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RICHMOND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
PUBLIC HEARING

January 15, 2026
6:00 p.m.

T.W. Josey High School (Gymnasium)
1701 15th Street
Augusta, Georgia 30901

Kimbely Griffin, CCR, CVR

5409-4423-1615-6928

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PROCEEDINGS

January 15, 2026

MS. STOVALL: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. If we could have everyone to find a place to sit down so that we can go ahead and begin promptly.

My name is Shonda Stovall. I am the president of the Richmond County Board of Education. We are here tonight for our facilities master's plan conversation. Our community conversation will be discussing Josey, Jenkins-White, and Murphey Middle School.

We are here this evening to have questions that will be facilitated by Mr. Tracy Richter and Dr. Melinda Cobb. There she is, our superintendent. And afterwards, we will have a Q&A session that will be facilitated by Mr. Michael Myers. We will have an opportunity for you to ask your questions, and for you to have the information. All of the information that we will have presented will be right up here on our screen so that you can also see and hear what is being said.

As of right now, though, we are going to have our presentation of colors by the Josey ROTC. Please stand. We will have our Pledge of Allegiance by Cadet Johnson.

CADET JOHNSON: Gentlemen, please remove your

1 caps? (The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

2 Gentlemen, you may put your caps back on, and
3 please be seated.

4 MS. STOVALL: Thank you, Cadet Johnson. At this
5 time, we are going to turn this over to Mr. Tracy
6 Richter and Dr. Melinda Cobb. We are asking that you
7 reserve your questions to the end of time. Please take
8 notes. You are welcome to record as well. We are
9 asking that during the Q&A time, is the time that we
10 will have for our questions, that you may ask about
11 anything that is presented.

12 Our goal today is to make sure that by the time
13 you walk out the door, you will have accurate
14 information. We understand that people are confused
15 about what is happening and what is proposed. Please
16 be reminded that this is just a plan. Nothing has been
17 voted on yet. The Richmond County Board of Education
18 has not voted. It has not made any decisions yet.
19 This is a plan that is presented. So, all information
20 today is not solidified. Amen.

21 At this time, I am going to turn it over to
22 Mr. Richter and Dr. Cobb. We will have you to join us
23 at the podium.

24 DR. COBB: Hello. Welcome. Thanks for coming out
25 tonight. My name is Melinda Cobb. I am happy to be

1 here with you all. And I want to take a moment to
2 introduce our board members who will be here with us
3 this evening. I want to introduce them. You just
4 heard from our board president, Ms. Shonda Stovall.
5 Our board vice president, Mr. Ed Lowery. If you want
6 to give them a wave. Trustee, Ms. Venus Cain. Board
7 member, Ms. Shante Boyd. Board member, Mary Jane
8 Abbott. Board member, Samantha Valentine. And board
9 member, Charlie Walker.

10 And if there were any other elected officials here
11 in the audience tonight, if you want to stand and be
12 recognized at this time, please do so. Mr. Charlie
13 Hanna is also with us. And, Mr. Hanna, if you could
14 give a wave, he is our board member. And I see -- I
15 can't see Ms. Braswell. Yes. Ms. Braswell -- board
16 member, Ms. Braswell is with us today as well. And
17 Commissioner Tony Lewis. Yes. Okay. And if someone
18 can see better than me, is that Ms. Francine? Okay.
19 And Commissioner Ms. Francine Scott. Thank you.

20 All right. I want to thank you all for coming out
21 here today and for helping me with your
22 (unintelligible). So I also want to just take a moment
23 to introduce -- they're going to stand up. Some of our
24 cabinet members are here with us tonight. So if you
25 are a part of our senior cabinet leadership, could you

1 stand and be recognized at this time as a group? You
2 may want to look around because you might have some
3 questions for these folks at the very end.

4 Also, we have invited out tonight the principals
5 of the schools who are impacted. So if you are a
6 school or a student who has been, we say your new zone
7 is going to be Laney High School, for example,
8 Dr. Cordero Middleton is here for you to be able to
9 meet him as well. So we have lots of staff members at
10 the end that we're going to be able to introduce you
11 to.

12 Without further ado, I'm going to hand it over to
13 Tracy Richter, who's going to talk to us about our new
14 facility proposed plan -- and board member, Walter
15 Eubanks. Mr. Eubanks, thank you for coming in.

16 MR. RICHTER: Thank you, Dr. Cobb. Well, good
17 evening, everybody. Can you all hear me up there just
18 fine? Are you good? The white sweatshirt, if you can
19 hear me just say yes because you're the furthest away
20 from me. Thank you, sir.

21 Okay. So, tonight, let me introduce myself. I'm
22 Tracy Richter. I work with a group called HPM that's
23 been working with the district for a few years on
24 creating longer term visions for facilities planning.
25 We've worked with the board over the last few years to

1 look at how this district aligns from a facility
2 standpoint to align to future student enrollments and
3 student programs.

4 You know, obviously, when you go through a process
5 like this, this district did a really heavy lift about
6 a year and a half ago to talk about, you know, what
7 facilities have to look like and have a painful
8 discussion around, you know, reducing some facilities
9 in the district. And part of that discussion results
10 in the board approval of a long range facilities plan
11 that now we have to start implementing. And the
12 implementation of the plan, and if you've heard me
13 present this before in the past, that as hard as the
14 planning could have been, and a lot of hard discussions
15 that we had, and in this community too, sometimes the
16 hardest part is to implement it. It is to get it
17 going. Get it going, and making sure that we're in the
18 right place where we need to be.

19 And, again, I think what the board did a couple of
20 years ago was, kind of, took a different look at how to
21 look at facilities from a longer term vision. I hear a
22 lot about, you know, well, we used to have this, and
23 now you're bringing it back, but why did you close it
24 ten years ago? Well, I think part of that is that
25 trying to look out to the future about what this

1 district needs and trying to anticipate those needs,
2 first of all, is very difficult. We all know that.
3 There are things that can change education very
4 quickly. There are also things that can change our
5 demographics very quickly too. And so what I'm going
6 to take you through tonight is I'm going to tell you a
7 little bit of background of why decisions had to get to
8 where they needed to get to. And not that it makes
9 anybody any happier that those decisions got made, but
10 there's reasons why you move in a direction you go to.

11 And then for those of you who -- we did have a
12 luncheon today with Josey alumni, and I see a lot of
13 you here again, and I thank you for being here again.
14 You know, people all afternoon have asked me how it
15 went. I'm like it went as it should have went. It
16 went with people coming with concerns. People having
17 angst. You know, people being frustrated. And part of
18 this is that, you know, that has to come out in this
19 process. We all know that. We're here because of that
20 anxiety out there.

21 And, look, if the words didn't want to be heard,
22 first of all, the board wouldn't be sitting here. We
23 wouldn't host these community meetings and just do it.
24 And so I understand the issues with, you know, past
25 transparency and past trust, but we're trying to get to

1 this idea where we're trying to communicate as much as
2 we can and answer any questions that we can. And you
3 still will probably have some questions afterwards.
4 But what we want you to know is that even after the Q&A
5 session, you see all these, kind of, these signs out
6 here (indicating). All these people behind these signs
7 can help you with some of those questions that you
8 might have, more specifically, about the programs.
9 Whether it's transportation, whether it's about
10 funding, or whether it's about your student programs.
11 We want you to walk out of here with as many answers as
12 you can tonight.

13 So let me, kind of, take you through some of
14 the -- some of the background of where the district has
15 been. And so when we went back in the last process, we
16 had a lot of community meetings, and some of those
17 community meetings went more specific, you know. We
18 came out and we met with -- we met with, again, the
19 Josey Alumni Group. We met with some other specific
20 school groups that were impacted by this most. We did
21 larger community meetings, we did a lot of surveying,
22 and we had a lot of one on ones. People that would
23 come to board retreats and talk to us and all of those.

24 But what we wanted to make sure is that we were
25 trying to get as much input as we could, as we went

1 through the process. And, again, always knowing that
2 the district had to make some adjustments. And not
3 every decision was going to be a popular decision out
4 there. But the intent was to try to make sure that we
5 were trying to preserve as much as we could. You know,
6 pay attention to those things that matters to Richmond
7 County schools in specific neighborhoods, and go out
8 and try to hear those voices. But what we knew that,
9 and it still exists today.

10 And, look, I don't think it's -- many of you know
11 my background. I've been doing this a long time around
12 this country, but in Georgia, specifically. But the
13 dynamics of public schools has changed so dramatically,
14 and the impacts on public schools that everybody shares
15 a lot of these issues. And so when we know that, we
16 have so much facilities that our dollars go to bricks
17 and mortar and not kids, that's a problem. When the
18 dollars aren't going to programs, and going to heating
19 bills and lighting bills, that's a problem.

20 We need to make sure that we're getting our
21 facilities aligned to where students are, where they're
22 going to be, and how those programs support those kids.
23 Aging buildings and expensive buildings, or trying to
24 take care of buildings. It's no secret the cost of
25 construction and repairing buildings. You see it in

1 your own homes. It's trying, it's difficult, and more
2 and more difficult to maintain this portfolio of
3 facilities.

4 Declining enrollment. Nobody wants to hear this.
5 The fact of the matter is declining enrollment is a
6 fact of education in today's world. It's not just the
7 public education. It's the charter schools, and it's
8 the private schools. The fact of the matter is we
9 don't have as many kids today as we did tens years ago
10 coming into our school systems. Birth rates are at a
11 fifty year low in this country, and they don't
12 anticipate to rise anymore.

13 And so -- and on top of that, what's happened in
14 our current economic condition is that our houses that
15 used to kind of turn over and generate kids again
16 aren't turning over right now. People aren't selling
17 their homes. They're staying in their homes because
18 it's not affordable to go somewhere else anymore.

19 And so what you see as a result of that, and on
20 top of that, when you see that there's disinvestment in
21 public housing. And the housing disappears, and nobody
22 reinvested when cities or municipalities can't reinvest
23 in those neighborhoods, that kind of strip you of your
24 enrollment. Those things all impact everything we're
25 doing. And it's -- and I'd like to tell you that's

1 turning around. But right now it's not turning around.
2 And it's not turned around for most school districts
3 out there. And so -- but what we do know is that at
4 some time it will turn around. We know that something
5 will happen that will spur enrollment someday again.
6 So we need to make sure our facilities are aligned.
7 Not to go so far down that we don't have any space, but
8 to make sure it's aligned for future growth also. But
9 it's a balance.

10 Inequitable program distribution. We've heard a
11 lot about this. Now, we don't have the programs other
12 schools have, and that still continues today. Part of
13 that is all tied to enrollment. Having enough kids in
14 buildings to make sure that you can afford those
15 programs that kids need.

16 I'm going to share with you a little bit about how
17 the district is trying to alleviate some of that, but
18 they can't make it all work. And also then trying to
19 just maximize state dollars. And I think this is a big
20 part of the conversation.

21 You know, as we looked at population, we knew that
22 what's interesting about Richmond County is that
23 there's been an increase in population, but there's
24 been an inverse relationship to enrollment. We're
25 getting more people, but less kids. And so when you

1 see housing developments come in, those housing
2 developments, they're generating kids, but it's not
3 enough to offset the loss of kids that we've gotten in
4 the past. And so we've got to balance the two there.

5 The historical enrollment in this district has
6 shown a steady decline. Again, not a secret there.
7 This is -- I don't have to put Richmond County schools
8 on this. This is every district in the past five years
9 I've worked with. And I don't mean to compare you
10 against others, but we have to go to the new norm. We
11 have to make sure that we don't have so much space out
12 there that we're paying for space instead of kids.

13 And so part of the tough decision that the board
14 had to wrestle with, and the future boards will have to
15 wrestle with is exactly that. We heard today a lot
16 about tax rates. We heard about how much taxes you're
17 paying and they're not going down. This isn't helping.
18 Maintaining buildings that don't have kids in them only
19 keep your tax rates high. And it continues to go down
20 that direction.

21 But we're staffing in a way that the state doesn't
22 fund our schools to the maximum potential, and the
23 burden comes on you. It doesn't help your tax rate.
24 So we have to figure out how we minimize some of
25 that -- how we minimize some of that impact that's on

1 the local community, and make sure that we're getting
2 our fair share of that.

3 And so as I look at the projected enrollment, the
4 good news is that we see some stabilization. But the
5 fact of the matter is that the big enrollments are
6 already through. We've got far less kindergartners
7 today than we did five years ago. And those birth
8 rates and the disinvestment in housing -- in public
9 housing and affordable housing, has attributed to that.
10 And so the school board has to react to those kind of
11 norms out there that occur.

12 Now, again, the other thing we hear a lot about is
13 that we haven't invested in some schools. And the fact
14 of the matter is that we really have. So I'm going to
15 take you through this chart. And this is online so you
16 can see it. But I want to explain it really quickly.

17 This earned number right here (indicating), this
18 earned number is when you have students walking in the
19 door, the state funds the students at a certain rate.
20 And the state says, for instance, at Josey, you know,
21 and I don't need to pull any of them out? That based
22 on the allocation of how state funds your schools, they
23 will pay for forty-three positions in the school. The
24 problem is it doesn't support all of your programs
25 because there's not enough kids in there to support the

1 programs that are necessary. And, so, locally, you all
2 fund sixty -- seventeen extra positions. One hundred
3 percent of them are on the local taxpayer. You're
4 paying for that. And you know what, it's not a bad
5 thing you're paying for them because they're providing
6 the services for the kids in here. And maybe at one or
7 two schools, that's okay, but if you just look at these
8 three schools -- and I'm not just calling out these
9 three schools, but if you go across the district in
10 some of these cases, if you look at seventeen,
11 nineteen, and nineteen, that's fifty-six local
12 positions you're paying for out of your pocket that the
13 state doesn't fund.

14 And in the same light we hear we're paying too
15 much taxes. And so it's trying to balance the two.
16 The state -- the district wants to put these people.
17 You need five paraprofessionals at Josey High School.
18 Absolutely. And the district's not going to take them
19 away. But they're not pulling resources out. They're
20 actually adding resources in to try to maintain some
21 programmatic equity across the district. So, and I
22 know that you get frustrated that programs aren't the
23 same across buildings, but part of the reason is we
24 can't stretch that much further. And so the district
25 has to deal with this. We use this chart a lot that if

1 you look at the way the state staffs things, that
2 schools that are under, let's say, the high school
3 under one thousand, the great positions are positions
4 that don't get funded by the state for under a thousand
5 kids. But look at what happens when schools get to
6 fifteen hundred. It's fully staffed. All CTAE, all
7 fine arts, all athletics, all PE, and all special ed,
8 it all gets funded by the state.

9 And so I think that not that your schools will
10 ever -- we're not going to get your schools to fifteen
11 hundred at the high school level, but the closer we get
12 to that fifteen hundred level, the better that staffing
13 becomes. And the less burden on the local taxpayer you
14 have.

15 And so look, I don't want to make this -- and I
16 will tell you, I'm an educator my whole life I'm an
17 educator. I don't want to make this about the business
18 side of the world. But the fact of the matter is, is
19 that you have to run a good business to teach kids.
20 You have to staff and spend your money the right way.
21 Otherwise, the kids do get cheated. And so we want to
22 make sure that there has got to be a balance between
23 the two. Maintaining a good budget, getting the right
24 staff in the right schools, and maximizing the dollars
25 that come in.

1 Now, what I'm going to take you through, all of
2 you Josey folks who were here earlier today, this
3 presentation looks a little different. Because I've
4 got Jenkins-White and I've got Murphey to talk about
5 tonight, too. So bear with me a little bit. I'm going
6 to get to Josey in a minute.

7 But the first thing is, we're going to talk about,
8 kind of, the movement that happens as a result of the
9 decisions. Okay. So with Jenkins-White coming offline
10 next year, where will the students go? With Murphey
11 next year, and how does Josey and the transition work,
12 too? I'm going to walk you through that. But first
13 and foremost, I want you to see this. The student
14 locator on here (indicating). If you can look at that,
15 but I think it's online. You can go to the district
16 website and see this and you can put it on there. But
17 if you put your address on there -- it's called a
18 student locator. If you put your address in there, it
19 will show you your current boundary and where the
20 proposed boundary will be based on tonight's
21 presentation. Okay? It's a pretty easy tool to work
22 with. Just put your address in and you can see it
23 immediately. Okay? So, I want to leave that up for
24 just a second because I think that's important.
25 Because it will help clarify maybe where. Because

1 tonight, in some of the presentation, I'm going to show
2 you like where the NPUs are, the planning units are.
3 But it might not be that clear.

4 So the recommendations for Jenkins-White. Now,
5 Jenkins White, again, here we've looked at a part of
6 the city where the public housing has completely gone
7 away. They've been in a process of that for the last
8 couple of years, and now we don't have any students
9 where they were just two years ago. And right now, no
10 plans of -- they're not going to reinvest in it anytime
11 soon.

12 First and foremost, the Jenkins-White property is
13 going to stay as a part of the district property. And
14 it has to. Because the first thing that could happen
15 in a city like Augusta is that part of the city could
16 come back again. We want to make sure we have space
17 for that. Okay? And so that property will remain part
18 of the Richmond County School Board.

19 Now, overall, the shifts -- there's a lot of
20 shifts out of Jenkins-White, and the reason for that is
21 that over time, the Jenkins-White, kind of, boundary
22 has taken a lot of different moves. Historically,
23 you've been here a while. But over the last forty
24 years, it's been offline. It's been online. It's kind
25 of moved around a little bit.

1 But what we've tried to do is we've tried to
2 reassign students to their closest neighborhood school.
3 And as you do that, you can see that the students are
4 going to go to different schools in this case. They'll
5 go to Hains, they'll go to Hornsby Elementary [sic],
6 they'll go to Wilkinson Gardens, and some will go to
7 Lamar-Milledge.

8 And so as you move forward with this, I'm just
9 going to take you through part of it. Part of the
10 group that will go into the Hains boundary are going to
11 be this NPU-41. And you can see that there's
12 twenty-nine kids, or about thirty pre-K five kids that
13 will move to that boundary. And so Hains will gain
14 thirty kids into the facility.

15 In the Hornsby, you see there's sixty pre-K kids,
16 and there's one of those NPUs that occur. And it's
17 just a small piece. And what's interesting about the
18 planning units out here is, regardless of how small the
19 planning unit might look, a really small planning unit
20 can have a lot more kids in it just because of where
21 the housing is. And so there will be sixty kids that
22 will go to Hornsby Elementary. Okay?

23 Now, the other piece to this is that, remember
24 that chart I showed you when it showed how many kids in
25 a building like an elementary school under four fifty,

1 what we get out of this is Hornsby and Hains go to a
2 higher enrollment that secures their enrollment for a
3 really long time. We've got the elementary schools,
4 just so you know this. That hard process that this
5 community went through about a year and a half ago. At
6 the elementary grade level, we're pretty much where we
7 can be.

8 We're gonna -- the future ESPLOST construction
9 programs are going to talk about reinvestment and
10 rebuilding elementary schools, but they're not going to
11 talk necessarily about school closure anymore because
12 we've got the capacity where we need the capacity to
13 be. And we've got some room for growth out there. But
14 the key is that we had to get those enrollments to
15 that, and try to get them to that four-fifty number to
16 maintain that solid enrollment and funding for each
17 school.

18 So at Hornsby, they get sixty students. Then into
19 Lamar-Milledge, there's about eighty-eight students
20 from that area. And, again, we have some more in here
21 that will go from Hornsby into Lamar-Milledge. We had
22 to do a domino -- and, again, what you find in this is
23 that, and what we found in this, is that we're finding
24 several students after this move will actually be
25 closer to the new elementary school than they are

1 currently today. There's some that won't, but there's
2 a lot that will be closer just because of how the
3 boundaries for Jenkins-White have been made over time,
4 and where those other elementary schools are located.
5 And then finally, into Wilkinson Gardens, we've got
6 ninety-nine students that are going to go into the
7 Wilkinson Gardens out of that.

8 Now, once again, this is based on this year's
9 student enrollment. And what this year's student
10 enrollment still shows are some students that live in
11 that housing development that has been closed down. It
12 includes those kids still, but they've already moved.
13 There's no housing there left. So they're already
14 somewhere else. They've been displaced because of
15 housing. And so, again, there's a lot of movement
16 here. And if anybody's here from Jenkins-White tonight
17 and part of that family, stay with us tonight if you
18 can -- if you want to a little bit, and we can walk you
19 through and go to the school locator with you and help
20 you, kind of, navigate that.

21 This is, to me, this Jenkins-White one, one of the
22 reasons that we waited another year on Jenkins-White
23 was because of the complexity of this move. Ideally,
24 when you do something like this for an elementary
25 school, you want to try to move as many of those kids

1 together as you can. And the fact of the matter is the
2 way this boundary's been kind of beat up over time and
3 the historical, kind of, reconstitution of it, and it's
4 not the last school board or the school board before
5 that, it's kind of fifty years of the district just
6 kind of adjusting. This finds a way to get those
7 students close to those schools as close as they can,
8 but it does redistribute to four different elementary
9 schools.

10 And, folks, I'm going to tell you, it's not ideal.
11 But we felt like we would do a disservice if we brought
12 kids all the way from the southern part of Jenkins to
13 an elementary school way across, and crossing schools
14 to get there.

15 And so, once again, students -- and so you know
16 this, when students are reassigned to a boundary,
17 students have opportunities for reassignment if they
18 want. It's House Bill 251 that allows students to
19 apply for transfers if they want to. And I know that
20 doesn't happen in a lot of elementary schools, but if
21 they find that programmatically or more geographically
22 or even more parents work, then they should take
23 advantage of figuring out if you want reassignment.
24 Okay? And the board will help you with that. Okay?
25 The school district will help you with that.

1 So we'll move on to Josey and the Murphey
2 conversation also. And we covered a lot of this today,
3 but I want to be sure -- and we're not going to cover
4 everything we covered today, but I want to give you
5 some of the existing things that are out there. So the
6 board decision and the recommendation in December '24
7 was to take Josey High School and turn it into a
8 comprehensive high school focused on career and
9 technical education. But also be a comprehensive high
10 school.

11 And a comprehensive high school means it would act
12 like any other high school. And the difference between
13 this comprehensive career and college academy and high
14 school, the difference is that this school would not be
15 a school that is a test-in school. It'll be a school
16 of interest. If students want to attend it, they can
17 attend it. But here's the difference is that the idea
18 is that it's going to become a district-wide, which
19 means the boundaries will go away. But that doesn't
20 mean that the Josey community can't go to it. They're
21 right here. And so it becomes just a district-wide
22 boundary instead of a local boundary in the effort to
23 make sure that the enrollment on this campus is going
24 to be a sustainable enrollment over time, and offer
25 state-of-the-art programs that students can be a part

1 of.

2 And so there's a lot of thought and curriculum
3 discussion going in right now about what kind of
4 staffing the programs that are going to be implemented.
5 And those are going to be online for you to see. But
6 there are ideas and already partnerships out there.
7 Things like the early childhood program will have a
8 daycare center -- a functional daycare center for the
9 community. The hospitality place will have a front of
10 the store and back of the store restaurant for the
11 community to use where students are learning real-life
12 application of these career skills. And the list goes
13 on and on. And if you want to see there is a --
14 actually, if you want to come up here, you can look at
15 what the floor plan concept looks like.

16 But in order to do this, the part that will be the
17 comprehensive high school part will be the Josey, and
18 will be the Murphey Middle School section. And so that
19 will become the classroom component of this career
20 center at the Josey School.

21 And so as that happens, we know that this is where
22 the tough part happens, is that we have to get through
23 this transition. And the students in the building,
24 they are impacted most. Because right now, if the
25 plan, the way it's proposed is that the students that

1 are in there today, and so those rising ninth, tenth,
2 and eleventh graders. The twelfth graders will
3 graduate. So there are three grades that remain next
4 year, will be reassigned to another high school. And I
5 know that's the tough part here.

6 Now we've had a lot of discussion around this, and
7 we've had a lot of discussion in the noon meeting today
8 about this. Are there other alternatives we can
9 explore? And we will explore some alternatives. We
10 had questions about, can you leave all of them together
11 and take them to one school? Can you just keep them
12 together and graduate them out? We were asked those
13 questions to explore those questions. And so know that
14 we are working on that. Even the board members are
15 requesting that kind of information to make sure that
16 we make the right decision in this transition time.
17 It's going to take two years to reconstruct this school
18 building.

19 Now, dispelling any rumors. The football stadium
20 is not going away. Actually, you're getting a new turf
21 field. Why (unintelligible) a new turf field? The
22 football stadium stays. The basketball arena stay.
23 All of the infrastructure for athletics stays here.
24 Now, the question about athletics is still going to be
25 there, but the district has made clear for this, and I

1 want to make it very clear, that the intent is, how do
2 you do athletics at a comprehensive career and
3 technical high school? Because we have the
4 infrastructure to do it. But working with the students
5 in the community to determine what athletics looks like
6 for the future of Josey. Basketball teams, football
7 teams, soccer teams, or whatever it is. But how do you
8 make it so that tradition and legacy of athletics at
9 Josey still remains? Okay? And, so, part of that is
10 having that discussion. But in these two years of new
11 construction, right now, the students would go to the
12 other schools.

13 Now, again, like I said today, we heard some
14 suggestions on, can we explore other alternatives? And
15 in the next few weeks, we're going to do just that.
16 We're going to see if there's anything we can do to do
17 that. Okay? So we're going to explore the idea,
18 because in the Murphey Middle School, we have about a
19 six hundred and fifty capacity in that building, and
20 that will hold it.

21 But one thing that we shared with the group, just
22 to be clear, is that if we just, kind of, graduate them
23 out, like if we take them to one building and just have
24 tenth, eleventh, and twelfth next year, and then the
25 following year just have eleventh and twelfth, and then

1 the last year just have twelfth grade, what the concern
2 is, is that by the time you get down to two hundred or
3 two hundred and fifty kids, those students don't have
4 the teams, the clubs, and all of that, when it's just a
5 twelfth grade school. So the idea was that these
6 students do still have the programmatic opportunities
7 as you move forward.

8 Now, much like the Board President said, none of
9 these decisions are finalized, and we're here to hear
10 those concerns. Okay? But as I show you tonight,
11 where those reassignments go, that's based on what
12 we're looking at tonight, and as you look forward. So
13 I think the easiest way to explain the reassignment of
14 Murphey and Josey High School kids that will be those
15 rising kids, so next year's, like, seventh and eighth
16 graders at Murphey, where they go? Or next year's
17 tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders, that if they live
18 in the Bayvale Elementary Boundary, but attend Murphey
19 or Josey, so in that Bayvale Elementary Boundary.
20 Because remember high school boundaries are made up of
21 elementary boundaries. If they live in that Bayvale,
22 the new feeder will be, the students that go from
23 Murphey will go to the brand new Langford Tutt
24 building. A brand new facility. Just built. And then
25 that feeder then would go to ARC.

1 Students that live in the Wheelless Road feeder,
2 would change to the Richmond Hill Butler High School.
3 And then those in Wilkinson Gardens boundary, would
4 then feed into the Hornsby Laney High School.

5 And so what this does, is it redistributes those
6 students into those schools. And so I think what
7 happens here is our minds go to a lot of different
8 things about programs the kids are already in, and
9 athletics that they're already in. Look, just as
10 important in high school, your friend network and
11 social network you're in, those are important aspects
12 too. And so keeping in mind that when a district goes
13 through, and let's talk about athletics just for a
14 second, that when the district goes through a boundary
15 change -- a mandated boundary change, any athlete that
16 walks into that school in a district mandated change is
17 automatically eligible. They don't have to take a year
18 off. And I know that's a concern for a lot of people,
19 because when students transfer as an athlete in a
20 traditional way, they have to sit out a year. Not in
21 this case. They can participate in the following year.
22 So that's not the case. Incoming freshman, ninth
23 graders, they can go wherever they want anyway, they
24 don't become ineligible because it's their first year
25 of eligibility.

1 And so the new feeders kind of look like this, and
2 I'm not going to spend a lot of time on that, but as
3 you can see, one of the goals of this district was to
4 make sure that we keep whole elementaries together
5 going into middle schools and whole middle schools
6 going into high schools. We don't want to take an
7 elementary school and split it into two middle schools.
8 We're trying to keep those cohorts together as best we
9 can.

10 But in the student transition, this is kind of a
11 summary of the schools they would go to in what we're
12 presenting tonight. And, again, what we want to hear
13 about is some of those concerns or questions you might
14 have about those. But understanding that additional
15 resources for transition will be there. The district
16 is going to make the investment in these transition
17 years for services -- student services, for security --
18 for our resource officers, and for guidance counselors.
19 They're going to make those investments to get through
20 the transition where necessary.

21 And then for faculty and staff, I know this is a
22 big concern. We have staff that have been in these
23 schools for a really long time. And so a lot of times,
24 that's as impactful as student transition. Teacher
25 transition can be that. And it can be stressful. But

1 Richmond County has a continued need for the staff that
2 they have. There's always attrition in a district,
3 right? But there's still a need to serve all the kids.

4 Now, how they get funded when they get put
5 together looks different. But putting the teachers all
6 in one building and having the right enrollment gets
7 them there. Staff, as best we can, will predominantly
8 follow the student -- and so as best we can,
9 distribute. So, programmatically, our kids are seeing
10 teachers that they've seen in the past. They're also
11 committed to trying as best they can to maintain the
12 continuity that's there.

13 And, again, it's kind of difficult in a couple of
14 years of transition of that. Also, so what happens is
15 that the Board of Education hosts an internal job fair
16 for those teachers. They get a selection of where they
17 want to go. They're given -- right now the process is
18 they're given a top three choices. And they prioritize
19 based on where the faculty wants to go or follow. So
20 it's going to be based on programmatically about where
21 they go, and so in serving the kids. And that's,
22 ultimately, what that's about. Making sure the staff
23 is where the kids are, and to serve the kids.

24 So if you look at what happens next to the
25 facilities, construction would happen and start

1 immediately this summer. So those of you who aren't
2 familiar with what the plan is for the Josey campus, is
3 that the existing high school building, the Marion
4 Barnes would stay. Okay? It's going to remain open.
5 The Murphey building stays. The gymnasium stay. And
6 then the competition gym and the Murphey gym stay in
7 there. And then there's an expansion of cafeteria. So
8 all of this (indicating) front of the building is all
9 going to be brand new. So the front of the building is
10 all brand new and the old high school classrooms and
11 all that comes down. And that starts immediately.

12 So the construction is thought to start on June 1.
13 And if we don't meet our construction date for that,
14 the intent is to get this building open by the fall of
15 2028. Two years. Now, that's an ambitious goal. And
16 it has to happen on a June 1 start date.

17 And so as you go through some of this, some of the
18 questions that we get asked about -- well, can you just
19 leave the Josey component and the Murphey here? Well,
20 right now, we have forty-three million dollars invested
21 into this site for the Josey community. Forty three
22 million that will go into this school building. And
23 so -- and there's also some money in there for some
24 touch up of the Murphey space, although it's not that
25 old. To make sure that space is just refreshed to meet

1 the new building.

2 But if we were to keep both on campus, we would
3 need more classrooms to the tune of twenty- to
4 thirty-more million dollars. And so that's why the
5 Murphey section of the building becomes an important
6 part of the comprehensive high school discussion in
7 this. But in order to make that work, and stay within
8 the SPLOST dollars that you voted for, that is a
9 schedule to get to where we need to get to.

10 So I'm not going to make you look at the timeline,
11 but the timeline is outlined in this presentation.
12 It's online, and you can see, kind of, right now where
13 the plan is to start this to happen.

14 So as we look at the next few weeks, I guess,
15 coming up here is that we have more community hearings,
16 we've got a community meeting on the twenty-sixth for
17 the Barton Chapel community. Building a new
18 elementary, but consolidating elementaries over by
19 Barton Chapel. On the twenty-seventh is another full
20 district meeting. I believe that's at the board
21 office. Is that right? So that one's at the board
22 office on the twenty-seventh to come back if you want
23 to get more questions or more concerns, come back to
24 that twenty-seventh meeting.

25 The board has been under review. We showed a

1 first version to the board on the seventh of December
2 in their public meeting. So they've seen this. They
3 know what the timeline is. They will review those into
4 February to make a decision in February unless they
5 decide they can't make a decision yet and look a little
6 further if they have to. And, so, that's the current
7 plan as the board starts to look at this.

8 The other thing that will be taking place is that
9 in February -- February through November, the district
10 has already established and are inviting community
11 members into what we're calling a community high school
12 task force. And that community high school task force
13 over the next eight or ten months, sole task is to
14 figure out what high schools are going to look like
15 based on this cornerstone of this careering college of
16 Josey. What the district's going to look like from a
17 high school perspective in the future.

18 And so the board is going to work with community
19 members, and come back out to the community to talk
20 about what the future of high schools look like in
21 Richmond County. Because there's still a big
22 discussion to have there. We're still not getting all
23 of the programs the kids will need. We still need to
24 get more resources into these buildings. And so we
25 need to get the high schools where they need to be.

1 This site right here (indicating) in the Josey
2 community is a cornerstone of that, which is the reason
3 why the forty-three million dollars are going here.
4 It's because we believe, to our core, that this is the
5 premise of how high schools can look in the future.
6 And so this has to be a critical part of our
7 discussion, even as we move forward. And it's intended
8 to get this campus back to that eight-hundred thousand
9 student enrollment to keep this site, and to keep Josey
10 right where it's been for years. And so it's just
11 going to have a broader look and a deeper program
12 offering for the students in this area and for the
13 district.

14 So as we look at that, remember that this district
15 is going to continue to plan. They're never going to
16 stop planning. They're never going to stop looking at
17 things. And some will be a lot better than the results
18 of having to close buildings. The goal is that we need
19 to change the conversation as we reinvest in these
20 buildings. What are we going to give more to the kids?
21 And so we've got to get to that point, though. This
22 community has been through the hard part. And the next
23 part is implementation. When we get through this, this
24 district is going to be set from a facility standpoint,
25 and you can focus where we all need to focus. Back in

1 the programs, back in the classrooms, and back with the
2 kids. And where it should be all the time.

3 So as we look at this -- I'm going to turn it back
4 over to Michael and he's going to, kind of, walk you
5 through the public comment piece. And how we're going
6 to go through Q&A tonight. And I'm going to -- again,
7 much like today, I'm going to answer questions when I
8 can. But I've got experts here that can answer
9 questions. I think in some of this, you're going to
10 see that we're just going to hear some comments and
11 questions that we might not be able to respond to right
12 now, but we're going to keep a frequently asked
13 questions and record all of it to make sure we get
14 those answers back.

15 So I'm going to turn it over to you. Are you
16 ready?

17 MR. MYERS: Yes.

18 MR. RICHTER: Are you good? And he's going to
19 help facilitate how we go through that. So thanks
20 again for being here. Thanks for, kind of, the
21 patience of walking through this with me. And I look
22 forward to the questions and comments that we're going
23 to hear.

24 MR. MYERS: Thanks, Tracy. Real quick, if anybody
25 still has comment cards that they would like to turn

1 in, put them up. We're going to have people come
2 around and get them. We have some already. But is
3 there anybody else that has comment cards? That way we
4 can know who to recognize as far as getting in comments
5 and questions. We'll take care of that. Now, anybody
6 else?

7 If you still need a comment card, there's someone
8 in the back. You can raise your hand so I can get one
9 to you. We can take care of that as well. Thank you
10 so much. All right. We're wrapping, getting it taken
11 care of. She's handing it to me.

12 Oh, that's a part of the comments -- comment
13 cards. That's why -- that way we can call people up.
14 Yes, sir. That way I can have some direction and
15 reference to. She's passed them out right there. That
16 way we can have some direction and reference to getting
17 through the comments and things to that effect. We're
18 going to go ahead and get started.

19 There is a Ms. Barbara -- and I also ask that you
20 come up here. That way we can try to make sure that
21 the court recorder has the opportunity to be able to
22 record. But let me make sure I do this. As it relates
23 to public comments guidelines. Help me -- listen, we
24 need everyone's help with this. All right. Check it
25 out. Comment cards required. That's a big thing.

1 That's why we're asking for you to make sure you do
2 this. To speak, you must complete and submit a public
3 comment card.

4 We also ask one opportunity per person. Each
5 individual may speak once during the meeting. Focus on
6 the plan. All right. I understand we are all here.
7 We're all passionate about what's going on in our
8 community. We all want to speak from the heart. But
9 let's make sure we understand that at the end of the
10 day, we're all here because of the children. All
11 right. Comments should address the presented plan.
12 Off-topic remarks may be ended by the moderator. We're
13 trying not to make this a personal attack on anyone.

14 Respectful conduct. Please, no shouting, no
15 personal attacks, or disruptive behavior. Please
16 remain courteous to all participants. We also ask that
17 you use the microphone. This is very important. That
18 way we can make sure that all this stuff is recorded.
19 And as it relates to questions and comments, if
20 something is not answered, we're going to provide you
21 with a QR code, email address, and any information so
22 that you will be able to submit your question. We have
23 a link online that provides you with an opportunity to
24 drop a question in. Inside that question, the
25 frequently asked questions will remain up. We're going

1 to make sure that people have an opportunity to see
2 what people have asked, things that people want to
3 discuss. If it's a personal question, those should be
4 directed -- they have an email for that direction.
5 You're going to hear from us. After the meeting,
6 there's plenty of staff here. We're going to stay as
7 long as we need to, to speak to people individually.

8 This afternoon at lunch, we started at twelve, and
9 some of us didn't leave until after three. Right.
10 Because we wanted to make sure we spoke to everyone
11 that wanted to ask a question. A lot of people had
12 direct questions. Some specific questions, especially,
13 when it came to their personal student. So those
14 questions won't go up online because that's just you.
15 That's a personal question. So we want to make sure
16 that we can address those things individually.

17 I'm here to enforce the rules, and to make sure
18 that we are doing what's needed to get through us --
19 through this evening. Again, some comments we will
20 respond to immediately. Tracy is here. We have some
21 people here that are industry professionals that are
22 going to be helpful to us in that manner. Okay?

23 Ms. Thomas -- Barbara Thomas. Ms. Thomas, you're
24 number one. Oh, yeah. Oh, you just want to answer?
25 Okay. So she just wants me to read her question. Her

1 question is, Will the new Josey High have an athletic
2 department and a music department, like band and
3 chorus?

4 MR. RICHTER: Let me get this. Hold on. Is that
5 on? Is that good? All right. Well, I'm just going to
6 do this. It's a great question because I think that's
7 where we get a lot of questions. It's a comprehensive
8 high school. Arts and athletics will be a part of it.
9 And the reason we haven't been -- we haven't, kind of,
10 gone out and said which ones. The intent is to work
11 with the community to do that. So it's a comprehensive
12 high school that's going to have fine arts and it's
13 going to have some athletics, whatever the athletics
14 look like. So I think it's a great question. Thank
15 you for that.

16 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible.)

17 MR. RICHTER: What's that?

18 MR. MYERS: Here's another mic.

19 MR. RICHTER: (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

20 MR. MYERS: (Unintelligible cross-talk.) What is
21 the answer?

22 MR. RICHTER: Oh, so, okay. You didn't hear it?
23 Okay. There will be athletics. There will be fine
24 arts.

25 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible.)

1 MR. RICHTER: I'm sorry. I couldn't hear. Band.
2 Thank you.

3 Yeah. It's a comprehensive high school. So we
4 want to make sure that all those offerings are for all
5 kids as you walk in.

6 MR. MYERS: And I don't want to mess this up.
7 Last name, Melton. I can't understand the first name.
8 Last name Melton. Who wants to make a comment? Last
9 name Melton. Say it again.

10 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Lagon (phonetic).

11 MR. MYERS: Lagon. Oh, come on.

12 MR. RICHTER: It looks like Michael Hollis will be
13 next. Just to kind of wrap it up.

14 MR. MELTON: I don't have much to say. I'm
15 offended because you keep saying Josey. That's Thomas
16 Walter -- Dr. Thomas Walter Josey. Let's stand for
17 that. You keep saying Josey. This is Dr. Thomas Walter
18 Josey. I'm going to pass this on to Mr. J.R. Riley.
19 He's a benefit to our community. He supports the
20 school. I want him to speak on my behalf.

21 MR. RILEY: I just want to say one thing. Schools
22 in the black community get neglected. When they rezone
23 the students, they rezone all of the students from
24 Laney and Josey. All the students went to Richmond
25 from the bottom. They bypassed Laney and went to

1 Richmond. All the students out in West Augusta, out
2 where I live at, they bypassed Josey, and they went to
3 Richmond. Now, they're going to Westside.
4 (Unintelligible). Seems like they're trying to --
5 Josey's got a history. It will no longer be a high
6 school. We won't have nothing to see about Josey. But
7 Josey is the second black school in Richmond County.
8 Josey's got more rank over Glenn Hill, Butler, and all
9 the rest of them. So if you don't speak up now. When
10 you go to the polls, remember the people who represent
11 you. Because they ain't doing what they're doing.
12 They ain't doing their jobs. They're just rubber
13 stamping everything. So they done rubber stamped Josey
14 out. So you can forget about it. Don't care what your
15 compliments be tonight. Those seven black people that
16 you got to represent you, ain't about nothing.

17 MR. MYERS: Mr. Hollis. Michael. Is that you?
18 Come on. Hold on one second, Mr. Hollis. Let me get
19 Tracy to clarify something. He wanted to clarify
20 athletics.

21 MR. RICHTER: I think one of the things I wanted
22 to clarify is that. We want to be sure -- and the
23 reason there's no specifics on athletics right now. We
24 really want it to be student driven. Okay? And so
25 that, kind of, input about what it's going to look

1 like, and everything. But remember the infrastructure
2 is still here for all of it. And so we want it to be a
3 student driven discussion about what this looks like.
4 And so including those students in those conversations.
5 About what this is going to look like is an important
6 piece to this.

7 MR. HOLLIS: How you doing? My name is Michael
8 Hollis. I live in West Augusta also. My concerns are
9 during the transition period from Jenkins-White to
10 Murphey, where is -- is there going to be a liaison?
11 To make it sure that these children -- students, have a
12 smooth transition. Also, what are we going to do with
13 the special ed department? When they're not getting
14 their services now. How are you going to fund that?
15 That's my concerns.

16 MR. RICHTER: Okay. So let me answer that. I
17 mean, the first question. I will tell you that one of
18 the reasons that you don't get all the special ed
19 services is because it's all this -- they're stretched
20 so thin. We're serving way too many buildings to get
21 our teachers together to serve our special education
22 needs. And that's a fact. A lot of school districts
23 deal with that. So one of the ideas is if you can get
24 more students together (unintelligible) your teachers
25 can support the program. So the idea is to pay

1 attention to special ed. Along with every other
2 program. Especially special ed. So I think that's a
3 great question.

4 The second thing is will there be a liaison. So I
5 think the district in last years -- because remember
6 they closed buildings last year too. One of the things
7 the district did was went to every school building, and
8 even in the receiving schools, was to make sure that
9 there was clear communication about what they were
10 getting in the new buildings, how transportation was
11 going to work, and the staffing that was going to be in
12 those buildings. And so there will be a direct effort
13 to those schools and those students to do that. So the
14 answer is yes.

15 MR. MYERS: So real quick, let me address that.
16 Let me address that last part in reference to the
17 liaison part. So in recent days, in speaking with the
18 school board members, one of the main concerns was
19 making sure that there was a level of communication if
20 and when these projects decide to go forward.
21 Understand this, they are -- and let me speak very
22 frankly and freely in reference to what they have
23 addressed and said. They are going to make sure there
24 is open communication if this happens. To keep people
25 informed of what's happening next. And making sure

1 there are people in schools, so that the students
2 understand what happens next, and where they go, and
3 how it moves forward. This was one of the top
4 priorities if this was to happen. Remember this is
5 still a proposed project. It's still a plan. That is
6 a priority moving forward. So to answer that question,
7 absolutely. That is going to happen. That is top
8 priority. Remember, students first. This is a top
9 priority for them. So that is definitely something
10 that is going to happen. We want to make sure that
11 moves forward. All right. Ronald Young.

12 MR. YOUNG: Thank you sir. I notice that my
13 origins are being disappeared from me. I originated
14 from the old Leavy-White in the 60's. And I originated
15 from the Josey in '75. I just observed fifty years
16 last year. Now, what was stated by Mr. Myers has
17 concrete. I've heard enough to see that the gentleman
18 right here that was talking the stats, and all that. I
19 want to know, like the other gentleman said, what's
20 going to be my name right here in the next two years?
21 What's going to be my name? Tell me my name.

22 MR. RICHTER: All right. So what was proposed
23 today, and I will tell you this is -- let me take you
24 through the lunch meeting today. Okay? I'm with you.
25 So I have to answer it this way because it's the same

1 thing I walked the community through today. I don't
2 want to -- I don't want to get the message different.
3 Okay? I need to be consistent.

4 So right now, and we got pushback on this to
5 re-explore this. That according to board policy,
6 whether is's been practiced in the past or not.
7 According to board policy, there is a naming committee
8 that comes out of the community. Okay? So the
9 community goes through a naming effort. It's not --
10 obviously, the recommendation from the community will
11 be. T.W. Josey that comes out, but it's up to the
12 community to get that. It's like checking the box on
13 board policy. A lot of the alumni today were talking
14 to us about, Can we just say it's going to be the name
15 it is today? And so that's the message I'm taking back
16 to the board today. Okay? So we had that discussion
17 today, and that's what was delivered today.

18 According to board policy, you have to have the
19 committee. But they -- they were very clear today. Can
20 we waive that and just go forward with the name? So we
21 got that from today.

22 MR. YOUNG: To the community, and that commission,
23 let me just say it like this, Thomas Walter Josey
24 Comprehensive High school. We can save some money. We
25 might have more meetings. And I know that we're going

1 for social economic right here in this nation. But
2 just save some time, and some money. Thomas Walter
3 Josey Comprehensive High School.

4 MR. MYERS: All right. Dr. Williams. His card
5 was next up here.

6 Dr. Williams: First of all, I thank you for the
7 opportunity to stand here. And I'm glad I'm here, and
8 the name should be without a doubt, Thomas Walter Josey
9 School.

10 Let me give you a little bit of history. I hear
11 the stats, and I hear how we can make anything sound
12 anyway we want it to sound. I get that. I've been
13 around enough people to know that you can compile some
14 numbers or some information, and make it seem whatever.
15 I hear there's not enough students. I heard there's
16 not enough money. The federal government's not going
17 to do that. But let me go back and remind us that we
18 closed (unintelligible) Elementary School. Along with
19 the other school on top of the hill. We closed several
20 schools in the inner city. And I heard this young man
21 say that children are not being born, we're not raising
22 any children out of these communities. Well, my term
23 with the Augusta Commission, I learned that the city is
24 not doing anything with the school board to generate no
25 families to come back in here.

1 First of all, let's talk real talk. First of all,
2 in order for people to move back into their
3 community -- you can't expect for a graduate of T.W.
4 Josey or any other school to come out of the hood, and
5 then go back into the hood when you're living like you
6 were when I left there.

7 Now, there are some homes now that they're going
8 to build Habitat for Humanity houses on Grand
9 Boulevard. I didn't even go to the meeting because I
10 was so upset, and I knew I couldn't be quiet. I'm not
11 against Habitat for Humanity, but if you build a
12 Habitat for Humanity community, who else is going to
13 build something else besides that back in there. So
14 you're keeping the people where they been all the time.
15 And that's down. If we want to grow the system, we
16 want to grow the student in the school, we got to put
17 some effort back into the school. You're getting to
18 move -- don't let them move a shotgun house and move
19 back in that same shotgun house (unintelligible). It's
20 as if Augusta is going down.

21 I had a call from someone at the August Chronicle
22 and they said the same thing this gentleman said. He
23 said Augusta was going down. He said people are moving
24 from Augusta, and they're moving to other counties. So
25 I asked a question, I said, well, what are they doing

1 with the property they're moving from? Are they
2 selling it? Yeah, they're selling. I said, well, if
3 they're moving and they're selling it, how can they
4 keep going down? It's because they're selling to black
5 folks? He said, Oh, no that's not it. I said, well
6 wait a minute, you said they're moving. If they're
7 selling the property, and somebody's buying it, then it
8 had to be somebody else is moving in that same
9 property. But we're not investing anything in our kids
10 or our neighborhood to make the kids be the type of
11 kids we need to have.

12 I miss a lot of stuff, but I don't miss that. I
13 really wanted to make sure that the name is going to
14 stay. I know some changes are going to come, but the
15 name don't need to be brought up out of the community.
16 The name needs to remain the same. Why? Well, that's
17 history. If you change the name, you changing history.
18 Now we don't have very much no way, but those two
19 schools, in fact, Laney was the only school that we
20 could graduate from for many, many years. When they --
21 all I'm saying is that I appreciate what the board is
22 trying to do. I appreciate the changes are going to
23 come, but don't give me those figures and those --
24 those statistics you don't put together to make it
25 sound like we're doing something else. Listen, those

1 days are over with. We ain't farming no more. We
2 walked off the farm. We ain't on the farm no more.
3 You go to the farmer, tell us anything, we'll buy it.
4 We ain't buying that today. So all I'm saying is the
5 names ought to be Dr. Thomas Walter Josey Comprehensive
6 High School if it's going to be a name. That's all the
7 history we got. Everything else is gone. Everything
8 else is gone, and if we don't hold on to that, we don't
9 hold on to anything.

10 Now, I didn't like the fact that we brought in the
11 elementary school into a high school, but that
12 happened. Okay. We got -- if we don't say nothing,
13 you won't get nothing. And trust me, if you sit there
14 and let this meeting go and don't say nothing else,
15 they say -- and I heard Mike say, oh, we're gonna be
16 keeping you informed. But once the train get to
17 rolling, you can't stop it now because it's already
18 rolling. You better make sure you know what you're
19 doing. That's all I've got to say. Thank you.

20 MR. MYERS: So another question that came was;
21 what's going to happen to the JROTC program? Do you
22 want to address that? I know we somewhat addressed it
23 already, but I just want to make --

24 MR. RICHTER: Yeah. So I think on the program
25 side, again, in the reassignment idea is that the

1 program is offered in the new school to join that
2 junior ROTC. But, again, the intent for the
3 comprehensive high school is student-driven, is that
4 these schools that are comprehensive schools have
5 junior ROTCs. They have those kind of things. That's
6 a student-driven decision. That's a great decision.
7 Thank you for that. That come from you guys and I
8 appreciate that. And so again, the idea is that to get
9 through the construction period, again, of a
10 forty-three million dollar investment right here to
11 invest in this community. It's not to disinvest in
12 this community because you're right, housing is not
13 doing it. The school district's got to be the start.
14 And the impetus is forty-three million right in the
15 center of your neighborhood.

16 And I think that with that programmatically is to
17 keep those programs to keep kids in a career direction
18 like that. Much like that. And that's part of it.
19 So, you know, again, part of the programmatic drive of
20 this is giving the kids what they need to both not only
21 come out of this school as a comprehensive high school,
22 but the pathways that will be at this school are a high
23 school diploma. That they'll also be certified in
24 what, twelve different areas that we see. They can be
25 certified and career ready to go into those. They can

1 graduate in those programs with associate's degrees,
2 which means they can go to college and save two years
3 of college money. That's not becoming anymore
4 affordable. Those are the opportunities that come out
5 of this building.

6 And just very quickly, because I do want to
7 address the data thing, because I hear you. I don't
8 want to keep covering that either. My conversation
9 should be about kids. So I agree with you. But
10 sometimes what has happened is that we get emails,
11 we've gotten emails about just some information that we
12 had to just tell people where the information was.
13 So, but I appreciate that comment. So thanks for that.

14 ROTC? You're good. You're good. You're good.

15 LIEUTENANT BERRY: Good evening. I'm Lieutenant
16 Carl Berry. I'm the head of JROTC here, and we
17 presented the colors. I've been through a lot of
18 changes. I've seen five principals and I've been here
19 fourteen years and I'm, believe it or not, I'm the
20 longest serving teacher, aside from Mr. Tegnama
21 (phonetic) here at Josey. And I just want to say a few
22 things here just to clarify a few things, because I
23 can't remain silent.

24 Okay. Number one, Air Force tradition. I hear a
25 lot of tradition being talked about and in the Air

1 Force, we honor our traditions and legacies. Air Force
2 JROTC was brought here at the request of the Board of
3 Education, not the students, in 1970 because of the Augusta
4 riots. We brought in the first (unintelligible), my
5 predecessor, his name was Lieutenant Colonel Benson. He was
6 a World War II hero, a Korean hero, and Vietnam. Like
7 myself, three wars. I fought in three wars, Iraq,
8 Afghanistan, and Libya. Okay. Josey JROTC is the highest
9 performing JROTC in the county. And legacy is important.
10 Notice I'm
11 not wearing my Air Force JROTC uniform because I'm speaking
12 for myself. I'm also -- I don't want to advocate a
13 political decision. And the Air Force, as I, as all of you,
14 have a problem with closing down traditions. We're not
15 commies here. We don't close down traditions. JROTC is a
16 legacy unit. In the fourteen years that I've been here, we
17 have won four awards. Most recently in 2023, we won the
18 Distinguished Unit Award. Okay. We're going to have our
19 inspection next week. And if we're on track, we should get
20 another Distinguished Unit Award. Okay. Tradition.

21 In the Air Force, we don't close down legacy
22 units. We don't close down high performing units.
23 We don't. Josey, the high school is performing very well.
24 And the question on the data. Let's go with
25 numbers. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Josey's -- everyone maligns

1 us. I hear it. I hear it from everybody.
2 I hear it from the other schools. I hear the whispers. I
3 hear all the Snapchat. Okay. I hear it. It drives me nuts
4 because you're not working with the kids here.
5 I'm working with them every day. Okay. at Josey, we
6 perform. Okay. We do the most community service hours.
7 I've got the numbers. We're at six hundred and fifty, and
8 our goal is a thousand this year. We're well on our way to
9 exceed a thousand. A thousand community service hours.

10 Mr. Holt -- I think the other Mr. Holt from Paine
11 College, you keep asking me to do the colors at the
12 Paine College graduation, and we've done it. Okay. We
13 get lots of community service and things like that. In
14 fact, Josey ROTC goes to other counties because they
15 don't want to do it. They ask us. We did the Columbia
16 County CARES event, which was a high profile event with
17 Fox News there. We did it. Okay. We did the color
18 guard because they were all scared of it. We did it.

19 All right.

20 We've done other games and stuff like that in
21 addition to our own. And we get a lot of requests for
22 the parades. We have the parade this Saturday in the
23 cold. The Martin Luther King parade. Okay. One year
24 we couldn't do it because we went to NASA and saw a
25 launch that conflicted with that, and I got a lot of

1 phone calls and messages. Why aren't you at the Martin
2 Luther King parade?

3 Okay. Let's talk numbers. Let's talk numbers.
4 Josey increased their graduation rates. Josey increased the
5 CCRPI rate. We were one of a few schools -- one of
6 forty-three schools in the county to do that. Okay. We
7 also increased our reading and math scores. And our CTA --
8 our fine arts, you guys
9 increased four percent. You're one of the leaders in the
10 increase of the fine arts graduation.

11 Okay. Let's also talk numbers. Josey, CTA, which
12 we followed (unintelligible) CTA. Okay. CTA has a
13 ninety-eight percent graduate rate. Do you want to
14 know what Josey JROTC'S graduation rate is within Josey
15 JROTC? One hundred percent. Do you want to know how
16 long it's been one hundred percent? Fourteen years.

17 Okay. My other thing I have to say right here is
18 this. Facts. The information presented -- the
19 information presented was inaccurate. It was
20 inaccurate. Okay. For this is the law. And I'm
21 surprised you guys -- the information is inaccurate,
22 and that's what I don't like. I don't like half-truths
23 being presented as the truth. According to the law,
24 excuse me, guys. Okay. According to the law, you are
25 supposed to have two JROTC instructors irregardless of

1 size. Irregardless of size, you're supposed to have
2 two JROTC instructors. This was presented that,
3 well, you only got one. You only got one. We have two now.
4 In fact, my associate is an alumni of Josey. So, that's
5 inaccurate information.

6 Now -- now, the other inaccurate information that
7 just gets is I don't like it where, you know, closure
8 is they're going to say they're just going to reassign
9 us. Have you talked to the Air Force about this? Have
10 you talked to me? No, it hasn't happened. Now, this
11 is a conversation that the Air Force needs to know
12 about because they're expecting to come to our good
13 unit and keep it going. Okay. So that's all I have to
14 say with regarding that.

15 Now, you said in your briefing -- huh? Keep
16 going? All right. Okay. All right. So -- so no
17 one's talked to me. In fact, if you close down Josey
18 High School, I'm out of a job. But I would like to say
19 that, you know, every morning I wake up and everyone
20 says you got to find your why. Well, I found my why.
21 Okay. I have a hundred percent graduation rate for the
22 last fourteen years of my kids. The salutatorian or
23 the valedictorian, one or the other comes from Josey JROTC.
24 Okay. So when I looked at that and I saw that my areas
25 could be turned into a welding shop, naturally, I'm curious.

1 You say declining enrollments. You say we need to
2 invest in bricks and mortar. You say inequitable
3 program distribution or inequitable program. And,
4 well, I'm sorry, I'm old school, but those are commie
5 terms. But let's talk that. Let's talk that. Okay.
6 One of the reasons we made all these increases in our
7 academics, in our math scores, in our reading, our
8 CCRPI, and all that is because the population is kind
9 of relatively small. We have small classrooms, not too
10 small, but I've been around. I wander the halls. Any
11 parent knows that I got my megaphone. I'm doing bus
12 duty in the morning and bus duty in the afternoon, but
13 we want this like twenty to a classroom or maybe around
14 there.

15 If you want to have what you propose to have full
16 enrollment, thirty or more kids, the legal limit in
17 Georgia is twenty-eight per classroom in high school.
18 You can't teach. You're disciplining. You're babysitting.
19 You're not teaching. We are teaching. What's that? Keep
20 going? Okay. So in answer, you need to get your facts
21 correct because it's inaccurate that you didn't talk to
22 TRTC. So there you go.

23 MR. MYERS: Thank you very much. Another question
24 that was brought up was if the company -- and this was
25 addressed in reference to rebuilding the school here,

1 if they're willing to rebuild the school to provide new
2 pathways, the question says why are they not willing to
3 still leave the name? That's your question, Tawanda.

4 MS. HIGGS-HARRIS: My name is
5 Tawanda Higgs-Harris. I graduated in the class of
6 2001. A lot of this is mainly about a name because if
7 they're willing -- okay, grant it, we do need a new
8 building. That is true. I do agree. However, when I
9 attended this school and when my brother attended and
10 he graduated in '88, we had a fully functioning
11 daycare. We had a fully functioning cosmetology
12 center. We had all of these things. Now, in addition,
13 you can add the other pathways and I get that, but why
14 are you trying to -- it seems like the name is the only
15 problem. How are you going to guarantee enrollment
16 with the new infrastructure? How is that going to
17 work?

18 My second question, if, again, this is already a
19 comprehensive high school and it just seems like it's
20 already just the name that's an issue, why don't you
21 move the students? When you said that they were
22 asking about the students ninth, that's here now, ninth
23 through twelfth, to be put into a facility and graduated out
24 until the ninth graders or twelfth graders. If you're going
25 to do that, won't the new school be built during that time

1 when the ninth
2 graders or twelfth graders -- or when the tenth graders are
3 eleventh graders?

4 MR. RICHTER: Yes. I think that's a great
5 question for clarification, and I want to make sure I'm
6 clear on that one. So remember, the school becomes a
7 district-wide boundary. Okay? Which means those
8 students that are entering next year, we want the
9 district-wide, I'm sorry, get up here so you can hear
10 me. No, you're fine. You can stay here because I'll
11 talk to you. It wants to be a district-wide program
12 and those comprehensive programs -- because you're
13 right. I heard the comment about we used to have a
14 daycare and we used to have all of that. I think what's
15 happened is that the long-term vision maybe it wasn't there.
16 We need the daycare. It shouldn't have never been taken
17 away probably. We needed the culinary arts, we needed all
18 those programs to stay in line and we did. So again, part
19 of it is going back and saying, you know what, we need them
20 and that's how we're going to get kids here. We know that
21 there's programs of interest that are listed in these
22 certifications that kids from other schools want to come to.
23 Okay?

24 And what's restricting them right now is some of
25 those programs are going to get them to test you.

1 We're not making it a test. Like, RCTC, it's a test to
2 get into that school. It's not a test. This is a
3 school of interest. If you want to come here, you come
4 here. So that's a big difference in the two. There's
5 no restriction to come in here and the
6 comprehensiveness is just a deeper career pathway if
7 they want that with a comprehensive school, but more
8 pathways for career and college and to get more kids in
9 this building.

10 MS. HIGGS-HARRIS: So why not just add the extra
11 pathways and just keep -- get a new building?

12 MR. RICHTER: Well, her question is --

13 MS. HIGGS-HARRIS: Are they willing not to pay for
14 that because of the name?

15 MR. RICHTER: No. Okay. No, no. I think the
16 name is -- we've heard about the name. Her question
17 was, why not just keep it then? Because, first of all,
18 we won't have room when the building, this building has to
19 get -- not this building. Sorry. The main school. When we
20 rebuild the building, we have to tear that down, okay, so
21 there won't be a space for Marion Barnes. Yeah, and so with
22 that new facility, it'll have all the program spaces for
23 these programs. That's
24 what I'm saying.

25 MS. HIGGS-HARRIS: Okay. So why not move

1 everybody to (unintelligible).

2 MR. RICHTER: Okay. So her question -- and this
3 is a fair question because I think this is what we've
4 got to ask and I want to make sure that even the board
5 hears that because even some board members have asked
6 this question. So why not just move the entire school
7 population to an empty building and then bring them
8 back? A fair question and that's what we have to explore
9 based on the feedback that we've gotten,
10 okay? So that's a question we've got to ask and we're going
11 to address. We're going to talk about if we can do that and
12 if the school board has that direction too. And I want to
13 make sure that's on the table. So it's on the table for
14 that. So thanks for that.

15 MS. HIGGS-HARRIS: You're welcome.

16 MR. MYERS: I'm going to make sure that Tracy gets
17 the opportunity to address a couple of things, but I
18 wanted to make sure that this is one of the things that
19 was brought up is in reference to the naming, the
20 process, what has happened in the past -- hear me out.
21 Typically, the alumni community members, school staff,
22 district staff, local historians, if they're
23 available, they come together to form what the naming
24 committee is. That is what has happened -- the same thing
25 happened with Langford and Tutt. That's what goes on or

1 went on in the past with those things.

2 In reference to -- and Tracy may -- you may
3 address this. So and I thank you, Carl for your
4 service. I appreciate that. You made mention of the
5 slide, and I just want to make sure I say -- you said
6 that it said we only had one ROTC, one ROTC staff
7 member. It said that we were only allocated to have
8 one.

9 LIEUTENANT BERRY: (Unintelligible.)

10 MR. RICHTER: So, hold on, hold on. Let me just
11 answer the question because I hear what you're saying.
12 The law -- the state passes down laws that are unfunded
13 mandates every day.

14 LIEUTENANT BERRY: (Unintelligible.)

15 MR. RICHTER: The federal -- the federal hands
16 down federal mandates. Let me answer your question.
17 You're not letting me answer the question.

18 LIEUTENANT BERRY: (Unintelligible.)

19 MR. RICHTER: Yes. Yes, I am.

20 LIEUTENANT BERRY: (Unintelligible screaming.)

21 MR. MYERS: We have cards, so we will call --
22 we'll call based on the cards. Yes, sir. I'm going to
23 let this -- hold on a second. We're going to let them
24 continue the sidebar over there. Mr. Glennis Gaines.
25 All right. There was another question that came up. They

1 asked about making sure that -- so listen. Because I know
2 that there are several questions that are still going, as we
3 are trying to, if
4 you put a card in, if you put a card in, if you move down
5 this way, and that way we don't have to worry about trying
6 to get over. That will help us -- that way we can move
7 along, because I see some people who are saying they need to
8 move. But so let's make sure we get a chance for people to
9 say what they want to say. If you have a question or make a
10 comment, we're going to line up here. Yeah, just line up
11 right here
12 down the middle. That will be helpful. Yeah, we'll use
13 these two rows right here, and we have some questions done,
14 and we'll keep it. Come on. And then we can -- because I
15 see some people are starting to move out. I want them to
16 have an opportunity -- people to hear some questions as
17 things go on. But let's try to make sure, one, we, like I
18 stated, keep our comments focused toward the students and
19 for the students, and also make sure we remain -- we remain
20 without any disruptive behavior. that will help us get
21 through
22 this process. We want to make sure everybody have a chance
23 to communicate.

24 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Good evening. Good evening,
25 Eagle Nation. I'm not here to direct any questions to Mr.

1 Richter, or to Mr. Myers. What I'm about to say is to our
2 superintendent and our board members. Those of you that are
3 here tonight agree that the naming committee should be
4 removed, and that the board shall name that school T.W.
5 Josey. Please stand. I want the superintendent to see it.
6 I want the board members to see it. It is to remain T.W.
7 Josey. I'm not a cussing man. I'm a preacher, but I grew
8 up at 1593 McCauley Street, Sunset Homes, so I still know
9 how to cuss. I have no desire to cuss, but if I'm told one
10 more time that this school board cannot remove this
11 committee, I might just cuss, because if you created the
12 policy, you can delete the policy. The name should never be
13 in any doubt.

14 The second thing, we were told that Murphey can
15 hold six hundred and fifty students. Josey don't even
16 have six hundred. Those kids can remain together, move
17 into the Murphey building. You can add portables if
18 you have to. Keep them together. You already told us
19 that the gym is going to be here. The football field
20 is going to be here. They're not tearing those things
21 down, so you can still house them and keep them
22 together. If you can't do that, we have so many brand
23 new schools that are empty right here in the city of
24 Augusta that we can find a building to put them in.

25 All I'm saying is tonight we've got to stand. Not

1 only tonight, but moving forward, and I hope the
2 superintendent who will make the recommendation, the
3 board that will vote on it, and this stuff about
4 they've always used naming committees, that's not true,
5 folks. We're not that stupid. We're not dumb. And if
6 we want to talk about transparency, I walked in
7 tonight, and I met a young lady when I walked through
8 the door, and I introduced myself. She introduced
9 herself, and she told me she's the director of
10 communications for the board of education. I've worked
11 thirty-nine years, and I still work at the Savannah
12 River Site. I've been in management a long time. I
13 understand budgets. If you're the communication
14 director, and we're talking about spending money, and
15 I'm not pointing my finger at anybody, but why is that
16 communication director was not up here leading this and
17 not Mr. Myers?

18 I mean, I want to know from our board what is
19 Mr. Myers' title, and what are we paying him if we've
20 got a communication director if we're talking about
21 spending money. I mean, we need to have real
22 transparency, folks. Look, those are our tax dollars.
23 And the consulting group, I have nothing against them,
24 but I'd like to know how much money has been spent to
25 this day with the consulting group. We need to know

1 those numbers, and they should give them to us. It
2 should be public information since we're talking about
3 spending dollars. So I leave you with that question.
4 Mr. Myers, what's his title? What are we paying him?
5 How much has been spent to HBM? And that the naming
6 committee will be removed, and that this school board
7 will name the new school T.W. Josey.

8 MS. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hey, everybody. Basically,
9 mine is a comment. If you wasn't at the breakfast this
10 morning, they was informing us. So my thing was to the
11 people that was there, they were saying that they was
12 closing out Josey because, you know, they didn't have
13 anything. But if they close Jenkins-White, which feeds
14 into Murphey, which feeds into Josey, that's why we ain't
15 going to have nobody there. So my main concern, and we
16 already had this, so they probably ain't going to come up
17 behind me. But I just want to say that to see y'all tonight
18 is really good, but we got to stand together as a school. I
19 told Tracy, a lot of y'all I ain't seen two or three years
20 ago when we was going to them meetings out there in
21 Hephzibah when they was having these meetings. So this has
22 been talked about
23 for a while. And to be honest with you, it's still being
24 talked about, but I think it's already in
25 place.

1 Tonight, I'm not saying y'all wasting our time,
2 you know, and I respect the board and the board
3 members, but I'm not saying that they're wasting our
4 time, but they keep telling us the same thing. We can
5 follow the numbers, we can follow what they're saying,
6 but we ain't going to see a difference. The main thing
7 most of us is in here for tonight is we want to make
8 sure that we keep our name (unintelligible). And I'm a
9 proud Josey alumni of '99.

10 MS. ROBINSON: Good evening. My name is Sheffy
11 Robinson, class of 1999, member of the ROTC when I was
12 in school as well as a Sonic Boom of the South marching
13 band, and I am currently the president of the Alumni
14 Foundation.

15 Augusta owes Thomas Walter Josey Comprehensive
16 High School. The city of Augusta owes 1701 15th Street
17 because it was the permits that caused the teardown and
18 rebuild of spaces that did not bring families back to
19 this area.

20 The Board of Education owes 1701 15th Street,
21 Thomas Walter Josey Comprehensive High School, because
22 the consistent patterns of zones that have bused kids
23 out of this area to other schools, so that other
24 schools maintain their numbers, but Josey doesn't.
25 We are owed. We are owed a new school. We are owed to

1 remain Thomas Walter Josey Comprehensive High School because
2 we were in the '90s a comprehensive high school. I was the
3 president of Vocational Industrial Clubs of America. We had
4 all the programs that
5 you're talking about now, so you're not doing us any favors.
6 You're giving us back what we were owed.

7 And I need the board members to understand that we
8 are owed. We have tarried on 1701 15th Street for
9 sixty years of foolishness in the city of Augusta, and
10 we are tired. We are tired. And I know people want to
11 think -- want to say, oh, there are lies being spread.
12 Y'all aren't reading the data correctly. I have a
13 whole degree in data, baby. I know what I'm talking
14 about. So if you don't come for me, you come with the
15 data too. We are owed.

16 My plea to the board. Let it stay Thomas Walter
17 Josey Comprehensive High School. We can figure out the
18 rest. Our current students need to graduate as Thomas
19 Walter Josey Comprehensive High School students. Even
20 if you don't let new students come in, that's fine,
21 because the alumni will continue to support them. And
22 no matter what board members have said about us, the
23 alumni support our current kids.

24 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I'm not a Josey alumni, but
25 eight years ago at T.W. Josey High School in Richmond

1 County, the first STEM program was started. Now,
2 you're talking about not performing, you're not doing
3 anything to help them perform. We had a meeting
4 similar to this one two years ago, and I talked to that
5 gentleman there (indicating). He showed me some
6 figures. Do you know how many -- the percentage of
7 students that are bused out of this area going to Glenn
8 Hills? I'm going to tell you, twenty-seven and a half
9 percent.

10 Do you know how many students in this area are
11 going to Richmond? Eighteen and a half percent. How
12 many -- what does that percentage total up to be?
13 Forty-four percent of the students that live in this
14 area are bused out.

15 Now, you're talking about this school, but you
16 never considered Glenn Hills. I asked that same
17 question two years ago. I talked to that gentleman
18 there (indicating) for about two -- about an hour. He
19 said, well, Glenn Hills is going to be considered. You
20 come back tonight and you said nothing about Glenn
21 Hills being considered. But you're busing students to
22 Glenn Hills out of this area. You're busing them to
23 Richmond and to Glenn Hills, and George P. Butler is
24 getting seventeen percent.

25 Add those figures up and see how many students are

1 being bused out of this area to other schools. That's
2 why you don't have the students here. You're busing
3 them out. That's all I've got to say.

4 MR. MYERS: Hold on one second. Hold on one
5 second.

6 MS. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Good evening. I just want
7 to speak from experience as a retired board employee
8 about how high schools can be saved. When I was
9 assistant principal at Josey, I went out of town with
10 Dr. Audrey Wood and two other people, and we researched
11 the IB program because Richmond Academy's enrollment
12 was going down, and the people that lived off Walton
13 Way were sending their students to private schools. So
14 the county said lets save Richmond.

15 Dr. Wood and I, we went and we toured several
16 schools in Florida. We brought the program back. Now,
17 they kept the students at Richmond, and they built
18 around Richmond, and the IB program was probably one of
19 the best in the state.

20 A second project that I was a part of, I was sent
21 to Laney High School as principal. We started the IB
22 program. An eagle saved Laney. The IB program was
23 still running, and that was about fifteen years ago.

24 If we allow them to close Josey. Josey, no,
25 you're talking about history. We're not talking about

1 a name. We're talking about Josey's history. If they
2 close Josey -- I'm just going to use the girls
3 basketball team right now. That's not a basketball
4 team, that's a program. Those kids not only excel on
5 the basketball court, but in the classroom. So my
6 point is we can save Josey with our current students.
7 They can move into Murphey. We can build around just like
8 they built around Richmond Academy. They kept that school
9 intact. Do not -- I repeat, if you allow them to close
10 Josey, we will not have a Josey. Do not -- I repeat, if
11 we allow the Board of Education to close Josey, we can
12 forget it.

13 And the reason why the other two schools were
14 saved is because the people that were coming up with
15 the plan were vested in the city, right? So we have
16 outside consultants coming in. They're just making
17 money. They're talking numbers. They're not talking
18 people. When I was a principal, I used to always say
19 to the teachers -- they would say, well, eighty percent
20 of my kids passed. I said, well, what about the twenty
21 percent -- the two kids in your room that didn't?
22 You're talking about lives. True, we want this to be
23 named Josey, but we want Josey's history to remain.

24 If it closes, it starts over as a new Josey. And
25 do we really want that? I'm done.

1 MS. HURD: Good evening. My name is Donna Hurd.
2 I'm a proud member, a graduate from Thomas Walter Josey
3 Comprehensive High School, class of '95. Also a
4 member -- shout out to all ROTC. A proud member of
5 that as well.

6 Now, my question is, when we first came over here
7 and y'all wanted to bring Murphey over, and we had all
8 the alumni fight, argue, and say, Hey, we didn't want a
9 name change then. We did all of this meeting, and went
10 to the Board of Education. Before the camera people
11 could actually set up for us to talk about a name
12 change. You had a member come straight out back, say
13 it ain't no name change, and walked out with an
14 attitude. Nobody had a word to say. We couldn't get
15 anything else off.

16 Now, you're saying, Hey, we're going to close down
17 (unintelligible), and we're going to move the
18 elementary school to Lamar. That's starting up, as you
19 say, '27. This year, ending. How are you going to,
20 actually, do that when you have TGR starting up? I
21 don't believe y'all got enough money to outbid Tiger.
22 We already purchased that school, and it's opening in
23 '28. Now that's research also. We want to talk
24 numbers about it. As they all stated, everybody has
25 said, you all are busing everybody out. You open up

1 programs for Richmond, which is overcrowded. You bused
2 out, and you put everybody at Laney to save the school.
3 They're overcrowded. Everybody wants to go there.

4 Now, you have Butler that you're overcrowding,
5 which they had problems. We had Murphey -- I meant
6 (unintelligible). All those schools, they had
7 problems. You're busing out everywhere, but here. You
8 have all these programs that you said make it seem like
9 you didn't have teachers here that were qualified to
10 teach any of your AP programs. We had all of that back
11 in the '90s anyway. So, again, yes, everything that
12 you are mentioning, comprehensive -- we had
13 cosmetology. My beautician is a proud member of and
14 graduated from Thomas Walter Josey with the experience
15 from being in cosmetology from here, daycare and
16 everything else.

17 You have football members that's in here that's
18 like educators. You have members that want to become
19 educators and had to go somewhere else. Now, because
20 you don't offer programs like the special ed program
21 that stayed here for the longest you are capable of.
22 Wheelchairs. Laney can't house wheelchairs like that
23 because they had stairs. The only other school that
24 had handicapped wheelchair accessible or for the blind,
25 it's Butler. And it's overcrowded with problems.

1 So why can't you follow and have teachers here to
2 do it? Bring your students here. Now you still have a
3 lot of ifs. If we keep in the (unintelligible). If
4 they want to come back, they have the opportunity.
5 What kid, do you know, want to come back after I have
6 played football somewhere else where your teams are
7 bigger, your schools are outshining now because we have
8 it all spotlighted for them and not here at Thomas
9 Walter. I'm not going to come back to that school of
10 an if.

11 Now, if you want to make something clear out for
12 everybody, just tell the truth. It's gentrification.
13 It's gentrification. Everything is coming around. You
14 have MCG is sweeping all this way and you have Augusta
15 Masters sweeping the other way. So tell me how you're
16 going to plan if we're not going to keep it as Thomas
17 Walter Josey? How are you going to plan to even have
18 kids to come to a new school because you don't have
19 nothing but an if behind it with no students in the
20 area?

21 MR. MYERS: Thank you. So in reference to that, I
22 want to make sure I explain, you know, what we have to
23 look for is what is to come. They have laid out a
24 plan. Please understand, again, it's a plan. It's
25 proposed. This is a plan. It is proposed. Nothing

1 has been voted on. The vote is February 10th. It's a
2 plan. It's proposed. That is what I want to make sure
3 I continue to say.

4 Now, I know we still got questions, comments, but
5 I want to make sure I say this. There is going to be
6 staff here for individual questions for things after
7 this is over. We'll be around. We'll be able to stay,
8 talk, answer questions, individual questions, and
9 things that people want to know, or things people are
10 asking. We're going to be here for that. So please
11 make sure you stick around to ask us those questions.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible.)

13 MR. MYERS: Hold on one second. Let me give you
14 the microphone.

15 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It wasn't supposed to be
16 here. They put it -- this was a prison, and they moved
17 us in here and build all the money -- Josey been doing
18 that for -- and they're doing it again. This needs to
19 stop. Board members, this needs to stop. We right
20 here, and this school deserves to be here. We deserve
21 it. I'm going to come back in here. I grew up in
22 here. This school deserves to be here. It deserves
23 it. We have fought and died for this. We have
24 lawyers, doctors, all kinds of money in this school
25 right here. We deserve it. Don't take it away. We're

1 fighting. We are here to fight. Get your gloves.

2 Why don't you make the ones that stand up on the
3 board, make them stand up. Make them stand up. The
4 board members that support this, make them stand up.

5 MR. MYERS: I know we have a few more people that
6 want to speak in reference to Josey, but I want to make
7 sure that I do open the floor if people have questions
8 in reference to Jenkins-White. (Shouting from
9 audience.) But this meeting is for everyone. This
10 meeting is for everyone. Yes, yes, yes, ma'am. Yes.
11 Hold on.

12 MR. RICHTER: We're not going to take away their
13 time. We just want to be sure. We just want to be sure
14 because if -- ma'am, hold on just one second. We're
15 going to give them their time. I promise. We're not
16 taking away time. Okay. Hold on. This meeting stated
17 it was for Jenkins-White, Murphey, and Josey. I get
18 that. And, so, I know. I just wanted to be sure if --
19 I just want to be sure, please, if Jenkins-White -- if
20 we do have some Jenkins-White here, folks that have
21 questions, I want to make sure they get heard, and not
22 to take away time from the Josey (unintelligible).
23 Okay. Okay. Ask them what?

24 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible.)

25 MR. RICHTER: Okay. I misunderstood. My bad. So

1 if you are Jenkins-White, come forward too. I want to
2 make sure that you get heard too. Sorry about that.

3 MS. FRASIER: Good evening, everyone. My name is
4 Morgan Frasier, and I'm a sophomore at Josey. When I
5 first walked into Josey, I didn't expect much.
6 Honestly, I didn't even want to be here. That first
7 day was draining. I had just left people from my past
8 and I knew I was eventually going to see them again,
9 but I wasn't ready to go through all of those emotions
10 again.

11 Starting over is exhausting, especially, when
12 you're carrying your old memories with you. I walked
13 into Josey guarded and tired and unsure of what this
14 place would mean to me. But sometimes, the places you
15 didn't expect the most from, end up changing us the
16 most.

17 Not long after I arrived, I met a girl named
18 Faith. What started as a simple friendship, it grew so
19 much deeper than that. She's like my sister now and
20 together right here at Josey, we created something
21 bigger than we ever imagined. Our small business,
22 Munchie Cravens, this school didn't just allow that
23 dream to exist, but it supported it. Josey showed us
24 love, encouragement, and belief, and that support
25 changed our lives. If you've been here long enough,

1 chances are you've tasted a cookie, tasted a brownie,
2 or a cup of lemonade. Almost everyone in this building
3 has been touched by Munchie Cravens in some way, and
4 that didn't happen just by accident. That happened
5 because Josey is a place where people show up for each
6 other, a place where ideas aren't laughed at, they're
7 lifted. This school is more than just a building, it's
8 our home.

9 Josey has his own identity. We have the best
10 band, amazing cheerleaders, elite dancers, fly girls
11 who put their heart into everything that they do.
12 Other schools may have their own traditions, their own
13 names, and their own reputations, but it's different
14 over here. It's always been different.

15 At Josey, we stick together. We stick together
16 because we know what it feels like to be misunderstood.
17 We know people judge us without knowing us, so instead
18 of letting that divide us, we chose unity. We chose
19 family, we chose pride, and a place that many people
20 overlooked, but has given us so much.

21 Now we're on -- now, we're standing on the edge of
22 losing it. Josey hasn't officially closed but the
23 proposal alone feels heavy. And if something happens
24 to the school, I hope everyone listening takes this as
25 a lesson, not just for Josey, but about life. Places

1 like Josey teach us more than academics. They teach us
2 resilience, creativity, loyalty, and love, and that's
3 something worth fighting for. Thank you.

4 MS. SORRELL: Hi, good evening everybody. My name
5 is Faith Sorrell, and I am a sophomore here at T.W.
6 Josey. I don't have a lot to say, I don't have a
7 speech prepared. I just wanted the Board of Education
8 and everybody here listening to take heed to this
9 because Josey has truly changed our lives. The
10 teachers here, Ms. Patterson is right there
11 (indicating), Ms. Anindu, Ms. Stamm, and Ms. Taylor.
12 Everybody right there agree. All of them right there
13 have truly -- Ms. Williams, I didn't see you. Both of
14 them -- Mr. Asbury. All of them, Donna Priestie is in
15 the back they have -- Ms. Stokes is in the back. They
16 have truly changed us. Even with everything that they
17 do. Even if I come in here, I'm out of dress code,
18 Mr. Asbury say, Faith, you're out of dress code. I
19 might get an attitude with him, and I admit that, but
20 Mr. Asbury has always been there for us. He doesn't --
21 Mr. Asbury is not -- you might go to Laney, and the
22 student might get an attitude with them, the admin can
23 start yelling at them. Mr. Asbury has never been the
24 type of principal to yell at us -- assistant principal.
25 Well, it doesn't matter. He hasn't, he has never been

1 the type of person to get an attitude with us or
2 anything.

3 Josey has truly, truly, truly been a big part of
4 our lives. If we get a bakery when we get older then
5 we -- oh, when we get a bakery and get older, we will
6 sit here in our -- about our bakery, and we will say,
7 this started at T.W. Josey.

8 Mr. Tolbert is not here right now, but he was our
9 social studies teacher in ninth grade, and he told us
10 that nothing is impossible. He told us to fight. He
11 told us that if we wanted to do it, then do it. He
12 said we had the resources, we just need to make the
13 plan. We made the plan, and we made it happen. And it
14 happened. We -- we do what we need to do and we made
15 it happen. And I just want to say that Josey is just
16 so much to us.

17 Ms. Lucky in the back, she introduced me to DECA,
18 and at first -- at first, I was scared to do DECA, and
19 Ms. Anindu, she did too. Miss Moore isn't here, but
20 she did DECA this year. It was like DECA is a great
21 opportunity for you. So now when I graduate, DECA is
22 going to be in my resume, and the college is going to
23 look at it and say, oh, she was in DECA.

24 Miss Patterson told me, Faith, you like to argue
25 all the time, you better join the debate. I joined

1 debate, and I do great. I argue. I love to argue. So
2 I joined the debate. Miss Stokes, she gets on me about
3 every little thing, but I know when I get into college,
4 she's going to be like, I'm going to sit there and be
5 like, Miss Stokes told me not to do this, and I'm not
6 going to do it. And she told me to do it the right
7 way. And I can't go to -- I can't go to -- the school
8 that I'm zoned for is going to be Laney. I don't want
9 to go to Laney and have to make new bonds with new
10 teachers. I love my teachers here right now, right to
11 this day. What's today? Thursday. I went to school
12 today, and I seen every one of these teachers that's
13 here today. I don't take Ms. Huff, but every day in
14 the morning, Ms. Huff says, Good morning, Faith. Ever
15 since she's learned my name, she says, Good morning,
16 Faith. And that's just -- that's just like equal
17 pride, equal -- I love being an equal.

18 Some people -- some people can't -- you can't take
19 that away from us. Being an equal is important. It's
20 important to us. I'm gonna go. Thank you.

21 MR. MYERS: All right. Once again, like I said,
22 we will have -- we will have members of the staff --
23 the executive staff here to answer questions, and to
24 make sure we get an opportunity to address anything,
25 any question you have.

1 Different departments are here. From
2 transportation to finance, student services. Talk
3 about federal programs. All of these things are here.
4 I want to make sure I say that again. We're going to
5 wrap -- that way, we have a chance to speak
6 individually, just like earlier today. And like I
7 said, we'll stick around to make sure we can take care
8 of that. Okay? Hold on.

9 MR. WHITE: My name is Irving White. In school,
10 they called me Duff White. Most of them didn't know my
11 name really -- my first name. I'm here on the topic of
12 enrollment. When Josey first opened in '64, we had
13 sometimes like three -- two or three of the same class,
14 full of kids. Full. All around. Now, if you look
15 around here now, the neighborhood has been moved. When
16 you move the neighborhood, you move the kids. And when
17 you move the neighborhood it's a reason to close the
18 school.

19 Now, my opinion, this just didn't start ten or
20 twenty years ago. It started way back, because slowly
21 by slowly, Delta Manor, High Park, Southside, Gibbon --
22 not Gibbon Manor, but we got Oregon Park, that's all
23 the stuff. And look around at the houses. People used
24 to live all around here. So we had the kids. Now,
25 when some of them had to move, they weren't allowed to

1 come to Josey even though they stayed close. They were
2 (unintelligible) Richmond. Our kids would move, wasn't
3 allowed to come here. That's why the numbers are down.
4 It's not down because they did not want to come. Now,
5 these gentlemen, I don't know all of them.

6 I don't know all -- I'm not know -- nothing what
7 they have. I don't know all the stuff they have, but
8 our neighborhood has been moved. And to my opinion,
9 the way it's going, some of you that live around here,
10 at some point and at some time, your house might be
11 taken away. The reason I say that, I'm going to say
12 this, then I'm going to sit down.

13 I used to go to Sharon -- I still do. I go to
14 Sharon Baptist Church. Behind there one day, because
15 we didn't have no inside bathroom. They cut a path
16 through there. And I asked my father, I said, what's
17 that? He said, they're going to build a highway
18 through here. Now, I was a kid. I was in grammar
19 school when that happened. So right now, there's
20 things now, we don't know about that's going to close.
21 It might be where you live, park, but there's stuff in
22 the plans right now.

23 So by Josey closing, I don't want it to close,
24 because this is the (unintelligible). I was bused to
25 four different schools as a kid. Four. I had to get

1 up in the morning. I had chores to do before I went
2 and caught the bus. I had about an hour or more bus
3 ride. It didn't matter whether it was snowing, sleet,
4 or rain, it didn't matter. We kids, some walked. They
5 walked to school in the rain, and in the cold. The bus
6 I rode didn't even have a heater. It did not have a
7 heater. It could be snow, the bus didn't have a
8 heater. So Josey, I want it to stay. I don't know
9 about somebody else, but all the ones -- I know all the
10 ones here is for Josey to close. But sorry to say, it
11 might be already planned, and there's nothing we can do
12 about it. Have you thought of that? This is just -- I
13 hate to say it, but this is just a little show. Thank
14 you.

15 MR. MYERS: Everyone that has -- everyone that has
16 given a card, I want to make sure you have an
17 opportunity to speak. You spoke? Come on. Everyone
18 that gave a card, I want to make sure you have an
19 opportunity to speak. And, yeah, come on up.

20 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Can I finish what I just said?

21 MR. MYERS: Hold on one second. Everybody gets --
22 I want to make sure everybody gets a card. I have to
23 make -- I've been making that announcement, please.
24 Everyone that gave a card, I want to make sure you have
25 an opportunity to speak. So please come around, so we

1 can make sure you get on up and -- but, yeah, I just
2 have to make sure, we're making sure we're doing our
3 due diligence for that part. So anybody that has given
4 a card, to make sure you have an opportunity to speak.

5 MS. ROBINSON: Hey, how y'all doing? I'm Shirley
6 Robinson, class of '98. I was in the boom with a few
7 of y'all when it was booming. And to be honest, I
8 ain't going to hold y'all. I'm one of them alumni's
9 that feel to un-feel with somebody. Because a board
10 member told me in 2006 that I should seek education for
11 my children outside of Richmond County if I didn't like
12 the curriculum and how it was going. When they sold
13 our children's education out to Voyager, and introduced
14 sight words and took phonetics out. Because I don't
15 understand how you do that. How you teach somebody to
16 read without phonics? A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Didn't
17 y'all learn to read with phonics?

18 Okay. So at the behest of a board member, I did
19 what she said to do. What I thought was my only option
20 because I wasn't going to allow Richmond County to
21 retard my children. Right? So I went to Atlanta with
22 them. But old Sophia home, pass the peas. I'm back
23 now as of 2023. Right? And I don't like what I'm
24 seeing. Because now they done skid their property tax
25 bill on over to Shirley. And it ain't adding up. What

1 I'm looking at, what I'm researching, what I'm finding
2 out about our school board opting out, guys. FYI, if
3 y'all didn't know this, Georgia passed a statewide --
4 we voted, statewide on this, to put a cap on the
5 property taxes for the school operation maintenance.
6 And our school board, Richmond County's finest, opted
7 out. And when I asked the CFO today at the luncheon,
8 why did they opt out? He told me it was so they could
9 keep getting state money. And when I asked about that
10 forty-three million dollars, come to find out, y'all,
11 it's a loan.

12 At three and a half percent interest. Right? And
13 so we're also having to pay that. Instead of them
14 waiting -- because patience is a virtue, to bill, they
15 took out a loan and got this forty-three million
16 dollars at three and a half percent interest. Right?
17 And so now we are shouldering the burden as taxpayers
18 on the interest on their loan. And the deeper --
19 because what's going to happen is, they're going to end
20 up pricing everybody out with their property taxes, and
21 the city going to own a bunch of property, and now they
22 ain't collecting no taxes. Right? You see what I'm
23 saying? And so now I'm beginning to wonder, the three
24 hundred and eighty five million dollar budget that they
25 told me they had fiscally, how that was split up, and

1 how that was allocated. And I know that we used things
2 like enrollment and test scores to determine how much
3 each school is allocated. But, again, I feel like you
4 created this problem -- this enrollment issue by
5 closing down the housing projects that fed the students
6 to the school for enrollment.

7 And then you remove the location. Like I said, I
8 am a proud Ms. Campbell cosmetology student. And I
9 went on to Kenneth Shuler in North Augusta, and I've
10 had a cosmetology license since 2003, in two states,
11 Georgia and South Carolina.

12 So yeah, that served me in high school. I also
13 went on to a four-year school, because I played a
14 trumpet. Band scholarships were scholarshipping back
15 then. They don't give the kids nothing now.

16 But, again, there is a vote happening on November
17 the 3rd, y'all. Please don't think we got to just lay
18 down and take it. Whatever they decide, because again,
19 they're gonna vote on February the 10th and decide. No
20 matter what we say here, what we need to remind them of
21 is that all of those votes are public record. We gonna
22 know how you voted, and that's gonna dictate how we
23 vote when it's time for their seats to be reelected.
24 Right? The people that -- this isn't a personal
25 attack. Oh, no, no, no. This isn't a threat. It's a

1 promise. It's a promise from the taxpayer constituents
2 that when we go into the voting booth, we're going to
3 remember how our interest was not served financially.
4 How there was no financial transparency.

5 MR. MYERS: So we have people here to be able to
6 help us with. Absolutely. We have people here that
7 are able to help and explain the finance again than
8 they did this morning.

9 So they'll be able to explain that to you again
10 very shortly right after we finish wrapping this up
11 right now. Go ahead, sir.

12 MR. BRAZEL: Okay. I'm Billy Brazel, and I got a
13 question. My question is this. My question is this.
14 The Board of Education, you're gonna close Josey, and
15 send the students to other schools. Who are you
16 preparing this school for?

17 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hello.

18 MR. BRAZEL: Can one of y'all answer that, please?

19 MR. MYERS: He said if the school is closing, who
20 is the school being prepared for?

21 MR. RICHTER: Yeah. Okay. So, again, the idea is
22 that to reinvest right here to make sure that -- first
23 of all, the neighborhood gets served by a local school.
24 Always. You got a school in your neighborhood, it
25 serves the school. It serves your students right here,

1 no doubt. What we wanted to do was open the
2 opportunity for people to see what Josey really is and
3 break that enrollment gap.

4 And, so, what we're trying to do is attract that
5 back. I've heard all night about, we've tried to take
6 kids out, tried to take kids out. We opened up the
7 boundaries so all kids can come here. All right. And
8 that's the goal. We want to make sure the opportunity
9 at Josey is for all students in the district.

10 We know there are parts of the district that won't
11 come this far to get here. But we're trying to open
12 the boundary to make sure the neighborhood is served
13 because it's a neighborhood high school. And we want
14 to make sure the district students have an opportunity
15 to come here, to see the opportunities here, to get the
16 deep programs they need. So that's the intent. Okay?
17 And I understand your question on that, so I appreciate
18 it.

19 MR. BRAZEL: I love that idea.

20 MR. RICHTER: Yeah.

21 MR. BRAZEL: So let's just make sure if this is
22 what you're planning --

23 MR. RICHTER: Yep.

24 MR. BRAZEL: -- let's do this, but let's make it
25 still be Josey. And the students that you send away

1 from Josey can come back to Josey.

2 MR. RICHTER: Okay. That's fair. Yep.

3 MR. BRAZEL: All of them.

4 MS. JACOBS: Hi, good evening, everyone. Hi. So
5 my name is Lorea Jacobs, and I am a class of '26 here
6 at T.W. Josey. And I just wanted to say a couple of
7 words. I'm not here for no debate, guys. That's not
8 me. But I just wanted to share my story because I feel
9 like I am one of those that came out of Josey and was
10 able to prosper. And they feel like a lot of us can't
11 do that. But there's a lot of students at Josey who
12 are able to walk outside of the doors of Josey and do a
13 lot more in the community, go off to school. They're
14 able to be someone outside of this community. So why
15 take this school away if they are preparing students to
16 do something, to go somewhere, and to be something?

17 So like I said, my name is T.W. Josey -- I mean,
18 my name is Lorea Jacobs, and I am a class of '26. And
19 through my sixth through ninth grade year, I was at
20 A.R. Johnson. I was at a magnet school. I wanted to
21 go to school for mechanical engineering. I left that
22 magnet school to come to this school of my choice, T.W.
23 Josey, here on 15th Street. I decided to leave that
24 magnet school to come to T.W. Josey because I felt like
25 this was the environment that I needed. These were the

1 people that were going to come together to support me.
2 This was not a school where anybody could just, you
3 know -- this is somewhere where I know that the people
4 that are behind me are going to stay behind me for the
5 rest of my life.

6 These mentors that I have met here at this school,
7 they're going to be there for the rest of my life. Not
8 only have I come here, I am the youngest and the
9 only -- the first and the youngest Richmond County
10 student to go to Savannah Nuclear River Site and start
11 my apprenticeship out there. I've been working at
12 Savannah River Site since I was sixteen years old.
13 Sixteen. I am the youngest person to be on the site.
14 I am the first Richmond County student to go out there,
15 and I have been killing it. Absolutely. I love it out
16 there.

17 I have a -- I've been working full-time,
18 forty-hours a week, while I'm going to my school. And
19 I am currently taking four college credits. I will
20 enroll as a sophomore.

21 Why can't -- why can't the rest of our students at
22 T.W. Josey do that? They can. They can. But why
23 won't we give them that opportunity to do that instead
24 of trying to take it away from them? We're right here,
25 right now why do we have to change any of that? If

1 we're doing so great right now, why are they trying to
2 take this away from us? This is my class of
3 twenty-sixth year, and this will be -- it sounds like
4 it will be the last class. Why? Why? It won't be
5 because we're not going to let it be because this name
6 will stay right here. It won't be the end. That's it.
7 That's it.

8 I have -- this school has absolutely changed me.
9 I am our current DECA president, and that
10 opportunity -- the teachers here today are the reason
11 that I have been able to go on and do all the things
12 that I have been able to do. It wasn't just because I
13 am who I am, it was because I was in a community that
14 was able to support me. A school that was able to
15 congratulate me and lead me on. This just isn't a
16 miracle. No, people work with me here, they talk with
17 me here, they taught me here so that I could go on and
18 be something more. And I will go on and be something
19 more, and I will come right back to this school and
20 give right back to the school that made me who I am.
21 That's it. Fly eagles Fly. Y'all have a nice night.

22 MINISTER CLARK: You know, I've sit there, sit
23 there, sit there, sit there, and no one said these five
24 words. First, giving honor to the God. Not one
25 person. Not even when they start talking. It's all

1 about them. And I'm going to tell you who I am.

2 Minister Larry Clark. A proud graduate of T.W. Josey
3 High School, class of 1970.

4 And you say you want to talk about Jenkins-White.
5 Well, I come out of Jenkins-White also. Seven years at
6 Jenkins-White, which is Levi-White Elementary School.
7 And a lot of people in here know they came out of
8 Levi-White. Walked all seven years. Came to Josey in
9 the eighth grade, 1966. Walked all 12 years. Never
10 was blessed nowhere. The reason why they want to close
11 this school is because they done pushed everybody out.
12 As people say, they pushed them out. They closed.

13 Sunset. They closed (unintelligible). Where the
14 children have gone? They pushed them out to the south.
15 They pushed them out to the west. They bus them
16 everywhere else except here.

17 Yes, it's going to go down. Yes, they also --
18 that was the technical school right there. They went
19 to Josey and the technical school and prosper. I
20 prospered. I got a mechanical degree from the
21 technical school. I went in the military and come
22 back. Josey is my home.

23 They already done made their decision. They can
24 sit here and talk all they want. I thought about the
25 (unintelligible). But God is going to get the last

1 word.

2 MS. JAKAIA: Hey, y'all. My name is Jakaia. And
3 I'm standing here today, not just as a student, but as
4 someone whose life was shaped inside the walls of
5 T.W. Josey.

6 When people talk about schools, they usually talk
7 about test scores, graduation rates, or funding. But
8 T.W. Josey is more than just a number on a page. This
9 school gave me love when I needed it the most.
10 Laughter when it felt heavy, and possibilities that I
11 couldn't even see a future for myself.

12 Inside this building, I found teachers who didn't
13 just teach lessons, they saw me. They checked in.
14 They pushed me and I didn't even believe in myself.
15 And I stayed patient when I was struggling. For some
16 of us, this school was just stable. It was somewhere
17 that we could go when we wanted to get away from all
18 the love and the hate of our parents. It was somewhere
19 that we could go when we just didn't feel like being
20 outside or just didn't feel like doing stuff. These
21 teachers shaped our life in so many different ways.

22 And when I get to college and I become an OBGYN,
23 I'm going to remember T.W. Josey. Not just because of
24 how the teachers treated me or how I came in and people
25 was like, oh, you're out of dress code, you're out of

1 dress code. Because God knows Ms. Springs was on me
2 bad for dress codes.

3 God knows that Ms. Patterson -- Ms. Patterson was
4 the one that actually got me up for debate. I honestly
5 thought I couldn't debate because something about
6 arguing just didn't seem right. But when you're
7 arguing the right way, it seems like you know what
8 you're talking about. You know what you're doing. So
9 today I'm here to argue for Josey. Why are we being
10 shut down? What's the point? Why can't we graduate
11 from this school? I don't see you shutting down any
12 other school. They don't have a lot of children
13 either. Barely have teachers. So why are we getting
14 shut down? We're doing better. If you don't see it
15 we're climbing up on the charts. We're doing way
16 better than we have in the past five years. So what's
17 going on now? When we're finally doing better, y'all
18 want to shut us down? Y'all want to quiet us? For
19 what? I just don't see the problem.

20 MR. JOHNSON: I'm Elijah Johnson, class of '26.
21 Oh, '27, yeah, class of '27. Anyway, I ain't even got
22 to say that much, right? T.W. Josey to most of us,
23 it's not even just a school. It's a home. The
24 memories that I've made since I've been here, I've been
25 here for three years. I've been here since ninth

1 grade. And the people I've met here, Ms. Patterson,
2 Mr. A, and all the teachers, Mr. Lucky, Breasly, and
3 all my friends behind me, I'll never make those
4 memories again at another school.

5 And you can ask everybody. I'm not the person
6 that's been on top of my work since I started here.
7 But you can ask Dr. A. He even told me one day,
8 Elijah, you're getting better. I was on probation. I
9 did all this bad stuff. But teachers like
10 Ms. Patterson spoke to me. They told me I need to
11 start doing better. Mr. A spoke to me. He told me I
12 need to start doing better. My friends talked to me,
13 told me I need to start doing better. And that's what
14 I did. I started doing better. I joined JRC. My
15 parents tried to get me to join JRC since I was in
16 ninth grade. I'm just now joining it. But guess what?
17 I'm doing good in it, too. How they're going to
18 complain about our growth but won't let us continue to
19 grow? This is our home. And no matter the
20 consequences, no matter what we go through, we will
21 protect our nest. This is our home.

22 MR. ETHAN: My name is Ethan. And I just wanted
23 to say that Josey has welcomed me from day one. I've
24 met so many people that has changed my life
25 drastically, especially ROTC. I don't know where I

1 would be in life without it.

2 And Ms. Patterson, I want to thank you for
3 everything you've done for me. All the times you've
4 taught me, helped me out, and everything. Dr. A, you,
5 too. I just want to say thank you for everything
6 you've done for the school. You, too, Mr. Winstead.
7 Dr. Priestley, I just want to say thank you for
8 everybody. Y'all have all helped me be a better
9 person.

10 MR. WILL: My name is Taylor Will from class of
11 '27. I just want to speak on the side of Murphey
12 because they're kind of putting that down, too. It
13 really hurts me because I came from a little struggle.
14 And I came down here for elementary. But middle school
15 and high school really taught me a lot. From my sixth
16 grade year, I went to Murphey. I didn't know what to
17 expect. You know, I don't mean to make it about race,
18 but as a white kid in a majority black, it seems a
19 little odd. You don't know what to expect, you know?
20 You don't know if you're gonna be accepted and all
21 right. So I was a little iffy on it, and I told my
22 mom, I don't know, I didn't wanna go. You know, I want
23 to homeschooled. But then my sixth grade year, I got
24 into art, but I met Ms. Hill. She taught me a lot.
25 She told me to -- she encouraged me to keep going. She

1 noticed that I failed. She's like, don't let go, keep
2 pushing, keep striving for excellence, you got it.

3 And then a lot of class of '27 know Ms. Noble.
4 Ms. Noble did the (unintelligible). She's the
5 equivalent to what someone would say about Ms. Stokes.
6 But Ms. Stokes is a great teacher. But Ms. Noble, she
7 put it hard on you because she always wanted you to do
8 better. She flexed her degrees to make sure you know
9 you can achieve those goals too. She always told you,
10 hey, you're not doing the greatest, but keep going,
11 because you're gonna get there. She always did that,
12 she would correct you to make sure you're striving on
13 point.

14 And then seventh grade year, I met Winston and
15 Dr. Priestley. They really taught me a lot because
16 they noticed I was one of the only few white kids, so
17 they took me aside, they're like, hey, how are you
18 doing, do you feel accepted? Do you feel -- you know,
19 how do you feel? I was like, oh, sixth grade year was
20 nice. I met a lot of nice people. I met DeAndre and
21 Elijah back then. Zakiya, I just met her like eighth
22 grade, but Dr. Priestley and Mr. Winston, they took me
23 aside, they were like, hey, I'd like to see you grow,
24 you know, if you're one of the only few white kids
25 here. You know, they were like hey, you got it. They

1 were like, never give up. I want to see you do good.
2 Well, okay, thank you. It was really hard because as
3 it would look to a lot of other schools, it would look
4 odd. It's like hey, why did, you know, I thought
5 middle school and high school was gonna be about
6 bullies and all, no, I'm not ready. I got to ninth
7 grade, I went from Ms. Hill to now to Ms. Stanton.

8 Ms. Stanton's really taught me a lot, especially
9 now art itself. Art is really part of a life aspect.
10 If you fail, you can paint a better picture. I want a
11 better picture. I want to paint a better picture for
12 Josey. It kind of has eyes on me as an eagle, but I
13 would consider myself a brother, you know. I'd
14 consider myself a brother now.

15 But, you know, it really hurts because my favorite
16 color is purple, but ever since my ninth grade year,
17 and now where I live, I believe -- I believe green and
18 gold. Green and gold. Green and gold.

19 It really hurts because the board, the board
20 thinks they speak on numbers, and we can say our
21 numbers aren't the greatest, but so isn't Glenn Hills.
22 Our girls' basketball team is -- some would say, top
23 notch in Georgia. We have one of the greatest Georgia
24 high school prospects in girls' basketball, Keri Suell.
25 We have -- there you go (indicating). We have another

1 one named Montana Jenkins, all coming from T.W. Josey
2 High School. No other school is producing any of this,
3 and it really hurts because a lot of these teachers
4 really teach you a lot. They -- they push you to keep
5 going forward. They never want you to fail. Mr. A, he
6 gives a lot of his students a hard time, but that's
7 because he wants you to strive for excellence. He
8 wants you to do better.

9 Ms. Anindu, she's one of the nicest teachers I've
10 ever met. I've only had her for a year, but every time
11 I see her, she still greets me good morning, like I'm
12 in her classroom today.

13 Everybody speak on Ms. Patterson. She's one of
14 the greatest teachers, too. If you ever have a
15 problem, you go to Ms. Patterson and she'll help you
16 through it. She has a solution for every problem it
17 seems like. Do you know what I'm saying?

18 Dr. Priestley, he really stands by you for all
19 your works. If you ever have a problem, he encourages
20 you to come to him. They strive to make Josey a better
21 place. And it really hurts, you know, they're trying
22 to tear us down when, like you said, we're getting
23 better. We was doing worse, but now that we're getting
24 better, they feel like now is the time to shut us down.
25 If they really wanted to shut us down, they should have

1 did it when we was at our lowest. But now that we're
2 at our highest, they don't want us to see us grow.

3 Like Laney would say, they're trying to kill the
4 bird. We want to keep the bird alive. We want to
5 protect the nest.

6 MR. DEANDRE: Hey, my name is DeAndre. Hey, I'm
7 class of 2027. I've been here since -- well, I'm here
8 for Murphey and Josey. I started at Murphey in the
9 sixth grade. I didn't work in sixth, seventh, and
10 eighth. I didn't start liking school until I got to
11 ninth grade. Ninth grade is where I met
12 (unintelligible). It's not just where my friend EJ,
13 also my friend Javier. But, yeah, the time I've been
14 here, I found out, I might actually like school just a
15 little bit, but not that much. You know, it's still
16 school, you know what I'm saying? There's no, my
17 brothers graduated from Josey, my cousin graduated from
18 Josey, and right now, currently, all my little
19 siblings, are currently going to Murphey. I would
20 prefer for all of us to keep on going to Josey and
21 graduate. Even after my little brother. You know,
22 he's like six. Anyway, I'll say thank you to Mr. A,
23 Mr. Winstead, Mr. Priestley, thank y'all for doing your
24 jobs. Even this person back there, all of you, thank
25 you, have a good day.

1 MS. TOMPKINS: Good evening. My name is Tashara
2 Tompkins, and I graduated in 2013. I graduated in the
3 top five with my class. I was in FBLA, Jobs for
4 Georgia Graduates, and I also graduated out of the
5 Jessye Norman School of the Performing Arts program.
6 I'm not sure if you're familiar with that. With that
7 being said, what I came to say is, I understand very
8 well what you guys are saying, and you guys are saying
9 a bunch of nothing. You're not answering things
10 properly. You got all these proposals, but you can't
11 tell people what the proposals are.

12 When I was in high school, we had cosmetology, we
13 had child care, we had auto mechanics, we had
14 economics, we had cooking, and, oh, I was also a part
15 of the first group of class that did the merger with
16 Augusta Tech College. We had an econ class, it was
17 about twenty of us in there. And we had a teacher, his
18 name was Mr. Edwards. He came to the campus, he taught
19 us, what, once a week?

20 So you guys are hearing a lot of emotion in us,
21 because you guys are not really saying nothing. If you
22 close this community, you're not only affecting the
23 alumni, but you're also affecting the current students,
24 because you don't know how much them coming to this
25 school helps them. You don't know how much the

1 community giving back to the students really rely on
2 those things. You know, we are a younger class, so we
3 haven't always done things, but since we decided to
4 come back together and celebrate homecoming, we also
5 have decided to give back to our school. It's more
6 than just us gathering once a year to have a party.
7 We're gonna do that anyway because we work hard for it.
8 You guys are, literally, taking away everything from
9 these kids, and you're not telling them why. You got
10 kids here, and you're taking the school away, where you
11 gonna get the kids from? Y'all can't answer that
12 question. Like you said, half of the school is being
13 zoned out. Why stop something and bring it back? You
14 guys are wasting money that you claim you don't have.

15 Schools are overpopulated, understaffed, all this
16 money, y'all finna take out a loan to build a new
17 school. Why not put that money back into the school if
18 you're paying your teachers more? Maybe more of them
19 would wanna come to the school.

20 And this is no disrespect to you, sir, but y'all
21 have these people that don't look like us, don't talk
22 like us, don't come down here with us, and telling us
23 that y'all taking away something. Y'all not really
24 offering no real answers, and no real solutions, so,
25 yes, the people are frustrated because no one is

1 understanding.

2 Y'all have y'all nice suits on, and that's cool.
3 I respect all of that. Y'all work hard, and y'all
4 should be able to represent yourself in that manner, I
5 get that. But also, y'all are not saying nothing.
6 Y'all using y'all big fancy words, your screens, your
7 projectors with all these numbers that we know are not
8 real. We may not know everything, and, yes, there is
9 change that needs to be made in us as a community.
10 Yes, we can do better. We can do our part, and we
11 will, but how can we if y'all take it away?

12 So I'm gonna just -- I'm just curious -- and I'm
13 asking because I wanna know. I was raised right here
14 in Glendale off (unintelligible) road. I went to
15 Murphey, so I went to Wilkinson Gardens, Murphey, and
16 Josey. I wanna know what is gonna happen. Because
17 from babies, we was already -- let me see how I can say
18 it. I'm trying to put my professional voice on,
19 because I'm a little like antsy. But from little kids,
20 which I'm not opposed to the elementary school for
21 being touched, and let me just say this. I'm for all
22 of the high schools. Only because from babies, like I
23 said, we started as babies, and growing up in certain
24 areas, we are trained to go to where we go to. So
25 mixing the kids, that's what I wanna know. What are

1 you guys expecting to happen with mixing us, with
2 Laney, with Bridget, with Richmond, with Westside, just
3 combining the schools? Like, I just, I'm curious about
4 that because I don't think it's gonna be a good
5 outcome. Only because we, as high school, we're set in
6 our ways. And I'm not saying kids can't change, but we
7 are very territorial of our space. I wouldn't have
8 made it at no other school, and that's just being
9 because of where I'm from. We was already -- we knew
10 the band, we knew, oh, if you went to another school,
11 it's gonna transition into the neighborhoods. Oh, you
12 represent, no, you know, we just wasn't having that
13 when I grew up. So I'm just curious on what's gonna
14 happen when the kids are starting to bring all that
15 energy together. You're taking Josey kids and putting
16 them at Laney, which, that's our rival school. It's
17 kind of becoming disrespectful. And I love Laney, I
18 love all the high schools. I'm just saying I'm gonna
19 represent my school, they're gonna represent their
20 school. So our focus isn't gonna be on the education
21 at that point. You can't mix them to me. I'm just
22 curious on how that's gonna work.

23 MR. RICHTER: Okay, I mean -- I know that's been a
24 concern of this community, and I want to be sure
25 that -- let me -- I'm going to answer this question,

1 I'm going answer your funding question also, because I
2 want to be clear on the funding. I'm going to answer
3 her question, I'm going to answer her question, that's
4 what I'm going do.

5 Okay. So on that, because I agree, I mean, we've heard
6 about, kind of, it's been a turf cross, I have to have, I've
7 been in this city for three and a half years, I've driven
8 the seats, I've seen it, I get it, I get it. At the end --,
9 okay, I'm going to have to answer your question. But the
10 thing is, is that when you put the kids in elementary
11 schools, I agree, they come in with a high school teacher,
12 they do. But the learned behavior of that doesn't start in
13 elementary schools. The elementary school's coming
14 together, which make up high schools. Elementary schools
15 make up high schools. And so that's a learned behavior.
16 And that learned behavior doesn't happen in the classroom.
17 Those teachers aren't teaching turf. They're teaching
18 language arts, they're teaching math, they're teaching all
19 of that. That's a goal. And then bringing the community
20 together. So once again, trying to expand the opportunity,
21 that the neighborhood will still come to this school because
22 it's a neighborhood high school. It's right here. And
23 trying to extend that opportunity to other students out
24 there across the city. If they want to make it interesting,
25 it -- (unintelligible cross-talk).

1 Well, okay, okay, okay, so let me answer -- okay,
2 and I've heard that, and I've heard, let me answer your
3 funding question very quick.

4 I need to answer your question. I know you're
5 trying to talk over me, and I can't talk to her. So
6 the funding question. First of all, what was left out
7 of half of the conversation with the loan? Because the
8 other part that was told was that the district takes
9 those dollars, and they invest them in the state and
10 federal investment funds, which they make interest on,
11 which is higher than the three and a half percent that
12 the loan is for. And so they make money on that, and
13 then they have to pay what's called -- and I don't mean
14 to speak high words, but they pay something called
15 arbitrage, which is a penalty because they made money,
16 but it equals out, so it's a no, it's a zero net gain.
17 So she's gonna say no, and she's gonna walk away. The
18 fact of the matter is, is that's how the district
19 invests money. And, so, and on top of that when you
20 borrow the money up front, you can get the projects
21 done faster.

22 Do you know what the inflation rate in the last
23 five years was in construction? Five-percent.
24 Escalation of cost. So if I borrow money at
25 three-percent, because I can build it quicker, and get

1 ahead of five-percent inflation, it saves money. That
2 is taught by your math teachers, that is taught by your
3 English teachers, that's taught by everybody.

4 So that, and on top of that, the thirty-eight
5 million isn't operation dollars. School districts in
6 the state of Georgia and across the country aren't
7 allowed to mix up construction dollars and operation
8 dollars. Okay? And so you can't spend building
9 dollars on teachers, and you can't spend teacher
10 dollars on buildings. And it's the reason you do an
11 ESPLOST program to raise money for facilities, because
12 then it doesn't take away from the operations cost.
13 And so there's a separation there that happens.

14 And I understand the frustration with the money
15 and making sure it gets spent right. And we hear that.

16 MS. TOMPKINS: (Off mic) (Unintelligible).

17 MR. RICHTER: Yeah. Yeah. And that's what we
18 wanted to do. Again, we want to -- one of the things
19 we wanted is to invest the forty million right here at
20 Josey. That was the intent. And that -- you want the
21 truth, and you want that. The truth is, we're going to
22 spend forty three million dollars on this campus.

23 MS. TOMPKINS: (Off mic) (Unintelligible).

24 MR. RICHTER: Yeah, and they can. And they can in
25 that area. Okay? So, anyway, what I just tried to do

1 is try to explain that funding part to you. But we
2 hear the voice, and we appreciate that. If you hear
3 non-answers, I apologize for that. I'm glad to answer
4 any clarification on that. I will, I promise you.

5 MS. TOMPKINS: (Off mic) (Unintelligible).

6 MR. RICHTER: I've got another question here.

7 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: All right. So -- so I'm not
8 originally from Augusta. I'm from New York. And I
9 bring that up because I'm kind of seeing something that
10 kind of happened in New York -- Brooklyn, New York.
11 And somebody kind of brought up the point. And it's
12 this thing called gentrification. Not revitalization.

13 Now, I keep hearing it's for the community, or
14 it's for the people that's here. But if you put a
15 forty-three million dollar building here, that's gonna
16 raise the property taxes. If that raises the property
17 taxes, it's gonna bring in a different demographic, or
18 a different type of people. The community would no
19 longer be the same. So I keep hearing this is for the
20 community, but I'm not seeing how that's gonna help the
21 community by bringing in this new building. Like I
22 said, I'm seeing gentrification. Y'all trying to push
23 the people that's in the community out of the community
24 by bringing something like that in.

25 Now, my other thing is, we talk about, and

1 somebody else here, before I came up here, they kind of
2 brought up the point of y'all already sending kids
3 that's inside this zone out. Now, with that happening,
4 these other schools are already overcrowded, already
5 having issues, already having problems. So with you
6 sending more schools -- I mean more students to these
7 schools, without getting to know -- that was another
8 question I had. Is there any extra funding going to
9 these schools? How are these schools gonna be able to
10 handle all these new things that's happening?

11 Like, y'all not building up these new schools, so
12 if these schools are already overcrowded, and already
13 overpopulated, how is that helping the community or the
14 kids? Because it's a list of things that happens as
15 far as poor education now, overcrowded classes, you got
16 more issues, teachers cannot teach, it's more issues
17 that come with it. So I'm hearing -- or I keep
18 hearing, this is for the community, this is for the
19 community, but with y'all sending the kids that's
20 inside this community already out to schools that's
21 already overpopulated, I don't see how that helps the
22 community.

23 MR. RICHTER: Okay. Let me answer that question
24 really quick. First of all -- first of all, let me be
25 clear, there's not a high school that's overcrowded.

1 And when I tell you that, let me, like I talk about
2 Laney. Laney has six hundred and fifty kids, and it
3 has a capacity of one thousand kids. ARC has a
4 capacity of sixteen hundred and fifty, it has about
5 eleven hundred in it. So the schools aren't
6 overcrowded, first of all. And I want to make sure
7 that we know that.

8 The second thing is, is when it comes to the
9 property taxes, I have the same concern as you do with
10 gentrification. I do. And it's happened in Atlanta,
11 it's happened in all the big cities, and it's happening
12 here.

13 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Off mic) (Unintelligible).

14 MR. RICHTER: It is. Yeah. And so what I worry
15 about is, again, when the school gets built here to
16 make sure that the community thrives in the
17 revitalization, and not in the gentrification. I would
18 agree with that.

19 Now, the other thing is, is that the building of
20 this thirty-eight million does not raise your property
21 tax. That is paid through with ESPLOST dollars. That
22 is voted on as a penny sales tax out there. That we
23 voted on. Okay? And so it's not a property tax that
24 pays for the school facilities. And so now what it can
25 do, I agree, it can raise the property value.

1 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: People that's here, it's not
2 just a community. Like they say, if you build this
3 business here, now their property tax is raised. So
4 the people who property taxes that's gonna raise when
5 you get here, that's what causes them to start moving
6 out because they can't afford to live here because
7 you're now putting this big building here.

8 MR. RICHTER: Okay. Okay. And just let me
9 understand, because I do really wanna understand this,
10 and I honestly do, is that the property tax would raise
11 because the value of the house would raise, right?

12 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Right.

13 MR. RICHTER: And so it's a debate on property
14 value versus the tax rate. Building the forty-three
15 million dollars, I agree, putting forty-three in this
16 community, likely, makes the area more attractive for
17 people to come to. And it will -- and again, I'm not a
18 real estate speculator, so I will never say that.
19 Okay? But to your point, I can see that.

20 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: So they got people with 300
21 homes in the southwestern area right now that's not on
22 the tax road. Their biggest thing is always that
23 people move out of this community because the education
24 here is not up to par with Columbia County, I guess.
25 So with that happening, I'm seeing y'all say y'all

1 gonna build this new school here on 15th Street. Now,
2 let's talk about it. We got the medical district right
3 there. We got IT down here now. We got Fort Gordon
4 that's expanding. We got Mass (unintelligible) right
5 now on Walton Road. So it is money here in Augusta,
6 Georgia.

7 MR. RICHTER: I agree.

8 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: My thing is now, y'all only
9 putting money in Augusta, Georgia is because y'all
10 trying to displace the people that's the real community
11 people who done built Augusta up, and y'all trying to
12 move them out.

13 MR. RICHTER: So I'm wondering, again, I guess
14 what I'm confused at is, is the answer not to progress?

15 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It isn't if it's not
16 helping.

17 MR. RICHTER: Okay.

18 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: And that's like we said, the
19 solution is instead of tearing down the school how
20 about you put some of the students inside another
21 school? What we keep hearing is y'all trying to
22 destroy the school.

23 MR. RICHTER: No.

24 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: No, that is what y'all saying.

25 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Because, like I say, the

1 solution, (unintelligible). Why not just put these
2 students inside another school while you rebuild this
3 school up?

4 MR. RICHTER: That's what we're here for.

5 MR. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Off mic) (Unintelligible).

6 MR. RICHTER: Well, and that's, again, what the
7 plan was, and that's why we came here, to hear
8 suggestions just like that. And to discuss it with the
9 board, to say is this the right solution, to either
10 keep them together or move forward? (Unintelligible
11 cross-talk off mic).

12 MR. HAWES: All right. Good afternoon, everybody.
13 My name is Shaheen Hawes. I graduated class of 2016.
14 I was a member of the Sonic Boom South. I worked for
15 ROTC, and I also was a family career at Sonoma Science
16 League of America. So what I'm saying is, in this
17 description that we're having today, from my point of
18 view, it's like a lean on me thing. We're basically
19 like Joe Clark. They sent Derrias Priestley down here
20 to save the school. Now, he's saving the school, and
21 they don't like it. I'm just gonna cut it -- I ain't
22 got time to cut no corners with you. But big ups to
23 Derrias, because Derrias is actually doing what he
24 needs to do. And I salute you to that, because I met
25 him in sixth grade at Murphey Middle Charter School.

1 So from Murphey Middle to T.W. Josey, a couple
2 years of high school, things are gonna change, but the
3 thing that needs to change is we need to go back to how
4 we had it back in middle school, where we was forced to
5 go into the district that -- if we was in that
6 particular district, or we was in that school zone, we
7 had to go to that school zone. Y'all changed it.
8 Y'all took it out. So y'all made it hard for this
9 particular location to be populated. I mean, y'all
10 outcasted us, and made it seem like we such bad people,
11 but at the end of the day, when you come here to this
12 high school right here, then you find a home, you find
13 a family, you find love, you find peace here, and you
14 find encouragement. So a lot of leaders come right
15 here out of T.W. Josey Comprehensive High School. And
16 that's all I got to say.

17 So before we go on and make things change, and we
18 make all these good choices that we want to make for
19 J.R. and you, because they've got a street and they
20 want it, make sure you make the best decision and be
21 here for the people, the family, and the kids because
22 they need us right now today. That's why it's getting
23 so bad in the community.

24 So I'm here to talk to you guys today. I ain't
25 here to look at nobody back there. I want to talk to

1 y'all on this front row. When y'all shook my hand and
2 gave me my graduation diploma, you said have a nice
3 day, right? So, now, I'm here to display how we going
4 to make this thing better. Because we can't make it
5 better by closing down (unintelligible). That ain't
6 going to do nothing but start fighting, and then we're
7 really gonna get into a shootout. So before we even go
8 ahead and do all of that, let's protect the nest while
9 we're here tonight. And that's all I got to say.
10 Y'all have a nice day.

11 MS. WALKER: Hi, my name is Tantra Walker. Sorry.
12 I'm an alumni of Laney. I'm looking at a lot of the
13 people I went to school with. Growing up -- I'm
14 thirty-nine years old. I was born in Sunset. It got
15 torn down. The history is gone. I grew up at 646
16 (unintelligible) -- or 621 (unintelligible). Gone.
17 They tore that down. History gone. I say that to say,
18 I left in '04 to go into the military. I'm retired.
19 I'm a veteran. I moved back. My kids came home to go
20 to either Laney or Josey. All the way in Texas and
21 they're talking about Laney and Josey. And I say those
22 two names together because they go hand-in-hand. You
23 can't have Laney without having Josey. You take Josey
24 away, you take away the rest of the history.

25 Now, y'all talk about history, but why are y'all

1 taking the history away? You can't sit here and take
2 these kids away and think they're gonna come back.
3 It's not gonna happen. And like everybody else say,
4 you can sit here and say all day long that that's a
5 trained behavior. My parents went to Laney. Yes, it's
6 trained. You already know what school you're gonna go
7 to. When I had my kids in Texas, they knew they was
8 coming back home to Georgia to go to Laney or Josey.
9 So right now, they're at Laney. I got one that want a
10 wildcat and one wanna be an eagle. What? Eagle. They
11 don't have the programs that he need. So he has to go
12 to Josey. And you shake your head. But they had him.

13 MR. RICHTER: I agree.

14 MS. WALKER: They had him. So the money that
15 y'all are taking, put it back. Put it back. Give it
16 to these teachers so that they can teach these kids the
17 same things that we was taught.

18 Now, I do understand that there is a time that
19 there has to be change. But guess what? The change
20 has to start within the school. Just like it starts at
21 home, it starts in the school. It starts in the
22 community. You took everything that they had to bring
23 the students here. And yes, years ago, they might have
24 had buses, but guess what? It was kids that walked to
25 Laney, that walked to Josey, because they knew where

1 the best of the best was.

2 Now, most of these people that sit here that came
3 from Augusta, Georgia, they came from Laney and Josey.
4 The best principals that we have ever had came from
5 Laney and Josey. The best teachers came from Laney and
6 Josey.

7 I have a video on my phone from 2000 when I first
8 went into Laney. Guess what we had? We had a parade.
9 You didn't have a parade for Josey without having Laney
10 in it. You didn't have a parade with Laney without
11 having Josey in it. You can't have Augusta, Georgia
12 without Laney and Josey. You can't.

13 Now, grant it, I was in Iraq when they redid
14 Laney. But, I remember Lamar Village. When they redid
15 that school, they put us in portables. Don't tear the
16 school down because you're tearing down history. Put
17 portables out there and build on top of it. And it's
18 staying that way. It's cheaper. We're talking about
19 money being here, but let's keep it here the right way.
20 You can expand by putting portables out there and
21 keeping those kids here. You keep those kids here, you
22 keep the money here. That way people like myself
23 that's looking to buy, I'll buy here instead of staying
24 in Columbia County and driving my kids here. Because
25 guess what? They're gonna go to Laney or they're gonna

1 go to Josey. That is a thing in our family. You have
2 to have a diploma from Laney or Josey.

3 And I say that because the other guy, he was
4 retired military. He talked about proposals. Now,
5 proposing, as they say in the military, means it's
6 already happened. It already happened. And, now, the
7 only way that we gonna stop things like this from
8 happening is, for one, you can't keep coming in here
9 saying, well, we gonna propose when you already have
10 done it. You gotta be truthful about it. Stop doing
11 that. Because what you do is, you have an angry set of
12 people that comes out and they say, and they hear,
13 because guess what? All they hear all the time is,
14 what we're gonna do, what we're gonna do, and then you
15 go behind our back and you do something different.

16 You talk about the one-percent tax. You know that
17 one-percent tax get me every time I hit one of them
18 potholes? I drive a Mercedes Benz. Do the math. It
19 costs me. It costs me. Because guess what? When I
20 call the city to tell them that I hit a pothole and I
21 knock my car loose, they tell me, there's nothing we
22 can do about it. So it costs me more money with my
23 one-percent that I'm not even seeing already.

24 MR. RICHTER: And I'm not making that up. The
25 one-percent is a school --

1 MS. WALKER: There's a one-percent tax that we
2 pay -- that we pay already. Now, you said when you was
3 talking to that young man that we was gonna be paying
4 like a one-percent sales tax, or whatever the case may
5 be, because you didn't have the (unintelligible) to
6 your phone to hear all of it. But you talked about the
7 loan and how we was gonna pay it back. And you said
8 something about a one-percent sales tax. But our
9 one-percent sales tax ain't even getting us the right
10 roads. So I know it ain't gonna get us the right
11 school.

12 MR. RICHTER: Okay. I'm going to put this mic up
13 because the one-percent sales tax, it's called ESPLOST.

14 MS. WALKER: Uh-huh.

15 MR. RICHTER: It's for schools. It's not for
16 roads. It's not for infrastructure. The city passes
17 taxes on that. So the ESPLOST is a school program.

18 And so -- and what I'm going to promise you is
19 forty-three million --

20 MS. WALKER: No. Don't promise. Don't do it.
21 You already promised --

22 MR. RICHTER: The decision has been made --
23 (Unintelligible cross-talk).

24 MS. WALKER: (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

25 MR. RICHTER: The decision to build -- to spend

1 forty-three million has been made to be invested right
2 here. You're right.

3 MS. WALKER: Exactly.

4 MS. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Okay. All right. So, I
5 just wanna say first, Josey isn't just a school for me.
6 It's a legacy. All my people that came from Josey, my
7 mama, my daddy, my brother, I got aunties, uncles, and
8 a whole lot of lineages that came from here. Without
9 Josey, I wouldn't be here. My parents they've been
10 here at this very school. Y'all don't understand.
11 It's different. I've been to every single school in
12 the city, for real, for real. Like, I've been to
13 A.R. Johnson. I've been to Davidson. I've been to all
14 the magnet schools. I started in a magnet school.
15 It's nothing like Josey. When I came here, I felt
16 something different. I felt the family. I felt love,
17 trust. Y'all ain't never gonna get that if y'all don't
18 come here.

19 This person right beside me, it's my number one
20 competitor. Every time I step in the classroom I'm
21 thinking, dang, what grades did Kyra got? I'm trying
22 to compete with Kyra. I'm trying to be valedictorian.
23 That's why I came here. This my competition right
24 here. Y'all don't understand that. It's a different
25 level. It's a different level of bondage when you come

1 here. I got teachers behind me every single day.

2 I walk in that office late every morning. I see
3 Ms. Williams. She gonna say something to me. We gonna
4 laugh. I'm gonna go to class happy. Every morning,
5 I'm gonna see Ms. Huffman in the hallway. She gonna
6 say, good morning. I'm gonna see Ms. Dan. She gonna
7 tell me to turn in my work.

8 Every single morning, these people are setting me
9 up for greatness. I would never think I was gonna
10 succeed the way I have. When I went to them schools
11 before, I wasn't too confident. I didn't feel like I
12 was gonna get nowhere for real. When I came here, I
13 felt that. I knew, okay, I got a future. I ain't never
14 understood my future more than when I was at Josey. I
15 never thought I was gonna be able to go to college for
16 real. I'm thinking in my head, like, man, that's a lot
17 of money. I came here, these people were telling me,
18 like, you got all these scholarships. You got all
19 these opportunities. These people opening doors for
20 me. Every single morning, I come in here. Y'all don't
21 understand. I ain't never sat in no classroom and be
22 like, wow, I'm really learning something. I really
23 understand this. I'm teaching other people. Y'all
24 don't understand what I'm saying? It's a different
25 level when you come to this school. It's more than

1 just a school. It's this family, this blood. Every
2 morning, I'm coming in here. I'm ready to see my
3 friends. I'm ready to see my people.

4 Y'all not understanding that I got a 3.97. All
5 this time, I sat here with a 3.1, struggling, fighting.
6 I had a 3.7 for so long. 3.1 for so long. I came to
7 this school with a 3.97, like that. You see what I'm
8 saying? Because these people pushed me. These people
9 care about me. You feel me? I go home, my mama proud.
10 Like, y'all don't understand that. My brother, he
11 graduated. With the little bit he had, he was a Corp
12 team graduate. Do y'all know what that mean? That boy
13 didn't get to walk across no stage. I do, and y'all
14 taking that from me. This my last year. You see what
15 I'm saying? Y'all don't understand the type of stuff
16 that we go through every morning. Y'all separate us
17 up. I'm not gonna care about my school. Y'all still
18 saying, like, I come in here every day, ready, ready to
19 fight, ready to see. Damn, what I'm gonna do today?
20 What grades I'm gonna get? I ain't gonna be able to do
21 that if I go to another school. I'm gonna have to go
22 to Laney. Yeah, I got friends there, but they not
23 La'Kyra. They not Yazzies. They not Madmans. They
24 not Daryl. They not none of that. They not gonna push
25 me. My teachers push me every single morning. Are

1 y'all hearing me? Y'all not gonna get that. Y'all not
2 gonna get that level of dedication, that level of
3 success. I see people from my past. People that's
4 been here before me that's succeeding. I see people
5 who got older friends, they got businesses, they being
6 somebody. Y'all not gonna get that without no Josey.

7 MS. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Off mic) (Unintelligible).

8 MS. STOVALL: Can you join me up here, ma'am?

9 MS. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Yeah. Sure.

10 MS. STOVALL: What's your name?

11 MS. ROBINSON: My name is Shirley Robinson --

12 MS. STOVALL: Hi, Ms. Robinson.

13 MS. ROBINSON: -- class of '98.

14 MS. STOVALL: Ms. Robinson, can you say what you
15 need to say in two minutes?

16 MS. ROBINSON: Yeah.

17 MS. STOVALL: Okay.

18 MS. ROBINSON: I sure can. So, again, I came up
19 here to inform the people, the constituents, the
20 taxpayers, the voters, the power that you still do
21 have. Please don't leave this here gym feeling
22 powerless, feeling like that lady, that retired lady
23 that just stormed out of here said, ain't it already
24 decided? Like I saw the defeat in her walk away. We
25 ain't defeated, y'all.

1 November the 3rd. They have to disclose how they
2 voted on this. And that could dictate the way that you
3 vote. They won't get to keep not giving us answers,
4 not allocating those funds properly, not being able to
5 tell us how they even got allocated or where we're at.
6 Because I got a lot of sentences and words said to me
7 at that lunch, but no answers.

8 Now, I'm back as of 2023. I live here now. I pay
9 taxes on (unintelligible). I'm going to be a financial
10 thorn in the Board of Education side. Y'all are going
11 to have to be transparent with me. I'm going to insist
12 upon it. And I'm going to blare it all over everywhere
13 if there's any improprieties, if there's any
14 misallocations, if there's any backroom deals with the
15 developers from MCG, Georgia (unintelligible) for this
16 land, I'm going to find it. I promise you that. This
17 is not a threat. This isn't a personal attack. This
18 is a promise. This is a promise to avoid your names on
19 the ballot like the plague. If you close this school.
20 If you change the name, if you mess with the colors of
21 the mascots, or you don't allow these children to cross
22 that stage.

23 That baby just sat up there and told you she ain't
24 going to get the same effort at another building.
25 They're telling you this, these students. And you're

1 still sitting on there. And you can go to sleep at
2 night. On your very -- I'm sure you got really good
3 mattresses, three thousand dollar ones from Mattress
4 Firm, the ones that let up and down and zero gravity
5 and all. And y'all going to sleep great because you
6 don't live here. You said that at the lunch. This
7 ain't affecting your property taxes. This ain't
8 affecting you and your children and the legacy here.
9 Y'all should have heard Deion Grant at the lunch and
10 talk about how these sport programs saved him from the
11 streets of Southside -- out the projects of Southside.
12 He goes on to do so much for this community, for other
13 communities, because of the athletics here. And they
14 can't even tell or be specific on what athletics will
15 return.

16 So, no, we need answers. We need transparency.
17 And we got a bunch of nothing from y'all tonight. And
18 we're sick of it. And we're going to show you how sick
19 of it we are -- when, y'all?

20 MS. STOVALL: Thank you, ma'am.

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Good evening. My name is Stan
22 Williams. And, tonight, I want to tell you what this
23 school has done for me. A little bit about my life
24 here at Josey. I'm a graduate in the first graduating
25 class from Josey, 1966. And after graduation, I

1 entered into the military. And I met my wife here when
2 I was at Josey. After the military, I came home,
3 married my high school sweetheart, Gwen Williams.
4 We've been married now for fifty-four years. We have
5 three kids, three grandkids. And I'm a retiree from
6 the state of Georgia. She is also a state retiree. I
7 was a retired forensic technician. And after
8 retirement, I got into real estate. And I'm a
9 twenty-five year veteran of real estate. And we are
10 homeowners. As I said, we have three lovely grandkids.

11 And this is what this school has done for me. And
12 I'm hoping that some of the kids here can testify as
13 I'm testifying tonight what this school has done for
14 me. Now, this lady, we've been married fifty-four
15 years now. And we both have had successful working
16 careers -- very successful.

17 So I want to say, I'm hoping that the school will
18 stay. I do understand the numbers that the gentleman
19 described. And as my classmate Ervin White said, if
20 you look around the neighborhood, all you see is
21 grown-up lots now where kids used to live. It doesn't
22 exist anymore. Southside is gone. High Park is gone.
23 I remember when I was in school here, kids from High
24 Park, Southside, and you had a thriving community all
25 around Josey. All of that is gone now. So we have to

1 take all of that into consideration. That there was a
2 need back in the early '60s. But the need is just
3 about fading away.

4 Now, as Reverend Williams said, you have to
5 rebuild. And I want to say this. I served on the city
6 board for four years. Carlos Ivey here was one of my
7 colleagues on the housing and development work. We did
8 a lot at revitalizing the middle of the city.

9 And we got the Twigg Street corridor built. But
10 we never did get a chance to make it out to this area.
11 But it takes money. It takes money coming from
12 Washington DC to build communities. And I do
13 understand that.

14 But, now, if we can find a way to put those houses
15 back, take a ride around the neighborhood yourself,
16 you'll see where homes used to be, they're growing up
17 lots now, all up and down 15th Street. The only house
18 I see that's still standing is the Carpenter family on
19 the corner of DeWitt and 15th Street. That's the only
20 house that I see where homes -- where kids used to go
21 to school here.

22 Up and down Sunset Avenue. I remember when
23 students used to live at this grown-up lot, that
24 grown-up lot. All of that is gone now. So take that
25 into consideration. I know we don't want to see the

1 school go, but you have to look at what is reality.
2 Reality is everything is gone.

3 Now, back in 1963 and '64, I was a sophomore at
4 Lucy Laney High School. There were seven hundred
5 people expected to be graduating in my class. They
6 couldn't house us all at Laney, so they moved the
7 prison from here to Tobacco Road, and they built this
8 school. They had to because there was a need.

9 And what I'm saying is that you had a thriving
10 community all around Josey. And you had about seven
11 hundred people that were due to graduate from Laney.
12 So they had to split our class up. Half stayed over at
13 Laney, and the other half came to Josey. And we came
14 here during the year of 1964 and '65 as juniors.
15 Graduated in the year of 1965-66.

16 So there was a need, but that need is just about
17 fading away. I know you're putting the pressure on the
18 board members here tonight, but the board members
19 cannot go out and build these houses back. I mean, and
20 they can't put Hyde Park back where it used to be, or
21 Southside. All of that is gone. I'd love to see it
22 stay. This is where I met my wife. This is where my
23 life began. But we have to face reality. So the
24 reality is that there's no need anymore.

25 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the

1 audience.)

2 MR. WILLIAMS: There you go. Well, I'm retired
3 from real estate now. I don't have the money. You
4 know, we sat on the same board with the city. And you
5 know what kind of money it takes to build communities.
6 You have to get the funding from the federal
7 government.

8 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
9 audience.)

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Right. And you were also a city
11 council person.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
13 audience.)

14 My mom helped plan Josey. That's right. She also
15 helped Mr. Reese in planning Josey.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: I remember those days.

17 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Now, I have a love for Josey
18 that a lot won't understand. I told him two years ago,
19 it would be over my dead body if they closed this
20 school. And if I had a gun tonight, he might be dead.

21 MS. STOVALL: Okay. So, I understand. I
22 understand. So we will not have threats. It was a
23 threat. We will not. So we will not have threats. We
24 can't have threats. Because a conversation cannot
25 happen when we refuse to hear and listen to each other.

1 So let me say this -- thank you, sir, very much.

2 We hear you. And we are listening. I would like
3 to say something -- to the response to what the young
4 lady said about in the military. I was in the
5 military. I'm a veteran. And I'm a veteran myself.
6 And the difference between there and here is that there
7 are different standards that the military are judged
8 by. One of the things I would like to clarify is no
9 decision has not been made. No, it hasn't. And I'll
10 stand on that. Because what happens is our integrity,
11 and I can't speak for nobody else about their
12 integrity, but I can speak for mine. No decision has
13 not been made.

14 Because this is a plan. The young lady that was
15 sitting here beside me, this is how I explained it to
16 her. I asked, were they married? And she said, no,
17 not yet. I said, he's going to propose to you. And
18 you're going to set a date. We have an idea of how we
19 want our wedding to look like. But somewhere along the
20 way, some things happen. We may have to change venues.
21 We may have to change dates. But we know we're going
22 to get married because we're in the proposal area.
23 Nine out of the ten board members were here. And some
24 of the same questions that you had, we've asked. I
25 took notes.

1 We asked about when we had a presentation at the
2 board member meeting about gangs. And we said, with
3 all the different gangs that's happening in our
4 neighborhoods, how are we thinking about mixing kids
5 from different neighborhoods? How are we going to work
6 that out? Are we going to propose more SR rolls? Are
7 we going to be able to have mediation? Like, what is
8 that going to look like?

9 We can't spend money. And I think he addressed
10 that. If you've ever had a business, you know that as a
11 business owner, you cannot spend your business money on
12 personal things. Every year, the Board of Education is
13 audited by a third party. And that audit is released.
14 You are welcome at any time to contact the Board of
15 Education and request a copy of the audit. We have to
16 turn it in to the state.

17 No decision has been made, ladies and gentlemen.
18 And I'm telling you, as a person who lives in this
19 community, that we are here because we want to hear
20 your ideas. Yes, we did do Richmond Academy, and they
21 were in portables. That's an idea. Every board member
22 on here has proposed some kind of idea. But we want to
23 have the opportunity to hear what you have to say. One
24 of the things I always say is not one person knows
25 everything. But if you get us all together to work

1 together, somebody in this room has an answer. And
2 that's what the meetings are about.

3 I know that you're attached to your school and the
4 history. This school was built in 1965. It has been
5 updated twice, and that's just within the past twenty
6 years.

7 As Ms. Robinson said, you deserve a better
8 building. You deserve to have state-of-the-art
9 classrooms. You deserve to have more programs. How
10 are we going to have competitive education? Everybody
11 compares us to Columbia County. But you know what
12 Columbia County does, they don't necessarily listen to
13 their people. They make the decisions that's best for
14 their students and their goals. But here we are in
15 front of you, listening to you call us by any name, but
16 who we are. Accusing us of using money. But, we're
17 here to hear you and to work with you to figure out
18 what the best solution is.

19 A proposal is an idea. And if everybody has an
20 idea about the proposal, then let's work together to
21 find a better idea. The ones that will keep our
22 children first. No person that is employed at Josey or
23 Jenkins-White or Murphey will lose a job. Nobody. We
24 were adamant about that as a board. If you are
25 employed with Richmond County School System, you will

1 stay employed with Richmond County School System unless
2 you decide to leave.

3 I have three daughters that graduated from
4 Richmond County School System. And the one thing I
5 take pride in is that my village surrounded my
6 daughters to help them when I was struggling. I was a
7 homeless parent living out of a motel on the corner of
8 Gordon Highway and North Land Road. Because I had no
9 other choice. And it was the teachers and my community
10 that rallied around me and my daughters to help us be
11 better. And that same community can rally around these
12 students to also help them be better.

13 House Bill 521 says a parent can choose to send
14 their student to any school within the district as long
15 as that school has room. Maybe one of the questions we
16 should ask is how can we get parents to use that House
17 Bill to send their students to Josey? We deserve, and
18 when I say we, I mean a community. We deserve a state
19 of the art school. And if that means maybe we have to
20 be in the portables for two or three years. Maybe.
21 Maybe we might can use Tubman. Maybe. But Tubman's in
22 a bad shape too, so it's like going from bad to worse.
23 But there are solutions in this room.

24 All I ask is that when you come to the next
25 meeting, and the next meeting between then and now,

1 please write out your ideas. After each meeting, our
2 administration will be here. Board members will be
3 here. Because we can't fix this by ourselves. It's
4 going to take you supporting us, helping us, and
5 working with us. We want to hear you. I take notes
6 every time. But we have not made a decision. What we
7 did vote on was for the proposal to be presented.
8 That's what we voted on. We voted on the proposal that
9 was shown here to be presented to the community. And
10 we are going to hear what you have to say. And then
11 take those things and come back on February 10th. And
12 we're going to make a decision. Everybody's not going
13 to like it. Some people are going to be for it.
14 There's going to be people -- if we decide to keep the
15 school and do the portables, they're not going to like
16 it. There's going to be some people, if we decide to
17 put them in another school and remodel the school,
18 they're not going to like it. But one thing that we
19 talk about as a board is, what's best for the thirty
20 thousand kids? What's best for the students of Josey?
21 Not what's best for the alumni. Not what's best for my
22 mom and them. I get all of that. Because history is
23 important. But I want our students to have a
24 state-of-the-art school. I don't want our students
25 going to Columbia County. I don't want our students

1 coming out of the neighborhoods.

2 I live in East Augusta, right behind
3 (unintelligible). I'm on my commissioner all the time
4 about, hey, man, my street's still flooding. I want us
5 to be open to hearing different ideas and keeping in
6 mind, not what it was when you were here, but what it
7 can be. Because what's happening is the world is
8 changing. And we do not want our students to get left
9 behind. We want our students to come into a classroom
10 that prepares them to have a job in 2035.

11 Because some of the stuff, sir, can imagine that
12 in 1966, you couldn't even fathom what we're doing in
13 2025. So in 2025, we can't fathom what they'll be
14 doing in 2050. And we want our kids to have the best
15 opportunity. If that means that we got to sit down
16 with each other and figure this thing out, then, folks
17 that's what we need to do. We don't have no control
18 over the city, ma'am. And I wish that is one of our
19 desires is for us to work with the commissioners.
20 Because a lot of times the (unintelligible) they hear
21 is transparency. Since we want to be transparent. A
22 lot of the decisions that the city makes twist our
23 hands in the decisions that we make.

24 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
25 audience.)

1 MS. STOVALL: Well, then ma'am, I want you to call
2 your commissioners. But as of right now -- now, here's
3 the thing. We're here. We're here. So let me ask
4 you -- let me ask you this, ma'am. Let me ask you
5 this. We're here. So now what? Do we keep arguing
6 about it? Or do we find a solution that makes it
7 better?

8 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
9 audience.)

10 MS. STOVALL: Okay. So that's in November 3rd,
11 ma'am. We take this to February. So what do we do?
12 Do we just wait and give up until November 3rd, and you
13 kick those people out, and then some other people come
14 in, and they're still faced with the same decisions
15 that the city made that rolls down to us, that the
16 state made? Or do you and I sit down together, and we
17 talk, and we work, and we try to figure out a way to
18 make sure this school gets the best that it can get?
19 The name -- listen, the name is important. We cannot,
20 and I'm not going to argue with anybody. The name is
21 important. The history is important. You present us
22 the name, we're going to vote for it. But what I want
23 us to focus on is our students. They deserve to have
24 the best facilities. Our teachers deserve to have the
25 best resources. And our community deserve to have the

1 best school in the community. So we can work together
2 on that.

3 Our board meeting is next week. Please come.
4 Please come.

5 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
6 audience.)

7 MS. STOVALL: No, it's not. No, it's not.
8 Because -- and I'll say this to you. We don't respond
9 because the superintendent runs the system. And the
10 superintendent has someone to reach out from her
11 administration to reach out to respond to the concerns.
12 No, we don't call you. No, ma'am, the Board of
13 Education don't call you because we don't run the
14 school system.

15 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
16 audience.)

17 MS. STOVALL: The last two weeks ago. I want to
18 say, two weeks ago. Yes. So that was something
19 separate. But we have a board meeting, 864 Broad
20 Street. We have our committee and board meeting next
21 Tuesday, starting at 4 o'clock. At the end of the board
22 meeting, we have public comment. You can call, request
23 to be on for public comment. We hear. Our
24 superintendent makes sure someone responds. Our
25 superintendent doesn't run our deputy superintendents,

1 our staff member. We face the tough questions. So
2 we're going to fix this. It's going to take a
3 partnership of the community.

4 All we vote on is the solutions that's presented
5 to us. So if you have a solution, please offer it up.
6 With the gentlemen and the women that stays back in the
7 back, please offer it up, because they will put it
8 together and present us with another proposal, and we
9 either vote yea or nay.

10 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
11 audience.)

12 MS. STOVALL: We tried to meet with commissioners,
13 ma'am. You can't force nobody to do what they don't
14 want to do.

15 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
16 audience.)

17 MS. STOVALL: Well, then, ma'am, that's not on us,
18 because I'm just one vote. I'm just one vote. Okay?
19 So I thank everyone for coming. We will have our next
20 meeting.

21 Michael, you'll tell us about our next meeting.
22 Please come. Please come. Share your ideas. If you
23 want to have an idea, send it to one of our e-mails.
24 We'll pass it on to our administration. We want to get
25 the answers that make sure our students get the best

1 facilities. It's not going to be easy. It's not.
2 Nobody's going to stand up here and tell you that it's
3 not. It's not going to be easy.

4 But a decision must be made. And we need your
5 help to make the decision. You're welcome.

6 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Unintelligible speaker from the
7 audience.)

8 MS. STOVALL: And we are trying our best to do
9 that, ma'am. And that's why we're here to take the
10 questions.

11 MR. MYERS: And we will be here. The staff
12 members will be here to talk. The 26th at 6 p.m. And
13 the 27th at noon, that will be at the central office
14 down on Broad Street. So make sure you come out for
15 that.

16 Real quick, I want you to understand this. Public
17 hearings. Those are the public hearings. And I want
18 to make sure I -- and we'll be here to continue the
19 conversation and to talk real quick. Because, as
20 again, we talk about liaison between moving things,
21 understanding communications. I will be here to give
22 my information.

23 Also, if anybody wants to take this down my
24 number. You can send me a text. You can e-mail me.
25 If you have a question, send it in. We have a website

1 that is running that will keep up. Ms. Haley, they are
2 continuing to monitor questions. This is so important
3 to us to make sure that -- right, right.

4 All the meetings, the information is out already.
5 But they will be -- we will make sure we, again, put
6 them out so that you can have the dates and the times.
7 We are doing everything we can to continue the process
8 of transparency to make sure people understand the
9 information, what's going on, and when you can be a
10 part of the conversation.

11 All right? The 26th at 4 p.m. at I'm at Barton
12 Chapel, the 27th -- 6 p.m., excuse me. The 26th at
13 Barton Chapel, 6 p.m. 27th at 12 noon at the central
14 office. My phone number is 706-945-6002. Text me.
15 Send me an e-mail. Call. I will get back to you. I
16 want you to understand, this is how important it is to
17 the board members, the superintendent, executive staff,
18 that we have this communication. We do not want to
19 answer -- we do not want a question unanswered.
20 Please, stick around. We'll be here to answer these
21 things. Thank you so much.

22 And don't forget the signs are up if you have
23 direct questions for certain places. Transportation,
24 teaching, finance, those things. Everyone have a good
25 night. We look forward to seeing you. We look forward

1 to seeing you on the 26th for our -- next week we have
2 a school board meeting. So please come back for that.
3 (The hearing concluded at 9:28 p.m.)
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D I S C L O S U R E

STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF RICHMOND

Pursuant to Article 10.B. of the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Court Reporting of the Judicial Council of Georgia, I make the following disclosure:

I am a Georgia Certified Court Reporter. I am here as a representative of Veritext Legal Solutions.

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Date: January 15, 2026; Kimbely Griffin, CCR, CVR

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF GEORGIA:

COUNTY OF RICHMOND:

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript was taken down, as stated in the caption, and the colloquy, questions, and answers thereto, were reduced to typewriting under my direction; that the foregoing pages 1 through 140 represents a true, complete, and correct transcript of the evidence given.

The above certification is expressly withdrawn and denied upon the disassembly or photocopying of the foregoing transcript, unless said disassembly or photocopying is done under the auspices of Veritext Legal Solutions, and the signature and original seal is attached thereto.

I further certify that I am not related to or are of counsel to the parties in the case. I am not in the regular employ of counsel for any of said parties; nor am I in any way interested in the result of said case.

This, the 22nd day of January, 2026.



Kimbely Griffin, CCR, CVR

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