

REGULAR MEETING OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, May 13, 2021 ~ 5:00 P.M.
Suffolk City Council Chambers, 442 W. Washington Street, Suffolk, VA 23434

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

Board Members Present:

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

Absent Board Member:

Sherri Story

Administrative Staff 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/WORK SESSION

The School Board Meeting/Work Session was called to order by Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck.

School Board Self Evaluation & Feedback Regarding Professional Development for Board Members and School Board Retreat Topics

Board Members began their work session by discussing the School Board Self Evaluation results. Dr. Buck handed members a chart with evaluation responses for their review. Members were asked to log their opinions as to the topics that should be covered at the retreat relative to professional development which should be based on the information from the self-evaluation.

Members agreed that they would like professional development to cover the following areas:

- Teambuilding
- Advocacy
- Implicit bias
- Communicating successfully
- Parliamentary procedures training
- Governance vs. day-to-day operations
- Branding and cheerleading for the division
- Rolls and responsibilities of board members
- Uplifting/reprimanding in love

Members agreed that team building would not be successful if all members did not fully participate.

School Board Retreat Discussion/Approval of July 22, 2021 as the School Board Retreat Date

Board Members voted to approve the date of July 22, 2021 as the date for the school Board Retreat.

Member Riddick moved, and Member Mayo seconded the “motion to approve.”

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

Change in Agenda Format

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck explained the change in the format for future agendas and opened the floor for questions.

There being no questions, Dr. Buck thanked everyone for their ideas and moved forward to the next agenda item.

MOTION TO GO INTO A CLOSED MEETING:

Motion to Relinquish Recording Devices in Closed Meeting:

Attorney Waller read the following motion:

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 Johnson seconded the motion “so moved.”

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

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: Warehouse Assistant, Cafeteria Associates, Teacher Assistants, Teachers, Custodians, Head Custodian, School Nurse, School Counselor, Bus Drivers, Media Specialists, Safety Monitor, ROTC Instructor, Bus Drivers, Administrative Secretary and a Speech Language Pathologist;

- B. The disciplinary action of a certain bus driver;
- C. The hiring of one instructional and two administrative personnel for the following subject area: Early Start Teacher, a Director of Elementary Leadership, and a Coordinator of Employee Relations;
- D. The hiring of five non-instructional personnel for the following positions: Custodians, and Teacher Assistants;
- E. The hiring of four non-instructional personnel for the following part-time positions: Records Clerk, Safety Monitor, McKenney-Vento Specialist and Teacher Assistant;
- F. The hiring of seven non-instructional personnel for the following substitute positions: Cafeteria Associates and Teachers;
- G. Request for a school employee to receive a first stipend in the amount of \$150 for full training as a Substitute Bus Driver Trainee;
- H. Request for two school employees to receive a second stipend, one in the amount of \$300 for full training and one in the amount of \$150 for partial training, as Substitute Bus Driver Trainee's;
- I. Request for five teachers to receive compensation as tutors in the Algebra Readiness Program for the 2020-21 school year at King's Fork Middle School at the rate of \$26.40 per hour;
- J. Request for fifty-six teachers to receive compensation for after school tutoring (SOL) for the 2020-21 school year at Kings' Fork Middle School at the rate of \$26.40 per hour;
- K. Request for a substitute bus driver trainee to be receive two partial stipends as compensation in the amount of \$150 each;
- L. Request for a specific Spanish teacher to receive a stipend of \$1000 for the 2020-21 school year for Spanish Translation;
- M. Request for a teacher to serve as a homebound teacher for Hillpoint Elementary School for the 2020-21 school year at the rate of \$27.40 per hour;
- N. Request for twenty teachers and school counselors to receive a \$650 stipend each as members of the University of Virginia and Suffolk Public Schools M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision cohort;
- O. Request for twelve employees to receive a payroll adjustment increase due to the Virginia minimum wage increase to \$9.50 per hour;
- P. Request for two school personnel to receive extra duty supplements at John Yeates Middle school for clubs and organizations for the 2020-21 school year at the rate of \$200 each;

- Q. Request for 60 athletic coaches, a band director, cheerleading coach, choral director, debate director, department head, drama director, flag corps director, forensics director, newspaper director and yearbook director, to receive extra duty supplements at Nansemond River High School as per the 2020/2021 published classification and compensation plan for salary supplements;
- R. Request for 59 athletic coaches, cheerleading coach, an academic team director, band director, choral director, department heads, drama director, flag corps director, forensics director, newspaper director, yearbook director, lawn care personnel, and a web-master, to receive extra duty supplements at Lakeland High School as per the 2020/2021 published classification and compensation plan for salary supplements;
- S. Request for a Kindergarten teacher and a 3rd Grade teacher to receive a leave of absence; and
- T. Request for four teachers to be removed from the substitute list.

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:
 - Twenty-one (21) out of zone requests for students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools to attend school out of their designated school attendance zone.
 - Six students appeared for disciplinary hearings between March 29, 2021 and April 23, 2021.

Which is authorized by Section 2.2-3711 A.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

- 3. Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the litigating posture of the public body and more specifically as it relates to Sherri D. Story v. Suffolk City School, et als. which is currently on appeal before the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Which is authorized by Section 2.2-3711 A.7 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve with the amendment to the motion.

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

The Board reconvened in the Public Meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

Attorney Waller read the Certification of the Closed Meeting.

Whereas, the School Board of the City of Suffolk convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

Whereas, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, requires a certification by the School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

Now therefore, be it resolved that the School Board of the City of Suffolk hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this resolution of certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matter as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the School Board of the City of Suffolk.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion to "move to approve."

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

PRESENTATION OF NANSEMOND RIVER HIGH SCHOOL HONOR GRADUATES

- Janice Bibbo, Assistant Principal, Mrs. Cruely and Mrs. Perry introduced the honor graduates to the Board via PowerPoint presentation.
- Board Members expressed their pride in the 204 honor graduates. Members thanked the students for their hard work and for staying focused to reach this accomplishment.

The Board Chair adjourned the meeting to recess.

PUBLIC HEARING

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Brooks-Buck.

Public Comments and Recommendations on the Use of C.A.R.E.S. Act III Allocation

Mrs. Forsman presented information regarding Use of C.A.R.E.S. Act III allocations highlighting the following:

- SPS was awarded over \$27 million in funds
- She stated that there are parameters as to how this money can be spent, indicating the following areas:
 - 20% (\$5,471,111.35) must be set-aside to address learning loss
 - \$21.8 million to be used covering Information Technology, Professional Development, Instructional (non-set-aside), Special Education, and Facilities and Maintenance
- She also highlighted the various areas where the money cannot be used as there are many strings attached and it can only be used in the way indicated by the government to address learning loss and to develop a response plan to how to schools would continue to provide education in the upcoming years.

Chair Brooks-Buck invited the public speakers to the podium however, there were no speakers.

There being no speakers, the public hearing was adjourned.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

- The meeting was called to order by Dr. Brooks-Buck.
- Member Mayo led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEMS

Student Services Report

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Johnson seconded the motion to approve the Student Services Report.

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

Personnel Report

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

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

After the vote, Dr. Gordon introduced two new administrators that will be joining SAO:

- Jessica Avery – Coordinator of Employee Relations
- Catherine Pichon – Director of Elementary Leadership

Personnel Action Item # 20/21-2

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent on Personnel Action 20/21-2.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 1 (Riddick) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 1 to 0.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Johnson seconded the motion to approve the agenda.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

There were no speakers on agenda topics.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Good News Reports: Dr. Gordon introduced Mr. Charles Brabble, Digital Communications Specialist, to present the following information from the Good News Report
 - a. Student Recognitions
 - b. “Your Vice is Power” Competition
 - c. Grants & Awards
 - d. SPS Teacher Spotlight – April
 - e. Thank a Teacher Campaign
- Dr. Gordon presented the following reports:
 - Recognition of Pamela Connor
 - VSBA Business Honor Roll Recognition
 - Calendar of Special Events

CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ordinance 20/21-25 through Ordinance 20/21-39 were voted on together.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 20/21-25 through Ordinance 20/21-39.

Members had no questions or concerns and proceeded to the vote.

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

NEW BUSINESS

Reschedule date of July 8, 2021 School Board Meeting to July 15, 2021.

Dr. Gordon explained that July is a heavy vacation month and the administrative staff would be rotating vacations and in order to have the maximum possible staff available, it was necessary to move the meeting back one week to July 15, 2021.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Johnson seconded the motion to move the school board meeting from July 8th to July 15, 2021.

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

Set the date of May 26, 2021, 5 p.m. for a Special (Virtual) School Board Meeting for the Adoption of the 2021-2022 Approved Budget.

Board Chair Brooks-Buck explained that City Council had not yet approved the budget and that a special meeting for budget adoption was needed as council would be taking up the matter soon.

Member Mayo moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to have a special school board meeting for the adoption of the 2021-2022 approved budget on May 26, 2021 at 5 p.m.

There being no questions by board members, the vote was taken.

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

Resolution 20/21-27 A Resolution of the Suffolk City School Board Recognizing Dr. John B. Gordon III as a VA Superintendent of the Year for the 2020-2021 School Year as Designated by the VA Association of School Superintendents.

- Dr. Buck expressed her pride for this accomplishment and that it could be seen from all the things which has occurred this year that this honor is well deserved.
- Dr. Gordon indicated that his goal is to be the only superintendent to win this honor back to back by being named Superintendent of the year next year.
- Dr. Gordon also stated that since he began with SPS, the division has only had five (5) normal months together.
- He also stated that the quality of people in SPS is amazing. He thanked everyone in the division and vowed to keep Building the Best SPS.

There being no questions from board members, the vote was taken.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Johnson seconded the motion to approve Resolution 20/21-27 in honor of John B. Gordon.

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

VDOE Authorization of Signature in Absence of Division Superintendent Extension.

Dr. Gordon explained that this authorization is needed in case of his absence as he recommended Dr. Branch and Dr. Rice.

There being no questions, the vote was taken.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve Dr. Branch and Dr. Rice, in the absence of the Superintendent, they can authorize.

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

SPS Health Dashboard Update (Info Item Only).

Dr. Rice indicated the following:

- This is the last month that the Health Dashboard Update will be provided due to positive trends.
- This is the first time Suffolk has been in the “green” with percent positivity since the pandemic started. This was good news to all.
- Dr. Rice explained the breakdown of no cases in SPS in May and that the overall trend is moving in a downward direction.
- Member Johnson asked if the division would be offering vaccines in schools for students.
- Dr. Rice indicated that SPS is working on partnership details and that they will be able to offer vaccines to students as soon as possible.

○ **SPS Online: Virtual Learning Program.**

Dr. Branch presented information to the public highlighting the following:

- Students will return to five (5) days of face-to-face instruction in the fall.
- A virtual option will also be an option for those students who wish to remain virtual. In order for students to receive credit for the course, they must be in their online class all day.
- Teachers will receive extensive professional development to prepare for the 2021-2022 school year.

There being no questions from board members, they proceeded to the vote.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the virtual learning program as described by Dr. Branch.

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

Center for Performing and Production Arts.

- Dr. Gordon was excited about this opportunity and introduced Dr. Lawson-Davenport who presented information to the Board regarding this new program. Dr. Lawson-Davenport stated that the purpose of the program is to provide an innovative integrated fine arts program to develop student agency and knowledge of performance and production arts in the areas of music technology, vocal and instrumental music, theatre, and visual arts. She explained the key areas of focus of this program will be: Hand-on application of skills, cross discipline collaboration, content creation and promotion, college and career readiness, public performance, and marketing and entrepreneurship. Dr. Lawson-Davenport also highlighted that students in this program will select one strand as their concentration, but they will also be encouraged to explore other arts areas and all seniors will participate in an interdisciplinary final production (i.e. major production/performance). This program will also focus on multiple pathways to college and career readiness CTE pathways, college preparatory courses, career experiences, build community connections and experiences, and will increase enrollment numbers at LHS.
- Dr. Gordon and Board Members expressed their excitement with this program and how students will not only learn and understand about vocals, but students will also learn about and will be able to focus on building a career in production arts as well. They will understand the inner workings of the behind-the-scenes activities that goes into the art of performing and production.

- All agreed that this type of program is exactly the leverage that the division needed and that it will propel the students to higher levels.

There being no further questions or concerns, the vote was taken.

Member Johnson moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve the beginning of a Center for Performing and Production Arts.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

There were no speakers on Non-Agenda Topics.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Board Members:

- Were excited about the great things going on in Suffolk Public Schools.
- Indicated that the meeting was great and full of joy and excitement.
- Thanked Dr. Gordon and his staff for their hard work.
- Thanked teachers as they celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week and congratulated the Teachers of the Year.
- Indicated that the future is looking good for SPS.
- Stated they are looking forward to the five (5) days in-person instruction in the fall.
- Thanked all as they continue working together to Building the Best SPS.

Board Chair Brooks-Buck informed all that a letter had been received from the ACLU addressing the deletion of posts from Member Story's public social media account. Dr. Brooks-Buck warned all of the information provided by the ACLU which highlighted the following:

- Members using public social media cannot block or delete opposing viewpoints or comments from their social media platforms.
- Blocking or deleting citizens comments/viewpoints would violate their right to freedom of speech which could lead to a lawsuit.

Dr. Brooks-Buck stated:

- If a member is sued for violating citizens' free speech, the member will not be covered by insurance. The member will have to pay any and/or all legal fees out of his/her own pocket.
- She cautioned all to be mindful that not only does the member have the right to post comments on their public page but the public also has the right to reply either for or against the members' view(s) without their comment(s) being subject to deletion.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

The following items were provided as informational items only and Board Members asked no questions.

- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report April 2021
- Accident Report April 2021
- Support Salary Scale

- SPS Condolences
 - Letitia Davenport
 - Kenneth (Kenny) Watson

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or questions, Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the May 13, 2021 School Board Meeting at 9:51 p.m.

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*