

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

August 14, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.
Remote Meeting (via Zoom)

Presiding: Comm. Eddie Gonzalez, President

Present:

Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Rodney Henderson, Deputy Superintendent
Albert Buglione, Esq., General Counsel
Boris Zaydel, Esq., Board Counsel

Comm. Valerie Freeman
Comm. Della McCall
Comm. Hector Nieves
Comm. Joel Ramirez, Vice President

Comm. Kenneth Rosado
Comm. Kenneth Simmons
Comm. Corey Teague

Absent:

Comm. Mohammed Rashid

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

Comm. Gonzalez read the Open Public Meetings Act:

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

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

**Special Meeting
August 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.
Remote
90 Delaware Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey**

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

**GOAL SETTING SESSION WITH NEW JERSEY SCHOOL
BOARDS ASSOCIATION – Facilitator: Kelly Mitchell**

Comm. Gonzalez: Thank you all for joining us today. Today we will be discussing the goals for the district as well as the Board goals. The goal-setting session will be done by our New Jersey School Boards Association Facilitator, Kelly Mitchell.

Ms. Kelly Mitchell: Good evening, everybody. Thanks so much for having me. I'm super excited for this opportunity. I really would love it for it to be very discussion-based. I can go through a brief presentation to just give an overview of what we're looking at as far as goal setting. Once we do that, I'd really love for us to have a group discussion on the governance skills of the Board and where they want to be. I did get the proposed goals of the district. Dr. Newell will go ahead and discuss those. Why don't I start with just an overview of goal setting? We will just chat about why we set goals. Why would we be doing this exercise? Especially when you have a strategic plan a lot of board members wonder why we are setting these individual goals every year. It really sets the priorities for that strategic focus. When you're sitting at the Board table instead of just checking the box, you're working toward certain goals and thought processes that come together from the community, the Board and the district. It's just that strategic focus on aligning with that vision. I saw that you have a mission and vision. I don't know when that was updated, but we will chat about that in a little bit. And just to improve the outcomes. I don't know if you're familiar with the lighthouse study, but it talks about boards that are very focused on strategic goals will actually move the needle for student achievement. It's super important to have these goals and not just do it to check a box, but to really work towards something and be accountable. The lighthouse study said that if the Board sets goals for themselves and priorities about their governance skills and about what they're looking for in their students, it will really move the needle in your district for that student achievement piece. We will talk about building those goals for the Board that aligns with the district to be able to move the needle for that student success piece. Driven goals fix learning gaps, mental health and family engagement. A lot of times, boards talk about setting a goal for community engagement. A lot of times they say that the community doesn't show up at their meetings and so they must all be satisfied with what's going on, but that's not always the case. Just because somebody doesn't show up at the meetings doesn't mean that they wouldn't like to be engaged and be given the opportunity to give input. A lot of times the boards make goals about that community engagement. Also, there's usually a goal surrounded by success of the staff and celebrating those achievements. The morale is really important. This gives you a step-by-step model of what are actual board goals. It's about governance, oversight and professional development. Then you'll have the district goals that we will talk about tonight. That's more about programs, strategic plans, staff and instruction. Then it goes down to teacher and building level, but when you stack them all up, you should have great student outcomes, and they should be measurable. While you're going through this school year, you should be talking about where you are with your goals. A lot of times boards set goals and then they will just revisit with the CSA evaluation, but that's really setting yourself up for failure. If you talk about them at least three times a year it's really important because then you know where you are and if you have to adjust your sails with some of them. It's super important to do that and we will talk about that in a little bit. They should be measurable. They should be attainable. Sometimes there are pie-in-the-sky goals and you're never going to attain that so boards get frustrated, and they wonder why they're even doing that exercise. They should be attainable and relevant to that mission and vision that you have in the district. Tonight, we're going to talk about two facets of goals. The board is involved with district goals, but they're more about the 'what' and the superintendent and administration is 'how' those action plans are executed. You're supposed to be collaborative with each other to come up with those district goals. Then you have board goals and they're more about what the board owns. Here we are, this is how we're functioning, but we'd really like to get to the next level. How are we going to be able to do that? How are we collaborating with our community? Are we engaging with the county meetings? Are we being regionally responsible as a board? We will talk about that in a little bit. When we go through the development of the goals

themselves in the district we're keeping in mind that mission and vision. We're being very data-driven. We're looking at all those metrics and we're saying there are some facets here that are in need of improvement. I see that you have the middle school model that you're going to be working on, which is very data-driven. Did you achieve the goals from last year? Do you want to still include them? Some goals are for multiple years and that's okay. That's how those are developed. With the board goals it's a series of questions talking about you as a governance team. Where are you now and where would you like to be? Also doing the board's self-evaluation, I don't know that you've done that before, but that's super important because that will give you a very definitive view of how all the Commissioners feel about how the Board is moving forward and some areas where they feel they need training. That's a really great exercise and that is going to be a suggestion of mine. Usually, you come up with about three goals. That's really enough to do. As long as you have development plans with those, the administration will do that for your district goals and the board will set it for their goals. Tonight, after we have our discussion, I will write everything down and come up with some action plans as a draft for the Board. If they like what they see, then you can adopt that at a public meeting. This is a template that I'll use to send you that report on the board goals. If your Superintendent chooses to use this or a different type, this is the template that we use for those action plans. The timeline is exactly what we're doing. We're right on track. This is the time where we go ahead, and we plan those goals. Usually at that fall meeting, in either September or October, we will adopt them at your public meeting, and those regular updates are super important. That way you're really monitoring your progress and it's not just an exercise to check the box. We're going to talk about that board self-evaluation, and we will collaborate tonight on what we think the best course of action is for those three goals for the Board. Does anybody have any questions on the process of goal setting?

Comm. Gonzalez: What is the timeline for goal setting?

Ms. Mitchell: Tonight, if we're able to come up with three goal areas then I can put a report together that would show some of the action plans that the Board could take to achieve those goals. That would be a really quick turnaround. I can do that tomorrow and send that out to you and we can chat about that. If you choose where you really can't come up with those three goal areas, my suggestion would be to do the Board self-evaluation. I'll send a link to all the Commissioners. They will go ahead and do that and then you will be able to see those goals surface very easily from that Board self-evaluation. Then we can formulate the goals based on that. We can do it one of two ways.

Comm. Gonzalez: Hopefully we can have some great dialogue and come up with some Board goals.

Comm. Simmons: I wanted to suggest that we start with the Board self-evaluation.

Ms. Mitchell: That's usually how I do Board goals because it's a really great process. Everybody will then just sit down individually and do that. I get all that data, compile into a report, and then come into your Board meeting and present the summary report on that. When you see that and when we have those discussions, you'll be able to pull three goals out of that very easily.

Comm. Gonzalez: That sounds like a plan to me. Are there any other suggestions or comments from any of the Board members?

Comm. Teague: I agree. We can start off with the self-evaluation. From that I think we would be able to derive the three goals that we want to set for this upcoming school year. At least that's how I remember doing it in the past.

Comm. Gonzalez: I concur with Comm. Simmons on that. How would we go about it if we're going to do that first?

Ms. Mitchell: I'll send you all a link individually by email and then you can go on and do the evaluation. I'll watch that come in. We can discuss a date that we want it done by. We can then set a date when I can come out and do the summary report with you. That summary report will talk about the goals right then and there. Hopefully we can come up with three concrete goals and get the action plans going. The one thing about the new self-evaluation is that it has an area for board goals to see whether you achieved or not. We're trying to make that board self-evaluation very similar to the CSA evaluation. We want to align that. We want you to have that same commitment as the Superintendent does. That's why we added that component to it. I'm not sure that you had Board goals last year. If you don't, I can just check the box that says that you didn't.

Comm. Gonzalez: We had set Board goals in the past. We did it in-person at one of our retreats. I'm okay with moving forward with the Board self-evaluation first and then from what you're discussing we can follow up with that as well. There are some discussions I think we should have in general. One of the Board goals was to make sure that all of our departmental audits were done and we had received some recommendations on those. I would like to see how we can implement that into this and make that a goal, to make sure we implement those recommendations that were submitted to us from the various departments.

Ms. Mitchell: Did you know when you wanted to set the date for me to come out to do the Board self-evaluation summary report? Do you normally do everything virtually? Or do you meet in-person from time to time?

Comm. Gonzalez: Board retreats and what we have done in the past for these settings have been in-person. I think most Board members would prefer to do it in-person because we get better dialogue going. We've stood up, went to the wall, wrote on pads and put ideas down as it relates to the various ideas that we had for the district. I think we had great conversations around that. It's not that we can't do it virtually, but I just think we get better buy-in when we do it in-person. I open the floor to any Commissioners who may disagree with that, but that was my observation.

Comm. McCall: I totally agree that in-person gives us a different vibe.

Ms. Mitchell: I think it's super important, especially when you're speaking about how the Board is functioning, to have that back-and-forth with each other. It's really difficult to do that and to feel each other when you're on Zoom. I think that something as important as Board goals and getting to the next level as a Board team, doing the compilation report for the Board self-evaluation in-person. We have some really great discussions and come up with a really great plan when we're all together in-person.

Comm. Gonzalez: I agree. I will defer to Madam President. Maybe you can coordinate with the team to see what date works for everyone to do an in-person session.

Dr. Newell: Cheryl or me?

Comm. Gonzalez: Both. I don't know if we can get a consensus now on what would be a good date. I know some people are away. That's why they're joining remotely, like Comm. Rashid. I think it's probably 1:00 a.m. where he is.

Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your dedication.

Comm. Gonzalez: Others are assisting with an unfortunate situation here in Paterson. We had a water main break and there are Commissioners who are handing out water to residents in our neighborhoods. Everyone is putting their best foot forward wherever they are. We tried to do this virtually for today, but we can have some discussion around goal setting and setting the path to where we need to be so that we're better prepared when we meet in-person. I think that would be fruitful. I defer to you on that.

Comm. Simmons: What might be helpful is if she could go through the difference between board goals and district goals. It will help newer Board members understand the difference between the two and then how both should align with the strategic plan.

Ms. Mitchell: Board goals should be all about professional development for the Board, the governance team and how they're working together. Certain things like committees, how you're acting in your committees, are the committee reports something that you feel are good and are you getting what you need out of them. That's a Board goal; to change up the committee structure a little bit. Sometimes it's board norms. How does the board communicate with each other? How does it communicate with the Superintendent? Some boards decide to do a board norms document so that newer board members know what is expected of them. That sheet is all about expectation and communication. Sometimes that's a board goal. Sometimes the board goals are centered around community engagement and that really aligns a lot of times with district goals. The district will have community engagement. I see here you're going to have some public forums about the middle school model. How does the Board support that by attendance and things like that? The board goals are in alignment with those district goals, but really, they're about the team and owning that on their own. The district goals are collaboration with the administration and the board. The board goals are owned by themselves and they're the ones that are making those action plans. It's just to make them a better team. That's the difference between the two.

Comm. Teague: I remember from the past the Board goals are literally goals and objectives that we set for ourselves so that we're able to function better as a Board.

Ms. Mitchell: Correct.

Comm. Teague: If the Board is fractured, which in many ways it is, that trickles down to the administration and the students.

Ms. Mitchell: Sometimes we have boards that are quite dysfunctional, and their goals are very small just to get them back on track. We have boards that don't even do the CSA evaluation. By statute they are required to do that, but sometimes we have to make that an actual goal so that they get that done. The functionality of the team is what those board goals should be about. With board goals, unlike district goals, the board sets the action plan. With district goals, the administration and superintendent do the action plans. Are there any questions on the differences between the two goals?

Comm. Gonzalez: I don't see anyone raising their hands on that.

Ms. Mitchell: When we do the board self-evaluation, for the members who have not done that before, it's six different categories. It talks about policy, mission and vision, governance team, financial oversight and the community. You'll have all those different categories and there are very pointed questions on how the board functions with each individual category. You see those goals rising to the top when you see those areas of needing improvement when you score yourselves. I think that we're making the right choice by doing the board self-evaluation. I think it's really helpful, especially to new Board members, because it shows them what they're supposed to be focused on. Sometimes as a new Board member you don't even know what you're supposed to be focused on. You're just thrown in there. I think the board self-evaluation really helps with that.

Comm. Gonzalez: I agree. I would put it on the floor if anyone has a suggested date for us to meet. What is everyone's schedule looking like for the next week or so? Does anyone have any recommendations for next week?

Comm. Simmons: I will be out of town next week. Next week is the Superintendent's Institute also. I know that the administration will be busy as well, probably getting ready for the opening of the school year.

Comm. Ramirez: I suggest Cheryl poll the Board. That would probably be more productive because we do have members who are not on.

Comm. Gonzalez: We can do that.

Ms. Williams: It will give the Board time to finish the self-evaluation.

Comm. Gonzalez: Right.

Ms. Mitchell: Give at least two weeks for the Board to do that task because it does take a little bit of time. If you're on vacation you don't want to focus on the board self-evaluation. We will give a couple of weeks for that. I've seen here the goals are centered around rolling out some of them in October. As long as we're done before that, we can adopt those goals and be fine.

Comm. Gonzalez: Is there any other information you would like to share or have us prepare for other than the Board self-evaluation?

Ms. Mitchell: No. I think we will start there. It's a great step. When we do the compilation report and discuss it, it is a little lengthy so you will need at least 45 minutes to an hour to have that conversation. We try to make it very discussion based. When we're choosing that day to meet, just know that it will probably be at least an hour of discussion centered around that, unless you guys are quiet like you are today. Then it's a totally different story. Then you have to listen to me talk the whole time.

Comm. Gonzalez: When we're in-person it's not this quiet. Cheryl will reach back out to you in reference to a date when she polls the Board. She'll give it a two-week period at least for us to do the self-evaluation. Obviously, if any Board members have any questions in the process they can reach out to the administration, and we will get whatever information you may need prior to completing your self-evaluation. Are there any questions or comments from anyone else at this point? Dr. Newell, anything you want to add?

Ms. Williams: You have to talk about the district goals.

Dr. Newell: In terms of the district goals, do we wait since they have to work somewhat together with the Board goals? I had sent over some proposed goals, but I'm wondering if we need to hear back on where the Board is heading in terms of their goals, which is separate from...

Ms. Mitchell: They're separate, but they try to align with each other. I feel awful wasting some of your time today, but I think it would better time spent if we have that conversation altogether.

Dr. Newell: That's perfectly fine.

Ms. Mitchell: Okay.

Comm. Gonzalez: I would have to say that I agree and it's similar to what we have done in the past, making sure that both are in matters that make sense because that's what the administration's goals are. We want to move the district forward at the same pace. We're looking for the same outcomes from the district. I think that makes sense.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

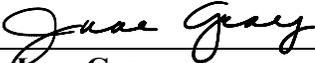
No speakers.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.



Ms. June Gray
Business Administrator