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CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MEETING

Proceedings held on Thursday, December 17,
2009, commencing at 9:00 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.
- 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.
- ALI KORMAN, Commission Member.
- JEANNE MILLER, Commission Member.
- GARY OLIVERAS, Commission Member.
- CURTIS THOMPSON, Commission Member.

ALSO PRESENT:

- STEVE ROHAN, Office of General Counsel.
- JEFF CLEMENTS, Research Division.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

December 17, 2009 9:00 a.m.

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THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

I'll call to order the December 17th meeting of the Charter Revision Commission.

As a preliminary, please -- a reminder, please turn all your cell phones to vibrate or silent.

We have a quorum. I will ask Commissioner Thompson to begin the roll call.

MR. THOMPSON: Curtis Thompson.

MR. OLIVERAS: Gary Oliveras.

MS. KORMAN: Ali Korman.

MR. FLOWERS: Robert Flowers.

MS. EICHNER: Teresa Eichner.

MR. CATLETT: Jim Catlett.

MS. O'BRIEN: Mary O'Brien.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wyman Duggan.

MR. CATLIN: Billy Catlin.

MS. GARVIN: Beverly Garvin.

MS. MILLER: Jeanne Miller.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you all.

Commissioner Austin is excused. He is not feeling well. Commissioner Youngblood is out of

1 town. He asked me to wish all of you a Merry
2 Christmas. And Commissioner Deal will be
3 slightly delayed, but will attend.

4 With that, we'll begin with the Pledge and
5 a moment of silence.

6 (Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.)

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

8 Before we begin, I would like to recognize
9 Boy Scout Troop 276 that is here today to
10 observe the proceedings in pursuit of their
11 citizenship and community badge. So welcome,
12 gentlemen. I hope you find this interesting.
13 Please stay as long as you like. We will have
14 public comment at the end if you would like to
15 ask any questions.

16 All right. Getting right to business, our
17 first presentation today will be from Ed
18 Pratt-Dannals, the Superintendent of the Duval
19 County Schools, and Brenda Priestly-Jackson, the
20 Chair. I don't know which order you would like
21 to go, but please proceed.

22 (Mr. Pratt-Dannals approaches the podium.)

23 THE CHAIRMAN: And just as a reminder, name
24 and address for the record and then our court
25 reporter will swear you in.

1 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 Ed Pratt-Dannals, superintendent of
4 schools, 1701 Prudential Drive, 32207.

5 And I will begin and then
6 Ms. Priestly-Jackson will add some comments and
7 then we would be glad to entertain any questions
8 and answers.

9 First of all, thank you for the opportunity
10 to come back before you to discuss this issue.

11 I apologize.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: The court reporter will have
13 to swear you in.

14 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Oh.

15 THE REPORTER: Would you raise your right
16 hand for me, please.

17 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: (Complies.)

18 THE REPORTER: Do you affirm that the
19 testimony you're about to give will be the
20 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
21 truth so help you God?

22 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: I do.

23 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

25 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

2 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Sorry.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: That's all right.

4 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: I think any discussion
5 as far as the direction of the school system
6 should begin with how we're doing. If you look
7 by any measure of the last decade, we've had
8 significant academic achievement gains. That's
9 kind of where you begin as far as whether or not
10 a district is making improvement.

11 The FCAT, which is our high stakes
12 assessment by which schools and districts are
13 graded, we have gone up in reading by
14 46 percent, in math 71 percent, 38 percent in
15 science, and 16 percent in writing. These are
16 significant gains over time and they have been
17 progressive and they have been across grade
18 levels and across content areas.

19 Another way that the state assesses schools
20 is by the letter grades. I'm not a big fan of
21 letter grades; however, it is what the state
22 uses. And when we began in 1999, we had ten
23 A schools; we currently have 73. We had seven
24 B schools; we currently have 29. Those are
25 significant, huge gains.

1 And during that same decade, the
2 requirements increased, and particularly with
3 the addition of science, which was benchmarked,
4 so it's very difficult to reach the requisite
5 cut score. Many schools and many districts went
6 down.

7 We've had a steady, progressive increase in
8 graduation rate, which is another key indicator,
9 this past year increasing by 3.2 percent. There
10 are two different ways that it's calculated, and
11 on either one of those, we've gone up
12 significantly and in the last three years by
13 seven percentage points in graduation rates.

14 This was during the same time that our
15 school district increased the graduation
16 requirements to be the most rigorous in the
17 State of Florida and in many cases the most
18 rigorous in the country.

19 The National Governors Association
20 designated what are called the achieve standards
21 and outlines not just the number of credits but
22 the specific courses that students need in order
23 to be ready for postsecondary work, whether
24 that's in a four-year college, university, or in
25 a career technical program, which increasingly

1 require the same level of academic skills
2 necessary as if you're going on to a four-year
3 college, so increased performance while
4 increasing requirements both in the FCAT and in
5 graduation rates.

6 We did have some discussion last time about
7 a strategic plan for the City, and I know that's
8 been mentioned as a possibility and we strongly
9 support that.

10 As you know, the district created a
11 strategic plan shortly after I came on board
12 just over two years ago and have been working
13 that plan, the purpose of which is to provide
14 focus, help us narrow where our resources are
15 placed, provide transparency and
16 accountability. In fact, I would argue that at
17 this point, we are the most accountable agency
18 in the community.

19 We have said, here are the targets we're
20 going to meet, and we're held accountable to
21 it. My evaluation is directly tied to those.
22 If we don't meet it, then that's a part of a
23 ding I get on my evaluation, direct tie to that,
24 direct tie to people who report to me, direct
25 tie to schools in terms of accountability for

1 improvement.

2 We are meeting with the other public
3 agencies. I think it certainly is in the
4 interest of the community, as represented by the
5 commission, to make sure that public agencies
6 are working together, that there is
7 collaboration. I think one example of that
8 certainly was the Jacksonville Journey. But
9 even before that came about, we've been meeting
10 regularly, not only individually with the mayor,
11 the State Attorney, the sheriff, nonprofits,
12 United Way, Community Foundation, and many, many
13 others, but as a group now, the sheriff, the
14 mayor, State's Attorney and I meet regularly to
15 look at common issues such as truancy,
16 suspension, crime, other issues that impact our
17 young people, and the other agencies have an
18 impact on that.

19 I think when it comes to the issue of board
20 governance, the key issue is not so much how
21 people get there. It's what they do once they
22 are there. You could find examples of both
23 highly functional and dysfunctional elected and
24 appointed boards. It really matters, do they
25 have a common vision and focus? Have they

1 developed a strategic plan? Have they hired an
2 executive to execute that? Are they engaged and
3 connected to the community as far as listening
4 to community concerns and including that in
5 those goals and aspirations for the district and
6 then holding people accountable for results?

7 Certainly, our school board does that.

8 Just over three years ago, at that time, I
9 was chief academic officer, and I was the second
10 person, in addition to the superintendent, that
11 went through what's called the Broad Institute
12 training. It's called Reformed Governance in
13 Action. And our school board was one of the
14 first of the school boards -- there were four
15 cities nationally that went through board
16 training. It was paid for by Eli Broad. If you
17 don't know him, he's the B in KB Homes.

18 And one of his focus areas has been -- he
19 has seen that in the past, there have been times
20 in which boards -- again, whether they're
21 elected or appointed -- got into
22 micromanagement, were trying to name friends and
23 relatives into positions, were trying to give
24 contracts to friends, all those kinds of things
25 that are inappropriate and in many cases

1 illegal. And to make sure that boards knew
2 their role in that governance area, which is to
3 set policy, set the goals and aspirations, set
4 the targets, hire a chief executive and hold him
5 or her accountable for those results.

6 Our board does that. In fact, two of our
7 board members are now training other boards in
8 that reform governance, one of which is an
9 appointed board. One of our elected board
10 members is training the appointed board on how
11 to do board governance effectively.

12 It's also very important, I think, for the
13 public to know that there is a direct connection
14 with an elected board member in their area, I
15 think, particularly when it comes to their
16 children. There is nothing more precious to
17 anybody than their children. When I get
18 together with colleagues, when I get together
19 with friends, when I get together with
20 relatives, our conversation almost always
21 centers around: How are your kids doing? How
22 are they coming along? Where are they going to
23 school? They're the most important thing we
24 have. And so, therefore, people have a very
25 high priority on making sure that they have a

1 person that they can talk to who has a
2 connection.

3 Now, it has to be well done, and we have
4 that done through a constituent service system.
5 So instead of the board member becoming involved
6 in the weeds, they're the point of contact for
7 that individual because they're elected. But
8 they put that into a system that, then, my staff
9 and I follow up on to get a resolution and then
10 communicate that back to the board member and to
11 the constituent. So they play their proper role
12 in terms of being that point of contact, but do
13 not overstep that role in terms of trying to
14 micromanage the school district.

15 This came out of the Reform Governance in
16 Action work. This is one of the things that
17 boards learn when they go through that
18 training. So I think that direct connection is
19 particularly critical for parents to feel like
20 they have a point of contact and not feeling
21 like they're shut out. This has been one of the
22 issues with appointed boards.

23 If you look at the history, for instance,
24 of Chicago on their process of closing schools,
25 they came at it pretty much top down with a

1 whole lot of input and now have had to
2 dramatically change their whole process because
3 of strong community outcry that they did not
4 listen to people well, and they now have some
5 systems in place to do that.

6 It's also very important, I think, in terms
7 of minority representation. There is still
8 concern out there that with consolidated
9 government came a dilution of some of the
10 influence of minority voting, and there's a
11 strong connection, I think, through the school
12 board for that kind of level of participation
13 that could be dramatically reduced and have
14 people feel disenfranchised if we were going to
15 a mayor-appointed board.

16 In terms of size and scope, both the
17 current mayor, Mayor Peyton, and the incoming
18 mayor are having dramatic issues that have to be
19 resolved here within the City, certainly not the
20 least of which is the pension issue, which I
21 know you are going to be discussing later. That
22 is going to be more than enough for an
23 individual to be able to handle, much less
24 taking on the responsibility of an institution
25 that's larger than the City.

1 We have 4,000 more employees than the City
2 has. Our budget is about the same as the City's
3 budget. And so to more than double the role and
4 responsibility of the mayor at this point, I'm
5 not sure who would want that, quite frankly. If
6 they do, I think it's because they don't
7 understand that the public goes to the person
8 who has the ultimate authority, so we encourage
9 them to go to the principal because that's
10 really where the situation is worked out. But
11 the person they go to is the superintendent, and
12 if they can't get that right answer they want
13 from me, they go to the board member because
14 they know the board member appoints the
15 superintendent, the board as a whole.

16 If the mayor appoints the board member, the
17 mayor's office gets all the calls from the
18 parents because they want him to influence down
19 the chain of command. I don't think that
20 anybody wants that. They can come visit us for
21 a day if they do. Again, that kind of huge
22 expansion of responsibilities.

23 This isn't like taking on one of the
24 independent authorities that typically have a
25 few hundred employees. We have 14,000

1 employees. We are the largest, other than the
2 Navy, employer in the city of Jacksonville, and
3 we're the largest under a single leadership. We
4 also have the largest professional workforce,
5 those with at least a bachelor's degree. We
6 also are the most racially diverse workforce at
7 the professional level. So I think in many
8 ways, we are doing a lot of things right, and
9 that should be recognized and to continue as we
10 are.

11 One of the things that there's been some
12 research on is, as I mentioned earlier, the
13 importance of school boards, particularly in the
14 minority community. Roughly 22 percent of all
15 African-Americans elected officials nationally
16 and 35 percent of Latino elected officials are
17 school board members. This is a place where
18 there is that strong connection and particularly
19 as it relates to the aspirations for the place
20 of education as a major mechanism for people to
21 work their way out of low or moderate income
22 status for their children to move into a much
23 better position. That sense of hope for the
24 future is directly tied to education and,
25 therefore, again, directly tied to having impact

1 on the -- what happens within the educational
2 environment.

3 Some have argued that an appointed board
4 would remove politics from the school board
5 process. I would argue that it just changes it
6 to a different level, that when the mayor ran
7 for mayor, the mayor would have to run as both
8 the head of the school system and also the
9 mayor. And half the questions, logically at
10 least, since we're as large as the City, should
11 be around the school system. And, again, I'm
12 not convinced that everybody is prepared to
13 answer those questions.

14 Also, there is no clear evidence at this
15 point that there is a connection between
16 governance and results. Part of my research in
17 my doctoral program was to identify what are the
18 key factors, strategies, input that lead to
19 high-performing urban education systems.
20 Governance was not one of them. Again, there
21 are examples of each that work given the
22 environment, given the state statutes, given
23 what the budgeting process is of the community.

24 For instance, in Virginia, half of the
25 budget for the school system comes from the

1 County Commission. They're very directly tied
2 in terms of the budgeting process. Now, they
3 still appoint superintendents there and they
4 have elected boards, but there is a much
5 stronger connection budgetwise, whereas in our
6 case, we are a separate taxing authority, we
7 have a separate budget. It's all in the
8 constitution. An entirely different section of
9 the constitution is around school districts,
10 board responsibility, superintendent/principal
11 responsibilities, budgeting.

12 School districts, for instance, have a
13 different accounting process than City
14 agencies. It's governed under a whole different
15 set of practices. So the idea that somehow you
16 can just kind of combine these really is much
17 more complex and difficult than one might think
18 at the beginning.

19 As I said earlier, the school boards are
20 governed by the state constitution and our state
21 officers. We are somewhat unique in
22 Jacksonville. I'm a fan of consolidated
23 government. As I said earlier, I believe,
24 before this commission that some of my
25 compatriots in the larger urban districts have

1 10, 15 different municipalities to have to deal
2 with, 10 different police departments. Very
3 difficult to maintain that kind of connection
4 and collaboration that we enjoy here in
5 Jacksonville.

6 So I think that's a good thing in terms of
7 that kind of commitment and how we can move the
8 city forward, but that does not include the
9 school district, which in the constitution is
10 intended to be a separate institution.

11 When you look at some of the cities that do
12 have appointed boards -- I know there's been
13 some discussion about conversations that were
14 with the mayor of New York and the mayor of
15 Chicago.

16 The test that is the kind of gold standard
17 of assessments in the nation is called NAEP,
18 National Assessment of Educational Progress. It
19 is given to a sampling of schools in various
20 cities, and we get statewide results. However,
21 there are about 13 municipalities. We're not
22 one of them. We've asked to be, but so far
23 they're only dealing with a certain number of
24 municipalities.

25 There are municipalities that test all of

1 their students. And if you look at appointed
2 versus elected, the highest performing districts
3 on NAEP have elected school boards. The lowest
4 performing, New York and Chicago amongst them,
5 Detroit, have the lowest performance of NAEP.

6 In New York, from '03 to '07 -- this was
7 during a period of time after mayoral control of
8 the school board came in -- on NAEP, there was
9 no significant progress during those four
10 years. Again, this is the gold standard of
11 assessments nationally. During that same time
12 also, there was no significant reduction in the
13 racial achievement gap in New York City.

14 Now, do I think New York City is doing some
15 good things? Yes. I think they have a good
16 superintendent. Do I think it kind of worked in
17 Boston? Yes, because they had for a decade one
18 of the stronger superintendents in the country.
19 But if you look at it on -- from a research
20 standpoint of whether you can make that
21 connection between improvement and governance,
22 it just simply is not there.

23 Recently, in -- New York City just reached
24 the 60 percent graduation rate. And as I said
25 earlier, on the same criteria, ours is almost

1 70 percent. So while they have made growth --
2 and that's good -- again, you would be
3 hard-pressed to make a connection between
4 effectiveness and governance.

5 At this time, I'd like to ask
6 Ms. Priestly-Jackson to follow up, and then we'd
7 be glad to answer any questions.

8 (Ms. Priestly-Jackson approaches the
9 podium.)

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome, Madam Chair.
11 Name and address for --

12 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Good morning.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Name and address for the
14 record, and then our court reporter will swear
15 you in.

16 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Brenda A.
17 Priestly-Jackson, chairperson of the Duval
18 County School Board, board member, District IV,
19 1701 Prudential Drive, Jacksonville, Florida,
20 32207.

21 THE REPORTER: Would you raise your right
22 hand for me, please.

23 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: (Complies.)

24 THE REPORTER: Do you affirm that the
25 testimony you're about to give will be the

1 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
2 truth so help you God?

3 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I do.

4 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

5 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Dear members of the
6 Charter Revision Commission, I stand before you
7 as the current chairperson of the Duval County
8 School Board and the voice of my six esteemed
9 colleagues: The Honorable Nancy Broner, the
10 Honorable Tommy Hazouri, the Honorable Martha
11 Barrett, the Honorable Victoria Drake, and the
12 Honorable W.C. Gentry.

13 As seven of your elected constitutional
14 officers, we represent single-member districts
15 in Duval County that are each unique in their
16 own right but help to make up the rich tapestry
17 of our beloved county.

18 As your elected constitutional officers, we
19 each bring a love for our county, I believe, in
20 our limitless potential if we work together in a
21 genuine knowledge that we are entrusted with the
22 education and development of one of the most
23 precious resources, our county's children. Our
24 focus is and always will be student achievement
25 and student achievement alone.

1 So who are we, you may ask, and what do we
2 offer our city, our county in our capacity as
3 your elected constitutional officers? We are
4 the daughter of the founder and publisher of the
5 Beaches Leader newspaper, who, along with his
6 wife, settled in our county over 50 years ago
7 after retiring from the Navy. This daughter,
8 along with her husband and siblings, is a
9 graduate of Fletcher High School where she later
10 taught and where she and her husband sent their
11 own three children. This daughter is also a
12 former olympic torch bearer and a consultant for
13 the Broad Institute, who is responsible for
14 training new school board members around the
15 country.

16 We are the daughter of small business
17 owners from the east side of Jacksonville who
18 settled in this city in the 1930s. This same
19 daughter graduated William M. Raines High School
20 and continued her education at the University of
21 Miami and Illinois University. This daughter
22 and her husband are the proud parents to two
23 African-American sons who graduated Duval County
24 public schools and are now continuing their
25 education at the graduate and undergraduate

1 levels. This daughter, too, is a consultant for
2 the Broad Institute and responsible for training
3 new school board members around the country.

4 We are the grandson of Lebanese immigrants
5 who settled in our city over 100 years ago and
6 the sons of the owners of Liberty Street
7 Grocery. This very son graduated from Andrew
8 Jackson High School, continued his education at
9 Jacksonville University where he served as
10 student body president.

11 Based on the diversity and richness of this
12 son's formative years, the son understood early
13 on that it was of vital importance that we
14 engage all citizens in the maintenance of our
15 democracy. And to that end, he was elected a
16 member of the state House, the legislature, and
17 mayor of our great city.

18 We are the daughter of a former Railway
19 Express Agency employee that settled here
20 shortly after his baby girl was born in the
21 1950s. A devout Catholic, this daughter was
22 taught that a life of value is a life of service
23 to others.

24 After graduating from a local high school,
25 this daughter continued her education in the

1 undergraduate and graduate levels. Having
2 worked with both national and state campaigns,
3 this daughter truly found her voice and
4 sharpened her ear to hear the needs of the
5 people under the tutelage of former Mayor Jake
6 Godbold, a most trusted advisor.

7 We are the wife of an engineer that came to
8 Jacksonville in 1977 with the thought that she
9 would only be here six weeks, however, instead
10 fell in love with the city and San Mateo
11 Elementary School.

12 This wife and mother have made a large part
13 of her life's work the active engagement and
14 involvement of parents in our public schools.
15 So to that end, this wife and mother has served
16 as PTA president, district school advisory
17 chair, and the author of the training manual for
18 our school advisory councils.

19 We are the son that grew up near and
20 graduated from Andrew Jackson High School and
21 knew early on that education was the key. This
22 son would go on to graduate with honors from the
23 University of Florida College of Law and earn
24 the reputation as one of the sharpest legal
25 minds in the state of Florida.

1 This son would become an advocate for the
2 equitable and adequate funding of public schools
3 in our state and would have three beautiful
4 daughters, one whom would become a public
5 schoolteacher.

6 We are the great granddaughter who stands
7 before you today some 108 years after her
8 great-grandfather encouraged and challenged then
9 Mayor Duncan Fletcher to treat our city's
10 colored citizens with dignity, respect, and
11 equity. This great-granddaughter is a product
12 of our desegregated public schools and a
13 graduate of Ribault High School when it was a
14 model school, (inaudible) State University, and
15 the University of Florida College of Law.

16 This great-granddaughter, granddaughter,
17 daughter, niece, wife, and mother is the legacy
18 of a family that places a premium on education
19 and lives by the model that with an education
20 anything is possible, and without it almost
21 nothing is certain.

22 So now you know who we are and who you
23 elected.

24 Conversely, it is in no way that anyone but
25 our electorate would bring together such an

1 eclectic, diverse, passionate, and committed
2 group of people to be their voice on the
3 Duval County School Board.

4 When the people exercise their power
5 through the voting booth, we are at our best.
6 It was with this in mind that the framers of our
7 state's constitution memorialized the importance
8 of public education by stating that.

9 The education of children is a fundamental
10 value of the people of the state of Florida. It
11 is, therefore, a paramount duty of the State to
12 make adequate provision for the education of all
13 children residing within its borders.

14 Adequate provision shall be made by law for
15 a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and
16 high-quality system of free public schools that
17 allows students to obtain a high quality
18 education and for the establishment and
19 maintenance, operation of institutions of higher
20 learning and other public education programs,
21 the needs that the people may require.

22 To ensure the people's voice in
23 establishing the education of children is a
24 fundamental value, our state statute
25 reads, "Members of the School Board shall be

1 elected from one of seven school districts."

2 Why is this important, and what does it
3 matter? If the education of children is truly
4 to be a fundamental value, these values must be
5 shared by members of our community and they must
6 have a voice in this process.

7 Members of the community expressed their
8 voice; hence, their values, through our elected
9 process. It is further through this process --
10 this elected process that members of our
11 community make real and tangible for them
12 exactly what our state's constitutional
13 provision regarding fundamental, paramount, and
14 adequacy of education means to them.

15 These beliefs in the transformance of
16 aspects of education in an individual's life and
17 then the quality of life of our cities are not
18 some ephemeral concept or merely a theoretical
19 exercise. This belief should not and is not
20 something to try, play, or experiment with
21 because the cost to our city as a whole and our
22 citizens as individuals is too high.

23 If the citizens right to vote for their
24 school board members is denied, their voice is
25 not only marginalized, it's actually muted.

1 Then how will we know what matters most to our
2 community when it comes to education? How will
3 we understand the needs of the single parent who
4 needs help with her child's reading over the
5 overly-burdened grandmother that thinks that
6 school has changed so much from when her kids
7 were attending that she doesn't know where to
8 begin with her grandchildren, the very
9 grandchildren she never imagined she would have
10 to rear; or the father that just wants his son
11 to have it better than he has it; or the
12 employer that says, "Our students are not
13 prepared for the specific demands of local
14 industry"; or the student that learns
15 differently and as a consequence does not quite
16 fit in our schools?

17 I'll tell you how we know. It is because
18 we see them in the grocery store or at the gas
19 station; at PTA meetings; at SAC meetings; in
20 the church, synagogue, or mosque; at the park;
21 in the school; at the Jaguar game; or in the
22 jail.

23 As elected board members, we live with the
24 people, interact with the people, and are
25 responsive to the people. We are responsive in

1 real time based on real needs that are often
2 diverse and potentially divisive. We deal with
3 issues and live each day with the consequences
4 of our actions all the while recognizing the
5 sacred trust that the electorate has placed on
6 each of us.

7 Should this power, the power that flows
8 from this fundamental value, be in the hands of
9 one person, one mayor? Should the citizenry be
10 denied the right to control approximately
11 \$2 billion of their taxes, the approximate
12 amount of the school district budget, and give
13 that authority over to the mayor, or should the
14 citizenry continue to exercise its voice through
15 its elected school board members and tell us how
16 they want their tax dollars spent and what their
17 priorities or fundamental values in education
18 are?

19 I answer the question that the power and
20 the vote belongs with and to the people, all of
21 the people here in our county, whether on the
22 north side, south side, or west side; at the
23 beaches or Baldwin; whether female or male;
24 whether African-American, White, Latino, Asian,
25 or multiracial; whether rich, poor, or stuck

1 somewhere in between.

2 Our County's greatest strength is our
3 diversity and the empowering ideas that come
4 when we both celebrate and encourage that
5 diversity. There is no better manifestation of
6 the impact of diversity on our democracy than
7 when our citizens use their vote as their
8 voice. Let's not take that away.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you both.

10 Before we get to questions, I would like to
11 invite any of the other school board members who
12 would like to comment. Since you are here, we'd
13 be happy to hear from you. If you prefer not
14 to, that's fine.

15 MR. HAZOURI: We both would like to talk,
16 but they speak well for us.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

18 Superintendent Pratt-Dannals, I'm
19 interested in -- when you said there are good
20 things that New York and Boston are doing, what
21 would those be?

22 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Both of them have done
23 an excellent job at looking at some other
24 approaches, particularly for middle and high
25 school students, that are not fitting in with

1 the more traditional educational environment, so
2 we've sent some staff -- along with the
3 Community Foundation and the Public Education
4 Foundation have been our partners in this. It's
5 a part of the larger Learning to Finish effort,
6 and so we have looked at some of their models to
7 see if we can implement them.

8 One of the biggest problems we have is, at
9 this point, New York City gets twice the
10 dollars, literally twice the dollars that we do,
11 and so we're trying to figure out how can we do
12 that in a way that doesn't cost as much as it
13 does there.

14 So those are the kind of things, I think,
15 they have looked at. We do that everywhere. I
16 mean, regardless of -- if they're not making
17 progress across the board -- if they are doing a
18 good job in a particular area, we always seek
19 out which districts are doing the best practice
20 in a particular area.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: How big is their school
22 district compared to ours?

23 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Boston is approximately
24 60- or 70,000, so it's about half our size.

25 New York City is the largest in the country at

1 about 1.3 million, so they're about ten times
2 our size --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

4 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: -- so very different.

5 In fact, you know, we're the 20th largest
6 in the country, and we are the sixth largest in
7 Florida. In many urban communities, while the
8 city may be much larger than Jacksonville, their
9 school district is within the former city
10 limits. So unlike us in Florida, where we have
11 a countywide school system, which can be very
12 small or very large, depending on the size of
13 the county, theirs are more governed with many
14 more school districts typically than are in
15 Florida.

16 So San Francisco, cities that you think are
17 huge, are much smaller than us in terms of their
18 school districts.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Where do we rank? If we're
20 the sixth largest school district in Florida,
21 how do we compare to our peers -- to the top ten
22 school districts in Florida? Where do we fall
23 in terms of academic achievement and graduation
24 rates?

25 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: We are above Miami and

1 below the others, and that tracks almost
2 directly with income level and minority
3 participation.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: And that's for both
5 graduation and achievement?

6 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Right.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: I want to make sure I
8 understand what you're saying.

9 Miami is tenth. We're ninth. Is that --
10 and when you say, "we're above Miami" --

11 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: In most measures,
12 yes. In some cases, we're above some of the
13 other ones, but for the most part, if you are
14 taking it as whole, we're tracking a little less
15 than the Orlando -- the groups we compare
16 ourselves to are primarily Orlando and
17 Hillsborough, but they have a much, much smaller
18 percent of African-American population. We're
19 the highest percent of any of the large
20 districts in terms of African-American
21 population.

22 In many of the districts, they have a very
23 large Hispanic population, but that can be
24 everything from someone who just arrived in
25 America to a third generation Cuban who is the

1 mayor of the city. So that particular data
2 point is very different in different cities,
3 particularly Miami-Dade where there is a large
4 participation -- doctors, lawyers, many of the
5 political offices are held by Hispanics.

6 So we look at -- particularly in terms of
7 the percent of poverty. And that, at this
8 point, directly relates to -- as -- as across
9 the country. And this is one of the things
10 we're trying to break, but we're making
11 continual progress.

12 We have a lot of very well run districts in
13 Florida. If you look at the kind of progress
14 that Florida has made compared to most states,
15 we've made the most progress in reading and
16 math -- again, based on NAEP -- in the last few
17 years of any state in the country. So we're in
18 competition with them. They're doing well,
19 we're are doing well, but we always want to move
20 up that line and beat these odds based on income
21 and race. And that's part of our strategic plan
22 and our target.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

24 I have heard secondhand that Duval County's
25 graduation rate puts it at 61 out of 67

1 counties. Is that accurate? Because I don't
2 know. I've just heard that.

3 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: I'd have to go back and
4 look after -- because the new ones just came
5 out. I'd have to see where it places us after
6 that, but we're not near the top.

7 And one of the things, I think, in terms of
8 our strategic plan is that -- we've said -- we
9 celebrate those minor successes, but we
10 celebrate them for about a day, and then we get
11 back to work.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

13 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: And so nobody is
14 satisfied with only having about 70 percent of
15 our students graduating in four years. If you
16 look at our plan in terms of targets, we're
17 expecting to be in the mid 80s soon. And,
18 again, this is with increasing requirements.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: What's the time line -- what
20 is your expected time line to be in the mid 80s?

21 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Four years.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. What challenges --
23 given that Duval County is unique -- fairly
24 unique in Florida with its consolidated
25 structure, what are the unique challenges that

1 you feel the school district faces that perhaps
2 are not prevalent in other comparable peer
3 cities that we have to deal with?

4 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Are you talking about
5 in Florida?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Correct, or nationwide,
7 Florida. You tell me.

8 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Well, I think we're
9 very diverse, first of all. Other Florida
10 counties are somewhat similar to us in that
11 way. Charlotte may be similar to us that way in
12 that we do have suburban, working-class, urban,
13 and if you go out far enough west, some
14 semirural, if you go out to Baldwin and some of
15 the areas out there. So I think that's a
16 challenge just in terms of the diversity of
17 types of students and families we're serving.
18 That's not that different, for instance, than
19 perhaps Orange or Hillsborough had some of those
20 same kinds of issues.

21 I think we experience many of the same
22 issues related to the kinds of impact on
23 families, particularly students who come from
24 low-income families in terms of having
25 consistency of work, consistency of a place to

1 live, the challenges of the amount of crime that
2 they see directly face-to-face each day. I
3 don't know that that's different from other
4 communities, though.

5 Do you want to talk about that for a
6 minute?

7 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Yeah.

8 I do think that there's one thing that we
9 often don't understand, even in comparison with
10 the other cities in the State of Florida.

11 Duval County has one of the smallest
12 percentages of individuals that have bachelors'
13 degrees or higher. We have about 21 percent or
14 22 percent. If you compare us to Tampa or to
15 Orlando or to Miami, you are looking at
16 45 percent or higher there.

17 I think that that trickles down to the
18 overall quality and understanding of education
19 and what it takes to be successful. So, to me,
20 that's a real time distinction. So when we take
21 our statistics in a backdrop in terms of how do
22 you truly infuse in a culture not only the value
23 of education but realistic steps of attaining
24 that, with that backdrop, it creates some
25 greater challenges than you face in other areas

1 in Florida.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Oliveras.

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

4 Mr. Superintendent, Madam Chairman, thank
5 you both for being here again.

6 I have a couple of questions.

7 The first, Superintendent, you mentioned
8 the regular meetings with the mayor, the mayor's
9 office, the State Attorney, the sheriff. How
10 frequently does the school board meet with them
11 or board representatives meet with them?

12 And I'm interested in knowing, does the
13 mayor's staff who attends these meetings, do
14 they have particular background and expertise in
15 education, educational governance, or, you know,
16 classroom instruction, or are they there
17 representing the mayor and the City
18 infrastructure, so to speak?

19 I'm curious to know what their input is in
20 these meetings and how frequently you meet.

21 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: We meet with the mayor
22 and the school board chair approximately every
23 other month. In addition, on about that same
24 time line, the four major heads, along with the
25 chief judge, which is actually five people, are

1 meeting -- it's specifically to follow up on
2 some of the issues within the Journey, so a lot
3 of the discussion is around the ones I mentioned
4 earlier: truancy, suspension, crime, support
5 systems for young people and their family.

6 To answer your other question is: It's the
7 latter of -- the staff person primarily connects
8 with the mayor through his assigned
9 responsibilities as opposed to being someone who
10 has expertise in education.

11 MR. OLIVERAS: Okay. Thank you.

12 Madam Chairperson, I -- a question about
13 the strategic plan that Professor Corrigan
14 mentioned last week. I'm very interested in
15 this concept, and I think that the schools have
16 already done a really good job in implementing
17 the district strategic plan. I see it at work
18 in my school.

19 My principal uses it weekly in her
20 administrative leadership team meeting as a
21 template for the meeting -- for the
22 administrators and the school leadership, and
23 people plug into those strategic points to move
24 into that -- those common goals, so I'm
25 interested in that concept, applying it

1 citywide. I think that may solve some problems
2 that we've been trying to address.

3 I'm interested in knowing how you feel
4 about that, being a stakeholder in that process,
5 if that were to be something we could consider
6 here as a recommendation.

7 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I definitely think
8 so. I think a strategic plan is your guide for
9 what you need to do. It tells you not only
10 where you are but where you need to go. And so
11 this is the first time that not only do we have
12 community stakeholders and an elected board and
13 superintendent, we all came together for the
14 strategic plan with what we felt were aggressive
15 but realistic targets. Some of us want to move
16 a little faster than others at times with all
17 deliberate speed.

18 But based on the research -- we put time
19 lines in to basically ensure that every student,
20 not a particular population of kids, every
21 student will reach certain goals and certain
22 benchmarks. And so as a board, we carefully ask
23 the question when aligning our resources: How
24 does that support the strategic plan? If it's
25 not a part of that, we don't want to be involved

1 with it. We're not planning to do it. We're
2 not thinking about it. We don't have time to
3 experiment or try it, and so I -- I welcome it.

4 It is very clear for us in terms of what we
5 said we were going to do with our targets or how
6 will we work with the most challenged
7 populations that we have, whether it's
8 socioeconomic, whether it's racial, whether it's
9 regional, and we have a way -- a means of
10 getting there.

11 And so some of our biggest conversations
12 come with the superintendents in terms of, you
13 know, what is your plan for doing it in terms of
14 how are you going to do it and how does, you
15 know, something fit into that?

16 But it's probably been one of the best
17 things, I think, that we've been able to work
18 towards, and I think that that would be
19 something concrete and meaningful for this
20 commission in terms of monitoring and seeing
21 where we're going because it helps us have a
22 rich dialogue on: What does it actually take?
23 You know, how do you get a kid who is years
24 behind in reading to where they need to be when
25 they have a home environment that may not have

1 supportive parents or guardians when you have an
2 obligation to educate that child, not basically
3 who their parents are.

4 You know, how do we make certain that we
5 have the best business practices in place? How
6 do we make certain that we're getting the
7 greatest degree of efficiency? So we have
8 wrapped that in and -- trying to be the best
9 that we can be.

10 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

11 One last question, I'm not sure who wants
12 to take this one.

13 The mayor has said that education is one of
14 the two areas in the community where he has the
15 least amount of influence. I'm wondering, are
16 you aware of any specific examples of situations
17 or circumstances that have arisen where the
18 mayor has come to the school board and said,
19 "Hey, I need this" or, "We need to work on
20 that," and not received cooperation or been
21 turned away?

22 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Not to my
23 knowledge.

24 I mean, I think the main initiative we
25 think would be the Jacksonville Journey, and in

1 terms of that, you know, the find- -- you know,
2 the findings of that commission where we have to
3 have -- you can't have kids educated if they're
4 not in school. So with this real aggressive
5 truancy push --

6 To my knowledge, we have been very open and
7 accommodating in terms of his requests. I think
8 on the flipside, we'd like a little better City
9 support for our requests with wraparound
10 services for students.

11 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Korman.

13 MS. KORMAN: I have two questions. The
14 first one is: We've heard from public hearings
15 and from elected officials and everybody about
16 wanting to appoint school board members. So why
17 do you think people are asking us to explore
18 that issue is my first question.

19 And my second question is: It looks like
20 the strategic plan was implemented right after
21 you came in, Superintendent, in December of
22 2007, so it's been two years. So how do you
23 think -- I mean, where are we? I think it's a
24 five-year plan, if I'm correct, five-year.

25 Where -- I mean, how do you think we have

1 done? How do you think we're going to be doing
2 to finish out the rest of those two years, and
3 where are we -- what are the other improvements
4 we need to make?

5 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I think I'll address
6 the first half in terms of individuals that have
7 brought the issue of an appointed board up.

8 I'm not really knowledgeable of the elected
9 officials that have recommended it, so I can't
10 speak to who comes before you to do that.

11 I think that sometimes education is a low
12 hanging fruit. And because it's a low hanging
13 fruit, individuals think it's a thing --
14 everybody thinks they're an expert because they
15 went to school.

16 And so, to that end, you know, everybody
17 wants to kind of engage and dabble in it, and
18 it -- it sounds good, but what I think is unique
19 currently about Florida's establishment of
20 public education, which is very important -- and
21 one of the things it says is uniformity. That
22 is why we have 67 counties, 67 elected school
23 boards with individuals who want to focus
24 primarily on that issue.

25 Also, to my knowledge, when -- just kind of

1 on the ground running and talking with folk, I
2 have not heard a swell or an outcry from the
3 community in terms of wanting an appointed
4 board. In fact, everyone that I have talked
5 with has indicated their desire to be engaged in
6 that process, to have their right to continue to
7 elect their school board members because they
8 are in real time responsive to their needs.

9 I think that there's a common ground that
10 can be reached by some of the issues that
11 you-all have outlined in terms of dealing with
12 some of our challenges: graduation rates,
13 dropout rates, moving more students to
14 proficiency. I just don't think that any
15 research shows that the answer to those problems
16 are appointing the board. If there were
17 research that showed that this was the foolproof
18 plan to do it, then I think you would have
19 everybody supporting it.

20 To me, the gamble is not worth it. It's
21 not worth the gamble. If you're moving in a
22 steady trajectory towards getting more students
23 proficient, more students graduating, fewer
24 students dropping out, I don't think it is worth
25 the risk to disengage and disenfranchise the

1 various segments of our population by removing
2 them from a fundamental value like education.

3 So, again, I haven't heard elected
4 officials. I think some other people who are
5 somewhat theoretical think it may be something
6 worth exploring. And, again, you know,
7 everybody kind of fills in their education,
8 so . . .

9 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: As to the answer of how
10 we're doing on our strategic plan so far, we're
11 doing very well. However, when we set up the
12 plan, we set it up to be extremely challenging
13 in the areas of graduation rate and the areas of
14 achievement gap closure. We could have crafted
15 the plan with targets that we come out and hit
16 every single one of them and laud our
17 achievements, but we wouldn't be serving our
18 students and our parents well.

19 So we have very dramatic acceleration goals
20 that for the most part we're still hitting.
21 There's a couple we didn't, and so the way we
22 look at those is we're behind schedule on
23 those. In some other cases, we're ahead of
24 schedule, areas like fewer numbers of students
25 missing a significant number of days,

1 dramatically cutting the suspension rate this
2 year.

3 So there are some areas where we've already
4 hit our five-year target. Most of them we're on
5 track to hit our targets. In other words, we've
6 been hitting the first two years, and so we're
7 on track to get there. And there's a couple
8 where we are behind, so we're continuing to work
9 on those where we're behind. But I wasn't
10 surprised by that because I knew from the
11 beginning that we had set out for ourselves a
12 very challenging and rigorous path.

13 MS. KORMAN: And I'm glad to hear that
14 that -- I mean, I haven't read your strategic
15 plan, but I would hope that you guys have a
16 challenging [sic] because we have a challenging
17 school environment here that we all are aware
18 of.

19 And as far as the elected officials, the
20 mayor came down and spoke -- it was all over the
21 paper and everything -- about supporting an
22 appointed school board. And I'd love to hear
23 eventually from the people that you talked to
24 about supporting the school board because we
25 haven't heard that much from them.

1 We received through an e-mail, you know,
2 comments about wanting to appoint -- and I don't
3 know who they are. I mean, they're just people
4 that we receive stuff. So, I mean, if you want
5 to ask them to come down and talk to us, the
6 more information we hear about this the better
7 because we're relying on you and the other
8 public to tell us the information and the
9 facts.

10 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Yeah. And I think I
11 naturally assumed it was a given with the
12 mayor. You said elected officials, so I -- I
13 wasn't aware of any other officials that had
14 done it. But I think in January, you're going
15 to hear from the public overwhelmingly.

16 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: I think there is
17 still -- even though it's been noticed in the
18 paper some, there's still not awareness of --
19 there's possibilities that that may be a final
20 recommendation from the commission. So I think
21 if that moves forward in any way, I think you
22 will hear some significant input.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlett.

24 MR. CATLETT: First, I'd like to commend
25 you on the progress you have made. We haven't

1 talked about that yet. I mean, I think you're
2 all doing a wonderful job. It's great to see
3 the other members here today.

4 On a little different tilt, what things can
5 we request of the legislature to help you get
6 where you want to go? As an example, different
7 funding sources or lifting caps on things that
8 you have control over, are there any things that
9 we can recommend to the state legislature or to
10 the City Council or the mayor, for that matter,
11 that would help you hit targets in that
12 strategic plan?

13 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: First and foremost
14 this year is to keep the class size amendment at
15 the school level. There probably will be a
16 recommendation for an amendment that would be on
17 the ballot next fall, and so supporting that
18 effort is one of the major things that we need.
19 That would cost us between 20- and \$40 million,
20 depending on how they count that.

21 The class size amendment was first averaged
22 at the district level. It's currently averaged
23 at the school level. The next step that we're
24 supposed to institute next fall is at the
25 classroom level, and that's extremely difficult,

1 it's counterproductive, and very expensive
2 without much payoff. That's the first thing.

3 The second would be to establish a
4 reliable, stable source of revenue in light of
5 the changing economy of Florida. Florida's
6 government, the taxing structure was built on
7 three things that no longer exist. It was built
8 on agriculture, which has decreased
9 significantly; tourism, which is flat and will
10 probably at some point increase, but not to the
11 levels we saw a decade ago; and growth. And
12 this is the second year of negative growth in
13 the state of Florida, and particularly growth
14 has been the key ingredient that has pushed --
15 with more people coming, more houses being
16 built.

17 I can't remember if I showed you last time
18 that -- one of the people who does the
19 demographics for the state said that, for a
20 decade there, every three years, the state of
21 Florida was adding a city of a million people,
22 300,000-plus new residents each year during a
23 period of time. And you can imagine what kind
24 of services and products are needed for a city
25 of a million people, just envision houses and

1 everything that's necessary, grocery stores,
2 everything that would be necessary, and that was
3 the driver of the economic engine. That is no
4 longer there.

5 And so I think the legislature certainly
6 has a part of that. I don't think they are the
7 only body. The governor certainly has a part of
8 it. I think groups like parents, PTA, groups
9 like business and industry leaders, Florida
10 Chamber of Commerce -- I think we need a new
11 vision for where Florida is headed, what is
12 going to be our economic base; what kind of
13 educational system, both K-12 and higher ed, do
14 we need to support that; and how are we going to
15 fund it. Right now let's figure out a way to
16 put a finger in the dike to get through next
17 year.

18 There is really not an established vision
19 that can capture the imagination of Florida and
20 someone who's willing to spearhead that -- or
21 someones who are willing to spearhead that and
22 see that through. I think part of the issue in
23 terms of I don't want any more taxes has to do
24 with -- the people don't see a connection in
25 terms of what the payoff is. In fact, if you

1 look at some of the information coming out of
2 Tax Watch, they're talking more about a -- kind
3 of a value added approach, what do we get for
4 revenue, so that there is a willingness, if
5 there is a payoff, for a brighter future to
6 invest in that for most of the people in
7 Florida, not everybody certainly.

8 So I think that -- that story is going to
9 have to be made in order for there to be viewing
10 of other revenue sources in order to fund what's
11 necessary.

12 There has been a lot of legislation over
13 the last decade that has put huge burdens on
14 boards, superintendents, principals, and
15 eventually that trickles down to teachers. Some
16 of the states, for instance, do differentiated
17 accountability requirements for some of our
18 lower performing schools. Puts huge demands on
19 teachers in terms of paperwork, accountability.

20 You know, some of that is helpful in terms
21 of payoff for instruction, some of it isn't. So
22 Florida has a very, very heavy top-down approach
23 to education as opposed to most states where
24 more of those decisions are developed and
25 implemented at the local level by local school

1 boards.

2 Usually that begins with the legislator who
3 identifies a problem, comes up with a solution
4 and statute, and the DOE, Department of
5 Education, is in task to implement that and
6 monitor it, research it, and see whether or not
7 it's effective. So we have to provide all this
8 data, which, again, is not a bad thing in and of
9 itself for a single issue, but you take a
10 thousand of those and add them together, and we
11 spend a whole lot of time chasing some things
12 that really aren't value added in terms of
13 teaching and learning. And that's the bottom
14 line.

15 I mean, regardless of how you organize a
16 system and fund it and so forth, it's happening
17 in the classroom. How can we improve teaching
18 and learning every day in every classroom, and
19 do the things the State's doing and we're doing
20 lead to that?

21 There are a lot of things the State's doing
22 that does not provide value added, costs money,
23 costs larger strict staff, more bureaucracy just
24 to be able to do the requirements that come out
25 of the State.

1 Do you want to add to that, Brenda?

2 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: No. I just want to
3 say flexibility. We just need flexibility in
4 public education, particularly with funding, to
5 address the needs that we see locally.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Miller.

7 MS. MILLER: Through the Chair, thank you
8 both for coming. Thank you for -- all the
9 school board members for coming and our former
10 member, Martha Barrett, who was a member of this
11 commission before she was reelected. I'm very
12 happy to see you.

13 I appreciate every -- all of your work and
14 certainly the achievement that you've
15 mentioned.

16 I would like to make a few statements. As
17 you know -- as you may know, this commission has
18 been charged to do a complete, whole health
19 workup of all aspects of consolidated
20 government, and so the questions and the
21 inquiries we're asking are part of our charge
22 that came from the City Council and are also in
23 response to not just Mayor Peyton, former Mayor
24 Delaney, I believe the statements made by former
25 Mayor Austin, statements made by Senator Wise.

1 Many elected officials, several have stated
2 that there needs to be a transformational and
3 fundamental change in how we educate our
4 children and the outcomes we're getting. And so
5 when we look at -- and I appreciate the earlier
6 statistics, Superintendent, when we compared
7 ourselves to ourselves.

8 It's nice to compare ourselves to show
9 progress, where we are, but if we are competing
10 in a global economy and if our students are
11 supposed to compete in a global economy and if
12 we're going to attract businesses in a global
13 economy and compete with other counties and
14 cities in the state, nationally, and
15 internationally, one of the things that
16 businesses look at is the quality of our
17 education system. So when businesses relocate,
18 many of their employees go to surrounding
19 counties, unfortunately, and that affects our
20 per capita income.

21 So when you talked about per capita income,
22 much of that has to do with -- at least in the
23 last five years, if you look at Chamber of
24 Commerce statistics -- many high-income
25 individuals leaving the county primarily because

1 of the quality of education.

2 And so when we talk about quality of
3 education, how do we measure that? And I've got
4 the Florida Department of Education statistics
5 and a report in front of me, which I'm sure you
6 are very familiar with.

7 And I'd like to just get your response
8 to -- we need to think about ourselves in terms
9 of comparing ourselves to the state and to --
10 nationally, so -- the state average for dropouts
11 is 2.3 percent. Our average is 4.8 percent, and
12 it's either the highest or one of the highest in
13 the state compared to Orange 1.1, Baker 2.0,
14 St. Johns 1.1, Clay 1.2. Maybe the next highest
15 is Dade at 3.9, so almost a full percentage
16 point above on high school dropout rates.

17 In terms of high school completion rates
18 and graduation rates, we're 11 percent behind
19 the state average. The state average for all
20 graduation, including GED, is 78.6 percent.
21 Duval's is 69.6 percent. If you do not include
22 GED -- so GEDs are those that are obviously
23 achieved afterwards -- Duval is at 64.5 percent,
24 and the state is 76.3 percent. That's an
25 average. That's 11.8 percent less.

1 When you get to those numbers in Baker and
2 St. Johns, we're at 87.5, 90, 81 percent. There
3 is a radical difference between graduation rates
4 where we are versus where our surrounding
5 counties are. And so you can see why students,
6 parents, teachers, other people might go to
7 other counties. And my mother was a public
8 school teacher for 36 years, so I absolutely
9 appreciate everything that you said about the
10 importance of education.

11 But I'd like to ask you, in looking at
12 these numbers -- because this is data collected
13 by the state and it's available to everyone, and
14 I'll provide it to Mr. Clements to provide --

15 You know that Duval County is different
16 because we have a consolidated form of
17 government. So what would be the harm, if we're
18 already leading the state in high school
19 graduation -- in the -- we're some of the lowest
20 in the state in terms of high school graduation
21 and the highest in terms of dropout rate, and
22 those are just objective statistics, two
23 measures.

24 What would be the harm in a ten-year
25 experiment, ten years? Because as a

1 consolidated government, the citizens can decide
2 to allow for an appointed school board. If the
3 citizens decide ten years, ten years of an
4 appointed board, measure that outcome -- because
5 we do have that authority under the Florida
6 Constitution.

7 If the citizens decide we have a ten-year
8 opportunity to change it to an appointed board,
9 and then at the end of that ten years, if the
10 achievement is not significantly increased, then
11 we could go back to an elected board.

12 Please let me -- talk to me about what you
13 see the harm there is because while we can
14 compare ourselves to ourselves, we really need
15 to be comparing ourselves to something greater
16 than ourselves, the state and nationally. And I
17 think that that has been -- when you -- when
18 education is the number one reason why companies
19 do not come to Jacksonville, that's a big
20 problem because that affects jobs and that
21 affects our per capita income. And when that is
22 one of the biggest problems -- and that's one of
23 the biggest concerns of our mayors in responding
24 to the citizens' needs.

25 When you talk about independent

1 authorities, I must correct you. The JAA is
2 accountable to the FAA and the City. The JEA is
3 accountable to the City and the Public Service
4 Commission and state regulations regarding --
5 governing utilities. The JTA is accountable to
6 the DOT and the federal DOT as well as the City,
7 so it can be done. Where there are competing
8 regulatory schemes or different, it can be
9 done.

10 So I will just make those statements and
11 ask you to respond to these rates, how we're
12 compared to the state, and what would be the
13 harm in a ten-year try? Because it doesn't seem
14 to me that we're getting to where we need to
15 be.

16 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Yeah, I'll start.

17 What would be the harm? I think the first
18 and foremost is going to be disengagement from
19 the public. It's not so much where we are right
20 now, but where we've come from.

21 Duval County is unique in that it has
22 44 percent African-American students, 44 percent
23 white students, 6 percent Latino, and the other
24 6 percent are multiracial.

25 Why is that important? We all know that a

1 child's success and value of education is
2 largely the -- contingent upon what supports
3 they have in place outside the classroom:
4 parent, guardians, and others.

5 There is a vital importance to be in --
6 real time knowledgeable about how you address
7 those needs. And so when you compare us to
8 St. Johns County, which does not have the same
9 percentage of minority students or low-income
10 students, or Baker County, and -- and you use
11 the statistics from those areas, which also have
12 a higher per capita income, it's apples and
13 oranges. It's not apples to apples.

14 The harm for me would be parents turning
15 off because they don't feel someone is
16 responsive to their needs to understand what
17 their children need. We have been able as a
18 board/superintendent team to put the programs
19 where we thought they were needed because we
20 knew what they were.

21 So, for example, if you had the most
22 challenged high school in the form of a Ribault
23 High School, the board/superintendent team made
24 an aggressive move about three or four years ago
25 to put rigorous programs in the school to

1 attract neighborhood kids, whether it was a
2 (inaudible) program or an early college/high
3 school program, because we realized that we had
4 some schools that were excelling, which -- you
5 know, and some schools that were falling far
6 behind.

7 How do we know we needed to do that?
8 That's because we were in real time, on the
9 ground, listening to challenges that parents
10 told us that they were facing in school.

11 So there is an uptick in that that's going
12 on, and it's moving steadily in the right
13 direction. We, as real time, basically say that
14 all kids must be educated no matter where they
15 are from, you know, whatever your background.
16 So we have aggressively decided we would pursue
17 the truancy rate because we know that a kid is
18 not going to be able to read if a kid is not in
19 school.

20 How do we know that? Because we see them
21 in the neighborhood, we see them in the
22 streets. Parents can kind of come and share
23 that with us. I mean, that's, to me, a little
24 bit different from a mayoral-appointed board in
25 terms of dealing with everything from whether my

1 lights are running, my garbage is picked up.
2 Our unique focus is purely education.

3 I am the only board member that still has
4 students in the Duval County Public School
5 System, and I decide in a lot of my judgments
6 what I think is best for my children, who are
7 extremely academically successful, and I put the
8 same measures for my community and
9 stakeholders. That is because, I think, in real
10 time, I see what works and what we want to do.

11 There, in my estimation, Duval County,
12 Jacksonville does not have a great history of
13 inclusiveness nor addressing all the needs of
14 its citizens when folk have been removed from
15 the electoral process.

16 And what do I mean by that? We now have a
17 very diverse board that comes in real time and
18 talks about what does it look like, what are the
19 challenges faced by various communities, and
20 moving the right way.

21 More importantly, there is a public trust
22 in this board that if you tell me, "In school A,
23 there's this problem," I hear you. And you've
24 got to, I think, have a heart for that work,
25 unlike the heart for any other work.

1 In the state of Florida, the superintendent
2 had mentioned earlier, when we compare ourselves
3 to large -- seven urban districts -- and that
4 has to be our comparison. I mean, that -- it is
5 not really accurate or fair to compare us to a
6 St. Johns or a Clay because it's a totally
7 different demographic.

8 We have the largest minority population in
9 African-Americans, we do, Jacksonville, not
10 Miami, not anyplace else, but we also have
11 minority access representation on our current
12 school board, which means we live amongst the
13 folk, we hear the folk.

14 I think we all understand the actual cost
15 to our city in terms of being able to attract
16 businesses, but I would dare contend that there
17 are some folk who just don't believe in the
18 viability of public education. And then you
19 have to ask yourselves, quite honestly, do you
20 trust yourselves, did you trust your own
21 children with it, or were you educated in it?

22 My perspective is one of someone who has
23 been engaged in public education all of my
24 life. My family has been engaged in it. But
25 also, what is, real time, the needs of the urban

1 community? And that's what I think we're trying
2 to focus on.

3 You were also mentioning a moment ago --
4 you talked about GED rates and you talked about
5 some other things. If you have a large urban
6 district, which we do, with 123,000 students, we
7 understand that there are multiple pathways to
8 academic success. Every kid cannot be in real
9 time in a seat for six and a half to seven hours
10 a day to get their work. We've got to meet them
11 where they are. And so when we put in our GED
12 statistics, contrary to popular belief, that is
13 not for kids who are out of the system.

14 We also had a GED -- a performance based
15 upon -- which allowed a young person, who might
16 be a teenage mother, who might be somebody who
17 was a high school -- who wanted to be a high
18 school dropout because they got into some
19 trouble to -- in lieu of having to meet certain
20 credits, you take the GED and you take the FCAT
21 as well, and you get a performance-based
22 diploma, which means you can now move on and
23 become a fully viable citizen in society.

24 Those are the things, I think, that we, in
25 real time, understand, and we know that there's

1 a trajectory and a pathway to go down that --
2 the way of doing it.

3 My fear is parents will turn off. I'm
4 going to be very candid. If they cannot, in
5 real time, call and say this is the bus stop
6 issue or this is what my kid experienced in the
7 classroom, I -- I think folk trust -- I trust
8 people with the system that believes in the
9 system themselves and invest their own resources
10 in it. That, to me, is the greatest indicator
11 and measure of do you really feel something
12 works.

13 And I think -- I acknowledge the
14 statistics, I acknowledge where we are, but I'd
15 ask for you to just take a ten-year historical
16 look on where we've been and what progress has
17 this board made. I know at one high school
18 there has been a 10 percentage point increase in
19 students proficient in one of our most
20 challenged schools in the last four years.

21 Is it where we want to be? Absolutely not,
22 but it's not where it was at one time.

23 So, for me, there is irreparable harm in
24 disengaging the public from the education system
25 in terms of real time -- establishing their

1 fundamental values about it and not being able
2 to support the work that we do. And that
3 becomes my real concern, that we try it when
4 there is no research to say that it does work,
5 and it's just a big gamble.

6 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Well, I think part of
7 the issue too is just being aware of how far we
8 have gone, the statistics I gave you earlier
9 about the number of A and B schools. I'm not
10 sure that all our public officials, who are out
11 trying to encourage businesses to come here,
12 know that information. We certainly do our best
13 to try and communicate that information so that
14 it's out there.

15 Most of our challenge has to do with our
16 high-poverty neighborhoods. That's the schools
17 that are the most challenged. That's where
18 we're having the most difficulty, like
19 everywhere else in the country.

20 So I would ask the question, how are we
21 doing as a city in attracting jobs to the
22 northwest quadrant? I would say that the public
23 school system certainly owns a good deal of
24 responsibility in terms of the progress of
25 students, but we don't own it alone.

1 Mayor Peyton often says that we're one great
2 school district away from being a great city,
3 and I think he's right. And we're also one
4 great city away from being a great school
5 district.

6 And so I think there has to be a
7 willingness on the part of all the agencies --
8 government, nonprofit, school district,
9 et cetera -- to work together on some of those
10 common problems, and I think we have a beginning
11 of that.

12 I could go through and look at some
13 statistics in terms of some of the
14 responsibilities of each of the agencies in
15 Jacksonville, and the picture would not
16 necessarily be very pretty. I think we all have
17 a long way to go, so I don't think it's just the
18 school system. So --

19 And the other issue brought up was the
20 constitutionality of it. I think that there is
21 at least as much or more support that that
22 cannot be done constitutionally as there is
23 otherwise. If you look at the constitution
24 again, the school board is the only one in a
25 totally separate section of the constitution in

1 terms of their establishment.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Superintendent, when you say
3 we're one great city away from a great school
4 district, what is it exactly that you think the
5 City should do differently or concede or
6 compromise -- I mean, I'm putting words in your
7 mouth. I don't know that that's exactly what
8 you meant. But what is it that you think the
9 City should do differently?

10 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Well -- and somebody
11 had asked earlier -- and I don't think we asked
12 that particular question, but what can the mayor
13 do? Because I think the mayor certainly has a
14 role, and I'm not talking about just
15 Mayor Peyton or previously Mayor Delaney or
16 whoever our next mayor will be. I'm talking
17 about the office of the mayor.

18 The whole community support structure is
19 something that the mayor can champion. First of
20 all, the mayor can be a champion of the school
21 district in terms of championing our success,
22 not apologizing for where we need to go, not
23 saying where we need to go, but someone who
24 says, "We have a rapidly improving school
25 system. They get it. They're heading in the

1 right direction." That's very important for a
2 community to hear that.

3 So, first of all, it's the bully pulpit.
4 Second is economic development, particularly in
5 our most challenged areas. One of the
6 difficulties our families face is not having
7 jobs. And so economic development, particularly
8 targeted in lower income neighborhoods, is
9 critical.

10 Quality housing, social programs, parks,
11 those are just some of the things that were in
12 the Journey, although certainly not as much as
13 we needed to, even in the original, much less
14 what ended up being funded, that connection with
15 the public libraries.

16 So all those support systems that make a
17 community viable -- just having restaurants. Go
18 try and find a first-class restaurant if you're
19 north of 20th Street until you get to Dunn
20 Avenue. Just some basic City services, cleaning
21 up areas, making them visibly better. And I'm
22 not saying that things haven't been done in this
23 area. I think there has been some concern in
24 this area. There has been some progress, but
25 not to the extent that there needs to be to

1 provide those wraparound services and supports
2 for families so that becomes less of an issue
3 that teachers have to deal with.

4 A good bit of some of our teachers' day in
5 some of our low income neighborhoods, there's
6 dealing with the emotional fallout of what
7 happens at home and in the neighborhood. And so
8 helping provide that support system for us is
9 critical and certainly a major area where the
10 mayor and others could support us and help us.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: And what is the school board
12 prepared to give the mayor in exchange for that
13 commitment?

14 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Well, I think, first of
15 all, a focused effort on improving the schools
16 in those same neighborhoods, having
17 accountability for improving those more rapidly
18 than we do other schools, focus our resources
19 there, make sure our best teachers and
20 principals are there. Some of the things we
21 have either done or are doing now to show that
22 those are improving.

23 This is not an excuse-filled list. It's a
24 no-excuses process from our standpoint in terms
25 of how we hold ourselves accountable, but the

1 reality is those other factors are factors.

2 And so I think that's why it has to be a
3 partnership, and really it's beyond the mayor.
4 It really has to be the community as a whole
5 wanting to pull together because otherwise the
6 mayor doesn't have the political support in
7 order to move forward, council support, things
8 like that in terms of funding and other issues
9 that are very important for the community as a
10 whole.

11 I think, in part, it's Jacksonville kind of
12 figuring out what kind of a Jacksonville do we
13 want. Do we want a Jacksonville that has
14 opportunities for everybody, and what do we need
15 to do to work together to that end? And
16 certainly we have a major role in terms of that
17 K-12 educational part.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: And as part of the focus on
19 those schools that you talked about in those
20 neighborhoods, those at-risk schools, those
21 underserved schools, are you willing to explore
22 taking them out of the normal system and putting
23 them under a different model, perhaps on an
24 experimental basis as Commissioner Miller --
25 maybe a community school type model that I know

1 Commissioner Flowers has talked about in the
2 past, just try something different that brings
3 more resources to those schools?

4 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Well, I think before I
5 move forward in terms of some of the charter
6 efforts -- the board voted 7-0 to support KIPP
7 schools coming to Jacksonville. There's a huge
8 issue nationally in terms of capacity. In the
9 same way that I think appointed boards are a
10 silver bullet, I think at this point charter-run
11 or educational management, organization-run
12 schools are also a silver bullet.

13 Are there some of them that are functioning
14 well? Absolutely. I think KIPP schools is one
15 example of them, but they're not prepared to go
16 beyond the five schools that they have made a
17 commitment to over the next five years.

18 We have 30 turnaround schools. We have
19 160 schools. So those focused 30 schools are
20 where we need to make the most progress, and we
21 are. The biggest challenge we have is at the
22 high school level, in part because of the way
23 the State is grading high schools compared to
24 elementary and middle schools.

25 There is not a group nationally who has

1 been able to do a turnaround work, come in with
2 a significant number of high schools and make
3 progress with the same students. If they do,
4 it's because they start all over. You have to
5 apply -- just because of the process of
6 application and the other requirements, it tends
7 to sift out. You attract the parents who are
8 more responsible, more engaged, et cetera,
9 versus those that aren't.

10 And so I think, first of all, I'd want to
11 find out who has a track record that's doing it
12 better and can do it at scale. And I would
13 argue at this point, there's not anybody.
14 Again, it's not that there haven't been some
15 successes, but those successes have been at
16 least equally paired with failures. And if you
17 look at the research compared to how districts
18 have done this -- and this is emerging work for
19 school districts.

20 So it's not that we've arrived, but we're
21 one of the leading districts with a group in
22 Boston, called Mass Insight, that is looking
23 at -- nationwide, what are those factors, be
24 they in -- school district run or charter run or
25 educational management organization, what are

1 the effective practices that are working, and
2 how can we adopt those in our turnaround work?

3 So I guess the answer would be no if you're
4 talking about some wholesale solution because,
5 quite frankly, I don't see it as a solution.
6 And I'm always one to say whoever can do it
7 better for less, I'm fine. I mean, that's why
8 we're contracting out our transportation, our
9 custodial, our food service.

10 So it's not as if we have a kingdom we have
11 to maintain, but I'm also not willing to hand
12 over the responsibility to our students,
13 particularly in schools where we are improving,
14 and we are making dramatic improvement.

15 At elementary and middle school, we've made
16 dramatic improvement in those schools that were
17 previously low performing. We still have
18 challenges at the high school, but, again,
19 there's not anybody doing it better.

20 I'm not saying we've arrived. We need to
21 do better, but there's not somebody else who is
22 doing it better than us at this point, who is
23 prepared to come in and say, "We'll take over
24 these four or five high schools and guarantee
25 dramatic, positive results."

1 THE CHAIRMAN: And I'm not suggesting some
2 outside organization. I'm suggesting the school
3 board do it, in consultation with the mayor,
4 perhaps under a hybrid oversight board or model
5 or some tweaking of the current power structure
6 that would have the school board being able to
7 take these schools, north and west of the river,
8 put them under a different model.

9 And let me give you one example of the kind
10 of thing I'm trying to get at. Secretary Horne,
11 when he addressed us -- and I believe you
12 were -- both of you, I think, attended his
13 presentation -- talked about the fact that in
14 his CPA business, he doesn't put his newest,
15 most junior, most inexperienced CPAs on his most
16 complicated clients. But under the -- as he
17 described it -- typical union work rules, as
18 teachers gain seniority, they transfer out of
19 those schools because they want to go to a,
20 quote, better school. And so you have the kids
21 who most need master teachers not well served.

22 So what I'm talking about is: Can you
23 create a structure, in consultation and
24 cooperation with the mayor, a power-sharing
25 arrangement, where you take these schools

1 outside of the normal work rules and give them
2 more resources to the kids who need them?
3 That's the kind of thing I'm trying to get at.

4 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Yeah. I think part of
5 it too is -- is kind of old news. We no longer
6 put first-year teachers in the lowest performing
7 schools. The only ones that are are ones who
8 have come out of like a Teacher America Program
9 where they have a very strong support system.
10 It has to be two or three very highly qualified
11 niche programs to go into one of our highest
12 needs schools at this point.

13 Some of that has been driven by the State
14 in terms of their requirements, but we had
15 already come to that position. Many of you know
16 that even a decade ago, we were working
17 collaboratively with the union to attract and
18 retain teachers to our lowest performing
19 schools.

20 There is a real cultural issue. In terms
21 of "wanting to work closer to where I live,"
22 fewer people who are teachers live downtown, and
23 also just some stuff about, well, why would you
24 want to -- your neighbor says, "Why would you
25 want to work there?" So, again, there has to

1 be, I think, a shift in terms of our public
2 perception of those teachers and principals who
3 are taking on the toughest challenges are
4 revered.

5 If you go to Singapore, one of the highest
6 performing educational systems in the world,
7 that's what they do. The people -- the public
8 revere teachers who take on the toughest
9 challenges. I would argue that's not the case
10 in our community or probably anywhere in
11 America.

12 But we have put in place and have plans to
13 do significantly more in terms of attracting and
14 retaining our best teachers, rewarding them for
15 that, not just in terms of money but
16 professional development and advanced degrees
17 for free. And that's that work I mentioned that
18 we're working collaboratively with Mass Insight
19 and a couple of other districts nationally to
20 put in place.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Miller, do you
22 have follow-ups for your original questions?

23 MS. MILLER: I would just like to clarify
24 an earlier statement for the record.

25 In terms of my earlier statements, I want

1 to make sure that the record is clear that I am
2 in absolute 100 percent support, pardon me, of a
3 public school district with -- that is
4 absolutely responsive to every aspect of the
5 community.

6 I would use JEA and JTA as good examples of
7 independent authorities that are responsive to
8 every aspect of the community and have the
9 ability to direct capital funds to the areas
10 with the greatest need, water/sewer expansion
11 authority absolutely turning around and
12 investing in infrastructure and devoting
13 resources to a specific area when there is a
14 need to be agile and responsive.

15 And many of the statements that the
16 superintendent made regarding the City and the
17 county can be achieved and overcome through this
18 type of consolidation, whether it's through a
19 consolidation in terms of governance structure,
20 as you have suggested, but -- but I think that
21 is what we're hearing more and more, that it may
22 not be a silver bullet for all schools, you
23 know, keep doing what we're doing and doing it
24 well, but for what we're not doing well, how do
25 we address that and change the governance

1 structure for a period of time?

2 It may not work. But if we're already
3 leading the state -- or the lowest in the state
4 in some of the -- we can't go any farther. The
5 only way we can go in those areas is up,
6 hopefully. Hopefully. Let's not say that.

7 So I would just say that I'm absolutely in
8 favor of a responsive public school district, be
9 it appointed or elected, but there was just some
10 notion there that it was something other than
11 public. It has to be public and open to
12 everyone.

13 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Mr. Duggan, can I
14 follow up on one thing you said? And maybe I
15 need to be clear.

16 You're talking more of a governance
17 structure that we'll share, but certainly a
18 collaborative effort with some of the
19 understanding being changed to work rules with
20 collaboration with -- with the union as a part
21 of that.

22 I think there is some willingness. In
23 fact, we have already done that in many areas
24 with those schools. And we have farther to go
25 still, but certainly a partnership that would

1 include the City, City services, and others in
2 target areas to wraparound and do our part in
3 that and look at what needs to change in terms
4 of either board policy or union rules to execute
5 that. Absolutely I think there's a willingness
6 to do that, and I think we can move forward with
7 that.

8 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I want to add
9 something. I think we -- oftentimes we've
10 been -- in talking about if we're going to share
11 some power structure and deal with some of our
12 most challenged areas and -- then we mention the
13 term "the northwest quadrant," you know, which,
14 in my estimation -- I represent that particular
15 area. I grew up in that area. Board Member
16 Burney is the other minority access board
17 member.

18 Jacksonville does not have a history of
19 engaging all segments of its population.
20 Jacksonville does not have a history of
21 supporting the education of all of its
22 citizens. It does not. What we finally have
23 now in Jacksonville is, I believe, a trust and a
24 commitment from all portions of the community
25 that together we can work and accomplish

1 something.

2 Do I think that my constituents would trust
3 anyone appointed to guide their education based
4 on the history of Jacksonville from the present
5 to today? Absolutely, positively not. Would I
6 encourage them to trust that to anyone else?
7 No.

8 There is something real time about living
9 amongst folk, going to school with people and
10 seeing in real time value what the needs are in
11 an educational environment. And I genuinely
12 believe that if you move the people from the
13 process -- and the people are removed if they
14 don't have a voice and a vote to say who
15 represents them and decides what's going to
16 happen to their education -- they disengage, and
17 that has happened.

18 I mean, that is Jacksonville's history. It
19 is not a history I created. It is a history
20 that if you look back over -- whether it was
21 case laws when cases came down -- Brown I came
22 down in '54, Brown II in '56 -- we desegregated
23 in Duval County in '71. How do I know? Because
24 I started first grade.

25 You go back to the -- you have the district

1 declared unitary. You can go back to court in
2 the '90s -- the early '90s, and then you declare
3 it unitary in '99, and so there is a public
4 trust issue with certain segments of the
5 community. If they are not involved in that
6 process, you will do the right thing. And there
7 is just not the history to say absent those
8 marginalized voices being brought into the
9 process, is this actually going to work?

10 It is nice to say to me what you will do
11 for other people and what's good for them, but,
12 again, I ask -- the standard is always, would
13 you trust your own children with it, or were you
14 educated in it? And, if so, do you bring that
15 working knowledge on how to make it better?

16 I cannot look my community in the eye and
17 say, "Disengage from your schools. Turn them
18 over to people who may have not worked with
19 them. Turn them over to people who use a
20 private school model on public education,"
21 fundamentally different.

22 Public education is charged to educate
23 every child regardless of their background.
24 Private schools is a far more selective process
25 oftentimes contingent upon parental engagement

1 and involvement.

2 A lot of the people who purport to be
3 experts to offer opinions on public schools and
4 public education and the governance structure
5 don't have the public school background but have
6 the private, don't understand in real time that
7 you have to have willing spirits and hearts that
8 want to do this work and, more importantly,
9 people and parents and guardians engaged in this
10 work.

11 You know, we -- our goal is not to run kids
12 out. And it's funny -- someone mentioned
13 earlier our statistics. The reason we have
14 statistics is because we're very open and honest
15 about what we report. We don't brush it under
16 the rug. We are a data-driven board in terms of
17 where are the problems, where are the
18 challenges, where are the schools that need the
19 help, let us put our resources there. And that
20 is something, I think, that's come about in the
21 last seven or eight years.

22 It's when the public -- we don't tell the
23 public, "No, that's not going on. No, School A
24 is equal to School B." We say, "How do you
25 think that we can get this school to where it

1 needs to be?" And so the public gives a command
2 and a charge. I know from the community I
3 represent, it was.

4 We need to have rigorous, high-quality
5 programing in neighborhood schools because our
6 kids are leaving the neighborhood schools and
7 going to select dedicated magnets, so that's the
8 agenda that we worked on.

9 Some of the communities was, "We are
10 overcrowded." You know, "We need to build a new
11 school here," so that is what we have done. We
12 didn't -- we don't go back to the old fights,
13 and that's because we have the real time
14 knowledge of it. And I think the community
15 finally sees for the first time we know the
16 problems, we know the issues, but there's a --
17 we're going to work on them.

18 I can't sit here and say, no -- and I
19 believe that if you come into a community, you
20 objectify a community, you carve out a
21 community, that that community is going to fully
22 participate in the democratic process and
23 thereby support the education of its children,
24 not when you don't understand in real time. So
25 what do you do for the kid who has no Internet

1 access at home but has a research project?

2 What do you do? I mean, real time issue,
3 what do you do? And it's something that all of
4 us take for granted and probably have wireless
5 houses. What do you do? What do you do for the
6 parent that got ran out of school, when they
7 were in school, that only goes back now because
8 their kid is being suspended or something else?

9 How do you say, "No, you will learn. We
10 will make certain we support you"? It's a
11 fundamentally different model that means we're
12 open to all young people, and we have to meet
13 them where they are to take them where we think
14 they need to go.

15 The private school model, which I think
16 sometimes is what we use as our paradigm of
17 experience, our -- what we think works, parental
18 engagement, parental involvement, selection, and
19 choice. We choose all young people for K
20 through 12 in our system. They have a right to
21 it. It's not a privilege; it's a right to it,
22 and that's the kind of perspective that we have
23 to bring in.

24 Our history, again, in Jacksonville, in
25 terms of certain segments, has not nearly been

1 as inclusive or transparent for all those
2 communities, and I think we now have one of the
3 more transparent processes in place.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Madam Chair, I completely
5 subscribe to your characterization of the
6 marginalization of certain elements of our
7 community over the last 60 years at least. And,
8 in fact, when you cited earlier as one of the
9 challenges of the community, 22 percent -- was
10 it college or high school?

11 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: College --

12 THE CHAIRMAN: College.

13 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: -- graduates in
14 Jacksonville on the whole 22 percent.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: That, in itself, I think, is
16 an indictment of the educational system for the
17 last 60 years. I don't think we've gotten
18 education right in this county, probably
19 starting with the fire, but certainly not for
20 the last 60 years.

21 What I'm proposing is trying to bring extra
22 resources to exactly that segment of the
23 community that was marginalized, trying to find
24 a way that both sides can work together, both
25 power structures in this consolidated

1 government. What I hear you saying is we don't
2 want your help.

3 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: No, that's not what
4 I'm saying. When you said a separate management
5 governing structure or a combined -- or a
6 bifurcated management, I don't support that.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: What if one of the
8 members --

9 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Now, as far as
10 wraparound services --

11 THE CHAIRMAN: What if one of the members
12 was you, as the elected school board, for that
13 area of town?

14 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Well, I already
15 represent that area of town, so -- or whoever
16 sits in this seat represents them.

17 What I am concerned about is that people
18 are removed from the process in real time to say
19 what the real-time needs are.

20 So, for example, we have turnaround schools
21 in the very areas you're talking about. I would
22 just like once to fully implement a plan we have
23 in place without the State or some other outside
24 entity saying, "Change it," after we're two
25 years into it. I'm being very -- that -- the

1 State comes in and says -- this not a local
2 thing -- reconstitute the school, changes --
3 more kids are proficient now, not less.

4 Give us a chance to execute a plan -- and I
5 think we're moving down that road -- the
6 services that we can wrap around from the City
7 to support those efforts.

8 I will share with you -- teachers, we have
9 done everything we can probably. We could use
10 more financial support to be able to actually
11 leverage it in terms of truly being a financial
12 benefit to work at some of our challenged
13 schools, not because any teacher is in it for
14 the money, but in some of our turnaround
15 schools, you work 10- and 12-hour days. In some
16 of our neighborhood schools, you work six and
17 seven. You make only 3,000 more for the
18 turnaround school.

19 If you look at some other areas, it would
20 be worth exploring, how could you have something
21 meaningful in terms of compensation for some
22 teachers to take on those challenges? And then
23 you have to be mindful that a teacher in
24 school A in the suburbs, that the students are
25 flowering, sometimes get culture shock when they

1 go in turnaround school B.

2 So I want first a person with a heart,
3 which is why I like Teach for America. Do you
4 have the heart to deal with the realities and
5 the challenges that you face?

6 So I think working that way, we can do it,
7 but I don't support any reduced level of control
8 of the schools by the public in terms -- in
9 certain segments of our community. I don't
10 support that. They have to be in a real time --
11 and have to be able to say, when I fail to do my
12 job or whoever comes after me, we're going to
13 get you out, you're gone. That, to me, is their
14 voice to say what they need in real time. And
15 that's, to me, very important that we hold on to
16 that.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlett.

18 MR. CATLETT: Recently we had
19 Sheriff Rutherford here, and one of the things
20 that we were asking him about was -- you know,
21 to speak to some people that may have had dual
22 experience being sheriff and being appointed
23 police chief. And we've kind of been
24 overlooking the fact that we've got a member of
25 this school board that's been mayor and has been

1 in the state legislature. So, if possible, I'd
2 like to ask Mr. Hazouri, if he would, to say a
3 few words about the prospective of whether the
4 mayor should have control of the school board.

5 (Mr. Hazouri approaches the podium.)

6 MR. HAZOURI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
7 members of the Commission.

8 I wasn't planning on speaking today. I
9 have spoken here. I -- maybe some of y'all may
10 have forgotten. So it's not just Mayor Delaney
11 or Mayor Peyton or Mayor Austin who sits on this
12 august body.

13 Sometimes I feel like -- and don't take
14 this as a criticism, per se, but I feel like
15 we're talking to the Harper Valley PTA here.
16 And the reason I'm saying that -- and I say that
17 in all seriousness because the last time the
18 superintendent and I, when I was chairman,
19 spoke, there weren't that many questions, which
20 I didn't understand, but y'all have asked and
21 raised some great questions today.

22 And I -- I don't think any of the board
23 members here could have been so -- as eloquent
24 as -- I mean, all of us agree with what
25 Ms. Brenda Priestly-Jackson has said and what

1 our superintendent said. That's the kind of a
2 relationship that you want to build on your
3 school board.

4 That's what we have here today. This is
5 not yesterday's school board. We're all Broad
6 trained, and W. C. Gentry will soon be, and that
7 is significant because it's about reform
8 governance. We have an ideal superintendent
9 that works hand in hand with us. We don't go
10 him who the next principal should be. We don't
11 go tell him to put a water fountain at this
12 particular school. We're policymakers. And
13 like Brenda said, we throw away those things
14 that are not part of our agenda.

15 And every item that comes to our school
16 board meeting each month -- we meet more than
17 once. We meet throughout the month in
18 workshops, and I think many of you know that.
19 But when we meet that first Tuesday of every
20 month, every board agenda item at the bottom,
21 how does this relate to our strategic plan?

22 The City doesn't have a strategic plan.
23 Sometimes I wonder if we, as a City, have a
24 vision. And that is a strategic plan.

25 We have one. That's what people have been

1 advocating. Do you have one at FCCJ or Florida
2 State College or Community College? Do you have
3 a strategic plan that says, this is where we
4 want to go?

5 Preston Haskell chaired it. I heard
6 that -- Mayor Delaney say about coming back and
7 having some of these people come forth, but he
8 helped chair that, working with our staff and
9 our COO and the school board, in creating that
10 strategic plan, a 6.4-year plan that we continue
11 to review and amplify and, as the superintendent
12 said, to do away with some of those things that
13 look to shortcoming on our part.

14 I think if you've looked at what's happened
15 in this school board -- and I come in here --
16 and I think Mr. Gentry, if he were here today,
17 would tell you the same thing. When you get on
18 this board, you wear a different hat and you see
19 a different operation than you used to read
20 about.

21 As a legislator who chaired the Education
22 Committee, as a mayor -- you know, I don't
23 discard anything that the former mayors have
24 said to y'all, but they're no more of an expert
25 than I am.

1 Mayor Delaney's present view -- and I
2 respect all of them. Mayor Austin doesn't have
3 the education background. Yeah, he graduated
4 from college. And I'm saying that Mayor Peyton
5 and all of us -- I could go get a litany of
6 people coming, but just like our school board
7 meetings, Ms. Korman, when they come, you see a
8 small minority.

9 Let me assure all of you, a recent poll was
10 just done this week -- and y'all will hear about
11 it -- 84 percent of the people in this community
12 want an elected school board, 82 percent want an
13 elected chair. You'll hear about this, but this
14 was part of a mayoral poll that was done. But
15 you'll hear this.

16 So if you want people to come, they will
17 come, but that's not what we're about. This
18 whole operation and what we're doing here today,
19 I think, is very healthy, but it's taking us off
20 of our focus of doing what we do best, trying to
21 graduate our kids.

22 As a former member of the legislature who
23 chaired the committee and then going into the
24 mayor's office, I will tell you what a mayor can
25 do. The Jacksonville Journey is one -- one

1 thing. What we did, we had a teenage pregnancy
2 program that we did at old Darnell-Cookman High
3 School. We did a -- our infrastructure needed
4 it. Brentwood Elementary, where the
5 commissioner -- or Secretary of Education, Bill
6 Bennett, praised what we had done to make it
7 safe from drug users in that community.

8 We did a number of other things. We had a
9 commission on education that addressed the drug
10 problems and individual problems. We brought
11 swimming pools here from the legis- -- now,
12 these are all things -- and we do have a
13 community center. We have what they call the
14 full-service schools. And that's the thing -- I
15 think if we want to do something, have a clinic,
16 have a school, have a library, have a community
17 center, have them all together saving money,
18 doing some things that make a difference in
19 helping our kids.

20 I'd like to go back to having parks, where
21 they're supervised and the kids can go back out
22 there. But it's really about one thing, no
23 matter who the mayor is, it's not about who they
24 appoint. Heck, if I had to depend on an
25 appointed board, we'd still have tolls in

1 Jacksonville.

2 That's not what this is about. It's about
3 leadership and priorities. If a mayor wants to
4 make things happen -- it used to be the mayor,
5 the sheriff, the State Attorney walking hand in
6 hand. Today, really it's a four-legged table
7 with a superintendent who represents us on a
8 continual basis, should be sitting with the
9 mayor, the superintendent -- I mean, the mayor,
10 the State Attorney, and the sheriff to work
11 together, walking hand in hand, not leaving a
12 single person in this community behind and
13 making things happen for the children of this
14 community.

15 If it's a safety issue, if it's an
16 infrastructure issue, a learn-to-read program --
17 we instituted in City Hall -- we found that a
18 lot of people couldn't read, and that's why they
19 wouldn't take tests to get promoted. We
20 instituted an in-house learn-to-read program
21 that, unfortunately, looks like it may or may
22 not be going away here in Jacksonville.

23 So a mayor, like any leader, whether you're
24 the governor, the president, the mayor,
25 whomever, president of the City Council, it's

1 about leadership and priorities. Where are your
2 priorities? Do you want to do this? Work with
3 us.

4 You asked about the JEA the other day. I
5 would never compare the JEA -- no offense to
6 you -- the JEA or any board to the way that we
7 should be operating our school board. We don't
8 give those bonuses out.

9 Yes, you can easily say that you can raise
10 the rates if you want to, you know, use some of
11 that City money. I mentioned here before, we
12 knew that that would be an answer. Yeah, they
13 would have to raise the rates to make things
14 happen.

15 Y'all were talking, I believe, about a
16 charter district for low-performing schools, but
17 there is two -- and you want to know what you
18 can do, Mr. Catlett? \$2-and-a-half million that
19 they get each year, split it up and let that
20 build and reinvest it and get our share of that
21 48 percent of property taxes -- I think Tom
22 Thomas is here today, Thomas -- but to get our
23 share of property taxes to their rightful
24 place. We collect 48. They collect about 51.
25 We don't get a dime from that.

1 Yes, we get a little break in our electric
2 rates, but we're paying a lot more money than we
3 ever have, much like many of you.

4 There are things that you can do, working
5 hand in hand, in the consensus basis to make
6 things happen if you provide that leadership.
7 If you don't make it a priority, you won't get
8 it done.

9 Yes, education is the first issue,
10 Ms. Miller, that people look at when they want
11 to come to a community. They're going to look
12 at crime, they're going to look at education,
13 but don't blame the school system here for why
14 we don't get business here.

15 You get business by hustling, by promoting,
16 by taking your chamber leaders, taking other
17 people up there and bringing it down and letting
18 them know, and talking about the positive of
19 what is going on in the public and private
20 sector, whether it's on a university or college
21 level or in a K-12 level.

22 So, you know, I can go get Mayor Godbold.
23 I can go get others. I can have them standing
24 up here. I believe in all my heart that you
25 will have a chasm. This city has continued to

1 be divided. It hasn't changed very much in
2 recent years, but you have a chasm between north
3 and south here in Jacksonville.

4 If you choose to make a recommendation --
5 and I don't dis- -- fault a conversation on
6 this. I think that's healthy. But if you
7 choose to make that recommendation, which I
8 don't think would ever pass because I do believe
9 it's a state issue, but if you choose to do that
10 and take that course, you're going to see this
11 community become more and more divided.

12 I have never seen an authority member --
13 maybe some of you have -- other than the
14 executive director or president or whatever they
15 want to call themselves, the regular members go
16 to speak to XYZ civic club representing the JTA,
17 the JEA, the JPA, or whatever. It's usually the
18 executive director.

19 I don't believe that they would pick up
20 that phone and say, "Yes, I understand about
21 your child doing this. Well, I'll be at your
22 PTA meeting and I'll listen to you." I don't
23 think you'll see that happen. I'm not saying
24 that they're above or beneath that. I just
25 don't think that's what an appointed board

1 member would do. They would point to the
2 superintendent and send you of [sic] staff.

3 That's not what they do when they see us in
4 the Publix or in the elevators. As Brenda said,
5 what they do is they elect you. They know
6 you're an elected official and they know that
7 you can help do something for them.
8 Unfortunately, when they call us, the
9 bureaucracy has failed along the way.

10 One prime example, I remember when I was in
11 the legislature, I got a call from somebody on
12 the Westside, when we were multimember
13 districts, calling me from a telephone booth
14 when we had them -- I guess we still have one on
15 Cassat I read the other day -- a telephone
16 booth, had one quarter in their pocket, called
17 me -- they didn't know me from Adam, but knew I
18 was elected -- some dogs were chasing them on
19 the street, and he was in a booth and he didn't
20 know what to do about it. He didn't know
21 whether I was a mayor or a legislator or a
22 school board member, city councilman, or
23 anything, but they knew that that was a -- he
24 was -- mine was an elected official and I would
25 probably try to do something for that person.

1 And you know hear these kinds of stories.
2 That's a little silly sounding, but it's a true
3 story.

4 If you want people to come here and stand
5 in line around Duval Street and on down to Hogan
6 and all, we can do that, but you're taking away
7 the time of our district of doing what we need
8 to be doing, and that's focusing on education in
9 Duval County.

10 You take tremendous --

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hazouri --

12 MR. HAZOURI: Yes.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: -- I appreciate your
14 comments, but I will not apologize for our
15 organization, for our commission. We have a
16 mandate as well. And I will tell you this to
17 your face because I'm going to repeat it to
18 other people later, I think it's inappropriate
19 for you to say that we are, quote, wasting your
20 time.

21 MR. HAZOURI: When I say wasting time, I'm
22 saying you're taking the time. I didn't say
23 that y'all shouldn't be doing it. I said I
24 think it's healthy to have a conversation on
25 it. I think it's taking an inordinate amount of

1 time from your school board and this district
2 when we're trying to do things for our kids when
3 we have to go and defend. None of these people
4 come here for the money. None of us serve for
5 that reason.

6 Go ahead and --

7 THE CHAIRMAN: None of us are coming here
8 for the same reason.

9 MR. HAZOURI: I'm not here to argue,
10 Mr. Chairman. I'm telling you my opinion. You
11 can give your opinion, but I think -- it seems
12 to me that there's a handful of individuals --
13 and I'll finish this.

14 As a former mayor, as a legislator, and as
15 a school board member, as a citizen, there are a
16 handful of individuals who would not do away
17 with the public education system here but
18 undermine the public education system as we know
19 it.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Hazouri.

22 Mr. Catlett, did you get your question
23 answered?

24 MR. CATLETT: (Inaudible.)

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Korman.

1 MS. KORMAN: Some of my questions were kind
2 of answered, but I'll follow up.

3 I just want to say to Mr. Hazouri, we're
4 volunteers. We're doing the work to help the
5 citizens out, so what we talk about is because
6 the citizens came to us. And if you want to
7 line the room, that's great. It's facts, that's
8 the information we look for to besides having
9 experts like yourself, so --

10 MR. HAZOURI: (Inaudible.)

11 MS. KORMAN: But I'm just saying, we
12 welcome that, you know, and so you have to
13 respect what we're doing also. As a volunteer
14 board, we give up three hours every week to come
15 here and to listen and to learn and make the
16 right recommendations for the City.

17 You kind of answered the question,
18 Chairwoman -- or Chairperson Priestly-Jackson,
19 but I wanted to talk a little bit more because
20 the business community seems to have really
21 gotten behind Teach for America and KIPP and
22 some other things. I wanted to see how you guys
23 plan to work with those schools.

24 And second question is -- I guess it's more
25 of a knowledge base for me -- is -- we keep on

1 referring to how we have the highest population
2 of African-Americans and minorities. When can
3 we or are we ever going to be able to forget the
4 Black-White issue and just talk about students
5 in general so we can just try to provide a great
6 education for all? And that's just a knowledge
7 question for me.

8 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I'll take your
9 second question first.

10 You know, as -- I don't think we'll ever
11 reach a post-racial Jacksonville or a
12 post-racial Florida or a post-racial United
13 States, and I don't find that problematic
14 because as a spiritual person and believing in a
15 higher power, I believe that the good Lord could
16 have all created us translucent if he wanted to,
17 and he did not, so -- or her.

18 So, to that end, there's a richness that we
19 bring with our racial and ethnic diversity.
20 This is a country that was founded largely on
21 race, on class, and so those kind of issues kind
22 of follow us throughout with everything that we
23 do. And, to me, that's our greatest strength.
24 But I also think in real time, we have to talk
25 about what it looks like.

1 We have, what, 28 percent of our citizens
2 in Jacksonville that are -- actually, 28 to 33
3 that are African-American, but 44 percent on the
4 public school systems. That tells you there's a
5 huge population -- we have the largest home
6 school population here. I mean, I can give
7 you -- the litany goes on and on.

8 There's a certain population that seek the
9 services, so I think you have to have real time
10 knowledge on how to address the needs of that
11 population that seeks the services, so that --
12 that's a part of that.

13 And I will always have the dialogue because
14 it's rich, it builds us up, it helps us not make
15 some of the mistakes we've made in the past. It
16 helps us become more inclusive and everything
17 else, and so I think that that's what we'll
18 always talk about.

19 Now, repeat your first question to me in
20 terms of -- oh, KIPP and different programs like
21 that, right?

22 MS. KORMAN: Yes.

23 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Okay. Good.

24 Got it.

25 We support choice. I think that there is a

1 role we all can play. Teach for America, KIPP,
2 magnet schools, charter schools, there is not a
3 board member before you that opposes any of
4 those. In fact, if I pointed them out and we --
5 we talk. We have put our kids in private
6 schools. We've put our kids in public schools.
7 We've put our kids in charter schools. We've
8 put our kids in magnet schools. We graduated
9 from private schools.

10 That, to me, is what helps us come up with
11 best practices. That works in conjunction with
12 the public school system that we have here
13 because the public school system is not for
14 every child. It is really not, and we need
15 these resources that are available to put other
16 kids in. So I don't see them as competing
17 interests. I really, really don't. I see us
18 working together.

19 And this is not what we're coming before
20 you to say today. What I think our primary
21 position is, the public must remain an integral
22 part of public education. The public -- and the
23 way that we have for our folks to do that is to
24 be involved in the electoral process.

25 Also, public schools in the traditional

1 form don't have the luxury of choosing who
2 comes. In every model you give, KIPP, extensive
3 application process, extended hours. If kids
4 don't go, they get put out. It is what it is.

5 Charter schools, they get to apply. They
6 go -- if they don't -- why do you think they
7 come back? Private school put you out? When do
8 you think you're coming back? Welcome.

9 You know, we have to -- and so that's a
10 different mind-set, so we have to think out the
11 box in terms of: A, what resources are
12 available for kids who we can't serve in the
13 system? So I can recommend you a KIPP. I can
14 recommend you, you know, a private school. I
15 can recommend something else.

16 But, also, what do we do when we know in
17 Jacksonville for our highest needs, lower
18 socioeconomic and minority kids, they will be in
19 the public education system, how do we make
20 certain that we keep moving them around in the
21 right direction so the parent understands, you
22 know, what to look for to know that your child
23 is not reading earlier in time, you know, not --
24 the one that doesn't have the expert at home to
25 know that.

1 What do you know if you hear your kid is
2 struggling? You know, how do you disaggregate
3 an FCAT score to say, "If my kid is in third
4 grade and reads at a level 2 or 3, that's going
5 down a grade level. They'll slip further
6 behind"? So I think that that's the kind of
7 conversation dialogue we have. At the same
8 time, I'm the first person to tell some
9 parents, "You might need to look at this. You
10 might need to look at that."

11 So we're not competing. We're really --
12 we're not competing. We're trying to work in
13 tandem with one another and create a menu of
14 choices. Different from saying Schools A, B, C,
15 and D in a certain section of the city we're
16 going to take over. You know, that I don't
17 think will work because I don't think that
18 there's -- there's a learning curve, trust you
19 me.

20 With my son in one of our most challenged
21 schools, after being a dedicated magnet, there's
22 a real learning curve of some of the challenges
23 we face in some of our challenged schools that I
24 never knew until I had a kid in one. You know,
25 so that's the kind of knowledge, I think, that

1 you want folks having and everything else so
2 that we know that's what's out there.

3 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: I would just say that
4 on both of those programs, when John Pryor was
5 here and I was responsible for the academic
6 arena, we had people from Teach for America and
7 KIPP here to see if we could bring them to
8 Jacksonville. KIPP wasn't able to come because
9 of the low funding formula in Florida, and part
10 of their success is more time. Longer days and
11 longer years is one of the formulas of the
12 success, and so it was fortunate that we were
13 able have some people step up and fill that
14 funding gap.

15 So I think for the students who are going
16 to be going to school, initially in schools over
17 time, that's going to be good. What we need to
18 learn from that is, so how can we, then,
19 leverage resources so that Florida's not the
20 lowest in funding per capita, per income in the
21 country and be able to differentiate resources
22 to be able to do that, you know, whether that's
23 at the state level or potentially we have to do
24 that locally with a funding event here to do
25 that. So it's good, but how does that translate

1 into a larger success story for all of our
2 students?

3 So we probably have six or seven middle
4 schools that need that same kind of extended
5 year, extended day. And even in our more
6 successful schools, we have some students who
7 need more time and we simply cannot afford it.
8 Almost all of the money that has been added to
9 this come from the state, since the class size
10 amendment was put in place, has simply been
11 class size money.

12 Literally it is flat. Class size money has
13 helped us hire more teachers and lower class
14 size, but not do anything else, even keep up
15 with inflationary factors. And so it really is
16 a revenue issue.

17 Now, the revenue has to be spent well. We
18 have to have a smart, accountable plan and
19 challenge our own policies, union rules,
20 et cetera, and engage partners in that work. I
21 think we can do it, but I think it's going to
22 take some more resources to do it, and I fully
23 believe that it's going to have to be a
24 collaborative effort, including -- including the
25 mayor.

1 MS. KORMAN: Mr. Chair, if I could just
2 follow up.

3 Thank you for answering. I was just trying
4 to figure out the relationship between these
5 programs that businesses got involved in.

6 In going back to the minority issue,
7 because I'm still struggling with that one,
8 because the way it was presented -- when you
9 said it just a few minutes ago, it was more --
10 it was very eloquent and beautiful the way you
11 said it, but when you first come across, it's
12 almost like it's a crutch of ours. It's like a
13 negative thing, and I know that's not at all
14 what you meant. So -- and my whole thing is,
15 you know, black, white, purple, green, yellow,
16 whatever, you know, it may be, it's all across
17 the board. We all want an education equal,
18 excellent for all of them, but now I understand
19 your point you're trying to make about that
20 percentage and being the highest percentage. I
21 thank you for that clarification.

22 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Okay. Thank you.

23 I want to -- you mentioned something
24 earlier, what can the City do? You said, what
25 can we -- let me just -- and I think it's

1 important to just kind of share -- and I'll try
2 not to get into personal testimonials, but I
3 think this is appropriate.

4 I love Jacksonville. My roots, you know,
5 dig back in the city at for well over 100
6 years. Parents civically, socially-engaged
7 grandparents. And I was thinking what made me,
8 unlike a lot of my peers, grow up on the
9 Northside, move away for a moment, come back and
10 stay on the Northside, become involved, and
11 choose this life. It's because the city
12 believed in me.

13 When I came of age -- when you said
14 wraparound resources -- Mayor Godbold was in
15 office, and we had summer fun programs and
16 summer work. So if I was a good kid during the
17 year and did my work and didn't have to go to
18 summer school -- the kids who went to summer
19 school, you know, one week after you got out,
20 And they were gone all summer, and they show
21 back up a week before school starts -- there was
22 something meaningful for me to do. I believe
23 you valued me. You valued who I was.

24 And I will share with you, if you would
25 look -- whether it's Kevin Holzendorf or some

1 others, look at various leaders in Jacksonville,
2 people who have positions, that grew up during
3 that same era, there was a substantial
4 investment made by the City that we will do
5 whatever we can after the school day to support
6 all of our children. We will -- we promise you,
7 we believe in you, we're going to give you these
8 other supports.

9 That's the kind of thing, to me, we -- you
10 know, young people have to have jobs. You know,
11 they have to have somebody that's more like
12 their mentor. They have to have somebody,
13 whether they're going to go to college or
14 they're just going to get -- they're going to a
15 vocational trade -- that's going to be willing
16 to take them work and say, "You can come work
17 with me for a while." That's the kind of
18 collaboration that I was blessed to come of age
19 in the '70s and the early '80s in Jacksonville,
20 which, I think, lets me know that there's a
21 model out there of some things that work.

22 It, to me, is not if we have some
23 challenges already with certain city services.
24 It is not taking more on the plate in the form
25 of public education. You know, I think our

1 framers knew that was a massive undertaking,
2 which is why they separated.

3 A lot of -- no other state has it like
4 Florida: 67 counties, 67 districts, 67 elected
5 school boards. They knew it was a paramount
6 duty, paramount importance, fundamental value,
7 and you need folk who want to do that. You want
8 to come in here, you know, and get the barrage
9 of questions, like who has a passion and a heart
10 for doing that, because it's just that
11 important.

12 So that -- I would love to see additional
13 resources leveraged. I would love to see
14 collaborations developed and created, but I -- I
15 end, again, with nothing that I think in any way
16 would marginalize the voters' voice in that
17 process for real time information on what --
18 what works and what their needs are.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

20 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Thank you.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Flowers.

22 MR. FLOWERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 You spoke of history, and I have lived
24 under appointed board, and it was not wholesome
25 at all. And I say that to say I support elected

1 board for the same reason you mentioned. I
2 support an elected board because at that
3 posture, you will be able to talk about some of
4 the City expenditures in terms of HUD Community
5 Development Act.

6 Our neighborhoods did not get that way by
7 accident. There were resources that were
8 divided, and the books will show for other
9 purposes, so we have a constant deterioration of
10 the Northside.

11 And so I think with getting a handle on it
12 through the leadership of the school system, by
13 helping our children and start making certain
14 that schools are located in a fashion and look
15 in a fashion that can draw other children to
16 that -- but the school board has a
17 responsibility to see how the City spends
18 supportive service money in terms of
19 infrastructure that will encourage more
20 development, that will raise the income level of
21 those people in that neighborhood.

22 So I just wanted to give you a chance to
23 know that somebody have lived that experience,
24 and I can help my colleagues here understand
25 what you're talking about.

1 Thank you for having a response to how --
2 or what I'm talking about.

3 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I appreciate it.

4 I agree. I agree with you that we didn't
5 come where we are overnight, and so I think
6 all -- together we can all get to where we want
7 to be, and economic development is crucial, it
8 is vital. You know, I -- I reflect upon my
9 peers who graduated and how many actually still
10 live on the north side of Jacksonville, and
11 those that have the education have left. They
12 are not there.

13 And so I -- like you, I am concerned for
14 the folk who can't come out, who still want to
15 stay, and everything like that, so I definitely
16 think economic development will go a long way in
17 improving the quality of the schools.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Eichner.

19 MS. EICHNER: Thank you for being here
20 today.

21 And I've sat through a lot of these
22 meetings. I haven't said a lot of things in
23 response to education in just trying to sort of
24 weigh this issue and help find a solution, and
25 so I may throw out a wild idea here.

1 But one of the things that you said -- and
2 I'll echo everything that you said. I think
3 school board members are some of the closest to
4 the people elected officials there are in our
5 City because you guys deal with a treasure that
6 an elected official -- you become a partner in
7 their -- the future of their most precious
8 treasure.

9 And so in trying to sort of figure out a
10 solution to some of the things that we've talked
11 about today, I'm interested in knowing, is there
12 any other school district anywhere that has
13 maybe a combination of the two, elected
14 officials and appointed, in that here's -- yeah,
15 here's my wild idea: Maybe adding two appointed
16 members in helping find a solution for those
17 wraparound services, maybe adding two members to
18 the school district that the mayor appoints so
19 that you really have a voice and you can use
20 that bully pulpit to your advantage.

21 So just -- again, I'd just like to hear
22 some comments about -- what are some thoughts
23 about that.

24 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I'm not aware of any
25 that have the appointed and elected. I'm aware

1 of one -- and I'm looking to Ms. Broner as the
2 expert.

3 There are some that have different entities
4 that appoint and things like that, and so she
5 can come forward and share any information
6 relative to strategies for that that are
7 successful.

8 (Ms. Broner approaches the podium.)

9 MS. BRONER: Hi. Nancy Broner.

10 I work with districts around the country.
11 There are several districts -- Providence, Rhode
12 Island comes to mind -- where they have a
13 blended board, some appointed by the mayor and
14 some elected.

15 There are appointed boards that are -- that
16 come together, appointed by a combination of the
17 governor and the mayor, such as in
18 Philadelphia. Ninety-three percent of school
19 boards in the country are elected. Only
20 7 percent are appointed. And of the 7 percent,
21 there are a wide variety of models of
22 combinations of who appoints.

23 There are some awkward-functioning boards
24 around the way they come into their office. I
25 wouldn't want to comment on any individual board

1 by name, but there are some very dysfunctional
2 situations out there on both elected and
3 appointed sides, but by no means is there a
4 record of greater functionality among appointed
5 boards.

6 But to your original question, there -- at
7 least Providence and another two or three that I
8 know of that have a blended board.

9 MS. EICHNER: Thank you.

10 And I'll say this: You know, I am totally
11 in favor of an elected board, but in trying to
12 help you guys find a solution for some of the
13 challenges that you spoke to today, it just was
14 an idea that, you know, I hadn't given a lot of
15 thought on but just wanted to get your comments
16 on that.

17 Thank you.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Oliveras.

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

20 I've been thinking about the comments
21 between yourselves and Commissioner Miller, the
22 comparison with the other counties -- Clay,
23 Baker -- and the apples to oranges comparison.

24 I know this because I work in the system,
25 but I think that a lot of folks in our city and

1 perhaps some of the commissioners aren't as
2 aware of the encumbrances some of our students
3 come from.

4 The issues of generational poverty are
5 huge. My school, I have three criminal street
6 gangs that operate in the territory around my
7 school. The sheriff just arrested a number of
8 criminal street gang members, 45th Street Boys,
9 on RICO charges. That gang operated in sight of
10 two elementary schools and a middle school, and
11 they were a very violent street gang. They shot
12 people for fun. These are the situations that
13 some of these students come from and come into
14 our schools, and the responsibility for
15 educating these children is laid at your feet.

16 And I still remember the thing that made me
17 passionate about education and being a school
18 resource officer was a young man at the first
19 school I was a resource officer at.

20 Dana Krisner was the principal. This young man
21 routinely got into trouble at about lunchtime so
22 he could either get sent home or go to time out,
23 sit in the house administrator's office for the
24 rest of the day.

25 One day I brought him into my office and

1 just started talking to him. And I asked him, I
2 said, "Why? Why is this every day?" He told
3 me, "I come here to eat." And that changed me
4 in a very profound way.

5 I had no concept of that type of poverty,
6 and I had no recognition of the situation that a
7 lot of our students come from every day. And we
8 expect them to sit down and take in their math
9 instruction, their language arts, their
10 history.

11 So I think it might be helpful, if you
12 can -- because many of these challenged schools
13 are, in fact, in your district,
14 Ms. Priestly-Jackson -- if you can share with
15 the commission the types of situations that the
16 individual schools have to deal with to overcome
17 on a daily basis and perhaps what is not
18 reasonable to be laid at your feet because I
19 don't expect you to strap on tactical gear and
20 go after street gangs, but they operate right
21 outside the fence of our schools, and these
22 young people come from those neighborhoods.

23 And I think there are tremendous
24 encumbrances and inhibitors to education being a
25 priority in these young people's lives. It just

1 doesn't rank up there with having a bed to sleep
2 in and having food to eat, and I'd just
3 appreciate your comments on that.

4 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: I totally concur,
5 whether you talk about coming from a
6 crime-ridden neighborhood, or being the product
7 of a teenage parent, you know, or the product of
8 perhaps, you know, someone whose parents are
9 incarcerated, or the product of living with your
10 grandparents.

11 We have one of the highest mobility rates
12 in Jacksonville. Mobility is kids moving from
13 school to school, not out of our district. You
14 know, that's nothing to do with the military.
15 So our mobility rate, the last time I checked
16 it, was about 67 percent. And a lot of those
17 kids move from school to school, so there is
18 little to no stability.

19 And these are the realities of a lot of the
20 backgrounds that children come from. And I
21 think you look at it, you acknowledge that's
22 where they come from, but you have to have an
23 education system that says in spite of all that,
24 I hold you to high standards.

25 And so you've got to give a child a chance

1 to decompress. You feed them in the morning, so
2 they come for breakfast. And you sit back and
3 say, "Now you'll get lunch." But you still have
4 to meet the same standards. You have to
5 understand that by riding through neighborhoods
6 and looking -- you know, I see young people
7 standing out, I ask them, "What are you doing?
8 You know, why are you there?"

9 Are we all free -- if you saw a teenager
10 right now, when you left here, walking the
11 street, would you stop and say, "How are you
12 doing? Why are you out"? Well, we think it's
13 not our issue. It's not my problem. Well, I
14 better not say anything because I don't know
15 what they're going to do to me. You know, it's
16 that -- these are the realities that a lot of
17 communities live in.

18 I think another unintended consequence of
19 all the challenges we have with education for
20 many folk is that they don't see the real value
21 in it. And it's hard to see the value in
22 education if your socioeconomic position is of
23 such that you really have been living in the
24 generational poverty. But we have to tell you,
25 that's the only way you stand a chance, that a

1 high school diploma is not an option. It is a
2 must, and actually to be competitive, you need
3 at least a two-year degree or higher.

4 That's not the message because we have not
5 only racially-isolated communities, but we have
6 economically-isolated communities, and that's a
7 different thing. So this oftentimes is what I
8 call middle class, professional mind-set that
9 many of us bring with our functions, what we do,
10 able to go on field trips with our kids, you
11 know, able to -- looking forward to the
12 Christmas break and all that. That's not the
13 environment that many kids come from.

14 And so what you've got to show them is
15 there is another way because they want better.
16 There's not a parent I've run into, guardian,
17 aunt, uncle, somebody raising a child that has
18 said, "You know, I don't want my child to have
19 an education." They just don't know how to get
20 there. They just don't know that that means
21 then I need your help at home just by turning
22 off the TV, or can you -- if you have no food,
23 just help push them out of the house to get them
24 to school early enough so we can feed them. A
25 hungry kid can't learn or the child who can't

1 read because they don't have glasses. Number
2 one illiteracy problem for a lot of kids is they
3 don't have glasses.

4 So through PTA, through SAC, through other
5 things we do -- you know, hearing testing. We
6 do vision testing. We do -- this is what your
7 public schools do to try to meet kids where they
8 are to lead them where they should be, and it's
9 a real time challenge.

10 In a lot of the surrounding areas, there
11 are parents who choose those areas because they
12 know there's a gang in the school, because they
13 know that there are some questionable values
14 that they feel -- and they don't want their kids
15 exposed to that, and I respect every parent's
16 right to make that choice.

17 You know, I believe that we have got to be
18 there for all kids, I mean, real -- all kids. I
19 would encourage -- we are open -- and the
20 superintendent has talked about that. We would
21 love to take you-all on a tour of three
22 different schools around Jacksonville, I mean,
23 not in one particular area, all over. I think
24 what you would see would be amazing if you just
25 rode through to see what some kids have to go

1 through before they get to school, then see what
2 they experience when they got in school, and
3 then when they have to go back out.

4 It's our greatest strength, and that's in
5 our diversity. It really, really, is. But
6 there -- kids are not equally situated in our
7 city. They are not equally situated, so I
8 appreciate your sharing that.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioners, I have nobody
10 else in the queue.

11 Commissioner Miller.

12 MS. MILLER: My comments are for the
13 commission, so --

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Stand by.

15 Any other questions or comments for our
16 speakers?

17 COMMISSION MEMBERS: (No response.)

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very
19 much --

20 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: Thank you.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: -- to all of you for being
22 here today.

23 Superintendent, I will contact you about
24 that tour. I'll ask Mr. Rohan let us on the
25 commission know whether it would be a violation

1 of the Sunshine Law if more of us -- more than
2 one of us attended that tour together in the
3 interest of you making efficient use of your
4 time, but I will be in touch with you at a
5 minimum.

6 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: We can notice it.

7 MS. PRIESTLY-JACKSON: If we notice it, you
8 can all come.

9 MR. PRATT-DANNALS: Okay. Thank you for
10 the opportunity. We appreciate it.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker will be Mr. Catlett, our
13 own -- our very own esteemed Mr. Catlett.

14 MS. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, just through the
15 Chair, I would like to address the commission.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought
17 you wanted to wait.

18 Go ahead.

19 MS. MILLER: I'd like to suggest -- this is
20 obviously a very emotional issue that some have
21 taken defensively and personally, and I'd like
22 to remind us all that we should be driven by the
23 data and the facts and -- and our responsiveness
24 is based on our charge.

25 So I appreciate your comment earlier,

1 Mr. Chairman, in defending all of us, that there
2 are no -- despite direction to me in particular
3 by the speakers regarding my comments. I think
4 that the comments should always be directed,
5 just as the council rules, to the commission as
6 whole because we stand as a body with a single
7 charge of investigating, of exploring, of doing
8 our due diligence and coming up with the best
9 recommendation.

10 Unfortunately, that wasn't the case in this
11 situation, and I would ask that in the future,
12 speakers be guarded and guided to direct the
13 commission as a whole and not to attempt to make
14 either personal or professional directed
15 comments.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you,
17 Commissioner Miller. I think that's an
18 excellent observation.

19 Mr. Catlett.

20 MR. CATLETT: Mr. Chairman, on my laundry
21 list of things to talk about, along with
22 everyone else's, with -- it almost pales by
23 importance to, obviously, the school board and
24 the sheriff and those items, but I'm back on
25 term limits, and I had requested that Mr. Rohan

1 assist by coming up with a chart showing what
2 the staggering of elections would do to take
3 away the fruit basket turnover that we're going
4 to experience in 2011.

5 Although we can't cure it for 2011,
6 certainly we should have the ability to
7 recommend to the City Council that it be changed
8 for the future of councils. And I really don't
9 have any particular date that it ought to be
10 implemented, but -- but these are two different
11 alternatives.

12 Also, I'd ask, as a friend to the
13 supervisor of elections, Jerry Holland to come
14 and to give his thoughts on these, and I sent
15 him a copy of this in advance. These are two
16 alternatives. There may be others. And I don't
17 want to shut off the possibility of others, but
18 just to get this out on the table.

19 But it's very difficult for a council
20 president in 2011, no matter who it is, to
21 have -- I think it's 14 new ones, isn't it,
22 Jerry, something like that?

23 MR. HOLLAND: (Inaudible.)

24 MR. CATLETT: Yeah, something like 14 of
25 the 19 will be turning over due to term limits

1 and other things in 2011. So that means that
2 the council president has a very small number of
3 people to rely on that know anything about the
4 government in charge of a billion-dollar budget,
5 and also not just a billion-dollar budget, but
6 based on current trends, a very thin budget.

7 And so, you know, I think it would be
8 useful to the public to have terms where we had
9 some staggering, and Mr. Rohan has helped a
10 great deal by coming up with these two charts,
11 one that is based on four-year terms and extends
12 to 12 years as a term, and one based on two
13 six-year terms, which, again, totals 12 years.

14 And I'd like to get some input, if we can,
15 from the other members.

16 I know this is not as burning an issue as
17 public safety and education, but under good
18 governments -- you know, we were asked -- one of
19 the things we were asked to do was to look at
20 things that weren't working really well, and
21 this one is not working really well. And I
22 could probably call on you as an expert on how
23 well that works, and -- you've been here
24 seasoned enough to see that.

25 But, Members, do you have any thoughts on

1 this?

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Catlett --

3 MR. CATLETT: Yes.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: -- explain to me what the
5 numbers are underneath the time lines.

6 MR. CATLETT: Okay. Good question.

7 Those numbers are the council districts.

8 In other words, the districts are the first set
9 of numbers and then the groups are the at-large
10 numbers.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. But then the 23, the
12 29, and the 35 --

13 MR. CATLETT: Oh, that's the difference in
14 the number of years. From the election at the
15 top, you see a list of numbers that are
16 elections, and this ties to those same
17 elections. In other words, these are the years
18 at the top, and then the elections are what you
19 see tied to the six years or the four years, so
20 those indicate years.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

22 MR. CATLETT: And these are based on
23 six years and four-year terms, of which both are
24 12-year terms to accomplish this, but certainly
25 we have no pride of authorship in this and we're

1 open to all kinds of ideas to discuss to see if
2 somebody has another idea.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Clements, is this
4 displayed for the benefit of the audience?

5 MR. CLEMENTS: Yes, it is.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

7 Would you like to ask Mr. Holland's input
8 at this point?

9 MR. CATLETT: Yes, I would.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

11 MR. CATLETT: Oh, sorry. Wait.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Korman.

13 MS. KORMAN: I just need clarification.

14 Numbers aren't my thing.

15 So the four-year terms, we'll be expanding
16 it to three four-year terms for 12, right? So
17 it will be two of six --

18 MR. CATLETT: That's true.

19 MS. KORMAN: -- correct?

20 Okay.

21 MR. CATLETT: Yes, ma'am.

22 MS. KORMAN: Thank you.

23 (Inaudible.)

24 THE CHAIRMAN: On the mic, please.

25 MR. ROHAN: The first example is two

1 six-year terms, and the second example is just
2 staggering, period. It doesn't apply to term
3 limits. It has nothing to do with term limits,
4 the second example, four-year terms.

5 You could have three four-year terms, but
6 it's not contingent upon three four-year terms.
7 It could be two four-year terms or three
8 four-year terms.

9 If you're staggering four-year terms, by
10 definition, you have to have a certain group to
11 come up in two years and then a certain group to
12 come up the next two years, but then there will
13 always be two-year elections.

14 MS. KORMAN: Mr. Catlett, did you have a --
15 going along with Mr. Rohan's -- for the four
16 years, did you have a preference that you want
17 to make it 12?

18 MR. CATLETT: It doesn't matter as long as
19 it accomplishes the goal.

20 I don't know that it matters much which way
21 we do it or if either one of these are the way
22 to do it. It disturbs me, though, that we don't
23 have an organized turnover with a stable
24 council. And some of you that are involved with
25 the government recognize this as a bigger

1 problem than those who are not involved in
2 dealing with the City Council and having a fruit
3 basket turnover.

4 I wouldn't care if it's two four-year terms
5 and we ran eight each time or eight expired each
6 time on term limits. It doesn't -- I think --
7 I'm not preaching getting rid of term limits.
8 I'm preaching getting this on an organized
9 schedule to where we don't have everybody going
10 out of office at one time.

11 MS. KORMAN: I was just clarifying to see
12 if you had a preference facing this.

13 MR. CATLETT: No, ma'am.

14 MS. KORMAN: Okay.

15 MR. CATLETT: I have absolutely no
16 preference. I just know that what we're doing
17 doesn't make sense.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Holland.

19 (Mr. Holland approaches the podium.)

20 MR. HOLLAND: Thank you.

21 Jerry Holland, supervisor of elections, 105
22 East Monroe Street.

23 The concept of staggering terms is one that
24 even the council has talked about in previous
25 years. It is one that many elected bodies look

1 at. Obviously, the school board is one of those
2 that staggers their terms.

3 To give you some comments, also look at the
4 other variables as you talk about staggered
5 terms. One is, as you were mentioning, the
6 turnover of council members. It's been
7 interesting in the last four years since we have
8 had term limits.

9 In '99, there was 14 new and 5 existing
10 that returned. In 2003, there was 8 new and 11
11 that came back. In 2007, it was 10 new and 9
12 that came back. In 2011, actually it's the
13 opposite of what you're saying. There actually
14 is -- looking at 5 new, and 14 will have the
15 opportunity to come back.

16 But something you have got to remember
17 also -- and as I comment on these two proposals,
18 the staggering of the -- on the six-year terms,
19 the other problem that it creates is you have
20 other City elected officials that are on
21 four-year terms. So you would have to still
22 conduct the four-year cycle in addition to the
23 six-year cycle. You would have to check across
24 the top that you would still have elections in
25 the year 2015, 2019, 2024, 2028, 2032, 2036.

1 So you would be conducting a four-year
2 cycle for constitutional officers and the mayor
3 and then a six-year cycle for council. That
4 would actually triple your cost of elections for
5 that period of time.

6 The other side would also be -- is -- if
7 you had this number of staggered, you would also
8 have fewer on the ballot during that period of
9 time. And you have to look back historically at
10 our City Council elections. In '99, five were
11 unopposed. In 2003, two council members were
12 unopposed. And in 2007, seven council members
13 were unopposed, which, again, the correlation is
14 if you -- in some of these cases, you may only
15 have one at-large for the entire county on the
16 ballot and only a couple of districts.

17 When we have seen that in special
18 elections, those turnout rates would be very
19 low. That would be something, if you did
20 stagger in a six-year or four-year cycle of
21 elections, might be very confusing and also
22 lower a lot of the participation.

23 On the four-year terms, as mentioned below,
24 on splitting the council, would probably be
25 easier to put because you could also split the

1 constitutionals and stagger those where some of
2 those are on some of the cycles so you don't
3 have all your constitutionals and the mayor on
4 one cycle with some of the council members and
5 that may help participate in some of the turnout
6 from that situation.

7 Again, if you take the concept of our
8 current off-cycle elections, though, and you
9 staggered, you would be doubling the cost of
10 elections.

11 MR. CATLETT: Jerry, what would happen if
12 you just -- what does the school board look
13 like? How do they do this on their elections?

14 MR. HOLLAND: Well, they have seven
15 council -- I mean, seven school board members,
16 one for every two City Council districts. What
17 they do is they stagger with four and three. In
18 the gubernatorial cycle, I believe they have
19 three, and then in the presidential cycle,
20 there's four, if I'm correct.

21 MR. CATLETT: And that would increase or
22 decrease participation by the voters in your
23 opinion?

24 MR. HOLLAND: Well, as we've seen, it
25 varies depending on what else is on the ballot.

1 Where you have a heavily contested mayoral race,
2 you have a very good turnout. If you staggered
3 and the mayor wasn't on every city election, you
4 probably wouldn't see as much.

5 As we saw in 2007, the highlight race, as
6 the Times-Union featured, was the supervisor of
7 elections race. I don't bring out a large
8 turnout. You know, I'd like to say I do, but I
9 don't. So that varies on what your premiere
10 race is and what draws the people to the
11 ballot.

12 So from that standpoint, on the school
13 boards, they fall on those two cycles of the
14 gubernatorial and presidential, so they have a
15 steady election turnout because of the other
16 races also.

17 MR. CATLETT: So what's the most cost
18 effective way to stagger the terms?

19 MR. HOLLAND: The most cost effective would
20 be following the pattern of the school board,
21 which is mirror and put those -- you know,
22 stagger them, all the races on the fall cycle of
23 the gubernatorial and presidential, then you
24 would eliminate one of the City costs.

25 MR. CATLETT: Okay. And so that's one set

1 of ways to do it, align it with what the school
2 board is doing and works pretty well.

3 Now, let's just say that the City Council
4 decides -- and you have been on that council, so
5 I don't have to educate you as to this.

6 Let's just say that the City Council elects
7 to keep their election cycle as it is, what's
8 the best way to stagger them within what the
9 City Council is doing as far as election
10 cycles?

11 MR. HOLLAND: Well -- and, of course, there
12 are two bills right now in front of the
13 City Council to look at putting it on the off
14 cycle fall or on the gubernatorial fall.

15 If the council stays on an off cycle,
16 whether it be spring or fall, then the only way
17 that it would be common sense to stagger them is
18 do another off cycle in between, where now
19 you're looking at doing it in between the
20 gubernatorial and presidential. Then you would
21 follow after the presidential year and do
22 another City election either in the spring or
23 fall to follow the same pattern.

24 MR. CATLETT: And that would, again, cost
25 more money?

1 MR. HOLLAND: Yes, because the situation is
2 this: Once we have one at-large race, then in
3 the elections, we have to open all precincts.
4 And our minimum number of early voting sites,
5 which we've established, is seven. So you
6 establish that same cost.

7 So whether -- you know, again, we only have
8 one at-large race or whether we have five
9 constitutionals and five at-larges in all 14
10 districts, again, we open the same number of
11 precincts and are required to by law.

12 MR. CATLETT: Now, let's just say for the
13 sake of grins -- and I just want to get all
14 these ideas out and, you know -- this may not be
15 worth the time we're taking on it, but I do want
16 to at least explore it.

17 Let's say that you have half of them run
18 every four years, term limited out every four
19 years, what would that do?

20 MR. HOLLAND: If you had half of them term
21 limited every four years, it's -- well, again,
22 you can never determine when someone is going to
23 be term limited out. By example, in the current
24 council, we have some that are serving partial
25 terms and still have two full terms. There will

1 be people leaving to run for other offices.
2 There will be incumbents that will be beat.

3 So I don't think you could design a system
4 that says take this group and now you will be
5 termed out at this point because, in theory, as
6 it goes on in future, the public is going to
7 decide when they're going to be termed out,
8 whether it be at the end of two four-year terms
9 or at the end of one four-year term or should it
10 be the point that the elected official decides
11 to leave office.

12 MR. CATLETT: Okay. So if we're looking at
13 the four-year terms at the bottom, does that
14 create new elections, or is that on the current
15 cycle?

16 MR. HOLLAND: If -- and, again, the
17 recommendation there is not when they're held.

18 If you do on our current either spring
19 cycle or on the proposed off season fall, then
20 it would create another countywide election,
21 which, again, would duplicate that cost
22 somewhere between -- depending on what we
23 project turnout, between two-and-a-half and
24 \$3 million.

25 MR. CATLETT: Okay. Thank you.

1 MR. HOLLAND: You're welcome.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: I have nobody else in the
3 queue.

4 Commissioner Korman.

5 MS. KORMAN: I mean, I support,
6 Commissioner Catlett, your concern. I don't
7 know how -- if we should get like more charts
8 like this to give us all of our options so we
9 can look it at a further meeting. I don't -- I
10 kind of follow Supervisor Holland in his
11 thoughts, but there's a lot going on.

12 My personal concern is that six years is a
13 long time to have one person in there,
14 especially if it's someone that overall we don't
15 support. So that would be my only concern.

16 MR. CATLETT: Okay.

17 MS. KORMAN: But other than that, I support
18 you. I just don't know how to -- I don't know
19 what the right way to do it is. So if -- what's
20 our approach, Chairman, that we could somehow
21 get all the numbers, facts, figures, whatever?

22 THE CHAIRMAN: I agree that would be
23 helpful. Mr. Catlett, would you like to provide
24 us with --

25 MR. CATLETT: Well, I'll work with

1 Supervisor Holland to get the correct
2 information and come back with more details.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: We need to be on the
4 microphone.

5 MR. CATLETT: Oh, I'm sorry.

6 I would be glad to work with Supervisor
7 Holland. This probably isn't an election time
8 at his place either, so we can spend a little
9 time on this and come up with some additional
10 charts and graphs that may come up with some
11 direct proposals, 1, 2, 3, and what they cost
12 and what the effect of those are.

13 We have a -- I just want to get this out
14 today because this has been one of my pet peeves
15 to get people thinking about it at least.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: I think that additional
17 information would be very helpful.

18 MR. CATLETT: Yes, sir.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Eichner was
20 good enough to identify for me some potential
21 resources in Alachua County who might be useful
22 to us. Apparently -- I don't know if it was the
23 county or city.

24 MS. EICHNER: City.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: The City of Gainesville

1 looked at this issue within the last few years,
2 implementing a stagger, and so there's an
3 individual at the University of Florida that I'm
4 going to contact who might have a useful
5 perspective for us on their experience. So I'm
6 hopeful that we can hear from him maybe at the
7 January -- one of the January meetings, so I'll
8 be in touch with him.

9 I hate to put you ladies on the spot, but
10 our two school board members, who are still
11 here, if you have any thoughts on the
12 effectiveness of the stagger that you think
13 would be useful for us that you want to share,
14 we would benefit from that.

15 (Ms. Broner approaches the podium.)

16 MS. BRONER: Well, having not lived under
17 the other system, I only could advocate for the
18 continuity, some institutional history that is
19 retained when you don't have such a turnover.
20 It's been valuable to us. So I think that it
21 would be logical that anything that could add to
22 stability in leadership in this city can only be
23 positive.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

25 MS. BRONER: You're welcome.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Oliveras.

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

3 Do we know -- perhaps Mr. Holland or one of
4 our school board members, do we know how the
5 stagger at the school board began? Was it an
6 original thing? Was it implemented at a later
7 time? How did it -- if we knew how we got it
8 there, then it might be easier for us to do it
9 here. That information would be helpful, I
10 think.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Holland.

12 MR. HOLLAND: That's a good question. I
13 don't have the answer, but we can sure research
14 it and come back to you.

15 MR. OLIVERAS: Thank you.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: That's a very good
17 question.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. OLIVERAS: It might save some work.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Commission Miller.

21 MS. MILLER: Through the chair, a question
22 for Mr. Rohan. But first, I wanted to make a
23 comment to Mr. Catlett.

24 Commissioner Catlett, I also support this.

25 I agree with Commissioner Korman that six years

1 is probably too long and that three-year --
2 three four-year terms would be more appropriate,
3 more responsive to the public. And I like your
4 proposal in terms of that it is out into the
5 future, this would begin at some future date and
6 not effect anyone in office or about to run for
7 office.

8 So I appreciate the work that has gone into
9 this and would support a -- if we have the
10 additional data, support a -- every four years.

11 I'm absolutely convinced that we need
12 greater stability in our -- in the institutional
13 memory and then in our government in terms of
14 the election cycle and another reason why I
15 support moving the elections to November -- off
16 cycle or on cycle, to November, to have a
17 prepared, educated council.

18 To Mr. Rohan, how do we do this? If the
19 council were to approve this, what happens? Can
20 the council amend the charter? Does it have to
21 go to the legislature? Does it have to go to
22 the electorate? How is it done?

23 MR. ROHAN: If -- this would be done either
24 through council action, approving and having a
25 referendum, or through the legislative process

1 through the state legislature.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Let me echo, first of all,
3 Commissioner Miller's comments. Mr. Catlett,
4 thank you for taking the time to put this
5 together for us. I appreciate that.

6 And I see you're in the queue.

7 MR. CATLETT: Well, I thank Mr. Rohan
8 because he did the work on this.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Rohan.

10 MR. CATLETT: I have to be very honest
11 about it.

12 Also, to Ms. Miller's comment, thank you,
13 and I tend to favor the three four years also.

14 But I did find out I was incorrect about
15 something for sure. Mr. Holland had informed me
16 that there would be three carryovers. I don't
17 remember which three, Jerry, but -- he may.

18 There were three carryovers. If it was on
19 the ballot in '11 and took effect in '15,
20 because of some unfinished terms that would be a
21 part of that mix, that there would be three
22 carryovers into that election.

23 So if you want to eliminate all of them, it
24 would have to be 2019, I guess, which would be
25 fine, too. This is -- we're not talking about

1 individuals or the current council. We're
2 talking about a systemic institutional problem.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Vice Chair O'Brien.

4 MS. O'BRIEN: In regards to the carryovers,
5 when you say it would have to start in 2019, I
6 guess, at that point -- but if there's a same
7 situation, if somebody steps down, you're always
8 going have that issue where you might have, you
9 know, off terms because someone just has to move
10 away or, God forbid, something worse happens.

11 So at some point, if we were to go to a
12 staggered term process, we have to contemplate,
13 I think, as a commission those unknowns and
14 there would be -- we would have to address the
15 issue of those carryover terms, I think.

16 MR. CATLETT: Well, certainly that's one of
17 the things that I plan to discuss with
18 Supervisor of Elections Holland when we get
19 together because that is -- you know, there's
20 got to be a starting point at some point and a
21 cut off at some point, and 2015 with three
22 carrying-overs tickles the heck out of me. I'm
23 just ready to get this moving forward and get it
24 on the ballot, see what the council thinks, if
25 they think it should be on the ballot, and if it

1 should, to get it implemented where we have --
2 we have good government now. I'd like to see it
3 even better.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rohan, I see you would
5 like to comment.

6 MR. ROHAN: One thing that might be of
7 interest to you, I think we only have one
8 carryover that would not be out of office by
9 2015, and that's Councilmember Meserve. The
10 other two will be termed out, I believe, that
11 year. That's Council President Clark and
12 Councilmember Fussell.

13 MR. HOLLAND: But you had some others that
14 came in on special election. I think
15 Councilmember Reggie Brown did, Councilman John
16 Crescimbeni did. That's year three.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. ROHAN: Thank you. That's absolutely
19 correct.

20 And one thing you might consider is that
21 the City Council has -- the City Council has
22 adopted a methodology for determining what is a
23 full term, and in that case -- that's for
24 commissions, not for themselves or not for
25 anybody referenced in the charter.

1 They have adopted a protocol by which if
2 you are there for more than half the term,
3 that's considered a full term. So you might
4 want to consider doing that in the charter to
5 define what is a full term because we currently
6 don't have such a definition. And, therefore,
7 it's the opinion of the Office of General
8 Counsel that if you do not serve the entire
9 term, you have not served a full term, so that
10 is something you might want to have for
11 consideration.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Rohan.
13 That's food for thought. Thank you.

14 Commissioner Deal.

15 MS. DEAL: I believe this would be a
16 question for Commissioner Catlett.

17 With the idea behind adding the third
18 four-year term, would that be to create
19 additional stability? Was that the thinking
20 behind adding that third?

21 MR. CATLETT: Well, again, it's not the
22 stability. It's the number of new people coming
23 on at any one time. Commissioner Holland is
24 right. We have a bunch staying this time.

25 What happens four years after that, Jerry?

1 MR. HOLLAND: The opposite would be true.

2 MR. CATLETT: We have 14 coming on in '19,
3 and that's -- when you think about it a minute,
4 it takes ten votes to approve the budget and to
5 make major legislative changes. So to turn over
6 14 and have them look at a budget the day they
7 arrive and have no knowledge of anything, other
8 than "Wow, I just won an election. People like
9 me, you know, and I've got to go to a lot of
10 meetings," I mean, those are good things to know
11 also, but, you know, they don't know what
12 they're doing. So, you know, nine or even ten
13 would be okay, but 14 is more than the entire
14 process takes, not only to pass legislation, but
15 override the mayoral veto.

16 MS. DEAL: No, I totally agree with you.

17 My question is: Can you not accomplish
18 that in having half turn over each time with two
19 four-year terms as opposed to three?

20 MR. CATLETT: Well, Mr. Rohan, can you tell
21 me that, based on what we've learned here? Can
22 you have a half and a half, or do we have to
23 have three terms to stagger them to do that?

24 MR. ROHAN: Are you talking with staggered
25 every two years?

1 MS. DEAL: (Nods head.)

2 MR. ROHAN: The staggering -- there is no
3 such thing as staggering in a four-year term if
4 you don't have them every two years. And by
5 definition -- and Supervisor Holland can help me
6 on this if I'm wrong. By definition, if they're
7 every two years, you will, for sure, have a
8 certain percentage of them turn over.

9 So the actual third term will not affect
10 the arbitrariness, if you will, of the
11 turnover. In other words, you will have some
12 that will only serve one term, some that will
13 only serve two. The extra term will not affect
14 it.

15 MS. DEAL: And then I just have one comment
16 to Commissioner Catlett's -- what you're trying
17 to do here, I think, is great. And I do think
18 that, yes, there will be a lot of unknowns as to
19 someone coming on and having to leave if they
20 decide to run for another office. But I would
21 just add that I don't think it would be as
22 dramatic as it is now, so --

23 MR. CATLETT: And, also, the one thing you
24 have to remember is that no matter what we do,
25 it's got to pass muster with the council. And

1 as you all know, they are a very independent
2 group of people, very thoughtful, but very
3 independent. So once we get this to where we
4 think it will work, then we've got to run it
5 past some of the council members.

6 You will be pleased to know that I sent a
7 copy of our little chart here to the current
8 president, and the person who has been suggested
9 will be the next president, who is the pro tem
10 right now or vice president, and both of them
11 agree with what we're discussing. It ought to
12 be staggered, but they don't know how either.
13 So we're looking at it not just for us, but for
14 the council to look at before it goes on the
15 ballot to the electorate, if it does.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Eichner.

17 MS. EICHNER: And Jerry -- and Supervisor
18 Holland may be able to answer this question
19 because I think he may have been on the council
20 at that point.

21 Has this ever been discussed at council in
22 the past and debated there and pros and cons on
23 how to do it?

24 MR. HOLLAND: Yeah. The awkward and
25 difficult part for council is to decide who gets

1 to stay longer and who has got to leave early,
2 and that's why you almost have to do a concept
3 if the council hasn't -- and they do have a
4 right to approve what you put forward -- is you
5 have to do it so far out in the future that no
6 one there is affected by it.

7 That was the problem when we discussed it
8 on the council, was -- we'd take the -- you
9 know, the odd ones, meaning the odd districts.
10 I want to clarify that. I was one of the odd
11 districts -- and say, "Okay. You go an extra
12 two years to stagger this," you know. But then
13 the even districts would be slighted or they
14 would be cut two years. And so that's the
15 problem when you look at, again, affecting those
16 that are on the body today.

17 If you look at the theory and say, "I'm
18 going to go as far out just to make sure that in
19 the future it's done right" -- and it may have
20 to be as far out as 2019 so that no one
21 currently serving is affected. Yes, somebody
22 who may come in next term will be affected, but
23 the ones voting on it won't be currently
24 affected, then you may have success in doing so.

25 MS. EICHNER: Thank you.

1 And I just -- I like the concept of
2 staggering these terms and this body trying to
3 figure out exactly how we might be able to
4 accomplish that. And I appreciate all of
5 Jerry's time in working with you on -- and
6 establishing how to maybe make this process work
7 a little easier.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: I have nobody else in the
9 queue.

10 Commissioner Korman.

11 MS. KORMAN: I don't know. Are you keeping
12 like a list of things to go over for the
13 future? Because one of the things I think it
14 was Commissioner Miller brought up that I wanted
15 to make sure is on our list is about -- and I
16 don't know which way I'm on it yet, but about
17 exploring how often the Charter Review
18 Commission meets. So can we -- I don't think
19 it's going to be a long discussion, but some
20 time --

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's on my list --

22 MS. KORMAN: Okay.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: -- of things that we should
24 talk about before our work is finished.

25 MS. KORMAN: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: And so, Mr. Catlett, you
2 will -- you will provide the additional material
3 that, was it Commissioner Korman, requested with
4 respect to a graphic depiction of the different
5 options?

6 MR. CATLETT: Yes.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: My thanks to you and to
8 Supervisor Holland and to Mr. Rohan, again, for
9 your work on this.

10 I will move to public comment.

11 Our first speaker will be Julie Delegal.

12 (Audience member approaches the podium.)

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: My pleasure. Thank you for
15 coming.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 First of all, I want to thank all of you
18 commissioners. I am very impressed with all the
19 things that you're sitting through, listening
20 to, and considering, and I know that you are all
21 giving very generously of your time to do that
22 and I appreciate that.

23 Again, my name is Julie Delegal. I'm also
24 a volunteer. I've spent a lot of time
25 volunteering in the public schools, and I came

1 to speak on the issue of the proposal to
2 consider appointing the school board. I don't
3 know much about -- well, I'm learning about the
4 consolidation process.

5 I have not read the book that you-all have
6 had the benefit of reading, "A Quiet
7 Revolution," but I know that there were
8 particular things going on at that time in 1967
9 when they were drafting that affected the
10 decisions that were made. And I would offer to
11 you that are some particular things happening
12 right now in Jacksonville, Florida that might
13 affect the decisions you make on whether to
14 recommend an appointed board.

15 As an observer, my oldest child is in the
16 11th grade, so I've been a pretty active
17 observer of the public school system for about
18 12 years now if you include his kindergarten
19 year. I have never seen such coordination
20 between the school board and the superintendent
21 and such a determination to tackle individual
22 problems and, first of all, to even have a
23 strategic plan.

24 One of the phenomenal things going on right
25 now is that we have this incredible business

1 community when you look at the strategic plan.
2 It is a who's who of Jacksonville who reads on
3 that list of business leaders and philanthropic
4 leaders who have taken their time to engage
5 themselves in this process to build the
6 strategic plan in conjunction with your sitting
7 school board and in conjunction with the
8 superintendent and many of the administrative
9 officials there. That's just phenomenal. To
10 me, as an observer, I've never seen that. And I
11 would argue that having that iron in the fire,
12 okay, having that strategic plan, having just
13 the intense interest of the business community
14 right now, having the professionalism of the
15 board and of the superintendent --

16 And, also, right now, you know, we just
17 went through this process where we talked about
18 a quality of life where we're talking about the
19 Jacksonville Journey. These are all -- you
20 know, the City is poised. The City is
21 asking, "Okay. What is our role in improving
22 education in Jacksonville?" And I think those
23 are things we have never had before kind of
24 coalescing together now.

25 And with all these irons in the fire, I

1 guess, you know, why do we want to rebuild a new
2 furnace would be my question because these are
3 things that are new, that are really moving us
4 forward. I'm excited about it. I would add
5 that I think that the idea -- is my time up?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: I'll give you another
7 20 seconds.

8 MS. DELEGAL: The idea introduced by
9 Professor Corrigan -- I don't know which week it
10 was -- that the mayor hold a summit with the
11 stakeholders is an excellent idea, and I don't
12 think there is anything to stop the mayor from
13 leading the City and determining his role in
14 supporting public education with the elected
15 board, with the superintendent. I think it
16 would be a net loss to lose them, and I also --
17 something I heard today, something about a
18 hybrid board, maybe that's an idea worth
19 exploring, having an extra appointed member from
20 the mayor's office to enhance that process by
21 which the City and the schools are working
22 together to solve our -- or to reach our common
23 goals.

24 Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thank you for

1 coming down.

2 Curtis Lee.

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you very much.

4 My name is Curtis Lee, 7537 Teaticket
5 Court.

6 This is my third speech before this
7 commission. I had decided to first appear when
8 I learned about three City pension plans and how
9 the deficit of those plans was \$1.2 billion as
10 of last year. And everybody seems to concede
11 that the deficit will increase if nothing is
12 done to reduce benefits. I previously proposed
13 some charter modifications, and I wanted to add
14 two more. One is to reduce the size of the City
15 Council. This would integrate with everything
16 you've been talking about.

17 I lived in Erie County, New York, which is
18 the Buffalo area, until 2003. Many of the
19 cities and towns and counties in upstate
20 New York have reduced the sizes of their town
21 councils and legislatures to save costs. I
22 believe it's been 100 percent voter approved.
23 If not, very, very close to that. Wherever it's
24 done, people like the idea.

25 Number two, I suggest the charter be

1 modified to require voter approval of any
2 increases in public employee benefits or of any
3 compensation increases beyond inflation. For
4 example, if voters knew that the average police
5 and fireman earned 59,000 last year, no doubt
6 more today, and that the average pension for
7 that group was 46,000 last year, more today, and
8 that they can get a full pension at age -- as
9 early as age 40 plus the 3 percent annual COLA,
10 I think they would be outraged and they would
11 not approve increases.

12 And now to recap my three prior proposals,
13 the third -- number three, to require the cost
14 of all proposed loss to be computed and
15 publicized before enactment. This should
16 prevent a repeat of mistakes as before.

17 Number four, to change the Police and Fire
18 Pension Fund Board of Trustees, give the City
19 two-thirds or more of the seats since the City
20 pays over 86 percent of the costs, and the
21 pattern of the City paying almost all the costs
22 will continue. The City should have control
23 since it pays most of the costs.

24 And five, to impose charter limits on
25 taxing and spending, similar to what many

1 governments do. This can be limits on spending
2 on pension -- this can cover limits on
3 spending. There's all sorts of ways to do it.
4 For example, you can say that there's no defined
5 benefit plan accruals under any City-funded plan
6 after 2013. Less aggressive things can be done
7 as well. This is intended to avoid Mr. Rohan's
8 concerns about unfair labor practices.

9 The agreement under negotiation currently
10 cannot by law exceed three years in term. So if
11 the voters approve cost savings and then the
12 public employees decide later to litigate after
13 the charter modifications take effect, for one,
14 they will probably lose in court, but number
15 two, they will certainly lose the PR battle by
16 showing their contempt to the public.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Lee.

19 Annette Worthen.

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Excuse me. Hi, my name
21 is Annette Worthen. I'm president of the Duval
22 County Council of PTAs here in Jacksonville,
23 Florida. We are -- PTA is the largest volunteer
24 advocacy organization in the nation, and we
25 speak on behalf of children. We have currently

1 over 30,000 members in the Jacksonville area.

2 PTA believes in the right to vote, and our
3 position is that parents and guardians are full
4 partners in the decisions that affect children
5 and families. If the school board,
6 superintendent positions become appointed
7 positions, then you have taken away the rights
8 of the parents and guardians to speak on our
9 children's behalf.

10 If the board and superintendent are held
11 accountable to the City government that hires
12 them, then where is the accountability to the
13 parents? If we as community members, parents,
14 and guardians lose our voice because our right
15 to vote for the school board members is taken
16 away, then our children lose.

17 With the current system of an elected board
18 and a hired superintendent, we as parents and
19 guardians have a voice not only through our
20 vote, but through the accountability that the
21 elected board members have to the constituency
22 that hired them by voting them into office.

23 If we as parents and community members
24 don't feel that the school board members and
25 our -- and/or superintendent are doing their

1 job, then there is a process already in place to
2 remove them from that position.

3 Please don't take our rights to speak on
4 our children's behalf away from us. Our right
5 to vote for the school board members to
6 represent us is our way of holding our
7 educational leaders accountable.

8 And I would just like to add a few things,
9 that during -- a year or a year and a half ago,
10 I'm not sure -- I don't remember when the
11 process took place. But when we went through
12 the accreditation process for the first time as
13 a county, our school system, the SAC's
14 (inaudible) Committee that came from all over
15 the country had nothing but wonderful things to
16 say about the health and productivity of our
17 board and how wonderful our board and
18 superintendent worked together. And I think
19 that that's something that you should consider
20 in your decision-making process is that
21 educational leaders from all over the country
22 thought it was important enough to mention the
23 working relationship our board and
24 superintendent have, and that's because we as
25 voters voted those board members into office.

1 I think our at-risk schools -- I know that
2 has been a concern and it's a concern of the
3 parents as well as the business leaders in Duval
4 County, and I think that our school board has
5 done a good job in the last year and a half, two
6 years of recognizing those schools and putting
7 programs in place. And under the direction and
8 leadership of Mr. Belamy (phonetic), I think
9 they have done some incredible things, and I
10 would like to see that work continue. I think
11 they have done a good job.

12 Earlier you elaborated and asked for some
13 comments about -- from Ms. Priestly-Jackson
14 about some of the student issues that she sees
15 the teachers have to deal with on a daily basis,
16 and I would just like to point out some things
17 that maybe have happened to me.

18 I come from the Westside, and my son
19 attended -- and I live out in the Argyle area.
20 My youngest son attended Central Riverside
21 Elementary School. He is now in high school.
22 But it was at Stockton and I-10, and I drove him
23 over 20-something miles one way to attend that
24 school. That's a Title I school. It is a
25 school that has a magnet program for gifted and

1 academically-talented students.

2 And I was in the building one day. I was
3 very active, involved in their PTA, and I
4 learned very quickly that you needed to be able
5 to speak not only to the magnet parents, but the
6 parents that lived in that community. And we
7 learned that something as simple as sending home
8 a newsletter to the parents had to be written so
9 that a kindergartner or a first grader could
10 read that information to their parents because
11 so many parents in that community were
12 illiterate, and you had to be able to reach
13 those parents.

14 That's -- and partly I think maybe that is
15 a reflection of the past school system that was
16 in place. But it's very important that you
17 reach the parents, and you have to think outside
18 the box. And I think the PTAs in Duval County
19 are trying to accomplish that, and I think that
20 our school board and our superintendent are also
21 trying to accomplish that.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Worthen.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: I have speaker cards for
25 Rodney Hurst, Thomas Thomas, and Dave Smith, but

1 I believe they have left.

2 Any other members of the public wish to
3 speak?

4 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (No response.)

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Commissioners,
6 discussion?

7 Vice Chair O'Brien.

8 MS. O'BRIEN: I just have one observation.

9 It does go back to the school board conversation
10 that we had and a comment that we shouldn't at
11 all relate it to JEA and the success that that
12 board has had. And, to me, removing the issue
13 of whether it's an elected or an appointed
14 position for the board members, I see a lot of
15 correlation that I think we can learn from those
16 organizations.

17 JEA took over a failing system. They had
18 people in place that knew finance. They knew
19 how to use money. They knew how to borrow it.
20 They knew how to bond with it. They had people
21 who were interested in the community. They, in
22 a way, have to service all the citizens of Duval
23 County, whether you're rich, poor, or somewhere
24 in the middle. They have to give an
25 undiscriminatory electrical service and water

1 service, and depending on where they've grown
2 their system, sewer system, you know, to the
3 citizens of Duval County no matter where they
4 are within the city. So I actually think we
5 have some good lessons to learn on how they were
6 able to do that, the systems that they could.

7 Personally, I think because they are an
8 appointed board, they are able to identify some
9 individuals to serve on that board that are
10 uniquely qualified to address a billion-dollar
11 budget. So I think there are certainly good
12 arguments to an appointed board or to a hybrid
13 board where possibly you aren't going to get
14 those people to run for office, but they bring
15 invaluable experience, in particular on the
16 financial and the business side, that right now
17 I don't know if that expertise is available to
18 the board that runs -- it's a huge, significant
19 budget. A billion dollars plus is a lot of
20 money, and I know I don't have the expertise on
21 how to best borrow against that money, bond
22 against that money, and use that money.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

24 Commissioner Miller.

25 MS. MILLER: Through the Chair, I would

1 like to give this to Mr. Clements. This is the
2 most recent '08/'09 report from the Florida
3 Department of Education to distribute to the
4 commission.

5 And I'd like to just comment on -- and
6 thank you, Commissioner O'Brien.

7 Contrary to what Mr. Hazouri accredited to
8 me -- attributed to me, we know that both
9 Mayor Delaney and Mayor Peyton suggested the
10 independent authority model, not me. It's not
11 my original thought, and so I would attribute it
12 to much greater minds than mine.

13 I would suggest that there are items that
14 we didn't discuss today that hopefully will be
15 discussed regarding the pressures that an
16 elected school board member has. We have one of
17 the lowest tax base ad valorem rates for
18 contribution to school board taxes. The school
19 board has to decide on that. There's pressure
20 to run for public office, and there's pressure
21 not to raise taxes.

22 So when we talk about a funding rate and
23 funds going, we can't keep blaming the State for
24 a lack of funding if we're not contributing. So
25 there's a direct correlation between the money

1 that's going in and the money -- and there can
2 be the product that's coming out, whether it's
3 elected or appointed. That's just a basic
4 fundamental fact.

5 And so just like our tax base right now,
6 we're cutting into bone when we eat into our
7 infrastructure and our very low tax base.
8 There's a cost to that. There's a cost to
9 having very low ad valorem millage rates for the
10 school district, and so that's something to
11 consider.

12 We need to stop comparing ourselves against
13 the past. But if we do compare ourselves
14 against the past and look at the achievement
15 gap, if you look at language at the DOE website,
16 achievement gap is how far have we come in
17 closing the achievement gap and making students
18 ready, prepared to take jobs, we haven't made
19 progress. So we have made progress on some
20 indicia and indicators, but we haven't.

21 So if we're going to compare ourselves to
22 ourselves, then let's look at outcomes, but
23 let's think about comparing ourselves to
24 something bigger because we have one of the best
25 chambers in the United States, the second

1 largest in the United States. Our chamber and
2 Cornerstone receives national and international
3 recognition and awards for their business
4 recruitment. So they have succeeded in spite
5 of, not because of, in spite of the weaknesses
6 of our community, but because of the strengths
7 of our community, which include consolidation.
8 And every economic developer out there will tell
9 you that they're jealous of our community
10 because of our consolidation and what we have.

11 So I would just suggest that there are
12 issues that hopefully somebody else can speak to
13 about the benefits of an appointed board and
14 what you can do in terms of directing resources
15 to the most needy areas.

16 And, again, many of the items that were
17 required that were suggested as accommodations,
18 they're required by law. Any appointed school
19 district would be -- have to follow the same
20 regulations, be accountable to the same people,
21 have to be out in the same communities because
22 it's required by the state law.

23 So the same laws would apply, appointed or
24 elected. So I would -- just want to make sure
25 we're all clear on that. It's -- you know,

1 there's this notion that somehow we're going to
2 be less accountable to the people. The same
3 laws apply. You still have to provide them free
4 lunch if they qualify. You still have to
5 provide them glasses if they're not -- if they
6 can't see, under the ADA. So let's just keep
7 that in mind when we -- when we're really
8 comparing apples and apples. The same laws will
9 apply whether it's an appointed or elected.

10 And I'll -- I'll just end on that.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Oliveras.

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

13 First, I started thinking -- I heard former
14 Mayor Godbold's name mentioned several times
15 this morning, and I started thinking that -- he
16 was there during the early post-consolidation
17 period, and it would probably be very beneficial
18 to hear from him in general about the
19 consolidation -- the early days,
20 post-consolidation, and perhaps specifically on
21 these various issues of elected versus
22 appointed. So I would like to suggest that we
23 invite Mayor Godbold to come address us.
24 Perhaps when we hear from Sheriff Demmings, it
25 might actually be a good day to do that, if that

1 schedule works.

2 And I'd like to talk about the elected
3 versus appointed school board a little bit. I'm
4 looking at November 19th's transcript where
5 Mayor Peyton said he thinks that the voters have
6 empaneled probably one of the most effective
7 school boards we've had in many, many years.
8 And he goes on -- and I have to confess to my
9 fellow commissioners, I'm a little frustrated by
10 this process because the suggestion was a bit
11 ethereal. We want to have a conversation with
12 the voters.

13 Mayor Peyton did not give us anything
14 firm. What would he do different? What is he
15 critical of currently? What needs to be
16 corrected to engage in this process of perhaps
17 recommending a truly massive change in local
18 government?

19 We debate and we talk about these ancillary
20 issues. And I would like to know, what is wrong
21 that would be corrected by an appointed board?
22 I realize there are state and federal
23 guidelines. There's laws that have to be
24 applied. There's a lot of latitude in how
25 things are done at the local level. I think

1 that -- actually, we've had a couple of
2 representations today where the school board is
3 perhaps ahead of the City. The school board has
4 figured out how to do staggered terms. The City
5 has not.

6 The school board has implemented a
7 strategic plan, which I have seen being utilized
8 at the school level, and it's requiring and
9 encouraging and pushing all principals, all the
10 stakeholders to move in a common direction to
11 achieve common goals. The school board has
12 already done that. We just heard about it last
13 week, something that perhaps the City would be
14 interested in.

15 Truthfully, I am very interested in this
16 idea from Professor Corrigan. I think this is
17 something that could actually move us past this
18 entire argument because I think it is something
19 that would have some substance, it would have
20 the ability to bring in school board members,
21 bring in the supervisor of elections, bring in
22 all the elected officials, and the mayor could
23 use the power of the bully pulpit to set an
24 agenda for this City, a unified agenda. And
25 people would have the ability to buy into that.

1 They would do what we do. They would discuss.
2 They would debate. They would compromise. They
3 would work towards these common goals to the
4 benefit of the city.

5 So I am very impressed with that idea, and
6 I think it's something that we should look at
7 very seriously. But I have yet to see anything
8 of substance that would make me want to give up
9 my right to vote for my local officials. I
10 don't see that. I want the right every four
11 years -- or perhaps every six years. I'm not
12 sure, Mr. Catlett -- to say yes or no about not
13 just who represents my district and my school
14 board, my sheriff, my tax collector, property
15 appraiser, supervisor of elections, I want that
16 right. I want to retain that right, and I'm not
17 willing to give that up. I want to -- if it is
18 necessary to make a change, I would like for
19 somebody to have given us the reasons why, and I
20 don't think I've seen that.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner Thompson.

22 MR. THOMPSON: Thanks, Commissioner.

23 There's one thing very briefly, if we're
24 talking about Commissioner Catlett's report on
25 the staggering of terms, he concluded -- I heard

1 him say that he had already passed on this
2 document to the current council president and
3 vice president, and -- do we want to stop
4 there? Since we went this far, do we want to
5 pass it on to other council people?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioners?

7 Well, first, let me say my reaction to
8 that. On the one hand, we were chastised for
9 giving our opinion to the council on another
10 issue. And I made a personal commitment to the
11 council president that we would not come back
12 piecemeal. However, this obviously affects them
13 as well.

14 And, Commissioner Catlett, this is a
15 document that you've created. Technically, it's
16 now a public document.

17 MR. CATLETT: True.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: So, as a matter of
19 practicality, I don't see a way that we can now
20 keep it from the rest of the council. Because
21 the council president has it, they can get it
22 from him. So that might be a good avenue for
23 dissemination going forward.

24 Commissioner Thompson, do you have any
25 further comments on that?

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

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Commissioner Catlett.

3 MR. CATLETT: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman.

4 I certainly didn't represent this
5 commission by showing them this chart. They
6 both understood this was an early model draft,
7 and I simply wanted to make sure that if one of
8 them really hated one of these two alternatives,
9 since they are in the position to control the
10 flow of legislation, as you know, that -- you
11 know, if one of them said, "Absolutely we can do
12 four years, but not six," I would report that to
13 you today.

14 You know, as a political matter, this is a
15 political question. For me, it's a question of
16 civic responsibility to have a government that
17 works well, and this is fine-tuning. But, you
18 know, when you're affecting other people's
19 elections, at least for the current president
20 and future president, I felt they ought to at
21 least have it one day ahead of time, which is
22 what they got, just to see if I was totally off
23 base and this was a totally stupid idea. It
24 would be really good to know before I made a
25 public fool of myself.

1 So that was my reason for calling them and,
2 of course, talking to Supervisor Holland to make
3 sure I wasn't totally off the reservation with
4 this.

5 And, you know, again, this is not one of
6 the burning issues that would come up in a poll,
7 like public safety or education, but it's
8 something if we can fix it without bloodshed, we
9 should. And I take responsibility for showing
10 them this early draft. It is now a public
11 document. It became so yesterday.

12 Before we push it out to the council,
13 though, I'd like to follow up on
14 Commissioner Korman's suggestion and come up
15 with real working charts and narratives as to
16 what the strengths and weaknesses are of each
17 and what the costs are, because only Mr. Holland
18 has that kind of information, and give a
19 complete report to present to this commission.
20 And then, you know, if you want me to send -- or
21 want the commission to send it to the council,
22 it would be up to commission to decide that, not
23 me.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Catlett.

25 Commissioner Korman, you were in the queue

1 and now --

2 MS. KORMAN: I was just concerned, if we
3 were to send something out, we -- it represents
4 something that we're doing. And we haven't made
5 a decision to do anything yet, and that will set
6 us up, again, for not positive press at least.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioners, any other
8 comments? I don't have anybody else in the
9 queue.

10 THE COMMISSIONERS: (No response.)

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Our next meeting will
12 be January 7th. I wish all of you a Happy
13 Hanukkah, a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year,
14 including to our staff: Mr. Rohan,
15 Mr. Clements, and Ms. Tropa. Thank you all for
16 your hard work this year.

17 The end is in sight, but I think the
18 hardest part is left, so thank you all for your
19 hard work.

20 (The above proceedings were adjourned at
21 12:10 p.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 30th day of December, 2009.

Diane M. Tropa