I. Call to Order

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

President Elaine Gantz Berman called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m. The following Board of Education members were present: Ms. Elaine Gantz Berman, Mrs. Susan G. Edwards, Rev. Lucia Guzman, Mrs. Michelle Moss, Mr. Kevin Patterson, Ms. Theresa Peña, and Mr. Lester Woodward.

C. Recognitions

Ms. Gantz Berman called on Sharon Robinson, Executive Director/Principal at Emily Griffith Opportunity School (EGOS), to recognize Essie Garrett for her dedication to EGOS students and activities during her long-time employment there. Ms. Robinson said that, as a world-class ultra-runner, Essie has adopted many charitable projects. This year Essie and her running partner adopted the EGOS Foundation, which provides student scholarships. Their goal was to raise $25,000 by running 310 miles from Arnold, Nebraska, to EGOS, dressed in bonnets and boots and clothes of the time period of Emily Griffith and pulling a small covered wagon. Arnold was where Emily’s family lived before they left their homestead to travel to Denver in 1895, and the run followed that pathway. So far, $21,500 has been donated. Ms. Robinson asked Mr. Patterson to make the presentation. Mr. Patterson congratulated Essie for what she has done for the students of EGOS. Ms. Garrett responded that this was truly a “village” effort, and she thanked the Board and all of the people who were instrumental in raising this money. She said the greatest thing of all was the journey, and that when she thought things were really rough, they were not. She said all she had to do was to look out to the community and say “We need some help,” and they helped—and $3,500 was still needed to reach their goal.

Mrs. Moss introduced former councilman Mr. Ted Hackworth and Ms. Jeanne Faatz, the new city councilwoman from Southwest Denver. She thanked Mr. Hackworth on behalf of Southwest Denver and the Denver Public School (DPS) for all of the work he
has done over the last 30 years. The first six years of his public life were spent in this Boardroom and the last 24 as a city councilman representing Southwest Denver. When several of Mr. Hackworth’s constituents came to Mrs. Moss to ask how they could recognize him for his years of service. Mrs. Moss said she, of course, thought of DPS and in particular of Sabin Elementary School in Southwest Denver. Sabin has great baseball fields, so on September 18 there will be a dedication ceremony at Sabin, a huge sign will be erected, and that area where children play and the community gathers will be known forever as “Hackworth Field.” Mr. Hackworth thanked the Board for the recognition and for their dedication to Denver kids.

II. Board Member Reports

A. November 2003 Election Initiatives

1. Resolution 2827 – GO Bond Election – Mr. Patterson read and moved the adoption of Resolution 2827 calling for an election on November 4, 2003, to authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds and the levy of property taxes to pay such bonds; setting the ballot title and ballot issue for the election; providing other matters and ratifying action previously taken relating thereto; and providing the effective date of such resolution. The motion was seconded. A copy of this resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, II-A.

Mr. Patterson said this resolution is the result of much hard work by many people. He said the main thrust of this bond is the hard construction of new and renovated buildings and the maintenance of facilities in the amount of $310,800,000 over three years. A good portion of this amount is meant to bring district facilities up to code, to make sure they are safe and secure. He said that there are a number of buildings that are aging, and the district must be responsible in taking good care of them because our most treasured asset, our children, are in them.

Superintendent Jerry Wartgow recognized and thanked the citizens committee and DPS staff who worked so hard over the last six months on this proposal to identify the most pressing needs of DPS children. Though they first were asked to prepare a five-year proposal, the staff and committee all agreed to reduce the planning horizon from five to three years, and that is how they got from the $474 million to $310 million. He said the district must respond to growth patterns of the city, there is a tremendous investment in capital facilities, and that investment must be protected. This bond proposal is in line with the goal of high expectations and improved performance of all students and closing the gap between better and poorer performing students. He said the district must provide an environment in which teachers can teach, students can learn, and the community can be proud. Dr. Wartgow said he is pleased to present this to the Board for approval.

Mr. Patterson said that there is an appendix that has the actual language the voters will see on their mail-in ballots. People need to understand when they look at that language that it is a lot like the baseball stadium tax. The way people need to think
about this tax is that it allows the district to keep the revenue to pay for the bonds. He wanted to make sure people are clear about how this works, and an example that has been thoroughly explained may be the best way.

Ms. Gantz Berman reiterated that the bond would not involve a tax rate increase for Denver citizens. It is a way for citizens to increase their investment in the schools and not increase their tax rate. She said a unique aspect of this bond package is that this is the first time DPS will include two charter schools as part of a bond. KIPP Academy and Denver School of Science and Technology are very exciting charter schools, and the Board is pleased to include them as part of the bond package. This is a 100% mail-in ballot election, so people will begin to vote about the third week in October. She said that this is the final step the Board of Education will take in this process; the rest will be up to Denver voters.

A roll call vote was recorded, and Resolution 2827 passed unanimously.

2. Resolution 2828 – Mill Levy Election – Mr. Woodward read and moved the adoption of Resolution 2828 calling for an election on November 4, 2003, to authorize a “Mill Levy Override” tax increase; setting the ballot title and ballot issue for the election providing other matters and ratifying action previously taken relating thereto; and providing the effective date of such resolution. The motion was seconded. A copy of this resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, II-A-2.

Mr. Woodward said he would read the language that will be on the ballot because it very briefly describes some of the really exciting things that the mill levy override would give DPS the financial capacity to do. The ballot will read as follows:

Shall Denver Public Schools (School District No. 1) taxes be increased $20 million annually in the current budget year and each budget year thereafter to

• Provide art/music teachers in all elementary schools
• Purchase new textbooks
• Increase funding for repairs and maintenance
• Expand all-day kindergarten and early childhood education classes
• Improve high school graduation rates
• Improve academic achievement in under-performing schools

by an additional property tax levy at a rate sufficient to produce the amount specified above in each such year, which taxes shall be deposited into the general fund of the district and shall be in addition to the property taxes that otherwise would be levied for the general fund?

Mr. Woodward said that unlike the general obligation bond that was described and voted on just before this, there would be a tax increase imposed on all property within the city of Denver if this ballot issue passes. It has been calculated that this would have an impact on the average priced home of $251,000 of approximately $48 a year or $4 a month. He said the Board believes that all of the items on this
mill levy are directly related to improved academic achievement and the success of DPS students. These items have been needed for a long time, but have not been available. In two instances, they simply provide for recovering where the district was, with respect to all-day kindergarten and early childhood education, and that would only be in part in certain schools with low-income families. It is not by any means a full recovery or where the district wants to be, but is a step in the right direction. He said he hopes that proponents of this proposal can do an adequate job of describing this to the voters of Denver so that they will support, as they have so many times, the opportunity to improve the education for the children of Denver.

Ms. Peña said that she had the opportunity to serve as a citizen on this committee for the last six months, and one of the over-riding objectives was to provide programs that really improved the quality of the neighborhood schools. If the bond issue is the bricks and mortar, the mill levy is the chicken soup for the soul for our children. The early childhood education issue was really a pay now or pay later proposition. The district will spend fewer resources in the long run by providing early education, particularly to the disadvantaged children in the district, rather than have society pay those costs on the back end for kids who are dropping out and then are not able to obtain solid wage-earning jobs. The other issue was to improve the academic progress in secondary education; and to reform and revitalize neighborhood schools, something the committee really felt was critical to leverage the resources that the district has put into elementary programs over the last several years. Ms. Peña said there was incredible oversight by the citizens on this committee. They were watchdogs, and they were really guarding their fellow citizens’ money. They felt that this was the best investment of those dollars, because there will be improvement in academic achievement and closing the gap. The committee really felt that these were the five or six programs that would move DPS forward in a way that could not be done within existing budget.

Ms. Gantz Berman added that every Board member was proud of the progress being made in the school district, and believes that this mill levy is needed to move to the next level. The City of Denver would be as strong as its school system, and DPS is making great strides. DPS plays a major role in the economic development and well being of this city. If the mill levy passes, for the first time in many years elementary schools will all have art or music teachers. She said this will give a leg up to many low-income kids who cannot afford early childhood education or all-day kindergarten now. She said the district wants to change under-performing schools so that every family would feel proud to send their child to their neighborhood school, and if they make another choice it will be because they are selecting a specific educational option, not because of the quality of their neighborhood school. She said that this is one of the most exciting mill levy packages that DPS has ever put forward, and she is very excited that the Board of Education is about to put this before Denver voters.

A roll call vote was recorded, and Resolution 2828 passed unanimously.
III. Superintendent’s Reports

There was none.

IV. Consent Agenda

Assistant Secretary Jacquie Lucero read the consent agenda items by number and sequence, in accordance with consent agenda procedures. The following items were removed from the consent agenda and held for discussion:

IV-C-1a - Ratification of the Agreement between the Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association

IV-C-1b - Revisions to 2003-2004 School Year Calendar

The following items were included under the consent agenda:

A. Board of Education

1. The Board of Education will be asked to approve revisions to Policy BEDH – Public Participation at Board Meetings to allow citizens to address the Board of Education with regard to policy issues or general educational concerns of the school district. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-A-1.

2. Resolution – Capital Construction Costs for KIPP: Sunshine Peak Academy Charter School. This resolution states that KIPP has established capital construction needs, a need to incur bonded indebtedness or obtain revenues from a special mill levy to finance capital construction, and presented a viable plan. It further states that up to $2 million be allocated for this purpose should a general obligation bond program be submitted to and approved by the voters in November 2003. A copy of this resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-A-2.

3. Resolution – Capital Construction Costs for Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) Charter School – This resolution states that DSST has established capital construction needs, a need to incur bonded indebtedness or obtain revenues from a special mill levy to finance capital construction, and presented a viable plan. It further states that up to $5 million be allocated for this purpose should a general obligation bond program be submitted to and approved by the voters in November 2003. A copy of this resolution is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-A-3.

4. Intergovernmental Agreement – The Board of Education will consider the Intergovernmental Agreement between the school district and Denver Election Commission, which describes how the school district election will be coordinated
with other city and state issues and provides for payment of costs. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-A 4.

5. Naming of Athletic Facility – The Board of Education will consider approving a motion that will name the softball fields at Sabin Elementary School Hackworth Fields. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-A-5.

B. Superintendent’s Office

1. Gift Report – The Board of Education will be asked to accept gifts having a value of $500 or more. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-B-1.

C. Administrative Services

1. Human Resources

   c. Personnel Transaction Report – This report contains information regarding employee activity such as appointments, resignations, and transfers. A copy of this report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-C-1c.

   d. Resolution of Critical Shortage – The Board of Education will consider a resolution declaring a critical shortage of certain non-licensed employees in order that the district may hire current retirees to fill vacant positions with no resulting reduction in retirement benefits for these employees. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-C-1d.

2. Facility Management

   a. Final Settlements – The Board of Education will be asked to approve the Final Settlements for contracted services as described on the attached schedule. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-C-2a.

   b. Construction Advisory Committee Final Report – The Board of Education will be asked to approve the Construction Advisory Committee’s Final Report for the Centennial Elementary School Four-Classroom Addition project. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-C-2b.
D. Educational Services

1. Charter School Initiative – The Board of Education will be asked to approve revisions to the Challenges, Choices, and Images Charter School contract changing the location of the charter school; increasing the school’s maximum enrollment to 600 students; and increasing the term of the charter school to 30 years. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-D-1.

A motion was made and seconded that the consent agenda be approved. A roll call vote was recorded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION AGENDA**

IV-C-1a Motion – Ratification of the Agreement between the Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association – Mrs. Edwards read a motion that the Board of Education approve the Agreement with the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA), which includes the related Salary Schedules for the 2003-2004 School Year, effective September 1, 2003. The motion was seconded.

Mrs. Edwards said that this was her ninth season of involvement in negotiating the teachers’ contract, and this has been a challenging year, made most challenging by the current budget situation that exists in the nation, the state, the city, and the school district. But she said she was thrilled to get the phone call Friday evening saying that the teachers had voted to ratify the contract as negotiated. Despite the fact that the budget situation does not allow the Board to compensate employees at the level of their worth, and despite the fact that this resulted in modifications to the school calendar, which many wish were not necessary, there were a number of positive outcomes to this agreement. She said a clarification, a redefinition of the collaborative school committees and other partnership efforts within the contract will serve well in working together to benefit the students of DPS. Mrs. Edwards read from the contract itself, under “Statement of Beliefs,” the following:

“In negotiating this Agreement, The Board and the Association, with the concurrence of the Community, have three major goals for joint school reform efforts:
Greater success for all students as reflected in higher achievement.
A significantly higher completion rate that moves the District toward its goal of graduating all students from the K-12 educational program.
An improvement in the Community’s level of confidence that the Denver Public Schools, as an institution, provides effective education for all students.”

Mrs. Edwards said that this initiative represents commitment to that partnership between teachers, the Board of Education, and the district. It sets the stage for continued collaboration to take public education to a new and higher level. She believes exciting things will come out of this partnership next year and in the years to come, and said a strong joint message must be sent to the community as a whole that the district, working with all of its employees and employee groups and with the community, is here to serve to
the very best of its ability every child within the Denver Public Schools. She said she was honored to bring this motion forward for action.

Dr. Wartgow said that he wanted to thank the members of the negotiating teams on both sides. This was a very difficult year, particularly following last year’s budget adjustments. There was a lot of hard work and good faith, and it was a true joint effort that was deeply appreciated. No one really feels good about what DPS was able to offer, but in light of the current situation, tough choices were made throughout the whole budget process, and this was one of those tough choices. He said he was proud of the teachers for standing up and taking their fair share of hits, or some may argue less than fair. What teachers are expected to do in this day and age is incredible. He said in many cases they are expected to be parents, babysitters, nurses, counselors, social workers, cops, and the list of demands placed on teachers can go on and on. Besides all of those roles, they serve one unique role that no one else serves, and that is as a teacher. He said the district has been fortunate to make progress towards all of its goals, in student achievement, in closing the gap, and will continue to because of what happens in the classroom. He said that this is one budget, this is one issue, not without its tensions and not without concerns that are shared by all. What has to be done now is move forward and be very careful not to lose the momentum, the good will, and the confidence that have been generated with the citizens of Denver and look at what can done next to recover and to compensate teachers for what they are worth, so that the district can attract and retain the very best and brightest. Dr. Wartgow said he was pleased that the agreement has been ratified, and he looked forward to continuing the partnership with the teachers association and all of the district’s employees.

Ms. Gantz Berman asked Becky Wissink, president, and Bruce Dickensen, executive director of the DCTA, to join her at the podium. She said she did that just to show hope for a continued strong working relationship and partnership. She said that the last couple of months have been tough resolving this contract, and all agree that it is the teacher in the classroom who makes the difference for education and learning, and without good, dedicated, and well-compensated teachers, there will not be a solid school district. She wanted to show the Board’s real sincerity and deep commitment to continue to work together. She said the Board will work toward a strong partnership and will do what is good for teachers, because teachers are the core of everything that happens in the schools.

A roll call vote was recorded, and the motion passed unanimously. A copy of this Agreement is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-C-1a.

IV-C-1b    Motion – Revisions to the 2003-2004 School Year Calendar – Mrs. Moss read a motion that the Board of Education approve changes to the 2003-2004 School Year Calendar as indicated below:

Traditional Calendar:

- Change the last day of school from May 27 to May 26
- Designate October 20 as a no student/teacher day, rather than a planning day for teachers
- Designate February 17 as a no student/teacher day, rather than a parent conference day
Continuous Calendar:
- Change the last day of school from June 11 to June 10
- Designate October 20 as a no student/teacher day, rather than a planning day for teachers
- Designate April 12 as a no student/teacher day, rather than a parent conference day.

The motion was seconded.

Mrs. Moss said she had a hard time with this resolution, though she knew that it had to be made. She said she also recognized that all three days represent a real loss to the district and most importantly to students. It would be her sincere hope that in the coming year a way would be found to reinstate all three days.

A roll call vote was recorded, and the motion passed unanimously. A copy of this motion is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, IV-C-1b.

V. Old Business

There was none.

VI. New Business

1. School-Community Partnerships
   a. Semi-annual Grant Report – a report on grants submitted for the period January 1, 2003, through June 30, 2003, is presented to the Board for information. A copy of that report is appended to the official minutes of this meeting as Appendix 03-17, VI-1a.

RECESS AND RECONVENE

Ms. Gantz Berman recessed the meeting and explained that the Board would reconvene at 7:00 p.m. for the public hearing segment of the meeting.

Ms. Gantz Berman reconvened the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

VII. Public Comment (First Thursday of Each Month)

Eryn Osterhaus, Susan Danley, and Teddy Goldman, Teacher Compensation – Eryn Osterhaus, a fifth-year English teacher at George Washington High School (GW), spoke of her and other teachers’ concerns with the step freeze. She said the contract passed by only 5% and was soundly rejected by most secondary teachers, because they are the ones bearing the brunt of all the changes, including increased class size and increased instructional time. At GW teachers teach six periods a day. The new contract cuts one day of instructional time, and she thinks this will directly affect the perception of DPS. Already 30% of Denver residents choose other districts or other venues for schooling, she said, and wonders how cutting instructional time can have any positive impact on the perception of DPS and/or CSAP scores. If kids are lost, teachers are lost.
She said she failed to see how the Board’s decision not to include teacher compensation in the mill levy reflects the Board’s commitment to teachers. Two new schools are being built, when most districts are closing schools. A big problem she had with the mill levy, she said, was that one art teacher would be added to every elementary school, and she doesn’t know how the district plans to pay these teachers after the mill levy money runs out. If there is a step freeze now, she asked, what will happen in the future to the added teachers? The current contract ignores teacher compensation, and the Board’s decision to ignore it on the mill levy speaks clearly to how they value teachers. If they advocate for children, they must advocate for teachers, because the one thing that ensures student success is the teacher. She asked the Board to reconsider its decision not to include teacher compensation on the mill levy. They have the opportunity right now to address teacher compensation on the mill levy, and they need to take it, she said.

Teddy Goldman, computer art teacher at GW, said he taught for 14 years and has never seen teacher morale lower. He said he would only speak of his personal experiences of how art works in schools. To cite an example of how he thinks this district wastes money, he said last year DPS hired a director for the Art Department. They are a very small art department, a very small number of art teachers, and yet a director was hired with a starting pay of $69,500. In his experience, he said, most districts take a 3 or 4 thousand dollar stipend, give it to a teacher who is the volunteer leader, and then they gather all the art teachers once a month, and they do everything a $69,500 director does and more. So he said, if he saw one such waste in his little department, he has to think there are many others down at Grant Street. He asked if anyone had ever done a real analysis, had ever come to the people like him who have experience and asked him how to do it. If enough cutting were done in the right places, maybe there wouldn’t now be a freeze on the step increases, which are pretty sacred in most school districts. Step increases, he said, are how a teacher gets to a point where 15 or 20 years from now he is finally making a fairly good salary that he can put towards retirement. Teachers look at examples like this, however, and they think big administration, they lose faith, and morale is very, very low, Mr. Goldman said.

Yoon Park, GW teacher of intro freshmen and AP juniors and seniors, said that strong emotions are involved in the district’s lack of value for the teacher/student relationship. She said at GW they are mandated to teach six classes, and what that means to her as an English teacher, and thus to students, is that at the end of the day, she has 160 papers to grade when she gets home, its means that she has to turn away students during lunchtime and after school. Where normally she would welcome students, she said she just doesn’t have the energy anymore or it’s just not in her as much as it used to be because she is so taxed. DPS cannot afford to treat dedicated, qualified teachers as expendable workers. She said the district always uses the reasoning that teachers should bear the brunt, because they have to think of the children. She loves her students, and doesn’t want to see them hurt or negatively affected by this, but she said the district can’t keep using that excuse to put everything on the teachers. She said that as a teacher, she believes it is inherent in their identity that they have a bit of the martyr in them, but said they do not have sucker in them. She said she is not going to be a sucker.
She said she is young, but she has her expertise, and if she is not treated well, she will take it somewhere else. And finally, she said, the Board’s meeting schedule is a perfect example of how they value teachers’ time. They started 23 minutes late and had a very small apology. She said she has an avalanche of papers to grade, three preps to organize, and she values every single minute she can get.

Ms. Edwards said that there are many things she would like to say, but will just comment on a couple of the facts that Eryn put forth. She said that when she talked about 30% of families leaving DPS, she was obviously quoting the misleading headline in the Rocky Mountain News. In reading the article, the 30% speaks to DPS families who choose to stay in DPS and make choices of other educational opportunities within the district. She said that mill levy money does not end. When voters pass a mill levy, that money is there in perpetuity. She said the Board believes strongly that Denver citizens value having neighborhood schools for their young children, and that is why schools are being built. Voters will decide if they want their kids to attend a neighborhood school or not. Mrs. Edwards said that she is very disillusioned to hear it even inferred that this Board does not value teachers. She knows from experiences as a student, a parent, and now a Board member that this Board of Education values teachers tremendously. She was very impressed, she said, that GW teachers were willing to teach six classes a day, rather than have greater class sizes than is educationally sound, and she has an appreciation for the frustration that teachers are feeling. She said one of her goals when she came on the Board of Education was to begin to break down the barriers between what was perceived as downtown and the schools. The anger and hostility that she heard tonight are very disconcerting, she said, and when she sees the partnerships and communication that’s happened over the years, maybe she was, for once, at a loss for words. She said she knows she is not going to change their perceptions, but the really bad news is that the message going out to the citizens is that this is a district where the teachers, or at least the teachers from one school, are not supportive of what is happening, and for the sake of the kids and the school district, it is necessary to carry this mill levy and bond election this year. The last thing needed is discourse internally and have that be the public impression of the school district. She said it is too late to change this mill levy, but there are plans in place for future initiatives as far as pay for performance is concerned. She said she was sorry for their frustration, but disillusioned by their message.

Mrs. Moss said that this is hard for her as well, because she was a professional educator before she retired. She taught school for 13 years and understands the challenges of teaching and the energy that it takes, she has incredible respect for teachers and the job that they do, and she understands how difficult it is. She also sees a different side of it from sitting on the Board, she said, in that there are sometimes trade-offs that have to be made. Unfortunately this was a year that those trade-offs were not pretty, they were excruciating for all; she knows that they impacted teachers, and it is difficult to accept that. She must say, however, that the Board did not intend to show disrespect in coming late to the Boardroom. She said they needed to understand that the Board is not sitting upstairs waiting to come
down, that there are real issues that are talked about, often times from 4:00 until after midnight. They do that because they love this district, and she hopes that teachers can appreciate that as well. She said that while she understands that this is a difficult year and that there could be low morale in buildings and among people, the are, as always, all there for the kids. She said she hopes that the teachers in this district will get behind the mill levy bond and will work for its passage, because she truly believes it will benefit the kids of the district and the teachers of the district.

Rev. Guzman questioned the statement that the agreement was only ratified by 5%, and Ms. Osterhaus clarified that it was ratified by 55% of voting members, which is 85% of DCTA membership. Rev. Guzman asked for clarification of the remark that all secondary schools or high schools voted against it. Ms. Osterhaus said that, with the exception of Manual High School, all of the high schools voted against the contract. Rev. Guzman said that her colleagues had adequately expressed how difficult this has been and that they all feel the same. She thanked the teachers for their work and said that she would do all that she could in the coming year to find a way to strengthen salaries and support what this district could offer teachers. If they have the view that the Board does not respect teachers, then the Board needs to strengthen their respect, through actions and decisions.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that she is the School Board member for GW, and that she would be happy to go there to meet with these teachers or the entire faculty. She also said that every employee group received the same salary increase this year of 2.8%, and DPS was not like a private business where there is some control over the revenue received. She said they’ve said it over and over again to DCTA that the Board wants to do what is right and appropriate for teachers. This year was a struggle for all, for every employee group, and it was even a little harder for secondary teachers because of the class-size increase. They are hopeful that the economy will be some better next year, and will do what they can to make it right, because teachers are important to the district. She said she was sorry for their frustration, and would make herself available if they would like that.

Becky Wissink, DCTA Settlement – Ms. Wissink stated that she is a bilingual education teacher currently serving as DCTA president. She said she wanted to talk to the Board about the ratification vote and where to go from there. She said this was the highest ratification vote in recent memory; 2,354 votes were cast; 55% voted to accept. It was not a popular settlement. It is interesting to look at the results—in general, elementary schools voted for it, middle schools were split, and high schools voted against it. She feels that the vote reflects what is happening in the schools. Teachers saw the Agreement equate to more work, less time, and no increase in pay. The number of days paid were reduced, yet the workload didn’t decrease. And teachers, those who are directly responsible for academics, were the only employee group to make this level of sacrifice. Teachers want what the Board wants, she said, and have high expectations of teachers, and want to attract the best and brightest to Denver, because that is what the students deserve. They want to retain and reward the best teachers, because they make the difference in student achievement, she said. As professionals, they want to
advance their careers, learn continuously, and be recognized and financially rewarded
for their contribution. Board members and the superintendent have said they value
teachers and want to lead the state in compensation. If these statements are to be
believed, now is the time to act. The first step is to focus on a salary recovery plan.
Teachers will not accept a freeze on their salary schedule two years in a row, she said.
A salary recovery plan is necessary because DPS has lost ground in the market place in
relation to its competition to attract and retain teachers. DPS will continue to lose
ground in that market next year unless there is a concerted, joint effort to create a
recovery. Looking out 18 months, if the retirement systems merge, the district will lose
some of its best teachers because DPS is no longer a leader in teacher salaries, and there
would be no monetary incentive to stay in DPS. Looking out seven months, a salary
recovery plan is crucial before a vote on the new compensation system. She said they
want teachers to cast their vote in March based on the merits of the proposed
compensation system. The new compensation system was never meant to be a solution
to balancing the budget or keeping the current system viable. She asked how a new and
improved system can be promised, where teachers have the potential to earn more,
when the promises of the current compensation system are not being kept. Looking
ahead just one month from now, they expect to monitor the district’s budget, and will
reopen negotiations if there is increased revenue from student enrollment, less
expenditures within department budgets, or funds are made available in the general
fund due to the passage of the mill levy. If not in the mill levy, what will be the source
of revenue to make the salary restoration plan possible? They have established working
relationships anchored in the Agreement. Now, more than ever, is the time to work
together.

Mr. Patterson commented that very often relationships are difficult. It’s not in the
good times that relationships are tested, but in the tough times such as now, he said.
The only way to improve the relationship is by keeping lines of communication
open, even though that is not always easy, often times it’s awkward, and sometimes
it’s painful. But the same goals and concerns are shared. He said teachers have his
commitment to continue to work and look for ways to continue a good relationship,
even through the difficult times. He thanked Ms. Wissink for her work, and said he
knew it had been difficult for her as well.

Elimination of Family Passes – Ms. Gantz Berman said that she would like Sue
Edwards to explain a little bit about the Family Passes before the next three speakers.

Mrs. Edwards said that the Board wants to increase the number of people in the
stands, to have a certain revenue income to be able to support the district’s athletic
programs, and to simplify some cumbersome and complex situations that arose at
the gate because of abuses of passes in the past. The Board has heard the concerns
of individuals through emails, Mrs. Moss attended a meeting at John F. Kennedy
High School (JFK) and heard concerns of parents there, and they have heard from
other schools that sell 40 or 50 passes a year. The Board got the messages and has
asked staff to go back and take a look at coming up with a proposal that would
maintain the revenue stream, and at the same time make it possible for parents of
student athletes to purchase some sort of individual pass to make it possible for
them to attend sporting events of their child or events throughout the district. The
head of athletics and other staff members will be getting back to the Board ASAP
with a proposal and a look at whether that can be done. She said they have heard
the message, and this is an issue that the Board is taking a serious look at to see if there
are some changes that can happen.

Adina Swift – Ms. Swift introduced herself as a parent at JFK. She said that JFK has a
large student, family, and community participation in their school events, and spoke to
the issue of all passes to all school events. She said they would prefer to have
nonparticipating students attend other school events, rather than have them wandering
around the community. Eliminating passes to school events will provide more
opportunities for kids out on their own in the community to get into trouble. She said
she wanted to speak about this issue as it affects the kids, rather than the parents. She
expressed appreciation to Mrs. Moss for attending the meeting and said that it shows
that the Board is taking their concerns seriously.

Jeff Johnson – Mr. Johnson said that he has two daughters at JFK, and between the two,
they are in five sports. He said he wanted to thank the Board for understanding the
situation that some of them are in, because with five sports, that automatically means
$300 for fees. Mr. Johnson said they support their kids and school 100%, and they go to
every single event, so if they had to pay $5 for everything, that would be another $300.
Eliminating the pass, he feels, effectively eliminates the people who support the school.
He said he appreciates that the Board recognizes the need for some kind of pass and
hopes that ASAP really means ASAP.

Mrs. Moss said they had some discussion about this upstairs, and that everyone was
pretty clear on how she felt about it. She said it was a privilege to be at the
Commander Club meeting and a delight to see parents so involved with their kids
and their school. She thanked all of the JFK parents for coming tonight.

Mrs. Edwards said that she was like the hard, bottom-line, budget kinds of person,
and may come across at times as a hard nose on this issue. But she said she realized
that certain resources are needed to offer athletics programs. It would be nice to let
everyone in for free, but then all of the money to offer athletics would have to come
out of the district’s resources, and there isn’t enough in the general fund to do that.
It is a balancing issue, she said, and asked what they thought an individual annual
pass to sporting events in DPS should cost, what would be a reasonable amount?

Mr. Johnson responded that last year and individual pass was $30. He said that, at JFK
at least, the Board could double that amount to $60, and people would gladly pay it.

Mr. Patterson said that if the desire is to do more things in athletics, ways to raise
more revenue must be found. What would the reaction be to paying more fees for
the athletes and then that would be tied to the passes, he asked?
Without doing any research on it, Mr. Johnson said he didn’t think it would be a good idea, because there are some high schools now where students don’t pay any fee to participate in sports.

Board members disagreed with Mr. Johnson on that statement, and Ms. Gantz Berman explained that if students can’t afford to pay, there is a fund available, but everyone is supposed to pay (or work it off, Mrs. Edwards added). Dr. John Leslie, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, agreed with Board members that every school has a work program or opportunities for students who cannot afford the fees to earn money to subsidize their fees, but all athletes are required to pay.

Marjorie Klarl, North High School Teacher Transfers – Ms. Klarl, retired North High School teacher, said she would continue the theme of how morale is lowered by some of the decisions made in the Boardroom and by administration and would speak to the issue of the teachers at North who were summarily transferred. There were serious problems with the administration at North last year, she said, but when teachers spoke out about the terrible climate and inappropriate things that occurred, they were characterized as slackers and were accused of not wanting to do lesson plans—all comments designed to turn attention from the real issue, which was the incompetence of the school principal. They were repeatedly told that there would be no retaliation for these statements, for exercising their first amendment right to speak their minds. Unfortunately, Ms. Klarl said, these assurances proved to be false. Four excellent teachers, a secretary, and an assistant principal were arbitrarily transferred. This was a worst-case scenario of DPS cutting off its nose to spite its face, she said, and leadership needs to make strong leadership decisions and not be coerced by the legal system.

Ms. Gantz Berman said that the Board could not comment, because it is in the middle of a lawsuit right now.

L. W. Morrow, Fuel Cell Outreach – He said that about a year ago he visited with the Board about the Fuel Cell Enterprise and now he would like to do this outreach to bring about a greater public awareness of this technology. He said that since 9-11 there has been a lot of emphasis on this technology. His objective is to implement just a fraction of what the California Fuel Cell Partnership has done. They are eons ahead in this effort. He said it’s a very interesting technology, but there is not a great deal of interest here. So his objective is to generate this interest. There is not a lot of private industry in Colorado, Mr. Morrow said, it is a young state and does not have the robust private industry that you find on the East Coast, in Connecticut and New York City, where they manufacture these systems for the automakers. On a positive note, there is in fact a stationary fuel cell unit located at the Washington Park fire station. He said he would like to move forward, and provided documents from February of this year and from September 5th.

Ms. Gantz Berman thanked Mr. Morrow and said that that concluded the public hearing portion of the meeting, but before the Board meeting concluded, the Board would like Dr. Eckerling to present some of the highlights that will be part of the mill levy. This
would be, she said, a continuation of the previous part of the meeting and something they didn’t get to before the break.

Dr. Wayne Eckerling, Assistant Superintendent for Research, Planning and Special Programs, said that he would first like to point out that this is a very exciting opportunity for the DPS to move forward and to really enhance the educational opportunities that the district can offer students. He said there are six different components in the mill levy proposal as follows:

First, is to provide art/music in all elementary schools. This would provide an average of one new art or music teacher—and art and music broadly are defined broadly, he said, so it could include drama, drawing and painting, or a variety of programs, per elementary school. This would be a nonconvertible position. Once it’s there, it would be there forever.

Second, would be to purchase new textbooks. This would provide $3.5 million annually that would let the district, in conjunction with curriculum reform, purchase new books for various classes. This would go a long way in helping schools and in getting new materials out to the schools and really enhance the quality of what is being done.

The third component is maintenance and repairs. This has many different aspects to it. and emphasizes things like roof replacement, repaving, painting, etc., and this gives additional money to ensure that the district is able to maintain the facilities. Part of this money also needs to be used to have an ongoing source to replace the kinds of equipment that would normally be funded out of the capital reserve fund. This would provide money to replace such things as foreign language labs. Those are put into new schools, but there is never a source to go back to five to ten years later to fix them again and make them state of the art. So this money would be used for a variety of maintenance and repair purposes, some of them educational and some facility related, he said.

The fourth proposal, to expand all-day kindergarten and early childhood education, speaks to two important issues. First, this money would provide one full-day kindergarten class for every school with more than 50% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Second, it would change criteria for scholarships for tuition-based kindergarten and early childhood education classes to make additional families eligible. Right now, the guidelines are pretty tough for a family that is just over the requirement for free/reduced price lunch guidelines. This would double the number of scholarships available, and also the guidelines would be looked at. The district believes through this proposal about 2,200-plus new students in kindergarten and early childhood education can be served. All research indicates that this is one solid, proven way to help kids achieve. Kids who participate achieve better in third grade than kids who don’t, Dr. Eckerling said.

The fifth initiative would be to improve high school graduation rates. High school reform is gathering steam around the nation, and he said the district’s graduation rate is not acceptable. Particular emphasis would be placed on improving the graduation rate
and closing the achievement gap by providing a) additional advanced placement and other rigorous courses and programs; b) an instructional program that respects differences among students and helps each achieve at a high level; c) revised curriculum to reflect high expectations; and d) support for more students to participate in advanced courses, including tutoring and help with study skills, he said. The district may want to look at expanding the on-line programming, the variety of courses that are provided in each school, and also look at special or rigorous programs modeled after things like School of the Arts, but in different areas that will be appealing to students to draw them in and inspire them to achieve those high expectations held for all of students.

The sixth and last component of the proposal is to improve academic achievement in under-performing schools. This initiative really has two parts. It has the component to increase the attractiveness of schools to the neighborhood communities through special or choice programs and through increasing academic achievement. He said a new program couldn’t be put into a school without having a solid reading and math program, that both are needed. A community committee will be established for each school to collaborate with staff to develop the special program. Some examples of nice starts in that direction are Lincoln and Fairmont Elementary Schools, and Smiley Middle School, and it is interesting that those are schools that are doing pretty well in enrollment this year. It is believed that with a dedicated effort, with funding set aside for this, much more comprehensive work can be done than can be done without funding.

Ms. Gantz Berman said the Board has had extensive conversation about this and they wanted the public to hear in detail what was proposed in the mill levy. She said they are all extremely excited about it. She thanked Dr. Eckerling and said the Board would continue its work session upstairs.

Ms. Gantz Berman adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Susan G. Edwards, Secretary
Board of Education