

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, May 11, 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 Slingluff

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:**

Chair Riddick called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

➤ **Safety Audit Committee Presentation:**

David LeFevre, Coordinator of Student Services, and Brandon Randleman, Committee Chair, shared the issues found by the Committee and possible solutions. They highlighted the Committee's purpose, timeline, and the following recommendations (not prioritized and are approximate prices) which totaled \$3.5 million:

- Traffic light at FBES and NPES,
- Crosswalk and pedestrian crossing light between KFHS and KFMS,
- Upgrade the camera system on all high school football fields,
- Additional radios for all schools,
- Lockers to house chemicals in all schools,
- Additional stand-alone metal detectors in each building,
- Additional SROs in each elementary school,
- Cameras on buses to help monitor citizens who do not adhere to the bus stop sign when it is deployed,
- Cameras outside of the Transportation department and a buzzer system for their doors,
- Speakers outside, near playground at elementary schools,
- Air quality detectors in each high school bathroom,
- Narcan available at each high school.

Board Chair Riddick thanked Mr. LeFevre and Mr. Randleman for a great presentation and for presenting not only the issues found, but possible solutions. Board Members proceeded to ask questions.

➤ **JFKMS Construction Update:**

Dr. Gordon provided an update to the JFKMS renovation. He presented information regarding the interior concept design, including colors, floor map and classroom floor pattern, and wall tile in bathrooms. Another update to this project, including a site plan, will be given in July

once permits from the city are obtained. The project design is 65% complete and will be about 95% complete by June.

Board Members asked questions and thanked Dr. Gordon for the presentation.

➤ **SPS Purchasing Process:**

Anthony Hinds, Purchasing Manager presented information regarding the purchasing process. He shared the following:

- Small purchases less than \$10,000: One quote required, handled by department directors or designees (SPS Regulation 8-1.1)
- Small purchases greater than \$10,000 but less than \$100,000: Three quotes attempted, or the use of a Request for Quotes, or an Informal Request for Proposals (SPS Regulation 8-1.1, 8-1.2, Code of VA 2.2-4304, and 2.2-4343). The Superintendent may enter into contracts up to \$100,000 for items in the best interest of the school division under this regulation provision.
- Threshold Change – effective last year and reenacted by the General Assembly, new small purchasing threshold is \$200,000 however, per the agreement between the Superintendent and the School Board, SPS threshold hold remains at \$100,000.
- Invitation for Bids and Request for Proposals: Written invitations are distributed and required to be posted for no less than 10 days (SPS typically keeps bids posted for at least 21 days) (Code of VA 2.2-4302.1 and 2.2-4302.2).
- Award of Bids: Bids are awarded to lowest responsive and responsible bidder (Code of VA 2.2-4302.1, 2.2-4318, School Board Policy 4-6.2).
- Award of Request for Proposals: Written requests received, committee to review/grade, interviews (if needed), contract awarded to highest ranked proposal (Code of VA 2.2-4302.2, School Board Policy 4-6.2).
- Cooperative Contracts: Government entities can ride or use contracts from other governments in the United States and other localities in the Commonwealth of VA (Code of VA 2.2-4304, School Board Policy 4-6.2)
- Sole Source: When only one source is practicably available for that which is to be procured, contract may be negotiated and awarded to that source without competitive sealed bidding or competitive negotiation. There is a 10-day posting period prior to the execution of any agreement or purchase order.
- Emergency: Contract may be awarded to remedy the situation that is deemed an emergency without competitive sealed bidding or competitive negotiation. Also requires a posting on website with ~~not~~ no waiting period.
- School Board: Write policies that address how goods and services are procured and the process in which they are approved. SPS policy does not require the Superintendent to bring some projects to the Board for approval; however, projects are presented to the Board for transparency and to foster a relationship between the Superintendent and the School Board.

Board Members asked questions and thanked Mr. Hinds for his presentation.

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 item and subject pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia (1950) as amended:

The discussion or consideration of a student disciplinary matter that would involve the disclosure of information contained in the student's scholastic record and more specifically a student appeal from a recommendation imposing a long-term suspension.

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

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the motion to go into a closed meeting as read by Mr. Waller.

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

RECONVENE IN PUBLIC MEETING

- Meeting Called to Order:
Board Chair Riddick reconvened the public meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

- Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A Resolution of Certification of the Closed Meeting of May 11, 2023, Pursuant to Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as Amended

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 matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the School Board of the City of Suffolk.

Board Member Byrum moved and Member Dr. Brooks-Buck seconded the motion to approve the Certification of Closed Meeting as read by Mr. Waller.

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

MEETING RECESS

- Board Chair Riddick recessed the meeting for 20 minutes.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

- **Meeting Called to Order:**
Board Chair Riddick called to order the regular public meeting.
- **Pledge of Allegiance:**
John Yeates Middle School led all in the Pledge of Allegiance and sang the National Anthem.
- **Musical Selection – JYMS Chorus:**
The chorus from John Yeates Middle School, under the leadership of Ms. Tiffany Carr, performed at the meeting. The Board enjoyed the musical selections and thanked the students for their outstanding performance.
- **Recital of SPS Mission:**
Board Chair Riddick read the Mission of Suffolk Public Schools.

PRESENTATION

- **Recognition of Honor Graduates – Lakeland High School**
Lori White, Principal, introduced her staff and expressed pride in the honor graduates from Lakeland High School. She stated that the honor graduates were 40% of the graduating class and that to date, \$4 million in scholarships has been received. Mrs. White was supported by Counseling Director Mrs. White and Counselor, Ms. Rice who introduced the 104 honor graduates.

Board Chair Riddick thanked the staff for all of their hard work as they are instrumental in producing the large number of honor graduates within Suffolk Public Schools.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- **Approval of Agenda:**
Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Vice-Chair Howell 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:**
The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak. The following speakers shared their comments:
 - Travis McKinney (April 6th Minutes) – Mr. McKinney did not like the comments made by Dr. Gordon regarding race/racism at the School Board Meeting of April 6, 2023.
 - Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom (Minutes) – Dr. Wahlstrom was pleased with the progress of the Safety Committee, purchase cards and bills and payments reporting, but felt SPS must do more to promote literacy.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

➤ Good News Report:

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

- Alumni Highlight: Where Are They Now?
- All Suffolk Reads Campaign 2022-2023
- The College and Career Academy at Pruden
- The Governor's School for the Arts – Yternita Williams
- 2023 VSBA Regional Spring Network Forums Art Contest
- SPS Music Education Program Receives National Recognition
- SWES Book Blast Program
- NPES Published Article in the Scholastic News Magazine
- ACCESS College Foundation's College Commitment Day
- Suffolk Art League Artistic Verses Writing Contest – Catelyn Taylor, 3rd Place Winner
- Day of Action with the United Way
- SPS at the Norfolk Tides Game
- Awards and Recognitions – Teacher Spotlight

➤ Calendar of Special Events:

Dr. Gordon highlighted the events listed on SPS website for May/June.

CONSENT AGENDA

➤ Approval of the Consent Agenda:

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

➤ Approval of Ordinances 22/23-76 through 22/23-86:

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to consider Ordinances 22/23-76 through 22/23-86 collectively.

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

NEW BUSINESS

➤ Payment of Retention Bonus to Full-Time and Permanent Part-Time Employees Only

Member Byrum moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the payment of retention bonuses to full-time and permanent part-time employees only, as presented.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

At this point, Board Chair Riddick explained that the Board needed to revisit the item under Unfinished Business, as the vote to approve the Ordinances had not been done. The approval made was only to consider the ordinances collectively.

Also, due to technical difficulties with the electronic voting system, Attorney Waller indicated that all votes for the duration of the meeting must be done via roll-call vote.

➤ Approval of Ordinances 22/23-76 through 22/23-86:

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Vice-Chair Howell seconded the motion to approve Ordinances 22/23-76 through 22/23-86 as presented.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

There being no further unfinished business, the Board returned to consider items under New Business.

➤ VDOE Authorization of Signature in Absence of Division Superintendent Extension

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Jenkins/Byrum seconded the motion to approve the VDOE Authorization of Signature in Absence of Division Superintendent Extension as presented.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ Resolution 22/23-16: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Granting the School Superintendent the Authority to Obligate by Encumbrance Any Remaining Appropriated Funds Before the End of the Current Fiscal Year (June 30, 2023) for Certain Designated Repairs and/or Purchasing Needs of Suffolk Public Schools

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck stated that she had questions regarding the encumbered funds and asked for an explanation of such.

Board Chair Riddick clarified the need for a motion and a second before discussion is to ensue.

Member Jenkins moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-16.

Member Slingluff moved to amend the motion offered by Member Jenkins and seconded by Member Byrum to approve Resolution 22/23-16 with the stipulation that the Board receive a report on the expenditure funds quarterly, beginning in July 2023.

Board Chair Riddick clarified that Member Slingluff's motion would be an amendment to the original motion and would have to be accepted by the person making the original motion.

Member Jenkins stated that reports are already being received on funds spent.

Mrs. Forsman clarified encumbrances, how they are listed in the financial reports that are provided to the Board monthly, how funds are returned to the City if unspent, and the auditing of encumbered funds. She suggested that if a report is to be submitted to the board, that it be submitted at the end of each quarter.

Additional conversation/clarification ensued between Mrs. Forsman and Member Slingluff.

Board Member Slingluff withdrew her amended motion.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 1 (Dr. Brittingham) / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 6 to 1.

- Resolution 22/23-17: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Agreeing to Reimburse the City of Suffolk, Virginia an Amount Equal to What is Received in State Aid to Correct a Miscalculation Made by the Virginia Department of Education
Vice-Chair Howell moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-17 as presented.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

- Resolution 22/23-18: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Approving an Award to Triangle Roofing Services Inc. and Roof Services (A Tecta Company LLC.) Pursuant to a Written Invitation to Bid Issued by Suffolk Public Schools
Vice-Chair Howell moved and Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-18 as presented.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

- 2023-2024 Budget Adjustment for Adoption (information item only, no vote required)
Mrs. Forsman presented information regarding budget adjustments necessary to have a balanced budget based on the Governor's and City's approved budgets resulting in reduced funding for SPS. Mrs. Forsman highlighted the following:

Required and recommended changes:

- Reduce State Revenue by \$835,787
- Reduce City Appropriated Revenue \$2,000,000
- Remove Bonus from Non-Departmental Expenses (Bonus + FICA) \$1,143,440
- Reduce Athletic Trainers Purchased Services \$109,985
- Eliminate (1) ITRT and (1) Technology Technician positions \$114,597
- Eliminate (10) Teacher Assistants - \$356,290
- Eliminate all S3's added to budget (28) - \$995,980
- Reduce Bus Driver raise to \$18/hour or 17% raise \$115,495
- Total reduced expenses \$1,692,347 / Reduction in additional positions by 40.0

New budget totals for adoption:

- Operating Fund - \$184,600,294 / 4.95% increase
- Grants Fund - \$29,832,775 / 38.66% decrease
- Food Services Fund - \$9,567,596 / 13.78% increase
- Total for adoption - \$224,000,665 / 3.83% decrease from current year

- Resolution 22/23-19: 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, 2023 and Ending June 30, 2024

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-19 as presented.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 2 (Dr. Brittingham, Slingluff / Abstain: 0.
The motion passed by vote of 5 to 2.

- Ordinances 22/23-87 through Ordinance 22/23-97 (information items only, no vote required)

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:

1. Robin Page (Appreciation for the Experience the Family has had Since Coming to SPS in 2022) – Ms. Page and her family are new to the area and to KFHS, coming from a private school. She appreciated the positive experience she and her family have had during their transition from private school to public. Staff are welcoming and attentive staff.
2. Suzanna Shedd (Implementing a Medical Health Professions Class in all High Schools) – Ms. Shedd would like to see a Medical Health Professions class as a Science or an elective credit bearing course in all public high schools to help alleviate future shortages among professions in the field of medicine.
3. Tracey Hamilton (The Excellence of SPS Students) – Ms. Hamilton has four children attending SPS and highlighted the successes of the students and staff. Our children deserve to be cast in a positive light.
4. Jasmine Myrick (VA Teachers for Tomorrow Program) – Suggested bringing the VA Teachers for Tomorrow program to all of the high schools as she was not able to participate because it was not offered at her school.
5. Travis McKinney (Leadership Young Lion) – Mr. McKinney expressed that he was disappointed in the leadership of the Chair.
6. Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom (VA Supreme Court Decision) – Dr. Wahlstrom expressed her satisfaction with the VA Supreme Court Decision regarding a FOIA violation.
7. Mike Ralston (Academics, Athletics, Safety, Family, Culture, Board/School Interaction, Transparency, Accountability, and Oversight) – Mr. Ralston felt that academics are very important. He also indicated that we all must work within a common-sense, moral compass for the success of the students, the Board, and society. He encouraged all to stay focused on the children.
8. Belinda Pitts (Appreciation for the Collaboration with the Board and Superintendent with Suffolk Alumnae for our Community Service Events and the Encouragement of Positive Interaction and Decorum with One Another as We Seek to Assist Students and Teachers) – Ms. Pitts commended the Board for their dedication and willingness to serve. She also thanked the Board Members/Superintendent who participated in various events held by the local chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. and encouraged all to practice governance and decorum.
9. Janet McKinney (A Well-Informed Public) – Mrs. McKinney felt that Dr. Gordon's statement regarding his hostile work allegation is not accurate and does not have anything to do with race. She felt that the Superintendent is working to cast dispersions.
10. Edward Woodis (Training) – Mr. Woodis would like to see additional training of our students to prepare them for success when they are no longer matriculating and staff to help the students reach this success. Students must be trained in order to perform at the level which they are asked.
11. Shawn Markley (FOIA Request Process / School Safety) – Mr. Markley was concerned with the FOIA case that was lost and question the decision to appeal. He was not happy with the lack of comment from administration regarding the case. He also suggested a mentoring program for students to assist with school safety.

12. Chris Dove (School Funding / The Impact of Residential Zoning on Schools) – Mr. Dove was concerned that the City’s lack of support for the schools’ budget. He also indicated that the facilities study is out of date and does not match the UDO.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

- Comments and Reports by School Board Members:
 - Thanked teachers for all of their hard work and investment in kids,
 - Thanked the Safety Audit Committee,
 - Thanked the JYMS Chorus and Ms. Carr for her leadership,
 - Requested information to be revisited by the Policy Review Committee,
 - Congratulated the honor graduates of Lakeland High School,
 - Thanked the public speakers for their remarks,
 - Thanked all presenters,
 - Thanked Dr. Gordon and staff for the support of the VSBA Tidewater Region Forum,
 - Thanked Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. for their support and collaboration,
 - Corrected falsehoods and misinformation,
 - Thanked Mr. Hinds for his report,
 - Thanked the School Nurses for National School Nurses Appreciation Day,
 - Asked City Council to meet the schools’ budget in the middle and partner with the school division with the budget,
 - Advocated parental/community involvement through additional training and the with the possibility of establishing a citizen’s academy for the community and schools to partner together,
 - Congratulated the Teachers and Rookie Teachers of the Year,
 - Encouraged all to stay focused on and to celebrate our children.

MOTION TO GO INTO A SECOND CLOSED MEETING

- Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A motion is needed to go into a Closed Meeting to discuss the following item and subject pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia (1950) as amended:

The discussion and/or consideration of a student disciplinary matter that would involve the disclosure of information contained in the student's scholastic record and more specifically a student appeal from a recommendation imposing a long-term suspension.

Which is authorized by Section 2.2-3711 1A.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

Member Byrum moved and Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the motion to go into a second closed meeting as read by Mr. Waller.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

RECONVENE IN PUBLIC MEETING

- **Meeting Call to Order:**
Board Chair Riddick reconvened the public meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

- Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A Resolution of Certification of the Second Closed Meeting of May 11, 2023,
Pursuant to Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as Amended

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 matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the School Board of the City of Suffolk.

Board Member Byrum moved and Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the Certification of Closed Meeting as read by Mr. Waller.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEMS

- **Student Appeal #22/23-2**
Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A motion is needed that student appeal 22/23-2 be denied and that the long-term suspension be upheld with the recommendation that the IEP team reconvene to determine the need for ESY, any further evaluations, and proper placement for the 2023-24 school year.

Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Member Dr. Brooks-Buck seconded the motion to approve the motion for Student Appeal #22/23-2 as read by Attorney Waller.

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

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Accident Review Report – April 2023
- Capital Projects Financial Statement
- Financial Report – March 2023
- Financial Report – April 2023
- SPS Condolence:
 1. Beulah Bailey – Bus Driver – 34 Years of Service (Retired Employee) – Passed Away 04/27/2023

ADJOURNMENT


➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

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

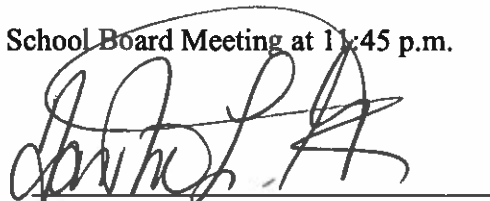
Vice-Chair Howell moved and Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ Board Chair Riddick adjourned the May 11, 2023 School Board Meeting at 1:45 p.m.



Tyron Riddick, *Board Chair*



Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*

