

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, June 9, 2022 ~ 5:00 P.M.

Col. Fred Cherry Middle School, 7401 Burbage Drive, Suffolk, VA 23435

Board Members Present:

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*

Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Lorita Mayo

Tyron Riddick (see footnote #2)

Sherri Story

Administrative Staff Present:

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*

Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*¹

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*

Keesha L. Hicks, *Deputy Clerk*

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

Call to Order:

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

SPS Vision 2022 Presentation:

Dr. Gordon presented information to the Board and highlighted four (4) main areas of focus:

- Community Leadership:
 - SPS Supports (Special Education Parental Support Group, SPS Transition Teams, Year “13”, Communication Protocols for Support, Proactive Parents)
 - Parental Partnership Program (Parental Program of Studies, Parental Partnership Opportunities, Business and Financial Support)
 - SPS Community Champions (Tiered Levels of Community Support from Individuals and Business, SPS Community Champion Catalog, Partner with the CTE Advisory Council, Faith Leader Partnerships)
- Instructional Planning:
 - SPS 2022 Summer Series (Summer Academy, Summer School, Summer Explore, Summer Bridge)
 - 4x4 Block Scheduling for 2023-2024 (Transition the High School Master Schedule to a 4x4 Block Schedule, Advanced Diploma = 26 credits, Standard = 22 credits, School Board Vote = October 2022)
 - Professional Learning (Thomas Murray-Director of Innovation for Future Ready Schools – presenting to teachers during teacher in-service week (Tier I Instructional Balance, School Performance Plans, Professional Learning, Cultural Competency for Licensure (From VDOE)
- Human Resources and Talent Acquisition:
 - SPS Expanded Recruitment for Talent Acquisition
 - Hybrid Approach for Job Fairs
 - Recruitment and Retention Incentives

¹ Attorney Waller arrived at 5:59 p.m.

- SPS Facilities and Maintenance Overview:
 - Technology (security camera additions, intercom clock replacement, Chromebooks replacements, digital signage, fiber infrastructure, audio, video lighting)
 - Summer 2022 (HVAC System Replacement, HW actuator valve replacement, new construction design work, painting, roof replacement, floor replacement)
 - Ongoing Repairs and Replacements (stormwater system piping repairs and replacement, parking lot resurfacing, track replacement, turf field installation, Center for Performing and Production Arts, mobile unit decking and walkway replacement, fire panel upgrade, master clock upgrades, begin discussion on NSES expansion),
 - SPS Pharmacy (updated presentation August 2022, estimated opening Jan. 2023)

Board Members asked questions, expressed their agreement with Dr. Gordon's vision presentation, and thanked him for moving SPS forward.

SPS Strategic Plan (Student Achievement / Community Engagement and Communication)

Dr. Branch presented information regarding the Strategic Plan and the Board worked together on student achievement, community engagement and communication areas. Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck divided Board Members into two work groups. Board Members Mayo, Jenkins, and Vice-Chair Byrum worked to develop sample goals for Student Achievement. Board Members Story and Howell worked on developing a goal for Community Engagement and Communication. Members collaborated to develop sample goals for Student Achievement and Community Engagement and Communication. Drs. Brooks-Buck, Gordon, Branch and Byrd assisted members as needed. Member Mayo was selected to compile the goals for Student Achievement.

● **BUDGET ADOPTION**

Resolution Number 21/22-23: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Approving the Annual Budget of Suffolk Public Schools for Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2022 and Ending June 30, 2023

Mrs. Forsman informed the Board of the two items which were awarded by the General Assembly, were not included in the Operating Budget but were included in the Grant Funds:

\$4.4 Mil. – School Construction Program

\$1,000 – Bonus for SOQ Employees (percentage from State funds, SPS must make up the difference)

These funds could not be listed in the operating budget because the money must be accounted for to the auditors and the State as being federal money, therefore it could not be listed in the Operating Budget. She also indicated that a budget transfer will be submitted to the Board in December to cover the difference needed for employee bonuses because the amount awarded from the State is not enough to cover the number of employees in SPS.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to support the upcoming budget as presented.

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

There being no further questions or concerns, the meeting was recessed.

- **RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING**

Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck reconvened the public meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

Member Mayo led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **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: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS**

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

- Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom – Re: Proposed Policy Amendments – Dr. Wahlstrom did not agree with Ordinance 21/22-39 “Appointment of Purchasing Manager and Duties of the School Superintendent; Spot Purchases by Employees”.

- **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: Skylar Old, NRHS c/o 2018
- Leadership Academy for Potential Principals (LAPP) ²
- Project Lead The Way 2021-2022 Distinguished Schools: NRHS, LHS
- CCAP Culinary Arts Students Meet World Renowned Chef Malcolm Mitchell
- WHRO: PBS Kids Writers Contest Winners (Kylah Jaramillo – 1st Place / Willow Young – 2nd Place)
- Senior Awards Night (LHS, KFHS, NRHS – scholarships received thus far, total over \$13 million)
- Athletic Wins
- May Teacher Spotlight

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

- **CONSENT AGENDA**

Approval of the Consent Agenda

Dr. Gordon indicated that additional information needed to be added to the Personnel Report.

² Member Riddick arrived and joined the meeting during this time. (7:16 p.m.)

Dr. Gordon indicated that due to the agenda review being released a week prior to the meeting, there were some challenges with the date release for the agenda and the interview dates. As a result, new hires for one principalship and five Assistant Principals needed to be added.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the addition of information from Dr. Gordon.

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

At this time, Dr. Gordon introduced the new administrator for the 2022-2023 school year.

- Steve Smith – New Principal at JYMS

- **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Ordinance 21/22-39: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 4, Article 6, Section 4-6.2 Entitled, “Appointment of Purchasing Manager and Duties of the School Superintendent; Spot Purchases by Employees” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – Second Reading

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to accept Ordinance 21/22-39 - An Ordinance Amending Chapter 4, Article 6, Section 4-6.2 Entitled, “Appointment of Purchasing Manager and Duties of the School Superintendent; Spot Purchases by Employees” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board.

Board Member Howell asked for clarity regarding the reason for the change in the policy and Dr. Brooks-Buck, Dr. Gordon and Attorney Waller provided information. Attorney Waller explained that this was not a new policy expanding the contracting authority of the school superintendent but aligning language in Section 4-6.2 to what was previously adopted by the School Board in October 2020 and found in Section 4-6.1, subsection B, and setting parameters/limitations on the superintendent’s contracting authority.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 4 / Nay: 2 (Howell, Story) / Abstain: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed. 4 to 2 to 1

Ordinance 21/22-40: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 7, Article 16, Section 7-16.5:1 Entitled, “Placement on Salary Scale; Credit for Teaching Experience; Credit for Work Experience; Credit for Military Experience; Reserve Military Experience Not Included; Superintendent to Development Regulations” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – Second Reading

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21/22-40, An Ordinance Amending Chapter 7, Article 16, Section 7-16.5:1 Entitled, “Placement on Salary Scale; Credit for Teaching Experience; Credit for Work Experience; Credit for Military Experience; Reserve Military Experience Not Included; Superintendent to Development Regulations” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board.

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

Ordinance 21/22-41: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 9, Article 11, Section 9-11.6 Entitled, “Portable communication devices permitted; use in classroom; Superintendent to develop regulations” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – Second Reading

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve An Ordinance Amending Chapter 9, Article 11, Section 9-11.6 Entitled, "Portable communication devices permitted; use in classroom; Superintendent to develop regulations."

Members asked for clarity of the policy relative to allowing students to bring and use their own device(s). Dr. Gordon explained that this was aligning policy language with current practice. SPS preference is that students use school issued devices for classroom instruction instead of their own personal devices; however, students are bringing their own personal devices to school. Attorney Waller further clarified that according to current policy, if a student wants to use their personal device and have it connected to SPS's network, approval must be obtained from SPS's Technology Department and that decision would be final. Dr. Gordon also stated that the policy revision removes reference to devices that are no longer relevant (i.e. walkie-talkies) and any non-school issued device must be vetted through Technology before connecting to SPS's network. Therefore, the updated policy would place certain restrictions on use of personal electronic devices within SPS.

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

Ordinance 21/22-42: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 9, Article 20, Section 9-20.11:1 Entitled, "Prescription medications; Nonprescription Medications; Self-Administration of Medication; Sharing, borrowing etc., of medication prohibited; Self-Administration of Asthma medication and Auto-Injectable Epinephrine; school nurse trained in administration of epinephrine; superintendent to develop regulations" of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board — Second Reading

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Howell seconded the motion to approve An Ordinance Amending Chapter 9, Article 20, Section 9-20.11:1 "Prescription medications; Nonprescription Medications; Self-Administration of Medication; Sharing, borrowing etc., of medication prohibited; Self-Administration of Asthma medication and Auto-Injectable Epinephrine; school nurse trained in administration of epinephrine; superintendent to develop regulations" of the Policies.

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

Ordinance 21/22-43: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Article 3, Section 10-3.5 Entitled, "Virginia Freedom of Information Act; not required to create a public record; penalties for altering or destroying public records; School FOIA Officer; Training required" of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board — Second Reading

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve An Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Article 3, Section 10-3.5 Entitled, "Virginia Freedom of Information Act; not required to create a public record; penalties for altering or destroying public records; School FOIA Officer; Training required."

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

- **NEW BUSINESS**

Resolution 21/22-21: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Granting the School Superintendent the Authority to Obligate Through Encumbrance Contracting any Remaining Appropriated Funds Before the End of the Current Fiscal Year [June 30, 2022] for Certain Designated Repair and/or Purchasing Needs of Suffolk Public Schools.

Dr. Gordon explained/itemized how the funds would be used which included the following:

- 10 Buses (77 passengers w/ AC)
- 12 Vans
- 7 Trucks
- 6 Vehicles
- Fuel tank installation at FBES
- Professional painting at CES and KFMS
- Sewage pump station at NPES
- Restroom partition replacements at LHS and NRHS
- Fire lane and parking lot painting at all schools
- Replacement of six-year-old copiers at various schools
- Hot water system valve replacements
- Sink holes repairs
- Furniture replacement
- Student desks replacement
- Playground equipment replacements at MBJES and OES
- Camera scope and drainage field at KFHS
- Various parking lot repairs
- VPI playground replacement at various schools

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Resolution 21/22-21.

Board Member Riddick questioned the purchase of buses and wanted to be sure that buses could be used across the board and not just for athletics or certain programs because specific requirements must be met for a bus to be used for picking up/dropping off students. Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Forsman indicated that the buses will be in full compliance with state and federal regulations for transporting students.

Board Member Story asked for the definition of an Encumbrance Contract. Dr. Brooks-Buck and Wendy Forsman explained that an encumbrance contract meant that the contractor/provider would have to be under a contract before June 30, 2022 in accordance with the Virginia Public Procurement Act. It was further explained that these are obligated funds that may not be used for any other vendor or any other purpose than what they were encumbered for (i.e. the vendor for buses – once this contract is in place, SPS cannot change the vendor or the item(s) purchased.) All monies not encumbered or spent is returned to the City.

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

Resolution 21/22-24: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Approving an Award to McGraw Hill to Provide Textbooks Pre-K Thru 5 Pursuant to a Request for Proposals Issued by Suffolk Public Schools and Benchmark, Scholastic Education, Learning Without Tears, and Collaborative Learning to be Used as Supplements to Such Adoption.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve Resolution 21/22-24 - A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Approving an Award to McGraw Hill to Provide Textbooks Pre-K Thru 5 Pursuant to a Request for Proposals Issued by Suffolk Public Schools and Benchmark, Scholastic Education, Learning Without Tears, and Collaborative Learning.

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

Technology Repair Fees:

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the technology repair fees as outlined.

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

• **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS**

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

- Carl Jackson – Re: Do Not Censor or Ban School Books – Father of SPS honor students. He did not agree with the removal or banning of books.
- Shawn Barnard – Re: Administrative Position Placement – IB Specialist at KFHS. She and others who attended with her, did not agree with the transfer of Assistant Principal Elke Boone from KFHS to another school.
- Nicole Sperry – Re: Information Received via FOIA Regarding Teresa Sperry – Parent of Teresa Sperry did not agree with the findings entailed in the investigation of her daughter's death.
- Jenifer Herget – Re: Pfizer Vaccine – Supports informed consent and encouraged parents to have informed consent before vaccinating their students. (Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck interrupted Mrs. Herget as she began to promote/advertise a specific website that promoted controversial information about vaccinations.)
- Amber Snodgrass – Re: Giving the Superintendent Power to Enter Contracts without School Board Oversight – She did not agree with Ordinance 21/22-39. She felt that the ordinance was a removal of Board oversight.
- Ebony Wright – Re: Gratitude – Mrs. Wright expressed her appreciation and gratitude to the Board, Dr. Gordon, faculty and staff, and parents, and encouraged everyone to lead by example, be willing to express gratitude and to continue Building the Best SPS!

• **BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

Members shared the following:

- Dr. Gordon was presented with a gift of thanks from Board Members for his dedication, leadership, and his continuous hard work.
- Gratitude was conveyed to citizens for attending and participating in meetings of the School Board, and for bringing light, love and gratitude into the meetings.
- Everyone was thanked for adapting and working hard together for the success of students and the division.
- Mrs. Elke Boone was mentioned for her service, and dedication to KFHS.
- A Member expressed her disappointment to the Sperry family for the investigative report and stated that she did not agree with the family's treatment.

- It was mentioned that students deserve the best and that SPS could not be the best if everyone is not working together. As Board Members, they do not always get it right, but they are committed to trying, working hard, and giving it their all.
- Members must set aside personal issues and agendas, and put students first.
- The LAPP participants, athletic wins, teachers who were spotlighted, honor graduates who received scholarships and various awards, and the entire graduating class of 2022 were congratulated.
- All were encouraged to enjoy the summer and suggested sending a letter or note to the students over the summer as they will miss coming to school.
- The faculty and staff were thanked for their hard work and for trying, giving their best to the students and succeeding in making SPS great.

- **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- Accident Report – May 2022
- Financial Report – May 31, 2022
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- 2021-2022 Student Teacher Ratio Report
- Citizens Advisory Committees Announcement
- Evaluations Notice: Superintendent, School Board Attorney, School Board Clerk

- **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: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed. 6 to 0.³

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the June 9, 2022 School Board Meeting at 9:58 p.m.


 Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*


 Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*

³ During the roll call vote to adjourn the meeting, it was recognized that Member Riddick had left the meeting. The exact time of his exit is not known.