

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD**  
**Thursday, May 12, 2022 ~ 5:00 P.M.**  
**King's Fork Middle School, 350 King's Fork Road, Suffolk, VA 23434**

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**Board Members Present:**

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*

Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Lorita Mayo

Tyron Riddick

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*

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• **OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION**

○ **Call to Order:**

Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order.

○ **Student Discipline Report**

Dr. Brown presented information to the Board and highlighted the following:

- Discipline Data Comparison, Student Discipline Data by School, Discipline Data by Location, Discipline Data School Level, Top Five Incidents, Student Discipline Initiatives.
- According to the data, the month of March had the largest number of referrals. The administrative team will look at the data to proactively create strategies to mitigate disciplinary behaviors that lead to the high number of student referrals.
- Overall, disciplinary referrals are on a downward trend with the largest schools reporting the larger number of referrals.
- Schools are doing a great job curbing behavior (e.g. administrative visibility in the buildings, hallway/special areas monitoring, and initiatives at each school level).
- New initiatives for the remainder of the year, include: Western Tidewater School Based Mental Health Grant (Cognitive Behavior Intervention for Trauma in Schools, Group Sessions focused on managing symptoms using CBI, Individual/Parent/Group Sessions), Tele-mental Health Services Grant (Behavior and Mental Health), Additional Safety Monitors, Hall Monitors for select schools, Dean Support one day per week, VDOE School Based Mental Health Grant (School Psychologist/School Counselor Grant Positions).
- Members agreed that the administrative team is working hard to address student's needs while additional work is still needed.

Board Members asked questions and suggested that student discipline should be a community effort, rewarding students for positive behavior, and to continue educating students, teachers, and parents as this will reinforce positivity in the division.

- **RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING**

Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck reconvened the public meeting and thanked all for their patience regarding the delay in the meeting.

- **PRESENTATION OF KING'S FORK HIGH SCHOOL HONOR GRADUATES**

Mr. Derrick Bryant, Principal and Ms. Cassandra Requizo, Guidance Director, presented each honor graduate and stated their plans for the future.

Board Members expressed their pride in the 149 honor graduates and their accomplishments and the more than \$5.5 million in scholarship money. Members also congratulated teachers, parents, and the family members who played a role in the student's success. The students were reminded that they can achieve everything they are determined to do. Working together with their support teams and staying focused and steadfast, never letting anything get in the way will lead to success. All Members look forward to hearing the great things these students will accomplish in the future.

- **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Member Story led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **ITEMS REQUESTED FROM BOARD MEMBERS TO BE ADDED TO THE AGENDA FOR JUNE 9, 2022 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING:**

- Member Riddick asked that three items he requested be added to the agenda for June's meeting be removed. (e.g. Report on the Training of Administrators on Police MOU, Information on the implementation of policy 7-16.1:1., and Improve community stakeholder KFMS...All Middle Schools)
- Member Story moved and Member Howell seconded the motion to have a report on the Adult Education Program at CCAP, last year's completed report (2021) and the report for 2022 upon its completion, and a report given annually to the Board thereafter.

Members asked if this report is already given and for clarification as to the request. Member Story clarified that according to her understanding of the regulations, a separate Adult Education report was to be given to the Board each year. Attorney Waller provided further clarification as to the policy which requires an annual report on Adult Education be given to the Board. However, he indicated that the policy refers to individuals over the age of 18 who are not enrolled as SPS students but may be receiving some educational services at CCAP. According to the policy, the annual report would cover July 1 through July 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. Therefore, the request for the report for 2021 is in compliance with policy and should be available.

Additional conversation ensued. Member Story clarified that she was asking for a "report of the 2021 Adult Education Program as required by the regulation in the State Code for Suffolk Public Schools."

Attorney Waller clarified that the report given by Mr. Skinner does not reference adults over the age of 18 enrolled in programs at CCAP. His report pertains to students enrolled in SPS who are also taking classes at CCAP.

- **ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEM (Student Appeal #21/22-3)**

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to accept the recommendation of the Student Service Committee in Student Appeal 21/22-3.

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

- **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. The motion Passed. 7 to 0

- **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS**

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

- Linda Johnson – Re: Book List for Middle School Courses – Mrs. Johnson did not agree with the Board voting on or removing books from a curriculum. She felt that this action puts the Board on a slippery slope.
- Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom – Re: Discipline, Policy, Purchase Cards – No Show
- Deborah Kliche’ – Re: Teacher Hires for 2022-2023 – Mrs. Kliche’ suggested an investigation on the number of teachers that are leaving SPS and (a follow-up plan) and steps taken to replace qualified, licensed teachers.

- **REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT**

Good News Report: Ms. Ward, Community Engagement Officer, highlighted the following good news/events that happened throughout the division;

- SPS Alumni: Maurice Fofana, NRHS
- Dr. Joleen Neighbours – Honors Society Induction
- UVA Cohort Members Receive Nominations and Scholarship
- 2022 School Lunch Hero – Angela Knight - NSES
- NRHS Students Accepted into the PLTW BLAST Program
- 2022 VSBA Tidewater Spring Regional Forum Art Contest
- Bus Driver Recognized for Doing Math Problems During Routes – Joy Dorr
- SPS Springs Into the Zoo
- Growing Up Suffolk
- Grants and Awards
- April Teacher Spotlight
- Appreciation Week

Dr. Gordon presented certificates and the pictures to each of the winners/participants of the VSBA Art Contest. He also recognized Ms. Knight who expressed her gratitude for being able to be a positive part in the lives of the students she serves.

Calendar of Special Events: Dr. Gordon spotlighted the events on the calendar.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Set the Date of May 25, 2022, 6 p.m. for a Special School Board Meeting at Col. Fred Cherry Middle School for the Adoption of the 2022-2023 Approved Budget (Pending State Budget Approval)**

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Howell seconded the motion to Set the Date of May 25, 2022, 6 p.m. for a Special School Board Meeting at Col. Fred Cherry for the Adoption of the 2022-2023 Approved Budget (Pending State Budget Approval)

Dr. Gordon indicated that if the State has not approved its budget by May 23<sup>rd</sup>, he will contact the Board Chair and recommend that the Special School Board Meeting be cancelled. Member Story reminded everyone that a work session for the Strategic Plan should be a part of the special meeting which was according to the minutes from April's meeting. Vice-Chair Byrum amended her motion.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Story seconded the motion to Set the Date of May 25, 2022, 6 p.m. for a Special School Board Meeting at Col. Fred Cherry for the Adoption of the 2022-2023 Approved Budget (Pending State Budget Approval) and Strategic Plan Work.

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

- **Use of Facility – The Mount**

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the Use of Facility for The Mount and Reverend Wilkins at KFHS.

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

- **VDOE Authorization of Signature in the Absence of the Division Superintendent Extension**

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion authorizing Dr. Okema S. Branch, Chief Academic Officer, and Dr. Rodney J. Brown, Chief of Administrative Services, to sign documents submitted to VDOE in the absence of the Division Superintendent.

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

- **VSBA Excellence in Workforce Readiness Award**

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Riddick seconded the motion to accept the VSBA Excellence in Workforce Readiness Award along with the program with AMADAS.

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

- **BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

Members shared the following:

- Thanked Dr. Gordon and his team for a job well done, constituents for entrusting them to serve, faculty and staff for all they do to ensure the success of Suffolk Public Schools, and the honor graduates for their accomplishments as they were impressed with the \$5.5 million awarded in scholarships. Honor graduates were encouraged to continue to soar and reach for their dreams.
- Thanked the students who participated in the VSBA Regional Art Contest and recognized the great talent of these art students. They also recognized the jazz band from LHS who provided music for the contest.
- Congratulated the Rookie and Teachers of the Year and welcomed all the new administrators who will begin their new role with SPS for the 2022-2023 school year.
- One Member questioned the relevance of the Legislative Committee and was disappointed with the lack of participation of the Student Health Advisory Board and the Safety Audit Committee, and looked forward to the Strategic Planning Session.
- Appreciated the open, honest, and transparent dialog held during the meeting and indicated that those conversations are important for all constituents to gain additional information which will aid in understanding the thought process behind a member's vote.
- Thanked Dr. Gordon and the SPS family for an amazing time at the Norfolk Zoo and for providing this opportunity for all faculty, staff and their families.
- Looking forward to graduation.
- A Legislative Committee Member provided history of the Legislative Committee, its functions during Covid, dates and times when reports were given to the Board, and how the committee will continue fulfilling its responsibilities.
- Stated that Suffolk Public Schools may not have all that they want but they do the best with what they have.
- Stated that SPS is the best and anyone who says anything different is not looking at the data.

- **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- Financial Report March 2022
- Financial Report April 2022
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Accident Report April 2022

- **ADJOURNMENT**

- There being no further business or questions Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

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

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the May 12, 2022 School Board Meeting at 10:54 p.m.

  
Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, Board Chair

  
Tarshia L. Gardner, Board Clerk