

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

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Via Telephonic Phone and Video Conference  
Available Streaming Online at [www.spps.org/boe](http://www.spps.org/boe)**

**August 24, 2020  
5:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Jeanelle Foster, Vice Chair.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Board of Education: J. Brodrick, C. Allen, J. Kopp, S. Marchese, Z. Ellis, J. Foster,

Staff: Superintendent Gothard; Chuck Long, General Counsel; Cedrick Baker, Chief of Staff; Marie Schrul, Chief Financial Officer; Dave Watkins, Chief of Schools; Jackie Turner, Chief Operations Officer, Kate Wilcox-Harris, Chief Academic Officer; Stacey Gray Akyea, Director, Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment; Kenyatta McCarty, Executive Director of Human Resources; Kevin Burns, Director of Communications; Sarah Dahlke, Secretary to the Board

**III. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA**

**MOTION: Director Foster moved approval of the Order of the Main Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Ellis.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Marchese	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

Superintendent Gothard thanked everyone for joining to take the Board through some purchases as we open the 20-21 school year. There are several areas of CARES funding and knowledge of those numbers allows us to plan for the school year. It's important to ensure we submit these purchases prior to the school year so that there are materials available for students and staff to fully open DL school year beginning September 8. We do have several purchasing guidelines, and when they exceed a certain

amount they do require approval by the Board. Chief Baker will also be providing a recommendation for a series of special meetings as we move into this school year unlike any other.

A. Google Voice - Virtual Telephone Services

**BF 32178** Google Voice - Virtual Telephone Services

That the Board of Education authorize the Purchasing Manager to award to the best value vendor for the purchasing of Google Voice Services in the amount not to exceed \$475,000.

B. Hotspot Internet Access for Students

**BF 32179** Hotspot Internet Access for Students

That the Board of Education authorize administration to approve the proposal from T-Mobile for the purchasing of additional hotspots and increasing the data plans for hotspot lines in the amount not to exceed \$750,000.

C. Staff Computers

**BF 32180** Staff Computers

That the Board of Education authorize administration to approve the proposal from Apple and DELL for the purchasing of additional computers for staff in the amount not to exceed \$450,000.

D. Distance Learning 2.0 Take Home Instructional Materials K-12

**BF 32181** Distance Learning 2.0 Take Home Instructional Materials K-12

That the Board of Education authorize the Purchasing Manager to award to the best value vendor the purchase of take-home instructional material kits to be made available to all of the students in the St. Paul Public Schools in the amount not to exceed \$1.5M utilizing Federal CARES Act funding.

**MOTION: Director Foster moved approval of the recommendations for these items - Google Voice - Virtual Telephone Services, Hotspot Internet Access for Students, Staff Computers, and Distance Learning 2.0 Take Home Instructional Materials K-12. The motion was seconded by Director Brodrick.**

**QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- What was included in the educational kits? Response: We have heard from students, families, and staff that they needed additional equipment on hand. A few things are included in the kit, and it is set up to be designed for K-2, 3-5, and older students. In K-2, we are proposing a box of 24 crayons, and pocket folder, wide ruled spiral notebooks, unifix cubes, dry erase board, and dry erase markers. A few of these are also supported by 3M, and will be careful not to be redundant. For students in the older grades, there will also be a calculator, sticky notes, and spiral notebooks. In 6-8, we are adding colored pencils, index cards, protractors, and other items that align to the standards being taught. In the older grades, items such as ball point pens, spiral notebooks, index cards and 3-ring binders. We also know we will be getting headphones and a stylus to have those donated. We are trying to

ensure when teachers are talking about a specific item and to draw a picture and show it to the class, that our students have the tools available to them and ready to do that. These are not only materials for DL, but also eventual transition. We want to be able to transition as we move to hybrid and in-person, and these materials will assist in that. It's also important for engagement and not adding additional stress to families and students. We have a couple quotes but are looking to spend \$30-35 per kit, and is a little different than the kits for PreK, and we will be sending these pre-packed by the vendor, and hopefully to be in the hands of students in September.

- The headphones will also be useful for when there are multiple students in the same house, as well as hoodies to students to be able to isolate themselves and focus on their learning.
- Will these be delivered to students, or will there be curbside pick up? Response: The plan is that they will be sent to the schools, and the schools will be ensured and assisted that they will be picked up, as well as creative ideas to ensure they will be delivered to the students, including our Title I office and their amazing work and do whatever it takes. We also talked about using Transportation, and volunteers to deliver. It will be energizing and kids will have their own items and feel ownership for their learning. These are consumable items, and will also need to consider the needs in October as well.
- For the hotspots that are being purchased, how are we determining the needs of our families, the process for families to know who to contact, when, and how they will be delivered? How many hotspots? What is the estimate of the demand? What have we learned about the additional needs? Response: We are using the same process for hotspot requests in the Spring which worked well, through the family hot line in technology. They can either be picked up at curbside, or deliver them. The BAI for this meeting looks to purchase 3600 hotspots, including 500 new ones to be added to the hotspots we already have, and some resources also to outfit current hotspots to be unlimited data. We learned last spring with T-Mobile, they increased hotspots, however the increase ended in June. Moving into this school year we know our students will need unlimited access preferably with DL 2.0, and made decision to upgrade all hotspots to unlimited, and prioritizing for students and families, and working with staff for another means to offer them wifi.
- How many families have hotspots now that were already distributed? Response: We were close to 2800, and some staff as well, with the remainder is the increase of hot spots. Between hot spots, partnerships with broadband partners, we believe we can cover the majority of the needs out there.
- Another item mentioned is the speed of the hotspot, will that be increased as well? Response: The speeds are unlimited data, not throttling so they don't slow down, and the speeds will vary between 25MB to 100MB per second, and determined on location and how close they are to cell tower.
- Will the upgrading happen automatically or will there be something families will need to do? Response: T-Mobile will be taking all information, feeding it into a computer, and the computer will update them to unlimited.
- If families have any issues where they are slow, they will call help line? Response: Yes, families can call the family support line that is a direct connection to Technology Services, and there is also curbside available, as well as delivery options.
- This contract is for additional hotspots beyond 2800? Response: It is for additional 500 hotspots, and trying to measure the need at the start of schools. The second item is for moving from the 2G data cap on all hotspots, and need to move off of that. We are going to move as quickly as possible to unlimited data plans. There won't be throttling where the hot spot slows down.
- Superintendent Gothard also thanked Executive Director Davis and his team the work has been incredible, and to lift the entire district and rely so heavily, wanted to say thanks.
- It is noted on working on access for staff, for hotspots, and how many do we think we'll need and how soon will we be able to figure that out? Response: For the hotspots for staff, we are providing hotspots for staff who are working from home and unable to leave their home due to medical reasons

or approved by HR. For staff who need WiFi, we are opening WiFi access centers throughout the district for staff to come, if unreliable WiFi or don't have access at home. We believe that through district support centers and other administration buildings for ample access for staff who need regular and consistent WiFi access. We are working to ensure all staff have access.

- Within the computers for staff item, does that include EAs, TAs and SCSPs? Response: The computers in this BAI are to refresh staff that have either a limited desktop, and found that during DL where needed a laptop. Some of the purchases are for laptops to be more mobile, and if we are in situation where staff need laptops again, they will be limited to their desktop computer. The other portion of this item is for staff who needed an upgrade to their computer. It is a refresh. The staff are working with their supervisors and principals to ensure they have requests or invoice for their computer. This particular board action item is for all staff depending on if their job requires a personal computer, or if they currently have a computer that is outdated. The majority of the requests are for school office clerks.
- In the kits, wanted to know if they vary by school or all have similar items? Response: We have plans to provide upwards of 35,000 kits, and important that they are standardized. We are looking at grade bands. We are also working with staff at schools to ensure those added pieces, such as a theme or specialized area, to ensure they are included so that students have what they need in that area. We have literacy, science, and arts specialists who are also working with the staff to ensure they have the right materials to demonstrate and support students. They are pretty standard and pretty similar.
- As a procedural technicality, on all items, and bullet point 5 with the funding provided by the Business and Financial Affairs office, and the item submission. Who are we authorizing to purchase these? Do we need to be more specific to authorize who to spend this money? Response: This is to ensure we have these items in preparation for the start of the school year. We worked with the business office and Chief Schrul to approve all items, and have been approved and in agreement with this, and did not move forward without their approval. There is a separate board agenda item routing that goes for all items, and Finance did look and approve those CARES requests, with a separate spreadsheet tracking the CARES funding to give to the Board as an update at a later time. For the approval and designating the purchasing manager or administration, the purchasing manager is listed on the one because the bid award needs to be done yet, whereas the other ones have a contractual authority through a state contract or other items references with contract number, which gives the district authority, and allowing Administration to continue, with the individual department to complete the purchase.
- We do need to be nimble and quick during this time, but more comfortable when knowing who is being authorized. For the Board to authorize something, under the recommendation, we are usually pretty specific, and varies between one person to a more general recommendation.
- Want to be trusting, and assure this is the best way to proceed. Response: There is a digital routing process, so all are engaged. There is a time to make comments or hold things up if more information is needed. Is the source of our Senior Executive Leadership Team meetings to bring concerns or information, and to ensure it is signed off by all prior to the Board approval.
- Understand to give authority and be nimble, with the only concern is that with the checks-and-balances and more staff to sign off on it to verify and approve.
- Is all this funding from the Federal government, but through the State? Response: It is Federal through State funding. The CARES Act funding, we currently have 2 allocations we are working on that were received a few months ago - the ESSR funding and GEER funding, and those 2 buckets of funds that we have initially put applications on amount to a little shy of \$20M, with the two funding areas we are seeking some purchase approvals through, and those funds come from the overall CARES Act. The third funding source is new, is the Governor's Relief Fund, and another funding

source to look at, with the District receiving a third source of funding. Those are the three areas, and this evening, looking for approval from the first two allocations.

- Superintendent Gothard noted these are relief fund purchases that are to meet the needs of our students to start the school year, and important to re-establish these conversations and the need to be nimble, and to share with the community.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Marchese	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes

Chief Cedrick Baker shared a preview as we move ahead, including that we will need to be nimble within the next few weeks as we prepare and move into the start of the school year. He recommended that over the next few weeks, there is a periodic or weekly special board meeting. Our concern items need approval in prep for the school year, and some items will not be able to wait. One of the recommendations is to schedule weekly special meetings, with certain meetings prepared if needed.

#### **QUESTION/DISCUSSION:**

- The Board agreed to this recommendation, and for the Board to participate, but not interfere with the nimbleness. It's a good idea to stay in communication and ongoing meetings to keep connected with parents, families and students from a Board perspective. Board members also noted it's helpful from a scheduling perspective to set aside time, and appreciate the proactive thinking.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

**Director Foster moved to adjourn the meeting; Director Ellis and Director Allen seconded the motion.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Marchese	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

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

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke

Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education