

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, January 13, 2022 ~ 5:00 P.M.
City Council Chamber, 442 W. Washington Street, 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
Lorita Mayo
Tyron Riddick

Board Members Absent:
Heather Howell
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

➤ **Call to Order:**

The School Board Meeting/Work Session was called to order by Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck. Dr. Brooks-Buck welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded those in attendance to wear a mask while inside the building. ¹

➤ **S.W.O.T. Analysis Presentation:**

Dr. Branch provided an overview of the recent Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.) Analysis to Board Members. She indicated that she and her team read over 15,000 comments that were received from stakeholders as she highlighted a few comments. She reminded Members of the recommendations they offered during a previous meeting which included student achievement, climate and culture, operational efficiency, teacher quality, hiring and retention, family and community engagement as Board Members brainstormed ideas. Dr. Branch also reminded the Board of the need for SMART goals and how these goals will help build the strategic plan. She specified what the next steps are which included: Board will consider areas of immediate need and correction (recommendation and actions that can be addressed now), consider Strategic Plan Focus Areas (due January 28th), develop the Focus Areas, and implement an action plan.

The session ended with the opportunity for Members to ask questions.

➤ **Stakeholders Budget Development Overview for 2022-2023:**

Mrs. Forsman discussed the budget development process and that staff members have direct input into the budget using Google Sheets. They are constantly reviewed to ensure requests are being addressed. She noted that the public also has input into the budget as

¹ One member was late arriving however, the meeting began as a quorum was present.

they can ask budget questions online, attending and participating in Public Budget Hearings, and reviewing the budget books located in public and school libraries. Mrs. Forsman explained how salaries, health care benefits, and operating costs are budgeted. She highlighted that balanced budgets are required by state law and that three budgets are produced annually (Superintendent's Proposed Budget-February / School Board's Approved Budget-by April 1st / School Board's Adopted Budget-after City of Suffolk and General Assembly finalize their budgets; the School Board adopts the final budget document for the next fiscal year.

Members thanked Mrs. Forsman and her team for the amount of detail in her report. It was mentioned that this is the reason why the Finance Department receives perfect audits. Members highlighted that SPS clear audits prove that money is being managed appropriately and commended Mrs. Forsman for a great presentation which left no questions unanswered.

MEETING RECESS

There being no further questions, the meeting was recessed.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

➤ Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck. She welcomed all to the meeting and reminded attendees to wear their masks and seating restrictions as Covid numbers are on the rise. She also informed the public of speaking rules and the visible time clock.

➤ Pledge of Allegiance:

Board Member Riddick lead all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the agenda as proposed.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 0

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

- The Clerk read the opening statement regarding decorum for those who signed up to speak.
 - Ethel Williams (Budget) – Suggested a 5% increase in the budget due to increased work expectations placed on employees' shoulders.
 - Tinesha Kelly (Covid Numbers–Kids Are Our Future) **NO SHOW**
 - Carly Bosco (Personnel Report, Bus Patrol, and Covid Reporting) – Concerned with the lack of teachers to cover classes, inquired about what is being done to reduce unmanageable workloads for teachers. She appreciated the Bus Patrol item but stated that covid reporting was inadequate and should be reported daily.
 - Patricia Holloman (Covid Numbers/Health Dashboard) **NO SHOW**

- Deborah Wahlstrom (S.W.O.T. Analysis Data/Purchase Cards) – Felt that the S.W.O.T. Analysis should cover each of the core areas. Requested transparency with purchase cards reporting.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck clarified some misinformation. She stated that PALS Scores are used as a reference instrument to evaluate and assess where students are at the beginning, middle and end of the year. They are for instructional purposes only and not for grading purposes. She also clarified that the S.W.O.T. survey captures all demographics, races, and genders in all of the spectrums within the grade groups chosen. She reminded all that purchase cards are used by large organizations for various reasons including conferences, training, and meals during these events. She expressed that if anything inappropriate had occurred with the purchase cards, it would have been detected and pointed out in the audit.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Good News Report: Ms. Ward, Community Engagement Officer, highlighted the following good news events that happened throughout the division.
 - WTKR/WGNT Sounds of the Season
 - Home for the Holidays Parade
 - 2022 All-District Choir
 - CCAP Cyber-Patriot Regionals
 - December Teacher Spotlight
 - SPS Alumni Where Are They Now: Simeon Guyton
 - Grants and Awards
 - Family Engagement – Virtual Living Museum Presentation
 - SPS Staff Lends A Helping Hand to Bus Drivers
- Calendar of Special Events: Dr. Gordon spotlighted the events on the calendar.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of the Consent Agenda

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded, the motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 0

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS

- Contracted Transportation for 30 Students at King’s Fork High School for the Remainder of the 2021-2022 School Year.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded, the motion to accept the contract as presented.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 0

- Resolution 21/22-11: Resolution of the School Board of the City of Suffolk, Virginia, Adopting a Code of Ethics for Members of the Suffolk City School Board.

The Board Clerk read the resolution.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to accept Resolution 21/22-11, Code of Ethics for Board Members, as read.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 0

- Resolution Number 21/22-12: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia, Adopting a Code of Conduct for Clerk of the Suffolk City School Board.

The Board Clerk read the resolution.

Vice Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to accept Resolution 21/22-12 as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 0

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

- The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak.
 - Zee Cherry (Bullying) – She expressed that she is consistently being bullied at school and on the bus and did not agree with her suspension from school.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

- Board Members thanked Dr. Gordon for his leadership and hard work and for every aspect of what he does for the success of SPS stating that he is not all talk but action.
- Members thanked the nurses for all that they do during this difficult time. They also congratulated everyone recognized at the meeting. They recognized Mrs. Sharpe and Mrs. Perry for being honored at the Eighth Annual MLK Day Celebration.
- Members were thanked for what they do and for their patience and hard work to support all of the students in Suffolk Public Schools.
- Members thanked Dr. Branch and Mrs. Forsman for their thorough presentations and for all that they do. They also thanked the Community Engagement Department for a job well done. They recognized the teachers for their excellence reminding all that they do not teach for financial gain but for the love of the profession.
- Members thanked employees for stepping up and covering in the areas of need as they continue doing an excellent job with our students. Member expressed pride in the strength and talent of the students, and staff of Suffolk Public Schools vocalizing that the Board doesn't take them and all that they do for granted.
- Members also emphasized that they will continue to correct misinformation that's spread about SPS.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Accident Report – December 2021
- Bus Patrol
- Financial Report – December 2021

- Financial Report – Capital Projects
- Information and Reporting on the Composite Index for 2022-2024
- SPS Health Dashboard Update
- SPS Condolences: Doris Sumner, Margaret Jones, Geraldine Schwartz, Darlene Alexander

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 Riddick seconded, the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0. The motion Passed. 5 to 0.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the January 13, 2022 School Board Meeting at 8:29 p.m.


Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*


Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*