

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

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102, and**

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

**September 20, 2021
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Jim Vue, Vice Chair.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Foster, J. Vue, C. Allen, J. Kopp

Y. Carrillo and Z. Ellis arrived a few minutes late.

J. Brodrick was not able to attend today's meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

Vice Chair Vue moved approval of the order of the main agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Kopp.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Foster	Y
Director Vue	Y
Director Allen	Y
Director Kopp	Y

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

IV. ENVISION SPPS

Vice Chair Vue turned the meeting over to Superintendent Gothard and staff to lead the board through the Envision SPPS updates.

Superintendent Gothard thanked the board for the opportunity to provide an update on work that had been ongoing for several months. Included in the presentation is information on the methodologies used

to formulate the Envision SPPS plan, with additional details to come later this fall. He then introduced Chief Turner.

Chief Turner thanked the board for the opportunity to provide information in an informal setting about what the Envision SPPS working groups have learned and an outline of the recommendations the board will be asked to vote on later in the fall. Chief Turner is aware of the high level of interest in the Envision SPPS plans and noted how important the collaborative working groups, comprising district staff, parents and community members, are to the development of Envision SPPS recommendations. Special meetings of the board are open to the public and livestreamed to help communicate plans to community members so there are no unanswered questions come voting time later this fall. Finally, she noted many other members of the Envision SPPS team will participate in future meeting presentations.

This is the first time SPPS has had a strategic plan, capital plan and an Envision SPPS plan aligned at the same time. The goal is to align capacity, capital planning and investments. To reach this goal approximately 120 participants joined work groups for 120 hours over at least five meetings (2.5 to 4 hours per meeting) to develop Envision SPPS recommendations.

SPPS is facing both declining birth rates and increased competition from more educational options for students, including charter and private schools. Families have more options. The Highland Bridge housing development does present an opportunity for more enrollment, but the district has learned from experience that enrollment from such developments often result in localized enrollment increases in the neighborhood but do not increase the district's enrollment overall as families just as likely relocate within the district to Highland Bridge.

The goal of Envision SPPS is to reach each student and provide a well-rounded education. Families want well-rounded education for their students, including core curriculum in reading, writing and math. Yet inequities in schools in terms of student access to a well-rounded education that also includes the extras like world languages, dance, music, creative expression, writing, and accelerated learning for gifted and talented students. These courses bring smiles to our children, but they are not available in all schools. Small schools do not allow a full complement of such courses while in large schools teachers are able to focus on their specialities.

Other aspects of a well-rounded education -- fieldtrips, community experts -- are helped by enrollment and parent fundraising. All children deserve it, but community-based agencies and grants help larger schools more. Therefore, SPPS is looking at schools with fewer than 2 sections of a grade as a school of concern. From a well-rounded education perspective, a more ideal, sustainable size would be, at minimum, 3 sections a grade per school, though SPPS also understands that this goal may not be achievable all at once.

Chief Turner noted the goal is to look at small schools to get to ideal size that's sustainable. At present approximately 6-8 schools -- standalone schools under 540 students -- cannot provide well-rounded, sustainable education unless subsidized by the district. That is, funds are taken away from schools with sustainable enrollment and given to schools that need subsidies. In the end, given these circumstances, no one receives a well-rounded education.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Ellis asked for clarification about SPPS's commitment to communities with smaller schools, which Chief Turner described as unsustainable. She stated that while those schools may

be considered small, they can provide a well-rounded education asked: But that's not your understanding?

- Chief Turner response: That's right. ESSER funds can be used during this transition to make sure students receive the appropriate level of education. She noted SPPS is providing schools with additional resources to have special opportunities in music, art, and science.
- Superintendent Gothard noted the importance of considering the differences between elementary and middle schools and their differing formulas for teachers. For middle schools, if 50 fewer students show up than expected, the district still must deliver the structure that's in place though it's necessary to make appropriate adjustments to deliver that structure. The situation is a little different for elementary schools.
- Director Ellis then asked Chief Turner a follow-up question about the relationship between enrollment dollars and decision-making. For example, if parents know what opportunities are available at a school, which they believe provides a well-rounded education, the district may call that same school unsustainable. She asked what parents will be able to do to ensure they are achieving the well-rounded education they sought.
- Chief Turner thanked Director Ellis for the question and noted that for the last several years, based on the funding formula, parents may not realize the level of subsidies the district has provided schools to achieve a well-rounded education. Today, schools that are unsustainable are provided some resources that are available thanks to transfers from other schools' dollars to make that possible. Chief Turner noted her belief that every school should have a set of resources such as a nurse, among many others, but it's a struggle when the district does not have enough staff to deliver high quality educational experiences in every school. Small schools may have only 6-8 FTEs, not counting custodians. There are not enough resources to go around, so the district has come to a time to discontinue the process of taking from one school and giving to another.
- Chief Collins noted that working with parents and administrators may choose a school and then compare it to other schools. It's important to keep in mind that a 12 section school and an 18 section school are differently resourced. The number of specialists will vary. It leads to partial FTEs, and very difficult conversations to navigate from a workforce perspective. Economies of scale may not be a popular term, but it's part of this discussion when trying to provide to schools -- hiring for students' outcomes.
- Director Kopp added that in addition to opportunities available to students, it's also about the burden on staff who stay late and do more, which may lead to greater stress and burn-out, which has a direct impact on students too. Keeping up morale is a big challenge for staff, but principals may be overburdened too. All of which impacts students' outcomes, which are the heart of the matter.
- Chief Wilcox-Harris noted she wrote down the word burden and stated that the burden is real yet the benefits are missing because the district does not have the capacity to build standards and outcomes. SPPS is known for its partnerships but, as a result of this burden, the dreams for those partnerships are not meeting their potential.
- Director Kopp stressed that principals want stability of staff! The school board itself is an example of change and the challenges that change presents. She noted that when people are let go due to enrollment that affects students; the lack of cohesion impacts students,
- Director Carrillo echoed the sentiment that the district's core mission is to improve outcomes for students and to provide opportunities in that environment. He sought clarification regarding the criteria for change, stating that as a parent of a student at one of these potential sites affected: Is it about identifying a sweet spot of enrollment or are there other criteria? As a board member, he emphasized that it's important to know the criteria when parents come to board members with concerns at a time when the ground under parents is shifting. More specifically, he asked whether

beyond the goal of achieving the ideal size to match the school building, or are there other criteria?

- Chief Turner responded by emphasizing that Envision SPPS recommendations are not just about school size but rather what the SPPS district could be. It's not about closing schools but achieving better outcomes for all students. Recommendations to the board and the superintendent are grounded in data around enrollment, class size, achievement, budget criteria, facilities for an inner city, urban school system that's landlocked, with limited land. The district is looking at the operational efficiency of school buildings, but the district is also looking at equity and the impact on students. For example, are all areas of the city impacted relatively equally? Or is one part of the city more impacted than others? What about special education students, African American students and ELL students -- how are they impacted? Chief Turner noted the need to look at the transportation factor. Plus the district considers families' demand for a particular school -- what are the options to meet demand at that school? Plus, in terms of financial sustainability, there are unknowns -- federal and state government requirements must be aligned with SPPS programs. In sum, it is not just about the number of sections in a particular school.
- Director Carrillo: Thank you.
- Director Ellis: Why don't we as a district change the formula?
- Chief Turner continued by mentioning it becomes a mathematical formula for a principal. For example, a principal may be responsible for delivering a program with a particular enrollment (meaning you have a particular budget that you must manage - teachers, custodians, etc), but this includes an economies of scale factor. The district must do more to find a way to address educational funding gaps.
- Director Ellis noted that families are sometimes involved in deciding which teacher is needed more due to funding limits, even though it's difficult for families to understand the circumstances that led to the need to make such a decision. She asked whether the district could change the funding formula to provide a well-rounded education rather than shuttering schools. Making this kind of a change and its rationale must be explained in clear language. For example, if the goal is to increase grade sections to three in each elementary school, do all elementary school buildings have that much capacity? Director Ellis expressed concern over families' understanding of the district's plans.
- Superintendent Gothard mentioned that in regard to changing the formula, the district wouldn't change the formula, but rather would change how the district spent its dollars. Enrollment is critical and the district has hard decisions to make to achieve well-rounded education outcomes. When making difficult decisions, the district does need to express how the outcomes will be achieved and the recommendations coming to the board are made to achieve that.
- Chief Collins, reflecting on the last statement by Director Ellis, added that regarding decision-making at a particular school the district knows there are other layers of funding. For example, some buildings qualify for Title I dollars with a specified use. The matter of funding is more complex than dividing up the dollars differently. The goal is to give more flexibility to schools yet, due to no one's fault, smaller sites have less flexibility.
- Chief Turner noted that Director Ellis's comments address the cornerstone of the Envision SPPS goal. The district will continue to have art schools, science schools, and Montessori schools, but parents should expect some basic resources and outcomes in all of the district's schools.
- Director Vue commented on a presentation slide that highlighted factors impacting enrollment trends and asked which groups in the SPPS community are most impacted -- which students are leaving the district? He wondered whether the district is taking a targeted approach to reshaping our schools and our communities. For example, birth rate change is impacting some groups more than others.

- Chief Turner responded stating that groups with steady enrollment include students of color and special education students. While overall enrollment is decreasing, the district's special education students and special needs enrollment are holding steady. The district has this data and the study built in additional data points on demographics to take note of shifts. As a result, some groups should be targeted for planning purposes.

Chief Turner continued, in reference to previous questions by Director Ellis, that there are some very small schools and just 2 section schools that work with what they have, emphasizing that with Envision SPPS the district will not see the 'disposal' of schools. Instead, other programs may move into that school as a part of a repurposing of that school building.

Chief Turner continued that Envision SPPS is not about closing schools but about envisioning what the district can really be. Sustainable schools -- some may not need to change. Some may need to co-locate with another program in the same building to build economies of scale to share costs and resources. Another may need to relocate to a larger building. Still, some school buildings and some programs will close. In a district in which 80% of resources are used on people, it's very important that the impact on staff be explained. The focus is on people and students, not on buildings -- the focus is what will children and families receive in terms of well-rounded outcomes. Some buildings will be recommended to close. Some may be repurposed with another role or program. Decommissioning -- closing a school building -- is a legal process and given the landlocked status of St Paul, the district does not currently foresee the decommissioning of any school buildings.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Allen, returning to Director Ellis's comments about school capacity and program relocation, asked about how a child would maintain relationships if a program relocated to another building?
- Chief Turner stated that a relocated program means moving elsewhere more or less intact to continue it in a new space.
- Director Allen then noted major concerns regarding students deciding to go to a very particular school to receive a well-rounded education.
- Chief Turner noted history and data in the district show that parents make decisions resulting in enrollment declines. Data also show that when you make the right decision to provide a well-rounded education district students and families come back. The district's middle schools are a good example of this. Before Superintendent Gothard's tenure began, the district experienced a large departure of students after 5th grade. Dr. Gothard and team put together a very strong middle school program and over the last three years the district has seen more and more 5th graders choosing SPPS 6th grade. The district's middle schools are doing quite well. Families are coming back.
- Director Allen asked about enrollment and what will happen in buildings with the district does not get the enrollment projected.
- Superintendent Gothard noted his commitment to working with the community and how the district has heard continually about families being torn between choices. District classrooms/buildings are increasing enrollment due to the district's programs -- and he expressed his belief that the district will stabilize or increase enrollment. The goal now is to have the opportunity to offer those programs. Therefore, it's not a matter of per pupil funding, it's about making structural decisions to offer those programs based on feedback received.
- Chief Wilcox-Harris added that the district is designing the floor, such that all students have that access. So much of what the district had done in the past was in response to No Child Left Behind, but now the district has block grants to support well-rounded education. This has required

a needs assessment as block grant dollars must go to needs at all Pre-K thru 12 sites. We want to provide a well-rounded education at every school.

- Director Ellis responded by asking that the district refrain from using “the floor” -- asking that the district elevate that a little. As a parent you want to have all of the programs and resources, but noted that it is not fair to put decisions on the community. The community was told that they were responsible for making decisions in the past (e.g., regarding the focus on science), which was a really good experience. However, the community was then later asked to cut either language or science and Director Ellis wondered how that staff member felt knowing that families voted on whether to place greater value on language or science.
- Chief Turner noted the district’s intention to be able offer a core of reading, writing, and math. Parents may then have a choice in what language is offered, not whether a language is offered. She noted that as a community we can talk about co-locating programs and managing operational costs. Colocating can help to make programs sustainable. Relocating programs, as discussed earlier, because a school or program is closed may mean families that attend that school would have higher priority to attend a particular school. If a program is phased out, that process may involve students aging out of programs.
- Director Allen requested cost analysis information: What are the costs if a building is not immediately repurposed?
- Director Carrillo then added a request for more information to understand changes and fluctuations in enrollment. What is online enrollment now?
- Chief Collins: K-12 online enrollment: 1,500.
- Director Carrillo noted the district’s initial expectation of lower enrollment in online learning and now whether those students will have a place in school when they are seeking to go back to in-person learning.
- Superintendent Gothard responded by saying any student that goes back will have a well-rounded experience and noted that he has been very clear -- Envision SPPS is a much longer process than just this round -- this is just phase 1. Every decision will have a reaction. Online learning is an example of when the district thinks about what that outcome will be and when it will be a good time to make new recommendations.
- Chief Collins mentioned that the enrollment numbers discussed tonight are pre-pandemic enrollment numbers. SPPS has a lot of capacity in SPPS schools now. Enrollment season begins in January and ends in mid-Feb. From a budgeting perspective the district needs to be flexible as enrollment may fluctuate. The waitlist now is very small -- a few schools have waitlists and there are some on the online waitlist. The district will look and see where parents are at, where families are at, and staff those buildings accordingly. A key question is what is the SPPS experience that is desired and how does the district staff for that outcome.
- Director Carrillo mentioned his sense that there will be a group of fluctuating students who are online now and wondered how to think creatively about capacity and moving student cohorts to other sites. He recommended not to think linearly but rather to think creatively. Phasing out is a costly approach and the district will have parents leaving the district for private and charter schools. Colocating and relocating proactively empowers the community to build a vision for moving to a place of well-rounded education and seeing that come to fruition.
- Director Kopp added another way to think about this is that while in the past parents have had to choose schools outside the neighborhood, but now we may see some changes to that practice. She mentioned comments she’s heard, when giving school tours for 3 years, what families wanted. As we are building toward this and being intentional about well-rounded schools in every neighborhood, where families are comfortable, phases may be a good way to go.
- Chief Turner noted that as the district looks at solutions the district can think about that and consider what agencies can help a building become sustainable. Partnerships with Headstart,

Achievement Plus and other agencies that may be able to help. And in response to Director Carrillo, there may be options for schools that we recommend to combine under one leader. Programs would retain separate budgets and staffing, but share leadership and operations, or recommendations may be about mergers of two very small community schools within blocks of one another. There are other options too, such as merging leadership and staffing, similar to the merger of Prosperity Heights and Hayden Heights. Communities can come together to work together to become one program.

- Director Ellis then asked about the time frame associated with decision-making and what happens after a decision is made by the board.
- Chief Turner turned to the Engagement Model table in the PowerPoint presentation and noted that after the board votes in November, the community will work together from December to September to make decisions. She addressed Director Ellis's comment that it's unfair to ask parents to make decisions, and stressed that decisions are made by the board. Parents are involved and are welcome to comment, but the work starts by January 2022.
- Director Ellis asked what might potentially change these timelines.
- Chief Turner noted that if the board does not take action this fall, that would change the timeline. The district is aligning this process with the budgeting process earlier approved by the board. If the board does not take action, we are giving everyone less time to come together to make plans.
- Chief Foster noted that her comment is not about the current process, but rather is to focus on the language being used so that the community understands the process and its recommendations and that there is a space and place for holding conversations with community. It needs to be user-friendly and accessible. She agreed that as board members elected by communities it is the board's responsibility to make decisions, but the district needs to provide clear data on which to make decisions and be clear about tying in conversations with communities to make decisions.
- Chief Turner noted that every decision is consequential. A decision in one area affects other areas. For example, in the past Director Marchese asked about the choice process and how it's aligned with class size. For Envision SPPS, the Work Group has grown to 120 people and Work Group findings are being used to formulate recommendations. Recommendations are birthed from reports -- ranging from 10 pages to 200 pages. The team of 120 representing our community, parents and staff has developed reports that inform district recommendations and provide a framework for how enrollment is tied to well-founded education. That's where the discussion begins.

Chief Turner then turned to introducing each Work Group, their process, and a summary of their findings:

- College and Career Work Group: This workgroup found secondary schools need lab spaces and classroom spaces that are appropriate for training in large gatherings, and maker spaces that are adaptable and flexible. The Work Group recommends that each high school has a center for career pathways.
- Early Childhood Work Group produced a 200-page report. They started with questions about what the city needs for early learners, whether there's enough capacity for early learners and if there's a space mismatch for the city's early learners -- e.g., East Side relative to Highland or Central. As the district repurposes buildings it makes sense to repurpose buildings for early learning and the district should have early learning hubs -- for Pre-Ks and early childhood screening that could also include partnerships with HeadStart. There would be a place parents could call. The Work Group has not identified a site, but the Work Group has identified the need

and they have given the district ideals around classroom square footage size for early childhood learners.

- Enrollment Work Group focused on customer service and how friendly is school selection. What's the actual impact on potential enrollment of different recommendations? Also, we have looked at class size limitations. If you always lock out a family when you reach a certain enrollment level - e.g., 25 highest number in a class while additional students are put on waitlist, then the district loses opportunities for growth. Site location also has an impact on enrollment. You will see in our recommendations that some programs are recommended to relocate to another neighborhood.
- Facilities Use/Utilization and Alignment: 85% of building space utilized is ideal, the sweet spot that allows for growth and adaptation. Under 70% capacity is underutilized -- the district has some of these schools. Every building in the district has gone through a facilities utilization review as part of this process.
- Language Immersion Work Group: This was the district's first language immersion work group and it was started by the Hmong parent group. French and Spanish immersion programs will have findings too. The Hmong language program recommendations include that two Hmong language immersion programs in the city are not sustainable. They have been very clear in their work, under Dr. Bao's leadership, that those two programs currently in Jackson and Phalen must be consolidated. This is the parent work group's recommendation. They have also talked about realigning the program to include a cultural studies track in Hmong Studies, in addition to the language immersion track, in which students would learn appreciation for Hmong culture. One city-wide Hmong immersion program at a Pre-K thru 8 school building or possibly in a lower campus and upper campus configuration where the two buildings are near each other.
- Integration: Integration is a core concept at work in Envision SPPS and the NAACP is providing a leadership role in defining integration as a guiding concept but they are not making decisions. The NAACP has provided a new definition of what integration is -- "inclusive, remove legal and social barriers that perpetuate disparities in student achievement...eliminating educational inequities...inclusion...equal and equitable access to education resources for all students." The NAACP has also provided an assessment tool for monitoring decisions and their impact on American Indian, Asian, African American and Latino students, among other student groups and they have asked the district to use this Assessment Tool on Equity Impact (Integration) (see presentation slide). NAACP's work with the district is ongoing.
- Middle School Model Work Group findings include that in order to meet well-rounded educational goals, no 6 thru 8 grade schools should have enrollment below 540 students. The Work Group also recommends adding flexible workstations for teamwork and other newly learning amenities, among other findings.
- Montessori Pathway Work Group is not done with their work yet. Key questions guiding their work include asking: How viable is it for the district to offer Pre-K thru 8 Montessori in the district? If Montessori families often choose to leave the district for higher grade education, should the district continue to offer a middle school experience in Montessori? No recommendations have been made yet. There are concerns about the sustainability of Parkway's enrollment below 200 students. The Montessori Pathway Work Group continues its research and discussions.

Director Vue called a 10-minute break at 6:32 p.m.

Director Vue called the meeting back to order at 6:42 p.m. and Chief Turner continued her introduction to each Envision SPPS Work Group:

- Special Education Work Group noted special education enrollment in the district is not declining. In fact, more space is needed to meet special education needs, with some variation in the demand for space in different parts of the city. Greater demand is found on the East Side where more special education students live, but they currently may need to leave their neighborhood to attend school, away from their siblings. It is important for families to know what to expect too. The Work Group also anticipates the need for school building spaces to undergo accessibility assessment. While all buildings are currently ADA compliant, some buildings may be more accessible than others.
- Talent, Development and Acceleration Service Pathway Work Group: In order to offer this experience, resource considerations are very important. This Work Group developed 4 possible models of school support, including the single school model (which exists now); the school-based model with speciality support in every school -- a more equitable model; a blended service model; and another model. Please see the relevant slide presentation for complete details. This Work Group determined the district should employ a mixture of all these models. As part of the Work Group's process, they reviewed the current practice of sending Capitol Hill school students to Highland, and recommended that Capitol Hill students take advantage of offerings of accelerated and advanced courses at all high schools instead. The Work Group looked at courses the students take and found the courses students take at Highland are not different from courses offered at other schools, so the conclusion of the Work Group is that the Highland program may no longer be needed.

Chief Turner summarized Work Groups' mandate saying that each Work Group was asked to answer a series of questions, which resulted in reports. All reports will be available on the website this week. Next, the Envision SPPS team plans to meet with the board every other Monday through November 2021 to ensure community participation in person or via livestream. Before the vote takes place, public comments are also welcome during regular board meetings. In addition, Chief Turner plans to schedule virtual community engagement sessions--in general or with targeted communities, similar to the meeting held to discuss in-person schooling. Communities can also request speakers to join them at a community meeting. As winter approaches, the consultation with communities phase will begin if the board decision is made in November. Consultations will focus on communities and the decision's impacts on their school. Chief Turner noted the existence of a much broader and deeper communications plan, but this statement now provides a summary of the district's communications and engagement plans. Chief Turner then asked for additional questions and discussion.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Ellis noted that board members are hearing from community about other avenues for communication with community might be explored. Director Ellis asked her board colleagues what the board had done in the past when such decisions were being made?
- Director Carrillo seconded Director Ellis's called for public comment and encouraged the board to be open to additional public comments opportunities. Given none of these presentations have had specific sites or recommendations in place, there's no way to go to the public to ask for comments on anything specific. The question is which sites will be affected in Round One? He recommended the board coordinate with staff to make recommendations public and that the

board open space to have public comment with the board, beyond the regular time that the board meets. He wondered whether it would be possible to hold sessions in different parts of the city.

- Director Ellis said that rather than expecting the public to come to the board, the board could go to the community. She wondered again about past community engagement practices when similar issues have come up.
- Superintendent Gothard mentioned the well-attended virtual meetings during the pandemic may serve as a model.
- Director Kopp noted that concrete Work Group recommendations are needed before seeking feedback. Community members may hear this, but some families may think the school has everything it needs. Others may know their schools are being discussed for change. Therefore, setting expectations is very important. Some of the decisions will be difficult and emotional, and the board must understand the gravity of decisions and their importance. Director Kopp asked that the board be mindful of that. Communication that is accessible -- that everyone can grab onto and access -- is very important. Even before there are recommendations, some people will be wondering about the impact on their school(s).
- Chief Turner responded by saying the district makes decisions about where programs go or what happens to schools. The district has been very clear about that. The district is not going out and asking community to make decisions they do not have the authority to make, but the district does believe targeted engagement is important. She noted the NAACP also asked to meet with the parent group of color -- parent advisory group -- about how they want the district to communicate with them about decisions and implementation.
- Director Ellis added that the board has not seen any recommendations yet, and wondered what the board could do to receive more input.
- Director Vue then asked a question about integration, especially with regard to presentation slides 28 and 29, and what categories people were placed in and whether any disaggregation of those categories was done. He was concerned the analysis may be missing information when using these categories. Also, he noted the need to be realistic about timeline and process.
- Chief Turner responded by saying the Work Group has put some forethought into this. Also, the decision may be made but it may not be implemented until September 2022, or implementation may take a few years. Consideration is also being given to the fact that school choice decisions take place in January and February. This is a multifaceted program with many variables, with implementation in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Director Vue followed up by asking if and when decisions are made, such as in regard to the Hmong immersion programs, how families and students will be supported. He also wondered about the impact of decisions on school reputation and community perception of different schools and programs as a result of decisions made and whether the Work Group has taken these factors into consideration.
- Chief Turner responded by saying that it's important to work with Hmong immersion program families to help them think through the implications for the school and to support the families themselves. Those are opportunities for targeted work with a particular community. A decision in the fall will allow the board to engage with targeted community groups, ask the right questions and gather community opinions.
- Director Ellis asked Chief Turner to return to the last slide in the presentation on "Next Steps" and noted that she realizes the Superintendent likes the word phases, but how many schools may be part of Phase I? A couple? A handful? She wondered whether information about short-term and long-time implications will be provided in future meetings.
- Chief Turner responded by saying the Envision SPPS core group is preparing information on the impact of each decision for administration leadership. The district is mindful of the need to avoid directly impacting a significant number of students. That said, analysis of data also shows that the

district has 10 unsustainable elementary schools and some middle and high schools at that level as well. There are a range of solutions, including a mixture of closures, relocations, etc.

- Superintendent Gothard added that online enrollment today is part pandemic-induced and part preferred learning. After the past 18 months, the district needs to look at different realities, while still not knowing what the future will look like.
- Chief Turner made special note of the phenomenal work of the Hmong community on their report. The decision is to have a pre-K thru 8 school or an upper and lower campus. If the preference is to have an upper and lower campus, it may take a few years to identify an upper school space that's available. That's what is meant by phases. It may take some time to grow to meet the vision for a given program and as a result some decisions are phased in.
- Director Ellis noted that this concrete example was helpful, but the terminology of phases creates uncertainty and lack of clarity. She also mentioned her hope that the district would not be dragging this out either, and exhausting communities in the process. Director Ellis added that the presentation was information rich and very informative.
- Director Kopp then asked for clarification on the date when the board will hear specific recommendations.
- Chief Turner noted specific recommendations would be provided during the November 2021 Committee of the Board meeting, with the officials vote taking place during the regular Board of Education meeting in November 2021. The earlier a decision is made, the sooner the board can engage with the community.
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- Director Kopp noted the importance of a timely process that is not stretched out. She added that small schools are strategizing about how to be heard in this decision-making process. Thorough communication is really important -- asking the right questions matters when trying to understand what people want and need. She provided the example of planning a neighborhood park and being asked what kind of play equipment they wanted in the park when they had no expertise in playground equipment. Rather than asking the community group to select playground equipment, the experts should have asked what our kids liked to do and the experts could then select relevant playground equipment if that was what the community engagement process determined was needed. The board must be committed to investing in impacted communities. If not, the district might see that attrition in enrollment and the district must follow through on investing in impacted communities if the district says it is going to.

Chief Turner, in conclusion, stated that the goal is to provide a vision for sustainable programs that provide a well-rounded education to all students. If no action is not taken this year, she will provide information about what the schools will look like 4 years from now if the district does nothing. She also looked forward to more specific opportunities for outreach and engagement with community. Chief Turner asked that any additional community engagement requests be shared with the board liaison.

Superintendent Gothard rounded out the session by emphasizing that Envision SPPS is not new. Envision SPPS is nearly two years old and is part of the strategic plan and the Envision SPPS recommendations are an outcome of the strategic planning process. Regardless of the outcome, the point is to achieve high standards. He thanked everyone for their hard work.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Director Vue moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Allen seconded the motion.

Director Vue noted the upcoming Regular Meeting of the Board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 21, 2021 beginning at 5:30pm with public comment.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

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

The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 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