

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
(Official)

June 19, 2014  
Elizabeth, New Jersey

A special meeting of the Board of Education was called on June 19, 2014 at 6:00 p.m., in the Multi Purpose Room, Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education, 544 Pennsylvania Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Board President Tony Monteiro presented the following statement at 6:37 p.m.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is a special meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting was sent to The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on Friday, June 13, 2014. In addition, this notice is posted on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of 500 North Broad Street, and pursuant to this act, a copy has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth.”

“I wish to extend a warm welcome to everyone present to this June 19, 2014 meeting of the Board of Education. We are here to govern, provide management oversight, and make policy for the district. The Superintendent manages the district. This is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

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

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

Present: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Monteiro – 7

Absent: Ms. Bathelus, Mr. Trujillo – 2

Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Supervising General Counsel/Board Attorney Marvin Lehman, Assistant Board Secretary Donald Gonçalves and members of the public were in attendance.

Mr. González gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Ethics

Core Beliefs and Commitments

Mr. Monteiro thanked everyone for attending the meeting tonight. Mr. Monteiro thanked the technology department for putting this meeting together and everything they do all year.

Mr. Monteiro presented the following public participation statement.

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

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

Maria Echavarria, 321 Westfield Avenue, thanked the Superintendent for agreeing to attend a meeting scheduled for next month for special education.

Mr. Monteiro thanked her for her comments. Mr. Monteiro called twice for the next public participant, Jennifer Rosel, to address the Board. Since she did not come forward, Mr. Monteiro called upon the next public participant, Crissy Lockhart, to address the Board.

Crissy Lockhart, PTA President at Halsey, spoke about the parent liaison positions and stated she had a petition with 102 names against the elimination of the parent liaison positions.

Mr. Monteiro thanked her for her comments. Mr. Monteiro called upon the next public participant, Sandra Coco, to address the Board.

Sandra Coco, Past President of PTA at School 19, stated that we are losing many of our youth and need to keep them encouraged and spoke about the elimination of the parent liaison positions. Mrs. Coco stated that her grandson will be attending Nyack Christian College in September.

Mr. Monteiro thanked all the parents for taking the time to come here to speak. Mr. Monteiro stated that this was one of the most difficult budget years that we have faced here in a long time in the City of Elizabeth. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Board of Education is not a money making organization and is at the mercy of the funds that come from the State and federal government as well as our local taxpayers. Mr. Monteiro stated that this year our budget was cut back and we had to deal with what was given to us. Mr. Monteiro stated that we understand all too well the pain you feel because it starts right here at the Elizabeth Board of Education. Mr. Monteiro stated that it is one of the single most difficult things, we have to reorganize and deal with the numbers and it is not just our district facing it, the State is facing it and many school districts throughout the State and the country are facing the same situation. Mr. Monteiro stated that it is a never ending dilemma we face and that we try to do more with less. Mr. Monteiro stated that clearly we have moved this district in a direction that no other urban school district has in the State of New Jersey. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are certainly saddened by the cuts and hopefully in time and with other measures we are hoping to take we can revisit certain things.

Mr. Perreira stated that he was part of the Finance Committee and that it was a very difficult and nerve-racking task to have to decide when people's livelihoods are affected. Mr. Perreira stated that they understand the difference that it is going to make to the school environment because in some cases like the speakers said they have had a great positive parent liaison who he knows personally and that makes it much more difficult. Mr. Perreira stated that whether or not it can happen we will definitely look and turn every stone but if it doesn't bring

back that position we will definitely make sure that there are avenues available to make sure we keep up the same level of service to the children and to the parents which is one of key components that we need at the high school level for the kids to be able to succeed. Mr. Perreira thanked the speakers for attending and stated that they are very committed at Halsey. Mr. Perreira stated that he is committed to keeping the services and if the parents have ideas to please reach out to him or his colleagues. Mr. Perreira offered his phone number to the speakers and thanked them for their commitment.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina thanked them for their concerns and stated that she understands what it is like to have a reduction in force and this is one of the hardest decisions we have to make in order to continue the services. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina commented that she appreciates the commitment of the parents and stated that this decision is very hard for all of us.

Mr. Neron thanked the parents for coming and expressing their concern. Mr. Neron stated that they should not give up, not on us and not on our children because it is extremely important that their involvement continues and that we advocate to keep these programs going and that's what we are here to do. Mr. Neron stated that we all advocate for them and this is a difficult time with the budget cuts and cuts we have to make. Mr. Neron stated that if it wasn't that position it would be another position and something would have to go and it is a very difficult time with the budget constraints that we do have. Mr. Neron encouraged them to continue to advocate and get other parents to advocate and stay involved because without parents we will not succeed and our children will not succeed. Mr. Neron stated that it is absolutely right that we are losing many of our youth and we need to keep them encouraged and keep them involved. Mr. Neron congratulated the young man who is going to Nyack College and commented that he should come back, show his support and mentor others to do the same. Mr. Neron thanked his parents for their tenacity and encouragement of what they have been doing over the years and the involvement that they have had.

Mr. Fajardo stated that he understands and he remembers when the parent liaison positions were first in the budget in 1997. Mr. Fajardo stated that we understood the need of parent liaisons in the schools and it has worked to bridge the gap between school and home. Mr. Fajardo stated that he assures that we will do what we can to find money somewhere. Mr. Fajardo stated that his children attended the Elizabeth Public Schools and graduated from Elizabeth High School. Mr. Fajardo stated that 50% of the work is from the schools and 50% is the responsibility of the parents. Mr. Fajardo stated that taxes are tremendously high in the City of Elizabeth and this Board of Education raised taxes less than 15% over the last 12 years. Mr. Fajardo stated that the taxes are high not because of the Board of Education but because of the City government raising taxes tremendously. Mr. Fajardo stated that when people say it's the Board of Education raising taxes so high, that is a lie. Mr. Fajardo stated that we are mindful of the people of Elizabeth and the taxes. Mr. Fajardo stated that we are very mindful of the position of parent liaison and it was a very painful and difficult decision. Mr. Fajardo stated that he will do his very best to try and find the funding somewhere.

Mr. Monteiro thanked the parents for coming tonight and stated that we appreciate parent involvement because it is one of our battlecries. Mr. Monteiro stated that as great as the schools are becoming in Elizabeth what will put us over the top, not only to being the best urban school district but the best public school district in the State if not the country, is parent participation. Mr. Monteiro stated that we need more parents being involved, not just at our Board meetings, but being involved in the schools. Mr. Monteiro stated that as PTA/PTO Presidents they understand how weak participation is and we need to do more and we need to have this room filled with parents. Mr. Monteiro commented that as Mr. Fajardo stated that unfortunately everyone knows too well the politics in this City. Mr. Monteiro asked could you just imagine if the two could ever get together at a table like this, sit in a roundtable, and we probably have a lot more in common than not. Mr. Monteiro stated that there is an old African saying that when two elephants fight only the grass gets hurt. Mr. Monteiro stated that in our case it is the children of

the City of Elizabeth because we are all Elizabethans and we all love our City. Mr. Monteiro stated that he is born and raised here, our Superintendent from Elizabeth, our former Superintendent from Elizabeth and attended the Elizabeth school system and it is nice to see that we are still here and fighting for our wonderful City. Mr. Monteiro stated that certainly we have our problems and are not a yet perfect school district. Mr. Monteiro stated that these are difficult times and commended Board member Paul Perreira who is the Chairperson of the Finance Committee and had to oversee one of the most difficult budgets that we have faced in many years. Mr. Monteiro stated that there were many long hours with the Superintendent, back and forth, and we were pulled into so many meetings and the last thing we wanted to see was for anyone to lose their job, people with families, and wonderful people we know. Mr. Monteiro recognized Rose Carreto, Elizabeth Education Association President, who was present and as President has to endure the agony of many of the members who are facing difficult times. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are well aware and wish we could do more. Mr. Monteiro stated that if we had more cooperation with our City government and State officials he is sure we could do more. Mr. Monteiro stated that what was unfortunate was that last year we had a small increase in our budget and it was played out in the media and in propaganda that the Board of Education is responsible for all the ills and property taxes in the City. Mr. Monteiro stated that it is so unfortunate for both sides because we both lose when we play that propaganda game because at the end of the day it only hurts the children. Mr. Monteiro stated that they have a hard time at City Hall, too and have to face the same with the 2% tax caps and they have their difficulties like we do and certainly we need more cops but they don't have the money to hire more. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are going through this together and he wishes we could do it together being in a room and share different views. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are going to turn every stone, as Mr. Perreira stated, and we are not looking to cut back on services to the children and we want to continue the progress that is happening. Mr. Monteiro stated that every Board member here does not get paid and they serve with passion and with love and are committed to the City. Mr. Monteiro stated that we may have our differences we may not always agree and that is a great democracy but when it is all said and done, the children come first. Mr. Monteiro thanked everyone for coming tonight and stated that we are all accessible with phones and emails and to please feel free to reach out to us, come to more of our meetings and let's work through these difficult times together and keep the faith. Mr. Monteiro thanked them all for coming.

Mr. Fajardo congratulated Christopher on his acceptance to Nyack Christian College and stated that the support of his family is the 50% he was speaking about earlier. Mr. Fajardo stated that with 50% of the work from the school and the other 50% family support our children can succeed. Mr. Fajardo thanked the parents for their involvement in their children's education.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he had the pleasure of attending one of the parent participation meetings at Terence C. Reilly School No. 7 and when he walked in at 9:30 a.m. he was so surprised to see the meeting room packed with passionate parents and the enthusiasm was incredible and contagious. Mr. Monteiro thanked every one for being here tonight.

Since there were no other citizens signed in to address the Board, Mr. Monteiro declared this portion of the public meeting closed.

The Board went into recess at 7:10 p.m.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, Gonzalez, Perreira, Rodriguez, and Monteiro reconvened at 7:25 p.m.

Personnel Report – Retirements, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. González, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Perreira, Rodriguez, Monteiro – 6

Negative: None

#### Superintendent's Report – Use of Facilities

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. Perreira, that the requests be approved with a waiver of fees.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Perreira, Rodriguez (abstain- At Heart's Length), Monteiro – 6

Negative: None

Mr. Neron returned to the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

#### Authorizations Report – Authorization for Use of School Bus, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. González, seconded by Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Monteiro – 7

Negative: None

Mr. González stated that we are providing services to the United Youth.

Mr. Rodriguez asked about the program.

Mr. González explained that the program is for after school and summer for our children and is a great program.

The President requests a motion to go into Private Session to consider matters exempt under the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically for the Superintendent's Evaluation, Superintendent of Schools Annual Performance Report, Board Member Self Evaluation, School Board's Professional Development Improvement Plan, for discussion of personnel, specifically C.S., reorganization; authorizations, specifically building acquisitions. The Board will reconvene in public to take formal action.

A motion was made by Mr. González, seconded by Mr. Fajardo, to go into private session at 7:30 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Monteiro – 7

Negative: None

The Board reconvened in public at 1:00 a.m.

#### Resolution – Reorganization – Job Description for Technology Coach

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. Rodriguez, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez,  
Mrs. Castillo-Ospina - 6  
Negative: None

Resolution – Authorization to Enter into Contract – Acquisition of Buildings

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. González, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez,  
Mrs. Castillo-Ospina - 6  
Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Assistant Superintendent for Family and Community Outreach effective July 1, 2014 – Jennifer Cedenó

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. González, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez,  
Mrs. Castillo-Ospina - 6  
Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Principal effective July 1, 2014 – Theodore Panagopoulos

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. Neron, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez,  
Mrs. Castillo-Ospina – 6  
Negative: None

On a motion by Mr. González, seconded by Mr. Neron, the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 a.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez,  
Mrs. Castillo-Ospina – 6  
Negative: None

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