

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

**Tuesday, January 4, 2022 ~ 6:00 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*

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Lorita Mayo

Tyron Riddick

Sherri Story

Administrative Staff Present:

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*

Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*

Keesha L. Hicks, *Deputy Clerk*

OPENING OF MEETING

Call to Order:

The Organizational Meeting of the Suffolk City School Board was called to order by Dr. John Gordon, Division Superintendent.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Board Member Jenkins lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Oath of Office:

The Oath of Office for new School Board Member Heather Howell was conducted by Mr. W. Randolph Carter, Jr., Clerk of Circuit Court.

ELECTION OF CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR, CLERK AND DEPUTY CLERK

Nominations for Chairperson / Close Nomination:

Dr. Gordon presided over the election of the Chairman of the School Board and asked for nominations for the position of Chairperson of the Suffolk City School Board.

- Member Byrum nominated Member Dr. Brooks-Buck.
- Member Howell nominated Member Mayo however, Member Mayo respectfully declined the nomination.

There being no further nominations, Dr. Gordon called for a motion to close nominations.

Member Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to close nominations for School Board Chair.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 Nay: 2 (Howell, Story). The motion Passed. 5 to 2

Election of School Board Chairperson:

There being only one nomination, Dr. Gordon called for the vote to appoint Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck as Board Chair.

Upon a roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 Nay: (Howell, Story). The motion Passed. 5 to 2

Dr. Gordon turned over the meeting and passed the gavel to Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck.

Nominations / Election of School Board Vice-Chairperson:

Chair Dr. Brook-Buck presided over the election of the Vice Chairman of the School Board and asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson of the Suffolk City School Board.

- Member Mayo nominated Member Byrum

There being no further nominations, Board Chair Brooks-Buck closed nominations and called for the vote.

Member Mayo moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to close nominations for Vice-Chair for the Suffolk City School Board.

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

Member Story asked for clarification from Attorney Waller since the Board Chair and Vice-Chair are up for recall.

Attorney Waller clarified that if they (Dr. Brooks-Buck and Mrs. Byrum) are recalled, the Board would have to be reorganized and seats temporarily filled until special election which can occur as early as November.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck provided further clarification that grounds and legal reasons are required for a recall, and there are none.

Appointment of Clerk and Deputy Clerk:

Member Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to appoint Tarshia Gardner as Clerk of the Board and Keesha Hicks as Deputy Clerk.

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

SETTING OF SALARIES

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to set salaries at \$10,000 for Board Members and an additional \$1,400 for Chair Duties.

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

The meeting was recessed by Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck to allow the opportunity for the Chair and Vice-Chair to review Members requests/resumes for appointments to Standing Committees and Foundation Boards.

Member Story did not agree that Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck had the right to make appointments. She was of the opinion that it should be up to the entire Board to make appointments. Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck clarified that the Chair makes the recommendations and the Board votes to approve.

Member Story asked Attorney Waller to read the policy from which Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck was referencing and he indicated that the meeting must return from recess before he can do so. Member Story stated that the Board did not vote to go into a recess.

Dr. Buck reconvened the meeting and thanked all for their patience.

Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck recommendations were as follows:

- Finance Committee: Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck / Vice-Chair Byrum / Member Story-Alternate
- Legislative Committee: Member Jenkins / Member Mayo / Member Riddick-Alternate
- Policy Review Committee: Vice-Chair Byrum / Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck / Member Howell-Alternate
- ACCESS Committee: Member Jenkins / Member Riddick-Alternate
- The Governor's School for the Arts: Member Mayo / Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck-Alternate
- SECEP Board: Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck / Member Howell-Alternate
- Suffolk Education Foundation: Member Story / Vice-Chair Byrum-Alternate
- WHRO/HRETA Education Advisory Board: Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck / Member Mayo-Alternate

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the recommendations as read.

Member Story expressed her concern that each School Board Member had not been assigned to a committee. Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck informed Member Story that each member had been appointed and explained the number of committees and Members.

Member Story asked if the Board Chair counted as a quorum for a committee. Board Chair Brooks-Buck responded that each of the groups review information and make recommendations that are brought back to the Board for a vote. None of the committees have the power, even if there are three members, to make decisions independent of the full School Board. Member Story did not agree as a committee must still have a quorum to meet. She added that this was not in agreement with Robert's Rules. Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck clarified that Board governance rules first and Robert's Rules are used to augment Board policies, not to circumvent or overcome. Member Story asked if the policy was to follow Robert's Rules. Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck replied that Member Story's question had already been answered and asked the Deputy Clerk to continue with the vote.

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

SETTING OF SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to accept the second Thursday of each month for School Board Meetings, beginning at 5 p.m. with Work Sessions and 7 p.m. for Public Meetings.

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

SUPERINTENDENT’S DESIGNEES

Vice-Chair Byrum moved, and Member Mayo seconded the motion to accept Dr. Branch and Dr. Brown as the Superintendent’s Designees.

Member Story did not agree with the recommendation of Dr. Branch being the designee and indicated that she was under a restricted license.

Dr. Gordon clarified that Dr. Branch’s license is not restricted. Member Story asked when Dr. Branch was granted full licensure and Dr. Gordon would not agree to discuss the credentials of staff in the public as that is a personnel item. He directed Member Story to access Dr. Branch’s credentials on the Virginia Department of Education website. Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck asked Member Story to refrain from denigrating employees publicly and inappropriately questioning their credentials. Member Story did not agree.

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

ADJOURNMENT

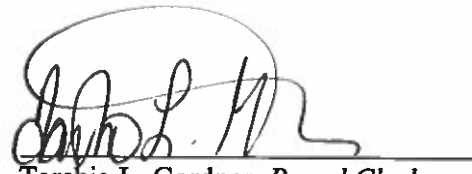
There being no further business or questions Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Member Mayo moved, and Vice-Chair Byrum seconded, to adjourn the meeting.

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 January 4, 2022 Organizational Meeting at 6:44 p.m.


Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, Board Chair


Tarshia L. Gardner, Board Clerk