

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD**

**Thursday, October 13, 2022 ~ 5:00 P.M.**

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

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**Board Members Present:**

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Lorita Mayo

Tyron Riddick

**Absent:**

Sherri Story

**Attendance via Electronic Device (Upon Board Approval):**

Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*

**Administrative Staff Present:**

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*

Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*

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**OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION**

➤ Call to Order:

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

➤ Motion for Meeting Attendance Via Electronic Device (Phyllis Byrum):

Attorney Waller read the following motion:

A motion is needed pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.3, Subsection B.2. To allow Board Member Phyllis Byrum to participate in tonight's public meeting of the School Board through electronic communication means from 1596 Great Fork Road, Suffolk, Virginia 23438 due to a medical condition of a family member that requires Board Member Byrum to provide care which prevents her physical attendance at tonight's meeting.

Member Mayo moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve virtual attendance for Mrs. Byrum as read by Mr. Waller.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 4 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 2 (Byrum/Story).  
The motion Passed by vote of 4 to 0

➤ Student Achievement Updates:

Dr. Branch, Chief Academic Officer, presented the following highlights:

- Division/School Accreditation Status – 15 of 19 schools are accredited (CES / FBES / HES / KSES / NPES / NSES / OES / SES / CFCMS / FGMS / JYMS / KFMS / KFHS / LHS / NRHS)
- Four schools are accredited with conditions (BTWES/EFES/MBJES/JFKMS)
- Additional targeted support and strategies for the schools accredited with conditions include a focus on evidence-based reading strategies: phonics, phonemic awareness,

phonological awareness and comprehension skills, use of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI), Academic Coach modeling science best practices, use of Fact Fluency Resources in all grade levels, K-5, including High Yield Routines, co-teaching and co-planning focus, utilizing common assessments to identify skills for spiral review, monthly and weekly collaborative planning sessions, quarterly grade level PLC meetings, integrated writing across the curriculum into P.E. and exploratory classes, SOL Pass and PhET simulations, and after-school science remediation and enrichment sessions.

- Additional supports include SPS Saturday Academy beginning October 15<sup>th</sup>, high school Z-block tutoring, sending manipulatives home to families of select special education students to reinforce instruction, before or after school tutoring sessions at all levels, and Special Education Parent Resource sessions.

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

- The need for a Closed Meeting and all other actions relative to such (Certification of Close Meeting, Action on Closed Meeting) were no longer applicable / needed for this meeting of the School Board.

### **MEETING RECESS**

- Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck recessed the meeting.

### **RECONVENE IN PUBLIC MEETING**

- Meeting Call to Order:  
Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.
- Pledge of Allegiance:  
Member Mayo led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- Approval of Agenda:  
Member Riddick moved and Member Mayo 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 by vote of 6 to 0.

### **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS**

- Citizen Comments on Agenda Items:
  1. Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom – Student Achievement, Purchase Cards – NO SHOW

### **REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT**

- Good News Report:  
Mrs. Dickens, Community Engagement Officer, highlighted the following good news/events that occurred throughout the division:
  - Spotlight (NPES teacher, SPS Majority-to-Minority Transfer Option)
  - Athletics & Activities (KFHS, LHS)

- Awards & Recognitions (CCAP's Early Childhood Ed. and Welding programs; September Teacher Spotlight and Bus Driver Perfect Attendance)
  - SPS In the Community (Yoga sessions by Organic Roots Yoga Studio, LLC)
  - SPS in the News (WTKR News-3, WAVY-10, Suffolk News Herald)
  - Grants & Awards (KFHS -\$500)
- VSBA Academy Awards:  
Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck presented the following VSBA Academy Awards to Board Members and Staff:
- Award of Recognition – Tyron Riddick, Keesha Hicks
  - Award of Excellence – Heather Howell, Dr. John B. Gordon III, Tarshia Gardner
  - Award of Honor – Karen Jenkins
  - Award of Distinction – Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, Phyllis Byrum. Lorita Mayo, Sherri Story
- All were congratulated for their accomplishment.
- Calendar of Special Events:  
Dr. Gordon spotlighted the events that are listed on SPS website for October and November.
- Dr. Gordon shared information regarding his visit to the African American Studies Class at King Fork High School (KFHS). During the class he had the opportunity to speak to students about the history of historically African American fraternities and sororities known as the Divine Nine. He spoke specifically about the fraternity of which he is a member, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. and the Community and Civic Programs which its members developed and support. He spoke with students regarding the Kappa Alpha Psi Guide Right Program, college application process, upcoming SAT dates, and even discussed, tying Windsor knots.
- Dr. Gordon highlighted SPS' partnership with All District Reads which focuses on student literacy. This is a family reading experience that all can participate in.
- Dr. Gordon announced the pilot of a clear book bag initiative as a part of the school safety initiative at the secondary schools. Students on the secondary level will have the option of receiving a free SPS clear book bag which will assist in expediting school security checks as well as additional methods for staff support. He indicated that the clear book bag initiative is on a voluntary basis.
- The Superintendent also provided an update to the early start of the school year survey. There was total of 5800 responses (2800 from parents, 1561 from students, 1377 from staff, 49 from community members.) According to the survey 53% of respondents felt that the school year should not begin before Labor Day. The largest number of concerns were noted for the potential to affect summer plans, and planning for instructional staff. Suffolk Public Schools will begin school post Labor Day for the 2023-2024 school year. Additional survey results will be shared on the website.
- Lastly, Dr. Gordon highlighted information from the City Council Meeting held on October 5, 2022. Dr. Gordon and Ms. Forsman attended the Council Meeting to answer questions from Council Members regarding the \$394,000 which was requested to be appropriated back to Suffolk Public Schools for sinkhole repairs. After Mrs. Forsman and Dr. Gordon shared the information and the gave evidence that data had been provided in advance to appropriate city officials, the Council voted to return the funds to Suffolk Public Schools.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### ➤ Approval of the Consent Agenda:

Member Mayo moved and Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

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

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### ➤ There was no unfinished business.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### ➤ 4x4 Block Scheduling:

Dr. Gordon introduced Dr. Stenette Byrd III, who provided the following highlights of 4x4 block scheduling:

- What is a 4x4 Block Schedule?
- Sample Schedules
- Reasons for Change
- Opportunities for Input
- Opportunities for Input
- Next Steps

Dr. Byrd and his team answered questions from Board Members before the vote.

Member Mayo moved, and Vice-Chair Byrum seconded the motion to approve the 4x4 Block Scheduling as presented.

Upon a roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 1 (Howell) / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Story). The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 1.

## **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 – (Re: 5 Topics in 5 Minutes: What are you teaching my child? VDOE statistics, History of leadership of SPS, Failure of leadership to fix literacy problems, This is how it all relates to policy) – NO SHOW
- Shareka Robinson – (Re: Bullying) Ms. Robinson felt that bullying is a problem in the school division and that more should be done to make students feel safe. She encouraged the division to put a system in place to protect students against bullying.
- Diamond Hannah – (Re: Special Education Negligence) – NO SHOW

## **BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

### ➤ Comments and Reports by School Board Members:

Members shared the following:

- Great time to be back in SPS and in face-to-face learning.
- Shout out to KFMS and JFKMS basketball teams as their games were electrifying.

- Seize every moment available to interact and engage with students and parents via athletic games or other activities.
- Encouraged community stakeholders to help service students via tutoring.
- Congratulated bus drivers and aides and those who fly under the radar for providing services for students.
- Congratulated everyone highlighted in the Good News Report.
- Governor’s School for the Arts report which included an increase in SPS student enrollment. The program has expanded tremendously.
- SPS students have made great strides in learning due to the leadership and dedication of Dr. Gordon, his team, faculty and staff.
- Delegate and Board Members Jenkins enjoyed visiting and interacting with students during athletic practices and games.
- Thanked the partnership with Zeros Subs in Suffolk for showing SPS students you care by providing food and drinks to our athletes during training practices.
- The importance of reading to child(ren) daily and encouraged parents to use resources available to assist children with reading.
- Parents to update their contact information with their child’s school.
- Encouraged everyone to educate themselves with the issues of public education and to vote for what is best for all children and citizens of Suffolk.
- Thanked Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Forsman for expertise and professionalism with supplying / correcting information and answering questions during the recent City Council meeting.
- Acknowledged shortages within school divisions, public service positions and many other offices.
- Strong schools make for strong cities, they help each other and when they work together, everyone is successful.
- Proud of the students of SPS, faculty, staff, and the initiatives promoting literacy and reading throughout the division.
- Encouraged support for the Big Feet Meet.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- Accident Report September 2022
- Financial Report: Capital Projects
- Financial Report September 30, 2022

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### ➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

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

Member Riddick moved and Member Howell 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 by vote of 6 to 0.

- Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the October 13, 2022 School Board Meeting at 9:17 p.m.

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Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*

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Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*