

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

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

**August 9, 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, C. Allen, H. Henderson, U. Ward  
Superintendent Gothard

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, S. Dahlke, P. Pratt-Cook, J. Grathwol, C. Anderson, M.  
Sullivan, K. Kimani, K. Morris, K. Wallace, L. Boehlke, J. Pettigrew, L.  
Corey, D. Payne, A. Anderson, J. Larson, K. Huiett, D. Abrams, P.  
Matamoros

Community: T. Lonetree, S. Pumper, M. Hart, M. Schrul, A. Schilling, C. Mahaney, R.  
Davis

**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 by welcoming everyone. He provided a recap of his time at the MDE Back to School Conference, which he attended with members of his Senior Executive Leadership Team. Updates included information from the legislative session, including the historic and transformational work, as well as mandates as part of session. He also provided an update on work of reading in SPPS and WINN teachers, as well as other sessions at the conference that included CTE, mental health, Special Education, and school meals, non-exclusionary discipline, family and community engagement, and American Indian Education updates. He also noted that Commissioner Jett spoke at the conference, and his previous experience in SPPS and connections.

**QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Vue requested further information on the training of the Science of Reading, as well as funding, and statewide curriculum options, as well as the universal screener - one of which is FastBridge which SPPS currently uses.
- Director Allen also noted the importance of training on the Science of Reading in higher education, so future leaders and teachers will be prepared, and the onus of training will not be on the school district.

## **5. FY2024-2026 FINANCING PLAN**

Superintendent Gothard welcomed Steve Pumper and Michael Hart from PMA Securities, as well as Chief Sager, to present the FY2024-2026 Financing Plan for facilities maintenance and improvement. Included in the presentation were details on the process and timeline, finance plan goal of “Meet SPPS Builds plan needs with a responsible and sustainable finance strategy,” financing tools, funding tools, projected expenditures and funding source details. Information was also shared on the proposed issues of upcoming bonds and certificates of participation, COP funding needs, COP project, LTFM funding needs, LTFM revenue strategy, capital project portion of levy details, financing plan tax impact, finance and plan assumptions. Further information was also provided on the 2013B bond refunding, and timeline.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Foster requested more information on the certificates of participation and their alignment to achievement and integration plan, and those projects tied to that work. Information was then reviewed on projects, such as the rebuild of Bruce Vento Elementary.
- More information was also requested on the levels of funding. Response: The next few years are the largest in funding, and the intentionality in the five-year facilities plan and the three-year finance plan.
- Director Allen requested information on the \$44M of extras and those funding sources. Information was then provided on the expenditures of \$151M, and \$60M of bond-funded money on hand, with \$45M in tax levies, and the leftover of \$44.9M to be funded with bonds. The resolution on the agenda at the July Regular Meeting and August Regular Meeting is related to these funds, and to fund maintenance, improvement, health and safety in the LTFM program through the end of June 2025.
- Director Foster noted the factoring of the interest rates, and how to prepare for that. Response: There is a balancing that occurs, and to represent a fair representation for the tax impact with the best information we have today.

## **7. SCHOOL SAFETY**

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Marcus Sullivan, Assistant Director of Security and Emergency Management, and Kathy Kimani, Director of the Office of School Support, to present on School Safety. Superintendent Gothard began the presentation with a review of the work of the department, including changes and overall work of the team and their 24/7 schedule. Staff then shared details on Safer SPPS, and the safety engagement plan, data collection, and areas of focus in this work. It was noted that the culture and climate of the school community is so important - and bigger than a work of a single person or a single team. He also noted the themes heard from students during his convenings, including the need for more mental health supports, yellow buses and not feeling safe on Metro Transit, issues in bathrooms, stronger relationships with teachers and staff, and a better balance of staff and teachers of color. Most feedback is not about safety - but about culture and climate. The data around lockdown and lockout

scenarios was reviewed, as well as the work of the Superintendent's Safety Team and their cross-departmental team and work. He also went on to share details about the violence prevention grants, and work with the City. A review of the School Support Liaison training academy was provided, as well as supports from the Office of School Support. Details were also shared on the new technology to be introduced as a way to identify visitors to a building across the district.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

#### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Ellis requested information on the expectations for the building clerk in greeting visitors, as well as scenarios where a non-custodial parent may be at the building.
- The timeline of the new technology was also shared, including a roll-out at four high schools and two elementary schools, with it to be distributed district wide by early fall of 2024. The different features of the program were also shared, with many to remain off in the early stages of implementation. It is called SingleWire, and the program is Visual Aware.
- The tracking and reporting of the system was also discussed, including that the data would only be sent to the ECC. Concerns about immigration status for families was noted, and ways to ensure we are protecting our families and students, and board action to ensure that feature is not turned on within the program.
- Further discussion also centered on the features of the system and policies directing Administration on their use. It is more in the contract agreement and procedures of how it is implemented, and the initial purpose of the system is a universal check-in for all schools. Superintendent Gothard noted that future conversations could include the menu options for additional features, but currently, it is only for a consistent way of tracking visitors.
- Director Foster also noted concerns about privacy and the legality of the system features. She also requested information on the information and access to information. It will also be helpful system for students to see identification of visitors to the building.
- Chief Turner also reviewed the procedure for visitors with an alert and members of the school administration to talk with them.
- It was noted that Madison, WI school district, as well as ISD 196, currently use this system. This is one tool as we attempt to collectively help our physical schools to be safer, both socially-emotionally and physically. This also related to data security and cyber security, and an authentication process for visitors.
- Director Kopp noted this is a pilot program, to help schools with visitor identification, and if other features are to be turned on, that will be another discussion in the future. She noted hearing from board members that if those features to come online and when, they would like to be informed and involved. The young people will also see those badges in their schools and be supported, and will also be helpful for community partners in our schools. Chief Turner noted that if other features are to be turned on, that will come to the Board for a decision.
- Director Ellis noted practices for checking-in at all schools and buildings for the upcoming school year.
- Director Foster requested information on the SSL training academy, and ongoing training and additional professional development. Response: On non-student contact days, there is reiteration of training and scenario-based training. For social-emotional training, there are intervention specialists that collaborate and do training together with SSLs and other staff in the building as well.
- Information was also requested on the reporting structure of SSLs. They report to both the assistant SEM manager assigned to their school, as well as the administration of the building.
- Director Foster requested information on the communication to families. There is back to school information sent to families on changes and practices in efforts to keep students safe for the upcoming

school year which will be sent the week prior to the start of the school year, and will also include information about the Visitor Aware software.

- It was also noted that through the survey results, we are learning that students have found electronic passes to be helpful.
- Director Allen requested information on how to establish a great sense of community values for families and staff. Superintendent Gothard noted that we are taking stock in what we have been doing or are planning, and school-based level activities which may look different. Director Allen noted that what we have been doing has not been working, and what we're doing differently to establish a greater sense of community for students, families, and staff to feel valued.
  - Ms. Kimani noted an example of the elementary school morning meeting or connect time, including lessons and prompts, and opportunity to come together in a circle at the beginning of the day. She also noted examples in elementary with the RP coordinators, as well as Foundations classes.
  - Director Allen noted concerns about Foundations at the middle and high school levels. Adam Kunz, Assistant Superintendent, provided details on advisory classes, such as Foundations, and the AVID-like investment in middle school and support for students throughout the day for meaningful engagement within all areas, and connection with the teacher. There is also an investment in intervention specialists, and links between administration, teachers, SSLs and supports for students in buildings. There is also automated communication about students and grades, to ensure families have information regarding grades throughout the quarter.
- Director Allen pushed that many students do not feel seen and part of the academic community of SPPS. There are Karen language courses, but what about our Black student population, or other SE Asian students? She noted that this is at the core of safety, and when students feel like they don't belong, they turn to destroy or disrupt, since they don't feel they belong in the academic space, which leads to not successful academic outcomes. She is disappointed that we have had time to think about this and apply ourselves, but we are rolling into another year with the same culture and expectations. Superintendent Gothard noted the purpose of the report is to share school safety, where we have been, and where we are going. There is also a Back to School Report on an upcoming agenda with a more comprehensive approach in gaps. There is also other professional development occurring and will make sure there is information provided to the Board.
- Director Ellis noted that families are also so important in the success of our students, and as a District, we have sometimes missed that family component.
- Director Foster also noted the adult behaviors that need to change in order for student outcomes, and the accountability from one another to each other. A culture shift requires us to be real and relevant and support or move where it needs to go. It takes intentionality and courage to be real. The Board needs to know how to support, for expectations and accountability and supports to show change. Kids are kids, and our job is to teach and guide students. Director Kopp echoed this, and a sense of belonging for safety and how adults do the work to make changes in their own behaviors, and a model for young people.
- Director Henderson noted that every student needs a trusted adult in the building, and knowing that the burden of that falls on our Black and Brown staff who hold and continue to hold the emotional work of working with our students, and how we are supporting them. Ms. Kimani noted that is a recurring theme and topic in PLCs, and offering different times for staff to attend, and engage more folks, and listening and honoring the space to be together.
- Director Allen requested information on Stop the Bleed training. All SSLs are trained in this, as well as nurses. Director Allen noted her work in community and Narcan training, and tools such as this to help teachers and staff to feel safe and help in a crisis situation.
- It was noted that the Executive Committee will discuss next steps for comments in this discussion.

## **8. FY25 BUDGET ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Tom Sager, Executive Chief of Financial Services, and Jackie Turner, Executive Chief of Administration and Operations, to present the FY25 Budget Engagement Framework. Included in the presentation was the engagement objectives, and the community's values and priorities, a review of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, information on the FY25 budget timeline, preparation of leadership, stakeholder mapping, potential engagement strategies, and engagement timeline.

Discussion centered around the questions of success in this budget engagement process, non-negotiables within the FY25 engagement process, and the goals of engagement and expectations on this process.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

#### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Ellis noted her past experience with BFAC, the timeline for information around budgets, and decision-making process. If provided options on the budget, the rationale and why of the budget is important. If we want the community to be engaged and involved, the design of the process needs to change. Families also need to see the alignment of both their school as well as across the district of budget decisions, as well as communication of impacts to their specific school. She also noted building upon the process from year to year. Chief Turner notes that the goal in this process is to have a multi-year engagement process, and with this unprecedented amount of funding, the intense engagement is expected to last three years and the work will continue. While there will not be this level of budget engagement every year, there will be different iterations and additional information. Director Ellis also noted the decision-making timeline, and to make those decisions around winter. Chief Turner also noted examples in budget decisions that come before the Board, and that they are based on the values and needs of the strategic plan.
- Director Allen noted that the budget engagement process needs to be sustainable, and we can learn and modify it. With the timeline presented, and information available in winter around projected enrollment, and allocations to schools in March/April, it will be important to see the combined budgets at the same time as schools. It was frustrating to receive the budget a week before the vote this year, especially with such a large amount of funding.
- It was also noted that different scenarios of budget will be helpful in order to understand investments, and for there to be a few options and make decisions from there.
- Flexibility in the budget and being able to adjust based on student population is also important to ensure all students are engaged in the curriculum. While there is not a large amount of flexibility given the contract agreements, there is some at sites to shift. The scenarios were also noted and to talk to colleagues to see what it could look like and themes or focus areas.
- Chief Turner noted that the process did occur late this year, and we are building a new process to learn, and a way to inform earlier. A budget primer or overview is possible, to explain the formula upfront for internal and external stakeholders. Folks would then be able to compute the budget based on data provided and the formula.
- Director Allen also noted the poverty level and achievement in the budget process, and different samples from different districts for format. She would also like to receive the priorities and options, and to know the budget allocations sooner.
- Director Ward noted the amount of flexibility that exists and how much is not predetermined by contracts or mandates, and how much of the budgeting process would potentially affect the end result. He also thanked the team for working on this and the plan for the budget advisory committee and appreciates the work thus far.

- He also noted that success in this process involves opportunities to change the outcome and affect it. A lot of folks are concerned that they will give feedback, and it will not be taken and used. The DFAC as described could be beneficial, but also means that the vast majority of those served will not be strong applicants for the committee without a background knowledge of financial expertise.
- He also noted questions on the pathways for affecting shifts, and the timeline of the budget to the Board in order to look it over in detail and potentially make changes based on feedback from the community, and accountability. In talking about IAP2, the power is with the Board, but if they are not given enough time to review the budget or make a change, the Board is not making the decision, and there needs to be time built-in and time to evaluate the information. He would like to see different spending options and work with Administration on them. He would like the Board to be empowered and make decisions and give the community an opportunity to tell the Board of changes they would like to see. The Board needs time and information to evaluate the budget for themselves and for the community to evaluate it to make changes if needed, for accountability in this process. Chief Turner noted that there are a number of items in contract language, and those pieces may also need to shift. She also noted the values of the governance board and the impacts on the budget. Discretionary funding was also discussed.
- The values and commitments we share are crucial to the budget process, including transportation. The Board requested as much detail and information on the Budget as Administration.
- A conversation on discretionary funds may also be helpful, and to quantify that and how to define discretionary funds. Clarity was also requested on the budget scenario options, and the parameters of a budget, including enrollment, inflationary increases, state aid, etc. There needs to be a process and understanding, and also a way to measure class size into the budget and allocate funding.
- Chief Sager noted examples of yellow buses and the new East African Magnet School within the budget process and scenario examples.
- Director Ellis also noted the changes from the legislative session and the impacts on the budget.
- Director Henderson noted that it will be important for year-over-year budget cycles, and to project enrollment so there is not a shock and that we are providing as much information as possible. She likes the idea of a DFAC, and stressed the importance of including women and folks of color and providing opportunities for them. Chief Turner noted that is one of our values in this process and for the Board, of a value of the DFAC to be reflective of our student population.
- Director Henderson also noted to be intentional in the budget process, and to provide space for things that are important in buildings, and to be clear about the budget and its impact to life within these spaces.
- She also noted student engagement in this process, and to know the District values their opinions and needs in the classroom. Chief Turner noted the student convenings held by Dr. Gothard and hearing what students value and being able to responsibly incorporate that into the budget.
- Director Kopp noted the importance of clarity in the budget process, and to draw themes of budget priorities – safety, belonging, relationships. It will also be important to provide guidance year after year, and a predictable process. The goal of engagement also relates to Student Outcomes Focused Governance, and goal-setting and the values of the community from those goals. When community input is frontloaded, what matters and is important are those feelings and experiences, and how students, staff and families feel in a school and a budget that makes that possible. We need to be grounded in the values of the community, because when we begin to pull individual pieces is a domino effect – we need to be interconnected and strong in our process.
- Director Foster noted that there needs to be template for success, and an annual, predictable process, with messaging that is concise and applicable across buildings. The messaging is so important and one way to engage students and families, in a District is how we treat people, and to be a premier destination for folks, we need to communicate and allow others to be aware. We need to talk about culture shifts and adults in spaces and our role in change of behaviors, because

not all of our families are hyper-vigilant of the budget. As a Board, we need to talk about expectations and hold ourselves and each other accountable in order for the community to receive less mixed messages, and to have accurate and relevant information.

- Director Vue noted the work of DFAC, as well as engagement with our program leaders, principals, and our PACs. Success will be defined if we have met our goals, and they need to be smart and aligned to the strategic plan. A non-negotiable is to not break the values of the Board and District. The goal is to approve the budget, and a budget that doesn't break the values in June.
- It was noted that this information will be used to formalize a project plan and assign a project manager, and an internal team will be formed to implement what was heard and report back. Administration will report back to the Board and in a format that was discussed, and a communication plan for the community, as well as a timeline, website and publications dedicated to this work in order to be externally transparent.
- It was discussed that the Board does not need to vote on this topic at a Regular Meeting.

## **9. BOARD MEETING STREAMING**

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Erica Wacker, Director of Communications, to present on Board Meeting Streaming. Items reviewed included requirements of law, current state of streaming, requested state, live viewership data, and three options for future state, including format and costs. Constraints and realities were also discussed, as well as information on streaming in comparable districts across the Metro and nation. Discussion and next steps included a board vote on the preferred option at the upcoming August Regular Meeting, and timeline for additional streaming services.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Ward noted the different options, but that Option B – holding Committee of the Board meetings in 5A with audio recording – involves the most questions, including for audio equipment, and the capturing of the conversation and to be intentional about introducing each member when speaking. It was noted that in podcasts and radio broadcasts, a speaker may join at any point and folks are accustomed to that. For the audio, it would essentially be a computer without the camera on, and several microphones throughout the room. It would not be a perfect audio capture, but Osseo does have a good example of how it could look and to listen to their recordings. It was noted on the less formal nature of the meeting in 5A, and there may need to be a more formalized order for speaking in terms of lining up near the microphone for the audio to be as clear as possible.
- Ms. Wacker also noted that in listening to the audio vs. video, at Board meetings, the Board is speaking as a collective, and what is heard should be the main points, and not necessarily who said it. When conducted at the dais, a meeting is naturally more formal and more on display with folks watching. With the audio stream from 5A and at the table, it allows the meeting to be different from a Regular meeting.
- Director Ward requested information on passing microphones to those who would like to speak, which would require additional coordination, and it will be important to speak close to the microphone, which may require a change in behavior.
- Director Ward also appreciates the ways to adjust the stipend for special meetings. Those meetings do require more work, with overflow rooms, and hiring additional staff for cameras.
- Director Kopp noted that for the audio recording, it will be important to be organized and clear to formally call on the speaker to be clear for listeners on who is speaking.

- Director Ellis requested information on the equipment upgrades included in Option A, which include updates to the microphones, and the time to set up the space and check the equipment and troubleshoot it if necessary. The robotic cameras were also noted and the usage of them in doubling the meetings.
- Director Allen requested further details on the full-time staff members in Communications who do video streaming work, as well as the number of years that the current stipend has been in effect.
- Chief Turner noted this would fall under discretionary funding, and the streaming stipends are paid by the Board budget, but there is also the contract with Eduvision and SPNN that is from the district budget.
- Could new equipment be included in the ARP budget? Response: It may not meet the qualifications to address post-pandemic recovery, and the ARP budget and application would need to be revised, and special permission may be needed.
- Director Foster requested more information on the cost increase, and how it compares to others in the district and in the field. One reason for the increase is to increase our own pool of staff, and to hire an external vendor would be more market rate.
- Director Ward noted the inflationary measures of the stipend from 2000 to present date.
- Director Foster thanked the staff for their work.
- Director Vue requested details on the livestream statistics and data, and it is important to note how many community members are accessing this content. More folks view the content on their phones.
- It was noted this will come before the Board again for a vote at the August 22 Regular Meeting, and the three options will be presented. Chair and Vice Chair will be contacting each board member for their thoughts and consensus on an option.

## 10. ADJOURNMENT

**Director Kopp moved to adjourn the meeting. Other directors seconded the motion. It passed by acclimation.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 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