THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

MINUTES

Meeting of: December 2, 2002
Call of the Meeting: Regular Meeting
Members Present: Mr. Brentley, Mrs. Colaizzi
Mrs. Fink, Mrs. Harris, Mr. Isler,
Mr. Matthews  Mr. McCrea
Mr. Taylor, Mrs. Wood
Present 9.
Members Absent: Absent 0.

The following matters were received and acted upon.

Actions taken are recorded following the reports.
THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15213
Administration Building
341 South Bellefield Avenue

December 2, 2002

AGENDA

Election of Officers and Conduct General Business

TEMPORARY ORGANIZATION

1. Election of Temporary President
   Roll Call

2. Election of Temporary Secretary
   Roll Call

PERMANENT ORGANIZATION

1. Election of President
   Roll Call

2. Election of Vice Presidents
   Roll Call

ELECTION OF SECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES AND SETTING OF BONDS
   Roll Call

ELECTION OF SCHOOL TREASURER AND DEPUTY SCHOOL TREASURER AND SETTING OF BONDS
   Roll Call

NEW BUSINESS
   Roll Call

We are an equal rights and opportunity school district.
ELECTION OF SECRETARY AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES AND SETTING OF BONDS

RESOLVED, That John W. Thompson, Ph.D. be elected as Secretary of the Board of Public Education in addition to his other duties as Superintendent of Schools, without additional salary, and that bond for the office be set at $250,000, the bond to be furnished at the cost of the Board.

RESOLVED FURTHER, That Stephanie L. Royal, Richard R. Fellers, Peter J. Camarda and Christopher M. Berdnik be elected Assistant Secretaries of the Board of Public Education in addition to their other duties as Solicitor, Chief Operations Officer, Executive Director of Budget Development and Management and Director of Finance, and that bonds for the offices be set at $250,000 each, the bonds to be furnished at the cost of the Board.
ELECTION OF SCHOOL TREASURER
AND SETTING OF BOND

RESOLVED, That Richard M. Fees, Treasurer of the City of Pittsburgh, be elected School Treasurer and that bond for the office be set at $250,000, the bond to be furnished at the cost of the Board.
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

PITTSBURGH BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
BOARD ORGANIZATION MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2002
5:37 P.M.
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - BOARD ROOM

BEFORE:
JEAN FINK, BOARD PRESIDENT
DARLENE HARRIS, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
JEAN WOOD, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
MARK BRENTLEY
THERESA COLAIZZI
WILLIAM ISLER
ALEX MATTHEWS
FLOYD McCREA
RANDALL TAYLOR

ALSO PRESENT:
DR. JOHN W. THOMPSON
MR. PETER J. CAMARDA
MRS. PAT CRAWFORD
MR. PHIL PARR
MRS. JODY SPOLAR

REPORTED BY: EUGENE C. FORCIER
PROFESSIONAL COURT REPORTER

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ORIGINAL
Ms. Fink: This meeting will please come to order.

Will everyone please stand and salute the flag.

(Salute to the flag.)

Ms. Fink: Our first order of business tonight, will be to elect a temporary president, and then a temporary secretary.

We will elect our temporary president, they will then assume the president's seat, then we will proceed with the election of the temporary secretary, and on to the election of the Board officers.

So the floor is now open for nominations for temporary president.

Mrs. Wood.

Ms. Wood: I nominate Floyd McCrea.

Mr. Taylor: Second.

Ms. Fink: Do we have any more nominations, for temporary president?

Hearing none, Floyd McCrea is unanimously elected to be temporary president.

Now we will change places.

Mr. McCrea: Okay. Let's start with the roll call.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Brentley?
MR. BRENTLEY: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi?
MS. COLAIZZI: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink?
MS. FINK: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris?
MS. HARRIS: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Isler?
MR. ISLER: Present.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Matthews?
MR. MATTHEWS: Present.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. McCrea?
MR. McCREA: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Taylor?
MR. McCREA: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Wood?
MS. WOOD: Here.

ATTORNEY WEISS: All members present.
MR. McCREA: Okay. We will proceed then with the election of the temporary secretary.

Do I just read this up here, or --
ATTORNEY WEISS: This is temporary secretary.

MR. McCREA: All right. Are there any
1 nominations, then?

MR. TAYLOR: I nominate Mr. Brentley.

MR. ISLER: Second.

MR. BRENTLEY: I don't accept.

MS. COLAIZZI: I nominate Mr. Taylor.

MR. McCREA: We don't need a second?

Mrs. Colaizzi nominated Mr. Taylor.

Are there any other nominations?

MR. TAYLOR: I decline.

I nominate Miss Colaizzi.

MR. McCREA: All right.

Mr. Taylor then nominates Mrs. Colaizzi.

All right.

Do you want to turn your mic off.

MR. ISLER: Second.

MR. McCREA: Okay.

All those in favor?

(Thereupon there was a chorus of ayes.)

MR. McCREA: Any opposed?

(No response.)

MR. McCREA: All right.

MR. MATTHEWS: One abstention.

MR. McCREA: Sorry?

MR. MATTHEWS: One abstention.

MR. McCREA: One abstention.
Did you get that?
All right.
Next, I will ask for nominations from the floor for president.

MS. FINK: Mr. McCrea, I would like to nominate Darlene Harris.

MR. McCREA: Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: I would like to nominate Randall Taylor.

MR. McCREA: Any other nominations?

Then let's proceed with the roll call vote, for how do we do this, either one or the other, or --

ATTORNEY WEISS: We will call the roll, and the member voting should indicate which candidate they are voting.

Mr. Brentley?

MR. BRENTLEY: Mr. Taylor.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi?

MS. COLAIZZI: Mrs. Harris.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink?

MS. FINK: Mrs. Harris.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris?
MS. HARRIS: Mrs. Harris.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Isler?

MR. ISLER: Mr. Taylor.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Matthews?

MR. MATTHEWS: Mr. Taylor.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. McCrea?

MR. McCREA: Mrs. Harris.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Taylor?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Taylor.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Wood?

MS. WOOD: Mrs. Harris.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris is elected president, 5-4.

MR. McCREA: Okay. Now we can proceed with the first vice president.

Mrs. Colaizzi.

MS. COLAIZZI: I nominate Mrs. Fink.

MR. McCREA: Are there any other nominations?

Let's take the roll call vote, then.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Brentley?

MR. BRENTLEY: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi?

MS. COLAIZZI: Mrs. Fink.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink?
MS. FINK: Mrs. Fink.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris?

MS. HARRIS: Mrs. Fink.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Isler?

MR. ISLER: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Matthews?

MR. MATTHEWS: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. McCrea?

MR. McCREA: Mrs. Fink.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Taylor?

MR. TAYLOR: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink is elected 5-4.

MR. McCREA: Mrs. Wood.

ATTORNEY WEISS: I'm sorry, Mrs. Wood, excuse me.

MS. WOOD: Mrs. Fink.

ATTORNEY WEISS: I'm sorry.

MR. McCREA: Next is the --

MR. TAYLOR: That's not 5-4, that's 5-0-4.

ATTORNEY WEISS: 5-0, correct.

MR. McCREA: The next is the second vice president.

Any nominations?

Mrs. Wood.

MR. McCREA: I would like to nominate
MR. McCREA: Are there any other nominations?

Then we can proceed with the roll call vote.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Brentley?

MR. BRETLEY: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi?

MS. COLAIZZI: Mrs. Colaizzi.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink?

MS. FINK: Mrs. Colaizzi.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris?

MS. HARRIS: Mrs. Colaizzi.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Isler?

MR. ISLER: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Matthews?

MR. MATTHEWS: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. McCrea?

MR. McCREA: Mrs. Colaizzi.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Taylor?

MR. TAYLOR: Abstain.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Wood?

MS. WOOD: Mrs. Colaizzi.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi is elected five yes, four abstentions.
MR. McCREA: Next, then do they take their seats, or do we just --

MS. FINK: Yes, Darlene will go over there now, and then you do this.

MR. McCREA: Take their seats? Very good. I'm done.

More musical chairs.

MS. HARRIS: May I say something before we proceed?

MS. FINK: I think we will proceed, and then you say something.

MR. McCREA: Proceed on those things.

MS. FINK: Give her those two resolutions.

ATTORNEY WEISS: The secretary, and assistant secretaries.

MR. McCREA: Do you have those? Do you have a copy of these, too?

MS. HARRIS: Okay. The election of secretary, and assistant secretaries and setting of the bonds.

(Mrs. Harris read from prepared material.)

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Brentley?

MR. BRENTLEY: Do we vote on this?

ATTORNEY WEISS: Yes.

MR. BRENTLEY: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi?
MS. COLAIZZI: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink?
MS. FINK: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris?
MS. HARRIS: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Isler?
MR. ISLER: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Matthews?
MR. MATTHEWS: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. McCrea?
MR. McCREA: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Taylor?
MR. TAYLOR: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Wood?
MS. WOOD: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: The vote is nine in favor.
MS. HARRIS: Okay. And then we have the election of school treasurer and setting of the bond.
(Mrs. Harris read from prepared material.)
MS. HARRIS: May we have the roll call vote.
MR. FELLERS: Mrs. Harris?
MS. HARRIS: Yes.
MR. FELLERS: There is an omission on this
item. It needs to read, "Further resolved, that
Linda M. Kuzner be elected as deputy school treasurer,
upon the recommendation of the treasurer," and for a
like bond.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Fellers, Mrs. Kuzner
is no longer employed by the city.

So, it would seem to me that when a deputy
treasurer is appointed, which I understand is to be
early next week, the Board may take this up at the
regular meeting.

MR. FELLERS: Thank you.

ATTORNEY WEISS: She now is employed
elsewhere.

MR. FELLERS: Thank you. I was not aware
of that.

MS. HARRIS: May we have a roll call vote.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Brentley?

MR. BRENTLEY: Yes.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Colaizzi?

MS. COLAIZZI: Yes.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Fink?

MS. FINK: Yes.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Harris?

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Isler?
MR. ISLER: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Matthews?
MR. MATTHEWS: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. McCrea?
MR. McCREA: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mr. Taylor?
MR. TAYLOR: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Mrs. Wood?
MS. WOOD: Yes.
ATTORNEY WEISS: Nine in favor.
MS. FINK: Is there another resolution?
MS. HARRIS: No, that's all for the resolutions.
MS. FINK: Then, you can make your --
MS. HARRIS: Okay. I would just like to make a comment.
I would like to thank Mrs. Fink for her year of devotion to this District, and I would like to begin by thanking my fellow Board members for their vote of confidence.
I look forward to leading this Board, and working with all of the members.
In order to encourage the spirit of cooperation, I will soon schedule a Board retreat as an introduction to seeking mediation to bridge the
divide that exists between us as colleagues.

Additionally, in the weeks to come, it is my intention to reach the goal of a collections based balanced budget, as directed by my fellow Board members. Living within our means, and spending only the amount of money that we have taken in within a year is what the public expects.

The Board can help avoid tax increases for the citizens of Pittsburgh, if we manage our money as if it was our own family budget.

Further more, building bridges to all of our partners, from foundations, to parents, will be of the utmost importance this year. To that end, I will reintroduce the building on basics blueprint submitted to you last year, as a means to direct us along the path to provide educational excellence for all of our students.

Thank you.

DR. THOMPSON: Madam President?

MR. FELLERS: Yes, Dr. Thompson.

DR. THOMPSON: I would like to offer my congratulations to the newly elected officers, and pledge to them, that the staff is ready to move forward, to a world class School District, under your leadership, and we are here to work for this 35,000 --
35,600 students in our School District, plus the other
10,000 students that we serve daily in this School
District.

And congratulations to all of you.

Miss Fink, I congratulate you on the year
that you had in the office, and we look forward to
your leadership continually throughout the rest of the
year.

Thank you, very much.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. Is there any other
business?

If not, may I have a motion to -- yes.

MR. MATTHEWS: Let me say, that this is a
fine way to start off the year, because in one breath,
you indicated that you wanted to work together, and to
bring about cohesiveness to this Board, and then on
the other hand, you said you are going to carry out
the mission of a collections based budget, as directed
by your fellow Board members.

This Board member did not direct anyone to
do that.

I don't know if Mr. Taylor, Mr. Isler or
Mr. Brentley have also directed you.

It appears that once again, your directive
comes from the five Board majority.
The legacy that Mrs. Fink left, was one of a tragedy, and I would only hope that -- what is your legacy going to be? What is your legacy going to be, in terms of the continued downfall of this District?

It's a shame, that through this whole process, that this District is being led by a majority, and I have to state that it is a Caucasian majority, who is destroying this system, without input from the African American Board members, and Mr. Isler, and it constantly continues to go to the fact that five Board members have continued to run this District any way they see fit, overriding the superintendent, not consulting with other Board members. You know, everything that you guys have done, you have done in secrecy, because you five Board members, have voted along those lines, discussing things.

Mr. Taylor wasn't consulted on a lot of issues, myself wasn't consulted, Mr. Brentley, Mr. Isler, and we continue to say it's the Board, and we need to be very clear, that the Board is five majority white folks, who are leading this District, without input.

My community, which is made up of African Americans, as well as Caucasians, have absolutely no
input into the decision making of this Board.

You know, it is one thing for me to cast a vote, and it fails, but not to even be included in the discussion, you are leaving out the African American communities.

Now, that was Mrs. Fink's legacy. What is your legacy going to be? How are you going to convert this Board, and make us work together, allow us to be cohesive together, working with the agenda of the superintendent, and not -- and try to eliminate the racial overtone of this District, of this Board?

This Board is very, very much, in a racial disarray.

No one wants to deal with that.

You want to have retreats, that's fine, but until you start dealing with the racial issues, this Board will continue to cause this District to go downhill.

It's already on its way.

And I don't see any change in the leadership.

The only one person, who has any kind of reasoning, is now not even an officer, so I don't know what kind of decision making is going to happen now.

You know, not one African American was
asked to be on your cabinet, wasn't nominated on your
cabinet.

And so it just shows me the type of
leadership that you are already displaying, because of
your comments, of your saying that you are going to
work with the whole Board, and then you talk about
that the whole Board, that the Board gave you a
directive.

No one gave you a directive.

And so, I don't know how it's going to be,
but I can only see that this District is still going
to plunder down hill, with your leadership, with the
leadership of the new officers, because of the fact
that you don't include -- you don't include our input
from our communities, you don't take the advice of
your own staff, you do what you want to do.

So I am just wondering, what is your legacy
going to be? What are you going to leave this
District, when you leave as president? What do you
want people to say? That we had a collections based,
because five Board members wanted this, and we got it
done?

What is your legacy going to be?

MS. HARRIS: Hopefully, Mr. Matthews, with
our retreat, you will be one of the members that would
like to go into mediation, so that we can resolve some of our differences.

So it will not just be up to myself, it will be up to all nine of us.

So let's see how we can work together, in a spirit of cooperation, starting with a retreat, and working our way to talking about -- everyone has to agree to go into mediation, or it never does work, Mr. Matthews.

I will be first to say, that I will, as a Board member, go into mediation.

So let's see what happens.

Thank you.

Mrs. Fink.

MS. FINK: I just wanted to say that, although Mr. Matthews didn't appreciate the way this was done, we did discuss this at a meeting of the full Board, and you elected not to come to that meeting, Mr. Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: What meeting was that?

MS. FINK: That was agenda review last week.

MR. MATTHEWS: Okay. That is agenda review. this is a budget item, this should have been done at a budget meeting, not at agenda review.
When I get -- when I get my package of material, I can pick and chose. I was on my way from Harrisburg, I can pick and chose what meetings to go to.

The budget was not on that agenda. That's agenda review. That is agenda review. That is the part that bothers me, as long as you have been in the leadership of this District, you still don't understand the workings of this Board.

MS. FINK: I am talking about --

MR. MATTHEWS: You don't understand the workings of this District, because for you to say, "Yes, you gave a directive, at an agenda review meeting."

Had you told us it was going to be in the meeting, then we could have made sure that we were there, and that we were present.

But you didn't do that. That is your leadership. And I am not dealing with your leadership any more, because we know for a fact how chaotic that was. Now we are dealing with Mrs. Harris, and her leadership, and I am hoping that things will become quite different, than what it is that you have demonstrated.

And you didn't learn from the best. You
1 didn't learn from the best. I don't know what you
2 have learned. I surely don't know.
3
4 MS. FINK: You were president before me, and I learned from you.
5
6 MR. MATTHEWS: And this District was great.
7
8 MS. HARRIS: Okay. Is there any other comments, or can we have a motion to adjourn this meeting?
9
10 MS. WOOD: Move we adjourn.
11
12 MS. HARRIS: Mr. Isler.
13
14 MR. ISLER: Thank you, Mrs. Harris.
15
16 I am a little dismayed, at this move to a retreat, given the fact that during this past year we had three retreats, without any follow up.
17
18 We were promised, in December of last year, I have the minutes before me, that we would deal with something that Mr. Matthews spoke about this evening, and spoke about in the meeting of December the 19th, of 2001.
19
20 That was the issue of trying to deal with race on this Board.
21
22 Mr. McCrea made a recommendation, that I think should be the number one on the agenda.
23
24 Mrs. Fink responded absolutely. 12 months later, we are nowhere.
In fact, if anything, I think we have gone backwards.

I don't want to cast blame. I want to guarantee that we are going to move forward.

I agree with Mr. Matthews, that nothing appeared on the agenda dealing with the budget, at agenda review.

I think that any budget proceedings must be open to all Board members, announced in advance, and dealt with in the public, not behind closed doors, and not with just a few Board members.

I also would hope that in your spirit of trying to bring this Board together, that you talk about fiscal responsibility, where we bring all of our costs under control, and that we clearly manage all of our resources effectively; that we take a look at a District wide reorganization, so that we can match up what our student and community needs are, with what our actual needs are.

And that we become a data driven School District, and start talking about data that is factual and accurate, and it is data that everybody agrees with, not just a few.

And my final recommendation, and I am appalled that in 12 months, we never asked questions,
how is student achievement in this District.

Every decision we make, should be based upon how is it affecting student achievement.

We have responsibility to the students, to the parents, and to the community at large.

But our number one goal, is student achievement. And I have to say, that as far as I am concerned, this Board, if graded on this past year, all nine of -- us, all nine of us, not just a few of us, would be getting a failing grade.

And I don't think that is fair to the students, and I don't think it is fair to the community.

I could go in to a litany of what's happened in this past year, to the national story about the loss of funding from the foundation community, to the appointment of a mayor's committee to study three aspects of this District, that this Board should be looking at all the time, and we are not.

I am going to take you at your word, Mrs. Harris, and hold your feet to the fire as the leader of the Board, that we are going into retreat, and we are going to work, and working together, as nine members, for all students in this entire city.
MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Isler.

Mr. Brentley.

MR. BRENTLEY: Yes.

Miss Harris, I just also want to just make my comments to this Board majority, and I am sure it is nothing -- shouldn't be anything new, but I just want to remind you again, that over the last year, under the leadership of Mrs. Fink, and this five majority, you have hurt so many people.

This city is actually -- we are actually beginning to take sides now. You can't go throughout a day, without somebody saying, "What side of the Board do you support, are they right or are they wrong?"

You talked about bringing this Board together. Let's not forget some of the things that have happened over this last year.

We are talking about watching our dollars, but we opened up three new schools, Mrs. Harris, that you helped lead the charge with.

Those three schools continue to be the talk of the town because, as you know, like everybody else, it is causing some legal problems for the District, it is causing a bigger racial divide once again, we have an issue where this majority again voted down the best
qualified MBE coordinator for the City of Pittsburgh, and now, this city has to wait, while you hand pick, go through the process and hand pick who you want to be there, regardless of the process that we used, that this District put in place, for anyone interested in being employed in this District, but now you are going to go back and hand pick, which is going to create another problem, on top of that we are talking about watching the dollars.

To date, I know from this Board member, I have yet to receive a detailed report on how you are planning on spending that million dollars.

I don't know what the plans are, and we are talking about watching dollars, and bringing our best foot forward, or showing in the spirit of cooperation, Mrs. Harris. That was wrong.

Never before in the history, have the Board majority put aside that much money, that was not earmarked for any particular category.

Nobody knows still, to date, the negative atmosphere that was created by this new majority.

So I am saying, again, pretty much the same comments Mr. Matthews made, it is going to be very, very difficult, and how -- how can we talk about coming together, when we have already created such an
atmosphere, especially along the racial lines. It is going to continue to create problems, and we have yet to address some of the major issues that work within this District.

I want to make it very clear, that I think something you may want to consider, and that is, if we would keep in mind that we are all on the same team. You should not be, and your leadership should not be competing with the man at the other end of the table.

And that's what we have been experiencing over the last year.

We are working together, we should respect the recommendations of his staff, and I would hope that somehow, some way, some of these issues would begin to be addressed.

I am once again disappointed, because you had a great opportunity, I think this majority had a great opportunity, several times, over the last four or five months, to at least give some kind of hope in this city, that, look, "Hey, it's not a racial thing, hey, we are serious, hey, we are honest about dealing with the children," but you never took advantage of that.

So I am once again, I am concerned about
the leadership of this Board, I am concerned about the atmosphere that this city will continue to look at, on a negative level, coming from the Board, and this leadership.

So, you know, we don't know exactly what to expect from your leadership, but based upon what you have been involved with in the past, I'm really fearful, not only as a Board member, but also as a parent, and that at times, can disturb me.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Brentley.

Mr. Taylor.

MR. TAYLOR: I want to congratulate our new elected officers. And I also want to thank my colleagues, who supported me, for School Board president.

I have spoken to you, Mrs. Harris, and Mrs. Wood, about the importance of making a change in the School Board president.

I thought a lot of damage was done, and I thought it was important for us to make a statement to the public, to the taxpayers, we have learned from some of those mistakes, and we made change at the top, and we hope to deal with in the future.

We, and many of those -- and I want to also, you know, thank Mr. Isler, Mr. Matthews, and
Mr. Brentley, and myself, who were willing, in the spirit of compromise, to support Mrs. Wood as the next School Board president, for the very purpose that at least she, at times, has cast enlightened votes. She had a number of votes, which she will have to carry as part of her legacy. But Mrs. Wood, at least has a relationship with all of the School Board members.

Mrs. Harris, unfortunately, you don't have that.

I think that is going to make it very difficult for you to operate as president, because of your lack of a relationship with all of the Board members.

But we have to keep an open mind. We have to hope that there has been a conversion, Mrs. Harris, in your views, as a School Board member, and now as a School Board president.

But as I mentioned to you on many, many occasions, it is not about the words, because those were very nice words that you gave, and I hope that those words become the reality. As much as I hoped that former President Fink's building on the basics, would have become a reality, when we know that was never seen or spoken of, let alone adhered to this past year.
I am expecting -- and these next few weeks will tell the story, the next few weeks.

One, I am expecting a budget that is supported truly by our superintendent, one that is not a reckless budget, one that is a very fiscal conservative budget, which budgets for the worst case scenario, not the most rosy scenarios.

I will be looking also in the new budget to see how you wukk address the severely, under capacity schools of Bon Air, of Spring Hill, and of Arlington.

You cannot in one instance say that you are being fiscally responsible, when you are operating schools of that population.

I will also be looking for a direct accounting of -- if the $1 million Board line is kept in the next budget, my expectation will be a clear understanding of what those dollars are going to be expended for, and I hope you will be comfortable with those, and also, we would hope that in the future, there isn't a large amount of money sitting under utilized as happened with some of the million dollar budget.

I also will be looking for a clear process on school closings, and one that is free of Board members, one that is free of favoritism, and other
things that are unfair to those who are not politically strong enough to get what they need for their communities.

And finally, I expect that next year -- and I expected this year, that many of these things will, you know, not occur, and that I will continue on my responsibilities, and I expect my other colleagues in minority, to fight as hard and as fierce as we can, for this District, and for these children, and my sincere hope will be that the public will understand that we are not concerned about politicians, we are not concerned about foundations, we are concerned about the children of this District.

And in 2002, that we fought very hard on defense to fight as hard as we can, and I think some we were able to slow, some we able to stop, and unfortunately, a severe, severe amount of damage was done.

But I can promise you in 2003 we are going to put a progressive pro child agenda in front of this School Board, constantly, every single vote, every single legislative meeting, and defy you to vote against the children.

And as we know, elections are coming, as I always said, and always found out, now celebrating my
fifth anniversary now on the School Board, elections are the only things that have made a difference out here. This is my sincere hope, that this Board separated, as only five people in this city have, are now going to face the voters, and now there is going to be five more people, that are going to make a difference to the Board.

But I will guarantee you, that there will be a very pro, progressive pro child agenda in front of you.

And one of the things I would like to start with, if we are allowed, under new business, I would like to make a motion, that we did a very great thing last month, as far as passing unanimously, for our meetings to be televised, but there was an omission of public hearings being televised, and I believe that the public hearings are a very important vehicle for the public to hear what is on the minds of other members of the public, parents, students, and I would like to make a motion that we amend the legislation that we passed last month, to allow the televising of our regular monthly public hearings.

MR. ISLER: Second.

MS. HARRIS: Discussion?

MS. WOOD: I won't agree to your
recommendation, Mr. Taylor, and I think we have discussed the fact that the agreement was for the way it was on the agenda, and the way we voted for it, for one year, until we saw how this went, and how it was received, and also, till we see that we get some television time for the School District, to promote the children, and the District itself, and when I see that that happens, I will be happy to vote for additional meetings to be televised.

MS. HARRIS: Mrs. Colaizzi?

MS. COLAIZZI: I also will not support that, because more importantly, before I would support a public hearing, that anybody can come and watch, I would like to support an education meeting, or a business meeting.

I think that that would be more important to go before a public hearing.

I think that if the people were able to watch TV and see that, they would learn more about what we actually do, and then what we end up voting for.

The public hearing is basically people then can come and speak on what they have already heard us discuss.

So, I wouldn't support that at this point
in time.

But I would support business, or our
education meetings, again, down the line, after we
have tried this out for a while, and see how it went.

MS. HARRIS: Mr. Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: Well, I would hope that my
colleagues have a change of heart.

Simply for the simple fact, that when the
public hearings are televised -- and I understand the
reason why most folks don't want it televised, is
because the community has been coming out, speaking
out against the actions of this five Board majority,
and they don't want that televised, because just like
the people there listen to the complaints of the five
Board majority, let's not let other people see what is
really happening.

If you really want to be proactive, if you
are really sincere about getting everyone involved,
then allow people to see what other folks are talking
about, at the public hearing.

Allow them the opportunity to engage, if
you will, the conversation that's being taken place by
the speaker, because maybe somewhere in their mind,
they may think, "That's an issue I need to get on
board with," or "I disagree with that speaker, let me
go down there, and make sure that my voice is heard."
That is freedom of speech. That's what it is all about.
That's where the actions really take place, see what people -- how we intergage -- engage with the community.
When the speakers come, and present their testimony, that's what we ought to be listening to, and that's what citizens, listeners around this city, should be listening to; to see what other people think about this whole conversation about education, about the conversation that's taking place on this Board.
And for us to sit back and say that we don't want that to occur -- and like I said, I understand it, because you don't want people to see the complaints, and things that are coming toward the five Board majority.
They don't want that.
But I am saying that is part of reality; it occurs.
When the issue reverses itself, and people were coming about the school closings, they were attacking the majority at that time, and I agree those ought to be televised, regardless of who they are coming after.
Because that's what the public is trying to convey their message to us, and allow other people to listen to that conversation.

That's all we are asking, is to allow them to listen to the conversation that is being taking place, at the public hearings.

So they may want to get involved.

MS. HARRIS: Mr. Isler.

MR. ISLER: I would agree, I think that the more we can inform people about the workings of this School Board, and this School District, the better we are, and I think we should take every opportunity that we have, and I agree totally with Mrs. Colaizzi, I don't think anybody should be, or anything should be eliminated, but I would like to see it all.

But I think that public hearings, where people come out, with a variety of issues, I don't care what they are speaking about, I think that it is good, that we let people know what's going on.

And I don't think we can get people enough information.

So I think eliminating anything, is a mistake.

MS. HARRIS: Anyone else?
MS. FINK: I thought long and hard about how we were going to do this, and should we include public hearings, and there seemed to be a lot of sentiment on both sides, but in order to see how this goes, I think we have picked the two most crucial meetings.

I would agree with Mrs. Colaizzi, that since we are about education, to televise the Education Committee meeting, and wouldn't it have been great to have been able to put that math meeting on television, so that everybody could become versed on this issue.

Unfortunately, people that come to public hearings talk about a great many things, other than education. You know, they are upset with the mayor for something, so they come here to vent. We don't -- I would rather use our television time more wisely, and to me, that an education meeting, particularly, would be the third meeting that I would want to add.

Anyone who wants to come here, and speak at public hearings, is welcome to do that. The unfortunate part of the way our public hearings are structured, is that we don't interact
with the speakers.

The last time I tried to do that,

Mr. Taylor reminded me that I was prolonging the
meeting.

So, we -- and I have done that to other
people who have responded to the speakers.

And that's certainly not giving the public
a good impression of how we react to the information
that the speakers bring us.

So, I just rather leave that one alone,
until we really get a taste for the televising, and
seeing how these meetings go, and then if we want to
reformat the public hearings, and give time for
interaction, if we want to do something altogether
different there, to make it more palatable for TV,
then I think we talk about that.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. Mr. Brentley.

MR. BRENTLEY: Yes. I just want to
encourage my colleagues that this is clearly an
opportunity to show a majority vote.

Let's not forget the purpose of the public
hearing, it is two-fold.

The public hearing, the first part of the
public hearing is an opportunity for this District to
put its best foot forward, in recognizing outstanding
students, outstanding staff, outstanding teachers,
et cetera, et cetera.

That is a very important part, in molding,
and shaping a positive image for this School District,
and to walk away from that opportunity, I think is
something that's just not something that we want to
just kind of say, "No, we are not going to support
it."

If you want to do it, and do it on a
probationary basis, of four to six months, then so be
it.

But I would encourage my colleagues, to
vote no against this particular recommendation, would
clearly send a signal to the public that we do not
want to boast about all of the good things that are
coming out of this District.

It would also begin to send some messages
that we are not interested in the public comment, or
what you have to say, or what you think about the
District.

So I would just ask you, you know, each
colleague to kind of reconsider here. Over the last
year we have had some pretty sharp students, that came
before us, on these public hearings, on their
recommendations, nationally, locally, and different
contests, and the whole bit.

We cannot, and we should not let that opportunity go. So I am asking, I just want to --

MS. FINK: I agree. We should switch those awards to the legislative meetings.

MS. HARRIS: Mrs. Fink. Mrs. Fink, you are out of order.

MS. FINK: I'm sorry.

MR. BRENTLEY: I just think, that let's not flip the script now. Now there is an opportunity to let the people hear the real public, in its uncut, and unedited form. Let's not do that, Mrs. Fink, let's not begin to say, well, now we will shake things around, and turn around, so that we cannot get -- encourage public involvement.

I am asking for this Board and, Miss Harris here is a great opportunity for you to show your leadership.

This is something that we all can support, this is something I think the public will begin to support, and I think it's a great opportunity, and I would hope, and I would encourage you for your first opportunity here, to use your leadership, in coming forward with a majority vote, of a unanimous vote, on this particular new business.
MS. HARRIS: Okay. Anyone else, who has not spoken?

I believe you have already spoken, Mr. Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: Right. But I had my hand up again.

MS. HARRIS: Well, I would like it, and let me take note now --

MR. MATTHEWS: The rules of procedure says, that unless you specify that there is a certain time element to the discussion, or if you are going to limit people from speaking, that has to be said before the discussion.

You did not do that.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. Well, I will make sure --

MR. MATTHEWS: So I had my hand up for recognition.

MS. HARRIS: Go ahead, Mr. Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

MS. HARRIS: But I will state that at every other meeting.

MR. MATTHEWS: And I hope that applies to your five Board majority, too. Because that --

MS. HARRIS: Absolutely, Mr. Matthews,
absolutely.

MR. MATTHEWS: Because that's how a lot of conversation comes back, because of things that you five Board members continue to do.

Mrs. Fink, I guess one of the things I want to talk about, with this public hearing, is that Mrs. Fink brought up the fact that people vent out against the mayor.

Now, if my memory serves me correctly, reference was made to the mayor coming back and tying it into your actions, the actions of this Board.

This is not -- it was not anything that was directed, say, "We are going after the mayor," because then that would not be appropriate for our public hearings, and then whoever is the chairperson, if that is the avenue the person is taking, then we stop that.

We have to be about the business of educating our public about what is happening.

And everything we do here, is educational. Whether it's the business meeting, whether it's the educational meeting, whether it's the special session meeting, everything we do is educational.

We do the budget, that is educating the public, about what's happening, with our finances.
That's educational.
Those are topics that the public will speak about.
You know, what if someone comes up, and they want to speak about the transportation, and even though that is not an issue that we are voting on, maybe there is a problem that maybe someone in the television audience can listen to, and say, "You know what, I have the same concern," or "that doesn't happen to me, let me go out there and voice my opinion."

That is educating people about issues.
Allow everyone the opportunity to hear what folks are thinking and saying.
Allow that discussion to take place.
And if they come back, and they criticize us, as Board members, then that's fine, that's part of educating the public about what's happening to this educational process, to this educational system of Pittsburgh.

That's what it is all about.
And as such, I would ask, because unless the majority five are going to change their minds on this issue, then I would ask my colleague, Mr. Taylor, to take this off the table, so that we don't discuss
MR. TAYLOR: Can I make one comment again, President Harris, in the future, if you think you are going to use a time limit, to quiet dissent out here, it is never going to happen. All you are going to do is turn this place into chaos.

So if you think you are going to say, "You have 32 seconds to be against some proposal," it is never going to happen out here, you are just asking for this to break out into chaos.

Could I ask our solicitor, this is an issue which I would like to bring before the public every month, until the Board majority supports the public's right to hear other members of the public speak about the issues, and to hear other parents, students, and others that come to our public hearings.

I don't want to put myself in a position where I am not able to bring this up, and speak on behalf of the taxpayers of the city, every single month. So you tell me the process, in which -- is it best that I withdraw this motion tonight, and reconsider it next month?

ATTORNEY WEISS: I would recommend, if that is your wish in the future, that you withdraw your motion.
MR. TAYLOR: Miss Colaizzi, I hope in the future, we can talk about, because I do think we should have business affairs, any education meetings, and along with the public hearing. But I do think the public hearing, is most important, because as I said before, this is the public's business out here, they deserve to be in this room, more than we do. So in the sense of me trying to get a further clarification, I will withdraw that motion.

MR. ISLER: I will withdraw my second.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. Any other business, for the good of the School District?

Yes, Mrs. Colaizzi.

MS. COLAIZZI: I believe that Mrs. Fink just made a comment about changing the awards that we give out in front of the legislative meeting -- and before the public hearing, I'm sorry, to do it before our legislative meetings. I would love to make that a motion, if it is appropriate to do so.

MR. TAYLOR: We should discuss that before --

MS. FINK: I would second that.

MS. WOOD: Can I make a comment?
MS. HARRIS: Yes.

MS. WOOD: I think that should be on the agenda for discussion.

MS. COLAIZZI: Absolutely. Then I will withdraw that.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. Anything else?

MR. BRENTLEY: I do have one question, I think I would like to ask for our legal, because I am a little confused by Mr. Taylor's comments.

If we are talking about televising, our Board members, then does that prohibit the news media from bringing their cameras in as well?

Or what's the difference? I --

ATTORNEY WEISS: Well, are you recognizing me?

MR. BRENTLEY: Yes I --

ATTORNEY WEISS: Well, the news media is here as the news media, they are free to tape whatever they wish to tape, and they are free to leave whenever they wish to leave.

The arrangement, the Board approved at the last meeting, was an agreement with the cable provider for the city, and the city to actually televise, I guess on a live basis, and then on a delayed basis, the entire meeting.
The media is free to come to any public meeting, and tape whatever they wish to tape, and the reporters are free to take down whatever they wish to take down. The Board does not, and cannot, and has no desire to control that.

But the issue of which meetings are televised, as live matters, as the City Council meetings are televised, is a matter the Board has to decide.

So there is a difference.

MR. BRENTLEY: Let me just ask this question: So if one of the local media outlets decided to put up a crew, to televise the entire public hearing, will that prohibit them from doing that, or they can do that, if they so -- if they decide to do that?

ATTORNEY WEISS: If somebody wishes to, news media wishes to televise any public meeting, that is the news media's prerogative.

MR. BRENTLEY: Which is not subject to any legislative action from this Board.

ATTORNEY WEISS: It is a public meeting, they have a right to be here, and televise, and tape whatever they wish to televise and tape.

MR. BRENTLEY: Thank you.
MS. HARRIS: Anything else?
Motion to adjourn?
MS. WOOD: So move.
MR. McCREA: Second.
MS. HARRIS: Okay. This meeting's adjourned.

(Thereupon, at 6:25 p.m., the Board Organization Meeting was concluded.)
I, Eugene C. Forcier, the undersigned, do hereby certify that the foregoing forty-six (46) pages are a true and correct transcript of my stenotypy notes taken of the Board Organization Meeting held in the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, Administration Building, Board Room, on Monday, December 2, 2002.

Eugene C. Forcier, Court Reporter