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CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MEETING

Proceedings held on Thursday, October 29,
2009, commencing at 9:02 a.m., City Hall, Council
Chambers, 1st Floor, Jacksonville, Florida, before
Diane M. Tropa, a Notary Public in and for the State
of Florida at Large.

PRESENT:

- WYMAN DUGGAN, Chair.
- MARY O'BRIEN, Vice Chair.
- ED AUSTIN, Commission Member.
- JIM CATLETT, Commission Member.
- WILLIAM CATLIN, Commission Member.
- JESSICA DEAL, Commission Member.
- TERESA EICHNER, Commission Member.
- ROBERT FLOWERS, SR., Commission Member.
- BEVERLY GARVIN, Commission Member.
- MECHELLE HERRINGTON, Commission Member.
- ALI KORMAN, Commission Member.
- JEANNE MILLER, Commission Member.
- GARY OLIVERAS, Commission Member.
- CURTIS THOMPSON, Commission Member.

ALSO PRESENT:

- LOREE FRENCH, Office of General Counsel.
- JEFF CLEMENTS, Research Division.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

October 29, 2009 9:02 a.m.

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THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning, commissioners.

I have 9:02, so I will call this meeting to order, the October 29th, 2009, meeting of the Charter Revision Commission.

Again, as a reminder, please put your cell phones to silent or vibrate for the duration of the meeting, and I will begin with an around-the-horn roll call, starting with Commissioner Oliveras.

MR. OLIVERAS: Gary Oliveras.

MS. KORMAN: Ali Korman.

MR. FLOWERS: Robert Flowers.

MS. EICHNER: Teresa Eichner.

MS. O'BRIEN: Mary O'Brien.

MR. AUSTIN: Ed Austin.

MR. CATLIN: Billy Catlin.

MS. GARVIN: Beverly Garvin.

MS. MILLER: Jeanne Miller.

THE CHAIRMAN: And Commissioner Catlett is with us as well, and I'm Wyman Duggan.

And, as per usual, we will begin with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence,

1 and I know in my moment of silence I'll be
2 thinking about the Somer [sic] family and their
3 pain at this time.

4 (Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.)

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

6 The topic for today is education issues and
7 we have several distinguished speakers. I'll
8 get right into the proceedings, although I will
9 note that we -- I would like to reserve some
10 time toward the end of our meeting, perhaps in
11 the last 45 minutes, to talk about some
12 housekeeping matters, in addition to public
13 comment, but that's for later in the meeting.

14 We will begin with Trey Csar, who is the
15 executive director of the Jacksonville Public
16 Education Fund.

17 Mr. Csar, please come to the podium.

18 (Mr. Csar approaches the podium.)

19 THE CHAIRMAN: We'll begin by having our
20 court reporter swear you in.

21 THE REPORTER: Your name and address first,
22 please.

23 MR. CSAR: Okay. My name is Trey Csar.
24 I'm the president of the Jacksonville Public
25 Education fund. My address is 2131 Post Street,

1 here in Jacksonville, 32204.

2 THE REPORTER: Do you affirm that the
3 testimony you're about to give will be the
4 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
5 truth?

6 MR. CSAR: I do.

7 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome.

9 MR. CSAR: Thank you.

10 Chairman Duggan and members of the
11 commission, thank you for inviting us here to
12 speak with you today about the quality of public
13 education in Jacksonville.

14 As I said, my name is Trey Csar. I'm the
15 president of the Jacksonville Public Education
16 Fund. I am here with three other
17 representatives of our community, Nina Waters,
18 president of the Community Foundation in
19 Jacksonville; Cleve Warren, CEO of Essential
20 Capital; and Jeff Chartrand, executive director
21 of the Chartrand Foundation.

22 The four of us have been involved in
23 working with the Duval County Public School
24 system for some time and in a number of
25 different ways. While I'll speak to our formal

1 presentation here today, all of us will be
2 available for questions and -- at its
3 conclusion.

4 We wanted to begin our comments here today
5 with a quick overview of the Duval County Public
6 School system. This year there are more than
7 123,000 students attending 160 schools in
8 Jacksonville. Those students are taught by more
9 than 8,700 teachers supported by 5,800 other
10 district employees.

11 White and African-American students each
12 account for about 43 percent of the Duval County
13 public school system student body, with
14 significantly smaller populations of Hispanic
15 and Asian students comprising the remaining
16 14 percent of that student body.

17 Performancewise, the vast majority of Duval
18 County schools earn passing grades of A, B or C
19 in 2009 from the Florida Department of
20 Education, leading the district as a whole to
21 receive a grade of B.

22 A deeper look at these metrics, however,
23 reveals that Jacksonville has truly a bifurcated
24 education system and is struggling to provide
25 all of its students with a high-quality

1 education.

2 DCPS identifies its 34 most struggling
3 schools, 15 elementaries, 8 middles, and
4 11 highs, as turnaround schools collectively.
5 These schools shown here in red are identified
6 by various performance measures and are almost
7 exclusively located in the urban core in
8 Northwest Jacksonville.

9 High schools, in particular, are
10 overrepresented in the population of turnaround
11 schools with nearly 65 percent of the district's
12 nondedicated magnets/high school campuses
13 classified in need of turn around.

14 These 34 turnaround schools account for
15 100 percent of the F-rated schools and all but
16 one of the D-rated schools. They also serve
17 significantly higher populations of low-income
18 and minority students.

19 Looking at the relationship between poverty
20 as measured on the horizontal axis here by the
21 population of students at a school with free --
22 that receive free or reduced lunch and student
23 performance measured on the vertical axis here
24 by students who score a three or higher, a
25 passing grade on the FCAT, the challenges of

1 these turnaround schools, which are shown in
2 red, become very clear.

3 The more free and reduced students the
4 school has, the tougher time it has received
5 with encouraging the majority of its students to
6 reach a passing grade in the FCAT.

7 This is in tenth grade reading
8 (indicating), but these patterns persist in
9 tenth grade math --

10 MR. OLIVERAS: Excuse me just a second.

11 MR. CSAR: Sure.

12 MR. OLIVERAS: Mr. Chairman, we're not
13 receiving the PowerPoint, the video yet.

14 MR. CATLIN: Some are and some are not.

15 MS. GARVIN: I just got it now.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you,
17 Commissioner.

18 Mr. Csar, stand by.

19 MR. CSAR: Sure. It may be a little hard
20 to follow this part without -- without some
21 visual aides.

22 (Brief pause in the proceedings.)

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Commissioners, you
24 should all be seeing a map of the -- an
25 aerial -- an overview map that shows the pins of

1 the turnaround schools with the red --

2 MR. CSAR: Great. And I didn't want to
3 bring us back too far, but I did want to
4 highlight where these individual turnaround
5 schools were located. They're represented on
6 this map by the red pins, with the rest of the
7 schools -- the rest of the DCPS public schools
8 in blue. And, as you can see, a vast majority
9 of those schools are inside the red circle of
10 Northwest Jacksonville, in the urban core.

11 These are the school grades by turnaround
12 status where the vast majority of the D schools
13 and all of the F schools are considered
14 turnaround schools by the district.

15 And, again, here are the demographics with
16 a larger percentage of low-income students and a
17 larger percentage of students of color, but this
18 is where I think it really gets interesting.

19 As you can see, the relationship between
20 the number of students -- number of low-income
21 students and the number of students who score a
22 three or higher on the FCAT is particularly
23 correlated. That's the dashed line there. And
24 those red -- these schools, again, in red are
25 the turnaround schools, and so they consistently

1 end up at the bottom right corner of this -- of
2 this type of graph, whether you're looking at
3 tenth grade reading, tenth grade math, eighth
4 grade reading.

5 And, for the record, the higher school here
6 is Ribault Middle -- and we'll come back to that
7 in a second -- who's significantly outperforming
8 where we'd expect them to in eighth grade math.

9 Even in elementary school where there's a
10 bit more -- a number -- a lot more schools and
11 the correlation is a bit less precise, the vast
12 majority of turnaround schools still end up in
13 the bottom right-hand corner of this graph in
14 third grade reading and third grade math.

15 As you can see overall, the Duval County
16 public school system struggles most in high
17 school, which is the green line on this graph --
18 these are just those trend lines replotted
19 together -- and is more successful in reading.
20 As you can see, the lines are higher on reading
21 than on math.

22 This pattern, while consistent with most
23 urban school districts across the country, is
24 something we can and must change.

25 Returning to this map of turnaround

1 schools, it doesn't take a lot of research to
2 say that most assuredly a family's income level
3 and where they choose to live in our city can
4 severely limit their children's chances to
5 achieve academically and become productive
6 citizens.

7 This area in Northwest Jacksonville, as
8 many of you know, which contains a majority of
9 the turnaround schools, is -- is considered
10 health zone 1 by the Duval County Health
11 Department. And the challenges these students
12 face academically are also reflected in broad --
13 broader community metrics. This area has more
14 children living in poverty than any other health
15 zone in the city of Jacksonville, a higher teen
16 birth rate, and fewer people with college
17 degrees. Such a situation is wholly
18 unacceptable, both morally and economically, in
19 any city, but particularly here in Jacksonville.

20 Before we go any further, I want to make
21 very clear one key point, which is that the
22 responsibility for these academic shortcomings
23 that we pointed out in the -- in these
24 turnaround schools lies squarely at the feet of
25 the adults in charge and around the system.

1 We -- and I say that in the broadest sense
2 of the term. We have not created situations
3 that allow these children to achieve
4 academically. And it's not that these children
5 cannot achieve, but we have not put those
6 situations in place.

7 Despite these grim statistics, school
8 transformations can and do happen. Looking
9 locally, I wanted to point out two schools. The
10 first, Rutledge Pearson Elementary, has risen
11 from an F to an A grade. If you remember back
12 on the charter school grades, they were the only
13 A turnaround school because they're in their --
14 the latter stages and getting -- hopefully
15 getting ready to exit turnaround status. In
16 just two years they went from an F to an A with
17 more than two-thirds of their students meeting
18 high standards in reading and math.

19 Similarly, Ribault Middle School has risen
20 from a D grade to a B grade in the same time
21 period with a strong change in the school's
22 culture occurring through the use of innovative
23 educational practices such as gender-based
24 classes.

25 In both of these cases, led by exceptional

1 school leaders, these -- the adults in these
2 schools have made educating every single child a
3 top priority and refuse to make excuses for poor
4 academic performance of any child, but these
5 improvements are not happening fast enough or
6 districtwide. We must seek transformational
7 change to turn these pockets of excellence into
8 patterns of excellence before we lose a
9 generation of students.

10 The need for transformational change is
11 evident in the number of community organizations
12 working in and around our schools toward
13 increasing student academic achievement.

14 From Teach for America to the United Way to
15 KIPP and even the Chamber of Commerce, our
16 community is standing up daily to say that
17 incremental change is unacceptable and that both
18 the city and the district must do more to help
19 our students.

20 The Jacksonville Public Education Fund was
21 formed to help align the work of these different
22 types of organizations and continue to push for
23 strategic systemic change in our schools.

24 To that end, I can confidently say that
25 there is no single program, technology, or

1 policy alone that will ensure that every student
2 learns to the best of his or her ability.
3 Continuing to look for that mystical silver
4 bullet is both a waste of time and political
5 capital, rather we must seek to agree on a broad
6 set of principles to help guide the
7 decision-making of teachers, principals,
8 district leadership and political bodies such as
9 this one and we must focus our reform efforts on
10 these turnaround schools which are most in need
11 of improvement.

12 The four of us have identified six keys to
13 reform listed here that we encourage the
14 commission to keep in mind as it makes decisions
15 about education in Jacksonville.

16 First, the leaders in our schools matter a
17 lot and the district must do everything it can
18 to ensure that these leaders are well trained
19 and have the authority to make decisions
20 that -- about what is best for their individual
21 student body.

22 The policies and procedures in place at
23 Mandarin High School may not be the same ones
24 needed at Lee or Raines or Fletcher, and we
25 impede our school leaders' ability to react to

1 local needs by centralizing an undue amount of
2 the decision-making far from school buildings.
3 From the temperature of the classrooms to
4 district standard remediation text books, one
5 size does not fit all.

6 Other urban school districts have found
7 significant success in decentralizing
8 decision-making. Created in 1995 through a
9 partnership between the mayor, superintendent
10 and teachers union, 19 Boston pilot schools have
11 focused on increasing autonomy of school-based
12 leaders in five critical areas: staffing,
13 budget, curriculum, schedule, and governance.

14 These schools have been accountable and
15 evaluated regularly against a common set of
16 benchmarks. They are driven by a strong vision
17 and hire teachers and staff and implement
18 policies that support that vision, and they're
19 working.

20 Promotion rates at the pilot high schools,
21 shown here in red, are nearly as high as
22 Boston's prestigious exam schools, like Boston
23 Latin, which are pictured in green, and their
24 graduation rates are more than 23 percentage
25 points higher than other Boston public school

1 campuses and more students from these pilot
2 schools are going to college.

3 Similarly, student scores in the MCAS,
4 which is the Massachusetts standardized test of
5 student achievement, were significantly higher
6 for pilot school students than for the rest of
7 the students in Boston public schools.

8 Similar efforts around autonomy have been
9 made in Chicago through their Autonomous
10 Management and Performance Schools, their AMPS,
11 as well as in New York City's Empowerment
12 Schools. Charter schools, such as KIPP, have
13 also historically placed significant emphasis on
14 the power of school-based leadership and
15 school-based decision making.

16 Second, as a community, we must find ways
17 to effectively recruit, retain and reward those
18 teachers and principals that are able to
19 significantly impact students' academic
20 achievement when measured in a value-added
21 manner.

22 High-quality teachers and leaders must be
23 encouraged financially and managerially to teach
24 in our turnaround schools. In Dallas, a study
25 found that the achievement gap between students

1 who had had three highly-effective teachers in a
2 row and three highly-ineffective teachers in a
3 row was more than 49 percentage points --
4 percentile points, excuse me.

5 Research has consistently shown that the
6 importance a quality teacher plays in the
7 academic success of a student and the
8 characteristics by which our compensation system
9 has traditionally been based, such as masters
10 degrees and years of experience, do not always
11 correlate with high levels of student
12 achievement.

13 We must recruit educators selectively,
14 judge their effectiveness based on the
15 performance of their students, and do everything
16 we can to reward those who are contributing most
17 to our students' academic achievement.

18 Some communities have focused on using
19 outside organizations, such as New Leaders for
20 New Schools and the New Teacher Project, to help
21 them recruit great people. Other districts have
22 found ways to partner -- increase school funding
23 measures with strong performance-based
24 incentives, as was done here with the Denver
25 public school system, their ProComp program in

1 2005.

2 ProComp was funded by a one mill property
3 tax levy and supported by the Denver Classroom
4 Teachers Association. This comprehensive
5 assessment system pictured here, while complex,
6 uses student performance and student growth as a
7 major component.

8 Meanwhile, in districts such as the D.C.
9 public schools in Washington, are trying to
10 reward educators and principals willing to be
11 judged by their students' performance and to --
12 and to voluntarily give up their tenure.

13 In this recent proposal from Washington, a
14 teacher with 14 years of experience and strong
15 student achievement gains could earn more than
16 \$100,000 a year. To compare that same teacher
17 in Duval County, would make less than \$44,000.

18 Third, our educational calendar is woefully
19 out of date, based on a 19th century agrarian
20 economy. We have very few children in
21 Jacksonville still working in the fields, yet we
22 choose to limit the time we teach our students
23 by months every year.

24 As has been done with many charter schools,
25 Jacksonville must find a way as a city to extend

1 both the school day and school year,
2 particularly in our turnaround schools, if we
3 are able to -- if we're ever going to be able to
4 significantly increase academic achievement.

5 Looking at one of these charter school
6 operators, KIPP, which will open a school here
7 in Jacksonville this August, its time gap
8 quickly becomes evident.

9 KIPP students go to school from 7:30 to
10 5 p.m. every day with half days on Saturdays
11 twice a month and an additional two weeks over
12 the summer. After one year, students in KIPP
13 schools will have spent nearly 700 more hours in
14 the classroom. By the end of their middle
15 school career, these same students will have
16 spent 61 percent more time in class than any
17 student in the Duval County public school
18 system.

19 Yes, all that extra time does cost more.
20 In KIPP's case, about \$1,600 more per student
21 per year, but our students need that time,
22 particularly in our turnaround schools, and we
23 need professional educators to help them use
24 that time to reinforce, extend, and apply their
25 learning.

1 Fourth, our students, particularly in
2 low-income areas, come to school with more than
3 just academic needs and schools must become a
4 centerpiece of the neighborhood and a hub for
5 service providers in areas such as health care,
6 housing assistance, parental education, law
7 enforcement, and economic development.

8 We have a program here in Jacksonville that
9 provides some of these services called
10 full-service schools, but those services are
11 provided at only one school per feeder pattern.
12 In the Ribault feeder pattern, the distance
13 between a school like Butler Middle and the
14 full-service school site at Ribault High School
15 is more than six miles, an imposing trek for
16 parents, particularly with those -- those with
17 limited access to transportation.

18 When done well, however, community schools
19 can be powerful. In Green Bay, Howe
20 Elementary's kindergarten readiness rate has
21 risen significantly due to earlier
22 intervention. At East Hartford High School in
23 Connecticut, 80 percent of students were able to
24 go on to two-year college in 2007 because of
25 closer integration between the school and their

1 higher education system in the state.

2 Finally, the achievement gap has shrunken
3 from 30 percentage points to 10 percentage
4 points in East Elementary School in Kings
5 Mountain, North Carolina, thanks to proactive
6 tutoring and remediation provided by community
7 partners in a community school.

8 In all of these examples, data has played
9 an integral role in the decisions educators and
10 leaders make on a daily basis. While Florida is
11 fortunate to be a data-rich state, collecting
12 information about K-12 and higher education
13 students, the workforce, incarceration and
14 social services, the state and districts
15 struggle to make that data accessible easily to
16 researchers and community organizations.

17 For district partners and the school
18 district itself -- for district partners and the
19 school district itself to be successful in
20 developing, implementing and evaluating
21 programs, data about student performance must be
22 made transparent, available, and independent.

23 JPEF is currently exploring playing a role
24 in sharing that data with the community. But
25 regardless of the messenger, that data must be

1 used daily to drive instruction and other
2 decisions.

3 We also couldn't stand up here today and
4 not speak about how most, if not all, of our
5 recommendations will require -- will undoubtedly
6 require additional fiscal resources.

7 Despite the language in its constitution,
8 in recent years the state of Florida has failed
9 to make education its, quote, paramount duty,
10 funding Florida schools at a level nearly \$4,000
11 below the national average and in the bottom
12 quartile of all states. Looking at the funding
13 per \$1,000 of taxpayer income, Florida falls to
14 dead last among the 50 states.

15 There's no doubt about it, while we can
16 make incremental progress towards improving
17 academic achievement with the current funding
18 structure, transformational change will require
19 an additional investment of resources.

20 To compensate for this funding shortfall,
21 the Jacksonville community must both advocate
22 for additional state funding as well as explore
23 other local options for raising revenue. To
24 expect significant additional academic
25 performance out of schools without additional

1 funding is illogical and such an insistence is a
2 significant barrier to reform.

3 Additional funding should be coupled,
4 however, with an additional accountability --
5 with additional accountability and expectations
6 for student achievement on behalf of educators
7 and school leaders as well as -- as the freedom
8 we spoke about earlier for school leaders to use
9 those dollars to address their students most
10 urgent needs.

11 In conclusion, the challenges we face in
12 Duval County -- of all the challenges we face in
13 Duval County, the largest problem we have is not
14 a system problem but a turnaround problem. We
15 have a subset of schools in which we have not
16 created the conditions in which all students can
17 learn.

18 These schools, in turn, allow a significant
19 population of students to leave without ever
20 earning a high school diploma. The lost
21 potential of those students is a tragedy, both
22 individually and for the community at large.

23 Looking economically at these students, we
24 see that they are five to eight times more
25 likely than a college graduate to end up in jail

1 and more likely to lead unhealthy lifestyles,
2 requiring significant public assistance, instead
3 of prospering and contributing to the city's tax
4 base. They're also less likely to vote and
5 actively participate in civic life.

6 Furthermore, students who struggle
7 academically as early as eighth grade leave
8 school and face a competitive world in which
9 their median income is more than 40 percent less
10 than that of high-achieving students.

11 A recent study by the McKenzie Consulting
12 group pegged the economic loss from this
13 achievement gap at more than 300- to
14 \$500 billion per year in lost GDP across the
15 country, a situation they call, quote, the
16 equivalent of a permanent deep recession in
17 terms of the gap between actual and potential
18 output in the economy, but it does not have to
19 be that way.

20 The challenges Duval County public schools
21 face are not unique, nor are they
22 insurmountable, nor are they the district's
23 alone to address. These challenges belong to
24 the community as a whole and will only be solved
25 through thoughtful partnerships between the

1 district, the city, and the community.

2 As we wrap up our formal presentation here
3 today, we implore you to keep these six keys to
4 education reform in your thoughts as you
5 consider the role of education in the city's
6 charter and have the courage to push for bold
7 new ideas. We hope that you approach your work
8 from an informed position and take the time to
9 become even more informed as you progress
10 through your deliberative process.

11 Additional incrementalism will only lead to
12 decades of additional underperformance,
13 particularly in our most needy schools. We need
14 the patience to seek long-term solutions, but
15 also the vision to enact transformational
16 policies that will enable our community to
17 achieve its prosperous future together.

18 Thank you very much for the opportunity to
19 speak with you here today.

20 At this point, the four of us are happy to
21 respond to any questions the committee may have
22 about our presentation or public education in
23 Duval County.

24 Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Csar.

1 I appreciate this information.

2 Jeff, I don't have a queue in front of me.
3 I just have the rolling screen, so I can't tell
4 if anybody has -- Commissioner Korman, go
5 ahead.

6 MS. KORMAN: I just have a question.

7 I'm decently familiar with JPEF, but can
8 you explain it again to the rest of us so we
9 know exactly what you're trying to achieve and
10 the board and everything else?

11 MR. CSAR: Absolutely.

12 JPEF, the Jacksonville Public Education
13 Fund, was formed by a group of highly-motivated
14 community philanthropists and foundations to
15 serve as an independent nonprofit -- so we're
16 separate from the school system -- to work as a
17 critical friend to the school system where we
18 are able to support the school system in the
19 positive work they are doing and also challenge
20 them to improve systemwide through systemic
21 change, and so we are working on a number of
22 initiatives around the graduation rate and
23 around increasing public engagement in our
24 school system.

25 MS. KORMAN: So basically you devote your

1 time to studying different success stories
2 around the country and then bring -- hopefully
3 that we can enact them in our -- in our county;
4 is that --

5 MR. CSAR: Yes, in -- in large part, yes.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Oliveras.

7 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Thank you for being here, Mr. Csar.

9 MR. CSAR: Absolutely.

10 MR. OLIVERAS: A couple of different
11 questions.

12 First of all, Rutledge Pearson and Ribault,
13 we heard about the improvements, but what were
14 the -- if you have them, the specific strategies
15 that were put in place? What were those
16 strategies and then why aren't those specific
17 strategies being replicated at other elementary
18 schools and middle schools?

19 MR. CSAR: There were a number of -- again,
20 there's no silver bullet, so there were a number
21 of strategies put in place, but the one that I
22 would point to as the transformational strategy
23 is -- in those two schools, you have
24 exceptional -- you had exceptional school
25 leaders, you had principals who had a dedicated

1 focus and vision for how their schools should
2 improve. And despite all of the requirements
3 put on them by the district, the State, and the
4 federal government, were able to work the system
5 for the best interest of their students. They
6 did not go to work to -- to follow policy and
7 stand in a narrow trough. They went to school
8 to make students learn and they were successful
9 in doing that.

10 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

11 You didn't mention anything about family or
12 parental involvement or responsibility in the
13 educational process. Are your -- your group's
14 focus strictly on the schools themselves or
15 does -- do you incorporate or look at how the
16 families can be involved and the importance of
17 the family support structure?

18 MR. CSAR: Certainly family involvement is
19 important, but it is not -- but I would argue
20 that for -- that every student should learn
21 regardless of how much their family is able to
22 be involved.

23 I've never met a family or a parent who
24 does not want the best for their children. At
25 the same time, I have met parents who have --

1 who have very limited ability to get further
2 involved in school.

3 One of our recommendations is to focus on
4 the creation of community schools, where those
5 schools become hubs for that community. And
6 we've seen some of that work start to happen
7 here in Jacksonville, but not -- not at a
8 widespread enough level.

9 And I think when you see that, schools
10 become an inviting and accepting place for
11 parents and parents are much more apt to go to
12 those schools and seek help or assistance or to
13 contribute to their student's education.

14 MR. OLIVERAS: That type of school, is that
15 something where -- like adult continuing
16 education type classes are occurring or is it --
17 are you encouraging more parental involvement,
18 volunteering in the schools?

19 That's something I'm particularly
20 interested in because I see a need here, and I'd
21 like to know where those models have been put in
22 place and how successful they've been.

23 MR. CSAR: The Coalition for Community
24 Schools is an excellent resource for more
25 information about the community school concept.

1 Secretary of Education Duncan put a great focus
2 on it in Chicago when he was there, prior to
3 becoming appointed secretary.

4 But creating those schools does bring a
5 number of service providers, everything from
6 health care to housing to parental -- to
7 parental education, as well as -- as well as
8 reaching out to the community to engage parents
9 in volunteerism.

10 If I remember my numbers correctly, I think
11 the Duval County public school system had
12 something on the order of 28,000 volunteers in
13 the last academic year. Certainly we'd love for
14 that number to be higher, but the schools are
15 not going to improve through -- through
16 increasing that -- the number of volunteers
17 alone. There are systemic issues that we must
18 seek to change in the school system as well.

19 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Miller.

21 MS. MILLER: Is it working?

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

23 MS. MILLER: Okay. I've never been accused
24 of not being able to be heard, with or without a
25 microphone.

1 Thank you very much for being here and for
2 your comments.

3 I have a few comments that might be of
4 benefit to the commission. And I don't know if
5 you have the answers or if someone in your group
6 might have the answers, so I have a few
7 questions.

8 Do you have the -- the current or even just
9 the -- for the last few years, the graduation
10 rate for Duval County Public Schools?

11 MR. CSAR: We've done quite a bit of
12 research on that. The graduation rate is
13 notoriously tricky to track, but what we found
14 through a coalition of community organizations
15 called Learning to Finish is that the number of
16 ninth graders that enter Duval County public
17 school systems, four years later less than
18 two-thirds of them receive a high school
19 diploma. So we're --

20 MS. MILLER: So less than 66 percent?

21 MR. CSAR: Less than 66 percent, and I can
22 get the actual number for you in just a second.

23 MS. MILLER: So -- okay.

24 MR. CSAR: But, I mean, it's --

25 MS. MILLER: So I guess the other side of

1 that question would be, what is the dropout
2 rate? Would that be the other side of that?

3 MR. CSAR: Well, it depends on how you
4 define "dropouts."

5 Officially in the state of Florida to be
6 considered a dropout, you have to physically --
7 as a student, you need to -- you have to go into
8 your guidance office and register to say I'm
9 withdrawing from school. So that number usually
10 hovers around 3 percent.

11 When, in reality, if you enter school in
12 ninth grade, there's a small percentage of
13 students who leave to move out of state or move
14 out of the district. But if you enter school in
15 ninth grade, the expectation is four or five
16 years later you graduate with a high school
17 diploma. So I would argue that, except for the
18 students that we know where they go and we've
19 already excluded them, that -- the remainder of
20 that number is the equivalent of the dropout
21 rate.

22 MS. MILLER: Do we know where Duval County
23 ranks throughout the state in terms of
24 graduation rate or dropout rate?

25 MR. CSAR: It certainly is -- is with the

1 other -- with the seven largest districts in the
2 state of Florida, so the urban districts in the
3 state of Florida.

4 In that pack, the challenge, again, is that
5 we spent -- invested a researcher into delving
6 into the actual statistics because they're not
7 tracked particularly in the fashion that gives
8 us the -- what we feel is the most accurate
9 graduation rates, so I couldn't say specifically
10 where it falls, but certainly it falls in the
11 scope of the other seven urban districts in
12 Florida.

13 MS. MILLER: And would that be in the top
14 ten or in the bottom --

15 (Simultaneous speaking.)

16 MR. CSAR: In those seven districts, I
17 would -- I don't know for sure, but I would
18 estimate -- probably are in the -- certainly the
19 lower half of the districts in the state.
20 However, there are a number of rural districts
21 in the state that also struggle, getting
22 students to graduation.

23 MS. MILLER: Do you have any numbers or
24 have you studied the number of high school
25 graduates who actually go to college?

1 MR. CSAR: We haven't yet. It's -- as part
2 of the Learning to Finish collaborative, it's
3 one of the things we'd like to study. We have
4 this cohort of students that we used to track to
5 determine the graduation rate. And we're
6 probably two to three years out from being able
7 to go and take a look and say you should have
8 received an AA, received a BA by now, and see
9 where they ended up, and so we don't know that
10 yet.

11 MS. MILLER: Is there any way that -- or
12 has your organization tracked a measurement to
13 determine whether or not those students are
14 college ready?

15 MR. CSAR: We have not, the district does.

16 A number have worked with the college
17 placement test and SAT and ACT scores, so I
18 would -- I would strongly suggest, you know,
19 looking at those metrics to get some idea of
20 that.

21 College ready is one piece. College and
22 career readiness is what we like to talk about.
23 Every student should have the opportunity to
24 attend post secondary education should they like
25 to, but also should be ready to enter the

1 workforce in a job that enables them to be
2 self-sufficient.

3 MS. MILLER: On that note, do you --
4 does -- has your organization or the
5 organizations you work with, have they taken any
6 position regarding career academies?

7 MR. CSAR: Yes. We believe the career
8 academy model, when implemented properly and --
9 is a strong model to increase student engagement
10 in high school as well as gives students the
11 professional certifications that enable them to
12 leave high school and earn jobs paying
13 \$50-plus-thousand a year right out of -- I mean,
14 you know, shortly out of high school.

15 MS. MILLER: Are there any good examples of
16 career academies in Duval County?

17 MR. CSAR: Most of the career academies in
18 Duval County are developing. There are a number
19 that are up for national certification this
20 year. One that I visited recently was an IT
21 academy at Sandalwood High School, and there I
22 met a couple of students who had different
23 Microsoft and Cisco networking certifications
24 and some which had a list of those
25 certifications.

1 So there are programs, they're smaller than
2 we'd like to see them right now, but certainly
3 they're something that the Chamber and JPEF and
4 a number of other organizations are working to
5 expand.

6 MS. MILLER: Okay. And if I may continue,
7 has your organization or the organizations you
8 work with taken any position regarding the Duval
9 County School Board's policy pertaining to
10 placing students in advanced placement classes
11 and whether or not that is for -- in the
12 students' or the schools' best interest or
13 even -- or even -- in terms of college
14 placement, and -- and also the same question as
15 it pertains to dual enrollment of students.

16 MR. CSAR: We have not taken a position on
17 either. There's ample research on both sides of
18 that question. I think -- I would say as an
19 education policy person that there's significant
20 debate about the value of students who may not
21 be fully academically prepared taking an
22 advanced level class and there's -- some
23 research points to it being a big benefit and
24 some of -- some research which pointing to it --
25 which points to it being not so great of a

1 benefit. And, you know, I don't think the
2 verdict -- I think the verdict is still out on
3 that one.

4 MS. MILLER: Do we know the cost or do
5 you -- does your organization know the cost of
6 the additional incremental cost of AP classes on
7 the school district?

8 MR. CSAR: The primary cost, to the best of
9 my understanding, is the actual administration
10 of the AP exam, which I -- which here in Duval
11 County, the district does pay for the
12 registration for those exams for students who
13 are enrolled in AP courses. I don't know the
14 exact number. I believe the number is somewhere
15 around \$50 per student, per class.

16 MS. MILLER: And do you have any data or do
17 you have any information -- I know there were
18 studies out there. You may have it. There's --
19 there is -- there are lots of studies out there
20 that show a direct correlation between the
21 number of high school dropouts and crime and
22 certain types of crime in particular. Do you
23 have any of that information? Are you familiar
24 with those studies?

25 MR. CSAR: Well, certainly as I presented

1 in our presentation, we have some research that
2 shows -- not locally, but nationally that shows
3 that a high school dropout is five to eight
4 times more likely to end up incarcerated than a
5 college graduate, so I don't --

6 I don't have anything more specific as to,
7 you know, high school dropouts are more likely
8 to commit X or Y types of crime, but certainly
9 there is -- there is a relationship, and I'd
10 point to an economic cost for that
11 relationship. If you leave high school and
12 cannot support yourself or -- or your family,
13 oftentimes you end up, I guess, to the sheriff.

14 MS. MILLER: Thank you.

15 And, through the Chair, you mentioned the
16 KIPP school model and the additional required
17 resources for that model, to support that model
18 or maybe some of these other models.

19 Is Mr. Chartrand with the KIPP school
20 locally here? Is he -- do we have a
21 representative of --

22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

23 MR. CSAR: No, we don't with us today, but
24 all of us are fairly familiar with the model. I
25 was the former assistant principal with KIPP in

1 Houston.

2 MS. MILLER: Okay. Would you mind
3 explaining -- because I'm not sure that the
4 commission knows -- I think it -- the idea of
5 KIPP and the timing of KIPP schools might be
6 important and -- not just the theory, but the
7 data behind the early intervention, the middle
8 school intervention. Would you mind talking
9 about that some --

10 MR. CSAR: Sure.

11 KIPP schools begin in fifth grade. They
12 take students who are entering fifth grade, and
13 then fifth grade through eighth grade, which
14 began really as a relic of the two founders who
15 taught fifth grade in Houston, Texas, where they
16 founded the KIPP system.

17 KIPP concentrates on a number of different
18 key pillars, two of which we talked about a lot
19 today, which are additional time in the
20 classroom and the power -- what they call the
21 power to lead, which is giving school officials
22 the power to make those decisions that are in
23 the best interest of their students.

24 Being a charter school, there are -- they
25 are exempt from many but not all of the

1 requirements of the public school system and
2 they're able to do what they feel is in the best
3 interest of their students.

4 It's funny, when I spoke with Dave Levin,
5 who is one of the founders of KIPP, he talked
6 about how schools need to be more like
7 Las Vegas. In Las Vegas, everything you do in a
8 casino is focused around getting you to stay in
9 the casino and spend more money. And his -- he
10 relates -- and I'm not sure if he'd really love
11 me relaying this in public, but he says that in
12 KIPP schools everything, from the time you step
13 on campus till the time you leave, is focused on
14 getting students to learn more and increase
15 their academic achievement. And that kind of
16 laser-like focus, he would argue, does not exist
17 across the country in many of our urban
18 districts.

19 MS. MILLER: Unless someone has another
20 question or --

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

22 MS. MILLER: Okay.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner O'Brien.

24 MS. O'BRIEN: Thank you so much for your
25 presentation.

1 I've done some research on my own. I
2 wanted to ask if you had studied either the
3 New York City school system as part of your
4 review of your organization and also the Chicago
5 system. Both of those are very urbanized, much
6 larger school systems than our Duval County
7 school system.

8 In particular, I've spent more time on the
9 New York system and the successes that they have
10 shown, so, obviously, if they can change, we can
11 change. I firmly believe that. I believe that
12 our school system needs to change. I look
13 forward to more input as to what, as a
14 commission, we can recommend to be done.

15 I agree with their overview in New York
16 City and what you're saying with the KIPP system
17 and the successes that you have seen in the
18 Pearson school and the other school, that it's
19 truly about empowering those principals and
20 those teachers to do what is best for those
21 schools since they are closest to the students.

22 I am curious to see what your perception
23 of -- if you have studied the New York school
24 system is. And I do have some reports that I
25 will make available through Jeff to our members

1 about the New York school system and the
2 successes that they have had.

3 In particular, their graduation rates have
4 increased 11.2 percent since 2002, 79.7 of
5 fourth graders and 59.6 percent of eighth
6 graders met or exceeded grade-level New York
7 State math standards in 2008, up from 52 percent
8 and 29.8 percent respectively in 2002. So a
9 huge jump over the last seven years.

10 61.3 percent of fourth graders and
11 43 percent of eighth graders met or exceeded
12 grade-level New York State English standards in
13 2008, up from 46.5 and 29.5 respectively in
14 2002.

15 And black and Latino students in New York
16 City achieved greater gains in both math and
17 English than their white and Asian peers,
18 narrowing the socioeconomic and racial
19 achievement gap.

20 And what's interesting is in New York City,
21 the white or Caucasian grouping is -- is one of
22 the smallest in their school system, so they
23 have a very diverse group of students that meet
24 and need extra help, many nonEnglish speaking.

25 So in regards -- what is your assessment of

1 New York -- they were very radical in what they
2 did. They went to the State and got permission
3 from the State to turn over the school system to
4 the mayor. They have a very strong chancellor
5 system, so it's under Bloomberg and Klein that
6 run that school system for them and implemented
7 all these changes through their Child First
8 program.

9 And then, lastly, you had stated, as a
10 charter school, the KIPP system, they are exempt
11 from many of the requirements of the public
12 school system. I'd be interested to find out in
13 particular what exemption you believe make them
14 succeed because as a commission possibly we can
15 make those exemptions part of our
16 recommendations and -- and effect our charter as
17 such.

18 MR. CSAR: Certainly.

19 I'm, as you are, more familiar with the
20 New York system than the KIPP -- or than the
21 Chicago system, but, you know, relatively
22 familiar with both of them.

23 I have a lot of respect for what's going on
24 in New York, and I think what they've done more
25 than anything is they have sort of lived that

1 there is no silver bullet theory. They have
2 tried a number of different things, from an
3 autonomous school zone or an Empowerment School
4 zone. They have tried -- they have tried giving
5 some schools support from other community-based
6 organizations, like New Visions for Public
7 Schools. They have tried a lot of different
8 things and have had some that have worked and
9 some that haven't worked as well. And through
10 that work, they've -- they're now in a stage
11 where they're -- they're trying to figure out
12 how to scale a lot of what they've seen has
13 worked.

14 With regards to their progress with the
15 graduation rate, they were part of a multicity
16 consortium called the Youth Transition Funders
17 Group, which was funded by a number of national
18 foundations, whom, our organization, Learning to
19 Finish, this community consortium here in
20 Jacksonville, is also working. And so one of
21 the -- we have a couple of folks from Portland
22 who is also in that group of YTFG cities that
23 are coming here and working with some of our
24 high schools to try to develop some strategies
25 here in Duval County that may work.

1 Similarly, New York has been very effective
2 in -- in what we call multiple pathways to
3 graduation, which is creating -- and I hate to
4 use the word "alternative," but separate schools
5 for kids who might need a different
6 environment. And what they've realized is that
7 a comprehensive high school may not be the best
8 place for all students to achieve a high school
9 diploma, so they've created night schools and
10 they've created schools for students with
11 children, they've created a lot of different
12 options like that, and that's something we're
13 also advocating for at the district level here.

14 With regards to their governance, which I
15 know is an issue that this commission has been
16 looking at, their system has worked there, but I
17 would say that there are effective school
18 systems that are better led by both mayoral,
19 slash, appointed superintendents like the
20 Bloomberg and Klein situation in New York, as
21 well as elected school boards.

22 And I think what's really critical is
23 focusing on what's happening in the classroom
24 and then -- and finding visionary leaders to
25 lead those school systems, and I think that can

1 happen under both and it's something that is
2 oftentimes more -- people put a lot more focus
3 on the governance structure than the actual
4 activities in the classroom and the programs the
5 school system is implementing.

6 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi.

8 Nina Waters with the Community Foundation
9 in Jacksonville.

10 I also want to stress that when you look at
11 these other districts, you need to look at
12 funding. And so sometimes we do that in the
13 absence of understanding what those schools have
14 to do the work that they're doing. So many of
15 them have many more foundations that are funding
16 public education reform, national foundations
17 like Gates or Kellogg or Carnegie, putting
18 significant dollars into the public school
19 system to add some of these wraparound services
20 that Trey talked about, but also they have a
21 much different tax base than we do in Duval
22 County and the state of Florida.

23 So I just encourage you to really, when
24 you're looking at that, look at that item.

25 I will say to you that we're not as

1 concerned about who is involved with making
2 those decisions but what those folks that are
3 involved do with the responsibility that they
4 have, so I think it's really important to note
5 that no matter who is in charge of a school
6 district, there are union issues. And certainly
7 in Chicago and New York they have much different
8 union issues than we have in Duval County, and
9 so it took a different approach in those type of
10 cities to address school reform because their
11 union issues are different than ours, but we do
12 have some union issues that Trey has talked
13 about, which really have to be looked at when
14 you're talking about school autonomy and
15 teachers and hiring the best teachers.

16 And I think Duval County has done a very
17 good job, and we still have work to do, as far
18 as looking at how you keep teachers and how you
19 move teachers out of the school. And the school
20 district and the union have worked fairly well
21 together to be able to make some of those
22 changes, but unions are something that are
23 challenging to public school systems, and I
24 think how that works, as you're looking at those
25 communities, is really important.

1 MS. O'BRIEN: The follow-up was, as a
2 charter school -- you'd mentioned as a charter
3 school they are exempt from many of the
4 requirements of the public school system. What
5 are those exemptions that you believe make them
6 more successful that, if at all possible, we
7 would like to implement --

8 MR. CSAR: I think a lot of them come down
9 to those principles of autonomy that we talked
10 about, which are freedom over their scheduling,
11 freedom over their curriculum, freedom over
12 their budget and their staffing, as well as
13 freedom from certain board policies that -- that
14 while well-intentioned may not -- may impose
15 additional burdens on the school campus.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Flowers.

17 MR. FLOWERS: Thank you, Mr. Csar.

18 Mr. Csar, you said education is a moral
19 issue when you began. And I looked at that
20 circle, and I remember when it was much, much
21 (inaudible), and I have some ideas of why it
22 grew.

23 The problem -- it seems to me that we're
24 trying to educate children in a (inaudible)
25 education environment. And that environment, in

1 my opinion, in our distribution of the Community
2 Development Act of 1974 (inaudible), which
3 caused this problem, and we're just trying to
4 dress up some over another problem which we're
5 going to face called regentrification.

6 So as we look at the education of our
7 children, we need to look at it for a long
8 period because everything we talk about is not
9 growing a city. And as the transportation
10 problem becomes more acute, then the people
11 going to come back to the city and you're going
12 to have the same problem because you dispersed
13 the people, and that's my great concern as we
14 look at what we're trying to do.

15 The money been put in since 1974 to -- have
16 stocked these problems and -- both to political
17 manipulation and maneuvering, which is the way
18 government runs in a capitalistic society, and
19 so that bring me to the other question.

20 We have to teach these children what
21 education is. When I came along, it was to
22 become a better citizen and perpetuate the
23 democracy. Certainly an uneducated person can't
24 do any -- make political choices when it comes
25 to candidates.

1 So all of this seem to be tying into a
2 philosophy that we're trying to make last, a
3 system that's not going to work. We just
4 (inaudible) on it.

5 I just wanted to give you a chance to
6 explore -- you're planning for these other
7 schools so that circle won't grow any further.

8 MR. CSAR: Certainly.

9 And I would strongly agree with you that
10 the key to the economic future in many areas in
11 Jacksonville is intricately tied to the
12 educational outcomes that its local schools
13 produce.

14 I think that there is ample opportunity to
15 turn around a lot of the schools inside that
16 turnaround school zone, inside health zone 1.
17 And it's something that we, as a broader
18 community, must invest in. We are only as
19 strong as our weakest neighborhood -- or our
20 neighborhood that has our weakest schools, and
21 we must improve those schools.

22 And I think it is moral issue. And for
23 those that may not see it as a moral issue, it's
24 an economic issue, and it's -- and it's really
25 intricately tied into the future of our

1 community without a doubt.

2 MR. FLOWERS: Thank you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Csar, could I get your
4 thoughts on a charter school district and
5 whether you think that might be a model that we
6 could possibly take a look at?

7 What I had in mind are examples like
8 New Orleans, the Recovery School District after
9 Katrina. I know it might be a little soon to
10 have hard data from that experience, but my
11 understanding is essentially what happened is
12 they took most -- a large number if not most of
13 the schools out of the regular school system,
14 created a charter district, and tried a lot of
15 different things, as you said they did in
16 New York.

17 What are your thoughts on that?

18 MR. CSAR: Well, it's interesting. I have
19 a particular affiliation with the New Orleans
20 public school system. I taught as a -- or was
21 an assistant principal at a KIPP school in
22 Houston that worked with students who had come
23 over after Hurricane Katrina to Houston. It was
24 a KIPP school.

25 New Orleans, prior to Hurricane Katrina,

1 had, without a doubt, the worst public school
2 system in the United States, bar none. And
3 Katrina, while an absolute disaster, was a
4 really unique opportunity for the school system
5 as a whole and for the city.

6 As you know, many of the schools were wiped
7 out, and they created a Recovery School
8 District. And as new schools opened, they
9 became part of this Recovery School District,
10 given many of the autonomies that existed --
11 that have existed in charter school networks
12 throughout the country.

13 A couple of things I would -- and so far
14 they're performing well. They're not -- they're
15 not all -- I mean, not universally, but overall
16 they -- they're performing much better than what
17 was there previously. I would attribute that to
18 a couple of things. I think certainly the
19 autonomies that school leaders and individual
20 schools in New Orleans have had the opportunity
21 to enjoy are part of it, a lot -- the autonomies
22 coupled with strong accountability measures.

23 I think the other thing which is a really
24 difficult issue to understand is -- when a
25 charter school starts, traditionally, most --

1 not all, but many if not most charter schools
2 start one grade at a time. So, for example, in
3 a KIPP school, we -- they open a school and it
4 starts at fifth grade, and the fifth graders get
5 in. It's usually about 90 students. The entire
6 staff is focused on that group of 90 fifth
7 graders, getting the school culture right,
8 getting the academics right, getting the
9 remediation and other supports that are
10 necessary together and functioning properly.

11 The next year those fifth graders become
12 sixth graders. They're the big boys on campus,
13 and all the incoming new fifth graders look up
14 and see that the sixth graders are -- have --
15 possessing the right culture and the right
16 belief around the importance of academics and
17 all that such that they start to conform, and
18 then the staff can -- you know, obviously helps
19 with that.

20 And over the next four years, as that
21 school grows from 90 students to four classes of
22 90 students, that culture is completely
23 shifted.

24 So I think that in New Orleans where you
25 had a number of schools that were able to grow a

1 year at a time, as well as in charter schools
2 throughout the country where you've had the
3 ability to grow one year at a time, I think that
4 is one sort of reason it's often understated in
5 a lot of what you read about, what makes many of
6 those systems successful.

7 As far as here in Jacksonville, we have --
8 JPEF has been advocating that the district look
9 at district charter schools, which would give
10 the -- give some schools the freedoms and
11 autonomies we talked about, as well as the
12 accountability that we talked about, with the
13 force of law. And so I think that that would be
14 something that -- that could be entertained.

15 Again, the prerequisite to those types of
16 schools being effective is having really great
17 school leaders and having really great classroom
18 teachers, and that's something that -- you know,
19 we need to make sure we have the human capacity,
20 the human capital capacity in place and
21 well-trained prior to suddenly giving over a
22 whole lot of autonomy to every school in the
23 district or whatever it may be.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

25 Commissioner Oliveras.

1 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Mr. Csar, a question about teacher
3 retention and turnover. I don't have the
4 numbers in front of me, but a while ago I looked
5 at the Duval County teacher retention rate and
6 it struck me as very -- unfortunately, over time
7 we lose a lot of our teachers. And working in
8 government myself, I -- there is a value in
9 having a brain pool and having senior, in this
10 case, teachers who have the experience, the
11 benefit of experience in the classroom over
12 time, over years, especially when they're
13 perhaps mentoring new teachers.

14 What are your thoughts on the retention
15 rate of our public school teachers and what do
16 you think is going on there with apparently a
17 lot of them leaving the system?

18 MR. CSAR: Certainly the teacher retention
19 rates in Duval County are in line with the
20 teacher retention rates in many urban districts
21 throughout the country.

22 Generally, what you find is that you lose a
23 substantial number of teachers, particularly in
24 the first five years of their teaching careers,
25 and I -- there's a few different things that are

1 at play there.

2 I think we need to recruit the highest
3 quality human capital we can. We also need to
4 support them and give them -- give them support,
5 particularly in those early years of teaching.
6 And then, again, we need to improve the quality
7 of our school leadership.

8 Contrary to what a lot of people consider
9 as the primary reason teachers leave, it's
10 not -- it's often not the money. It's often the
11 quality of their relationship with their school
12 faculty and their principal.

13 And so the more we can do -- and I think,
14 you know, many charter schools, certainly not
15 universally, have been successful with creating
16 a really -- team-oriented culture that is
17 focused around student achievement where all the
18 brains in the room are working together to
19 figure out how to best improve student
20 achievement for the group of students they have
21 at their school. And I think the more we can do
22 that, the more support we can provide the
23 teachers. And the more input we can -- we can
24 get them about how our schools function, the
25 more likely they will be to stay.

1 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner O'Brien.

3 MS. O'BRIEN: Are charter school
4 teachers -- and I don't know if principals are a
5 part of it or not. Are they exempt from the
6 union or are they members of the union
7 traditionally?

8 MR. CSAR: It depends on the individual
9 charter school, but most charter school teachers
10 are not members of a union.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Austin.

12 MR. AUSTIN: Thank you for your very
13 interesting presentation this morning.

14 How many charter schools do we have in
15 Duval County?

16 MR. CSAR: I don't know the number off the
17 top of my head, but it's around ten.

18 MR. AUSTIN: Ten? And are they all -- how
19 many of them are under -- are they all under
20 different -- are they all independent or are
21 some of them a part of a system?

22 MR. CSAR: To the best of my knowledge,
23 they're all independent right now. They're all
24 authorized by the school system, but they're all
25 independently managed. They're not -- they're

1 not part of a charter management organization or
2 a network of any kind.

3 MR. AUSTIN: What would that be, about
4 3,000 students?

5 MR. CSAR: I don't think it's anywhere near
6 that large. Generally charter schools are
7 substantially smaller than district schools.

8 MR. AUSTIN: Half that many?

9 MR. CSAR: Maybe.

10 MR. AUSTIN: Thank you.

11 Let me ask you another question. We're
12 charged with looking at the charter of the
13 consolidated government and how the education
14 piece fits within that charter and if we should
15 recommend any changes or not recommend any
16 changes.

17 You mentioned at the top -- and I couldn't
18 agree with you more -- that the primary -- the
19 number one item is leadership, and I think
20 almost anything we take on in life -- do you
21 have any suggestions of -- from your experience,
22 if there should be any changes made in the
23 structure of the Duval County system, from the
24 school board down, or is that beyond what you
25 folks are studying and looking at?

1 MR. CSAR: We have not focused on
2 governance issues right now. We are -- again,
3 are more concerned with what policies are put in
4 place that affect students. And as long as we
5 get -- are able to recruit, retain and reward
6 highly effective and visionary school leaders
7 and district leaders, then the governance
8 structure is substantially secondary in our
9 mind.

10 MR. AUSTIN: I'm not going to let you off
11 that easily.

12 Do you have any personal opinion?

13 MR. CSAR: I don't. I think that -- I have
14 a lot of respect for what's been done,
15 particularly in Washington D.C. and in
16 New York. However, I think that there are
17 equally surprising -- equally respectable
18 efforts that have been made in places like
19 Atlanta and some of the other school board --
20 elected-school-board-led areas.

21 (Mr. Warren approaches the podium.)

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Warren, would you
23 introduce yourself and then our court reporter
24 will swear you in.

25 MR. WARREN: I'm Cleve Warren, citizen of

1 Jacksonville.

2 On this issue of governance --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Warren, the court
4 reporter has to swear you in.

5 MR. WARREN: I'm sorry?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like our court
7 reporter to swear you in.

8 MR. WARREN: Oh, I'm sorry.

9 THE REPORTER: Would you raise your right
10 hand for me, please.

11 MR. WARREN: Sure.

12 THE REPORTER: Do you affirm that the
13 testimony you're about to give will be the
14 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
15 truth?

16 MR. WARREN: Yes.

17 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

18 MR. WARREN: Thank you.

19 On the issue of governance, we -- as Trey
20 pointed out, we've been more focused on what it
21 takes to be effective in the classroom.

22 What we do think, however, that a
23 cooperative relationship between City Hall, if
24 you will, and the school board is one that -- if
25 there is a Chinese wall that provides some

1 separation of state between responsibilities,
2 that that Chinese wall needs to be lowered so
3 there's a more cooperative effort in City Hall
4 and at the school board towards an effective
5 posture with the relationship to the achievement
6 of our children.

7 Whatever we can do as a community, we
8 should learn how to focus on facilitating a
9 means for both city government and the school
10 board to work together, from financial resources
11 to leadership. It's important that we come
12 together and recognize the problem of education
13 as being one that affects all of us, and we
14 can't defer the responsibility to those
15 specifically assigned the responsibility for
16 education in our community. Somehow we have to
17 figure out how we bring the two forces together
18 or all of the community together to focus on
19 what is a very large issue.

20 What Trey pointed out earlier, the problem
21 in our community in education is largely a moral
22 imperative issue, so how do we all get involved
23 in dealing with the moral imperative? And we
24 can't allow the Chinese wall or a separation of
25 state and responsibility to be something that

1 allows us to point the finger at the other guy.
2 If the other guy is trying all he can and the
3 need is for more resources, for more people, for
4 more financial capacity, then we figure out as a
5 community how to do that.

6 So to answer your question, Mayor, if there
7 is something we can do in the charter that
8 facilitates that cooperative relationship
9 between City Hall and the school board, we
10 should look to those measures to try and reduce
11 them such that the city -- city government, and
12 the mayor in particular and his leadership, can
13 bring that to bear in assistance to the school
14 board towards the achievement of what its
15 mission is.

16 MR. AUSTIN: I'm not very -- obviously not
17 very well informed on this. What is your
18 primary source of funding in the charter school
19 system, the charter schools?

20 MR. WARREN: It will vary from charter
21 school to charter school. Some of them are
22 church related and they have support from those
23 organizations --

24 MR. AUSTIN: Do you get public money?

25 MR. WARREN: Yes, they do. They get the

1 same FTE that will go to the public school
2 system minus an administrative fee that's paid
3 to the school system for the -- a license, if
4 you will, to operate a charter.

5 MR. AUSTIN: Okay. Thank you.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Korman.

7 MS. KORMAN: Mr. Warren, I guess I'm trying
8 to follow -- and also Mr. Csar's -- what you
9 were saying with -- with the governance
10 structure we have in place, meaning the school
11 board and the administration. I kind of get the
12 feeling -- and I don't mean to be putting words
13 in your mouth, so if you can elaborate a little
14 bit -- that we're seeing -- okay, we kind of
15 have to ignore what they're doing and focus on
16 the -- the kids and the parents and everything
17 else. And I find that hard to believe because
18 unless they're on board with what you guys want
19 to do, we're going to receive some resistance.
20 So I'm trying to figure out how that plan will
21 work. So that's -- if you can elaborate on
22 that, that would be great.

23 MR. WARREN: Sure.

24 Well, I'm not suggesting at all that we
25 ignore at all what the school board is doing.

1 What I am suggesting is that we join them in the
2 fight, if you will. And so if there is a
3 barrier that exists between what a mayor can do
4 or a president of a City Council can do and
5 bring the resources of the city outside of the
6 financial capacity and leadership capacity of
7 the school board, then we should figure out how
8 to bring those things together.

9 Now, to be abundantly clear, that may mean
10 that there is cause by City Hall to identify a
11 revenue source to assist the school board with
12 its efforts. It may mean that there is some
13 collegial body created between the school board
14 and City Hall to be more effective
15 leadershipwise so that a mayor can -- in this
16 community, the mayor can aspire, if you will,
17 for an improved school system, but, generally
18 speaking, has no -- no real latitude to effect
19 change in the classroom.

20 What I'm suggesting is we need to figure
21 out how we bring these forces together so that
22 there is collegial thinking and collegial effort
23 towards that, and today that doesn't exist.

24 MR. CSAR: And, if I may, quickly -- just
25 to chime in as well, I think that -- as you look

1 at our recommendations and our areas to focus
2 on, the two which I think this -- have the
3 greatest possibility for collaboration between
4 the school district and the City are the
5 wraparound services. There are -- again, there
6 are a number of City agencies and other City
7 bodies that should be in schools and the schools
8 should be welcoming to those groups, and there
9 are --

10 The other one is looking at additional
11 time, extending the school day and extending the
12 school year. The City invests many millions of
13 dollars already in different children's
14 programs, both after school and throughout the
15 summer, and so how can those programs be more
16 closely aligned with what's going on in the
17 school system such that they truly start to form
18 an extended day instead of school and after
19 school.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Korman, did you
21 have a follow-up?

22 MS. KORMAN: I guess I'm still -- and I'm
23 trying to understand it. It's not that I have
24 an opinion about it, but you -- the mind-set of
25 really not focusing on the governance structure,

1 which if it's a private company -- or in a
2 public company, you've got the four directors,
3 you've got the CEO, which is the same thing with
4 our school board, and the administration, so I'm
5 trying to figure out why you guys really haven't
6 really studied that issue because that is either
7 part of the solution or part of the problem.

8 MR. CSAR: I would argue that the structure
9 itself is neither the solution nor the problem.

10 If there is a problem where the leaders of
11 the school system are not doing what's in the
12 best interest of the students, then the citizens
13 of this city need to work to replace those
14 leaders. And if that's not the case and we
15 feel -- and the citizens of this city feel like
16 those leaders are effectively leading the school
17 body, the school system, then they need to work
18 to reelect those folks.

19 And so I think that the structure itself is
20 not the issue. If there's an issue, it's the
21 people, and that's a decision that is for the
22 citizens of Jacksonville to make.

23 MR. WARREN: If I could elaborate just a
24 tad more. They mentioned, by way of example, a
25 collaborative effort between city and school.

1 Let's just say for a moment that, instead of
2 TeamUp and after-school programs, we had longer
3 school days and longer school years, but what
4 does -- what will longer school days do?

5 Well, longer school days might eliminate
6 the need for having TeamUp because the kids are
7 there and that longer school day is a time frame
8 for academic -- more academic learning at a --
9 I'm not sure what happens at TeamUp, if it's
10 just more day care or if there's real learning
11 going on, but the reality is if you have a
12 longer school day, you spend more time on task,
13 and the effort there is to improve the
14 performance of our students.

15 Well, in that regard, a longer school day
16 means that there's more revenue needed to pay
17 for the longer teacher hours. Where might that
18 come from? And when we're dealing with a
19 limited resource as it is, it may mean -- just
20 hypothetically speaking -- some joint venture
21 with City Hall with the resources to accommodate
22 longer school days comes from a different source
23 that's not available currently to our school
24 system. It's that kind of thinking that I'm
25 suggesting we need to give thought to as to how

1 we get to an end by finding the means to get
2 there.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Austin.

4 MR. AUSTIN: Yes, this is a little -- a
5 little afield, but it seems to me that
6 monopolies very often lead to inefficiencies and
7 deterioration in products in the private sector
8 and competition seems to sharpen everybody's
9 performance and attitude and so forth.

10 Do you see charter schools coming into
11 the -- prominence enough to compete for students
12 with the public school system?

13 MR. CSAR: Absolutely, and I'll give you an
14 example.

15 MR. AUSTIN: Say that again.

16 MR. CSAR: Absolutely.

17 I think -- I spent much of my teaching
18 career in the Houston public school system in
19 the Houston independent school district and KIPP
20 in Houston, and KIPP currently has plans in
21 Houston to expand the number of schools that it
22 operates to such -- to have the capacity to
23 educate 10 percent of the student body in
24 Houston, Texas.

25 Now, I don't think KIPP would argue that

1 that's possible across the country in every
2 single district, particularly given the funding
3 structure that exists in different states. But
4 I think if you ask folks in the district
5 leadership in Houston whether KIPP is a
6 legitimate competitor for students and through
7 students for state funding, they would say
8 absolutely.

9 I think here in Jacksonville historically
10 we have seen charter schools struggle for a
11 number of different reasons, both based on
12 their -- their individual leadership as well as
13 the resources that the State of Florida provides
14 to those charter schools.

15 I think we have a couple of promising
16 examples, and I can't guarantee their
17 performance, but a couple of promising examples
18 in both the KIPP system that will -- that is
19 hoping to open five schools here in Houston
20 [sic] over the next few years, as well as in
21 Tiger Academy, which is part of the YMCA. That
22 may show that charter schools can outperform the
23 school, and only time will tell. And if they
24 are able to outperform the school system, I
25 think the school system will face some

1 competition for students and a lot of people
2 looking and saying we can do better.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner O'Brien.

4 MS. O'BRIEN: Mr. Csar, have you seen a
5 successful disciplinarian system in -- across
6 your studies?

7 What we find is oftentimes classes are
8 disrupted because of one or two students who
9 have behavioral problems. The ability of
10 teachers and even principals to effectively
11 discipline and remove those students from the
12 classroom has certainly been hampered due to
13 legal liability issues and such.

14 Have you seen a successful disciplinarian
15 system work or have you seen laws implemented,
16 possibly -- it was mentioned in some of --
17 previously, like a Good Samaritan Award -- or
18 not award, or law that gives greater flexibility
19 to our school system to allow them to implement
20 disciplinary systems so that you aren't
21 disrupting the classroom?

22 MR. CSAR: Sure. I mean, I certainly have
23 seen schools that have solid discipline. And I
24 think that starts with improving the school
25 culture, and so many of those schools have also,

1 not coincidentally, a phenomenal school culture.

2 That being said, there are -- I mean, it
3 really comes down to not so much a program or a
4 system as high-quality human capital, great
5 teachers and great principals who can work
6 within each individual case because, you know,
7 speaking from my experience as a teacher and a
8 school administrator, the reason that Johnny is
9 acting up may not be the same reason that Mary
10 is acting up, and the reason -- and what I need
11 to do is get to the root cause of both of their
12 disciplinary issues, whether it's, you know,
13 Johnny can't read or Maria didn't have
14 breakfast.

15 When we -- and taking the time and having
16 the ability -- having the time to investigate
17 those root causes and then work -- again, if we
18 have a system of wraparound supports, having the
19 ability to work to rectify those issues, whether
20 they are in-school issues or out-of-school
21 issues, academic or nonacademic issues.

22 It is possible to have a school in which
23 students are behaving and are ready to learn and
24 eager to learn, but I think to say that --
25 again, to say that there is a single program,

1 you know, we can implement X discipline system
2 and here are the consequ- -- oftentimes I feel
3 like that is -- that is, again, not -- you know,
4 one size does not fit all.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioners, as a courtesy
6 to our next speakers, I'm going to take one more
7 question before we move to them so that they can
8 stay on their schedule, and I will ask
9 Commissioner Catlett, who has not yet spoken.

10 MR. CATLETT: This is a quickie.

11 How are charter schools funded beyond what
12 the State supplies?

13 MR. CSAR: The State gives them the FTE,
14 minus a small percentage, and then the rest is
15 through private philanthropy. Oftentimes the
16 larger charter school networks have
17 philanthropic officers who seek grants from
18 foundations, individual donations and things
19 like that to make up that difference, to make
20 that 15- to \$1,600, in KIPP's case, per student.

21 MR. CATLETT: Are the children required to
22 pay an entry fee of any sort?

23 MR. CSAR: Absolutely not. It's forbidden
24 by state law. The schools cannot discriminate
25 on who they accept. And if they have more

1 applicants than they have capacity, they must do
2 a blind lottery.

3 MR. CATLETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Commissioner
5 Catlett.

6 Thank you, Mr. Csar. I would -- if you are
7 able, I would urge you all to stay. We'll have
8 more question opportunities afterward, but I
9 would like for our next speakers to have an
10 opportunity to present as well.

11 MR. CSAR: Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

13 Our next speaker will be Dr. Steve Wallace,
14 the president of Florida State College at
15 Jacksonville. Well known to all of us.

16 (Dr. Wallace approaches the podium.)

17 THE CHAIRMAN: And, Dr. Wallace, if you'll
18 just give your name for the record and then our
19 court reporter will swear you in.

20 DR. WALLACE: I will.

21 Steven Wallace, president of Florida State
22 College at Jacksonville.

23 And, Mr. Chairman, could we also swear in
24 Dr. Edythe Abdulla so she can participate?

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. However you

1 would like to divide your time is fine with me.

2 DR. WALLACE: Okay.

3 DR. ABDULLA: Good morning.

4 I'm Edythe Abdulla. I am the campus
5 president for the downtown campus of Florida
6 State College at Jacksonville.

7 THE REPORTER: Would you both raise your
8 right hand for me, please.

9 DR. WALLACE: (Complies.)

10 DR. ABDULLA: (Complies.)

11 THE REPORTER: Do you affirm that the
12 testimony you're about to give will be the
13 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
14 truth?

15 DR. WALLACE: Yes.

16 DR. ABDULLA: Yes.

17 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

19 DR. WALLACE: First of all, we really
20 appreciate an opportunity to speak with you this
21 morning. This is a privilege. We value your
22 work and we also commend you for your attention
23 to the possibility of structural changes within
24 our county government that can result in
25 elevated student outcomes, so it's wonderful

1 that you're attending to these issues.

2 Dr. Abdulla and I are here today to tell
3 you the story of a charter school, a very unique
4 and, fortunately, highly successful charter
5 school, Pathways Academy, but let me begin by
6 giving you a little contextual piece that is
7 part of my personal involvement in this story.

8 I came to Florida 12 years ago from
9 Minnesota. Charter schools were invented in
10 Minnesota, which is interesting because
11 Minnesota, arguably, has the best public schools
12 in America, yet they invented charter schools
13 because they weren't satisfied and they saw the
14 opportunity to take an exceptional public
15 education system and take it to yet a higher
16 level of excellence and performance.

17 I found that significant as an educator.
18 And ultimately we're all kind of the sum and
19 substance of our experiences, so five years ago
20 the issue of charter schools came up within our
21 college administration and board and we spent a
22 long and very thoughtful time giving very, very
23 serious consideration to the possibility of our
24 college creating a charter school.

25 There could not have been a more serious

1 and difficult consideration. We are a college.
2 While it is mission-relevant for us to
3 participate in the preparation of future college
4 students, it is not required. It's a
5 discretionary matter.

6 Other Florida community and state colleges
7 had, at that point, created charter schools.
8 All of them created charter schools for honor
9 students. In other words, they would come into
10 a district, take the very best students, bring
11 them into a college charter school and have a
12 highly enriched accelerated program wherein the
13 student would graduate with both a high school
14 diploma and a college associate degree.

15 We are the only organization that chose to
16 do just the opposite, and there's some
17 compelling reasons for that. And in short form,
18 we could not possibly be more concerned about
19 the consequences of dropouts in our community.
20 We know that directly or secondarily they are a
21 major source of crime and social problems. They
22 are a threat to themselves and the people around
23 them. And, most importantly, we care about
24 them.

25 These are young people that have, in many

1 cases, enormous potential, yet they're kids and
2 they have made a dumb decision, a decision to
3 forego the opportunities available to them and
4 to drop out of high school. And we know in a
5 knowledge economy that that pretty much
6 marginalizes them for the rest of their life if
7 they don't do something about that. They will
8 have almost no opportunity to achieve the
9 American dream, to have a living wage, to own a
10 home, to own a car that starts pretty much every
11 morning, and do all those things that many of us
12 take for granted. And we care about them, but
13 we're a college.

14 So ultimately our board, on our
15 recommendation, chose to take a bold step, and
16 that is to create a charter school for dropouts
17 as a statement. It is a rescue mission. It is
18 a statement that these dropouts are important.
19 We have a vested interest in them. They deserve
20 in many cases -- not all cases, but in many
21 cases a second chance and there are very, very,
22 very limited programs for them, so we created
23 Pathways Academy.

24 Unfortunately, we have to limit the size of
25 Pathways Academy. We are a college. This is an

1 important statement, but there are limitations
2 in terms of how much we can do. So we initially
3 limited Pathways Academy to 200 students. So
4 the mission is to save 200 young people a year
5 and put them back on the track to productivity
6 and self-sufficiency, to help them ultimately
7 achieve a higher quality of life and prosperity.

8 Dr. Abdulla, in a moment, will give you a
9 quick update on how that's gone. I can tell you
10 the first year of Pathways was one of the
11 hardest things any of us have ever endeavored to
12 do. It's a very challenging population. We've
13 now entered year four and things have changed
14 dramatically.

15 So, Mr. Chairman, if I could, I'd like
16 Dr. Abdulla to continue.

17 DR. ABDULLA: Thank you, Dr. Wallace.

18 Is gives me great pleasure to tell you --
19 give you an update today on the Pathways
20 Academy, and I'm going to start from the big
21 picture and kind of go down to smaller details
22 about our program.

23 Let me start by saying that we are SACS
24 accredited, so we have accreditation from the
25 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

1 We have accreditation with three commendations,
2 which is extremely unusual for a brand new
3 school, especially a charter school.

4 We are recognized by the U.S. Chamber of
5 Commerce, as well as the National Career Prep
6 Network, and have recently been published in
7 that -- in their document -- their latest
8 publication as one of 17 top example or model
9 schools in the country, and this is looking at
10 the career academy model.

11 Not only that, we have been recognized
12 nationally by Jobs for America's Graduates.
13 Jobs for America's Graduates is what Trey
14 referred to as a wraparound program. It
15 provides life skills, learning skills, workplace
16 readiness skills. We have been recognized as a
17 top provider in that area, and I will give you
18 some statistics about that a little bit later.

19 Not only that, we have been recognized by
20 the U.S. Department of Labor through a very
21 significant grant.

22 So I wanted to start with that.

23 Who are our kids? Our kids are 16 to
24 20 years old. Most of them are 16- and
25 17-year-olds, about 56 percent of them. They

1 are students who have not been involved in
2 violent crime, violent incidents during their
3 time in a Duval County school system or other
4 system before they come to us, so we use that as
5 an eligibility requirement.

6 They have to have -- our initial
7 requirement is that they have a ninth grade
8 reading level. Recently, in our new charter, we
9 added a -- we added a conditional enrollment or
10 a conditional acceptance, and so we do accept
11 some students with a seventh grade reading
12 level.

13 We have now 200 students. We have a day
14 program, we have an evening program, so our
15 students can come in the day and they can come
16 in the evening. We have an online program as
17 well as a strictly classroom program, so
18 students have an opportunity, if they need to
19 work, to participate in life -- life's
20 challenges of finances and also complete their
21 high school diploma, but I think the most
22 important thing about Pathways Academy is this:
23 Pathways Academy is not just about earning a
24 secondary diploma. Pathways Academy is about a
25 secondary diploma and post secondary

1 credentials.

2 Every student who enrolls in Pathways must
3 take high school classes and college-level
4 classes at the same time. Their first semester
5 in Pathways, they take high school classes and
6 what we call student life skills or an SLS
7 course so they can learn to be successful
8 individuals in an educational environment, both
9 the secondary and the post secondary.

10 Their second term in Pathways, they then
11 move to not only enrollment in high school
12 courses but enrollment in biotechnology courses,
13 automotive courses, manufacturing courses,
14 nursing courses, Allied Health kinds of things,
15 you name it, early childhood education. You
16 name the career, we give them the opportunity to
17 participate in that.

18 We have had a number of successes along the
19 year -- along the three years. As Dr. Wallace
20 has mentioned, our first year was a very, very
21 difficult year. But since that year, we've
22 moved from 11 graduates to 74 graduates. Now,
23 remember we only have 200 students.
24 Seventy-four graduates.

25 The program is geared for only two years.

1 It is a two-year charter school. So we've moved
2 from 11 graduates to 74 graduates. We have
3 students enrolled -- we have a 40 percent
4 transition rate; that is, transition from
5 completing high school and some post secondary
6 enrollment into college credit enrollment, so
7 they're continuing their education.

8 We have a 71 percent success rate in terms
9 of our dual enrollment, the students that are
10 enrolled in high school and in college at the
11 same time. So we are very proud of those
12 successes.

13 I think I will stop there and allow some
14 questions -- specific questions about the
15 program, but I've given you a broad overview of
16 what we do.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

18 Commissioner Miller.

19 MS. MILLER: Through the Chair, would you
20 mind discussing the model and the funding
21 approach and the model -- the counselors and
22 sponsorship and mentorship that the -- how we
23 not just approach education but all of the life
24 issues that these students . . .

25 DR. ABDULLA: Because we're dealing with a

1 very unique population, a very needy population,
2 we realized that we couldn't just look at the
3 academic issues. We had to really look at a
4 whole life approach, and so we are looking at
5 their career goals, we are looking at their
6 personal life goals and life challenges, and
7 we're also looking at academics.

8 Because of that, we developed a partnership
9 with Jobs for Florida's Graduates. That is an
10 affiliate of Jobs for America's Graduates, and
11 we now have career specialists for a cohort of
12 45 students. So for every 45 students, they are
13 assigned a case manager for all intent and
14 purposes. That case manager is responsible for
15 following that student, being a liaison for
16 personal problems, being a liaison for problems
17 in the classroom, being an attendance tracker,
18 if you will, making sure that the student stays
19 on track.

20 The Jobs for America's Graduates program
21 has some national standards that they set. They
22 looked at -- across the country there are about
23 2,000 career specialists. And in the state of
24 Florida, there are -- in Florida, there are a
25 little bit more than 200. They have some

1 minimum standards for those individuals in terms
2 of how much time they should spend with
3 students, what their success rate should be.

4 At Pathways Academy -- well, first let me
5 say, Jobs for America's Graduates requires
6 120 hours of contact between a career specialist
7 and a student. We have an average of 206 hours
8 of contact. We have just modified our program
9 to such that they could have more contact.

10 They have to follow the student not only
11 for the years that they are in Pathways, but
12 they also have to follow them for a year after
13 Pathways because they want to make sure that
14 they continue to be successful.

15 We have exceeded by 20 to 40 percent each
16 of the national standards that the Jobs for
17 America's Graduates program has established. So
18 everything from graduation rate to placement
19 rate to transition into post secondary education
20 to attendance, we have, bar none, exceeded all
21 of their -- all of their requirements.

22 You asked about funding. We have funding
23 from all kinds of sources. They mentioned
24 earlier -- Mr. Csar mentioned earlier that most
25 of the funding for charter schools comes from

1 FTE funding that flows through the Duval County
2 public school system.

3 Duval County keeps 5 percent in terms of
4 administrative costs and the other funds come to
5 us. Roughly about \$4,300 per student. But in
6 addition to that, again, because we realize the
7 needs of this particular group of students, we
8 have been able to secure a United States
9 Department of Labor grant, WorkSource Florida,
10 as well as the local WorkSource board has
11 provided funds to us. We also receive some
12 lottery funds up front.

13 We were very blessed, because of our
14 success, to receive incentive funds. Each
15 charter school -- let me back up for a second.

16 Each charter school receives a start-up
17 fund from the State, roughly about 150- to
18 \$190,000, depending on the size of your school.
19 Over the years -- over the first three years you
20 get a little bit less money as you implement
21 your program. But based on the success of that
22 program, you qualify for incentive dollars, and
23 we were able to qualify for an additional
24 \$100,000 in incentive money because of the
25 success rate of our program, so we've -- we've

1 looked everywhere for funds.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Oliveras.

3 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Thank you both for coming.

5 First of all, let me say I appreciate what
6 you're doing at Pathways. You're probably
7 rescuing a lot of lives.

8 With the 200 enrollment, how many
9 students -- or do you track how many are
10 essentially turned away every year?

11 DR. ABDULLA: Yes. This is a very
12 interesting story.

13 Last year we did extensive tracking of
14 this, and I don't know if you've noticed the
15 billboards and the radio ads, et cetera. We
16 received a little bit more than 2,000 telephone
17 calls last year for enrollment into Pathways.
18 In terms of the number of the students that
19 actually showed up, from that -- those 2,000
20 calls, 813 actually showed up to go through our
21 eligibility requirements.

22 After assessments, we give them the test of
23 adult basic education. We also give them the
24 college placement test in order to determine
25 their readiness for college. We then ended

1 up -- and this was last year's class, not this
2 year's class. We then ended up with 136
3 students.

4 So as you begin to -- you see that there's
5 a large population out there, but those that are
6 qualified and follow through -- we have people
7 that just don't show up. We end up with a
8 smaller number of students. That is one of the
9 reasons why we started the evening program.

10 MR. OLIVERAS: And the students that you do
11 have, have they -- actually, have they dropped
12 out of school and come -- are they coming back
13 or are they just perhaps failing out of the
14 school that they're at and then choosing this as
15 a more viable educational opportunity?

16 DR. ABDULLA: Ninety-five percent of them
17 are true dropouts. They have been out of the
18 system for six months or more.

19 We do have some career -- guidance
20 counselors, excuse me, at the high schools that
21 will refer students that we -- that they think
22 will be more successful in our environment, and
23 that would be about 5 percent.

24 Our agreement with Duval County was that we
25 would not recruit students out of their

1 population. As Dr. Wallace mentioned before, we
2 are not about recruiting, we're about rescuing
3 kids that have found, for some reason, they
4 cannot survive in the traditional school
5 system.

6 DR. WALLACE: Mr. Chairman, if I could
7 expand on that just a moment. I want to put
8 this in the larger context.

9 Florida State College operates a very, very
10 large network of GED Academies, so Pathways
11 Academy is one of two high school completion
12 programs that we have.

13 The GED Academy is very, very large, a
14 couple thousand students a term, and it is very
15 open. That is for students who simply want to
16 complete the high school diploma. That was not
17 the design concept for Pathways.

18 Pathways is a very, very high aspiration
19 initiative. And it's a recognition that in a
20 knowledge economy, while having a GED is
21 certainly better than being a high school
22 dropout, it's -- having a GED or a generic high
23 school diploma, frankly, is not a reliable
24 pathway to a high-wage, high-demand occupation.

25 In a knowledge economy, all of our citizens

1 are going to need education beyond high school.
2 Our school board recognizes that, our
3 superintendent recognizes that, and we need to
4 work together to make sure that happens.

5 Pathways is distinct from other charter
6 schools in that the intention of Pathways is
7 that 100 percent of the Pathways students will
8 earn that high school credential and continue
9 their education either in our technical college
10 or at Florida State College for a degree.
11 That's why we embed college in the high school
12 program itself, so they immediately begin to
13 have those bridging experiences into college.

14 Because of that, we have to be somewhat
15 selective. Reading is the key. We cannot be
16 successful with this high aspiration program,
17 this high standard program if reading levels are
18 so insufficient that the students can't even
19 begin to be successful in the Pathways program.

20 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner O'Brien.

22 MS. O'BRIEN: What do you-all believe makes
23 Florida State College, your structure, better
24 able to implement the Pathways charter school
25 and also the GED Academies above and beyond the

1 Duval County public school system?

2 DR. WALLACE: We don't look at it in a
3 hierarchial manner. The reason that we believed
4 and continue to believe that we can be
5 successful with this population is because we
6 have 40 years of experience operating an adult
7 high school.

8 It has been a part of our institution's
9 history and commitment for its entire -- almost
10 its entire existence to serve individuals in our
11 community, adults, individuals over 18, who need
12 to complete a high school credential. We have
13 done that. And over 40 years of experience, we
14 got pretty good at it.

15 We have now restructured that. We no
16 longer have an adult high school. We have our
17 two programs, Pathways and the GED Academies,
18 which are highly differentiated by design, but
19 we built -- the answer to your question is
20 simple. We built upon that experience and those
21 prior successes.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlett.

23 MR. CATLETT: Well, I think everybody here
24 recognizes that you've done a really progressive
25 job, not just on this but other things you're

1 doing at the university -- the college.

2 Do you have any plans to expand the
3 Pathways program?

4 DR. ABDULLA: Yes, we do.

5 We are planning to add another 50 students,
6 so we will go up to 250 this year.

7 We are able to go up to 300 students, and
8 so -- based on the facilities that we have now,
9 we're able to go up to 300, so our long-term
10 goal would be 300. Unless we are able to get
11 funding for a facility, an additional facility,
12 we would not be able to expand beyond 300
13 students.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Korman.

15 MS. KORMAN: A couple of questions.

16 The first one is -- how do you market to
17 find these individual is the first one.

18 The second question is -- I think I heard
19 you right, but I may not have. Seventy-four
20 kids have graduated from the program; is that
21 correct?

22 DR. ABDULLA: Last year was 74.

23 MS. KORMAN: Last year?

24 DR. ABDULLA: Yes.

25 MS. KORMAN: And I know -- I mean, how --

1 what happened to the other 26?

2 I think -- I don't remember if I had a
3 third, so those two for now.

4 DR. ABDULLA: Okay. We have -- it's a
5 two-year -- a student has up to two years to
6 complete the program. So of the two-year
7 population of about 136 students last year,
8 74 graduated. The other students came back so
9 that they can complete this upcoming year.

10 How do we advertise? Oh, my goodness. We
11 have billboards. We do radio, and radio seems
12 to be the most effective way to reach these
13 young adults. They're all listening to the
14 radio. They're all, you know, learning the new
15 songs, so we do a lot of radio ads. We have a
16 little bit of TV.

17 We try to be careful to walk that balance
18 between how much money we spend on marketing and
19 how much money we spend on students.

20 Now we're finding, as our numbers have
21 increased, that word of mouth is out there.
22 About ten students that are currently in
23 Pathways Academy are internal students. In
24 other words, they are students -- they're
25 children of employees. And so our reputation

1 within the college, our reputation in the
2 community is beginning to grow, and word of
3 mouth is sending more and more students to
4 Pathways.

5 MS. KORMAN: Follow-up, Mr. Chair?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

7 MS. KORMAN: Do you see the -- do the
8 students have to sign a contract in order to say
9 that they will complete the two years?

10 And the other follow-up question is, do you
11 track to see what happens to the students
12 after -- I mean, some of them do go to Florida
13 State College, some of them don't, so do we know
14 what happens to them?

15 DR. ABDULLA: Yes, they do sign a
16 contract. We have a pretty extensive
17 application process, and the application
18 process -- actually, we call it an orientation
19 because it takes literally about three days to
20 go through.

21 So they come in and we go through the
22 eligibility requirements, we go through
23 behavioral expectations, we go -- each person
24 must bring with them an adult who is committed
25 to supporting them through the process and is

1 committed to be a surrogate if the case manager
2 or the career specialist has a problem with that
3 particular student or an issue with that
4 student.

5 They, of course, go through assessments,
6 other activities to learn about Pathways in
7 general and what their schedule will be. And at
8 the end of that, they sign a contract, and their
9 contract is an agreement to attendance, it's
10 agreement to participate in a mentoring program,
11 it's agreement to our behavioral standards and
12 other things related to participating in -- in
13 the college community.

14 MS. KORMAN: My last follow-up, what would
15 you, Dr. Wallace, also recommend to us as the
16 review commission on how to help with this
17 issue?

18 DR. WALLACE: If you look at the challenges
19 we face as a community, we see excellent
20 progress with our elementary schools. We see
21 progress in our middle schools, but middle
22 schools are always going to be inherently
23 challenging for a lot of interesting reasons.

24 I know our school board and our
25 superintendent has focused on high schools. We

1 have focused on high schools as well, and we
2 have some high schools at risk of being closed
3 or taken over by the State. We find that deeply
4 troubling at a lot of levels.

5 We do not believe that it is in anyone's
6 best interest for the State to come in and close
7 or take over one of our public high schools. We
8 see this as a Duval County challenge. And we
9 would like to see our city, our county retain
10 the authority, but as Mr. Warren said,
11 collaborate with the city, maybe get beyond the
12 conventional wisdom that schools are the
13 exclusive concern of the school board.

14 (Ms. Herrington enters the proceedings.)

15 DR. WALLACE: The school board needs
16 partners. We've tried to be a partner. I think
17 there are other opportunities to collaborate.

18 Charter schools are not a magic bullet, but
19 charter schools, I believe, are certainly part
20 of the solution. But as we have seen in Duval
21 County --

22 We have various kinds of charter schools.
23 I mentioned Minnesota earlier. The successful
24 charter schools of Minnesota are all public
25 charter schools. Our charter school is a public

1 charter school.

2 Now, it certainly doesn't suggest that you
3 can't have successful private charter schools,
4 but we've not really had much of an experience
5 in Duval County with public charter schools. In
6 fact, I believe ours is the first and only one.

7 So there may be some really significant
8 opportunities there as we address the challenges
9 with our high schools to look at charter schools
10 and some other highly successful models, but the
11 bottom line -- my personal sense as an educator
12 is we need to do some bold things with our high
13 schools.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I'd be interested in the
15 thoughts of both of you on the governance versus
16 classroom focus issue that we explored with the
17 earlier speakers.

18 DR. WALLACE: We believe that governance is
19 a highly relevant and essential issue from a
20 public policy perspective where the issues that
21 we are dealing with in education are always
22 going to really be significant societal issues.
23 The boundaries are not limited to classrooms and
24 teachers and curriculum and all of those
25 things.

1 On that basis, we believe that governance
2 is a very relevant concern. We do not advocate
3 a change in the school board structure. That is
4 not our intent here today, but we see governance
5 as a broader consideration, which would include
6 city and county governance and potentially more
7 collaboration between the school board and the
8 city and county, and collaboration in the form
9 of support and other significant aspects of
10 being a partner.

11 DR. ABDULLA: If I might digress just a
12 little bit, but it does tie in with what
13 Dr. Wallace says.

14 I'm not sure if your commission realizes
15 that there are a number of opportunities for
16 charter schools. You can have a conversion
17 school, which is a school within a school that
18 has charter -- has a charter responsibility, and
19 so that gives unique flexibility to a population
20 within a high school that is a public high
21 school that is already operating.

22 You have, of course, community colleges
23 that can run charter schools, but businesses can
24 also step up to the plate and be sponsors of
25 charter schools, and so an AT&T or a BellSouth

1 or a Blue Cross Blue Shield could also run a
2 charter school if it so chose to do.

3 So I think as we look at alternatives to
4 our traditional system and reaching out to the
5 community to engage them, we have opportunities
6 to do not just public charter high schools, but
7 we also have opportunities to reach out to other
8 agencies.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Miller.

10 MS. MILLER: Thank you to both of you for
11 being here.

12 I wanted to ask you to talk a little bit
13 about the in-school governance structure. We
14 have our school board and our district board of
15 trustees governance structure, which allows and
16 permits, but the principal in Pathways has a lot
17 of authority. We have a strict disciplinary
18 code, which we enforce.

19 And if you can talk about the benefits and
20 the need for that kind of code and that kind of
21 discipline by the principal and in -- by the
22 teachers in the classroom, and also our ability
23 to recruit and retain teachers and the quality
24 of those teachers and maybe some of the -- some
25 of the barriers that might -- that teachers

1 might experience or schools might experience
2 that are not charter schools that we have -- we
3 have certain benefits, I think, from a -- having
4 our own governance structure within the college,
5 and maybe you can speak to some of those, as
6 well --

7 And I think we also have -- don't we have
8 what I'd call social counselors or counselors
9 who help these kids get to school, to help them
10 find day care, who help them get -- overcome
11 whatever obstacles in life they have to getting
12 to school because at the end of the day it's not
13 for lack of smarts. It's usually for a lack
14 of -- as Mr. Csar said, whether somebody had
15 breakfast or whether somebody is going through a
16 bad time at their house, and -- and maybe we can
17 also -- would you also speak about the outcomes
18 of performance, the job placement rates of our
19 graduates.

20 DR. ABDULLA: Thank you, Commissioner
21 Miller.

22 Yes. I will start with governance.

23 We have, of course, a great advantage
24 because our district board of trustees for
25 Florida State College at Jacksonville is also

1 the charter school board school board, and so
2 they bring with them a wealth of experience and
3 understanding and they have made our lives quite
4 easy to deal with.

5 What came also with this charter school are
6 all of the infrastructure that is present at
7 Florida State College, so that was a great
8 benefit to us. We did not have to start from
9 scratch in terms of building that
10 infrastructure. That can be very distracting,
11 when you're building infrastructure and you're
12 trying to teach kids at the -- at the same
13 time.

14 We do have a very extensive disciplinary
15 program and it is related to our career
16 specialists, the career specialists that I
17 list -- I mentioned to you before. I would call
18 it an early intervention process more than a
19 disciplinary process.

20 Immediately upon the first incident that a
21 student might have, whether it is not wearing
22 their uniform to school, not wearing their
23 student ID, not showing up to class, being
24 disruptive in a class, hanging out in what we
25 call at downtown campus is our mall, immediately

1 a career specialist gets involved with that
2 student and starts to help them with behavior
3 modification, with understanding the impact of
4 their behavior on their long-term success.

5 That early intervention program follows a
6 stepped progression as a student either
7 continues or discontinues their behavior. We
8 move them in one direction toward more
9 discipline and more structure or we move them in
10 another direction toward more privileges and
11 more opportunities to participate in interesting
12 activities.

13 We have a professional association. The
14 professional association is basically our
15 student government association. There are a lot
16 of incentives involved in participating with
17 that. We have the traditional prom. We have
18 all of the things, other than sports, that
19 schools usually have.

20 We have recently entered into a
21 relationship with Job Corps, who has a beautiful
22 facility, so that we can play intramural
23 activities against their students. So that is
24 something that's new to us.

25 You specifically asked about outcomes on

1 jobs and job placement. And just so I am
2 accurate, Commissioner, I'm going to go right to
3 this document because I don't want to misquote.

4 As I mentioned before, Jobs for America's
5 Graduates has minimum national standards, so I
6 want to give you some minimum national standards
7 and then tell you what our outcomes are.

8 For graduation rate, a 50 percent
9 graduation rate for a dropout prevention program
10 is what they are looking for. Our highest is
11 69 percent graduation rate.

12 For placement into a job or military
13 service, they have an 80 percent. We have a
14 100 placement rate.

15 Not only do they end up in jobs, but if we
16 look at -- and this is one that has a very low
17 rating -- Jobs for America's Graduates looks at
18 a 30 percent transition into post secondary
19 education rate as a national standard. We have
20 a 40 percent transition rate at this point.

21 My goal and the goal of my staff this year
22 is to move that up to 60 percent. And by the
23 time we end our new contract with Duval County,
24 we want to be at a 90 percent placement --
25 transition into post secondary education

1 placement rate.

2 By the way, there are only -- there were
3 six career specialists recognized nationally for
4 exceeding their goals. Three of them were
5 Pathways career specialists. And that's
6 national recognition, so I thought I might add
7 that little . . .

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioners, I have nobody
9 else in the queue for these speakers.

10 All right. Thank you both very much. We
11 appreciate you taking the time to come down and
12 share this information with us.

13 Also, at this time, because I did ask that
14 we curtail the questioning of the previous
15 speakers, if anybody wants to ask any additional
16 questions to Mr. Csar, Ms. Waters, Mr. Warren or
17 Mr. Chartrand, now would be the time to do it.

18 Mr. Chartrand, you have not said anything
19 today. If you would like to have a few minutes
20 to address the commission, I'm happy to give you
21 that --

22 MR. CHARTRAND: I'm fine. Thank you.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

24 MR. CHARTRAND: I think that (inaudible) --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: I need you to come to the

1 microphone if you're going to speak.

2 (Mr. Chartrand approaches the podium.)

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Name and address.

4 MR. CHARTRAND: Jeff Chartrand, 1478
5 Riverplace Boulevard, 1605.

6 I have nothing to add. I thought that, you
7 know, Mr. Csar and Ms. Waters and Mr. Warren did
8 an amazing job. There's nothing I would say on
9 top of that unless there's any questions that
10 you have specifically for me.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlett, is
12 your question for Mr. Chartrand?

13 MR. CATLETT: No.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

15 MR. CHARTRAND: Excellent. Thank you.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
17 Commissioner Catlett.

18 MR. CATLETT: It was a good presentation.
19 I learned a lot. Thank you very much.

20 I was recalling that Mr. Warren's
21 presentation had to do with collaborative effort
22 between the City and school board and that the
23 City might help with some resources. Could you
24 elaborate on what some of those financial
25 resources, the source of those might be?

1 We just went through what I would call an
2 excruciating search for pennies and nickels, and
3 so I'm encouraged that you may have found
4 another source that they could dedicate to help
5 with, and I'd like to know a little bit about
6 what you've examined and what your results were.

7 MR. WARREN: I can't say that I can promise
8 you that we found anything uniquely different,
9 but there are some things that we're doing in
10 the community that we think -- that the City is
11 doing that can be brought to bear on the
12 education effort.

13 Trey mentioned, and, in fact, folks from
14 Pathways mentioned as well from the college, a
15 necessity for a wholistic way of managing
16 students, particularly those students in these
17 turnaround schools who come to school with a
18 variety of needs that go beyond what they need
19 in terms of academic development, and those
20 needs relate to their social needs. Their
21 parents have needs that impact the capacity of
22 the students wanting to learn and the
23 capacity -- to answer one question earlier about
24 parental involvement, their parents have hurdles
25 as well to participating in the educational life

1 of their students -- of their children, but they
2 have needs with housing, they have needs with
3 day care, even students in school with children
4 having needs for day care.

5 They have needs with transportation, and
6 They pointed out earlier about -- in a community
7 school environment where the -- Ribault Middle
8 School or Ribault High School area is the
9 location for the services, but the children who
10 might be needing those services, going to school
11 at Eugene Butler, miles away, being logistically
12 almost impossible, one, for the student to get
13 there or even the parents.

14 So those kind of remedies in terms of how
15 we deal with transportation issues, how we deal
16 with social issues, health care issues, housing
17 issues are ways that -- there are issues dealt
18 with City Hall as opposed to things that are in
19 the purview of the school board. As we bring
20 those things together in some fashion, we then
21 begin to address the wholistic needs of the
22 student and family and thereby facilitating the
23 capacity of the student to pay attention, if you
24 will, in the classroom.

25 Now, with that said, there may be need

1 ultimately for additional dollars to deal with
2 these broader needs to have a focused approach,
3 particularly on turnaround schools may take more
4 financial resources than we have, even with
5 these additional services brought to bear.

6 As I mentioned earlier by way of an
7 example, if it takes more in terms of time on
8 task, then that means longer school days, longer
9 school years, and we have to accommodate more
10 teachers' salaries and pay teachers commensurate
11 with the performance of our students. And
12 successful teachers ought to be paid relative to
13 their success in the classroom, and that may
14 mean we have to identify an additional revenue
15 source to do that from philanthropic dollars to
16 dollars from the will of our citizens to pay for
17 a better educational system. I'll just leave it
18 at that.

19 But it takes political will to make this
20 kind of change in the system, and that political
21 will transcends beyond the dais, if you will, to
22 the citizens in our community. We have to be
23 committed to change, and that oftentimes means
24 we have to pay for it.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

1 Let me take a brief moment to request that
2 if you plan to address the commission at public
3 comment, would you please fill out one of the
4 blue speaker cards and then turn it in to --
5 just leave it on the counter there and
6 Mr. Clements will collect it.

7 Thank you.

8 Commissioner Oliveras does have a question.

9 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Earlier it was mentioned, the collaborative
11 effort between the City and the school board and
12 then the collegial atmosphere. And I'm not
13 trying to read anything into that, but I'm
14 curious, are you suggesting something along the
15 lines of like an advisory committee, interagency
16 type setup? And, if so, are there places where
17 that's worked effectively?

18 MR. CSAR: Sure. I mean, I think it could
19 take a number of different forms. And, I think,
20 again, the form is less important than the idea
21 that the responsibility for the success of our
22 students is shared between the district, the
23 City itself and the community at large. And
24 whatever form that sort of collaborative body
25 may take, it needs to have the ability to bring

1 the full force and effort of all three of those
2 partners to the table.

3 MR. WARREN: I think Trey stated it very
4 well. Whatever that form takes -- I don't think
5 there's an ideal model on how City government
6 and school boards come together. And, again,
7 we're not advocating that you change the format
8 for how we structure our school board, but what
9 we are advocating is that we create an
10 environment for City Hall and the school board
11 to work together.

12 Now, whatever form that takes, some sort of
13 advisory board or collegial body that we create
14 to allow, if you will, some influence to have --
15 to take place in this edifice and the one across
16 the river, whatever we can do to facilitate that
17 that we should do it.

18 There is need to combine resources on what
19 is a very large problem. And if we can remedy
20 that problem, then the entire community benefits
21 from that. The quality of life for our
22 community is affected by the educational -- the
23 intellectual capacity of the citizens in our
24 community.

25 If we raise this tide, we raise the

1 opportunity for these children to go to
2 college. We raise the opportunity also for us
3 to retain them here. We raise the opportunity
4 for us to be able to recruit companies to our
5 community that want to hire a college-educated
6 community.

7 That's what we're after, is providing that
8 kind of opportunity for everybody, irrespective
9 of what side of town you live on, what
10 complexion you are, who your parents are, that
11 the educational opportunity is fair and equal
12 for all, but we have to be aggressive about
13 dealing with the problem where it is.

14 And, as Trey pointed out in that colored
15 map that you have, it's a highly concentrated
16 problem. You could walk out of here and feel
17 very comfortable with the fact that we have a
18 B-graded system. The overall grade for our
19 system was a B. But when you look at where the
20 problem really lies, what's dragging the system,
21 it's a very concentrated problem in most of our
22 high schools, many of our middle schools, and
23 some of our elementary schools, but we've got to
24 begin to focus on developing the kind of
25 intellectual capacity that's needed to perform

1 well in high school.

2 And these children and the schools they go
3 to, from elementary to middle school to high
4 school, are very, very concentrated in one
5 geographical -- not in one, but in a large
6 geographical area that's very easy to identify.

7 If we're going to fix the problem, then we
8 have to concentrate on where the problem is, and
9 what we're suggesting is the resources to do
10 that may not be limited -- or are not limited
11 to -- should not be limited to the resources
12 that are available to the school board.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Miller.

14 MS. MILLER: Through the Chair -- and I was
15 actually responding to Commissioner Catlett's
16 comment.

17 And, Mr. Warren, Mr. Csar, thank you so
18 much for your comments.

19 I think something that Dr. Wallace said
20 earlier -- this is a Duval County problem.
21 These schools are a Duval County problem, but
22 yet we are -- we're in a posture now where the
23 State has identified them for possible shutdown
24 or takeover by the State.

25 And so if we look at other charter schools

1 that are either privately funded through
2 philanthropic means -- they get the basic FTE,
3 but every single one of them, bar none, says
4 that that's not enough, it's not enough money,
5 so they have to find another funding source.

6 If you look at -- there are federal, state,
7 local resources that are available to entities
8 and organizations who provide job funding, who
9 provide -- who prepare students and individuals
10 for careers to get back into the workforce for
11 retraining, especially right now, right now in
12 this economy and with what the Obama
13 administration has implemented.

14 So I think that when we -- we shouldn't let
15 funding -- I think if we have the big idea and
16 we know we want to tackle this, then we
17 convene -- the City can be a convener to bring
18 resources to bear.

19 The Gates Foundation, we've just qualified
20 and we've just received a basic grant that will
21 allow us to apply for a \$3 million grant, the
22 City and the college. That is for job
23 preparation and for preparing students and
24 retraining students, but it -- the same can be
25 applied for for charter schools or for a charter

1 school district or for the school districts that
2 are most in need so long as they're focused on
3 preparing students to be productive in our
4 community, and that is a key economic
5 development driver.

6 So I think that the -- the idea -- and what
7 Dr. Abdulla said earlier about -- it could be
8 corporations. There are lots of different
9 resources, and I believe that this community --
10 and whether it's a tax on ourselves, a Better
11 Jacksonville Plan, if you will, for these
12 schools or something like that on a modified
13 basis, in addition to seeking out alternative
14 sources from national foundations, from the
15 federal government, from others for that
16 specific purpose, I think it can be done, and
17 the City's role can be that of a convener to
18 address our -- our issue, and our issue is our
19 schools. And that's going to be, as you said,
20 the tide that raises the rest of the boat.

21 So that's just my own opinion. I believe
22 it can be done right. We just have to have the
23 right people and the right brains at the table
24 to go out and find the money.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner O'Brien.

1 MS. O'BRIEN: What I am hearing from all
2 the presenters and even from among our
3 commission is that charter schools in
4 particular, through the principles of
5 autonomy -- as you had mentioned, Mr. Csar -- it
6 gives you the freedom of budget, it gives you
7 the freedom of staffing, the freedom of some
8 board policies, in many cases the freedom of
9 union policies and requirements, it usually
10 presents a stricter code -- disciplinarian code
11 and lives up to that disciplinarian code, and
12 that they have greater efforts towards securing
13 private funds.

14 Help me understand. All that sounds very
15 good and very positive. I also understand
16 there's a political side to it. Besides the
17 union, the political efforts of a union that may
18 not have as much influence, what are the
19 political threats to a charter school district
20 system?

21 MR. CSAR: Well, I think part of it is in
22 that very name. I think that there is nothing
23 that would prevent -- I mean, there's nothing
24 that prevents the district from trying to enable
25 more district schools and give more district

1 schools that -- those same principles of
2 autonomy.

3 I think that as you look at our -- as
4 you -- I mean, it sounds like -- much of what
5 we're hearing is about a system where there's
6 multiple charter operators, and there are a
7 limited number of high quality charter operators
8 across the country -- you know, the KIPPs and
9 the Uncommon Schools and things like that -- but
10 they're not limitless. They are very selective
11 as to where they choose to expand.

12 The reason KIPP is here is because this
13 community came together and put some substantial
14 philanthropic dollars behind luring KIPP to
15 Jacksonville.

16 We also have -- and I don't want to paint
17 charter schools alone as a panacea, but we have
18 a number of -- we have two -- across the country
19 two types of charter schools. We have some
20 charter schools which are formed, which are
21 highly ineffective and don't do nearly as good
22 of a job at educating students as their home
23 districts. And we have some highly effective
24 charter schools, most -- usually backed by a
25 national charter management organization of some

1 kind, who often outperform their local
2 districts.

3 And so I would argue that if the City or
4 the State is to look at an expansion of charter
5 schools across the board, that -- two issues
6 that are going to come up is, one, increasing
7 that base FTE rate. Florida has one of the
8 lowest. It's one of the reasons why so many
9 national charter operators are hesitant to come
10 to a state like Florida. And the second piece
11 is bundling any effort to expand the number of
12 charter schools with an expansion in
13 accountability for those charter schools.

14 We need to give new charter schools a
15 window of time and specific performance goals.
16 And if they do not meet them, we need to shut
17 them down because we get very hung up on
18 creating schools and thinking they're better
19 just because they're charter schools or just
20 because they're district schools. If a school
21 is not performing, action needs to be taken
22 regardless of whether that school is a charter
23 school or a district school.

24 MS. O'BRIEN: One follow-up.

25 If we -- if Duval County were to approve

1 and implement a charter school district, would
2 you still see that being under the realm of
3 responsibility under the school board, whether
4 elected or appointed?

5 MR. CSAR: Well, someone has to serve as
6 the authorizer for those charters, and so I
7 think there's a lot of legal and administrative
8 questions there that I'm not prepared to answer
9 at this time, but I think there is certainly the
10 opportunity for the district to be involved in
11 that process and there's also the option to --
12 for it to be a separate process.

13 I think there's a lot -- one thing we spoke
14 about in New Orleans that -- that aided
15 New Orleans was the fact that they had a bunch
16 of empty school facilities. Facilities funding
17 is something that no state in the union provides
18 very much help on, and it's where a lot of
19 school dist- -- a lot of charter schools spend
20 the majority of their time raising money to just
21 pay leases or to build buildings.

22 Here, KIPP was very fortunate to have the
23 greyhound racing track donated to them, but
24 still must embark on a substantial fund-raising
25 campaign to convert that facility into a

1 school. So there are -- I think the only way
2 something like that has a prayer of being
3 successful is for the district to play some role
4 in it.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much,
6 Mr. Csar.

7 We appreciate the time and effort of all
8 our speakers today. It's been very informative
9 for us. You're welcome to stay for public
10 comments if you would like.

11 We'll move right into that. Our first
12 speaker will be Stanley Scott.

13 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Stanley Scott, 8734
15 Dalton Drive.

16 I wish they would stay and listen to public
17 comments because that would also help give them
18 some input, but I see that's one of the
19 problems. One of the problems with education in
20 Jacksonville and America is leadership, class
21 division, and parenting.

22 One of the best things we heard tonight was
23 Pathway [sic]. I know of the charter school,
24 the success, and KIPP.

25 But I want to go back here because it's

1 very important that we understand here,
2 education is all about community. It has
3 nothing to do with the system. And if we
4 continue down that road, all we looking for is
5 failure. If the community is not involved
6 physically, financially, and spiritually -- and
7 I'm not talking about religion -- education is
8 going to continue to be the way it is not only
9 in Jacksonville but throughout the nation, in
10 the world. Science, we eighth or ninth.
11 Mathematics, eighth or ninth.

12 Now, we supposed to be a powerful country.
13 A powerful country is defined by its education,
14 not by its military might.

15 In Jacksonville we have a problem. The
16 problem is because the wealthy folks in
17 Jacksonville is not putting the money where it
18 need to be, reinvested in the community.
19 They've taken from the community. One of the
20 most underserved community is the Northside.
21 Spending billions of dollars in this city, but
22 no one is concerned about that, but Pathway do
23 care.

24 The word that is still being spoke was I
25 care. That's what it's all about, I care. So

1 if we want to change the education system here
2 with the dropout rates and students leaving
3 here, going to college, never returning to
4 Jacksonville, we must look at education as a
5 community.

6 As far as charter schools, they need to be
7 public. Now, why do I say that? Because when
8 we talk about everything, we talk about money,
9 money, money. That's the biggest joke you can
10 play on a person. It ain't about money. We can
11 find the money if we're serious. We find money
12 for everything else. But if we're serious about
13 education, we'll find the money.

14 But they're closing down schools. They
15 have a lot of vacant buildings all over this
16 town. Pathway say they need facilities. That's
17 one thing, if you want to help them, the
18 facilities we have. We have so many empty
19 warehouses around this town.

20 Thank you very much. And I'm going to
21 write my information and send it in to the
22 commission because I have a lot more.

23 Thank you and have a good day.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Scott.

25 Please do that.

1 Alvin Brown.

2 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good morning,
4 Mr. Chairman and Commission.

5 I just have a few comments. I was sitting
6 back there listening, and a couple of things I
7 want you to keep in mind and think about as you
8 think about education as a whole.

9 Collaboration is a very important thing,
10 and one of the comments were -- I guess one of
11 the questions we asked, whether or not the
12 school board and the City could work together.
13 I strongly urge you not to set up another
14 structure. I mean, the bottom line is, if we
15 want to make something happen, you don't need
16 another advisory board, you don't need
17 another -- anymore legislation for the school
18 board and the City to work together.

19 I think at the end of the day it's about
20 commitment, what do we believe in, do we believe
21 in improving the quality of life in education.
22 I think that people can get together and decide
23 whether or not they're going to make sure that
24 education is a value-added proposition in this
25 city.

1 So I wouldn't recommend another structure
2 to set up to improve education in our city.
3 It's a commitment. That's one thing. I think
4 government is too big already. I think we need
5 to downsize and live within our means,
6 personally. I think there are too many
7 structures in this city already.

8 That's one thing.

9 Secondly, I'd like to say that it's -- we
10 have a lot of resources in this city. Education
11 is big business. If you really -- I want you to
12 really look at how much money is spent in this
13 city on education.

14 Before you do anything, look at how much
15 money we spend, where it goes, who gets it, who
16 provides the services, are they effective or
17 not, are we getting a return on our investment,
18 taxpayers' dollars on our investment for every
19 penny we spend. I think you need to look at
20 that so that at the end of the day this
21 commission can say, wow, we spent X number of
22 dollars. These are the organizations that are
23 providing the services every day to our kids.

24 That's the second point I want to make.

25 And the third point is, at the end of the

1 day, one of the things I was concerned about was
2 a couple of years ago the school board reduced
3 the GPA average from a 2.0 to a 1.5 to allow our
4 kids to graduate, so I would encourage you to
5 look at the standards.

6 I just asked Martha Barrett, who just came
7 back on the school board, that question and I
8 brought it up with some of my colleagues
9 before. But that's something we need to look at
10 because at the end of the day it's about
11 improving the quality of life, closing the
12 education gap, and making sure we have a really
13 strong workforce.

14 And so I urge you to look at how we spend
15 our resources.

16 Thank you.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

18 Our next speaker is Benjamin Hamilton.

19 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good morning.

21 I was here a couple of weeks ago and we
22 were discussing -- or you guys were discussing
23 an appointed sheriff versus an elected sheriff.

24 Well, I attended the first couple of
25 meetings within those two weeks, and there are

1 some things that occurred, I think they need to
2 be part of the record. I know you can only make
3 a recommendation to the City Council; you can't
4 decide what form of government they choose, but
5 I want to go on the record as being in support
6 of the appointed sheriff, and I'm here
7 representing the First Coast Coalition.

8 But during that meeting -- since the last
9 here, I was on two weeks -- two weeks ago --
10 Thursday would have been two weeks ago. There
11 have been two police shootings that resulted in
12 a homicide. There's been a number of brutality
13 cases. And I'm saying, I don't know whether
14 police are right or wrong, but I think that if
15 the police just make the decisions about whether
16 something was done wrong, there -- there are too
17 many lives being lost in Jacksonville where
18 police have weapons, and vice-versa, there's a
19 lot happening in the community.

20 But the police -- they do need someone that
21 they -- that they're responsible to, to explain
22 when a citizen loses their life out here in a
23 police shooting. It shouldn't be a situation
24 where just the union or just -- and he doesn't
25 have to answer to the mayor. The union covers

1 up everything, gets a lawyer for him. We need
2 some form of thing where there is a strong
3 mayor, and I guess you call him a weak sheriff.

4 Well, we need a system where when these
5 shootings occur, the citizens here in Duval
6 County have a chance to also take a look at
7 that, an independent look other than the
8 police. The police are not going to police
9 themselves, so the citizens need to be a part of
10 policing them and making sure that they do have
11 the citizens in concern when they pull a weapon.

12 Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

14 Lewis Armstrong.

15 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good morning.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Lewis Armstrong.

19 Glad to be in front of the Charter Review
20 board.

21 I'm here being -- as a citizen of this
22 great city of Jacksonville. I'm a member of
23 Cross Rock and First Coast Coalition. I'm here
24 because we have a problem. We have a problem on
25 the Northside, we have a problem on the

1 Southside, we have a problem on the Westside,
2 and other areas of the city.

3 With me today are other leaders and members
4 of these communities.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome.

6 MR. ARMSTRONG: Now, what I learned -- I
7 had a grand master teacher that taught me seven
8 years ago how to understand strong, good
9 government. And in that, he told me that
10 education was very important. He gave me some
11 examples, education, and keep that right because
12 he knows certain parts of what culture is like
13 for myself. Police shootings, you need to keep
14 that down. Police abuse, you need to keep that
15 down. Police profiling, you need to keep that
16 down. Laws that badly harm your environment,
17 you need to keep them out.

18 But also he showed me the symbolism behind
19 it. And in that symbolism, he took a
20 (inaudible) and slide it up in front of me. He
21 took a cross and slide it up in front of me. He
22 took a pinnacle and slide it up in front of me.
23 And he took Leonardo da Vinci Vitruvian man and
24 slide it up in front of me.

25 And he said, this is an ideal. And in this

1 ideal comes the great symbols of life. And he
2 showed me something. He said, hold your right
3 hand up. He said, now, if you look at yourself
4 in a mirror, you'll look like a cross if you
5 extend your hands.

6 He said, now, your government supposed to
7 be a political figure. He said, the reason they
8 set individuals up high before you is because of
9 their responsibility. And in their
10 responsibility, they should make sure that the
11 citizens are protected, and this is an important
12 thing.

13 He also showed me that your left hand is
14 the ring you wear your -- the hand you wear your
15 ring on. That's about your community. And this
16 political and this social environment should
17 work together.

18 Now, those individuals that we have in
19 front of us are our leaders. Those are the ones
20 that sit on the pinnacle. They at top. The
21 affairs of the community. They carry a
22 political power, and that political power is to
23 take care of its people.

24 Now, what we're having in the city of
25 Jacksonville, Cross Rock and First Coast

1 Coalition is having a lot of complaints and
2 these complaints coming because these people are
3 not satisfied.

4 We need to change the police system as it
5 is, and this is why we have a recommendation --
6 and I'll be through in a second. We have a
7 recommendation of a citizen review board and
8 have a strong mayor that these events could be
9 confronted. And if we do that, our community
10 and our educational system will be much better,
11 and that's why we're here today.

12 Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

14 I appreciate you taking the time to come
15 down here.

16 Winetta Wright.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: (No response.)

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Anybody? Do I have that
19 right?

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Indicating.)

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see
22 you in the back there.

23 Thank you.

24 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good morning, Council.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Winetta
3 Wright, and I'm with the Eastside Environmental
4 Council.

5 And I'd like to address the commission this
6 morning in regards to our environment. And for
7 the six to seven years that I've been dealing
8 with the environment, I have learned that
9 environment is a whole issue, and we are facing
10 a lot of issues in concern with our
11 environment.

12 We do know that most of the contamination
13 sites are in the poor and despaired areas, but
14 what I've also learned that -- is that
15 contamination in our river and on our land has
16 no boundaries, so it surges and it oozes
17 wherever it wants to go. So no one is -- has a
18 safeguard as far as contamination is concerned.

19 And I'd also like to bring up the issue
20 with -- piggybacking on some of the things that
21 were said in the community with disparity.

22 Basically, if you would look at the -- the
23 demographics of where the disparity is, it's
24 where most of the contaminated sites are.

25 There's an issue there. There's scientific

1 information that has led to say that the
2 contamination in the areas where disparity and
3 blight and crime are -- some of the chemicals
4 that are being emitted out of these contaminated
5 sites that people are living on top of has
6 issues with even the DNA of a person's makeup.

7 So what I'd like to do is to ask the City
8 to look at the whole issue and some of the
9 issues that we're having, even the issues of
10 education. The environment affects the -- the
11 ability of kids of learning. There's chemicals
12 that cause ADDH [sic]. There's chemicals that
13 are being exposed to people in these communities
14 with cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure.
15 This is a very intimate issue and we need to
16 address this issue.

17 And Jacksonville, being as large as it is,
18 the second largest city landwise in the whole
19 world, we need to take a better look. We need
20 to work together, and we need to also connect
21 some of these issues together and link them
22 together with education, crime, disparity. And
23 if we do that and work toward a goal to have
24 that initiative and make it a project, I think
25 we will have a better outcome for the city of

1 Jacksonville.

2 Thank you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

4 John Nooney.

5 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello.

7 My name is John Nooney, 8356 Bascom Road,
8 Jacksonville, Florida 32216.

9 What I just wanted to do is just read into
10 the record the memorandum that was handed out to
11 everyone today, you know, the October 29th,
12 2009.

13 "The Charter Revision Commission
14 decision-making processes" --

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nooney, I apologize.

16 I would like to address that memo among the
17 commission ourselves. I'm going to get to it
18 after public comment.

19 MR. NOONEY: That's fine.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: I'd appreciate it if you
21 would not get too far into that issue because
22 we're going to talk about it ourselves, but go
23 ahead.

24 MR. NOONEY: Okay. But I can still read it
25 into the record.

1 "The charge of the" -- "you have requested
2 guidance regarding whether the Charter Revision
3 Commission may make interim recommendations in
4 advance of a final report.

5 "The charge of the commission is found in
6 Section 17.103, ordinance code, which states:

7 "The commission shall make recommendations
8 to the council and the members of the
9 Legislature representing Duval County concerning
10 those provisions in the charter and other
11 special acts of the Legislature affecting the
12 consolidated City of Jacksonville.

13 "In making its recommendations, the
14 commission shall consider whatever factors are
15 relevant to the establishment of a relationship
16 between the state and local units of government
17 in the consolidated City of Jacksonville and
18 which are best calculated to fulfill the needs
19 of the citizens of the consolidated City of
20 Jacksonville.

21 "Nothing in the ordinance code provides for
22 timing of recommendations. The commission is
23 free to utilize whatever processes it wishes in
24 achieving its charge.

25 "The commission can vote at any time on any

1 issue. It can vote to reject an issue for
2 further consideration; it can vote to delay
3 consideration of an issue; it can vote to make a
4 recommendation on a particular issue; it can
5 vote to make a generic recommendation; it can
6 vote to recommend a specific detailed amendment;
7 it can vote to leave the charter alone; it can
8 vote to redo the charter start to finish.

9 "Once an independent commission is
10 established, neither the Mayor nor the Council
11 or the General Counsel will tell the commission
12 how to conduct its proceedings except, of
13 course, to ensure compliance with state law."

14 Well, I just want to share with you today
15 the reason -- the primary reason I'm here and I
16 come here is that I would hope that this
17 commission will recommend to the Jacksonville
18 City Council restoring the code of ethics to our
19 charter which was removed in 1972.

20 Now, I want to share with you -- this is a
21 front page headline of the October 27th, your
22 Florida Times-Union, Metro section, "Matanzas
23 driving just wasn't in rules." The popular
24 fishing and recreation area will close to
25 vehicles. Rules. Our city government has been

1 operating without rules since 1972.

2 So, anyway, thank you for listening.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Nooney.

4 Are there any other speakers?

5 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (No response.)

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

7 At this time, I'd like to move into
8 discussion of some issues relevant really just
9 as internal business for the commission.

10 As you all know, I did make a presentation
11 to the City Council Tuesday night regarding the
12 vote that we took on the legislation regarding
13 the consolidation of the elections. And, as you
14 know, the Council voted, I believe, 10 to 5 or
15 11 to 5 not to consolidate.

16 And, at that time, the issue came up as to
17 whether it was appropriate for us to take a
18 position on the issue and bring it to the
19 Council as the sense of the Commission.

20 As I said to you in our meeting last week,
21 I thought it was appropriate for us to take a
22 position at this time, before the Council
23 voted. And you have the transcript of that
24 meeting before you, and my reasoning is in there
25 and I won't repeat it, but I do feel an

1 obligation to all of you to make sure that I
2 don't lead you astray on matters like this, so
3 I've asked the Office of General Counsel to give
4 their opinion as to our discretion to act. And
5 you have that memo before you, and Mr. Nooney
6 has read it -- most of it to you. I do want to
7 just read a few relevant parts.

8 I did request guidance regarding our -- the
9 Charter Revision Commission's ability to make
10 interim recommendations in advance of a final
11 report, and I would just read these few key
12 points.

13 "Nothing in the ordinance code provides for
14 the timing of our recommendations. The
15 Commission is free to utilize whatever processes
16 it wishes in achieving its charge.

17 "Once an independent commission is
18 established, neither the Mayor nor the Council
19 nor the General Counsel will tell the Commission
20 how to conduct its proceedings except, of
21 course, to ensure compliance with state law.

22 "In conclusion, the Commission does not
23 have to wait upon a final report to make
24 recommendations. The Charter Revision
25 Commission may take any position it likes at any

1 time it likes. Presumably, all interim
2 recommendations will be wrapped into the final
3 report."

4 So I just wanted to have General Counsel
5 give us some guidance on that because it did
6 come up. I want you-all to feel comfortable
7 that we're acting appropriately. I think it's
8 clear that we have.

9 Mr. Clements, I would ask that you would
10 circulate this memo on the internal City Council
11 e-mail distribution list. Since it was raised
12 at council, I think the council members might be
13 interested in knowing the Office of General
14 Counsel's opinion on that.

15 Thank you.

16 I do have another matter that I would like
17 to bring up and I'd like to ask Mr. Clements to
18 distribute a copy -- one of these to each of you
19 before we get into it.

20 This is a blog entry from a local blog
21 entry called Jaxoutloud.com, and it was sent to
22 Mr. Clements yesterday afternoon and I will read
23 it for the record. It's dated 6:36 p.m.,
24 Tuesday evening.

25 "Due to the extraordinary efforts of

1 Charter Revision Commissioner Teresa Eichner,
2 the bill" -- which was the council legislation
3 considering consolidating the elections --
4 "failed 10 to 5 in a council vote tonight.

5 "Ms. Eichner met with a number of council
6 members prior to tonight's meeting and expressed
7 her concerns over this legislation. In my
8 humble opinion, it was her tireless efforts
9 which led to the bill's defeat. Kudos again to
10 Teresa Eichner."

11 Needless to say, I think this is a very
12 serious matter on more than one level, and I
13 want to begin by giving Commissioner Eichner an
14 opportunity to address this issue.

15 MS. EICHNER: I did meet with members of
16 the council on Tuesday afternoon, after the
17 agenda, and I felt that it's appropriate that I
18 do that.

19 I had a position and took a vote as a
20 member of this commission the prior Tuesday and
21 felt like members of the council needed to know
22 my position. It was not explicit in the memo
23 that we sent as a body who that dissenter was,
24 and I wanted them to know that it was me.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

1 Council President Clark pointed out at our
2 meeting, and on the record in the transcript,
3 that he felt you might have a potential conflict
4 of interest in taking a position on this matter,
5 and I don't recall what you said or didn't say
6 in response to that. I haven't had a chance to
7 look through the transcript. I remember that he
8 raised the issue.

9 But I would say that whether you voted or
10 not voted or abstained -- and the Commission is
11 separate, in my mind, from taking the
12 affirmative step of lobbying the council. I
13 think that's an extraordinary step that, to my
14 knowledge, nobody else on the commission took,
15 for or against the bill.

16 And I believe that you -- the fact that you
17 were the only one on the Commission whose
18 livelihood is impacted by the timing of the
19 elections creates the appearance that you had
20 some ulterior motive in taking that
21 extraordinary step, and I want to be more
22 specific in my concerns.

23 This is Florida Statute 112.3143, and it
24 comes from the code of ethics for public
25 officers. The section is entitled Voting

1 Conflicts, and it says, "As used in this
2 section, `public officer' includes any person
3 elected or appointed to hold office in any
4 agency, including any person serving on an
5 advisory body."

6 And it goes on to say, "No appointed public
7 officer shall participate in any matter which
8 would enure to the officer's special private
9 gain or loss or which the officer knows would
10 enure to the special private gain or loss of any
11 principal by whom she is retained.

12 "For purposes of this subsection, the term
13 `participate' means any attempt to influence the
14 decision by oral or written communication."

15 And I don't know if you've been retained
16 yet by any candidate for any office at any
17 election time. And I'm not accusing you of
18 anything other than bad judgment, but your
19 judgment affects not just you. It affects all
20 of us on this commission.

21 We are advisory only. All we have is our
22 credibility. And if people think we're putting
23 our personal agendas before our obligations
24 under the ordinance code to the council and to
25 the citizens to act impartially and in their

1 best interest, then we're finished. And I'm not
2 going to let the hard work and professional
3 sacrifices that all of these people have made be
4 jeopardized by that perception.

5 Now, before I say anything else, I want to
6 give the commissioners the opportunity to
7 comment on this because I've been doing all the
8 talking.

9 Commissioner Catlett.

10 MR. CATLETT: I was on something else.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Commissioner Miller.

12 MS. MILLER: Through the Chair, I am -- I
13 have to say from a personal and professional
14 standpoint, I'm very, very disappointed to find
15 out about this. And I think you captured it
16 best, I mean, in what you've mentioned, that we
17 all have taken a lot of time and effort out of
18 our personal and professional schedules for
19 hopefully a cause that's bigger than all of us
20 because we believe in this city, we believe in
21 this form of government.

22 And at the end of the day, I think we're
23 all working toward a very transparent process in
24 which all parties can be heard. I think we've
25 gone to extraordinary steps now in weekly

1 meetings to have -- make sure that all arguments
2 are heard in a public forum and then we have an
3 opportunity to debate it and to vote on it.

4 And I remember last week specifically
5 asking Ms. Eichner for her opinion and to speak
6 up so that we could hear the other side so we
7 could debate it, and I think we had a very
8 healthy level. It was one of the best meetings
9 we've had -- in my opinion, one of the best
10 meetings because we were able to debate an
11 issue, discuss it, discuss the relevant facts
12 and impacts and make a decision as a
13 commission.

14 But this -- this effort, while probably,
15 you know, entirely consistent with your First
16 Amendment rights, in my mind, goes against
17 the -- and undermines the efforts of this
18 commission and what we're convened to do.

19 And I would hate for the public to perceive
20 that we're coming here with a personal agenda or
21 otherwise or trying to advance a personal agenda
22 for private gain over the better interest of our
23 city, so I -- I would like to go on record that
24 I'm incredibly disappointed.

25 I have some serious concerns about whether

1 or not this would actually violate Chapter 112
2 of the Florida Statutes, which I'm very familiar
3 with because I counsel clients on it every day.

4 And I think it might be appropriate to ask
5 the City's General Counsel Office or Ms. Carla
6 Miller to give us an opinion on that, or
7 either -- so that we can be best informed
8 because we all need to understand the impact of
9 that, not just in this case but going forward as
10 we make recommendations, whether they're today
11 or tomorrow or next week or in February. When
12 we make recommendations, what are our
13 obligations to ourselves and to this commission.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlin.

15 MR. CATLIN: This could be an issue that
16 could cross so many different lines. I mean,
17 everybody has got their -- when we did our
18 priorities for this commission, everyone put on
19 their priority list what they'd like to change.

20 So not to single out any -- Commissioner
21 Eichner by any means. I mean, everybody -- you
22 know, there might be other people on this
23 commission who have a special interest they want
24 to see passed.

25 But I've got to admit, I'm angry that I --

1 you know, that I take three hours out of my
2 week -- not to mention the meetings that I'll
3 have with other folks in the community -- to
4 gather all the information I can to make a --
5 what I see is a wise decision, but to have
6 council lobbied against my point.

7 If this is how it's going to be going
8 forward, then I will call Councilman Fussell and
9 resign from this commission if this is what's
10 going to happen. This is not -- we're supposed
11 to give our opinion as a commission. And if
12 lobbying is going to happen to City Council, I
13 will offer my resignation.

14 That's all I have to say.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Eichner.

16 MS. EICHNER: I just -- I want to go on
17 record on a couple of issues.

18 I did not go to City Council to lobby City
19 Council on this issue. I met with two members
20 of the City Council that evening to let them
21 understand my position. I had been asked the
22 question about our vote, and so I was not
23 addressing them as a -- I was addressing them
24 from my point of view, from what I -- the issues
25 that I brought up in the commission meeting and

1 referred them to the minutes of the meeting.

2 Again, I'm not representing anyone. I'm
3 not under contract by any means on anybody
4 seeking elective office, and that -- I think
5 that's a matter of personal choice.

6 If I decide to represent someone from a
7 business perspective, I may not do that until
8 after this commission gives its final report to
9 council, and I've given that great consideration
10 throughout this process.

11 So I don't intend on representing anyone
12 that -- in a campaign or a political race until
13 that report is done at council. And I didn't
14 intend to lobby council on this issue. I
15 basically went to them and said, here is -- here
16 was my interpretation of what we're trying to
17 do. And if the election is tomorrow or if the
18 election is three years from now, that does not
19 change my position on working in a -- working in
20 a campaign cycle. It doesn't matter to me when
21 the election is held, and I said that in my
22 debate last Thursday.

23 So I apologize on the record if I've
24 disappointed anybody in going to council, but I
25 felt like I was asked by two people who are

1 members of the -- on City Council my opinion,
2 and I offered that opinion. I was not
3 lobbying.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Just as a clarification,
5 Commissioner Eichner, did you work on
6 Ms. Barrett's school board campaign as a paid
7 consultant?

8 MS. EICHNER: I did. That was prior to
9 this commission.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: But that election occurred
11 during the pendency of this commission. She
12 wasn't a candidate when this commission was
13 formed. There was no vacancy.

14 MS. EICHNER: Then that was just -- that
15 was something that had not crossed my mind at
16 that point. I don't have an opinion on it right
17 now.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm just clarifying your
19 statement that you don't intend to work for any
20 candidate while you're on this commission. I
21 mean, you've already done that.

22 Commissioner Oliveras.

23 MR. OLIVERAS: Well, I'm always a little
24 reluctant to go by information off of a blog. I
25 think if we raise a serious matter here, then we

1 should be very objective in what we discuss and
2 what we accept as true.

3 I know from -- just speaking for myself,
4 last week's meeting seemed to be a tightrope for
5 a number of people. The council president and
6 the council vice president at one point weren't
7 even sure if they should both be there at the
8 same time. OGC clarified.

9 You know, I have -- I have my own
10 tightropes I walk. I work for the sheriff, who
11 at almost every commission meeting something has
12 been brought up about the sheriff, the sheriff's
13 office, citizen review boards. I'm a board
14 member on the FOP, a favorite target of the news
15 media today.

16 I serve on the advisory committee for the
17 Police and Fire Pension Fund, and the pension
18 issue has come before this commission and will
19 very likely come before us again.

20 So I try to be very careful and very
21 deliberative in the things that I discuss with
22 people outside of this meeting when we
23 deliberate together.

24 I think there is a very big difference
25 between what I see in print and what --

1 Commissioner Eichner's statement of meeting with
2 two council members. I've walked into three
3 council members in the lobby and upstairs either
4 before or after our meetings here, and they've
5 asked me questions.

6 And so I think -- you know, as to the
7 appropriateness, I can't comment. I wasn't
8 there. I don't know.

9 To the gravity of this, you know, I
10 would -- before we -- before we get too terribly
11 worked up over this, I would think it's
12 important to know who and to what extent and who
13 initiated the conversations and, obviously, the
14 Chapter 112 issues. You know, if Commissioner
15 Eichner is not representing these folks, I'm not
16 sure that there is -- and I'm not an attorney --
17 a violation of 112.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Anybody else?

19 Commissioner Catlett.

20 MR. CATLETT: Well, you know, I've known
21 Teresa for years. She is a high standards, very
22 moral person. And, you know, I'd have to admit,
23 I make more mistakes in a month than she would
24 in a year. She's apologized publicly. I don't
25 know what more she can do, that she's empowered

1 to do other than to apologize.

2 And, of course, the damage is done, not by
3 what her actions were, but because of the
4 perception of what her actions were by whoever
5 wrote this blog and whoever reads this blog.

6 So, you know, I would say, okay. Well, she
7 made a mistake. But, you know, to the extent
8 possible recognize that other people are going
9 to misinterpret your efforts, make them public
10 and then it reflects on everybody here. And I
11 don't know what else to do other than say,
12 "Apology accepted. Move on."

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlin.

14 MR. CATLIN: I'm with you, Commissioner
15 Catlett.

16 And, Teresa -- I mean, you're fine with
17 me. We're still buddies and apology accepted.

18 I just -- I kind of felt, for those of you
19 who weren't at the meeting the other night, for
20 our commission -- for our chairman.

21 I almost felt like you were set up for the
22 fall when you came and spoke to folks and people
23 already knew that there might be some dissension
24 on the commission. And I just want to let you
25 know, Commissioner Duggan, that I'm behind you,

1 and I was behind you up at the podium.

2 I just feel like that -- and Councilman
3 Fussell's statements were obviously incorrect
4 here, but we're with you, I'm with you. I
5 appreciate you leading us and I respect your
6 leadership on this commission.

7 And, Commission Eichner, your apology is
8 accepted. I love you.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Commissioner
10 Catlin. That's kind of you to say.

11 And I endorse Commissioner Catlett's
12 analysis of the situation. As I've said, I'm
13 not accusing you of doing anything wrong other
14 than creating an appearance that affects all of
15 us, and I accept your apology because I think
16 that's part of my obligation to you.

17 However, I do think it would be prudent if
18 we ask the General Counsel's Office to make a
19 determination as to whether this is an issue
20 that needs to be referred to the ethics officer
21 for further investigation, so I would ask that
22 the General Counsel undertake that analysis for
23 us because I'm concerned just about the
24 appearance. We need to be the people that
25 people feel like -- are looking out for them, I

1 think. That's my sense of what our work here is
2 about.

3 So I'm sorry that this had to be played out
4 in this forum, but I think you understand that
5 the appearance is important.

6 MS. EICHNER: I do, and I'm happy to meet
7 with the Office of General Counsel or with Carla
8 Miller's office.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

10 MR. AUSTIN: (Inaudible.)

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Commissioner Austin.

12 MR. AUSTIN: Just a couple of
13 observations.

14 Taking it in chronological order, I think
15 the question would be, when we vote, whether
16 we're voting with something that we have a
17 financial interest in and then whether we
18 declare it or don't declare it, that type of
19 thing. Whatever that is, I don't know. I don't
20 know if there's any problem there or not.

21 I doubt very seriously that the fact that
22 we disagree with the commission's findings
23 prohibits us from going around and articulating
24 that to somebody. It might appear to be
25 disloyal, but I don't know of anything that says

1 a councilman can't walk out after a council
2 meeting and say they blew that one or that we
3 couldn't do that, so I don't know what --

4 It might disappoint us as the -- the
5 collegial thing, the way we voted and -- almost
6 unanimously, but I don't know that that -- I
7 don't know that any of us couldn't go around and
8 advocate something contrary to our position.
9 That doesn't -- the question in my mind is
10 shouldn't we all very carefully search our minds
11 and souls and so forth if we're voting on
12 something that affects our pocketbook. I think
13 that's the real issue.

14 And as far as Mr. Fussell's comments --
15 Councilman Fussell's comments and concerns, my
16 reaction was exactly like yours. My first
17 reaction was, well, if you appointed us and you
18 don't want to hear our opinion when you're
19 voting, what good is it to have us? And if
20 you're not soliciting everybody's opinions,
21 you're blowing it anyway, you know. So I was
22 offended by his comment, but -- and I'll tell
23 him when I see him.

24 But be that as it may, I'm sorry we lost
25 that vote down there. They made a -- this

1 council made a bad mistake.

2 Other than that -- and you -- you advocated
3 the wrong side, but -- in my judgment, but I
4 don't know anything really about going down
5 there other than the fact that the appearance is
6 not good.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: I have no other speakers in
8 the queue. And, again, I'm sorry that we had to
9 go through this process, but I hope you
10 understand.

11 Is there any other business that any of the
12 other commissioners would like to bring up?

13 Vice Chair O'Brien.

14 MS. O'BRIEN: I just wanted to ask in terms
15 of schedules and scheduled speakers -- another
16 issue that will be coming before the City
17 Council where we might have to make a
18 recommendation as a committee to the council
19 prior to February. I know that they are in
20 their 60 days of negotiations with the unions in
21 regards to the pension funds and such.

22 Do we have a schedule yet for some of our
23 pension speakers to educate us on what's
24 happening, what the (inaudible) are, what we're
25 committed to, the legal boundaries, things along

1 that line?

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I would like to have
3 those discussions before us in November I think
4 would be ideal, if I can -- I'm going to contact
5 Mr. Keane and Mr. Cohee. Commissioner Oliveras
6 provided me their -- suggested that they be
7 speakers to us by e-mail.

8 I'm happy to accept any other suggestions
9 from members of the Commission as useful
10 speakers on the topic. I don't know if any of
11 the City Council people will feel comfortable
12 coming to talk to us before they vote on it, so
13 I'm not sure that we can get the council
14 perspective or not.

15 I'm happy to ask Councilman Corrigan, who
16 is the chairman of the pension committee, what
17 his level of comfort is with that, and I'll let
18 you know his response.

19 MS. O'BRIEN: One other suggested speaker
20 may be Bob Johnson from the council auditor's
21 office, who I know has spent many years dealing
22 with this, 20-plus years, and has probably a
23 great understanding of the process.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

25 Anything else from the commission?

1 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)

2 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Everybody have a
3 safe Halloween.

4 We're adjourned.

5 (The above proceedings were adjourned at
6 11:56 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF FLORIDA:

COUNTY OF DUVAL :

I, Diane M. Tropa, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

Dated this 3rd day of November, 2009.

Diane M. Tropa