

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

**EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Via Telephonic Phone Conference**

**March 19, 2020**  
**5:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m. by Marny Xiong, Chair.

**II. ROLL CALL**

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

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; Kevin Burns, Director of Communications; Kaying Thao, Administrator to the Board; Sarah Dahlke, Secretary to the Board

**III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Chair Xiong, and seconded by Director Marchese, to approve the order of the agenda.

**The motion was approved by roll call vote:**

Director Marchese	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Xiong	Yes

Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes

#### **IV. MAIN AGENDA**

##### **A. Report from Superintendent regarding School District's Implementation of the Governor's Executive Order of March 15, 2020.**

Superintendent Gothard then provided details on the work to date, and acknowledging work in front of us. He provided a recap of current events, including the creation of a Distance Learning Plan and the Governor's press conference announcement of closing schools from March 18 to March 27 to allow districts to create a distance learning plan. The language also requires SPPS to provide childcare for essential employees during this crisis and SPPS created Essential Kids Care to provide this for our community; as well as meals for students, and there has been coordination with staff to deliver thousands of meals. He also thanked his Leadership Team, our building principals and support staff for teachers on this digital learning plan for our students.

He also provided high-level details on the implementation, including distance learning phases and planning, as well as platforms for student lessons, training sessions for teachers and staff, equal access for students in special education, role of EAs and TAs in our distance learning plan, multilingual learners instructional model, Spring Break plans and plan for Crossroads. He also provided technical details on iPad distribution for students, Essential Kids Care, and the values of our Governor, State, and City for our employees throughout this crisis with sites at Rondo (58 enrolled), L'Etoile du Nord (50), and Horace Mann (85), with the capacity of 100 students per site and 5:1 ratio by the CDC and MN Department of Health and staffing. He also provided information on meal distribution, with 15,250 meals delivered on Wednesday, and staff working to build and launch this program. He also provided details on meal distribution to bus stops across the city. He also noted the website <https://www.spps.org/covid> with information for families. It's amazing what has happened in SPPS the last few days and staff engaging in ways to make us proud. He thanked everyone and the Board of Education.

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

- Director Marchese thanked the Superintendent and staff who have come together to do this work, and it is heartwarming to see all staff rally a concerted effort to deliver for our students. Implementation is ongoing, with ongoing conversations. He noted thanks and appreciation to the many people making this work, including paraprofessionals, parents and students. The posts on social media have been

positive and important to show how the District pulls together on short notice in these circumstances and do it well.

- Director Ellis noted that she had the opportunity to speak with staff in different departments, and appreciated the overview and impressive work to pull everything together. She also noted the positive mentions on social media, and shows that Saint Paul shows up to do the best work for our students, and to be supportive no matter what is happening, and is very proud of our District and community.
- Director Foster noted that this is an example of how Saint Paul shows up for students and we are in this together. Leadership matters, and Saint Paul has continued to lead the way. She thanked Superintendent Gothard, leadership, and all staff as we move forward with the rules changing each day. She asked that we continue to do what we are doing, and keep updating and bringing new ideas to the entire team. She is proud of everyone and the Saint Paul community.
- Director Brodrick echoed his colleagues. He was not surprised at the great work that is happening, and thanked everyone.
- Director Allen also agreed with her colleagues, and that she is extremely proud to be a part of SPPS with the Superintendent and team doing a great job. She noted the possibility of paraprofessionals or volunteers involved in food distribution or at rec. Centers to ensure every student has food and is willing to pick up boxes and distribute throughout the city to ensure resources are shared and continue volunteer services.
- Director Kopp also agreed with her colleagues. She is grateful for the leadership, including in buildings and classrooms, and grateful for the talent of the team and compassion to problem-solve in this challenging environment. She is thankful for the leadership of the Board as we adjust to this new normal for now and rally and work together in the future to do great things.
- Chair Xiong noted that she also echoes her colleagues to ensure we are all in this together and it is new to all of us and our system, and is so proud of SPPS and our community.
- Superintendent Gothard noted that those words mean a great deal and will be sure to share the appreciation of work. He noted he has asked Chief Turner to follow-up with Director Allen. Patience and flexibility will be key to this work. He noted to take care of ourselves and those close to us, and to do our jobs to the best of our abilities. SPPS is committed to this work - not only complying, to create the very best learning and teaching environment and supporting community outreach opportunities of which to be proud.

**B. Discuss and establish the process for conducting future meetings of the Board of Education via telephonic phone conference during the current**

## **state of emergency.**

Chair Xiong then explained the process for conducting future meetings of the Board of Education via telephonic phone conference during this current state of emergency. Format will be similar to this meeting, with board members having an opportunity for questions and discussion via a roll call to ensure effective meetings and dialogue necessary for this format via phone conference.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Marchese noted the need to conduct business and means necessary at this time understanding the need for social distancing and recommendations from CDC and difficulty to meet in person. It is necessary for us to move forward, and there are topics the District will need to address and business to conduct. He hopes agendas will be constructed for informational conversation as smoothly as possible, and that the Board continues to receive public comment statements as a part of this process.
- Director Ellis clarified that meetings will be conducted in this format until instructed by the CDC. She also wondered about the agenda and input, and continued updates. She also noted that BoardBook will continue to be posted online to be available for all to view.
- Director Foster noted she understands the need for this format, and also to think about modes of public input during this time, with more details on the process for public input to be discussed.
- Director Brodrick noted that while the issue of the pandemic is overwhelming and he is feeling confident that items are being handled as well as possible, there is also business to be conducted. He noted the recent settlement of the contract with SPFE, and how that will impact other items, such as priority-based budgeting and the consequences of the recent settlement on our upcoming budget.
- Director Allen echoed her colleagues with concerns on community input, especially around priority-based budgeting, and whose priorities are centered in the community. This is the safest way to conduct business during the pandemic. She hopes to have community input opportunities or ways to create distance community engagement, so that we can ensure our community feels involved in the process and our schools and continue to invest in them.
- Director Kopp echoed others. She understands the fluid environment, and things are changing rapidly, and hopes that when we are in a clearing to continue the work, that we are prepared to transition as seamlessly as possible. She also hopes for opportunities to engage the community, which is so important especially during this

time, because while we are far apart physically, we can use this as an opportunity to engage and become closer and more connected to take things toward the future.

- General Counsel Chuck Long noted that the business of the District will continue, and the format of agendas will be similar to those previously, with the consent agenda, and new and old business. Just for the time being while dealing with the health pandemic we will be using a different format to do district work and business.
- Superintendent Gothard also noted that he and his team are also looking at engagement, and working with state officials for maximum flexibility for deadlines so we can make the best decisions for right now and coming out of the pandemic state. He noted that the business of the district will continue, including hiring for vacant positions. He also noted further discussion on ways for community input to the Board regarding public comments.

**MOTION: It was moved by Chair Xiong, and seconded by Director Foster, that the Board of Education conduct all future meetings until further notice (or the end of the state of emergency) via teleconference pursuant to Minnesota statute 13D.021.**

**The motion was approved by roll call vote:**

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

**C. Discuss and establish alternative processes for receiving public comment when Board of Education meetings are held via telephonic phone conference.**

The Board then discussed the establishment of an alternative process for receiving public comment when Board of Education meetings are held via telephonic phone conference. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is not practical or prudent to conduct Public Comment in person. Potential options were also discussed. General Counsel Chuck Long noted that public comment is not a requirement under law; it something public bodies can allow and decide to allow - within discretion of how to do it.

Some options may include:

A) leaving messages w/ the board secretary at [sarah.dahlke@spps.org](mailto:sarah.dahlke@spps.org), or 612-434-1105

B) email statements to the SB email (SB.Members@spps.org)

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Marchese noted that it would be helpful for staff to compile all comments into a usable format, and for staff to organize comments by topic or speaker. As in in-person public comment, priority could be given to students and items on the agenda. With emails sent to sb.members, there are concerns about them becoming overwhelming, and would prefer to vet them with staff and compile to send to board members prior to the board meeting. It will be important for community members to send their comments prior to the meeting for board members to review.
- Director Ellis wondered if comments would be read aloud during the teleconference meeting. The proposals were also reviewed and clarified for comments to be sent via email or phone call, as per usual practice.
- Director Foster noted about how the public comments would be a part of public record, and to ensure we are not limiting that as an input for community engagement.
- Director Brodrick noted the expectations in place for the upcoming meeting.
- Director Allen encouraged the team to think outside the box to ensure no one is left out that would like to submit public comments to the Board. She offered suggestions such as an audio version to play during public comment time or a video message. She encouraged community input around this topic, including listening sessions, or Zoom or Skype calls
- Director Kopp noted her agreement with both options, and also agreed about thinking of other ways to take input from the community. It may vary by communication if it is a part of public comment; we need to ensure we are clear about how folks should address those emails or include specific information to be included as part of public comment, with a statement of specific guidelines of how we are choosing to engage in the near-term.
- Superintendent Gothard noted the possible options, and honoring the voice of the public into the record of the Board of Education. For Tuesday's meeting, there may not be a final plan, but time to develop the plan for subsequent meetings, while committed to determining the plan for distance learning. Tnuhis is an unprecedented time and working with this new normal and to think about how to continue to engage the community and ensure we are able to conduct business as usual, including public comment.

Chair Xiong then proposed the following plan, with roll call for board members to offer additional insights:

- For the March 24, 2020 Board of Education Meeting:
    - Invite community members to leave messages with the board secretary via phone or email; and the board secretary will compile comments to be shared with board members
    - Invite community members to email statements to the Board at [sb.members@spps.org](mailto:sb.members@spps.org)
  - Propose a small group to convene and create a process to ensure inclusive voice of the community, and to create a process for future meetings after the 3/24/2020 meeting
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- Director Marchese agreed and appreciated the need for a process in place; he noted concerns about real-time and meaningful input by the public into the agenda for discussion.
  - Director Ellis agreed with the recommendation, and also questioned how long it would take for the team to pull together a plan
  - Director Foster was in agreement.
  - Director Brodrick was in agreement.
  - Director Allen was in agreement.
  - Director Kopp was in agreement and suggested a short explanation that could be made available on the BOE website or share on social media networks.
  - Superintendent Gothard noted the rush for Tuesday's meetings, and is willing to work with the Board to ensure it is done and done right for April and future meetings.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Chair Xiong, and seconded by Director Foster, that the Board of Education move forward with these changes to public comment:

- **For the March 24, 2020 Board of Education Meeting:**
  - Invite community members to leave messages with the board secretary via phone or email; and the board secretary will compile comments to be shared with board members
  - Invite community members to email statements to the Board at [sb.members@spps.org](mailto:sb.members@spps.org)
- Propose a small group to convene and create a process to ensure inclusive voice of the community, and to create a process for future meetings after the 3/24/2020 meeting.

**The motion was approved by roll call vote:**

Director Marchese      Yes

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Xiong	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes

A roll call to determine interest in the small group was also conducted, with Director Xiong, Director Allen, and Director Kopp being interested to serve on this small group task force to determine a process for public comment going-forward after the March 24, 2020 Regular Meeting.

## **V. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Xiong reminded everyone that our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 beginning at 6:05 pm via this same teleconferencing format. The phone number to call in will be 651-728-5389 with access code 129 614 310#.

**MOTION: It was moved by Chair Xiong, and seconded by Director Marchese, to adjourn the meeting. It passed by acclaim.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:31 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