

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, April 7, 2022 ~ 5:00 P.M.

King's Fork Middle School, 350 King's Fork Road, Suffolk, VA 23434

Board Members Present:

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*

Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Lorita Mayo

Tyron Riddick¹

Administrative Staff Present:

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*

Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*

Keesha L. Hicks, *Deputy Clerk*

• **OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION**

➤ **Call to Order:**

Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order.

➤ **2023-2028 Goals Indicators – SPS Strategic Plan**

Dr. Gordon introduced Dr. Branch who highlighted the following:

- Strategic Plan Focus Areas
- Sample Goals and Indicators
- School Board Next Steps

Dr. Branch reviewed the next steps for Members which included:

- Review sample goals and indicators
- Collaboratively create, revise, and edit goals and indicators
 - Recommended 3-5 SMART goals per focus area
 - Recommended 2-3 targeted indicators per goal; depending on the indicator
- Information from Members due to the Board Chair by April 29, 2022
- Goals and indicators shape the Superintendent's Next Steps – Action Plan

Dr. Gordon reminded the Board of the timeframe for developing the plan and implementation date.

The Board agreed to have an in-person work session to allow new Board Member Heather Howell the opportunity to know what has been completed thus far. The Board will continue working collaboratively to develop the strategic plan. The Board agreed to schedule a work session in order to continue work on the strategic plan. This work session will coincide with the special meeting to adopt the budget. They also agreed to reverse the order of the agenda at that special meeting, to begin with adopting the budget then having the work session to allow for more time to work through the Strategic Plan. The date for this meeting will be determined once the City approves its budget.

¹ Board Member Riddick arrived after the meeting had begun.

There being no further questions or discussions, Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck recessed the work session of the public meeting.

- **RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING**

- Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck reconvened the public meeting. Dr. Gordon introduced Mrs. Marie Bullock, Assistant Principal and Mrs. Sheila Williams, Counseling Director to the podium to present the Honor Graduates of Lakeland High School.

- **PRESENTATION OF LAKELAND HIGH SCHOOL HONOR GRADUATES**

- Ms. Bullock and Ms. Williams announced each honor student and stated their plans for the future.

Board Members expressed their pride in the student's accomplishments and congratulated the students, teachers, parents, and all family members who played a role in the student's success. They reminded the students to stay focused as they continued pursuing their dreams, and that the School Board will continue to be supportive as they work towards their life's journeys.

There being no further comments, Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck recessed the presentation segment of the meeting.

- **RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING**

- **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck and she welcomed all to the meeting.

- **Pledge of Allegiance:**

Member Jenkins led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Member Riddick asked to add to the agenda under New Business a Discussion regarding School Behavior Climate at King's Fork Middle School.

The motion was amended to approve the agenda as presented with the addition of a Discussion regarding School Behavior Climate at King's Fork Middle School being added to the Agenda under New Business.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

- **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS**

- There were no speakers on agenda topics.

- **REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT**

- Good News Report: Mr. Melvin Bradshaw, Community Engagement Facilitator, highlighted the following good news/events that happened throughout the division.
 - SPS Alumni: Albertha Cross, NRHS, c/o 2016
 - Virginia Space Coast Scholar – Kriscilla Robinson
 - Miss Roanoke Teen – Ayana Johnson
 - 13th Annual CTE Student Conference
 - Grants and Awards
 - Athletic Wins!
 - Finance Wins!
 - March Teacher Spotlight
 - City-Wide Teacher of the Year

- Dr. Gordon introduced Delegate Jenkins and his Chief of Staff to the podium for a special presentation. Delegate Jenkins presented, on behalf of the Virginia General Assembly, resolutions recognizing and honoring the outstanding athleticism shown by the following teams:

- King’s Fork High School Girls Basketball – VHSL Class 4A State Championship
- King’s Fork High School Boys Basketball – VHSL Region 4A State Championship
- Lakeland High School Girls Basketball – VHSL Region 3A State Championship
- Nansemond River High School Girls Indoor Track Team – VHSL Class 5 State Championship
- Nansemond River High School Boys Indoor Tract Team – VHSL Class 5 State Championship

The Board Clerk read each resolution as the coaches and students received their commendations. Board Members thanked Delegate Jenkins for his continued support of Suffolk Public Schools and the City of Suffolk. They also thanked the coaches and students for their accomplishments.

- Calendar of Special Events: Dr. Gordon spotlighted the events on the calendar.

- **CONSENT AGENDA**

- **Approval of the Consent Agenda**

Dr. Gordon introduced two new administrative hires to Suffolk Public Schools.

- Mrs. Melodie Griffin, Coordinator of Employee Relations (current Principal at FBES)
- Mr. Kevin Privott, Director of Transportation

Both Mrs. Griffin and Mr. Privott expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to serve the students of Suffolk Public Schools.

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

- **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no Unfinished Business.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Creation of Two Escrow Accounts – Fleet and Textbooks**

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the creation of two escrow accounts for Fleets and Textbooks.

Following questions by Board Members with answers provided by Mrs. Forsman and further discussion by Board Members, the vote was called for.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 1 (Story) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 6 to 1

- **Local Plan and Budget for Career and Technical Education – 2022-2023**

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve Local Plan and Budget for Career and Technical Education for 2022-2023.

Dr. Gordon presented information to the Board.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

Due to the lateness of the evening, Member Riddick moved to adjust the agenda by moving up items six (6) through eight (8) in order to release the students to go home and prepare for the coming school day. Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck agreed and immediately addressed Resolutions 21/22-17, 21/22-18, and 21/22-19. The Clerk read each resolution.

- **Resolution 21/22-17: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Honoring the King’s Fork High School Girls Basketball Team for Winning the Virginia High School League Class 4A Championship**

Member Riddick moved and Member Howell seconded the motion to approve Resolution 21/22-17 as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

- **Resolution 21/22-18: A Resolution of the School Board of the City of Suffolk, Virginia, Honoring the Nansemond River High School Girls Track and Field Team for Winning the Virginia High School League Class 5 Championship for Indoor Track and Field**

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve Resolution 21/22-18 as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

➤ **Resolution Number 21/22-19: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Honoring the Nansemond River High School Boys Track and Field Team for Winning the Virginia High School League Class 5 Championship for Indoor Track and Field**

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve Resolution 21/22-19 as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

➤ **Proposed Middle School Courses: 2022-2023**

Member Story questioned the contents of one of the books listed titled, *Walk Two Moons*, for its use of death and sadness. She read one of the book's reviews and felt that this book would affect the student population which is already dealing with depression and potential suicide. Member Story preferred to have this book removed from the suggested list. Member Riddick agreed with concerns expressed by Member Story.

Conversation and questions ensued between Members as Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport provided clarification.

Member Riddick moved and Member Story seconded the motion to approve the suggested course under the condition that the books that are related to the suggested courses would come back before the Board for approval at a later date.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 2 (Jenkins, Dr. Brooks-Buck) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 2

➤ **Special Education Annual Plan 2022-2023**

Stephanie Whitley presented information to the Board regarding the Special Education Annual Plan 2022-2023.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Howell seconded the motion to approve the Special Education Annual Plan for 2022-2023 as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

➤ **Summer School Program - 2022**

Dr. Branch, Catherine Pichon, and Dr. Ronald Leigh presented information for the Summer Series 2022. They indicated the following:

- The summer program will be held Monday-Thursday, beginning July 5 – August 4, 2022.
- Classes will be held in person with limited virtual options (secondary).
- High School Summer Academy will be July 11-28, 2022.
- The summer programs will be located at Hillpoint Elementary (Elementary), John Yeates Middle (Middle), and Nansemond River High (High).
- The ESY program will be located at Hillpoint Elementary and Nansemond River High.

- Program times will vary by level and program.
- Transportation, breakfast, and lunch will be provided daily.

Board Members asked questions as Dr. Branch and her team provided details/information.

Member Riddick moved to approve the report as presented under the conditions that summer school would be for students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools. The only exception would be for employees of Suffolk Public Schools. Their children would be allowed to participate in the Summer School program. There was no seconded to the motion, therefore the motion failed for lack of a second.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Story seconded the motion to approve the Summer School Programs as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 1 (Riddick) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 6 to 1

➤ **Resolution Number 21/22-20: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Regarding the Establishment of an Education Committee in the City Code Section 2-463**

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck explained the resolution and each Board Member expressed their thoughts about the resolution and whether or not they supported the resolution.

Member Riddick moved and Vice Chair Byrum seconded the motion to approve Resolution 21/22-20 as read.

The Clerk read the resolution.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 2 (Howell, Story) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 2

➤ **Discussion of King's Fork Middle School Behavior**

Board Member Riddick expressed concerns regarding reports of certain student behaviors, including bullying that is occurring at King's Fork Middle School. He acknowledged that efforts are being put in place by the Superintendent and his team to mitigate and combat these concerns, but the concerns still exist.

Member Riddick moved and Member Story seconded the motion for Dr. Gordon to provide a detailed report at the May 12, 2022 School Board Meeting that would include the following: (1) Current strategies in place at King's Fork Middle School to address student behavior, (2) How those strategies are being monitored to determine effectiveness; and (3) How are these strategies being communicated to the community.

Conversation commenced between Board Members and Dr. Gordon. Dr. Gordon did not agree to submit a report on King's Fork Middle School as a report of this nature out one particular school in a public forum which can negatively affect that schools' climate. He agreed to provide an overview regarding Member Riddick's concerns detailing district-wide strategies and additional measures being used to combat challenging behaviors and bullying.

Member Jenkins requested the report should include all Suffolk Public Schools.

After some discussion, Member Riddick amended his motion for the report to include all SPS schools.

Member Riddick moved and Member Story seconded the motion for Dr. Gordon to provide a report detailing the following: (1) Current strategies in place at all public schools in the City to address student behavior; (2) The method by which these strategies are being evaluated to determine effectiveness; and (3) The way in which strategies to improve student behavior are being communicated to the public. Dr. Gordon is to report this information back to the Board at next month's meeting.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 1 (Dr. Brooks-Buck) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 6 to 1

- **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS**

- The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak. The speakers shared the following:
 - Linda Bouchard – She would like to see a Pilot Program to address classroom discipline. She felt that classroom discipline has become a serious matter.
 - Greg Kasmark – He was alarmed by reports regarding the number of fights at the schools and felt that the school lunches were lacking in quality. However, he appreciated the faculty and staff at BTWES and was thankful for those teachers.
 - Janare Davis – He encouraged the Board to add a Student Representative to the Board as this person may offer a different/helpful perspective.
 - LaTroy Brinkley – Cancelled his appearance due to a conflict in schedule.

- **BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

- Board Members thanked the students, teachers, and staff who were recognized for their athleticism, academics, and all other accomplishments, and their constituents for their support.
- Members also thanked Dr. Gordon and his team for all of their hard work and dedication.
- Members requested the following reports/information:
 - Report on materials/training provided to employees to ensure compliance with the MOU between SPS and the Suffolk City Police Department,
 - The Policy Review Committee to review policy #7-16 1.1,
 - Report on the Adult Education program at CCAP,
 - Report on how many students attended the Saturday Academy on April 2nd,
 - Report on the critical shortage of teachers and administrators by subject,
 - Report on how many classrooms this year have been filled with long-term substitutes,
 - Requested an update and/or a Closed Meeting at the next meeting to discuss the leadership team at LHS,
- Members appreciated the collaborative effort and productive discussion at the meeting and they believe that all members have the desire to move Suffolk Public Schools forward in the right direction, despite their different approaches.
- They also felt that community/stakeholders' relations can be improved and that it is a great idea to add a student member to the board to provide a different perspective.

- Members expressed pride in students at the Governor's School for the Arts and those who participated in the Suffolk Education Foundation Gala.
- Members encouraged all to enjoy spring break, get some rest and come back feel refreshed and ready to end the year successfully.

- **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- Accident Report – March 2022
- The Following Financial Reports will be presented at May's meeting:
 - Payment of Bills and Payroll – March 2022 (Consent Agenda)
 - Financial Report – March 2022 (Information Item)
 - Financial Report – Capital Projects (Information Item)
- SPS Condolences: Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck offered condolence to those former employees who passed away.
 - Wayne Lawson – Bus Mechanic – 30 Years of Service (Retired Employee) – Passed away 02/04/2022
 - Betty Turner – Secretary – 12 Years of Service (Retired Employee) – Passed Away 02/25/2022

- **ADJOURNMENT**


- There being no further business or questions Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Riddick seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the April 7, 2022 School Board Meeting at 10:27 p.m.


Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, Board Chair


Tarshia L. Gardner, Board Clerk