

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**September 5, 2023
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Vice Chair Kopp.

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Kopp, J. Vue, J. Foster, Z. Ellis, H. Henderson, U. Ward
Superintendent Gothard

C. Allen was absent.

Staff: K. Thao, C. Long, A. Collins, N. Páez, Y. Vang, S. Schmidt de Carranza,
S. Dahlke, T. Sager, J. Turner, S. Gray Akyea, J. Danielson, A. Kunz, E.
Wacker, C. Green, P. Pratt-Cook, C. Anderson, K. Kimani, K. Morris, L.
Corey, M. Langworthy, H. Nistler, T. Parent, J. Vollmer

Community: J. Wolfe, L. Bolton

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: Director Kopp moved approval of the Order of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Foster. It passed by acclaim.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard began the meeting with a recap of the first day of school, including that the high temperature for the following day is forecasted to be 35 degrees cooler, which will be a relief as it was a warm day. He provided details on his school visits and with the media, including at Randolph Heights, East African Elementary Magnet, and welcoming students and families at both sites. He then visited Johnson Senior High and noted the principal and staff directing families dropping off their students. Generally, high school students are glad to be back, and there is excitement in starting a new school year. He then visited Farnsworth Lower Campus, and provided his experience in connecting with a mental health partner at the school, and the diligence of the bus duty staff member. He also noted the backpack event sponsored by 3M Gives, and the great collaboration with them in distributing zipper backpacks to students this year. He also met a first year counselor, and plans to connect with him again throughout the year to hear more about his experience. Finally, he stopped at Battle Creek Middle, where he also hosts a Boys Group, and provided his experience in meeting with the principal, as well as highlights in connecting with staff, including the first

year Health and Wellness coach, who is also a SPPS graduate, former EA, and coach. It was heartwarming to see his engagement with the students, and his connection to the community. Superintendent Gothard noted the staff ready to embrace students, families and each other, and the community that leads to success. It was an incredible morning, and a successful start to the new school year. He also thanked many in the room for their work, as well as the Board of Education and this milestone year for SPPS.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Vue requested information about observations on the tone of the start of this school year, compared to recent years. Response: In going back to the 2021-22 school year, there were some difficult first days as no one had been through a pandemic, and even last year, with the workforce shortages. This year feels different, even with the high temperatures in some buildings. Executive Director Tom Parent and others are working on a plan to manage the air quality and temperatures in buildings, and while we cannot do it all at once, we will continue to build on this enthusiasm and support everyone.

5. RESOLUTION RELATING TO EXTENDING A TAX INCREMENT FINANCING DISTRICT FOR THE MINNESOTA EVENT DISTRICT IN THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Tom Sager, Executive Chief of Financial Services, to present this item. As shared at the Executive Team meeting, there were legislative changes with the past session, and the City has asked us to support this item with action at the next Regular Meeting. Executive Chief Sager also thanked Jenny Wolfe from the City for her help in preparing the context and background for this item and for her presence at the meeting. He reminded the Board that no board action is required at this meeting, but will be coming back before the Board at the September 19, 2023 Regular Meeting. He then reviewed the pertinent facts and information. Ms. Wolfe also provided additional information including that legislation was pursued in order to reinvest in the RiverCentre complex, as the facilities are aging and there are no other alternatives. Minneapolis is also investing in their Convention Center, and we need to be able to offer large events spaces to bring tourism, jobs, and a strong tax base.

The full set of information can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Why are we the only city for this specific requirement? Response: It was part of legislation; this is asking for an amendment or extension of 10 years, and the resolution is to be approved by the City, County, and School District. When it was originally done, it did not require approval of the three jurisdictions.
- Director Ward reviewed his understanding of how a TIF works, including a district that is set up and instead of that place paying a jump in taxes, that money is captured and reinvested in that place. Response: That is the typical TIF district, but this is specially legislated. In 2009, it was already there and continues to capture and redirect those to the RiverCentre. All properties included in this TIF are owned by the City.
- It was noted that the TIF district includes the 20 block radius in downtown to generate the increment.
- Further details on the amount the school district has lost since 2009 was requested. It is not retrospective, but as part of the extension, and to send the plan to the County and School District. It is projecting for 10 years - one of the other nuances is the frozen tax rate. All taxing jurisdictions from 2009 had a 102%, and the school district with about \$15M over 10 years is captured in the TIF district and used to reinvest in the RiverCentre Complex. As part of the special election, the County is to be held harmless, and capture increments that is returned to the County.

- Why is there reimbursement for the County but not the School District? Response: The County is required to pass at the state legislature.
- If this were to pass, will there be reimbursement to the District for this? Response: No. The School District is funded through state aid and federal aid, and our local property taxes. The impact of this is more so on the tax base - the District isn't technically losing money from that because it is not funded through the City of Saint Paul.
- How much of the \$15M over the 10 years is from the City? Response: \$19.3M.
- Hypothetically, if this does not pass, what is the city's approach to maintain that area? Response: It would be to increase property taxes.
- The Board was reminded that this will come for a vote in two weeks, and if there are additional questions to reach out to Board leadership or Administration.

6. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FY23 END OF YEAR UPDATE

Superintendent Gothard then introduced Leah Corey, Director of Innovation, to present this item. Included within the presentation was a review of the SPPS Achieves Initiatives and ARP strategies by focus area, the ARP life cycle, a review of Year 1, logic model, information on the public dashboard; review of Year 2 including the professional learning community monitoring structure and informing of "scale-up" and review of engagement such as Marnita's Table, and spend down. A review of the students served was also shared, as well as promising outcomes, highlights and challenges. Future plans for 2023-2024 were also discussed.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Superintendent Gothard thanked the team for this work, and while our timeline wasn't different than other districts, we differentiated in knowing what was spent, how, strategies, and what it is leading to. This is our approach not only for ARP funding, but also a strategy decision and will continue to guide SPPS in this way. For these funds, we needed precision, discipline, and collaboration, and that is what was delivered. This is the right way to do this work, and monitor progress, and thanked Ms. Corey and her team - this is a wonderful model for the District.
- Director Henderson requested information on the low levels of implementation challenges and examples of that. Response: Some is connected to professional development, and implementing a PD strategy aimed at building capacity, and understand the reasons that staff may not be accessing optional PD or effective communication for those opportunities. We try to determine the root causes of why it may not be implemented with fidelity and then address those. With PD, we have learned that folks are exhausted, and it's important to balance adding staff with these funds and building capacity with the current staff.
- Further clarification was also requested on the percentages of American Indian students served by ARP funds.
- Director Foster requested information on the redeployment of funds and those decisions. Response: When we initially launched the plan in the summer of 2021, we convened the ARP Allocation Team - comprised of teacher, principals and district staff who met to look at the needs assessment and strategic plan and solicit proposals across the organization for how to invest the funds; the recommendations are then brought to the executive leaders to approve. We also review the proposals against a rubric and make a set of recommendations for executive leadership to approve. It was also noted that in sending this information to MDE, if there is a variance or amendment from the original plan, that it must be approved by the MN Department of Education - the staff bonuses are an example.

- Superintendent Gothard also noted the guidance to the team was to not spend all funds right away, but also not to wait until the end. We are monitoring and seeing where to adjust.
- Director Foster requested further information on our community partners and the ARP funds, as well as evaluation of their use. Response: Our Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships have several staff devoted to supporting our partners and navigating the contract process. We also have staff in Research, Evaluation, and Assessment working with our partners to collect data, and that information can be provided in the future. Folks from OFECP and Purchasing have been meeting regularly to review contracts. Once they are in the system, OFECP then works with the community partner to ensure they have what they need and for implementation. Superintendent Gothard also noted our commitment to allocate funds to the community, especially BIPOC partners and small non-profits who were severely affected by the pandemic. By providing some structure and direct support, our partnerships involving community in schools has been important, and we are proud of the efforts. Director Foster then noted she is a firm believer in full service community school models and what those look and feel like.
- Director Ellis requested further information on the unspent funds. We are looking at the needs assessment and the demonstrated ability to spend funds in ways that are close to students and redeploy them there. Further details were also shared on the initiatives that were identified as “behind”, including examples of hiring a staff member, but not being able to hire a FTE, and ways to deliver that service; and possible needed support in initiatives to serve more students and the communications. Chief Turner also noted that we are also spending funds in areas other than hiring, including a new phone system, which may not directly service students, but is needed. There are a number of other operational resources needed, but also need to analyze the funds available and the funds needed for some. The highest priority for these funds is in serving students first.
- Director Vue requested clarification on the unexecuted contracts and money absent, and the differences.
- Is the goal for tracking progress to get those off track to the next stage? Response: It depends on the nature of the strategy - there may be different reasons it is off track, including that the work we wanted to do isn't effective or we did not receive the intended results. The goal is to get everything on track as quickly as possible and work with those as a team to put supports in place. Sometimes, these issues go back to PLC structure as well.
- Director Vue noted that September 2024 is the deadline to spend ARP funds, and we are responsible to inform the community how the funds were spent and if we are on track or not. He requested the documentation for those that are not on track to be able to tell the community the story of that initiative, with the goal to get everyone on track as much as possible.
- More information was also requested on the initiatives that were sunsetted. Those are initiatives that were meant to only run for a certain amount of time, or it was decided not to pursue it any longer.
- Superintendent Gothard noted this process is about balancing the budget and showing where the dollars are spent, and an intentional way to demonstrate the innovative planning to impact student outcomes. We are likely to see reports like this in the future as well as we move forward with this process in other areas. We are changing the way we do business in SPPS, and the tracking and monitoring of these funds is an examples. We will build upon initiatives that are on track, and will also be able to sunset certain items. This is to see the promising practices that are moving the needle forward for student achievement and allows us to prioritize spending.
- Director Vue reiterated that we still need to demonstrate why an initiative did not work and tell that story, and continue to invest in what is working and what is on track. He also noted that for the unspent money, is there is a matrix by which to decide? Ideally, it would not be left to the executive team. Superintendent Gothard noted the needs assessment, or items that need to be prioritized quickly - such as the safety discussion and engaging with community to fund priorities.

- Ms. Gray Akyea also provided further details on the needs assessment, and that the pandemic really perpetuated the needs and exacerbated them. Some resources needed to be reallocated. Some issues are pervasive and haven't gone away, and there are potentially some new challenges that may arise and we will need to think creatively to allocate funds. It is about adjusting resources across time to meet existing needs we have.
- Director Kopp requested information on when schools will start to feel the impact of adjustments and changes due to items being sunsetted. Response: Funding will be completed in September 2024, and out budget next year will be impacted by the loss of ARP funding. Our aim is to make informed decisions about what is sustained moving forward. The decision points of December and February were noted. Superintendent Gothard also provided details on the shaping of the FY25 budget and the converging models of all revenue sources.
- Director Kopp noted that in thinking about schools and the shifts that may occur, some may be significant, and when sunseting initiatives or money moves away, that it's likely for folks to feel a loss of some kind, and it will be important to odder and give folks time to make that adjustment and support them in the adjustment process. She appreciated the efforts, and we are in a strong position to tell the good stories, and to own the ways that didn't go as well as planned.
- Superintendent Gothard noted that there are 72 WINN teachers who will be included in future budgets, and will be a priority moving forward. Communication will be done early and often - no one wants to be surprised.
- Director Foster noted that decisions need to be data-driven and to show where resources are allocated based on data, in order to show if an initiative is effective or ineffective to show families and students.

7. POLICY UPDATE

A. Policy 501.03 Student Dress Code

Superintendent Gothard then introduced Pat Pratt-Cook, Executive Chief of Human Resources to present this proposed policy update. The overall policy update rationale was reviewed, as well as the comparison of the current policy language and the rationale for those specific changes, and details on the new proposed language. The proposed draft of the updated policy was also reviewed. Board members approved of moving this update to the three-reading process.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Foster noted the C.R.O.W.N Act, and recent events with hair beads and how it applies to athletics. Beads are another form of cultural expression, and originated in Africa with kings and queens. What is our policy, especially with folks after school hours and monitoring to ensure this is upheld for our students. Response: At any event, there is designated staff to ensure policies are followed. At those sites, additional communication or professional development may be needed.
 - Director Foster also noted the issues with referees and the shortages, and they may be from a different part of the city or state and have different values. For Minnesota State High School League events, athletes are instructed to tell their coach if they feel they are the victim of harassment or microaggression, and the coach has a duty to report appropriately.
 - Who sites on the MSHSL from SPPS? Response: District wide Athletics Director, Monroe Thornton

- Director Foster noted that cutting hair should not be a requirement, and the training needs to be done upfront for the adults and supervisors of athletics. Chief Collins agreed and noted he will have a conversation about this topic. MSHSL may be vague in some cases, and there will need to be a conversation with them. Superintendent Gothard noted communication from MSHSL that prohibits beads, barrettes, and bobby pins from the basketball uniform, for safety reasons. We need a level of consistency, and clarification because students also want that structure and clarity.

B. Policy 413.01 Chemical Use and Abuse

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Kathy Kimani, Director of Office of Student Support, and Mary Langworthy, Director of Student Health and Wellness, to present this proposed policy update. The rationale for the update was reviewed, as well as committee members for this policy update, including staff from PBIS and SEM. The proposed draft of the updated policy was also reviewed. Board members approved of moving this update to the three-reading process.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION: None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Director Kopp moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Foster seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke, Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education