

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625
Saint Paul, Minnesota

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Available Streaming Online at www.spps.org/boe and Saint Paul Cable Channel 16

December 1, 2021
6:05 p.m.

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Foster called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: Z. Ellis, J. Vue, J. Foster, J. Brodrick, C. Allen, J. Kopp, Y. Carrillo

Superintendent Gothard
General Counsel Long

III. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

Director Foster then moved approval of the main order of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Vue.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Carrillo	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

IV. ENVISION SPPS: Our plan to provide well-rounded programs

Director Foster turned the floor over to Superintendent Gothard to introduce the final Envision SPPS proposal.

Superintendent Gothard noted that before bringing a resolution before the Board of Education, he would ask Chief Turner to present a summary of the Envision SPPS proposal and the process leading up to the vote tonight.

Chief Turner began by saying that prior to the reading of the resolution and the vote, she would provide a brief summary of program closures recommended and summary of the impact of the resolution.

SLIDE: Presentation Agenda

1. Envision SPPS objective and process
 - The Why: A well-rounded education for all students
2. Program closures, mergers and relocations
3. Summary overview and systemic impact
4. Recommended resolution to adopt Envision SPPS

SLIDE: SPPS Achieves: Envision SPPS

Strategic plan priority: Program Evaluation / Resource Allocation

Objective 5: Allocate resources based on program effectiveness and organizational priorities.

Objective: 5.3 Align school facilities with well-rounded programs

- Develop operational measures to assess building utilization, virtual connectivity, transportation costs, and equitable access to well-rounded programs
- **Align well-rounded education program measures, ideal school sizes, and parent demand for programs to determine facility allocations and major capital investment decisions**
- Adjust capital investments to ensure they meet the District's equity policy goals.

SLIDE: Rationale for closing and merging schools:

- At SPPS, we believe all students deserve the full range of educational opportunities and student support that a robust, well-rounded education affords.
- A well-rounded education is one that meets the Minnesota state's educational standards by providing students with learning opportunities that give them the skills to succeed in school, college and career.
- Barriers to providing all SPPS students with a well-rounded education at every school include declining birth rates and increased competition from schools outside of SPPS.
- This has resulted in an excess of 8,000 empty seats across Saint Paul Public Schools making many school programs unsustainable.
- As a result certain school programs have been identified to be closed so that students can be relocated to programs that provide access to a well-rounded education.

SLIDE: Decision-making structure and planning process

SLIDE: Collaborative Workgroups

1. College and Career Paths: Co-Led by: Leah Corey, Anna Morawiecki
2. *Early Childhood Education: Led by: Lori Erickson
3. *Enrollment: Led by: Jayne Williams
4. Facilities Utilization/Alignment: Led by: Tom Parent
5. *Language Immersion: Led by: Dr. Efe Agbamu
6. *Integration: Led by: Sherry Carlstrom
7. Middle School Model: Led by: Amanda Herrera-Gundale
8. *Montessori Pathway: Co-Led by: Jayne William, Andrew Collins
9. *Special Education: Led by: Marcy Doud
10. *Talent, Development and Acceleration Service Pathway (TDAS): Led by: Benjamin Lacina
11. Well-rounded Education: Co-Led by: Megan Dols Klingel, Craig Anderson

SLIDE: Filtering relevant findings through these CRITERIA:

- Data

- Facilities
 - Operational efficiency
 - Retain capital investment
 - Requires new capital investment
 - Spatial alignment
- Equity
 - Avoid unintended consequences
 - Integration
- Accessibility:
 - Physical
 - Program accessibility (transportation)
- Location and density of students and schools
- Enrollment
- Market demands
- Pathway programming
- Financial/funding
 - Sustainability
- State statutes/legal (known)
- Unknowns
 - Legislative (state/federal)
 - Cruz-Guzman

SLIDE: Engagement: Inform > Consult

Information meetings

- 19+ school-based information sessions: Oct. 20-Nov. 10
- 5 multilingual-specific information sessions - Hmong, Karen, Somali, Spanish: 1st week of Nov.
- 2 Public information sessions: Oct. 26 and Nov. 8
- 2 BOE listening sessions: Oct. 28 and Nov. 11
- 1 Public Hearing: Nov. 30

Board of Education meetings:

1. BOE Special Session - Nov. 29, 2021
2. BOE Special Session - Nov. 15, 2021
3. BOE Committee of the Board - Nov. 9, 2021
4. BOE Special Session - Nov. 8, 2021
5. BOE Special Session - Nov. 1, 2021
6. BOE Special Session - Oct. 25, 2021
7. BOE Special Session - Oct. 18, 2021
8. BOE Special Session - Oct. 11, 2021
9. BOE - Committee of the Board - Oct. 5, 2021
10. BOE Special Session - Oct. 4, 2021
11. BOE Special Session - Sept. 20, 2021
12. BOE Regular Meeting - July 20, 2021
13. BOE Regular Meeting- January 19, 2021
14. BOE Regular Meeting- February 18, 2020

SLIDE: Envision SPPS program changes, closures, relocations and/or expansions effective SY22-23

Area A:

- L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion (LNFI) lower merges at the LNFI upper campus
- LNFI lower site reopens as early childhood education hub
- Parkway reopens as Hmong Language Immersion and Culture program upper campus (to Phalen Lake lower campus)

Area C:

- J. A. Johnson merges at Bruce Vento

Area D:

- Cherokee Montessori program relocates and merges at J.J. Hill
- Cherokee reopens as a community school
- Riverview community program closes and merges at Cherokee

Area E:

- Galtier merges at Hamline
- Gatliter reopens as early childhood education hub

Area F:

- Jackson community merges at Maxfield
- Jackson Hmong Language merges at Phalen Lake

SLIDE: Envision SPPS program changes, closures, relocations and/or expansions

Area F:

- J.J. Hill Montessori relocates to the Obama site once remodeling is complete (either fall 2024 or fall 2025) and reopens as the Barack and Michelle Obama School and will also house a middle school (grades 6-8)

At the start of school year 2025-26:

- Capitol Hill's pathway will be expanded from Highland Park High School to other high schools so that students pathway to their community high schools

SLIDE: Summary Overview and Systemic Impact

Recommendations overview

- 11 school programs will have expanded or changed due to parent requests or program consolidations
 - Bruce Vento
 - Cherokee
 - Galtier
 - Hamline
 - J.J. Hill
 - LNFI Lower
 - LNFI Upper
 - Maxfield
 - Parkway
 - Phalen
 - Riverview
- 1 high school pathway change due to neighborhood expansion: Capitol Hill
- 6 sites will be available for future programs, community partnerships, early childhood expansion or temporary space during construction, or other district needs
 - Galtier
 - Obama
 - J.A. Johnson
 - Jackson
 - J.J. Hill
 - LNFI Lower

SLIDE: Recommended Resolution to adopt Envision SPPS (no other content on this slide)

SLIDE: School Closures:

At the end of school year 2021-22:

1. Galtier Elementary School, 1317 Charles Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104
2. Jackson Preparatory Elementary School, 437 Edmund Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55103
3. John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, 740 York Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55106
4. L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower, 1305 Prosperity Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55106
5. Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School, 1363 Bush Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55106

At the end of school year 2022-23:

6. Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary, 707 Holly Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104

Chief Turner reminded the Board and members of the community that Envision SPPS is part of the strategic plan and falls specifically under objective 5 -- plan and align school facilities with well-rounded programs. Specifically, align facilities, school demand, enrollment patterns, SSPPPS strategic plan.

Regarding the rationale and how we got here, Chief Turner stated that the district believes all students deserve a well-rounded education. In addition to state statute regarding instruction in reading, writing and math, SPPS believes in the need for a complement of other support to be well rounded, such as art, music, science, field trips, extra curriculars, and community experts in the classroom. Unfortunately, enrollment data show, in addition to decreasing birth rates, in ST Paul, MN, and US, more families are selecting schools outside of St Paul. The combined result is SPPS's high excess rate of open seats. Chief Turner noted knowing based on data there is a need to close schools and thus developed Envision SPPS.

The administration identified the Board of Education as a steering committee and Chief Turner noted she was named as project sponsor and there was agreement that a core planning team from SPPS, including the Office of Schools, Early Childhood, amongst others, and planning groups that were both internal and external would look at data from various perspectives. The administration informed the Board of the plan to take that data back to the senior leadership team and the administration was clear how the community would be involved and further informed the Board that we would be using the international association of public participation framework which calls for a pattern and spectrum for how you engage people. These plans were made clear and communicated internally and externally. Clearly the hands and decision and which schools would close would fall in the hands of the Board as policy makers and the administration informed the Board that the public would become involved post-vote.

A portion of the workgroups began in 2019 but that work became official when Envision SPPS was adopted. The workgroups consisted of about 120 people both internal and external, including parents, community and partners. These are people who did not work for SPPS. The Hmong language workgroup really started this work and asked for a process to come to a final recommendation in summer 2019, before we had Envision SPPS. Their workgroup was almost 100% parents. We followed that same process for special education, enrollment and from those 11 workgroups they used the following criteria (see criteria slide, above). Chief Turner acknowledged some unknowns about the future as well, including the Cruz-Guzman case.

Chief Turner then reviewed the Envision SPPS process following the presentation of initial recommendations and slate of schools for mergers and closures on October 11, 2021. Since that time,

there have been a number of meetings -- school-based meetings, listening sessions, bi-lingual sessions, and other public meetings (see Slide in BoardBook).

Chief Turner then reviewed the changes in the school district that are not part of the resolution that will be implemented and acted on, while the resolution contains other legal details (see slide in BoardBook). She then reviewed contents of the legal resolution (see recommendations overview slide) and noted being ready for the board to read the actual resolution.

Superintendent Gothard asked whether a correction was needed on one slide with regard to JJ Hill.

Chief Turner clarified that those 6 sites, including JJ Hill, would be impacted, but the buildings themselves would not necessarily be closing.

Superintendent Gothard thanked Chief Turner for the clarification.

Chair Foster read the full resolution, as follows:

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BF 32579 RESOLUTION ADOPTING ENVISION SPSS AND CLOSING SCHOOLHOUSES

WHEREAS, Independent School District No. 625, Saint Paul Public Schools, has engaged in a process, entitled Envision SPSS, for providing its students with the full range of educational opportunities and student supports that a robust, well-rounded education affords.

WHEREAS, a Notice of Public Hearing on the question of the necessity and practicability of closing the following schools: Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School; Galtier Elementary School; Highwood Hills Elementary School; Jackson Preparatory Elementary School; John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School; LEAP High School; L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower; Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School; and, Paul & Sheila Wellstone Elementary was published in the legal newspaper of the School District for two successive weeks on November 15, 2021, and November 22, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the time and place of the Public Hearing was set forth in the Notice; and

WHEREAS, Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School; Galtier Elementary School; Highwood Hills Elementary School; Jackson Preparatory Elementary School; John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School; LEAP High School; L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower; Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School; and, Paul & Sheila Wellstone Elementary were identified in the Notice as schools considered for closing; and

WHEREAS, the reasons for the proposed closing were set forth in said Notice; and

WHEREAS, numerous opportunities were provided for members of the community to learn about the proposals and to be heard whether for or against the question of closing Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School; Galtier Elementary School; Highwood Hills Elementary School; Jackson Preparatory Elementary School; John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School; LEAP High School; L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower; Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School; and, Paul & Sheila Wellstone Elementary including: Regular meetings of the Board of Education on February 18, 2020, January 19, 2021, July 20, 2021, October 19, 2021 (public comment), and November 16, 2021 (public comment); Special Meetings of the Board of Education on September 20, 2021, October 4, 2021, October 11, 2021, October 18, 2021, October 25, 2021, November 1, 2021, November 8, 2021, and November 15, 2021; Board of Education Committee of the Board meeting October 5, 2021; more than 19 school-based information sessions held between October 20, 2021 and November 10, 2021; five

multilingual-specific information sessions in Hmong, Karen, Somali, and Spanish during the first week of November 2021; two public information sessions on October 26, 2021, and November 8, 2021; two Board of Education listening sessions on October 28, 2021 and November 11, 2021; and one Public Hearing on November 30, 2021.

WHEREAS, a Public Hearing on said closings was conducted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 123B.51, subd. 5 pursuant to said notice by the Board of Education beginning at 5:30pm on November 30, 2021 at 360 Colborne Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102; and

WHEREAS, testimony and materials were received during the course of the Public Hearing by anyone in favor of or opposed to said closings and the Public Hearing was not deemed closed until everyone who requested to speak had the opportunity to do so; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has considered the following: presentations and materials from Administration at Regular Meetings of the Board of Education on February 18, 2020, January 19, 2021, and July 20, 2021; presentations and materials from Administration at Special Meetings of the Board of Education on September 20, 2021, October 4, 2021, October 11, 2021, October 18, 2021, October 25, 2021, November 1, 2021, November 8, 2021, and November 15, 2021, and November 29, 2021; presentations and materials from Administration at the Board of Education Committee of the Board meeting October 5, 2021; public comments conducted prior to Regular Meetings of the Board of Education on September 21, 2021, October 19, 2021, and November 16, 2021; public comments provided at Board of Education listening sessions on October 28, 2021, and November 11, 2021; emails and other communications from various stakeholders; and, public testimony at one Public Hearing on November 30, 2021.

WHEREAS, through the course of the many presentations, public comments, and listening sessions, the Board of Education directed School District Administration to remove LEAP High School, Highwood Hills Elementary School, and Paul & Sheila Wellstone Elementary School from the list of schools being recommended for closure; and

WHEREAS, on December 1, 2021, the Board of Education heard and considered the final recommendation of Administration to close Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School; Galtier Elementary School; Jackson Preparatory Elementary School; John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School; L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower; and Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that after considering the materials in the record, the testimony presented at said Public Hearing held pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 123B.51, Subd. 5, and the recommendations of Administration, the Board of Education, Independent School District No. 625, hereby determines:

1. That the Board of Education, Independent School District No. 625, hereby approves and adopts the Envision SPPS Plan dated December 1, 2021. In doing so, the Board of Education determines it is necessary and practical:

a. That Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School, located at 707 Holly Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104 shall be closed as of June 30, 2023, or as soon thereafter as practical.

b. That Galtier Elementary School, located at 1317 Charles Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104 shall be closed as of June 30, 2022, or as soon thereafter as practical.

c. That Jackson Preparatory Elementary School, located at 437 Edmund Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55103 shall be closed as of June 30, 2022, or as soon thereafter as practical.

d. That John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School, located at 740 York Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55106 shall be closed as of June 30, 2022, or as soon thereafter as practical.

e. That L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower, 1305 Prosperity Avenue, Saint Paul MN 55106 shall be closed as of June 30, 2022, or as soon thereafter as practical.

f. That Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School, located at 1363 Bush Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55106 shall be closed as of June 30, 2022, or as soon thereafter as practical.

2. The closure of Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School; Galtier Elementary School; Jackson Preparatory Elementary School; John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School; L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower; and Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School is necessary and practical based upon the following:

a. The School District's enrollment is declining:

i. Birth rates in the City of Saint Paul have declined over the past six years from approximately 5933 births in 2013-14 to approximately 5059 births in 2019-2020.

ii. Saint Paul resident kindergarten enrollment has declined from approximately 4452 students in 2018-19 to approximately 4150 students in 2020-21. Based on current birth rate projections, this number is expected to be approximately 3677 students in 2025-26.

iii. The percentage of Saint Paul resident K-12 children enrolled in a Saint Paul Public Schools school has decreased from 67% in 2013-14 to 62% in 2019-20.

iv. In 2019-20, approximately 16,058 Saint Paul resident students enrolled in other public school options.

v. The School District currently has an excess of 8000 empty seats across the School District.

b. The decline in School District enrollment has resulted in underutilization of certain School District elementary and middle schools.

i. The School District currently has an excess of 8000 empty seats across the School District.

ii. At Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School only 40% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes (analysis from school year 2019-2020).

iii. At Galtier Elementary School only 61% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes (analysis from school year 2019-2020).

iv. At Jackson Preparatory Elementary School only 71% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes (analysis from school year 2019-2020).

v. At John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School only 79% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes (analysis from school year 2019-2020).

vi. At L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower only 79% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes (analysis from school year 2019-2021).

vii. At Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School only 69% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes (analysis from school year 2019-2020).

v. The School District's ideal utilization for its elementary and middle schools is that 85% of the building's capacity is being used for educational purposes.

vi. Underutilized schools produce negative consequences for both finances and academic programming. By closing these schools, the School District can optimize the utilization of its remaining school buildings and align school facilities with well-rounded programs.

c. The schools designated for closure are not sustainable, meaning that they have less than the School District's ideal student enrollment (450 to 599 students at the elementary school level and 720 students at the middle school level).

i. At Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School enrollment for kindergarten to grade 5 for school year 2019-20 was 294. For school year 2020-21 enrollment was 266.

ii. At Galtier Elementary School enrollment for kindergarten to grade 5 for school year 2019-20 was 204. For school year 2020-21 enrollment was 157.

iii. At Jackson Preparatory Elementary School enrollment for kindergarten to grade 5 for school year 2019-20 was 296. For school year 2020-21 enrollment was 269.

iv. At John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School enrollment for kindergarten to grade 5 for school year 2019-20 was 286. For school year 2020-21 enrollment was 280.

v. At L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower enrollment for kindergarten to grade 2 for school year 2019-20 was 242. For school year 2020-21 enrollment was 183.

vi. At Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School enrollment for grades 6 to 8 for school year 2019-20 was 353. For school year 2020-21 enrollment was 290.

vii. The remaining school sites in the School District have sufficient space to accommodate these students.

d. Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School has a consistent pattern of being underenrolled and underutilized. The program is not able to generate funding to provide a well-rounded education. In addition, the facility was initially constructed and designed to house a larger elementary program or secondary program.

e. Galtier Elementary School has a consistent pattern of being underenrolled and underutilized. The program is not able to generate funding to provide a well-rounded education. The school facility has limited capacity to grow as compared to other nearby School District elementary schools.

f. Jackson Preparatory Elementary School has a consistent pattern of being underenrolled and underutilized. The program is not able to generate funding to provide a well-rounded education. The school facility has limited capacity to grow as compared to other School District schools that can consolidate a District-wide dual language immersion program.

g. John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary has a consistent pattern of being underenrolled and underutilized. The program is not able to generate funding to provide a well-rounded education. The school facility configuration is not ideal to house an elementary program because it was initially constructed to house a secondary program.

h. L' Etoile du Nord French Immersion Lower has a consistent pattern of being underenrolled and underutilized. The program is not able to generate funding to provide a well-rounded education. The school facility has limited capacity to grow as compared to other School District schools that can consolidate a district-wide dual language immersion program.

i. Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School has a consistent pattern of being underenrolled and underutilized. The program is not able to generate funding to provide a well-rounded education. Montessori is not sustainable as a middle school program.

j. By closing these underutilized and unsustainable schools, the School District can optimize its resources to provide all students the full range of educational opportunities and student supports that a robust, well-rounded education affords.

i. A well-rounded education is one that meets the Minnesota state's educational standards by providing students with learning opportunities that give them the skills to succeed in school, college and career.

ii. Building on a deep understanding of the core essentials of reading, writing and math, students are taught by educators with expertise in science, arts, social studies, world languages, physical education and health while having access to an array of enrichment opportunities.

iii. As a team, educators work together to deliver culturally relevant lessons personalized to each student's specific needs.

iv. A holistic, well-rounded education also provides a broad range of school-based services such as a full-time counselor, social worker and nurse to address students' social, emotional, mental and physical health. There may also be other specialized staff dedicated to family engagement and to address the needs of students and families from specific cultural backgrounds.

3. The Board of Education selected schools for closure based on the following data points and parameters:

a. Facilities; including operational efficiency, retention of capital investments, requirements for new capital investments, spatial alignment.

b. Equity; including avoiding unintended consequences, furthering integration.

c. Accessibility; including physical accessibility, and program accessibility (transportation).

d. Location and density of students and schools.

e. Enrollment.

f. Market demands.

g. Pathway programming.

h. Financial/funding.

i. Sustainability.

j. Legal requirements.

4. School District administration considered all data compiled through the Envision SPPS process and public and staff feedback at various meetings and the public hearing. The School District considered alternatives to the closing of schools, but determined that the closures were necessary to address effectively the identified concerns that have arisen due to declining enrollment, the underutilization of school buildings, and the unsustainability of the schools identified for closure. The School District set a goal to minimize disruption to students by establishing a 10% cap so that no more than 10% of School District students would be disrupted from school closings.

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Having concluded reading the Envision SPPS resolution, Chair Foster turned the mic over to Vice Chair Vue.

Vice Chair Vue noted there was a motion on the floor to approve the resolution as proposed and having listened to Board Director colleagues during meetings, on phone calls, and in other communication, earlier today he said felt ready to vote on the current proposal. However, he then said his son came up to him after school today and asked him not to close his school. Upon hearing that comment he realized he had fully considered the implications for individuals impacted by the proposal and determined the need to at least have a discussion about not closing any of these schools at the end of this school year.

BF 32580 MOTION: No schools will be closed at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Vice Chair Vue motioned to propose that no schools be closed at the end of 2021-2022 school year. The motion was seconded by Director Brodrick.

Vice Chair Vue stated that the reason why this discussion needs to happen is because the community has been asking for it. He said either the Board would pass a resolution as read by Chief Foster or pass a motion that no school will close for this year and vote on that. The Vice Chair clarified that if his motion did not pass, then the Board would move forward to vote on the resolution as read by Chair Foster.

Vice Chair Vue then asked General Counsel Long whether the district had satisfied the scope of state statutes to close schools.

General Counsel Long: Yes, we have.

Vice Chair Vue thanked General Counsel Long and opened the floor to Board Director questions or comments about this motion.

DISCUSSION/COMMENTS:

- Director Brodrick asked Vice Chair Vue to please explain why he asked to vote on this motion prior to voting on this resolution. Director Brodrick just wanted it to open it up to other Board members to see if they have any other concerns.
- Director Allen noted she was always open to having this conversation. She said the Board should have the conversation publicly. It's been a long haul with the community, heard from community and from the admin. She said the Board recognizes that some pretty drastic changes need to happen in our SPPS, though I do not want to close any schools. We need to start focusing resources on producing better outcomes. Through this process of understanding from the administration -- finance -- parents and administration are concerned about outcomes. I'm here to provide a quality education for all students. She said some parts of the Envision plan she could not stomach, with our values at SPPS, which is why hearing from the community. She said she was proud of our board, as someone who's usually the protester..In this situation, it was a

collective collaboration to get to this point: board, folks in buildings, and a common perception that something drastic needs to change. Talking about not closing is a conversation that can happen, but we need to talk about closing schools and school finances to produce outcomes. Prolonging this will lead us to delaying for another year, but she said she was sure she was okay with just sitting still. Thank you for opening the conversation. Not closing could be detrimental and we've done some due diligence and we can move forward today to produce better outcomes for SPPS students.

- Director Kopp said she felt Director Allen was reading her mind. What happens if we act and what happens if we don't. Acting will bring grief and sadness. It's real and deeply felt. Every year a child's education matters. Saying we can wait another year...I can't do that. I have had to reconcile two very difficult things -- school culture and academic outcomes. We talk about this all the time. This is our chance to achieve that goal and we have an obligation to act and to move and I'm comfortable with proceeding. Thank you for the opportunity to talk.
- Director Carrillo asked a clarification of Vice Chair Vue regarding the motion just made by Vice Chair Vue to confirm where the motion was to delay closing for a year or was it to delay the decision.
- Vice Chair Vue stated that the motion was to say no schools would close at the end of this year. - 2021-2022.
- Director Carrillo then asked: So the future decision would have to be meted out with a motion and hearings and notices and all legal notices, Correct?
- Vice Chair Vue: Correct.
- Director Carrillo: I'm tempted. I've been thinking about it a lot recently. The core component of the voice that is summarizing the comment that we received was not that we should not act on making difficult decisions. Rather, it has been to address the issues that have gotten us to this place. But that's not part of this resolution. My term as appointed Board member ends when Chair Foster signs her election documents. I encourage directors to operate from a frame of humility: not from a white tower, but to go down and meet parents where they are and co-create a district that is kind to our kids. When Envision SPPS was first brought to the Board, the Board had the difficult problematic -- a concerning, an alarming set of numbers that said action needed to be taken. He said when he first saw the numbers at some of our schools it was alarming, but the more he'd dug in to learn more about each school, it's grown harder for him to close any school. It was a very drawn out and consensus driven approach to get to where we are now. We are left with the decision to agree to disagree and move forward. We do this and we do not change our hearts. Or if we don't do this we would have to shave off the top for everyone which will further erode our capacity to provide services that are very important. With that in mind, we ought to think about what we actually achieve by delaying a vote? How could we get to that decision knowing the community is going to have this concern. Feeling this way, hands tied, Director Carrillo said he thinks we should move forward. It's not something I take lightly. Let's be clear, the burden is not on the Board, the burden is on our kids and families due to decades of inaction. But parents are saying this action is detrimental to us, and that's true. Will this get us to a place so everyone in St Paul can receive a well rounded education? From the bottom of my heart, and from an emotional perspective, it's here, but we do more than administer a handful of schools.
- Director Brodrick followed up by asking whether passing the motion by Vice Chair Vue would contradict the resolution.
- Vice Chair Vue stated his understanding was that his motion would cancel the resolution.
- Director Brodrick sought to clarify by saying that your motion would nullify the resolution just read.
- Vice Chair Vue said he thought so.
- General Counsel Long: Yes, that would be my interpretation of that motion as well.

- Director Brodrick said okay and then asked General Counsel Long to expand Vice Chair Vue's question that was specific to Minnesota statute regarding compliance with the process whether General Counsel Long would advise the Board to not go further.
- General Counsel Long: Yes.
- Director Brodrick stated that whatever the decision, some would be happy and some would be disappointed. Some may be unhappy enough and may want to challenge it legally. We are in compliance with the statute, but would it be possible to challenge us with regard to our process, including putting together the original Envision SPPS recommendation. Would we be able to defend ourselves?
- General Counsel Long: I'm happy to have this conversation, but this would be legal advice in a public setting and it would not be appropriate to do so in a public meeting.
- Director Brodrick followed up by noting General Counsel Long had sat in Board meetings with Board members over the past several weeks, sometimes painful, sometimes inspiring - especially the students. Director Brodrick then asked whether General Counsel Long would say SPPS would be able to defend the process that he had witnessed.
- General Counsel Long again noted that to get into legal claims might be brought against us, he'd prefer not to share those comments in a public setting.
- Director Brodrick said people would be disappointed by the outcome of the vote. Some may challenge it. He then noted that a previous general counsel had advised Director Brodrick some time ago that you "always have to be prepared to be sued, John."
- Director Ellis then noted having a question and noted she was here in 2016 when the Board had to vote on school closings. At that time she had been on Board for about 6 months and that process felt like it was just what we needed to do without information to support making the decision at that time. She stated her great love for all of our schools and her love for St Paul. She said her baby is here and your baby is here and that matters. Director Ellis wanted to make sure that the district provides access for everyone. Every one of our schools; she's been in them. She said she feels like a Gator in Galtier; she said she loves Como and that she doesn't take any of this lightly. It has been weighing on her head and her heart. She noted the need to be clear that people choose schools for what they have! But there are gaps between schools and schools are subsidized to keep them going. That's not a school's fault; that falls on the Board. In 2016 we had to make decisions for 39,000 students, but now it's a district of 35,000. What kind of district are we building for those students, what outcomes, when Minnesota has the worst academic achievement gap in the country. Change is needed for every student in this district. She said she's not taking this lightly. She said we need St Paul to do well and we cannot keep doing the same things to get there. She expressed appreciation for Director Allen's drastic change comments, asking whether the Board was comfortable using tape to hold it together and to plug holes. Our charge is to make SPPS the best experience possible. She said she didn't don't know if it's the right way, but a better way could have been framed: "How can we build a district for your child." Better conversation framing would have helped this process. Language matters. Our individual kids matter. Director Ellis noted the decision was weighing on her and she said we need all of us to be better. None of this feels good. Board members were elected to sit on this Board and community can make a different decision next time. Community did trust us to make a really hard decision. This is the difficulty of having this role, making decisions for and about kids so close to your heart.
- Vice Chair Vue: Thank you, Director Ellis.

Vice Chair Vue noted the current motion on the table, seconded earlier by Director Brodrick, is to not close any SPPS schools for the 2021-22 school year. Vice Chair Vue called for a vote on this motion.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	No
Director Vue	Yes
Director Foster	No
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Allen	No
Director Kopp	No
Director Carrillo	No

Motion fails to pass with a 2-5 vote.

Vice Chair Vue returned discussion of the original resolution as read by Chair Foster.

Chief Counsel Long interjected that no formal motion had yet been made to vote on the original resolution.

BF 32579 **MOTION: Vice Chair Vue then formally moved approval of the original RESOLUTION ADOPTING ENVISION SPPS AND CLOSING SCHOOLHOUSES, as read by Chair Foster. Director Allen seconded the motion.**

Vice Chair Vue then opened Board Director discussion of the resolution as read by Chair Foster.

DISCUSSION/COMMENTS (paraphrased):

- Director Brodrick: The original recommendation brought to us in October did not satisfy what I needed for a yes vote. I commend my fellow board members for constructing a modified plan to replace the original recommendation. However, the modified plan is still fraught with potential for harm to certain segments of our community. I've heard cries for clarity and transparency from hundreds of parents, staff, students and community over the past several weeks. I'd expected to hear sadness or maybe anger from those directly affected, but I was hoping not to hear a general sense of frustration -- distrust -- from so many different people. I say this with great deal of personal sadness. Unfortunately, distrust in our district was clearly on display the last several weeks by people in all of our diverse communities. We can never expect to halt declining enrollment until we restore trust. The modified proposal will only put a bandaid on this almost mortal wound of distrust that afflicts us. Therefore, I am voting "no" so that we can pause and look to our communities and take the advice of the St Paul chapter of the NAACP. They said start over and do this properly and do it the St Paul way. Do it the St Paul Way -- TOGETHER. I will not be on the board in 2022, but I know that this board has the energy, the dedication and the love to pause and to turn to our communities who have come to us in the last several weeks and offered to help. We must pause, Start over and get this right. It may take time, but it's better that we do it right than make a mistake that causes us harm. Thank you for listening to me.
- Vice Chair Vue asked for other questions. Seeing none, he asked a logistical question, regarding schools that remain on the list: If a school is closing, please once again discuss and explain the priority process for families impacted by the decision.
- Chief Turner: If a family chooses not to go to a school where they have a guaranteed seat for them, they would have the option to attend any other school in the district and they would receive closed school priority, which serves the family best if they submit their application on time.
- Vice Chair Vue: When the parent doesn't submit an application on time. What happens?

- Chief Turner: Then they would have a late applicant's closed school priority. If there are two students, the closed school priority students would receive priority. This is a higher priority than a merged school priority.
- Vice Chair Vue: Thank you. There are actually some families who enroll after school has started. How would that priority process work for them?
- Chief Turner: If they enroll in August 2022 as a 2021-22 Parkway student, they would be competing as a late entry. As we shared earlier, a family at a closed school who misses priority would not have acted on multiple interactions, emails, calls, letters. Letters are in hold pattern now and families letters will be mailed tomorrow after the vote. Another letter will be sent about open houses at their reserved seat school and also about other options in SPPS. A school choice fair is scheduled at Parkway. I'm happy to provide a reminder of the support to families, school and staff that would begin as early as this week.
- Vice Chair Vue: Thank you. Two more questions. How does class size limitations factor into enrollment.
- Chief Turner: Excellent question. A number of community members complained about Student Placement. Student Placement's role is it recommends students to schools where there are openings. Chief Turner then gave a specific example of Highwood Hills kindergarten enrollment and how class size limitations are the result of an agreement between this Board and SPPS administration with St Paul Federation of Teachers. Class-size meetings do take place and if there is an agreement then Student Placement does have authority to call that parent to say, for example, Highwood Hills can now accept your student. If there's room at a school, Student Placement is happy to assign them there. As we look at the Student Placement office, we need to look at some of our agreements. This happens at all grade levels -- class size average and a cap.
- Vice Chair Vue: If there's a class size cap and a student has priority, what happens in that instance?
- Chief Turner: In that instance the student is on a waiting list with closed school priority. That's why it's so important to get applications in on time. As families submit applications we can help provide resources to schools. We need to make sure we have capacity where families want to go and so we can help to make sure there's access. For incoming kindergarten families, the district has been able to offer 86% first choice, Traditionally that number hovers between high 80s and low 90s for families who submit applications on time. Feb 25, 2022 is the deadline.
- Vice Chair Vue: That's all I had.
- Director Allen: Chief Turner, I have a couple of clarifying questions regarding facilities. Obama community school will remain open through 2022-23 and while they are there they will be exposed to and be educated about Montessori programs? And will they have priority to enter the new programs at Obama that are Montessori?
- Chief Turner: Yes, that's right. It's an important part of our plan. Chief Turner then provided additional specifics regarding this transition.
- Director Allen: Regarding John A Johnson and Bruce Vento, what's the address of the new school and what's the timeline for the rebuild? I'm hoping the rebuild will include the Achievement Plus just like John A Johnson has now!
- Director Parent: During the Regular Meeting of the Board on December 14th, there will be a presentation to the Board codifying the Envision capital plan, including timelines and other details. The address is 409 Case Ave East -- site of the current and future Bruce Vento. The district is looking to have a community engagement process to define the other parts of the programs needed at the school, including wrap-around support.
- Director Allen: Will this include forming a task force from two communities impacted?
- Director Parent: Yes, we'll talk on December 14th about that process.
- Director Allen: Can Obama construction begin sooner so it can proceed more seamlessly?

- Director Parent: Likely not. We need to do the same with the 6-8 grades and Montessori to ensure we're building the right school and program long-term. We will be aggressive and we want to be sure we do this correctly.
- Director Allen: With the middle school piece, we're pretty clear it's possible to get started on that piece?
- Director Parent: We will explore it, but we want to have a holistic view before proceeding and respect Obama students during their last year in a building. There will be an impact on students and we want to be sensitive to that. I hear your request to be as quick as possible.
- Director Carrillo: I'd like to address comments brought up during yesterday's presentation. We want to understand placement policy going forward for schools no longer on the list. The Placement Center appears to be directing some parents to particular schools. Is it board policy or standard procedure to do that? How will this impact schools that were initially on the closure list : Highwood Hills, Wellstone, and LEAP
- Chief Turner: Students at those schools would not have a priority to move to a new school. Regarding how we make decisions, if we believe they need language support there is a language assessment to help determine where they should go. Same for special education assessment which has impacts on placement. If there's interest in learning more about the placement process for a building, it's a public building and they can have a tour. Once we determine the grade level, the home address, and we then can begin the placement process. As LEAP is an ALC, families have the right to choose a regular K-12 program if they so choose. We have to be able to offer regular and alternative programs. We are legally required to offer regular schools. We have offered all programs to families/students, but based on our assessments, we would offer particular programs to them. We will promote schools with openings, whatever school that is. We try to match and align, whether arts or science are desired, start times, bus needs. If a parent says they want LEAP, typically they will review needs and school programs.
- Director Carrillo: Would you say they support families who speak other languages and newcomers. Is there a way to assist those families who don't speak English?
- Chief Turner: There was a short period of time when the student placement office did not have a Somali speaking staff member (during pandemic). Now we do. That original person has returned. Student placement office demographics are extremely diverse -- demographics and languages spoken.
- Director Carrillo: Thank you.
- Vice Chair Vue requested a pause for an answer to the question regarding demographics of the placement office.
- Chief Turner: Just one minute. There are 16 total staff members, including 3 who speak Hmong, 1 speaks Karen, 1 speaks Somali, 4 speak Spanish, and others speak English (both African American and White staff members).

Seeing no further comments from Board Directors, Vice Chair Vue called for a vote on the resolution as read by Chair Foster and seconded earlier in the meeting by Director Allen.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	No
Director Vue	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	No
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Carrillo	Yes

Motion passes with a 5-2 vote.

Vice Chair Vue then opened the meeting for discussion of the approved resolution.

DISCUSSION/COMMENTS (paraphrased):

- Director Foster: Typically I have a lot to say. People are impacted. Inaction hurts. Action hurts. I want to thank you for making your decisions at this time. It does not stop here and a lot needs to happen to move forward from here. You have been heard though it may not feel like that for some communities. It's about each and everyone of us. At this point, I invite other board members to contribute and now move on to talk about what just happened and what needs to happen next.
- Director Ellis: This is weighing heavy on my head and heart. I'm okay with parts and not okay with others. There are larger concerns that we need to address - enrollment and serving our current students. There are pieces of the resolution that I struggle with because if parents and families are not going to those reserved sites, I'm concerned about how it will impact those sites. We have not fully fleshed that out. If they are not getting what we said they would be getting, what the Board said they would, I could not stand before the community. I need us to do better. So much better. I don't know if this is the way that we get there. I have so many concerns about what comes next for families and students. They will be thinking about whether to stay in SPPS. Every decision impacts every other school in this district: Why are you here? How can we support that? While I understand how we got to this place and I think about Director Brodrick talking to us about district history and all of the decisions that have been kicked down the road. This has not happened. It will have an impact on this district. I will always root for us to rise, but I'm scared for this district. For you and for us.
- Director Allen: As stated before, this is heavy on my heart and head. But the one thing that I knew -- just how strong our parents were, and great our teachers were. People showed up to the podium to say 'work with community' and I believe this can be the greatest district in the country. I believe that. It's a hard place because of things that had not been done previously. We need better collaboration! Parents and taxpayers have these goals for their children. With that energy, to get to that diamond in the rough. This plan is not one that says as of September 2022 all schools will be a-okay. But it is a drastic difference and a big step to build the schools we can build. For the schools on the list, one of the biggest things that came up was that we need to come up with a plan for these schools. In the process I think there were some folks who started to dive in to plan what their building could come into. Now it's the time to go and mobilize people in both merging schools and closed schools. Transition is always hard. A principal transition takes a few years; it's hard. I want to charge our community, our parents, and our district to step up to put in that heavy load because SPPS could be where our children have all of the opportunities in the world. We can be the tool and the catalyst. But something needed to change drastically and that does not stop here. It will put a greater load on my shoulders and my community's shoulders. They have been asking for it for years to help to build institutions that work for the city of St Paul.
- Director Foster: We talked about buildings and student outcomes. We have to talk about curriculum, staff and parent engagement. There are many pieces. We don't talk about specific things because we're Minnesota Nice. Disparities: We've got to talk about that! That is a conversation we have to have and be bold. Race. Talk about it. We pick to find one thing, but it's a multitude of harms in this community and some communities feel harmed by this decision. Our schools are the center of our communities. We all have to work together to look at education as a right for each and every child.
- Director Foster asked Board Directors for additional comments.

- Director Carrillo: I'd like to speak about the vote. I'm not proud of this vote. It's not a great moment in my life. The truth is I could have easily voted no, and stepping away from the Board in the next couple of days, I could have easily voted no, but deep down future Boards will be hesitant to make this up again. The truth is that finances will not permit supporting the amount of schools we have. Enrollment will not support them. This vote does not mean that this is the solution. I say this because of such low enrollment. In this modified plan we came together as a board and we put our differences aside in an attempt to find a solution. There are concerns for the district and St Paul -- we are becoming a hostile city to families, and to people of color to feel comfortable in our schools. We're becoming more expensive. We need to say the truth and be humble to listen to everyone and not lay down plans from the top. Our solution to the enrollment problem will be when we can treat people with trust. The problem is that in the future, the snowball could be even bigger. This is painful and hurtful, and Insulting to our schools. The charge is to transform what we need to change as people and as an institution to make a difference to people. Otherwise, we will lose the kids and families. They do not trust us. They need to feel that we listen to them. Staff need to trust principals and people need to trust us. These are plans but not heart and no care. Everybody here has a heart for success for our students and welcomes every kid, no matter the trauma. We need to look at how we're doing things. What institutional tools of oppression we're using and the hand-me down stress that we're passing down. I charge you as a Board: something needs to happen that charges us to be better, to actually change. Well-meaning is not good enough. We need to do well-doing.
- Director Kopp: I thought a lot about joining the board 2 years ago. Envision was one of the first things we talked about. I wanted to say thank you to my colleagues, to families and community, for the site visits, phone calls, and the work of the administration and small working groups. I am better at my job now and understand the district better now. What happens next is up to us. We get to choose how we show up. I'm ready for that work and I look forward to partnering with community who have told us where we have made mistakes. This is the end of something for some of our communities. I hope from this difficult and heavy moment something beautiful can grow, and I look forward to doing that work with all of you.
- Vice Chair Vue: I want to acknowledge that this was Director Carrillo's last meeting. I have witnessed him going above and beyond his duties and pushing us. Thank you for your service.
- Director Carrillo: Thank you for your support. Thank you for everything.
- Director Foster: I will throw your own words -- You have led with heart, action, and care. Intentionality -- very observable -- thank you for stepping up and we look forward to working with you.
[Board Members, Administration and audience members clapped in appreciation for Director Carrillo's service]
- Director Foster also acknowledged the work of the interim Board Secretary Brian Hammer.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Foster provided a reminder of upcoming meetings, including a Committee of the Board meeting on Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. and a Regular Meeting of the Board of Education on Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 6:05 p.m., beginning with public comment at 5:30 p.m. She also noted the ability to view the Regular Meeting via audio stream link online at the Board website: www.spps.org/boe and that updates are provided on the board website.

Chair Foster also noted the public may request to be added to the mailing list of public notices by contacting the board secretary and encouraged members of the community to submit Public Comment for the Regular Meetings of the Board of Education through:

- 1) Leaving messages with the Board Secretary at sarah.dahlke@spps.org or 612-434-1105 that will be compiled and distributed to Board members; and/or
- 2) Sending email statements to the Board of Education email (SB.Members@spps.org)
- 3) Submitting comments online via Public Comment input form at www.spps.org/boe.

Chair Foster then motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Vue.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Carrillo	Yes

Motion passes with a 7-0 vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 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:

Brian Hammer

Secretary to the Board (Interim), St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education