

SECOND MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, March 27, 2025 ~ 6:00 P.M.
King's Fork Middle School, 350 King's Fork Road, Suffolk, VA 23434

Board Members Present:

Heather Howell, *Chair*
Sean McGee, *Vice Chair*
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham
Valerie Fields
Karen Jenkins
Tyron Riddick
Kimberly Slingluff

Administrative Staff Present:

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*
Wendell M. Waller, *Esquire, School Board Attorney*
Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*
Keesha Johnson, *Deputy Clerk*

OPENING OF MEETING

- Call to Order:
Board Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- Pledge of Allegiance:
Vice Chair McGee led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Moment of Silence:
A moment of silence was observed by all in attendance.
- The Mission of Suffolk Public Schools:
Board Member Jenkins read the mission of SPS.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Approval of Agenda:
Board Member Riddick moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the agenda with the addition of a discussion regarding spending from the School Board budget line item being added to New Business.

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

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Good News Report:
Melvin Bradshaw Community Engagement Facilitator, shared good news happening within the division utilizing PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Gordon and Board Chair Howell congratulated Ms. Ariyanah Parsons from KFHS as the First Girls Wrestling State Champion in SPS History. She was presented with tokens of appreciation for her accomplishment.

➤ Calendar of Special Events:

Dr. Gordon, Division Superintendent, summarized information from the calendar of special events.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

➤ Citizen Comments on Agenda Items:

The Clerk read the statement of decorum for speakers who signed up to address the Board.

1. Travis McKinney—Re: The School is Burning and Y'all Playing Games of Pettiness. Mr. McKinney did not agree with the discipline action of a school board member. During his comments, he requested to be removed from the list of Non-Agenda speakers as he would submit a FOIA request for information.
2. Jennifer Willman – Re: Budget. Ms. Willman recommended the addition of funding for a forensic audit as a proactive measure of the Board showing that they are being good stewards of funds and are transparent.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

➤ Bus Driver Applicants VDSS Acknowledgement Form:

Dr. Jessica Avery, Director of Human Resources, explained that the new proposed form and process will not put students/staff at greater risk. It was explained that background checks are required by State Code and that they will continue with that process. However, the new form will allow potential employees to begin employment while SPS is waiting to receive results from the Department of Social Services Child Abuse and Neglect Registry of any founded complaints of child abuse and neglect. The division will continue to observe risk assessments and work hard to mitigate any threats.

Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the amended motion to adopt the Bus Driver Applicants VDSS Acknowledgement waiver form as submitted.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 2 (Fields, Slingluff) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 2.

NEW BUSINESS

➤ Resolution 2024/25-23: A Resolution Of The School Board For The City Of Suffolk Approving The Budget For Suffolk Public Schools For Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Totaling \$244,554,074 Which Includes Local Funding From The City Of Suffolk In The Amount Of \$82,332,201:

There was a discussion among Board Members, Dr. Gordon, and Wendy Forsman regarding the following: (1) School Resource Officers (SROs) and their funding; (2) teacher raises and salaries; (3) decreasing purchased services and the impact it would have on such things as sinkholes repairs, HVAC repairs, pest control, athletic trainers, copiers in schools, fiber optics, etc.; and (4) bonuses for SOQ positions from the General Assembly.

Board Member Riddick moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Resolution 2024/25-23 as presented.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

➤ Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items:

1. Travis McKinney–Re: Everything I Missed Earlier. Mr. McKinney requested to have his name removed from this list during his earlier comments.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

➤ Comments and Report by School Board Members:

Board Members expressed their appreciation to their constituents, Dr. Gordon, Mrs. Forsman and her team, and their colleagues. They recognized the accomplishments of the KFHS debate team, LHS JV Softball team and Coach, and looked forward to the Honor Graduates being presented at future meetings. They encouraged city council to approve SPS's budget, encouraged students to continue working hard for academic success, and challenged colleagues to continue reviewing budget, goals, and strategic plan information to gain understanding, become more knowledgeable, and to participate in productive conversations. Board Members suggested showcasing student's talents during school board meetings, recommended funding for raises, bonuses, walkie-talkies, that a rough draft of the budget be presented in February, and that financial reports be readily available when requested.

Vice Chair McGee expressed concern regarding a news report of a student being dropped off at the wrong bus stop and recommended addressing failures in the system. He also asked the Board to direct the Superintendent to provide a comprehensive report of the incident and a detailed account of all known incidents, how/when they are reported, how investigations are conducted, and steps taken to ensure that incidents of this nature will not occur again.

ADJOURNMENT

➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

There being no further business, Board Chair Howell adjourned the Second School Board Monthly Meeting of March 27, 2025 at 8:03 p.m.


Heather Howell, School Board Chair


Tarshia L. Gardner, Board Clerk

