

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, February 27, 2025 ~ 5:00 P.M.

King's Fork Middle School, 350 King's Fork Road, Suffolk, VA 23434

Board Members Present:

Heather Howell, *Chair*
Sean McGee, *Vice Chair*
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham
Valerie Fields
Karen Jenkins
Tyron Riddick
Kimberly Slingluff

Administrative Staff Present:

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

OPENING OF MEETING

- Call to Order:
Board Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

- Pledge of Allegiance:
Vice Chair McGee led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- Moment of Silence:
A moment of silence was observed by all in attendance.

- The Mission of Suffolk Public Schools:
Board Member Jenkins read the mission of SPS.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Approval of Agenda:
Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the agenda.

Board Member Riddick suggested tabling the Legislative Committee report and adding it to the March 13th regular meeting.

Vice Chair McGee amended his motion and Board Member Jenkins seconded the amended motion to approve the agenda with the removal of the Legislative Committee Report and adding it to the March 13, 2025 meeting agenda.

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

NEW BUSINESS

➤ Innovation Center Needs, Research, and Planning (Info Item Only):

Dr. Gordon highlighted and explained information contained in the documents provided to the Board and public, which included memos, cost estimates and models, quotes, and plans for the Innovation Center. All documents were relative to the research conducted for the planning and needs of the Innovation Center.

Board Members engaged in dialogue with Dr. Gordon and his team via questions and comments regarding building proposals, which included: (1) availability of other locations in the city that may be “move-in ready;” and (2) possible options of using currently owned real property.

Members of the School Board also discussed: (1) replacement of HVAC equipment; (2) funding sources; (3) if the Innovation Center will help alleviate the current administrative needs, or if this would only be a bandage covering a broken system; (4) what makes this project a priority over other projects needed by the division.

Dr. Gordon presented two options to the Board: (1) Full renovations to the cite as recommended by him and his team; or (2) Replacement of the rooftop HVAC system which must be done in order to have workable space.

Board Chair Howell thanked everyone for participating in the discussion.

➤ Resolution 24/25-20: A Resolution Of The School Board For The City Of Suffolk, Virginia Approving An Award To GC Commercial, Inc. Pursuant To A Written Invitation For Bid Issued By Suffolk Public Schools:

Board Member Riddick moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the amended motion to approve Resolution 24/25-20 as presented.

Additional dialog ensued between board members regarding the strategic plan for growing CCAP.

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 24/25-21: A Resolution Of The School Board For The City Of Suffolk, Virginia Approving An Award To Trane U.S. Inc. Pursuant Written Proposal Referencing The Omnia Cooperative Contract For Replacement HVAC Rooftop Units Located At Proposed SPS Innovation Center:

Board Member Riddick moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the amended motion to approve Resolution 24/25-21 as presented.

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

➤ Legislative Committee Report:

This item was tabled until March 13, 2025 by a vote during the approval of the agenda.

SUPERINTENDENT’S PROPOSED BUDGET (Info Item Only)

➤ Superintendent’s Proposed Budget:

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Gordon explained the budget process timeline. Dr. Gordon also highlighted common themes that were considered in formulating the budget and they included: concerns regarding safety of students and staff, student growth and literacy, and pay raises, and the 2028 Strategic Plan 2028 because it references Student Achievement, Climate and Culture, and Human & Fiscal Resources. He also made mention of the history of teacher raises which include a 23% raise over five years, proposed budget challenges with the Governor’s Proposed Budget relative to unfunded mandates and inflation, the ending of the State’s All-In Grant of \$5.8 million (ending June 30, 2025), and unfunded instructional and other needs totaling \$7,567,780.

Wendy Forsman, using PowerPoint presentation, highlighted and explained the structure of the budget book including its organizational information and legal requirements, the Executive Summary, expenditures by programs and the glossary of terms. She also explained that 84% of the total operating budget is compensation and benefits. She also provided a detailed breakdown of the 2025-2026 Superintendent’s Proposed Budget, explaining fund increases/decreases; the State mandated 3% raise versus the Superintendent’s proposed 3-3.5% raise for staff (based on experience step), the Cost of Living raise for employees at the top of their salary scale, and the \$3,208,761 million allotted to the division according to the Governor’s 2025-2026 proposed budget. The request to the City for \$7,000,000 will cover safety, security, student achievement, increased costs of operations. The total increase in the Operating Budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year is projected at \$10,151,881.

Board Chair Howell asked the board to submit general questions to Dr. Gordon by end of business day (5 p.m.) on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, and to submit changes or requests to him by end of day (5 p.m.) on March 20th to allow time for he and his team to address information submitted. She also encouraged members to read the narratives at the beginning of each category and information regarding non-departmental categories.

Board Members were thankful for the presentation and requested a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

There being no further business, Board Chair Howell adjourned the Special School Board Meeting of February, 2025 at 6:52 p.m.

Heather Howell, *School Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*