

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD**  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023 ~ 6:00 P.M.**  
**Suffolk City Hall, 442 W. Washington Street, Suffolk, VA 23434**

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**Board Members Present:**

Tyron Riddick, *Chair*  
Heather Howell, *Vice Chair*  
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham  
Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck<sup>1</sup>  
Phyllis Byrum  
Karen Jenkins  
Kimberly Slingsluff

**Administrative Staff Present:**

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

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**OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION**

➤ Call to Order:

Board Chair Riddick announced a brief delay in starting the meeting to allow for the arrival of Board Member Dr. Brooks-Buck. Upon her arrival, the meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m.

➤ Pledge of Allegiance:

Board Chair Riddick led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

➤ Mission of SPS:

Vice Chair Howell read the Mission of Suffolk Public Schools.

**NEW BUSINESS**

➤ Finance Committee Meeting Report (Information item only)

Vice Chair Howell delivered the report from the Finance Committee Meeting held on January 24, 2023. She highlighted the following:

- Ray Melendez, auditor with Cherry Beckert, was present and clarified information regarding the auditing process, and gave an overview of SPS's audit which included the activities fund. He also indicated that Suffolk Public Schools' current and past nine years of audit produced no comment (no problems found in the testing of its processes).
- Mr. Melendez also reported that due to the absence of fraud, comments, or red flags in the audits and purchase card program, there was no reason to suggest a forensic audit or to take an in-depth look into the audit processes of Suffolk Public Schools as no discrepancies have been found this year and over the past nine years.
- Mrs. Forsman provided additional information regarding the various audits conducted by SPS for state and federal reporting (i.e. Title I, Food and Nutritional Services,

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<sup>1</sup> Board Member Dr. Brooks-Buck arrived at 6:06 p.m.

CARES Act funds, etc.) confirming that multiple checks and balances, and reports are made to prevent and/or catch any kind of issues with the finances of SPS.

- Mrs. Forsman and her team were congratulated for their hard work, dedication, attention to detail, and professionalism displayed despite receiving false accusations and criticisms that were hurled at them on several occasions.
- Board Chair Riddick suggested that the false narrative of misappropriation of funds and/or fraudulent activities of SPS should now be put to rest. He stated that the negative chatter served as nothing but a distraction and prevented Suffolk Public Schools from peacefully handling the business of the division. He also indicated that the constant harassment of SPS employees could be a reason for the inability to fully staff the division due to individuals not wanting to work under such stressful conditions. Mr. Riddick said that the audit had been vetted and no problems were found therefore the division will move forward, working diligently to achieve great things.

➤ Superintendent's Proposed Budget for the 2023-2024 School Year:

Dr. Gordon and Wendy Forsman, Chief Financial Officer, presented the budget which was themed Safety, Security, and Support. They explained the budget process, timeline and common themes. Dr. Gordon highlighted the items covered during the 2023 fiscal year which included metal detectors, additional wands, new radios for schools, clear book bags for students, and additional positions.

Dr. Gordon shared his proposed budget for the 2023-2024 school year. He highlighted the following phased in approach to "No Duties for Teachers". Year #1 to include:

- Part-time safety monitors becoming full-time at the high schools (1.6).
- Full-time Safety, Security, and Support Monitors (S3's) to provide hallway support, security, and recess coverage (2.4).
- Reading Specialist in all elementary schools.
- Full-time In-School Suspension monitor in all schools.
- Additional Teacher Assistant positions.
- Teacher salaries increase of 6.14%.
- Bus driver's salary increase to \$19.00 per hour.
- Support staff salary increase of 5%.
- Additional positions (Reading Specialist-11, Teachers-3, Teacher Assistants-10, S3's-28, Technology Technician-1).
- Total proposed 2023-2024 proposed budget, including the Operating Fund, Grants Fund, Food Services Fund totaled \$226,836,452.

Dr. Gordon presented a detailed overview of the 2023-2024 budget which included an explanation of state funding, additional expenses, operational expenses, and all of the funds associated with the proposed budget.

After the presentation, Board Chair Riddick opened the meeting for questions from Board Members. There were no questions from Board Members.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

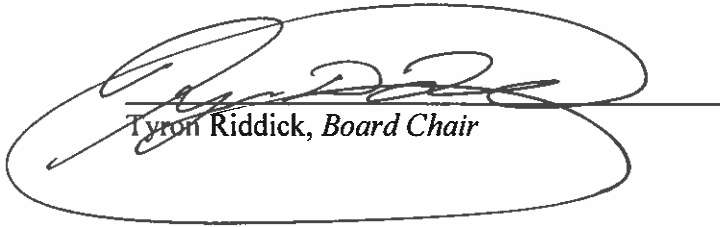
➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

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

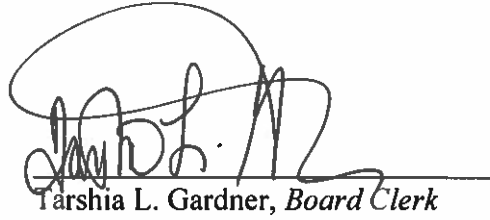
Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon a 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 February 23, 2023 Special School Board Meeting at 6:49 p.m.



Tyrone Riddick, *Board Chair*



Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*