vote on and he will make a judgment at that time. Mr. Neron stated that the goal is for us to try to work together and that would be the goal at the end of the day.

Mr. Trujillo stated that we partner with the SOAR program here and that is another concern because he would be conflicted in some of the things we do here. Mr. Trujillo stated that it is a great program and he has supported it over and over and it is great work but it would definitely cause a conflict for you.

Mr. Neron asked why it would cause a conflict.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Neron is a director of the program and would not be able to vote on it.

Mr. Neron stated that he would not be able to vote on it and that's okay.

Mr. Perreira commended Mr. Neron on his work and he knows that he spent the better part of his recent time for the kids and the community. Mr. Perreira stated that some of the things that we hear across the State for education are about charter schools and asked Mr. Neron where he stands on that and asked if he is for them.

Mr. Neron stated that he is here to apply for the Board of Education position. Mr. Neron stated that his priority is to make sure we better our school system and invest our dollars in our school systems. Mr. Neron asked if he believes people have a right if they want to opt to go to a charter school, and stated that sure he believes they have a right to go to charter schools if they feel we are not serving them and meeting a need and that we're not doing the best possible job that we can to make sure we improve our school system. Mr. Neron stated that the priority

should definitely be to invest in our schools and invest all our dollars in our schools to make sure the best possible thing can be done but he thinks people have the right to choose.

Mr. Perreira stated that he is for having a choice which is part of the reasoning giving parents a choice where they want to send their children whether it is public schools or elsewhere. Mr. Perreira stated that the reason he asked is because when a charter school is created within an area or a neighborhood it takes funding away from the district and at the end of the day without the funding you end up starting to cut costs somewhere and it does affect the district. Mr. Perreira stated that being for it, not that he is against providing a choice for a parent, but being for it also entails that we also know that we are going to be taking it from the district, from the public schools and unfortunately charter schools don't get run under the same criteria as we do. Mr. Perreira stated that is why he asked and there is nothing political about his question.

Ms. Bathelus stated that she commends Mr. Neron for sitting here and answering the questions. Ms. Bathelus stated that this appointed position will last for about five months and asked Mr. Neron what he can contribute to the Board of Education and the City and to the Elizabeth Public Schools within the next five months.

Mr. Neron responded leadership, direction, really taking us to a direction where we will not be at a point where bickering between the City and the Board of Education and where our priorities are the children and he thinks that is the direction we need to move in because as Mr. Trujillo stated we are not going to be naïve and there are several issues that exist and he works for the City and this is the Board of Education. Mr. Neron stated that it is time for us to really atone and really focus with the matters at hand and deal with the education of our youth. Mr. Neron stated that he is here to provide you with an asset, a different voice, a voice that can help us and better the community and represent the people. Mr. Neron stated that we need to hear from another point of view which is what he has been speaking about the whole time this evening about his experiences working with youth for so many years. Mr. Neron stated that you don't just wake up one day and say this is what I want to do, because we all know that you are not going to become a millionaire doing that, you're not always going to pay your bills doing that, and it is a lot of sacrifice that has to take place and you have to be willing to be a public servant and he commends everyone who has made that decision past and present and all those who are interested doing this here along with all the other candidates.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he volunteers at any other organizations.

Mr. Neron responded yes, New Jersey for Haiti is one of the main organizations that he volunteers for, YWCA, church, mentor to many in the community, mentor youth year round. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't have any children in the school system and the youth that he mentors are like his own.

Mr. Trujillo asked if Mr. Neron has any children.

Mr. Neron responded that he does not have any children.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he is a taxpayer and if he is a property owner in Elizabeth.

Mr. Neron stated that he is a taxpayer but does not own property.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron what his opinion is of charter schools.

Mr. Neron stated that some of them work and some of them don't and some of them need a lot of improvement. Mr. Neron stated that there are charter schools throughout the State that are doing very well and there are those that need a lot of improvement.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he thought there would be a need for them in this City of Elizabeth in light of what he knows about the City of Elizabeth that we are the Number One Urban School District in the State of New Jersey, three National Blue Ribbon Schools, two of the top best public high schools in the State of New Jersey, top academies. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron does he feel there would be a need for charter schools in the City of Elizabeth.

Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't know that there is a need but he wouldn't rule out the idea of having charter schools in Elizabeth.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron what he would think about a charter school that was to open but was failing and what would his feelings be about that school.

Mr. Neron stated that as a Board we would have to make a decision to accept the application for a charter school to come into our district.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he thinks it is in the best interest of the children if the charter school is failing that the State administration or the Governor shut down that charter school.

Mr. Neron responded that if it is failing.

Mr. Monteiro stated that is the case of a story that was in the Star Ledger this week with a failing charter school system in Newark, the Adelaide Sanford Charter School. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Commissioner of Education Cerf gave the order to shut down that charter school. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he is aware of that particular school.

Mr. Neron responded no that he heard about the story but was not privy to all the details as to exactly what happened.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he would support State legislators who support charter schools.

Mr. Neron responded that he didn't understand the question.

Mr. Monteiro stated that when you come on this position this is where he agrees to disagree with him respectfully on a position such as a board seat there are going to be matters of policy and politics and one that is right now a raging debate going on in the City whether we support charter schools. Mr. Monteiro stated that he believes they take money away from public education as well as the voucher program. Mr. Monteiro stated that we have right now in our district a State Senator who supports vouchers and supports charter schools. Mr. Monteiro stated that is why he asked Mr. Neron if he supports state legislators who support charter schools taking money away from our public school system and putting it into only the select few who would benefit from those schools.

Mr. Neron responded yes.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he is familiar with our gifted and talented schools and what does he think about them.

Mr. Neron responded yes and they are doing very well.

Mr. Monteiro stated that a few Council people in the City of Elizabeth have been very critical of these special schools and don't believe they should exist and should be integrated into the full school system. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he supports that thought.

Mr. Neron asked Mr. Monteiro to explain the question.

Mr. Monteiro stated that there are Council people in the City of Elizabeth who currently serve on Council who believe that the gifted and talented schools should not exist and they believe they should not be selected schools and that they should be integrated into the general population of our community schools. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he agrees with that.

Mr. Neron responded that the question should be directed to the Council people and not him. Mr. Neron stated that they have their own opinions and everybody has an opinion. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't think that the gifted and talented schools shouldn't exist.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he supports the gifted and talented program as it is right now and would like to see it continue.

Mr. Neron stated that he supports the school system that you have here and all the schools that we have. Mr. Neron stated that the gifted and talented programs are needed and the academies are needed but we need to work at making sure that all our schools are performing at the same level. Mr. Neron stated that is his opinion and he stands on it and whether he supports the individual gifted and talented schools that we are talking about he would have to get more information on the performances and exactly how the schools are doing so that he can properly critique them but right now he is not privy to that information so he can't properly answer the question. Mr. Neron stated that if you have schools that are doing well that is an excellent thing and an excellent approach and an excellent job on those schools that are doing very well but as he stated earlier and he has been talking about all night we need to get our schools on one accord and we need to make sure we raise the standards of our teachers and the performances of the schools so our kids can be on one accord.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he and Mr. Neron have known each other for a long time and he respects the work that he has done in the City and the work that he does with the children. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is having a hard time separating the two entities in the City of Elizabeth and the work that is done here at the Elizabeth Board of Education and we all know too well that it is like having two elephants in the room and they battle. Mr. Monteiro stated he agrees that it should not be a politicized position and it shouldn't be a political board but the reality is that we have a current Mayor and a current legislator, Senator Ray Lesniak, who are absolutely obsessed to attack this Board and be critical of this Board. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is not going to run away from it because the pressure that they put on this Board that serves as public servants who sacrifice their time and he can't run and can't get away from that. Mr. Monteiro stated that he respects that Mr. Neron believes that he can separate the two but we have a Mayor who just yesterday wrote a statement to the Star Ledger once again being critical of this Board and he thinks the statement went as far as asking the Commissioner of Education take over the search for our next superintendent of schools and that the Commissioner of Education select the next superintendent of schools here in the City of Elizabeth. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he agrees with that position.

Mr. Neron responded that he has no comment. Mr. Neron stated that Mr. Monteiro is asking him questions as if he is the Mayor and he is not the Mayor. Mr. Neron stated his name and that he came here to apply for a position for the Board of Education as Stan Neron, not as Mayor Chris Bollwage, not as Senator Lesniak and he thinks in order for us to move in the direction to bring this Board, this City and this entire City to one accord is that we have to stop

the back and forth and it is very important that we stop the back and forth because somebody is going to have to become the bigger man and we are going to have to make sure we put our children first and that is the bottom line.

Mr. Monteiro stated that Mr. Neron would not have an argument from anyone on this Board that we wish we could put the politics aside and agree to disagree and work in the best interest of all of our citizens and children in the City of Elizabeth. Mr. Monteiro stated that this is a very important question and is going to be the single biggest decision that this Board as a whole makes, besides making policy. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are going to hand off this incredibly successful school district with all the accolades and achievements we've made and progress we've made in the past eight years, we are going to now select the next superintendent who is going to take us forward and continue this momentum.

Mr. Neron stated that he would be ready for that challenge if he sat on the Board of Ed and whether or not he agrees with how the Mayor feels. Mr. Neron stated that we understand what the situation is at hand and that it is the Board versus the City and the City versus the Board.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Neron if he agrees with the Mayor's position that Commissioner of Education Cerf should select the next superintendent of schools for our school district in Elizabeth or should we the independent school board select the next superintendent. Mr. Monteiro asked if Mr. Neron agrees with the Mayor's position or does he agree that the collective body of the Elizabeth Board of Education should select the next superintendent.

Mr. Neron responded that he is not putting himself in that situation and he is not here to do that.

Mr. Monteiro asked him for his answer.

Mr. Neron responded no comment.

Mr. González stated that if we choose you that is one of the decisions that you are going to have to make when we have to make this important decision.

Mr. Neron stated that he will be ready for that challenge.

Mr. González stated that it is the job of the Board to select the next superintendent and all the members have to agree.

Mr. Neron stated that the job of the Board of Education is to do such and the root of the question is deeper than what he is actually asking so he doesn't want to start commenting about how the Mayor feels about the Board of Education. Mr. Neron stated that this elected Board has been elected to make decisions for the Board of Education for the school system and that is the job of the Board of Education.

Mr. González asked Mr. Neron if he would support the Board if we said yes to whomever we elect to lead the district.

Mr. Neron stated that if he was sitting on the Board of Education and a voting member on the Board of Education he would be ready for that challenge.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he ever worked for a charter school or any volunteer work for a charter school.

Mr. Neron responded no.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron if he has been associated with a charter school or associated with anyone who runs a charter school.

Mr. Neron responded that he knows plenty of people who run charter schools.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he wants to go back to the point that they take money from the children in Elizabeth because it is important. Mr. Trujillo stated that he does not support charter schools in Elizabeth and does not support them here because we are doing a great job offering the services needed. Mr. Trujillo stated that it concerns him that Mr. Neron would allow a charter school and you would support a charter school in Elizabeth and that you are even open to the idea knowing that they would take resources away from the children through the school system.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Monteiro's question is valid in the sense that if Mr. Neron is asking us to vote for him in support of this open seat then any question is valid in the sense of knowing your position. Mr. Trujillo stated that the reality is that the Mayor is adamant about this and we can't be naïve, Mr. Neron works for the Mayor and the Mayor is his boss. Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Neron is his own man and wants to believe that he won't be influenced by the Mayor's policy but if Mr. Neron is here then he is either going to support the Mayor's position or ours and the Mayor's position is that this elected independent school board lose its authority and give it up to the appointed authority of the Commissioner of Education to find the next superintendent for the Number One Urban School District in the State of New Jersey. Mr. Trujillo stated that it concerns him that Mr. Neron won't answer the question.

Mr. Trujillo stated that his intention is to find out who Mr. Neron is and who Mr. Neron would be as a Board member because he would have to work with Mr. Neron if he is the one who is chosen and he needs to know where his heart is on certain issues that are important to him and the constituents that he represents. Mr. Trujillo stated that it is important for him to know about these things and we all have a right to ask questions and if anyone is offended he again apologizes and he didn't mean to offend anyone by any of his questions. Mr. Trujillo stated that after this is over there will be people who will say why didn't you ask him this or that and Mr. Neron came here to answer questions and he understood there were going to be questions when he got here. Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Neron has worked with children for a long time and asked him if he sees a positive impact on the education on their lives that they are receiving here in Elizabeth or does he think that we are failing those children.

Mr. Neron stated that there are a lot of great success stories in this City and one of the key things that we go out to do is to save lives and we go to educate all our youth and we either win some or we lose some and that just is what it is no matter what community you go to especially here in the City we win some and we lose some. Mr. Neron stated that the same thing that happens in the Office of Youth we attempt to do the very best that we can and that is one of the principles he believes in to do the best that you can and you are not going to win everybody and everybody is not going to be a success but the goal is to make sure that they are.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Neron works with our youth and asked if he believes we have a gang problem in the City of Elizabeth and if our children are choosing gang life over the schools.

Mr. Neron responded that we have a lot of our kids involved with gangs.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he agrees that we have a lot of kids involved with gangs and it saddens him.

Mr. Neron stated that they do their best to make sure they get involved in other activities and he thinks that if they can come to one accord as a City we can eliminate all gangs throughout the City and throughout Union County. Mr. Neron stated that if we stop being so political and

really focus on the issues that are affecting the lives of our youth we can eliminate a lot of these problems. Mr. Neron stated that he would like to start here by eliminating the back and forth and really focusing the issues that we have with our children and really start creating programs and opening up our schools on the weekends and nights making them available creating more enrichment programs in our after school programs, making sure all the school systems that we have here are available to the communities that people can bring in programs so we can eliminate a lot of the issues that we are having.

Mr. Trujillo stated that it is an interesting point that Mr. Neron made that we open our schools on weekends. Mr. Trujillo stated that recently we were criticized because of our budget and he would love to be able to do that especially downtown where he lives he knows so many kids who could use the schools on the weekends. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron how he would pay for that when there is a limited amount of money and you have to choose between cutting in the classroom, cutting programs to expand other programs, and the money has to come from somewhere.

Mr. Neron stated that he would apply for grant dollars and create community partnerships and partner with the churches and a lot of local agencies that would be more than willing to work with the Board of Education.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron why he feels that we haven't been able to do that now and Mr. Neron directs these services on a City level and asked how come it isn't available now. Mr. Trujillo stated that he has never seen a request from the City to open a school on the weekend.

Mr. Neron stated that it is more than just the City and that we need to establish community partnerships, we need to work with our churches and a lot of other non-profit organizations to do that. Mr. Neron stated that there is a lot on the City and a lot on the Board and we need to tap into other resources to do so and he is clear about that.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Neron where is it that it is not happening and where does he see the wedge where it is not getting done and why it is not happening.

Mr. Neron asked why isn't what happening.

Mr. Trujillo asked why the schools aren't open on the weekends and how come these programs Mr. Neron is talking about aren't coming through and where is the grant money, the partnerships, the churches, and the organizations.

Mr. Neron stated that he currently doesn't sit on the Board of Education.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Neron sits as a Director of Youth at City Hall and work with these children and these could be provided for these children and asked why it isn't happening. Mr. Trujillo stated that if anyone knows why it isn't happening it is Mr. Neron and asked how come it is impossible and is there something we are doing wrong here at the Board of Education, is it the fault that we didn't apply for the right grant and are we not making the right partnerships and asked what it is that we are doing wrong.

Mr. Neron responded that he doesn't know what we are not or not doing but he does know that we need to move forward and we need to try to do better and we need to try and create some additional partnerships and apply for some grants. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't know that we are applying for grants and he is not Director of Youth Services for the Board of Education but he is Director of Youth Services for the City. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't know if we are applying for grants or not and he is not privy to that information.

Mr. Trujillo thanked Mr. Neron.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Neron for coming here and commended him for seeking to be on the Board. Mr. Monteiro thanked him for the work he did with the Haiti Relief Fund after the earthquake.

Mr. Neron thanked the Board members and for the people here with us as it has been a long interview process but it is a good healthy discourse.

Mr. Monteiro called upon the next applicant, Jose Rodriguez, to come forward.

Jose Rodriguez thanked the Board for the interview and presented his statement.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Rodriguez and asked his colleagues if they had any questions.

Mr. Perreira thanked Mr. Rodriguez for coming and applying for the position. Mr. Perreira stated that Mr. Rodriguez has been a teacher for ten years and his family moved out of the City of Elizabeth because they wanted to give him a better choice back then and his reason here is to give back to the community of kids from Abbott districts. Mr. Perreira asked Mr. Rodriguez as part of his work as a teacher why wouldn't he have chosen to go to an Abbott district to work versus working in a school not considered an Abbott district.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that is actually the high school he graduated from and that he started in Bayonne High School and decided to try and teach at his Alma Mater.

Mr. Perreira asked Mr. Rodriguez how he feels about charter schools and the fact that they take away funding from the district and the fact that they are not held to the same standards.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he is opposed to charter schools. Mr. Rodriguez commended this Board of Education and this City because it is probably one of the only major cities that does not have a charter school within its borders and that does speak to what our staff and teachers do. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is opposed to charter schools for that exact reason because it drains much needed funds from the district because even though this budget is very large we all know that school districts do not have enough money to reach the amount of students and we always need more and it is never enough and you have to work with what you have. Mr. Rodriguez stated that any kind of distraction or mismanagement of funds or any kind of funds that are taken out of that pool he is absolutely opposed to.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina thanked Mr. Rodriguez for coming and stated that it takes courage to come. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that Mr. Rodriguez is an advocate for special education and asked if he is teaching special education.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes that is correct.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is aware that teachers will become case managers and how does he feel about it.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he saw that today that the State Board of Education actually postponed the changing of the regulations so we're lucky that those regulations are in reprieve for now.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that the least restrictive environment means home school and in-district and Mr. Rodriguez mentioned once that he wanted to have a special education school only for children with disabilities and asked Mr. Rodriguez to expand on that because she doesn't

feel that is the way the State is telling us to conduct special education and asked what his reasoning is for that.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that we have about 25,000 students who go to this district so about 1 out of every 5 people who live in Elizabeth attend these public schools and being such a large district we have a large special education population. Mr. Rodriguez stated that throughout his studies he has found that there are about 213 students that are in out-of-district placements because of special education reasons and special needs and the average out-of-district placement cost to the district is anywhere from \$40,000. to \$50,000. per student. Mr. Rodriguez stated that calculating that it is about \$20 million that leaves our district and is given to other special education schools that do a good job. Mr. Rodriguez stated that us being the Number One Urban School District he believes that if we can bring those students back into district perhaps open a special education school that we can do a great job. Mr. Rodriguez stated that our staff has been doing such a great job with our students with our special needs population that is in-district that he believes that it is a challenge that this Board of Education can meet. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he has always said that he believes we could open a successful in-district special education school for those children who are severely handicapped.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina asked which types of disabilities does he think would be the most appropriate to have a building for these children.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that most of the children who are in out-of-district placement are in the autism spectrum so that would be the first thing that we could look into and the second would probably be the cognitively impaired students and we may not be capable of taking them in-district in the first or second year but we could work towards that. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he would try to get all of the Board members to look into those children in the autism spectrum to bring them back into district.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that we do have autistic programs in district in School Nos. 1, 12, and 30 and we also have children who have Asperger's syndrome and we bring them back in district. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that we have cognitively impaired children in district, we have multiple disabled children however they are in some type of inclusion and are in some type of regular education programs or buildings. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that the only time that a district sends a student out-of-district is because we either don't have the facility or accommodations and we have exhausted everything in district and has to be carefully reviewed and approved by the County Executive. Mrs. Castillo stated that she doesn't think there is a need for a special education building and she doesn't share his opinion but she does respect what he has to say.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is not naïve to believe that we can bring back all 213 students he believes that we can get a majority of them back. Mr. Rodriguez stated that we do have programs where we do teach children with autism, children who are cognitively disabled, and it wouldn't be that big of a jump to train those teachers more intensively and bring back some of the out-of-district placements. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he doesn't expect that we would go from 213 out-of-district placements to none but we could work that in and he believes our staff is knowledgeable and he knows the Board of Education is committed to our students and he believes that would be the best thing for these children. Mr. Rodriguez stated that while he understands the exclusion worry aspect that she has he believes that sending them out-of-district is more exclusionary.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that it is expensive and as an urban district we do not have the facilities in district and that we have to be very careful as a Board how this is managed because we have to provide every child with a free, public, and adequate education and that is

what we provide. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that when we send them out-of-district we give them the best that we can give them because she believes every child has the right to that.

Mr. Trujillo welcomed Mr. Rodriguez and stated that he has been very critical of this Board and so he is contradicting himself in a sense today when he is saying that we are doing a lot of good things and how great the district is.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he has been on record for commending the Board quite a bit.

Mr. Trujillo asked if Mr. Rodriguez agrees that the Superintendent is doing a good job.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez said he would bring back a majority of these children that go out-of-district and it is a great cost. Mr. Trujillo thanked God that we have the ability to pay for it because it is almost impossible to have the heart to tell a parent with a child with special needs that we can't provide the service for them because of the cost. Mr. Trujillo stated that it is hard to make that an issue and it shouldn't be about money at the end of the day we are talking about children's lives and we need to make sure that we educate them all equally no matter how they came into the world and we need to make sure that they leave a better person. Mr. Trujillo stated that we can't open another school for special education, and asked Mr. Rodriguez how he proposes we do that because some of the children have severe disabilities and the intensity of the instruction and attention they need can only be provided in a special place and some of these out-of-district placements provide that. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez what he would do with those children and if he would leave them out-of-district.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he is not naïve in the sense that he believes we can bring back all the children for instance a child who has severe autism who has no mobility and perhaps has to wear a helmet if he bangs his head, of course we would never have the ability to educate the child within district. Mr. Rodriguez stated that is on one side and obviously he is not privy to them because of student privacy issues but a lot of the cases especially within the autism spectrum we can bring back. Mr. Rodriguez stated that of course he would have to sit down with Mrs. Castillo-Ospina who is also involved with special education and two heads are better than one we can talk about a lot of issues along with other members of the Board and go case by case with the current Superintendent or the new Superintendent who comes in and make a conscious decision to try to bring these children back. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he knows for a fact a lot of the schools are overcrowded and tonight one woman spoke about having 900 students at Battin next year, that our K-8 schools are extremely overloaded and some of them have modular buildings outside of the actual school and he knows that the Board of Education has rented out other buildings. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes where there is a will there is a way and as a special education teacher it is a passion of his and he will be advocating for them. Mr. Rodriguez stated we would have to work in a spirit of compromise where we have to find a way and that is the tough part. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he tells a lot of people in the district that while you may think we are at odds, he tells them that on a Board of Education you have to realize it's sad but sometimes it is about money. Mr. Rodriguez stated that sometimes you have to choose between educating one child and five other children then have less of an education because of money and it's very difficult. Mr. Rodriguez stated that is why he believes as a teacher he does not want to see a Board with nine teachers or nine business people and it is the diversity that helps a Board of Education reach all the children. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes just coming in and having a discussion and even if we have to argue that's great because we're arguing about the same thing it's about education and our children. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he thinks sometimes you should argue because it means your passionate and those who sit back and do nothing don't have that passion and he believes where there is a will there is a way.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that obviously we would have to take a look at the Long Range Facility Plan in terms of any new schools coming up but it's worth it.

Mr. Trujillo stated that to go case by case wouldn't be Mr. Rodriguez's place as a member of this Board. Mr. Trujillo stated that as a member of this Board we are here to govern and make policy and the Superintendent manages the district and he would be the one who decides. Mr. Trujillo stated that if Mr. Rodriguez had an idea for a policy that may facilitate your plan and you obviously need the votes to do it then we can set the policy. Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez wouldn't be able to go case by case and decide who gets an education out-of-district and who doesn't. Mr. Trujillo stated that he wouldn't want any Board or governing body to decide on my child's education directly.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez has been very critical of the Superintendent and Mr. Rodriguez just said he's been doing a good job. Mr. Trujillo stated that he wonders why there are two opinions and remembers Mr. Rodriguez holding a press conference asking for his resignation and if he's doing a good job why does Mr. Rodriguez want him to resign.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that if you listen to that press conference the reason that he was asking for his resignation was for other reasons outside. Mr. Rodriguez stated while he believes that some of things he's doing wrong he did do a lot of good things. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he knows that no one is perfect but some of the issues that he was head of the school district during some of those issues he believes that it was time for him to resign. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes he has been doing a great job also but we all know things come hand in hand.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he said it was time for him to resign.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he called for his resignation for certain things and he doesn't want to get into those and you can see the press conference. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he wouldn't like to bring those ugly things up here and he doesn't believe it is the correct forum for it. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he does believe that he also was captain of the ship while this school district turned around and he gives him credit for that and he believes he was here from 2005. Mr. Rodriguez stated that there has been a huge change from then but also in the past few years there have been some scandals and some issues going on and again it's the duality of every person. Mr. Rodriguez stated that over the scandals that have been going on and any leader when there is something good that happens that leader will get credit but that leader must also expect to get criticism when things don't go because while he leads the ship in good times he also leads that ship in bad times. Mr. Rodriguez stated while he does give him full credit along with the Board of Education for turning this district around he believes the last few years he has been embattled in some issues that would lead to me calling for his resignation.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he is confused and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he wants him to go or he wants him to stay and which is it.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is leaving so it is a mute point.

Mr. Trujillo stated that yes he is leaving and asked Mr. Rodriguez but do you want him to leave or do you want him to stay. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if tomorrow the Superintendent said he would stay would that be something he would support and does he want him to stay and continue his work or does he want him to leave.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that at this point he obviously has decided to go and he has voluntarily gone to Passaic. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he wishes the Superintendent the best of luck because he believes he did a good job but not lately, no.

Mr. Trujillo stated that the other issue at hand is in reference to the position the Mayor has taken that he would like the Commissioner of Education to choose the next superintendent. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if that is a position that he would support.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no that he does not agree with the Mayor on that issue because he believes the Board of Education would be best fit at this point to pick the next leader of this district.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he believes the animosity between this Board and the governing body of the City of Elizabeth can be resolved and how would he resolve it if he thinks it can.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he thinks it can be resolved. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he thinks at this point that they would at this point almost sit down in the same room together and lock the door and just hammer out something because it has come to the point where no one even knows who started it and it's down to the point where it is tit for tat. Mr. Rodriguez stated that we have gotten to the point where we are just butting heads and he believes how to do it is to go into a room, lock the door and we are not coming out of there until we hammer something out. Mr. Rodriguez stated that in terms of what happens in there he believes that both sides would have to go in there with a sense of respect for one another because if we went in there already he did this and she did that and it has become he said, she said kind of issue. Mr. Rodriguez stated that how to resolve it is to all sit down together not in a public forum just somewhere private where we check the egos at the door and we just try to work it out.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he filed to run for the Board of Education in November.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez has run twice before and those times you have been supported by our Senator Lesniak who is a staunch critic of this Board and the work that it has done. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he supports Senator Lesniak's views of this Board.

Mr. Rodriguez asked what views because there are a lot of views.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he has constantly criticized us that we mismanage money and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he feels that we mismanage money in this district.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that there could be better management of funds.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if we are mismanaging money.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that it is not a simple yes or no because mismanagement brings a sort of connotation of willful mismanagement and he would like to answer in a sense that the district could manage funds better.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if then he agrees with Senator Lesniak that we are mismanaging funds.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no that the word mismanagement carries a connotation that he is not comfortable using.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Senator Lesniak has made allegations that every member of this Board is corrupt and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he believes we are all corrupt.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he does not believe that you are all corrupt.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he believes Mr. Trujillo is corrupt.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no he believes that everyone no matter how mean you may see them or how happy are good people. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes when Mr. Trujillo goes home that he is a loving father, that your children love you and that your family loves you so that makes you a good person and to that end he believes we can all work together.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez answered all the right questions today and has obviously been doing his homework and wished him luck. Mr. Trujillo stated that he has one more question and it is the funding of his campaign and that bothers him. Mr. Trujillo stated that whether Mr. Rodriguez is aware or not some of the supporters who donated to his campaign have been involved in corruption. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is willing to return that money.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he believes they funded a PAC that was run by some other people.

Mr. Trujillo asked if he is prepared to return that money.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that they did not give him money, so no he can't return money that was not given to him.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez is saying that they did not support him directly. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez who did support him directly and for the last school election did he raise his own money and does he intend to raise his own money for this election.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Trujillo thanked Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Perreira stated that in the past Mr. Rodriguez was very vocal about the high school dropout rates and he was discontent that we created the six academies. Mr. Perreira stated that he wanted to understand the logic behind not having six academies in the district.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no, maybe Mr. Perreira misunderstood. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he will go on record to say that was a great idea actually splitting them up and having academies. Mr. Rodriguez expanded on his core beliefs on the high schools.

Mr. Perreira stated that Mr. Rodriguez was against gifted and talented and lottery schools at some point and asked if Mr. Rodriguez why he is against it.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that no he is not against it and gifted and talented is a great program and is a product of gifted and talented.

Mr. Monteiro stated that Mr. Gonzalez has an emergency personal issue to attend to and excused himself from the meeting at 10:38 p.m.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes in something called tracking which we do here in part and separate students according to their academic level and the point of tracking is that you are supposed to support these students differently because every student is different and every student learns at a different rate. Mr. Rodriguez stated that although gifted and talented children

get support he is also looking at those children who are not as cognitively strong as those in gifted and talented and we must also support them in different ways, while they may learn differently that does not mean that they do not learn and while the same concept may take them a week to learn they can learn it while someone in gifted and talented may only take a day to learn. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is not at all against gifted and talented and it is a very necessary part of this district and that we must also support those children who are not at that level.

Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Rodriguez what he would be able to contribute to the Board of Education in the next five months.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that as a classroom teacher any decisions we make here as a Board while some of the policy makes because the Board members are not classroom teachers do not know how that may affect a classroom teacher or a student. Mr. Rodriguez stated that with his experience as a classroom teacher he can tell them while this policy may sound great on paper it's going to affect our staff this way or our students this way. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he can bring that insight and then we can have discussion and that's the beauty of working together and of having a diverse board and diverse views and working together.

Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Rodriguez for one negative and one positive aspect of this district.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that one positive for sure is our staff and we have great schools, they are proven and can't dispute our great schools. Mr. Rodriguez stated that the best of our kids can compete with any other district and most times probably beat them. Mr. Rodriguez stated that one negative part is that he still believes we have chronically failing schools in this district and while it's not one person or one thing to blame it is something that we need to fix and we need to fix it now.

Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he was a member of this Board and the choice was raising taxes to continue programs or cutting programs which would he support.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that his questions are so black and white and we know that on this Board of Education there is nothing that is black or white and we know in education we live in a world of gray. Mr. Rodriguez stated that it is hard for him to say yes or no and they may say that he is dodging the question but it's not that. Mr. Rodriguez stated that what would have to be part of that decision would be how many programs, what programs, where are they going to be affecting, and the flip side is how much are we raising taxes, is it a little. Mr. Rodriguez stated that if he could give him a specific that we're going to cut this program that costs this much or raise taxes this much to keep it then he can answer those questions but in terms of a blanket statement he is not comfortable living in black and white.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he would be specific and that extended day is something we offer in this district that he and his constituents are very proud and as a parent he is happy about extended day and it cost a lot of money to keep the schools open this late. Mr. Trujillo asked Mr. Rodriguez if he had the choice between cutting extended day or raising taxes would he support.

Mr. Rodriguez asked Mr. Trujillo if he is saying that we would need almost \$8 million to keep extended day.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he gave him a specific example of \$8 million or cut the program and asked Mr. Rodriguez which he would do.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he would actually be comfortable in saying that he would raise taxes for extended day and he would actually go in public to all Board meetings, block

watch meetings and he would defend that answer and get his constituents to believe. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes our taxpayers would not mind paying more money if that money goes to something good and if they really feel that they are getting their money's worth. Mr. Rodriguez stated that while he doesn't think 100% of the people will agree and he understands you have to make them believe and you have to show them this is why he's raising taxes \$140. next year and the City is not raising taxes this year but we are taking an extra \$140. from your pocket because he wants extended day and students need more time in the classroom and he would lay out that plan. Mr. Rodriguez stated yes he absolutely would.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Rodriguez for being here and for the courage to be interviewed by the Board. Mr. Monteiro stated that we may agree to disagree at times and he has been in elected office and in public light for many years and it certainly is not easy at times. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is not going to hold back and say that he is not going to be critical of him because he has been critical of this Board and it is his democratic right to do that. Mr. Monteiro stated that Mr. Rodriguez called for the resignation of our Superintendent and also had a press conference in front of School No. 1 and asked Mr. Rodriguez to elaborate on what was the heart of the press conference.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he can take a look at the press conference and it was about ten minutes long. Mr. Rodriguez stated that there were several issues that he brought up.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez what the issues were that he brought up.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that it was about a month and a half ago and he brought up the fact that two members on the school Board recently had been arrested for theft, the school Board Attorney that used to sit up there was also arrested, the fact that Mr. Fajardo and Mr. Muñoz had mismanaged \$63,000. of the district's money, and the cheating scandal at School No. 20 and the culture of cheating in that school was unacceptable. Mr. Rodriguez stated that those were the major ones.

Mr. Monteiro stated that we can agree that he is a strong advocate against corruption. Mr. Monteiro stated that Mr. Rodriguez at one time called for the resignation of then sitting Board member Marie Munn. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if it would be fair to say that he holds all public servants to those same standards.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is familiar with a story this week in the Star Ledger about the Adelaide Sanford Charter School in Newark.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he did read the article and about the one whose charter was actually revoked.

Mr. Monteiro stated that it was a charter school for mismanagement of money, improper leases, board members who were unethically appointed to the board, and it was determined that the school would now have to close as a result of those improper actions that will now be investigated by higher authorities such as the State Attorney General. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he knows that our current City Councilwoman Patricia Perkins Auguste is the school board president of that charter school.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he was not aware of that.

Mr. Monteiro stated that knowing what he just asked about holding public servants to the same standards would he call on her resignation on City Council knowing what he knows now.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no that he would call for her to resign as that school's president but because she didn't use her public office as City Councilwoman to do that he would not call for the resignation of her current elected office within Elizabeth. Mr. Rodriguez stated that if he was more familiar with the story he would call for the resignation of her position on that school board.

Mr. Monteiro stated that as a City Councilperson they abide by the same Robert's Rules of Order both on City Council as well as on the charter school and it was found that she improperly was appointed as a school board member and then was immediately appointed as the school board president. Mr. Monteiro stated that he wanted to understand his position and if there were double standards because as a sitting City Councilwoman she is aware of being on both sides of the fence. Mr. Monteiro stated that she is very critical of our school board and it is beyond offensive that she spent her time at last week's City Council meeting attacking the Elizabeth school budget that was passed, ratified by the County Superintendent and the State Department of Education. Mr. Monteiro stated that City Council as well as the Mayor went as far as asking the Commissioner of Education in Trenton to deny the Elizabeth school budget. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he agrees with that.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he took a look at it and there is a State law that does not allow especially this Board of Education along with others, to raise the budget more than 2% without it being voted on.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if it is his understanding that we raised the budget more than 2% and asked what is his understanding of the budget.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that according to the State law that he is familiar with because the tax levy was affected by more than 2% this budget should be voted on in November but the actual budget that should be voted on is only the percentage above 2% so therefore if it does get defeated this school board would still keep 2% of the tax levy. Mr. Rodriguez stated that according to State law if you affect the tax levy by more than 2% yes, the Board of Education should have that budget up for a vote in November. Mr. Rodriguez stated that while you can do that then therefore the school budget should be up for a vote this November.

Mr. Monteiro stated that for point of clarification that is not correct. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Kennedy if we are within the regulations of the State standards in passing this budget.

Mr. Kennedy stated that yes we are and approved by our Union County Department of Education as well as personnel who review our budget as a former Abbott district in the Department of Education.

Mr. Monteiro asked if we are within the guidelines of the 2% cap.

Mr. Kennedy responded yes we are.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if there is a State law stating that if you affect the tax levy more than 2% that there should be a vote on that budget.

Mr. Trujillo stated that there are exceptions to the 2% and it is 2% and we are within compliance.

Mr. Monteiro stated that this gets to the matter as to why he is going to have a hard time with some of the applicants here tonight. Mr. Monteiro stated there is going to be a huge disparity between those over at City Hall and those here at the Elizabeth Board of Education and

that they play with the words and they play with their double speak. Mr. Monteiro stated that when the City says they are within their 2% cap and they say that in the tax letter that goes out they fail to mention in that 2% cap they are allowed there are exclusions outside the 2% cap. Mr. Monteiro stated that health insurance increases, pension increases are exclusions that are allowable and the City plays with that when they send out their letter and they say they are within their 2% cap. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Board of Education does the same and meets the same guidelines and standards as the City and right away there is nonsense from the City asking Trenton to shut down our school budget but yet we followed the proper process with the County and to the State and it would have never been approved if it didn't. Mr. Monteiro stated that is part of the problem we have here and we clearly have a huge divide between two very large organizations here in the City and it is very unfortunate. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is even going to have a problem with his appointment tonight. Mr. Monteiro stated that his heart is in the right place and his passion for education, being a teacher, and it is commendable that he chose that profession which is a very admirable and honorable profession. Mr. Monteiro stated that he thinks his head and his processing is a little skewed because of the people who unfortunately advising or guiding him. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is a huge critic of Senator Ray Lesniak and Mayor Chris Bollwage and they have done good things through the course of their careers but the one thing they don't do now is certainly respect and understand all the work that has gone on here in the Elizabeth Board of Education. Mr. Monteiro stated that our Superintendent who is one of the greatest superintendents here in the State who has been highly sought after by headhunters, recruiting firms not just in the State but throughout the country because he has turned this district around. Mr. Monteiro stated that at one point when this school board was controlled by the political forces many years ago it was one of the worst school districts in the State. Mr. Monteiro stated that under the guidance, leadership, and vision of Superintendent Muñoz we have turned this district around and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he agreed that we are going in the right direction.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he didn't have an issue with the cap and the budget and he didn't bring this up tonight and it was brought up by the President. Mr. Rodriguez stated that if you're in compliance that's great and we all know that health benefits are sky rocketing and pensions are skyrocketing and we have over 4,000 employees in the district and he completely understands that.

Mr. Monteiro stated that all of us don't have all the answers and we don't purport to know and we have legal counsel, assistant superintendents, and business administrator and all the time we are going to them with questions because we don't know all the answers. Mr. Monteiro stated that he believes in solutions first and we look for the right answers together as a Board. Mr. Monteiro stated that he served eight years on City Council and spoke his mind and paid the price and he does here too. Mr. Monteiro stated that it might look like most of the time we are unanimous here but most of the times in private we disagree on many of the matters but we try to do it in civil discourse. Mr. Monteiro stated that elections can be rough and Mr. Rodriguez has had two of them. Mr. Monteiro stated that he doesn't agree with some of his political posturing and maybe it has hurt him and some of our decisions hurt us along the way and for every action there is a reaction. Mr. Monteiro stated that one of the flyers when Mr. Rodriguez ran in November was paid for by the Elizabeth Education Future and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he knows that group.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is not affiliated with that group.

Mr. Monteiro asked if he is not familiar with anyone on the Elizabeth Education Future.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that if he gives a list of members he can tell you if he recognizes their names.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he knows no one that makes up the Elizabeth Education Future, the PAC that sent out over half a dozen mailers on the behalf of Jose Rodriguez, Jorge Casalins, and Charlene Bathelus.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is sure that he does but if he can give him a list of members of the PAC he can tell you if he knows them.

Mr. Monteiro asked if Mr. Rodriguez is familiar with that PAC.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Monteiro asked if he is familiar with the flyers they sent out on his behalf.

Mr. Rodriguez responded he has seen some of them. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he does not work with that PAC. Mr. Rodriguez stated that it is illegal.

Mr. Monteiro asked if he is aware that the PAC raised in excess of \$100,000.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is not aware because he doesn't work with them and he tries to stay focused.

Mr. Monteiro stated that they raised over \$100,000. and most of the money, if not just about all of it, came from outside the City sources. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is going to tell this Board that he knows nothing about this PAC but yet this PAC clearly spent over \$100,000. in promoting their candidacies for the school board. Mr. Monteiro stated that his issue with that PAC is the majority came from outside interests, Peerless Beverage Company, an alcohol beverage company, gave about \$2,000.

Mr. Rodriguez asked what that has to do with him and stated that it would be illegal for him to work with that PAC.

Mr. Trujillo stated that Mr. Rodriguez should not play coy and he knows exactly where the money came from.

Mr. Rodriguez stated again to tell him a list of the members and he will tell you if he recognizes their names.

Mr. Monteiro stated that in all fairness to this Board Mr. Rodriguez had a campaign and over \$100,000. was spent and it is on the New Jersey ELEC site.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he did not spend that money.

Mr. Monteiro stated that Mr. Rodriguez is telling the Board that you know no one on that PAC and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he has taken pictures with anyone on that PAC.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that if you give me a list of members he can tell you if he knows the names. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he can't tell you if he doesn't know.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez why he would think that the International Longshoremen's Association would contribute \$7,500. to this PAC to promote his candidacy.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that you can ask them.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he is asking him why he would think that the International Longshoremen's Association would contribute \$7,500. to a PAC that would support his candidacy.

Mr. Rodriguez stated he doesn't know but that his father is a longshoreman for over 40 years and has many family members who are longshoremen. Mr. Rodriguez stated that for this campaign he is going to them to see if they will give him the money because they didn't give him the money.

Mr. Monteiro stated that is fair. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez why the corrupt Birdsall Services that was just indicted by the State of New Jersey contributed \$7,200. to this very same PAC that promoted his candidacy.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he doesn't have a crystal ball and Mr. Monteiro would have to ask them why they gave their money.

Mr. Monteiro asked why does he think Birdsall would contribute.

Mr. Rodriguez responded that he doesn't know and he doesn't care because they are corrupt and they did not give him the money or his campaign the money so why should he care.

Mr. Monteiro stated that they did not give directly to you but to an organization that is promoting the election and support of three candidates to serve on the Elizabeth Board of Education with all this money coming from outside and asked Mr. Rodriguez if that would not concern him. Mr. Monteiro stated that if he was running for the Elizabeth School Board and received \$7,200. from the Birdsall Services Group or International Longshoremen would Mr. Rodriguez show any concern.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that what he thinks Mr. Monteiro is trying to get at but doesn't want to ask straight up is if Birdsall gave him personally the money he would give it right back to them, he does not want their money. Mr. Rodriguez stated that because they gave it to a PAC that he is not affiliated with and has no control over whether he likes it or not the same PAC could have turned around the next day and attacked him for all intent and purposes. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he has no control.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he would ask, knowing what he knows now, this PAC to give the money back.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he is not affiliated with the PAC.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he would ask this PAC to give this money back.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he finds it peculiar that all this money in excess of \$100,000. which, by the way, Birdsall also shows up on the election reports of Senator Lesniak and Mayor Chris Bollwage and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is aware of that.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no.

Mr. Monteiro stated that now that he is aware of it would Mr. Rodriguez ask them to give it back.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he would have to take a look but if he had that kind of access to those individuals he would talk to them and let them know just like he lets everyone know that corruption shouldn't be tolerated at any level. Mr. Rodriguez quoted Martin Luther King once said, "Evil wins when good men do nothing." Mr. Rodriguez stated that he would take it to a point if he had access to these individuals that Mr. Monteiro speaks about. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he would tell them that they should do that and not only is it the right thing to do it is the politically correct thing to do.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he knew Jim Devine and how does he know him.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he does know him and asked if he writes for the Star Ledger but he does know the name.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he has an organization and a newspaper and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is aware of that and the Elizabeth Education Watchdog Newspaper.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he knows the newspaper.

Mr. Monteiro stated that the Elizabeth Education Watchdog is Jim Devine's newspaper. Mr. Monteiro asked if Mr. Rodriguez knew that the Elizabeth Education Watchdog had a function, an event, and all the newspaper does is attack the Elizabeth School Board and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he is aware of that and has he ever seen the paper.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he has seen the paper.

Mr. Monteiro stated then he must be aware that all the paper and website do is attack.

Mr. Rodriguez asked what this has to do with his application to become a Board member.

Mr. Monteiro stated that it is important for him to know whoever sits on this Board. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Elizabeth Education Watchdog is a paper funded by Senator Ray Lesniak critical of the Elizabeth Board of Education. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Elizabeth Education Watchdog had an event at Club Ole or Ole the big hall on North Broad Street and asked Mr. Rodriguez if he was aware of the event.

Mr. Rodriguez asked when was the event.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he doesn't recollect the specific date and the Elizabeth Education Watchdog only had one event at Club Ole.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that a few years ago he did attend that event.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he knew Senator Ray Lesniak was at the event.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he doesn't recall.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he was at the event. Mr. Monteiro stated that Ray Lesniak on stage gave a speech and the speech was recorded, video-taped and asked if Mr. Rodriguez was aware of it.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he doesn't recall that he was there and he wouldn't know if it was recorded.

Mr. Monteiro stated that at the time when Ray Lesniak got on stage and made that speech he said he is going to destroy the Elizabeth Board of Education and when he's done

destroying the Elizabeth Board of Education in the upcoming election which was the election we had he was going to appoint the next superintendent of schools of Elizabeth, New Jersey and that superintendent would be Frank Cuesta. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he recalls that speech.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that if he doesn't recall that he was there he wouldn't recall that. Mr. Rodriguez stated that if he was being recorded then you can show me the video.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he would like to see the video.

Mr. Rodriguez responded yes.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he thinks that any State Senator should tell the Elizabeth Board of Education or the residents of the City of Elizabeth that he would pick the next superintendent.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he ever heard Ray Lesniak say that the next superintendent would be Frank Cuesta.

Mr. Rodriguez responded no he never heard him. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he believes Mr. Monteiro thinks he has some kind of access to the Senator that he does not have.

Mr. Monteiro stated that there is a huge divide in this City between this organization and the City of Elizabeth and the questions were asked when or how are we ever going to build or cross that bridge together. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is not seeing that being possible because from one applicant he doesn't have an answer and he can't see that coming on this Board that he doesn't disagree with the Mayor telling the Commissioner of Education it's okay to appoint the next superintendent.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that no one on either of these sides is his boss and while he believes in building bridges that is not his first priority. Mr. Rodriguez stated that in all honesty if he can educate these children and we can do the best of our ability and the City keeps doing what Mr. Monteiro thinks it is doing then okay because no one is his boss. Mr. Rodriguez stated that the only boss he has here is his father, God and his soul. Mr. Rodriguez stated that whether he builds bridges or not, he doesn't care and what he does care about is the children and that is his passion and it may become everyone says it's about the kids but it really, really is his passion.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez who is running in the election in November would he allow another PAC to run another smear campaign if he had the ability to stop it and would he allow that PAC to raise money from outside sources if he was able to stop that.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that first it would be illegal for him to contact a PAC.

Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he had no coordination whatsoever or contact with the Elizabeth Education Future and anyone on that organization.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that is correct and would be illegal.

Mr. Monteiro stated that clearly we both share one thing, we share passion. Mr. Monteiro stated that he has been in Elizabeth his whole life, born and raised here, and the attack dogs have come at him every which way and he is still standing and expects more to come. Mr. Monteiro stated that we have a very powerful, influential Senator, as Mr. Rodriguez knows from

his own campaign, who boasted about how much he raised for Mr. Rodriguez's campaign and how much he was involved in Mr. Rodriguez's campaign. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Senator is not shy about trying to destroy the Elizabeth school system that has worked so hard over the past ten or twelve years. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is passionate to him and the men and women on this Board give up a lot of their time and he takes it personally. Mr. Monteiro stated that he takes the nonsense and the political silliness of the season that is going to come and calling people corrupt because whether they are only words they hurt because like him our families, our dads and moms are good people and it hurts them as much as it hurts us when they pick up a newspaper, a flyer and you know its double speak or just outright a lie. Mr. Monteiro stated that Senator Ray Lesniak just spent \$2 million to run for his re-election and God Bless Him that he can raise that kind of money and if you look at the report it's all money from special interest PACs from all over the State. Mr. Monteiro stated that there is passion and he still loves his City as sure as Mr. Rodriguez does and it hurt his mom to see a paper or flyer come out and personally attacking him. Mr. Monteiro stated that he knows what business he's in and he may disagree with Mr. Neron but unfortunately these are politically driven positions because they are government positions. Mr. Monteiro stated that we put the children in this district first because if we didn't we would be Asbury Park, Camden, Trenton and we are not. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are the only large urban school district in the State that has not been taken over by the State of New Jersey because the ones above us have and now the one below us has been taken over. Mr. Monteiro stated that he doesn't see the Senator down in Trenton and he doesn't see our Mayor in the City putting us on a pedestal saying what a great job all you Assistant Superintendents and Superintendent are doing. Mr. Monteiro stated that he doesn't care about the recognition or praise for himself he gives it up to where it is due because they do the hard work, the administrators, teachers, parents, and the children do the hard work. Mr. Monteiro stated that they are just up here as stewards and guardians. Mr. Monteiro takes offense even when Mr. Rodriguez comes up here and double speaks he would just rather have straight answers. Mr. Monteiro stated that a PAC is a PAC and he knows what it is and when they attack us because the school board employees write a \$50. check to support our cause there is no intimidation and he has accused us of that and the flyer put out by the PAC.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that Mr. Monteiro may have run packs like that but he is not guilty of that. Mr. Rodriguez stated that it may be hard for Mr. Monteiro to believe that he is not corrupt but it may be really hard. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he does not share those views with that PAC.

Mr. Monteiro stated that Mr. Rodriguez has never heard him disparage him and he thinks he has the passion and the heart because he is in a commendable profession and he commends anyone who is a teacher because it is a tough job and an honorable profession. Mr. Monteiro stated that he commends Mr. Rodriguez and anyone of these applicants for wanting to serve if there heart is in the right place but he also has to be critical at the same time and honest and open about some of the missteps like when you have a PAC that you take no knowledge of. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is only one vote and doesn't speak for any of the other Board members and that he is only one vote. Mr. Monteiro stated that he wants a Board member who is going to serve on this Board like the way he feels a Board member should be, independent. Mr. Monteiro stated that he doesn't need to see his certificates, degrees, how many awards or trophies he's won, he wants to see that the Board member is going to act independently and think for himself and think for all the constituency of Elizabeth not just the parents, not just the taxpayers but everyone collectively. Mr. Monteiro stated that right now we have a City administration that clearly doesn't see that, a State Senator whose made it clear that when he takes over he is appointing Frank Cuesta. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he thinks Frank Cuesta would make a good superintendent.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that he doesn't know his qualifications and that he doesn't know. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he understands and to be an effective teacher you have to put yourself

in the shoes of others and he understands that those political forces and that he has heard them, read and has seen what they've done. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he understands why he is angry or passionate about attacking them back but that is not him. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he does not work for City Hall or the Board of Education, and they are not his bosses and no one is and his only boss is his father. Mr. Rodriguez stated that Mr. Monteiro may think he is part of them but he is not, they may support him but they know that this is a passion of mine and no one is going to touch me for that and if they think they can, they can't. Mr. Rodriguez stated that this is a passion of his and he is running three times and this is his passion and this is what he wants.

Mr. Monteiro stated that it commendable and courageous for anyone who wants to seek elected office. Mr. Monteiro stated that it's easier for those who want to be just a critic because those are the cowards because the cowards never start and the weak never finish and the winners never quit. Mr. Monteiro asked Mr. Rodriguez if he believes the Elizabeth School Board should be independent from the elected machines of the Mayor or Senator and does he feel we should have separation of both City Hall and the Board of Education and that the Mayor and the Senator and any other big office holder should involve themselves in the Elizabeth Board of Education and do you believe we should be independent.

Mr. Rodriguez responded 100% yes.

Mr. Monteiro thanked Mr. Rodriguez.

Ms. Bathelus asked if she could call Mr. Calella back because she just has two questions.

Mr. Monteiro stated that the interviews are over.

A motion was made by Mr. Trujillo, seconded by Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, to have a vote for the Board vacancy.

Ms. Bathelus stated that she wanted to ask the applicants more questions and requested that the motion be amended. Discussion ensued.

Marvin Lehman, Interim Board Counsel, stated that there is a motion and second to have a vote for the Board vacancy.

The motion to have a vote for the Board vacancy was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Messrs. Padlo, Perreira, Trujillo, Monteiro – 5

Negative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina – 1

The vote to appoint a Board member to fill the vacancy was as follows:

Ms. Bathelus voted for Stanley Neron –1

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Padlo, Perreira, Trujillo, Monteiro voted for Stefano Calella – 5

Ms. Bathelus excused herself from the meeting at 11:40 p.m.

Mr. Trujillo congratulated Mr. Calella.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina congratulated Mr. Calella.

Mr. Monteiro congratulated Mr. Calella.

Stefano Calella took the oath of office administered by Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., School Business Administrator/Board Secretary. Mr. Calella stated that he is honored to have this nomination and acceptance by the Board.

Mr. Monteiro asked if there was any old business to discuss. Since there was no old business to discuss Mr. Monteiro asked if there was any new business to discuss.

On a motion by Mr. Trujillo, seconded by Mr. Perreira, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Padlo, Perreira, Trujillo, Monteiro – 5

Negative: None

Harold E. Kennedy, Jr.  
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary