

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, March 11, 2021 (5:00 PM)**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held at City Hall while practicing social distancing.

Upon roll being taken, the following persons were present:

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*
Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*
Karen Jenkins
Linda Johnson
Lorita Mayo
Tyron Riddick
Sherri Story

Also Present:

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

5:00 P.M. – OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

- The School Board Meeting was called to order by Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck.
- The ceremonial oath of office was administered for new Member Linda T. Johnson by the Clerk of the Suffolk City Circuit Court, Mr. W. Randolph Carter, Jr.

MOTION TO RELINQUISH RECORDING DEVICES

Attorney Waller read the following:

A MOTION IS NEEDED TO REQUIRE ALL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN TONIGHT’S CLOSED MEETING OF THE SCHOOL BOARD TO RELINQUISH AND HAVE STORED IN A SECURE LOCATION DESIGNATED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD ALL RECORDING DEVICES TO INCLUDE CAMERAS, COMPUTER STORAGE DEVICES, DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDERS, SOUND RECORDING TECHNOLOGY OR TAPE RECORDING DEVICES..

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve the motion as read.

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

MOTION TO GO INTO A CLOSED MEETING

Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A motion is needed to go into a Closed Meeting to discuss the following items and subjects pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia (1950) as amended:

1. The discussion and/or consideration of the Personnel Report regarding prospective candidates for employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific employees of the school board, and more specifically as it relates to the following:
 - A. The resignations of individuals employed in the following positions: Teachers, Cafeteria Associate, Nurse Assistant, Custodian, AFJROTC Instructor, Safety Monitor, Academic Coach, and Clerk/Dispatch;
 - B. The disciplinary action of a certain school custodian;
 - C. The hiring of instructional personnel for the following subject areas: SPED GC Teachers, Science Teacher, and English Specialist;
 - D. The hiring of non-instructional personnel for the following positions: Bus Drivers, Custodians; Proximity Learning Virtual Classroom Facilitator; and Part-Time Parent Resource Center Liaison;
 - E. The approval of a school employee to receive a second stipend in the amount of \$300 for full training as a Substitute Bus Driver Trainee;
 - F. The request for approval of two (2) substitute bus driver trainees;
 - G. Request for the approval of fifty-four (54) after school tutoring (SOL) teachers and counselors for the 2020-2021 school year at Col. Fred Cherry Middle School at the rate of \$26.40 per hour;
 - H. Request for the approval of compensation for a reading tutor at Elephant's Fork Elementary School for the weeks of February 1 through June 7, 2021 at the rate of \$26.40 per hour;
 - I. Request for approval of compensation for forty (40) teachers to receive compensation for after-school tutoring (SOL) and/or after-school detention for 2020-2021 school year at Lakeland High School at the rate of \$26.40 per hour;
 - J. Request for approval of extra duty supplements for teachers assigned to Kings Fork High School, Nansemond River High School, and Lakeland High School to provide English Language Learner Support at a rate of \$26.40 per hour;
 - K. Request for a SPED LD teacher to receive leave of absence;
 - L. Recommendations: Supervisor of English Instruction.

All of which is authorized by Section 2.2-3711 A.1 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

2. The discussion and/or consideration of the Student Services Report where the discussion in an open meeting would involve the disclosure of information contained in a student's scholastic record, and more specifically as it relates to the following:
 - Twelve (12) out of zone requests for students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools to attend school out of their designated school attendance zone.

All of which is authorized by Section 2-2-711 A.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the motion as read.

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

The Board reconvened in the Public Meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

Attorney Waller read the Certification of the Closed Meeting.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion, to approve the Certification of Closed Meeting.

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

PRESENTATION OF LHS HONOR GRADUATES

Dr. Gordon introduced Douglas Wagoner, Principal and Mrs. Williams, Director of Counseling, who introduced the honor graduates to the Board via PowerPoint presentation. The Board Chair and Board Members congratulated and thanked the honor graduates for their positivity, hard work and perseverance.

The Board Chair adjourned the meeting to recess.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

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

7:00 PM - PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

The Clerk read instructions for public speaking and indicated that due to the number of speakers, each speaker will be allotted three minutes to address the Board. Also, each speaker was to state their name and address before speaking. The following citizens signed up to speak about the budget.

1. ~~Glen McKinney~~ **NO SHOW**
2. Timothy Doughty
3. Sarah McDonald
4. Ashley Nettles & Cynthia Devers
5. Jennifer Connor
6. Deborah Wahlstrom
7. Brianne Ihlenburg
8. Catherine Pichon
9. Derrick Bryant
10. Miller Cary

11. Deborah Kliche'

Board Chair Brooks-Buck addressed the public saying that they receive misinformation because it is sometimes spread purposefully. However, it's not true when people say they have no idea of how money is spent. Each month the Finance Department posts how money is spent for the public to see. Nothing is being hidden, we have no need to keep information from public view. Details about how the money is spent are online each month, you only have to go online and read it. Suffolk Public Schools has had a clean audit for the past 10 years from auditors who are hired by the City, not hired by Suffolk Public Schools. There is no need for us to be dishonest about anything. If you have trouble finding information online, contact us, we will help you find it.

There being no further discussion, the Board Chair adjourned the public hearing meeting.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair.

Member Mayo lead all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEMS

-Pupil Personnel Reports

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion, to accept the Pupil Personnel Reports as presented.

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

-Personnel Report

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Johnson seconded the motion, to accept the Personnel Report as presented.

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

-Personnel Action Item # 20/21-1

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion, to approve the recommendation as presented.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

1. Heidi Pocklington – Waste and Nonsense (Letter)

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Good News Reports: Dr. Gordon presented information from the Good News Report
 - a. Music and Art in Our Schools Month:
 1. JYMS/CFCMS Virtual Choir
 2. All-Virginia State Qualifications
 3. Suffolk Art Gallery “Exhibit of Excellence”
 4. STEM Logo Contest
 5. KSES Teacher Receives National Recognition
 - b. Florence Bowser Elementary School Featured on WTVR-CBS
 - c. NRHS DECA Chapter Recognition
 - d. SPS Teacher Spotlight – February
 - e. Grants & Awards
- Calendar of Special Events

Dr. Gordon highlighted information pertaining to the beginning of students returning to face to face learning. He stated that although we are excited about the return, things will be different as we work towards closing out the school year with some sense of normalcy. He stated that he understands that not all agree with how we do things, but that doesn't mean that what we do is wrong. He asked all to set aside personal agendas and focus on students and schools reopening. He said we are all partners in the field of education as the School Board and City Council are partners, not our boss, not our parents, but colleagues. He said that the Board and City Council have worked hard over the years to establish a good relationship and the results are the building of great schools when everyone works together. Everyone has a role to play in our school division. We collaborate, not dictate, not demand, not order. He made a promise to protect this division and make SPS the top premier school in the country and we will make it happen together.

CONSENT AGENDA

All items on the Consent Agenda was taken and voted on at one time.

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

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Update on Approved General Assembly Budget and Changes to the Superintendent's Proposed Budget (INFO ITEM) Wendy Forsman presented the changes from the General Assembly and answered questions from Board Members.

Member Riddick asked if a line item could be considered in the budget for any legal costs not covered by insurance in our budget packet going forward.

Member Story asked if the Community in our schools were added in? Dr. Gordon indicated that he hopes so. This topic will be discussed at the work session.

Member Johnson clarified that this is a line item budget. Expenses for the month were very detailed in the budget. The audit would speak if there was a problem or if money was not being shown somewhere. Learned that using the words “Fully Funded” could be tricky, not sure what that means. She said a great job was done on the budget, it is very well done and is available online.

- Suffolk City Police Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):
Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion, that we accept Suffolk City Police Memorandum of Understanding.

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

NEW BUSINESS

- Item 1 – Set the date of March 25, 2021, 6 p.m. for a Special School Board Meeting at CFCMS for the Budget Work Session/Discussion and Adoption of the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget 2021-2022

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion, that we set the date for the Special School Board Meeting at Col. Fred Cherry Middle School for the Budget Work Session/Discussion and Adoption of the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget for 21-22 on March 25th, 2021.

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

- Item 2 – Summer School Program – 2021
Dr. Okema Branch presented information to the Board via PowerPoint presentation.
 - Summer Series consist of SPS Summer Academy, SPS Summer School, SPS Summer Bridge Program, and the Extended School Year Program,
 - Conducted via Hybrid Model,
 - Summer Program Dates: July 5 – August 5, Monday – Thursday,
 - High School Summer Academy – July 12-29, 2021,
 - Summer programs will be offered at the following locations: Elementary – All elementary schools except NPES and KSES; Middle: King’s Fork Middle School; High: King’s Fork High School; ESY: Elephant’s Fork Elementary and King’s Fork Middle School (middle/high),
 - Transportation, breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion, recommend that we adopt the Summer School Program for 2021.

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

- Item 3 – Textbook Adoption Committees
Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport presented information to the Board via PowerPoint presentation.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded, the motion to adopt the Textbook Adoption Committee as stated.

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

- Item 4 – Educate and Innovate Survey:
80% Staff, 53% Students, 66% Parents overall are happy with the Educate and Innovate Plan.
 - Good things and positive feed back were: Professional development for teaching proficiency, courses provided with content for 1st 9-weeks, technology assistance, video applications options (Big Blue Button, Zoom, and Google Meet); Teachers provided extra help, teachers give multiple learning activities and assessment, teachers were available to answer questions, and the daily schedule was appropriate for students; more than 80% of parents felt teachers have been available and provided multiple assessments to check students understanding, more than 70% agreed teachers provided adequate opportunities for additional student remediation and assistance and that the daily virtual learning schedule and time required for classwork is suitable;
 - Areas of improvement: Canvas rollout and preparation, planning time, more virtual instructional support; only half of the students agreed that virtual learning worked for them, enrichment and remediation was not consistently attended, assignments take more time to complete; too many applications and platforms for student to navigate, increased teacher live instruction time, timeliness in grading and feedback, varying course layouts;
 - Overall Virtual Learning Challenges: 1) Student engagement/motivation, 2) Teachers-distractions at home while doing classwork; Parents-limited interaction with classmates, 3) Teachers-attendance; Parents-keeping up with course assignments.
 - Next steps: students’ return to learn; engagement and motivation for students; greater social emotional well-being and support; improved attendance; parents keeping up with course assignments.

Members asked the following questions:

- Member Story - How will Educate and Innovate work during SOL time when students return?

Dr. Gordon - Students’ schedules may change however, nothing can be done until we see the numbers regarding how many students will be testing.

- Member Riddick -How many students will retain the same teacher, is it a big change at all levels?

Dr. Branch - Secondary students will retain the same teachers. At the elementary level, a virtual teacher per grade level had to be designated which may or may not be the student’s regular teacher. However, it’s been implemented that all students

will see their regular teacher during the morning meeting then they will branch out to their virtual teacher (if they are virtual).

Dr. Gordon - the current teacher will still work with the new teacher. The instruction model is like a collaborative model between current teacher and new virtual teacher for consistency with the student.

Dr. Branch thanked Mr. Shawn Dickerson, Supervisor of Data and Research, for his hard work and expertise in putting together the survey. He did an outstanding job.

- Item 5 – SPS Health Dashboard Update

Dr. Suzanne Rice presented information to the Board via PowerPoint presentation. She reminded all of the target zone and stated that for the first time we are in the yellow for percentage of positivity and that hopefully the numbers will continue to decrease. She explained the “Return to Learn Timeline” and that 56% of students opted to return to school in the Hybrid model and 44% opted to remain in virtual learning. Dr. Rice highlighted the following breakdown: 60% of elementary students, 55% of middle school students, and 46% of high school students will return for face-to-face learning. She also stated that about 7500 students will need transportation.

- Member Riddick asked if there will be enough drivers to facilitate the return plan?

Dr. Rice said yes.

- Member Riddick asked if we will still be able to continue with meal deliveries?

Dr. Rice said yes.

Dr. Rice also added as a matter of information that 47% of employees has been fully vaccinated and that the number is probably higher as some employees received their vaccination outside of SPS.

- Member Riddick stated that he is still deeply concerned with students returning but wanted to seriously stress to parents that if your child is sick, keep them home.

- Item 6 -19 – Ordinance 20/21-11 through Ordinance 20/21-24: These were info items only and presented for first reading. Board Members had no questions and Ordinances 20/21-11 through 20/21-24 were observed as a group.

- Item 20 – Resolution 20/21-21: A Resolution of the School Board of the City of Suffolk, Virginia, Requesting that Linda T. Johnson, Interim Appointee to the Suffolk City School Board Affix Her Signature to the Code of Ethics Applicable to all Members Serving on the Suffolk City School Board and Adopted by the School Board on January 14, 2021.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Riddick seconded, the motion to accept Resolution 20/21-21 as presented.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

1. ~~Donald Lee—Spectators at Outside Sports Events~~ **NO SHOW**
2. Dwane Sherrick – Policy for Scrub Uniforms for Faculty and Staff

Miller Cary stated that he was supposed to be on the late appearance agenda as well. The Clerk clarified that he would be added only if he did not have time to finish his speech during the budget hearing as this would again be his topic. The Board Chair continue with those signed up to speak.

3. Michelle Wiechert – Volleyball Postseason (Letter)
4. Kelly Hengler – Ease of Access to the School Board Agenda (Letter)

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck asked members to vote on a set time for comments of five (5) minutes.

Board Member Story objected to this vote.

Member Jenkins moved, and Vice-Chair Byrum seconded, the motion to set time limits to five (5) minutes for Members comments.

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

Board members proceeded with their comments.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Accident Report February 2021
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report February 2021
- Report of Spending: C.A.R.E.S. Act I, GEER/ESSER, and final spending of Coronavirus Relief Act Funding
- SPS Condolences:
 - *Estelle Wilkins – Retired Cafeteria Associate – 26 Years of Service – Passed away 02/07/2021
 - *Barbara Walker – Retired Teacher – 24 Years of Service – Passed away 03/02/2021

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the March 11, 2021 School Board Meeting at 10:34 p.m.

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*