

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, February 9, 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 Slingsluff

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:

Board Chair Riddick called the meeting to order.

➤ Gifted Advisory Board (GAB) Update:

Russell Terrillion, Chair, gave the update and highlighted the following:

- Gifted Advisory Board Purpose
- Membership
- Meetings
- 2021-2022 Accomplishments: Gifted Advisory Board Initial Meeting (Nov. 2021), Gifted Seminar Topics (Feb. 2022), Gifted Plan Overview (May 2022), Gifted Advisory Board Initial Meeting (Nov. 2022)
- 2021-2022 GAB Membership: Voting Members, Consultants
- 2022-2023 GAB Membership: Voting Members, Consultants

Mr. Terrillion was thanked for volunteering his time to work with the division in this capacity and for presenting his report.

➤ School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) Presentation:

Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport explained the make-up of the Family Life Board and how they assist in the implementation of Suffolk Public Schools' family life program. The program is used in grades 4-10 which comes from state SOLs for family life. Mrs. Anne McCoy explained the Welnet program which has been used since spring 2021. Welnet will be used in grades 6 through high school. Carly Bosco presented the recommendation for the Board to approve the materials for the grades as presented. Dr. Davenport explained that if students asked questions not covered in the family life curriculum, that child is directed to ask their parents the question. Parents wishing to remove their child from participating in this program have the right to complete the opt-out form their child and the student will be given a health-related alternative assignment.

Discussion ensued as members asked questions of Dr. Davenport and her team and they explained the measures in place to keep parents informed of the topics and options, and that all information regarding family life is located on the SPS website.

Dr. Davenport and her team were thanked for their report.

➤ Saturday Academy:

Dr. Okema Branch presented information on the Saturday Academy. She explained their purpose and expectations, programming setup, which included four components (Instructional Focus and Pacing, Staffing, Locations, and Logistics, Registration and Schedules), 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 data comparisons, academic offerings, and continuous efforts including before/after school tutoring at schools, Z-Block remediation (high schools), ISAEF Remediation in Reading and Math, University Instructors and Instructional Assistants in identified schools, Required Study Hall for Athletes and Band Members, Campaigns to increase high school SPS Saturday Academy attendance, Recruit teachers for additional areas.

Discussion ensued as Board Members asked questions and thanked Dr. Branch for her presentation.

MEETING RECESS

- Board Chair Riddick recessed the meeting.

RECONVENE IN PUBLIC MEETING

➤ Meeting Call to Order:

Board Chair Riddick called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

➤ Pledge of Allegiance:

All members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

➤ Recital of SPS Mission:

Member Dr. Brittingham read the mission.

➤ Musical Selection – JFKMS Chorus:

The chorus from John F. Kennedy Middle School, under the leadership of Jamilla Ford, performed at the meeting. The Board enjoyed their selections and thanked them for the melodic performance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

➤ Approval of Agenda:

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck 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 speakers shared the following:

- Travis McKinney – Payment of Bills – Mr. McKinney did not agree with the purchases made by Suffolk Public Schools. He felt that the purchases made were frivolous.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

➤ Good News Report:

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

- Spotlight (Alumni Spotlight - Ryan Speedo Green, NRHS Alumni), S.T.A.R. “Start Today and Rise”, General Assembly Recognizes FBES for 100 Years in Education, LHS Broadway Day
- Athletics & Activities
- Awards & Recognitions (January Teacher Spotlight, January Outstanding STEM Educator: Megan Farabaugh)
- Community Donations

➤ Calendar of Special Events:

Dr. Gordon highlighted the events listed on SPS website for February/March.

Dr. Gordon briefly highlighted the initiative Present Every Day. He encouraged all students to attend school daily, especially on the half days. There were over 2,000 students absent on the last half day. Therefore, students must come to school every day.

Dr. Gordon recognized Qua Cummins, art teacher from John F. Kennedy Middle School for the display of student art work that decorated the Council Chamber. He also recognized Dr. Neighbours and Mr. Camenish for the Broadway show at Lakeland High School and the great work they are doing at the Center for Production and Performing Arts. Dr. Gordon recognized Jessica Joyner, Coordinator of Special Education, for her creativity with customizing tumblers for each board member. Dr. Gordon recognized Board Members and the Clerks as February is School Board Appreciation Month and Clerk Appreciation Week. He and Mr. Riddick distributed certificates from VSBA to each member and clerk.

Mr. Riddick recognized the Clerks as being the vein of the Suffolk City School Board as they work diligently behind the scene to make the Board’s job easier.

CONSENT AGENDA

➤ Approval of the Consent Agenda:

Member Dr. Brittingham moved to remove the item Bills and Payroll from the consent agenda and add it to New Business.

Mr. Riddick asked her to amend/rephrase her motion to accept the Consent Agenda with Bills and Payroll removed and added to New Business.

Member Dr. Brittingham amended her motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the removal of Bills and Payroll and adding it to New Business.

Member Slingluff moved and Vice Chair Howell seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the removal of the 2022-2023 Elective and AP Textbook Adoption Committee, and Bills and Payroll and to add the two items to New Business.

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

With the approval of the Personnel Report, Dr. Gordon introduced and welcomed Mrs. Towanda Shirley, the new Director of Special Education. Mrs. Shirley was honored to accept the appointment and looked forward to working with SPS in her new role.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

➤ Ordinances 22/23-18 through 22/23-75:

Board Chair Riddick asked the Board if they preferred to proceed with the ordinances collectively or individually.

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to collectively approve Ordinances 22/23-18 through 22/23-75.

Attorney Waller provided a minor correction to Ordinance 22/23-55, Section 8-14.1, Section A, paragraph two, line three. The wording “specific academic aptitude” should be deleted and replaced with “and/or fine and performing arts.”

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck amended her motion and Member Byrum seconded the motion that Ordinances 22/23-18 through 22/23-75 be taken collectively and with the one edit mentioned 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 0.¹

NEW BUSINESS

➤ STEM Century: The SPS Edition (Information Item Only)

Dr. Gordon mentioned that this is an exciting opportunity for the division. He highlighted the following benefits from this collaboration:

- Improve Science SOL scores,
- Increase the total number of STEM activities and resources,
- Provide additional community partnerships and internships for our students that will lead to economic and work force development.

He stated that this partnership is cutting edge and the first of its kind for any school division, and introduced Mr. Marlon Lindsey, CEO of 21Cent Ed.

Mr. Lindsey, highlighted the following problems that are festering in the world today with the lack of educating students in STEM:

- Local, regional, national and global workforce shortages.
- Pressure from parents, industry, communities are mounting.
- Students are not just left behind, they are being left out.
- Not enough teachers. Not enough STEM teachers.

¹ Due to technical difficulties, the vote was recorded by a roll-call.

- Lack of comprehensive planning.

He indicated that jobs which are hiring today are not what's being translated into the classroom, however, if students are well prepared, they will have four primary options available upon graduation:

- Workforce (if well prepared, 100% of our students will be workforce ready),
- College (40% of college students drop out of college and are not prepared to go into the other options),
- Entrepreneurship (100% of our students should be ready for entrepreneurship),
- Service (students should be prepared to serve as this serves as a gateway to the other three options upon their separation from active duty).

Mr. Lindsey explained that the problem is that "Across the country, our children are being taught 20th-century skills, using 19th-century pedagogy, for an accelerating 21st century global economy." However, he offered a solution which includes "A Comprehensive STEM Education" where all students receive a STEM instruction "Early. Often. Everywhere." 21stCentEd. Promotes a District-Wide Pk-12 Plan for Comprehensive STEM, Skills Bank for Students, Best Practices for Teachers, and Work Readiness Standards.

Mr. Lindsey was excited about the partnership with Suffolk Public Schools and reiterated the benefits of this collaboration:

- First of its kind – STEM Century Book
- STEM Century – Documentary
- Custom PD to Improve Science Assessment Scores
- More STEM Experiences
- Involving Community
- Internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, career options, etc.

This partnership (comprehensive STEM education) will ensure that our students are ready for the global society.

Board members were thrilled with this program, asked questions, and thanked Mr. Lindsey for his presentation, partnership, and for the opportunity to propel Suffolk Public Schools to becoming the premier school division in the country.

➤ Family Life Approval

Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Vice Chair Howell seconded the motion to approve the Family Life program as presented.

Upon electronic vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.²

➤ Resolution 22/23-11: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Authorizing the Submission of a Literary Fund Loan Application and Requesting that the City Council of the City of Suffolk, Virginia Issue General Obligation School Bonds for School Purposes and Consenting to the Issuance Thereof.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-11 as presented.

² Technical difficulties were resolved and electronic voting resumed.

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

- Resolution 22/23-12: A Resolution of the School Board of the City of Suffolk, Virginia Approving the Policy Services Agreement Between VSBA and Suffolk City School Board
Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-12 as presented.

Upon electronic vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 1 (Brittingham) / Abstain: 1 (Slingluff). The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 1.

- Resolution 22/23-13: A Resolution of the School Board of the City of Suffolk, Virginia, Approving a Pharmacy Service Agreement Between On-Site Rx, Inc. and Suffolk City School Board
Member Dr. Brook-Buck moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to approve Resolution 22/23-13 as presented.

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

Payment of Bills and Payroll – January 31, 2023

Board Member Dr. Brittingham expressed her concern with voting on this item as she is having difficulty understanding the report and felt that additional information should be included with this report. She asked for patience as she is new to this process.

Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Byrum seconded the motion to approve the payment of bills and payroll-January 31, 2023 as presented.

Upon electronic vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 1 (Brittingham) / Abstain: 1 (Slingluff). The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 1.

- 2022-2023 Electives & AP Textbook Adoption Committees
Member Slingluff suggested the Board should consider appointing parents/citizens, who are not connected with the school system to serve on this committee to make it more balanced as most of the members are employees of the division.

Dr. Lawson-Davenport explained the process of selecting members, Dr. Gordon clarified that the committee is not citizen advisory committees, and Mr. Hinds provided information regarding the RFP process and the opportunity for citizens to review and provide input.

Attorney Waller added that the VDOE does not require citizens to be a part of the actual committee, but that provisions be made to allow parents the opportunity to review and comment on the materials. He also added that under the Board's policy, there is no textbook citizen advisory committee.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the 2022-2023 Electives and AP Textbook Adoption Committees as presented.

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

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 speakers shared the following:

- Travis McKinney – How to spend \$27 million revisited. Mr. McKinney suggested using the money for a college tutoring education program, or sponsor an employee's (potential teacher) full tuition and hire upon completion of program. He also felt that the statement regarding certain funds cannot be used to hire teachers is inaccurate. He also suggested to incentivize students to get them back in the game of education and have programs, field trips, or contests that would stimulate a child's intellectual curiosity.

Board Member Riddick provided context regarding policies for field trip permission by explaining the process for field trips approved by the board (overnight trips) versus day to day trips which are not approved by the board. He also commended Mrs. Forsman and Dr. Gordon on the financial report as it entailed exactly what the Board requested. He was grateful for the hard work of the staff as they are all working for the division's success. He mentioned that Suffolk Public Schools is a beacon of light for other divisions and that they look to us to glean information for their division.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

➤ Comments and Reports by School Board Members:

- Thanked Dr. Gordon, Mrs. Forsman and their teams for all of their hard work and diligence in providing information to members, employees, and stakeholders.
- Thanked Mrs. Ford and her students for an outstanding choral performance.
- Thanked the teachers and all who were highlighted in the Good News Report.
- Thanked the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for their hard work and for going above and beyond the call of duty.
- Excited with the STEM presentation and look forward to the great things this will afford the students.
- Clarified that all Board Members have an opportunity to be reimbursed for mileage.
- Enjoyed an amazing family night at Nansemond Parkway Elementary School.
- Enjoyed attending the various VSBA Capital Conference and New Board Member Training. Members felt it was very informative and was a great foundation to learning.
- Congratulated the Warrior athletes, and Jessica Joyner for her creativity with the tumblers.
- Thanked the public speaker for consistently showing up, asking questions, and bringing solutions.
- Encouraged everyone to think about the why before asking questions to determine if the questions are meant to understand or to mock, as one produces growth and the other does not.
- Wished all a Happy Valentine's Day.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report January 31, 2023
- January 2023 Accident Review

ADJOURNMENT


➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

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

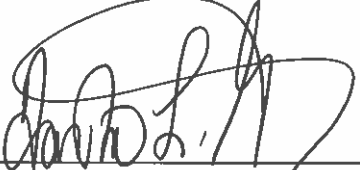
Member Dr. Brooks-Buck moved and Member Slingluff seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon electronic 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 9, 2023 School Board Meeting at 8:53 p.m.



Tyron Riddick, *Board Chair*



Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*