

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, May 14, 2020 (6:00 PM)**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually (via Zoom).

Upon roll being taken, the following persons were present via electronic device:

Judith Brooks Buck, Ph.D., *Vice-Chair*
Phyllis Byrum, *Chair*
Karen Jenkins
Lorita Mayo
David Mitnick
Tyron Riddick
Sherri Story

Also present via electronic device:

Dr. John B. Gordon III
Tarshia L. Gardner, Clerk
Wendell M. Waller, School Board Attorney

6:00 P.M. - OPENING OF MEETING

The School Board Meeting was called to order by the Board Chair.

PRESENTATIONS:

➤ **King's Fork High School Honor Graduates**

Via recorded message, Principal Bryant stated that the students have shown to be responsible, resilient, and committed to excellence during this difficult time. These characteristics will afford our students the opportunity to do great things for themselves, their families, and the great city of Suffolk. Mr. Bryant then congratulated the 2020 Honor Graduates of King's Fork High School.

Ms. Ward introduced and gave a brief introduction of each honor graduate. Dr. Gordon talked about the wide variety of messages from these students; from IB programs to athletic accomplishments. Shows the overall talent in Suffolk Public Schools. Dr. Gordon then thanked Ms. Ward, Mr. Bryant and his team, and the senior graduating class of 2020.

Mrs. Byrum and Board Members gave congratulatory remarks to the 2020 Honor Graduates. Board Members were moved by the student's expressions of pride and the welcoming atmosphere at KFHS and agreed that the resilience displayed by these students will pay off in their future. Congratulations to the 2020 Honor Graduates of King's Fork High School.

➤ **Rookie Teacher and Teachers of the Year**

Dr. Brown, Director of Human Resources, explained the selection process for the Teachers of the Year. He then introduced the following Teachers of the Year via digital presentation:

- o City-Wide Rookie Teacher of the Year – Sahmod Earls (LHS)
- o City-Wide Elementary School Teacher of the Year – Gwendolyn Mann (PES)
- o City-Wide High School Teacher of the Year – Sharon Criner (KFHS)

- o City-Wide Teacher of the Year – Emma Neave (JFKMS)

Dr. Brown read a message from the Suffolk Education Foundation who awarded each City-Wide Teacher of the Year with a monetary gift. He then congratulated all Teachers of the Year for their accomplishment and thanked the SEF for their gifts to these teachers.

Dr. Gordon expressed how their peers are so proud of these teachers. He stated that Dr. Brown and his team visited these teachers and present them with a plaque and their monetary gift. Dr. Gordon expressed that these TOYs are the best of the best and spoke of the pride we have in these teachers.

Ms. Byrum thanked and congratulated the Teachers of the Year and said they are all Superheroes. She then admonished them to continue to do great things in Suffolk Public Schools.

7:00 P.M. – OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair.

The Board was led in the Pledge of Allegiance by the Vice-Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion, to approve the Agenda as presented.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

There were no speakers on Agenda Topics.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT:

➤ Good News Reports:

*Lakeland High School Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Program Recognition – Congratulations to Sarah McDonald, the PLTW Students and Staff at LHS as the Bio-Medical Science program. Only one (1) out of 143 programs in the entire country receive this recognition and this year this distinction was bestowed upon LHS, they were recognized as Project Lead the Way Distinguished School for 2019-2020.

*Governor’s School Students Participate in Virtual Art Show – Congratulations to the following students who participated in the Virtual Art Show and for being selected to be featured in the Governor’s School of the Arts Virtual Art Show on YouTube:

Haley Boseman (KFHS)

Damon Jones (NRHS)

Elijah Gent (KFHS)

Kobi Davenport (NRHS)

Sydney Osborne (KFHS)

Dr. Gordon expressed pride in these students and for all students in SPS. There is so much talent in our district.

*Q Daddy's Provides Lunch for SPS Food and Nutrition and Transportation Staff – Thank you to Q Daddy's for providing lunch for our Heroes. Our essential workers are helping to feed our children during a global pandemic and Q Daddy's treated our Food and Nutrition and Bus staff to a meal. Mrs. Byrum thanked Q Daddy's for recognizing our staff and for their commitment to children during this difficult time. Dr. Gordon highlighted the teamwork between these two departments stating that this is not easy, but our departments are making it work. We're thankful for their teamwork and dedication they have. Shows we are #SPSStrong.

- Finance Committee Report – Mrs. Byrum gave highlights of the Finance Committee Meeting held on May 12, 2020. They covered various topics and reviewed changes (due to the pandemic) that may affect the 2020-2021 school budget. Funding has been reduced by the State and the City of Suffolk. The Committee also reviewed the C.A.R.E.S. Act and its restrictions. Also discussed was unknown revenue situations and estimates.

Ms. Story asked when the line-by-line will be available for review. Ms. Forsman replied by the 21st or 22nd of May.

Ms. Story asked if it would be provided electronically or by mail. Ms. Forsman replied electronically and that it will not be the entire budget but the lines that were affected.

Ms. Story asked how to get a copy of the entire budget? Ms. Forsman explained that the entire budget will not be produced until after the Board has approved it and that members will receive affected line items by the 21st or 22nd.

Ms. Story asked if teacher's salary scale will also be available at that time. Ms. Forsman informed that yes, the drafts of the teacher scale and bus driver's scales will be available to the board at that same time.

Ms. Story asked if administration scale included. Ms. Forsman indicated that that scale is not changing. She stated a 1% change may occur depending on what the City approves.

- SPS Response Plan – Dr. Gordon discussed updates to the plan which included the following:
 - *Students and staff retrieve personal belongings and clean out classrooms, this allowed an early start to summer cleaning and building improvement projects.
 - *New student enrollment and Kindergarten registration process.
 - *Instructional packets, Continuity of Learning, Mastery, and Virtual SPS model.
 - *Survey for feedback regarding our Continuity of Learning Plan.
 - *Plans for 2020 graduating seniors.
 - *Expansion of meal distribution plan. SPS will begin providing students meals seven days per week and will include dinner.
 - *How will education look for SPS in the future? Will use SPS Virtual Summer as a pilot to expanding SPS Connect to our PreK-5 grades students. Using this information to develop a hybrid learning model for the fall if need be.

Mrs. Byrum asked Dr. Gordon if he could indicate how many children are participating in the meal program.

Dr. Gordon shared Food Service is currently delivering over 1300 meals per day. The number fluctuate pending who shows up to receive a meal each day. It our plan to continue this model throughout the summer.

Ms. Byrum shared positive comments regarding the program.

Ms. Story shared her positive comments as well. Evaluating surveys, will you include teachers?

Dr. Gordon stated that the survey will go out to everyone.

Ms. Story shared that Edgenuity had some wrong answers. She asked if there was any chance to get rid of Edgenuity and go back to just teachers teaching through Google Classroom. Possible blended choice of Edgenuity and Google Classroom? Possible options. Parents and teachers happy with Google Classroom.

Mr. Riddick thanked Dr. Gordon and his team for SPS Response plan and for its execution. Many students depend on those meals and working through Edgenuity...it has been consistent. Students who experience complications, parents can check and use the tools available. Member Riddick expressed thanks for the finance report especially during this uncertain time and for working together to get through this time.

Ms. Story asked if the YouTube channel having difficulty. Mr. Littlefield indicated that YouTube was having difficulty, but our meeting was still streaming and being recorded and will be posted for later viewing.

- Supplemental Insurance – Ms. Forsman indicated that we are out for bid for our supplemental insurances (ex. Cancer policies, Heart policies). These policies are pre-taxed. There is no cost to SPS for these policies. We are looking to find the best deal for employees. Employees with current policies can be grandfathered in if their plan is 15 years or older as of July 1st. If less than that, employee will have the choice to either pay company directly (not payroll deducted, not pre-taxed), or choose the other policy option once it has been secured which will possibly be a much better option for our employees.
- Calendar of Special Events – Dr. Gordon highlighted the list of special events.

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Story requested to pull out the minutes from the Consent Agenda. Would like for the minutes to reflect at the beginning at the 5 p.m. meeting why two board members were not there and were polled about the meeting and the minutes do not reflect that.

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck asked Mr. Waller for clarification as to what the motion should be. Mr. Waller answered that the motion should be to approve the Consent Agenda without the minutes from the last meeting. He indicated that the minutes will be carried over to a New Business item which at that time can be approved with the recommended changes made by Ms. Story or it could be a motion to table those minutes to allow for the change to be made and at the next board meeting, you would vote on the minutes from that meeting.

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck made the motion that the Consent Agenda be adopted with the exclusion of Item 3 (the School Board Meeting Minutes).

Mr. Riddick asked if it was possible to table those minutes to the next meeting to give us time for the correction to be made versus pulling them out and having to bring them back as a New Business item.

Mr. Waller explained that the motion on the floor was to approve the Consent Agenda. So, an action must be taken on those other items. The motion at this time is to approve the Consent Agenda without the minutes and then you will have to talk about those minutes later in the meeting under New Business. At that time, a motion could be made to table those minutes to the next meeting.

Member Mayo seconded the motion made by Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck to adopt the Consent Agenda with the exclusion of Item 3 (the School Board Meeting Minutes).

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS:

➤ Resolution 19/20-29: A resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia, granting the School Superintendent the authority to expend end of the year funds for fiscal year 2019-2020 for certain designated repairs and/or purchasing needs of the Suffolk Public Schools

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck moved, and Member Riddick seconded, the motion to approve Resolution 19/20-29 as presented.

Ms. Story asked about the resurfacing of tennis courts in operational funds could be covered by athletic funds.

Dr. Gordon indicated that the athletic funds were cut due to no spring sports season. Tennis courts were more of a capitol expense. With this shortfall in revenue (no ticket sales for spring sports), did not want to lay that expense on our school's athletic department.

Ms. Story asked if we could get documentation of the revenues that come and what goes out?

Ms. Forsman replied yes, a copy can be provided. She further clarified that if schools must pay for facility repairs that that will become an equity issue because some schools cannot afford to pay. Normally the operating fund pays for the schools' overall facilities and its upkeep. Funds for athletics, go to athletic and not the actual facilities.

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

- Resolution 19/20-30: A resolution approving the terms and conditions of an Agreement of Lease between Suffolk Public Schools and the Children’s Center, Inc. at Booker T. Washington Elementary School

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck moved, and Member Story seconded, the motion to approve a resolution approving the terms and conditions of an Agreement of Lease between Suffolk Public Schools and the Children’s Center, Inc. at Booker T. Washington Elementary School.

Member Mitnick asked if this agreement was identical to the Memorandum of Understanding from last year or were there any changes? Mr. Waller answered that it is identical to last year. The only changes are the dates.

Upon a roll call for vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 Nay: 0. The motion Carried. 7 to 0

- Ordinance 19/20-66 – Amending Chapter 3, Article 1 Section 3-1.5, entitled “Administrative Organization Plan” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – First Reading
- Ordinance 19/20-67 – Amending Chapter 2, Article 2, Section 2-3.2, entitled “Regular Meetings; Open Meeting Requirement; Notice of Meetings; Agenda Packets Made Available; Placement of Items on the Agenda; Recording of Meetings Permitted; Special Meetings; Quorum; Minutes” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – First Reading

Vice Chair Brooks-Buck shared information from the Policy Meeting as an introduction to the following Ordinances. She shared the following:

The Policy Committee met on May 7th to discuss these two ordinances (as has been the process since 2013, Mr. Waller facilitates the meeting and the two policy committee members are in attendance.) The following policies were discussed, Ordinance 19/20-66, which gives the Superintendent the permission to change the Organization Chart/Plan. This is an information item. First Reading

The second item is a first read as well, Ordinance 19/20-67, this was looked at because each month as we prepare to review the agenda the Board Chair and Superintendent receive numerous request to add items to the agenda. Then number of items can sometimes total 10 to 20 additional items which have no relevance to the topics being covered. As an attempt to cover all the requests in a fair and equitable way, the committee looked at similar practices in the neighboring areas. Some districts reported no problems, however, VA Beach report similar problems with Board Members attempting to add various items to the agenda. In looking at their policy, some of the same verbiage was used for our policy. If Board Members can add any number of things to the agenda, our meetings will possibly never end. This was an opportunity to give everyone an opportunity to voice their concerns and have their voices heard in a fair way. This is a first reading.

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck indicated that this was an opportunity for all board members to read the policy and be prepared to discuss it a vote on it at June’s meeting.

Member Story indicated that the main concern (according to what she is hearing) is the number of items.

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck clarified that it is the number and kind of items.

Member Story asked how many of these board meet twice per month to cover more items. This may be an option. The kind is very subjected. Wanted to confirm the number and kind.

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck further clarified what number and kind means.

Ms. Story read what the current protocol is for adding items to the agenda.

Mr. Mitnick asked if a board member is truly presented an item that is more business, would it be an item that will be put out to a poll. If its board business, that item needs consideration. How would that be affected?

Vice-Chair Brooks-Buck provided clarification of the policy. This policy is not deleting anybody's issues, but if it's just my issue, then it is not a discussion, it is just me talking.

Member Riddick asked that postpone this matter until the second reading. We are trying to hash it out a little too soon. It is still in the developmental stage. Take this information and read over it and send back to the policy review committee if necessary or vote it up or down at the next meeting.

Mrs. Byrum clarified that all board members have the choice to confer with the Superintendent anytime regarding any items, is this correct?

Dr. Gordon replied yes.

Chair Byrum also asked Attorney Waller, under Virginia law, the school board can establish guidelines for management of any official business, right?

Attorney Waller answered that is correct.

Mr. Mitnick indicated that he has been reminding the board that the bylaws for the Special Ed. Advisory Committee has a different timeline for the board to develop how we are going to assign members to the Citizen Advisory Committee. That is why was asking for the item to be added to this agenda because their calendar stars in July. If we are not going to discuss how to assign people until June and then a means of communication...that is why wanted added to this month's agenda. Not trying to be difficult, I was trying to present an agenda item that was timely. I think this board has not done what we should have been doing earlier this year discussing assignment of people.

Member Riddick called for point of order. We are straying away from the agenda. We need to get back on task and target to handle the items that is before us and listed on the agenda.

- School Board Meeting Minutes (item was moved from the Consent Agenda for discussion/approval)

Member Riddick moved, and Vice-Chair Brooks Buck seconded, the motion to table the minutes to give the Clerk time to make the recommended corrections presented by Member Story and handle this matter at our June 2020 Board Meeting.

Upon a roll call for vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 Nay: 0. The motion Carried. 7 to 0

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS:

*****(Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, citizen comments were submitted electronically to the Clerk of the Board who read each person’s comments aloud during this segment of the meeting.)*****

- Gabrielle Wiggins – Reschedule of School Graduation and Time of Virtual Ceremony for NRHS
- Troy Merryfield – Electronic Meeting Contents and Ordinance Discussion
- Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom – Refusing Two Board Members Access to Meetings and Proposed Policy Related to Placing Items on the Agenda

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report April 2020

ADJORNMENT

The Board Chair adjourned the May 14, 2020 Monthly School Board Meeting at 8:19 p.m.

Phyllis C. Byrum, *Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*