

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, March 9, 2023 ~ 5:00 P.M.

Suffolk City Hall, 442 W. Washington Street, Suffolk, VA 23434

Board Members Present:

Tyron Riddick, *Chair*
Heather Howell, *Vice Chair*
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham
Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck
Phyllis Byrum
Karen Jenkins
Kimberly Slingsluff

Administrative Staff Present:

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

OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION

➤ **Call to Order:**

Board Chair Riddick called the meeting to order.

➤ **Facilities Study Update:**

Dr. Gordon gave a brief history of the Facilities Study which was done in 2021 as a joint project with the City of Suffolk. This facilities study was and is currently the instrument used to review conditions of school buildings/facilities and include recommendations for building new schools, preventative maintenance, student enrollment projections, and any other major projects that may need to be done over the coming five to ten years. Many of the preventative maintenance and major projects identified in the facilities study have been done, including roof replacements, HVAC, parking lots, tracks, and other items completed based on the actual facilities condition of the schools.

Terry Napier, Director of Facilities and Planning, provided information on the following:

- Timeline
- Three Major Components (Facility Condition Assessment Executive Summary, Facility Condition Assessment Executive Summary Appendix, School Facility Condition Assessment – Individual Schools (excluding FBES, SWES, CFCMS))
- Major Focus Areas (Demographic Analysis, Facility Condition Assessments, Facility Options Recommendations, School Capacity & Cost Methodology (including City UDO Recommendations))
- Deferred Maintenance (Calculated on a 10-year basis and broken down into three categories)
- Capital Improvement Planning – School Board Priorities: 1-JFKMS; 2-FGMS; 3-EFES; 4-JYMS; 5-KSES; 6-NPES
- Completed Facilities Maintenance Improvement Projects from 2018-2023 with costs totaling \$46.9 million.

Mr. Napier stated that with all of the work completed to date, the facilities study was not a waste of time and money, which is contrary to what was stated at the Joint Council/School Board meeting held on February 1, 2023.

Mr. Jeff Harris from RRMM Architects, presented various articles from across the country showing how the COVID pandemic affected costs assessment & estimates, project costs & timelines. He explained that increased construction costs, diesel fuel costs, and supply chain issues are some of the main reasons for the increased costs that were passed to consumers, including school divisions.

Dr. Gordon explained, in harmony with Mr. Napier's and Harris' presentation, how the Board arrived at the schools listed in their CIP priorities. He reiterated that the CIP has not changed, but has remained the same over the years so that repairs/construction are balanced throughout the entire city.

Board Members asked questions and Mr. Napier, Mr. Harris, Mrs. Forsman and Dr. Gordon provided additional insight into some of the projects and safety concerns within the school division. Board Chair Riddick explained that if our schools are not quality schools, citizens would not want to move to our city therefore, the two entities must work together in building state of the art schools to match the growth of the city. He also highlighted the 15,000 work orders, and over \$49 million in work/projects completed within the division as a way to dispel the false narrative circulating that SPS hasn't done anything on the Facilities Study.

➤ Superintendent's Revised Evaluation Instrument:

Board Chair Riddick clarified that a new instrument is not being developed, but in order to remain in compliance with state requirements, the cultural competency category must be added to the Superintendent's evaluation instrument. He further emphasized that the evaluation tool will mimic the one provided by the state, and that the Board is only adjusting the points value to include points needed for the additional standard and for the maximum points possible to total the sum of 10.

Board Members discussed each standard and the indicators, which are set by the State of Virginia, and determined the numerical value that should be applied to the standard. They decided on the following:

- Standard 1 - Leadership = 1.0
- Standard 2 - Planning and Assessment = 1.5
- Standard 3 - Instructional Leadership = 1.5
- Standard 4 - Organizational Leadership and Resource Management = 1.5
- Standard 5 - Communication and Community Relations = 1.0
- Standard 6 - Culturally Responsive and Equitable Division Leadership = 1.0
- Standard 7 - Professionalism = 1.0
- Standard 8 - Division-Wide Student Academic Progress = 1.5

The Board will vote on these values under the item as listed in New Business on the agenda.

PRESENTATION

➤ Recognition of Honor Graduates – King's Fork High School

Derrick Bryant, Principal, Mrs. Requizo, Guidance Director, and Dr. Tonya Spruill, Assistant Principal, presented 130 Honor Graduates, who have over 430 college acceptance letters on file.

Board Members congratulated the graduates, teachers, parents, and their village for their hard work and dedication for a job well done. They wished the students well and encouraged them to be happy in whatever they do as life is a journey and not a destination and to be sure to take

the time to enjoy the moments ahead as they go quickly. They also thanked Mr. Bryant and his team for their hard work in helping the students succeed.

Board Chair Riddick announced a delay in the Public Budget Hearing from 7 p.m. to 7:25 p.m.

MEETING RECESS

- Board Chair Riddick recessed the meeting.

RECONVENE IN PUBLIC MEETING

- Meeting Call to Order:
Board Chair Riddick called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.
- Pledge of Allegiance:
The Forest Glen Middle School Chorus led all in the Pledge of Allegiance
- Musical Selection – FGMS Chorus:
The chorus from Forest Glen Middle School, under the leadership of Ms. Small, performed at the meeting. The Board enjoyed the musical selections and thanked the students for their outstanding performance.

PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

- Meeting Call to Order:
Board Chair Riddick opened the Public Budget Hearing.

Dr. Gordon introduced Mrs. Forsman to the podium. She provided a correction to a table in the Executive Summary on page 23 of the budget book. The table had not been updated from the 2022-2023 school year however, this oversight did not affect the bottom line/total of the budget for the 2023-2024 school year as it was previously presented.

- Public Comments on the 2023-2024 Superintendent’s Proposed Budget:
The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those who signed up to speak. The following citizens provided comments regarding the 2023-2023 budget:
 1. Matthew Hintlian – Concerned about funding Saturday Academy without grant funding.
 2. Valerie Boykin (on behalf of AKA Sorority Inc.) – Supported the budget
 3. Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom – Did not support the budget.
 4. Zaki Edwards – Requested a crosswalk at JYMS, and a baseball program specifically at JYMS and throughout the division.
 5. Chris Dove – Encouraged the Board to make the largest request possible for the budget.
- Adjournment of Public Budget Hearing:
There being no further comments, Board Chair Riddick closed the Public Budget Hearing.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

- Meeting Call to Order:

Board Chair Riddick called to order the regular public meeting.

- Recital of SPS Mission:
Vice Chair Howell read the Mission of Suffolk Public Schools.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Approval of Agenda:
Member Slingluff moved and Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the agenda.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

- Citizen Comments on Agenda Items:
 - There were no speakers on the agenda topics.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Good News Report:
Dr. Gordon read a letter from a constituent who wanted to recognize Mr. Marcus Jones. Mr. Jones helped this citizen who was having car trouble. She expressed her gratitude for Mr. Jones' help as she was a recent widow with no family locally and the difficulty of navigating without her husband. She stated that Mr. Jones was extremely kind, considerate, and went out of his way to make sure that she and her family were safe. Mr. Privott and Dr. Gordon presented Mr. Jones with a SPS gift for his act of kindness.

Melvin Bradshaw, Community Engagement Facilitator, highlighted the following good news/events that occurred throughout the division:

- Parents & Partners: Together We Create Achievers Event
 - Alumni Spotlight: Dejah Wilson, LHS Alumni
 - Spotlights – (Owen Rawls (NRHS), Wrestling Champion, and the Girls Indoor Track State Champions (NRHS), were recognized at the meeting for their athletic accomplishments.)
 - Athletics & Activities
 - Awards & Recognitions
 - Community Donation (Towne Bank representatives, Michelle Butler and Jerry Kent presented a check for \$25,000 to Suffolk Public Schools for the STEM Century Project)
- Calendar of Special Events:
Dr. Gordon highlighted the events listed on SPS website for March/April.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of the Consent Agenda:
Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the removal of the Bills and Payroll and having this item added to New Business.

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

With the approval of the Personnel Report, Dr. Gordon introduced and welcomed Mrs. Emma Hundley, Coordinator II of Finance. Mrs. Hundley was thankful for the opportunity and excited to join the SPS Team and to get to work.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

- Set the date of Monday, April 10, 2023, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. for VSBA Virtual Board Development Training

Member Riddick explained that the change in date, (from Wednesday, March 22, 2023), was because that date was no longer being available for VSBA. Board Members responded with their availability for April 10, 2023 for training.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to schedule VSBA Virtual Board Development Training for Monday, April 10, 2023 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

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

- Set the Date of Wednesday, March 22, 2023, 6 p.m. City Council Chamber for a Special School Board Meeting for a budget work session/discussion and approval of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget 2023-2024

Member Jenkins moved and Member Dr. Brooks-Buck seconded the motion to approve Wednesday, March 22, 2023, 6 p.m. for a Special School Board Meeting at City Council Chambers for a budget work session/discussion and approval of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget 2023-2024, as presented.

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

- Summer School Program - 2023

Dr. Branch, Chief Academic Officer, and Mr. Douglas Wagoner, Coordinator of Auxiliary Programs, presented the summer school program summer series. They provided the following information:

- SPS Summer Series Program
- Logistics and Staffing
- SPS Summer Series
 - SPS Summer Academy
 - SPS Summer School
 - SPS Summer Bridge Program
 - Extended School Year (ESY) Program
 - SPS Explore

Member Jenkins moved and Member Dr. Brooks-Buck seconded the motion to approve the Summer School Program for 2023 as presented.

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

➤ Superintendent's Revised Evaluation Instrument

Board Chair Riddick explained the logistics of the evaluation instrument and that it is in line with the requirements of the State department and it is not an instrument designed to give Dr. Gordon a raise.

Dr. Gordon expressed his agreement and approval of the revised evaluation instrument.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the Superintendent's Revised Evaluation Instrument as presented.

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

➤ Payment of Bills and Payroll February 2023

Board Member Dr. Brittingham raised concerns regarding the payment of bills and payroll. She does not feel comfortable approving something that she doesn't fully understand and looks forward to understanding the process, and receiving additional clarification.

Board Member Slingluff clarified that her vote is not a reflection for concern with any of the finances of SPS or any reports that were prepared. She felt that in order to give her approval of the report, she must be able to validate the information.

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck provided clarity regarding her attendance at a conference as questions were circulating regarding her accommodations while at the conference.

Additional conversation ensued between Members.

Member Riddick provided context for the "School Board" stating that the Board is a collective group and no one person can move and do whatever he/she would like to do. He also emphasized the importance of Board training, commended members for their comments and for articulating their points of view.

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to approve the Payment of Bills and Payroll, February 2023 as presented.

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

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

➤ Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items:

The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak. The following speakers shared their comments:

- Chris Dove – Minimum level of service required for schools by the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and comprehensive plan

- E. Rick Copeland – Exposure undergirds one’s success
- Jacky Musick-Maggio – The safety of her child, major bullying issues, and concerns with administration at KFMS and KFHS
- Linda Johnson – Attack on Suffolk Schools
- Matthew Hintlian – STEM Program
- Xavier Scott – School bus policy and procedures
- Carl Jackson – Social Studies standards and the need for AP African American History classes
- Travis McKinney – Trusted Adult
- Selena Thornton – School Rezoning

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

➤ Comments and Reports by School Board Members:

- Encouraged everyone to work together especially the City of Suffolk and School Board as this is the way to build a great city.
- Thanked the FGMS chorus, athletes, and teachers who were recognized at the meeting.
- Appreciative of the CTE conference. Excited to watch the students participate in the conference.
- Appreciated the Army Band performance at the three high schools
- Thanked all in attendance at the meeting and wished them all safe travels back home.
- Appreciate that diverse talent within the division as it shows money well spent.
- Thanked Dr. Gordon, Mrs. Forsman and their teams for all of their hard work and diligence in providing information to members, employees, and stakeholders.
- Thanked citizens for coming out and participating in the meeting.
- Encouraged all to support the telling of true history. History must tell the true story.
- Appreciated Mrs. Credle and the DECA Students for their Blue Chip Award.
- Congratulated the over 4,000 honor roll students who received a letter from Delegate Jenkins.
- Encouraged all to participate in the Spring Fling being hosted by NPES.
- Asked all to find something good in people and not always recognizing the bad in students.
- Thanked the sorority of Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated for all that they do for the schools and school community.
- Thanked citizens for their attendance at Town Hall and for their questions.
- Suggested that everyone take a moment to check their heart and end goal, and if it’s about the children and staff, it should be reflected in how you deal with anyone who is different from you. If your goal is about self-preservation and revenge, you are making the work harder for those who are working hard to move the division forward.
- Wished all a good evening and safe night.
- Asked all to observe a moment of silence for an employee who passed away, (Iyeshia Cross Edwards-KFHS), and was recently funeralized.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Accident Review Report
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report February 2023
- Bi-Annual Review of the MOU Between SPS and SPD

ADJOURNMENT

➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

There being no further business or questions, Board Chair Riddick asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

➤ Board Chair Riddick adjourned the March 9, 2023 School Board Meeting at 10:25 p.m.


~~Tyron Riddick, Board Chair~~
Heather Howell, Board Vice-Chair


Tarshia L. Gardner, Board Clerk