

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, July 14, 2022 ~ 5:00 P.M.

Col. Fred Cherry Middle School, 7401 Burbage Drive, Suffolk, VA 23435

Board Members Present:

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*

Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Lorita Mayo

Tyron Riddick

Board Members Absent:

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:

- Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order.

SPS 2022 Climate and Culture Survey Results:

- Dr. Gordon and Shawn Dickerson presented information to the Board and highlighted the following:
 - SPS Climate Survey Construction:
 - March 7-31, 2022
 - Participants included all SPS employees, students (grades 5, 6, 8, 9, & 12), all K-12 parents
 - Conducted online, paper and pencil, and was completely voluntary
 - Dr. Gordon highlighted percentage results from the following areas:
 - Division-wide Employee Perceptions
 - Division-wide Instructional Staff Perceptions
 - Parent Perceptions
 - Student Perceptions
 - Dr. Gordon stated that there is room for improvement and that the areas of challenge, based on the feedback from the survey (highlighted in red on the presentation) will be the areas of focus for the 2022-2023 school year. They include the following:
 - Increased involvement of all staff in decisions that impact their work
 - Improvements in both the cafeteria and transportation
 - Increased student recognitions
 - Development of strategies to improve student respect
 - Efficiency in resolving concerns in a timely manner
 - Community Leadership: Volunteering

- Board Members asked questions and/or made comments. They thanked Dr. Gordon and his team for this report and were confident that Dr. Gordon will have many strategies for tackling the areas of focus for the 2022-2023 school year.

- **MOTION TO GO INTO A CLOSED MEETING**

- Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A motion is needed to go into a Closed Meeting to discuss the following items and subjects pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia (1950) as amended:

1. The discussion and/or consideration regarding the performance evaluation of the School Superintendent and any revision to terms of his employment; and
2. The discussion and/or consideration regarding the performance evaluation of the attorney for the School Board and any revisions to terms of his employment; and
3. The discussion and/or consideration regarding the performance evaluation of the clerk of the School Board and any revision to the terms of her employment.

Which is authorized by Section 2.2-3711 A.1 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the motion as read by Attorney Waller.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- **RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING**

- Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck reconvened the public meeting.

- **CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING**

- Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A Resolution of Certification of the Closed Meeting of July 14, 2022 Pursuant to Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as Amended

WHEREAS, the School Board of the City of Suffolk convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, requires a certification by the School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the School Board of the City of Suffolk hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed

in the closed meeting to which this resolution of certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the School Board of the City of Suffolk.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the motion as read by Attorney Waller.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

➤ Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck recessed the meeting for 20 minutes.

- **RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING**

➤ Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck reconvened the public meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

➤ Member Mayo led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEMS**

➤ Performance Evaluation of the School Superintendent - Resolution 22/23-1 - A Resolution Approving the Terms and Conditions of an Addendum to a Contract of Employment between the Suffolk City School Board and Dr. John B. Gordon III.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve a resolution approving the terms and conditions of an addendum to a contract of employment between the Suffolk City School Board and Dr. John B. Gordon III.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

➤ Performance Evaluation of the School Board Attorney - Resolution 22/23-2 - A Resolution Approving the Terms and Conditions of an Addendum to a Contract of Employment between the Suffolk City School Board and Wendell M. Waller.

Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to accept a resolution approving the terms and conditions of an addendum to a contract of employment between the Suffolk City School Board and Wendell Waller.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

*No vote was required on the Clerks performance evaluation.

- **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- Vice-Chair Byrum moved and Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS**

- The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak. The speakers shared the following:
 - Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom (Re: Minutes / Secondary Course Proposal) – Dr. Wahlstrom felt that the Board adopted a policy that was not in their best interest when they approved a resolution dealing with the purchasing authority of the Superintendent at the June 9, 2022 meeting, as recorded in the minutes.

- **REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT**

- Good News Report: Mr. Melvin Bradshaw, Community Engagement Facilitator, highlighted the following good news/events that happened throughout the division:
 - Alana Glover – KFHS Alumni – Maryland/VA Attorney was sworn into the VA State Bar, June 2022. During her third year of law school, she was recognized as one of the top 10 female law students in the country.
 - 2022 Sentara Health Career Camp – No cost to families and will be held June 27-July 1, 2022.
 - Teacher Wish-List Winner from Hatcher & Frey Orthodontics – Mrs. Lewis, Teacher at FBES was the winner of a \$250 gift card to purchase school supplies, additional learning tools or technology for her classroom each month of the school year.
 - Suffolk Pilot Club: Special Education Paraprofessional of the Year – Rainey Chapman, Special Education Paraprofessional at CES, was recognized as the Suffolk Pilot Club: Special Education Paraprofessional of the Year.
 - Athletic Wins! – Clay Grady of NRHS was named the Class 5 Player of the Year; Deondre Hardy of NRHS was recognized as the 2021-22 Gatorade Virginia Boys Track & Field Player of the Year.
- 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 Howell seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- There was no unfinished business.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

- Adjustment to School Board Meeting Date: - April 13, 2023 move to April 6, 2023:

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to move the meeting of April 13th Board Meeting to April 6, 2023.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- Organizational Chart 2022-2023:

- Dr. Gordon highlighted information on the 2022-2023 Organization Chart.

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Howell seconded the motion to accept the organization chart as presented.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- New Secondary Course Proposal:

- Dr. Gordon highlighted information on the proposed secondary course.

Vice Chair Byrum moved and Member Mayo seconded the motion to approve the new course titled Data Science as a pilot program at Lakeland High School.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS**

- The Clerk read the statement regarding decorum for those scheduled to speak. The speakers shared the following:

- Carshena Robertson (Re: SPS made a mistake by sending virtual school information to the wrong number, now they will not let my kids in virtual school) – Mrs. Robertson felt that SPS was wrong and should allow her students into the virtual program as they cannot return to in-person learning due to the mother’s medical condition.
- Travis McKinney (Re: Leadership Part 2) – Mr. McKinney feels that the Board has leadership issues. He stated that the Board is not a group of leaders but are followers.
- Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom (Re: Division-Level School Safety Audit Committee) – Dr. Wahlstrom felt that the Board does not understand the purpose, role, and responsibilities of the committee and issued the wrong tasks to the committee.

- **BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

- Members shared the following:

- Emphasized the importance of active community engagement. Encouraged parents to keep their children reading, engage them in conversation, and continue their involvement in social activities over the summer.
- Congratulated those who were highlighted in the Good News Report with a special shout-out to NRHS Warriors for their athletic endeavors.
- Excited about having volunteers return to school buildings with the start of the new school year.

- Dr. Gordon and his team were thanked for their leadership, direction, vision and great work. Employees who will be working throughout the summer were also acknowledged for their efforts.
- Encouraged everyone to continue working together to build a community where residents will be proud to rear their children. Everyone was encouraged to stop and think before speaking and acting because words and actions can have significant consequences.
- High school graduating class of 2022 were mentioned for their hard work. There were 877 graduates (399 honor graduates) who received over \$15 million combined in scholarships. It was mentioned that student success is a collaborative effort and it happens when working together and this speaks volumes.
- During a 5th grade Moving On ceremony, Board Member Mayo was honored to be the guest speaker as the students, faculty and staff were all excited and happy during this celebration.
- Positive comments have been received from teachers who received an increase in salary. Some now feel that they are being paid as a professional for the first time.
- Broadband and high-speed internet to the rural Holland area of Suffolk is now underway with the recent ground breaking. The grant, initiated by Delegate Clinton Jenkins, Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Dominion VA Power, and Charter Communications, was signed by Governor Ralph Northam during his administration.
- Condolences and appreciation were expressed for Mr. William “Bill” Whitley who served and was an advocate for Suffolk Public Schools for 51 years. Mr. Whitley also served on the School Board for 18 years representing the Chuckatuck Borough.

- **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- Accident Report – June 2022
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- 2022 Saturday Academy Information
- 2022 Substitute Information

- **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 Mayo seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed. 6 to 0

- Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the July 14, 2022 School Board Meeting at 9:22 p.m.

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*