

REGULAR MEETING OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, October 14, 2021 ~ 5:00 P.M.
King's Fork High School (Black Box Theater) 351 King's Fork Road, 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
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*

OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION

The School Board Meeting/Work Session was called to order by Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck. Dr. Buck welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Student Achievement Update:

- Dr. Okema Branch, Chief Academic Officer, and Shawn Dickerson, Supervisor of Data and Research, presented an overview of the strategic performance measures and the 2020-2021 SOL results. Catherine Pichon, Director of Elementary Leadership, and Dr. Ronald Leigh, Director of Secondary Leadership, presented achievement data from the elementary and secondary levels.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck reminded individuals attending the meeting about mask wearing while inside the building.

- Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, presented data for Advance Placement.

Dr. Branch highlighted the following initiatives that will excel student learning:

- SPS Saturday Academy
- University Instructors/Tutor U
- Before (elementary level) and After School (secondary level) Tutoring/Support
- Additional curricular supports provided to parents through the Parent Handbook including a list of online options for parents to support students when they are home.

During this time, members asked questions and Dr. Gordon, Dr. Branch, and her team provided answers/additional information to address inquiries.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck concluded this session stating that there is a lot of work to be done but it appears that solutions have been put in place that will be useful to parents and students.

There being no questions. The meeting was recessed.

The Board reconvened the Public Meeting.

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck and she welcomed all to the meeting and reminded all to wear their mask, to sit socially distanced, and gave details regarding the meeting's overflow seating, and thanked all for their cooperation.

Vice-Chair Byrum lead all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck reminded the audience that if they are not speaking to please sit quietly.

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: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 7 to 0 to 0.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

The Board Chair indicated that she will be reading a statement during this session and reminded all to exercise courtesy and listen intently while others are speaking. Below is the statement read by Dr. Brooks-Buck:

Lion's Story 2.0

"The story as told by the Lion is different from the story told by the Lion Hunter"

***Written By Judith Brooks-Buck, Ph.D.
J. Brooks-Buck Educational Consulting***

In the first VFOIA case filed against the School Board the court found four violations, three of which are now on appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court. The court did not grant declaratory or injunctive relief.

The second VFOIA case filed against the School Board alleged five violations of the VFOIA. The Board Member did not get to attend a closed meeting because she was unwilling to turn in her recording device, so she sued. All other Board Members were asked to do the same thing and they complied. The VFOIA Council, a body established by the Virginia General Assembly "to furnish, upon request, advisory opinions or guidelines regarding VFOIA" issued an opinion that four out of the five allegations were not violations of the VFOIA. The School Board agreed to settle this second VFOIA lawsuit due to a technicality.

Most recently, a third lawsuit filed against the Suffolk School Board found its way into the Suffolk Courthouse. Stories about the lawsuit abound and as usual, the lawsuits are supposed to be based on violations of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA). This lawsuit was brought by a "friend" of a School Board member, who refused to view the School Board meeting from the area designated for public viewing, disrupted a School Board retreat and had to be escorted out by the Suffolk Police Department because of her own poor behavior. The lawsuit was once again purportedly based on violations of the VFOIA. One of the allegations regarding notice of the meeting was not found to be a violation of the VFOIA and was dismissed. The claim filed against Dr. Gordon and myself individually was also dismissed. The VFOIA Council was asked if

the setup of the meeting room violated the VFOIA. The Council stated the following: “If the required technology limited you to using a certain room and you took steps to increase public awareness by using technology to allow the public who could not be present due to logistical limitations and the pandemic to view the meeting through technological means, that would comport with the FOIA’s policy to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operation of government, and therefore, would not be a violation of FOIA.” This information was not considered during the trial and not referenced in any of the news reporting. In this third lawsuit, the Board was accused of not taking COVID-19 mitigation strategies seriously. The court has permanently enjoined the School Board from designing any School Board retreat that bars the public from entering and being physically present in the venue in which the retreat is being conducted.

These three lawsuits have cost over \$300,000.00 in insurance money, and have provided half-truths to give the public the wrong idea about our schools. None of the lawsuits against the School Board have anything to do with student achievement, children in general, parents, or teachers.

Omitting such details might be viewed by some as intentionally misinforming the public but we can only guess at what motivated anyone to do that.

When a more than \$57,400.00 unflattering report was made available to the public because the Board Member was found to be harassing the Superintendent, there were no public outcry’s about wasted tax dollars. The handful of the Suffolk citizens who had spent a great deal of time laser focused on budget concerns were silent. No multiple reports in the Suffolk News Herald about the embarrassing details uncovered during the investigation by the Virginia Beach Law firm, McGuire-Woods were printed. More importantly, the Superintendent who had been harassed never received a public or private apology; the Board Member never followed the recommended remedies outlined in the report and required by the School Board; and NEVER stopped harassing the Superintendent. The most recent request by the Superintendent to mediate differences was declined by the Board Member.

Some believe that *implicit bias* and the use of the local paper for inexpensive political advertising aimed at the historic female led predominantly Black School Board are more in line with the true purpose of the nonsense. This writer tended to give credit to the usual Budget Season Distractions and petty politics. However, a deeper dive into the behavior and the cast of characters leads me to believe that a much more nefarious plan is at work.

This writer believes that it is time to tell the Lion’s side of the story to a broader audience. Implicit bias or stereotyping had helped to establish an atmosphere in which people believed fiction over truth. The stories about other Board Members holding secret meetings and personal attacks on the Chair and the Vice Chair were written off as fact finding and truth seeking when the opposite was true. The closed session board stories were interesting but irrelevant. The belief that Free Speech is somehow reserved for some people, while others should be quiet, was made clear by their behavior. The truth about the Board Member’s constant cyber bullying on Facebook, the repeated attacks on employees and insistence on making rules for others, but following none, could be described as bold, if you are the lion hunter. However, from the perspective of the Lion, the behavior is quite different.

In the past month, if America has seen nothing else, it has witnessed the destruction that lies and bigotry can bring about. Misleading people did not just begin and people who want to get and maintain power, attention, and money have, throughout history, gone to great lengths to do so. When people choose to take a position in public office, it must be done with a servant’s heart, and a lion’s ability. Public service does not make you wealthy; will get you both positive and negative attention; and can have people view you as powerful or powerless. Your willingness to serve has to be laced with a degree of humility, integrity, and the ability to work with others for the good of everyone. Lions are protective of those for whom they are responsible, and brave enough to fight

for what is right. They hunt for resources for the group and they can be a part of the group but be strong enough to separate from the group when necessary. Lions can see the big picture.

Suffolk is a diverse City that continues to prosper with great schools and students. The population will continue to grow as long as houses continue to be built. Schools will be needed and school leadership will reflect the population of the City. There are always choices to make when people decide which path to follow. This City belongs to ALL of its people. The people can choose the path of the lion hunter who creates a myth and makes up a different tale at any point in the story, or they can choose the path of the Lion.

If you have come to embellish facts, insult people and leave a story in place. The truth will be made known before you leave. We believe in the golden rule. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* Courtesy and respect will be given to each speaker, and courtesy and respect will be expected from each speaker. Everyone wants to be heard and everyone's concerns are important to them. Please be courteous and respectful.

The Clerk read the opening statement regarding decorum for those signed up to speak.

- **Justice Drake** spoke about his experience with online learning during school closures due to the pandemic. He emphasized the importance of in-person learning as he struggled with online learning, sports and extracurricular activities as well.
- **Carly Bosco** gave handouts for members then thanked all employees at FBES as they are doing a wonderful job and working hard each day. She then indicated that the covid dashboard is inadequate with regard to the infrequency of updates and information disclosed. She further indicated that instruction during quarantine is inadequate.
- **Patricia Holloman** thanked Dr. Gordon for providing the early dismissal days to give time back to teachers for planning. She asked if he would consider modifying the schedule to include early dismissal on Fridays to balance out the time for all even/odd classes, and provide a more convenient daycare option for parents.
- **Brittany Stokes** – **NO SHOW**
- **Margaret Rankin** spoke about the proposed policy change in Ordinance 21/22-22 which eliminates midterm and final exams. She believes that eliminating exams will lead to great inflation, lower retention of material, and lack of student preparedness for college and the work-force.
- **Kirstyn Oneill** gave invitations to the Harvest Festival at NSES. She thanked the all faculty and staff at NSES for all that they do. She was excited and proud of the Blue-Ribbon School status received at NSES and stated that it could not have happened without Mrs. White and her faculty and staff. She thanked the Board and Dr. Gordon for recognizing that the teachers and staff desperately needed planning time.
- **Deborah Wahlstrom** expressed concerns with the student achievement. She stated that the data is illogical and incorrect. She said the initiatives point to a huge remediation effort which will set up the division as being a remedial school division. Dr. Wahlstrom also stated that purchase cards and the purchase card programs are being administered incorrectly and that the division does not have accountability for the program.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Good News Reports: Ms. Ward, Community Engagement Officer, highlighted the following good news:

- a. SPS Alumni: Where Are They Now? (Adriane Branch – KFHS Class of 2009)

- b. NSES Received Blue Ribbon School Recognition
- c. United Way SHR Provides Dental Hygiene Kits to HES
- d. SPS Fine Arts Students Attend the Suffolk Peanut Fest
- e. Teacher Spotlight (Elizabeth Alston, SWES La-Retha Brown, HES Kim Bynum, FGMS Emma Connolly, NRHS Ginnie German, CFCMS Amanda Hadgraft, KFHS Heather McGee, LHS Angela Salerno, KSES Jessica Smith, NRHS)
- f. Grants & Awards (Science Dept./\$2,700/Northrop Grumman; SPS STREAMin3/\$54,872.00/OBICI Healthcare Foundation Board of Directors)
- g. Bus Driver / Bus Aide Perfect Attendance

Bus Driver Recognition – Bus drivers (Stacy Adams, Carrie Artis, Alfonzo Boone, Christine Bradshaw, Belinda Brown, Addie Bull, James Butts, Mary Chandler, Mary Jo Chaney, Larry Chapman, Reginald Darden, Joy Door, Della Eley, Courtney Ellis, Tammy Epps, Sheila Brown-Garner, Velma Gardiola, Jennifer Hanson, Bill Horner, Joanne Johnson, Hope Jones, Mary Jones, Natalie Jones, Bridget Jordan, Vivian Knight, Carolyn Liggins, Deborah Martin, Vernice McMillian, Barbara Miskin, Robin Montgomery, Michelle Grand, Lorie Norfleet, Lorie Prevoise-Lawthers, Mary Rodgers, Tammy Shepherd, Tony Smith, Robin Schneider, Jennifer Tate, Joanne Valance, Melissa Veil, Emmanuel Vincent, Dara White, Eulesee Whitfield, Tina Williams, Michelle Woods, Sandy Wright, Virginia Ligon, Stephanie Odom, Patrick Stockwell) and bus aides (Alquinton Boone, Calvin Boone, Catherine Brinkley, Michelle Brotherton, Brenda Herring, Jalisa Hayes, Faith Holloman, Kay Jones, Claudia McMillian, Lorrain Moody, Inetta Ramsey, Jeanette Reid) were recognized and awarded a \$250 bonus for perfect attendance and was thanked by board members for their dedication and commitment to transporting the students, “precious cargo” to and from school.

VSBA Academy Awards: Board Chair Brooks-Buck announced the following awards:

- Certificate of Recognition (Dr. John Gordon)
- Award of Achievement (Tyron Riddick/Tarshia Gardner)
- Award of Excellence (Phyllis Byrum/Sherri Story)
- Award of Honor (Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck/Karen Jenkins/Lorita Mayo)

Dr. Gordon highlighted information in the Calendar of Special Events.

Dr. Gordon provided clarity as to why Wednesday’s were chosen versus other days for early dismissal. He emphasized that we are working hard to promote a positive image throughout this division because as our kids are watching and we should be a positive influence and must model the behavior we would like to see in our students. Dr. Gordon spoke about bullying/cyberbullying and mentioned a new campaign being launched by Community Engagement called “Pause Before You Post.” He mentioned that all should be mindful because our students see the adults engaging in cyberbullying, they will follow that lead as well. Dr. Gordon stated that we are doing all we can to give our kids some kind of normalcy and if we keep students kids first, we will succeed despite the false narratives that are being circulated. He emphasized the fact that we are here to listen, keep kids first, build a great relationship with parents, and push forward doing what’s right for this school division.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded, the motion to accept the Consent Agenda.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

CIP Requests to Submit to the City of Suffolk for 2023-2032 Capital Improvement Plan

- (Mr. Napier, Director of Facilities and Planning presented the CIP for approval and reminded the board that this is a 10-year plan and the plan presented is a final plan with the figures included. He clarified that the order has not changed.)

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded, the motion that we accept the Capital Improvement Plan as presented with the figures.

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

NOTE: During the roll call vote, Member Story tried to explain the reasoning for her vote and was reminded by Attorney Waller that her explanation should have occurred during the discussion period and not during the recording of the vote.

NEW BUSINESS

2021-2022 Calendar Adjustments

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded, the motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation for the calendar adjustment.

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

During the roll call vote, Member Story tried to explained the reasoning for her "NO vote stating that she felt that it could have been done better as she was very concerned about the even days. Attorney Waller expressed to Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck that once the roll-call vote is being taken, there is no discussion, just the vote. Dr. Brooks-Buck reminded Member Story of the appropriate time to explain her vote which is during discussion, not during the vote.

SPS Health Dashboard Update (info item)

Dr. Gordon explained that the reason why the SPS Dashboard is not updated weekly is due to information not being released/provided by the Western Tidewater Health District on a daily basis. The information is released weekly. He also indicated that the number of cases per school is not listed to prevent possible identification of students. This would be a violation of HIPPA laws. In schools with a small numbers of students, identification would be easier.

Dr. Suzanne Rice provided an update for the City of Suffolk which is still listed in the red. She also highlighted the vaccination status for children ages 12-17. Those students who are fully vaccinated is 46%, and in students age 12 and above, 58.2% are fully vaccinated. This is a 5% increase from last month.

Ordinance 21/22-22 – Amending Chapter 8, Article 31, Section 8-31.6, Entitled “Semester Grades for High School” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – First Reading and Adoption

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck stated that the majority of the ordinances are “first read” and require no action. However, she directed attention to Ordinance 21/22-22: Amending Chapter 8, Article 31, Section 8-31.6, Entitled “Semester Grades for High School” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – First Reading and Adoption

Some board members expressed concerns regarding this policy becoming a permanent change. They were specifically concerned about its impact on students that will be attending college and their lack of experience in test taking. Some members also felt that this policy would also watered-down student grades. Dr. Gordon explained that the decision to bring this policy to the Board was not made in isolation and that several groups, including teachers and students, were consulted before moving forward. He also explained that most colleges/universities use project-based learning instead of testing. Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport provided additional information supporting project-based learning versus testing. Some members expressed the desire to wait through this year to see how students will fair before adopting this policy.

Member Riddick moved, and Member Story seconded, the motion to table the decision regarding this policy until the Board receives more information on which to base a decision.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 2 (Byrum/Dr. Brooks-Buck) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 2.

Ordinance 21/22-21 – Amending Chapter 5, Article 4, Section 5-4.2, Entitled “Maximum Safety and Efficiency Required; Review of Bus Routes; Traffic Control Plan Required; Superintendent to Develop Regulations; of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board – First Reading (info item)

Board Member Riddick asked the board to consider including in the policy (Ordinance 21/22-21) that students sit no more than two per seat on the busses as they are being transported to and from school during a pandemic.

Attorney Waller provided clarity as to the process for amending the policy. He stated when the policy comes up next month for an actual vote, Mr. Riddick can either make a motion to amend the policy, sending it back to the policy review committee or he can make a motion to vote down the policy.

Dr. Gordon provided additional information as to why there are more than three students to a seat. He explained that three students in a seat is not a standard practice. The practice is usually implemented when drivers are doing double or late runs.

Ordinances 21/22-23 through 21/22-38

These ordinances were information items only and there were no questions or concerns voiced at this time.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak.

- **Erik & Lena Badeau** expressed their concerns with students who are quarantined and how they receive little instruction while on quarantine, but are expected to keep pace with classroom instruction. Assignments are loaded in Canvas but there is no instruction being provided to students on quarantine. She said monies that were given to the division through the CARES Act, technology was purchased with it but it is not being used. She also spoke about covid testing for athletes. She suggested that all athletes be tested weekly and not just unvaccinated students.
- **Dayna Rhodes** highlighted experiences with how her child struggled in school and felt that proper instruction was not given to her son. She stated that she reached out to administration and was threatened with truancy and jail time as she pulled her son out of school to attempt to provide him with needed help. Mrs. Rhodes felt that more needs to be done to assist students who are suffering and struggling to keep up.
- **Kristin Parker** spoke regarding the transgender policy. She shared her own personal experiences growing up and the how the effects from making certain choices had seriously affected her life. She stated that schools should require permission from parents regarding how their child identifies. She stated that it is not the schools place to teach LGBTQ as it is outlined in the policy. She felt that the policy is dangerous for students as they are vulnerable to various situations at such a young age and will push students into depression and suicide as they struggle with their loss of identity and not knowing how to recover from it.
- **Cindy Chafian** stated that she is protecting the human rights and freedom of those who do not want to be vaccinated. She is concerned with information surrounding masks wearing and the shot mandate. She said there is a lot of misinformation and untrue science being followed and forced on students. She opposes the requirement for student athletes to be either tested or vaccinated.
- **Janet McKinney** stated that students should be tested for knowledge and proficiency in order to be successful adults. She does not agree with eliminating examinations as this elimination will not sufficiently prepare children for real life as adults. She said without exams, we are failing our students, and lowering their standards. She also stated that teachers are just teaching to a test and not for the mastery of a subject.
- **Lisa Edwards** does not agree with the vaccine mandate which devastated her son who left private schools to play sports at NRHS. She said that the board is mandating an ineffective vaccine on the healthiest population. She says that the vaccination mandate is not fair to students. Requested that the board provide testing and a spit test for athletes.
- **Katie Siebel** highlighted her over 500 hours of previous volunteer time in her children's schools. She felt that the lack of volunteers in schools is a disservice to students and puts them at a disadvantage as volunteers could fill in the gaps that missing staff typically fill. Volunteers and PTA are a vital part of schools as volunteers provide simple but effective support to teachers and staff. She asked the board to remove the restrictions on volunteerism and mitigate the health and safety risks by limiting volunteers to fully vaccinated adults.
- **Greg Kasmark** stated that everyone learns differently. He asked why SOL's are still being administered if exams are being eliminated. He suggested that the Board ask the state department for SOL's to be eliminated as well as these other exams.

During this time, Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck had to regain order of the meeting as the speaker continually tried to speak off topic and the members of the audience were shouting out of turn. Police had to escort individuals out of the meeting as they were continuing to behave unruly and disrupting the meeting.

- **Shareka Robinson** stated that her daughter was a victim of bullying at KFMS. She indicated that from the second week of school until Thursday, her daughter was being bullied and no one came to her protection as she told teachers and administrators that she was being bullied. She also stated that after her daughter's altercation that she was not allowed to call her mother and would like to know why she was not permitted to do so. She then asked the board when will they stand up to these bullies, and when will laws take place in school that protects the victims. She emphasized that her daughter is traumatized from this fight and is seeking counseling.
- **Ovedia Parker** expressed her frustrations with the incident that occurred at KFMS and wanted to advocate for not only for her child, but for all children being affected by or being bullied by others. She also stated that the policy committee should look at and repeal any policy that justify the victim(s) of bullying being penalized or facing disciplinary actions if the said bullying escalates to a physical attack. She said the schools failed the child and the parents.
- **Glen McKinney** asked if the schools were provided with a survey regarding the vaccine mandates as he felt that the parents were not surveyed. He highlighted information from an article in Virginian Pilot and asked if Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck surveyed white people in Suffolk to ask if they resent the racial makeup of the board. He concluded by asking how members can make decisions without consulting parents.

The Board took a 10-minute recess at this time and the meeting resumed at 10:18 p.m.

- **Emmie Tyler** discussed her disappointment with the OES administration's handling of the school to prison pipeline for students with disabilities. She felt that administrators were not well versed in this area and were actually promoting this pipeline when threatening parents with jail/prison time due to student truancy.
- **Laura Welton** spoke about her concerns with students being quarantined for 14 days. She stated that SPS is displaying discrimination when they send vaccinated students back to class and unvaccinated students home after encountering exposure at school. She was disappointed that her son had to miss basketball tryouts due to being quarantined and suggested that all athletes receive covid testing regardless of vaccination status.
- **Lisa Penn** spoke about bullying at KFMS and asked the Board what they could do to protect and help students feel safe going to school. She indicated that her nephew who attends KFMS does not feel safe attending that school and no longer want to attend.
- **Deborah Kliche** spoke about engaging the community in a positive way. She stated that she has concerns about the actions of the Board at Board Meetings and felt that their behavior of attacking the public is problematic. She said SPS must do better and engage the community positively.
- **Mike Pain** spoke about transparency and requested results in the case of a student who was involved in an altercation at KFMS. He asked why staff members did not break up the fight and why more students were not suspended. He also asked about the policy for cell phone use in schools.

- **Terrance Parks** spoke about virtual learning issues as he and his daughter were not given accurate information regarding virtual learning courses. He stated that they did not receive final confirmation of his daughter's classes until weeks later which put his daughter behind by four weeks. He stated that communication and accuracy must be improved
- **Latasha Tinsley** spoke about the transgender policy and stated that this policy is detrimental to students in schools. She challenged the Board to not bow down to the gods of this world as all will have to bow down and give an account to Jesus.
- **Tracy Hill** stated that her nephew (attends KFMS) is being bullied on the bus. She indicated that the nephew told teachers and administrators but nothing is being done about it. She said his parents also talked to administrators and submitted paperwork for a restraining order that she took out against the bullies and still nothing is being done. She asked the board for help with her nephew's situation.
- **Vontrelle Morris** – **NO SHOW**
- **Margaret Rankin** said that the Board should be committed to putting students first and that they routinely shut down a member and the citizens on critical issues. She said each member should listen to the needs of the constituents and students. She also stated that money used defending FOIA violations could have been used to educate students.
- **Andrea Breckner** spoke about the recent vaccine mandates for athletes and asked the board to allow home testing, including saliva testing which she states are fast, safe and accurate. She would like to see collaboration between the schools and the community to ensure that SPS has the best physical activities available for all students as this will help with students overall health that will assist with the best covid outcome.
- **Angela Kilgore** stated that eliminating midterm and final exams is not the answer to student success but is an attempt to hide the failures of the division in educating our kids. She stated that students must be prepared and know how to work hard. She felt that the board is marginalizing education and that must stop.
- **Jacky Music-Maggio** – **NO SHOW**
- **Dr. Steven Blunt** spoke about the relationship between the Superintendent, the Board, and the community. He was thankful for all who work for the potentiality of young people. He stated that Suffolk is bustling with potential which is a direct result of the relationship and dynamic collaboration of the Superintendent, Board, parents, and the community. He indicated that the Superintendent is charged with being the engineer of an ecosystem within our educational infrastructure and board members are charged with the governance and maintenance of that division as it pertains to the directives of what is best for our young people. He also indicated that parents share in this responsibility as well. He encouraged all to never forget that the aptitude of our young people is most important and that the students are depending on the Board and Superintendent to lead them forward to success.
- **Jonathan Powell** expressed his frustration and disappointment with the salacious behavior of the board. He stated if students were to behave in the same manner as the members, disciplinary actions would have been taken against them. He stated that there is not much unity on the board or in the activities of the community. He also highlighted a few successes of SPS and asked why this information was not being touted. He stated that the Board should have a spirit of collaboration and not conflict and to work at resolving problems by displaying grace and working with all as Jesus did.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Board Members highlighted the following:

- Thankful for the opportunity to serve during challenging times, and for the calls, emails from the citizens and for coming out to voice their concerns. All voices are important.
- Emphasized that children are always top priority.
- Encouraged all to get out and vote.
- Thanked Dr. Gordon for his leadership. He is the best thing that happened to SPS.
- Thanked everyone for coming and sharing their concerns as they are all taken seriously.
- Thanked the students who participated at the Peanut Fest.
- Acknowledged that the Board does not always get it right but they try hard to take steps that will benefit all students.
- Emphasized that bullying must stop and how we must do everything possible to stop this action. If you know someone who is being bullied, voice it, let people know because children should come to school and feel safe and protected.
- Highlighted that social media is also a huge problem.
- All must work together to overcome our differences and challenges.
- Covid is real as the science have proven it as many loved ones have died from this disease.
- There is good in SPS and we need to make that known.
- Governor's School for the Arts is under new leadership, has 366 students participating in programs, and 28 of those students are from Suffolk Public Schools.
- Encouraged all to continue working together to ensure students can safely continue in extracurricular activities.
- Expressed sympathy for the loss of Theresa Sperry and encouraged prayers for her family.
- It takes all to make this system better.

INFORMATION ITEMS

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

- Accident Report September 2021
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report September 2021
- Draft Letter to City Manager Increasing Appropriation for Grants Funds for C.A.R.E.S. Act III, C.A.R.E.S. Act II, and Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSLFRF) HVAC funding.
- SPS Condolence:
 1. Rosa Wiggins
 2. Margaret Heuberger
 3. Courtney Cross
 4. Theresa Makenzie Sperry

ADJOURNMENT

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

Member Johnson moved, and Member Riddick seconded, the motion to adjourn.

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

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the October 14, 2021 School Board Meeting at 11:47 p.m.

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*