

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

COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING

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

**November 9, 2021
5:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Vue called the Committee of the Board Meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

Vice Chair Vue noted Director J. Foster was not able to attend the meeting and thus would not be part of roll call.

Staff: Superintendent Gothard, C. Long, D. Abrams, K. McCarty, S. Gray-Akyea, A. Collins, K. Thao, K. Burns, J. Turner, C. Carlstrom, C. Baker, A. Schilling, M. Gilbert Dougherty, J. Robinson

Public: J. Verges

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice Chair Vue, seconded by Director Allen, motioned to approve the main order of the agenda. The motion was approved by acclaim.

II.A. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chair Vue turned the floor over to Superintendent Gothard to provide general remarks and to introduce the day's presentations.

Superintendent Gothard began his comments by noting the district continues to have school in session each day while workforce shortages have had their impact as well. Thanks to a substitute coverage plan, they are stepping in to pick up substitute calls and adding needed support. The district needs to be realistic about what needs to be done, with hard compromises. He recalled when Ramsey County had 4 Covid cases in July, but in the current surge in cases the district has had to adjust its plan to support the

day-to-day. He said he thought yesterday's case count may have been an anomaly, but cases are really up. He also noted the press conference held last week, and expressed thanks to Ramsey Public Health for their partnership. He said we're almost there regarding vaccinations for younger students. It will be important to open up access to vaccinations and identify barriers to ensure those with less access have access. Schools will help with these efforts. Any questions?

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Vue asked for an update about Metro Transit providing transportation for students.
- Chief Turner responded by stating that the intention was to come to the Board in December with an official Metro Transit and student transportation update. She added that there was a meeting with Metro Transit yesterday and stated that this partnership had been going well; students are learning the system and the district had received mostly positive feedback from families, students, and staff. Metro Transit informed SPPS of one route that will be removed from the system, which will impact 5 students. The district will be working on options for those students. Overall, it's going extremely well. There's a plan to meet again at the end of December or early in the year about the district's needs for next year. Metro Transit is willing to continue our partnership.
- Director Carrillo: In general, you're saying the reduction will only impact a few students?
- Chief Turner: Yes.
- Carrillo: How are we doing with regular bussing? Still struggling to find drivers?
- Chief Turner: We are slowly improving each week. We are back to our new normal while always continuing to recruit new drivers.
- Director Carrillo: Thank you.
- Director Vue: No further questions.

II.B. 2022 Legislative Agenda

Presenter: Mary Gilbert Dougherty, Legislative Liaison

Gothard: We are quickly approaching the time to address our 2022 legislative strategy. Mary Gilbert Dougherty will lead us through the discussion of this important work.

Mary: Thank you for having me here tonight. This is a supplemental budget year with a potential surplus, so the Governor will be making supplemental budget recommendations. The bonding bill may be easier to pass this year because a federal bonding bill just passed and will ease things for the state bonding bill. The Governor will be making recommendations for the \$1.23 billion dollar Federal ARP spending plan and the House and Senate will hold hearings about how to allocate that federal funding. Given political division in the state the legislature's agreement on federal fund use is very difficult, but the legislature may be motivated to come to an agreement because the Governor decides how to spend the money if the legislature does not decide.

To make things even more complicated, all state officials are up for election and all will be running in new districts. All Senate and all House and Executives are running. It's not clear how the endorsement process will work. I think the Republican convention will likely meet at the end of May. I will keep you updated on important dates. There's some discussion that precinct caucuses may be delayed until after the redistricting map is released. No one expects the legislature to agree on redistricting.

The state has taken in more money every month than projected. The November forecast will have the entire picture and we'll know what the state has collected and anticipates through the end of this

biennium. Expected expenditures will be known at that time as well, based on current formulas and how entitlements are funded based on estimated expenditures. In February another forecast that will be used by the legislature for the supplemental budget. May 23rd is the official adjournment date of the legislature. In an election year, the Governor would likely decline to call a special session. The governor could call a special session but the legislature determines when they will actually adjourn. It is expected that the Governor would only declare a special session after there is agreement about what the special session's agenda will be and if they are close to an agreement.

Slide content reviewed during presentation:

- Important Dates
 - November Forecast (early December)
 - Session reconvenes January 31, 2022
 - February Forecast (end of February)
 - Supplemental Budget will follow forecast
 - Sine Die May 23, 2022
- Legislative Priorities
 - Stabilize Education Funding - Cross-subsidies
 - Comprehensive Plan for School WorkForce Shortages
 - Enhance Taxpayer Equity
 - Enhance Local Control and Reduce Mandates
 - Provide Resources for Child and Family Stability and Support
- Special Education
 - Commit to phasing out cross subsidy, which is estimated to grow to \$806 million by FY25
 - At a minimum, hold cross-subsidy flat
 - State average cross-subsidy \$917 per ADM FY25
 - St. Paul Cross-Subsidy \$1,138 per ADM in FY20
 - Charter School Cross-Subsidy \$120 per ADM in FY20
 - Federal revenue estimated at 5.9% in FY25
 - Allow districts to recoup un-reimbursed fees charged by Intermediate districts and Co-ops
 - Allow district to close special ed programs under open enrollment
 - Enhance Medical Assistance (MA) Reimbursement for social work services
 - Establish tuition billing work group to make recommendations for districts with above regional/state average billing
- Phase-Out EL Cross-Subsidy
 - The English learner funding formula should provide the resources necessary to prepare students to achieve state and federal standards
 - State shortfall in FY20 \$117.2 million, SPPS is \$23.3 million
 - At a minimum, include EL increase from FY21 in the base
 - Phase out the current EL cross-subsidy

Whereas EL services may have been in a few districts a number of years ago, today it's an issue across the state.

- Underfunding/Counting of Compensatory

- Expand criteria for determining poverty to include other factors to determine compensatory funding
- Expand direct certification for Free/reduced lunch to include Medical Assistance (MA) for free/reduced lunch -- increases access to nutrition services and compensatory revenue
- Modify the compensatory formula to allow for the greater of the previous years fall count of the average of the previous two years' count

Extra time was allowed last year, but the forms and process are very confusing to families. There was concern by some people that using such services could impact Green Card applications. The purpose is to provide nutrition for families and to help us with revenue for these services, such as free and reduced lunch programs.

- Comprehensive Plan for School Workforce Shortages
 - Create a stakeholder / legislative work group to identify barriers and make recommendations to develop short and long-range plans to address school workforce issues, including bus drivers, licensed staff, substitute teachers, and non-licensed staff.

We are at a critical stage for schools. The bus driver shortage hit SPPS very hard and we are probably stealing drivers from other districts, but there's a shortage of other professionals too, including custodians. What do we need to do from a benefits standpoint to consider coming back to work on a part-time basis? During the pandemic there were some pension adjustments for medical professionals; what could we recommend for the entire state in the sector of education?

- Enhance Taxpayer Equity
 - Increase equalization of operating referendum, local option and debt service levies
 - Oppose taxpayer subsidies of private education through vouchers, tax credits or scholarships

Saint Paul's tax base is not as strong as other district's. So St Paul homes pay higher taxes than homeowners in other districts. We oppose taxpayer subsidies for vouchers and related initiatives.

- Reduce Mandates and Enhance Local Control
 - Oppose any new unfunded mandates
 - Reduce and streamline the reporting requirements for any underfunded or unfunded mandate
 - Allow school boards to renew existing referendum

This would be a year to renew existing referenda as none failed this year.

- Provide Resources for Child and Family Support
 - Support additional resources for highly mobile and homeless families
 - Increase school linked mental health grants and other child and family support services for at risk families
 - Support high quality after school and summer programs

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Ellis requested additional information about the K-12 funding formula and prospects for change.

- Director Dougherty: That's a good question. It depends on the K-12 committee. Proposals from the Finance Workgroup would include increasing the concentration formula, which is at 11% right now and has not been updated in years. Districts need more resources to provide services, such as for immigrants.
- Director Ellis: Regarding phasing out special education reimbursements, what does that look like? Phasing out would seem like it would be hard to do. What does it mean to phase it out? Is that even possible?
- Director Dougherty: It's a good question. I think the surplus will be substantial. What's allocated to education will make a difference. It would be a combination of how they were going to fund special education -- state plus local districts? Or a limited amount that charters or open enrolled in another school district could bill back to districts. So there could be strategies, if you could get a new formula. We would have to get a forecast for about 3 years. If there's a formula change that has to be a forecasted item. Entitlements are built into the formula.
- Director Brodrick: Thank you very much, Mary. 20 years ago when I first joined the board, you and Joyce Rockne tried to get me up to speed on state school finances and I want to thank you for that. Way back then, you made me acquainted with terms like unfunded mandates and a term I did not know existed was cross-subsidization. In the past 20 years we have not crossed into the promised land yet. Could you give this board some advice in terms of what we could do now and whether there is any hope to cross into that land where schools are properly financed. I know you could give us some good advice.
- Director Dougherty: That's a good question. As St. Paul schools are in a democratic city, there's a lot of school support. We believe we can get parents and students to support it from a grassroots perspective -- special education and EL student services -- to explain the need and importance. That's why those were two key focus areas. We have a very active special ed parent group. We work with advocacy organizations and we just keep pushing it and hold their feet to the fire.
- Director Allen requested clarification regarding the district being allowed to close a special education program under open enrollment.
- Director Dougherty: That was a recommendation. It wouldn't be unusual for a charter school to send their transition students to us. It doesn't mean that we would do it, but we would have the option to close the program.
- Director Allen: How are we being reimbursed now versus what we're asking for?
- Director Dougherty: For mental health services, it's a whole separate system, including credentialing, servicing, and it's very paperwork heavy. There are separate assessments. Our social workers -- it's too much work. Some suggest modeling the process after Michigan's system for medical assistance reimbursements to reduce paperwork.
- Director Allen: Do we ever ask for support of school facilities?
- Director Dougherty: Good question. Generally, it's geared at state owned schools or districts that have so little property tax that they could not apply for that building's construction. Generally, school districts do not come in for state bonding.
- Director Allen requested additional information about how allocation of funding is determined and whether it is paid on a percentage basis and how property taxes in a given year may impact that calculation.
- Director Dougherty: Some districts could not pay for building improvements due to their low tax base.
- Director Allen asked whether any special consideration is given to districts with a large nonprofit sector which reduces the tax base.
- Director Dougherty: It's based on what the tax base is. If a city has a lot of nonprofits you would get more equalization.

Vice Chair Vue noted the closure of the question/comment period.

BF# 32555 MOTION: Approve 2022 Legislative Agenda

Vice Chair Vue moved approval, seconded by Director Allen, of the 2022 Legislative Agenda. The motion was approved by acclaim.

II.C. Final FY21 Budget Revision

Presenter: Arleen Schilling, Controller

Controller Schilling: We are presenting to you the FY21 final budget revision for approval by the Board of Education. Final FY21 audits are complete and we come before you with the final FY21 budgets. The Board may recall earlier this year, in March 2021, we reviewed the first revision.

See BoardBook for detailed tables of FY21 Final Budget Revision (All Funds - Revenue Changes)

The reasons for revenue revisions include a reduction in total funds due to adjustments due to a decrease in student enrollments last fiscal year, in addition to changes in the Food Service, Community Service, Community Service - Fully Financed, and General - Fully Financed budget lines.

See BoardBook for detailed tables of FY21 Final Budget Revision (All funds - Expenditure changes)

The impact of coronavirus funds on expenditures is apparent. There is also a one-time transfer of 16 FTE to Title 1 programs.

See BoardBook for detailed table regarding the FY21 Final Budget Revision (Fully Financed Funds - Revenue and Expenditure Changes), which reflect the approval of grants that were not in the adopted budget, as well as revisions to adopted grants and entitlements.

Recommendation: To approve the Fiscal Year 2020-21 final budget revision as presented.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Ellis: I should know Cares Act Funding and Coronavirus Relief Funding. Regarding food service funding, what is that - supplies, staffing, food?
- Controller Schilling: Yes, food services funding provided for emergency staffing in December and supplies (boxes) and transportation costs of food delivered to the site. Depending on the timeframe of funding, be it ESSR, CARES, use of those funds depended on timing and other factors and covered a wide variety of items.
- Superintendent Gothard: A lot of this could go all the way back to March 2020. There were a lot of unknowns at that time and we were charged to go forward and work to get reimbursed for those expenses.
- Controller Schilling: There were ESSR 1, 2, and 3, and then similar funds from the City of Saint Paul and the county, and different departments in the community.
- Director Ellis: I'm just trying to keep it all straight. Given all those different categories of funding, it would be helpful to go back to consider them as we make plans to go forward.

BF# 32556 MOTION: Approve Final FY21 Budget Revision as presented.

Vice Chair moved approval, and Director Allen seconded, of the Final FY21 Budget Revision as presented. The motion was approved by acclaim.

II.D. Envision SPPS Update

Presenter: Chief Jacqueline Turner

Chief Turner: We are focusing tonight on the opportunities with Envision SPPS and revisiting the theme from last night and providing additional information about enrollment, number of 18 year olds in the district, charter school information, and information from public information sessions. This information is contained in the handout for this meeting and posted on the Envision SPPS website. Public information meeting summaries are provided in the first language, with summary comments provided in English.

During the Special Envision SPPS Meeting yesterday (November 8, 2021), I mentioned the maps clarification and that information is included in this handout.

We had a rushed meeting last night and I want to thank you for your ongoing support of this process.

Tonight the goal is to spend some time going over what Envision's opportunities are. We talked a lot about the healing process, but we have not talked as much about the opportunities that come along with Envision, especially in the area of early childhood education. Thus, the ways Envision SPPS aligns with the strategic plan and the capital plan. The opportunity is now. Vice Chair Vue I want to be mindful and wish to note that there's much interest in the packet/handout.

The meeting proceeded immediately to an extended question/comment period, in which the following themes were brought up by Board members, in chronological order:

- Request for data regarding the allocation of and actual revenue in April, and what it actually takes to run a building, especially the buildings impacted by Envision SPPS;
- The assumed association between the map of Hispanic population and dual language programs, and the relevance of this data to the Envision recommendations. Expressed special concern about representation of Wellstone School area in the data;
- Importance of capturing enrollment (school-age children) trends over time in West Side and North End in data analysis for Envision SPPS;
- Washington High School as the center of the North End, as a point to emphasize what is the best way to serve the community around the former Washington High School (Wellstone);
- Recommendation to engage St Paul's District Councils in Envision SPPS engagement processes;
- Request for themes to be pulled out and synthesized and reported back to the Board to understand what the community was asking for in Envision and how the administration is responding;
- Concerns that those community members who are not sending emails may be perceived as not caring about the Envision SPPS recommendations -- which is not the case;
- Does Envision SPPS represent a cost savings to the district?
- Need to provide clear timeline of process from vote to fall 2022 and fall 2023 -- reasonable time for community to understand what to expect in future years;

Chief Turner: We have not been as clear with what the opportunities for growth are with this plan. With Envision SPPS will be welcoming different types of programming and providing opportunities for discussion regarding early childhood, special education, and more.

Chief Turner then presented a map of where 4-year-olds live in the city, a map Dr. Lori Erickson and team presented a few weeks ago.

Dr. Lori Erickson: The yellow and green on the map represent a low density of 4-year-olds in the city. We zeroed in on the opportunities where there are lower numbers of early childcare seats and we believe Envision SPPS provides opportunities to welcome those families and children into those spaces. The ideal is to have some early childhood hubs with empty schools ready and available for several thousand 3 and 4 year olds who might be entering our schools.

Superintendent Gothard: St. Paul's goal is to have highly effective programming for 3 and 4 year olds in the city, this is on top of President Biden's new programs. The programs would target children who need it most. We're truly looking to provide support to families who need it.

Director Allen: I'd like to clarify that I asked for data of 2-year-olds too.

Chief Turner: This map does not include 2-year-olds.

Director Erickson: That's correct, this map is of 4-year-olds.

Director Allen: It looks like there are a lot of 4-year-olds in Frogtown, North Side, and East Side. If we project out, there would be an increase in kindergarteners, 1st graders and 2nd graders. Looking at this map an increase in kindergarteners might be a natural occurrence..

Director Erickson: You are 100% correct. I have not looked at the data with Covid impacts, but retention data from early years is high. With the early childhood hub model, built from birth with a pathway to the community school. birth.

Director Allen asked for additional information about access, fees and costs to families.

Director Erickson: Every family will receive some benefit from the program for 3 and 4 year-olds and the Build Back Better plan. It would be a sliding scale by income. We are already working through that now.

Director Allen: I'm excited for the 3-year-old pre-school. I just don't want to present opportunities for enrollment where we can increase it. It's a long term process. Change is not going to happen overnight.

Superintendent Gothard: It's important to say that we could focus resources in those hubs to enrich and provide wrap-around services that we might not be able to provide in a decentralized model.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS CONTINUED:

- Request for 2-year-old data in district;
- Toddlers and preschool populations in Frogtown, North End, and East Side is strong and could lead to strong kindergarten enrollment;
- Excitement for preschool for 3-year-olds as part of a long-term enrollment process;

- Do some Envision SPPS recommendations not fulfill the district's intentions? Is a vote on a modified plan possible instead?
- Early childhood workgroup findings -- who are those children and families -- what are their barriers, what kind of quality services do they need? There's a need to partner with those families to understand what they need.
- There are concerns about EDD misdiagnosis of non-normative behavior, and what we owe black students in particular to avoid misdiagnoses.
- Will students in EDD or special education programs be able to enroll in dual language programs?
- Related to EDD and special education, there is a concern about the allocation of appropriate building learning spaces for students with different diagnoses.
- "Planfulness" -- intentionality -- is an important aspect of Envision SPPS, including teacher-to-teacher hand-off of students from one building to a new building.
- There's a need to ensure SPPS is taking care of the needs of the child, or we might lose some kids if we don't request for a walk-through on how students will be supported.

Chief Turner then continued with the slide presentation, emphasizing that Envision SPPS signaled a welcome growth in innovative programming, including college and career programs; culturally-specific programs; full-service community schools; community partnerships. Envision SPPS provides an opportunity to re-set and re-think school use. She said she met with community today that the district has been working with over the years. Community shared that some of the buildings could have a greater good for the community in partnership with services related to food, county workforce, and other city opportunities. She noted that sometimes we have to reconsider and re-set for the greater good. She cited the Arlington example, plus Crosswinds and Open World Learning, which now has a waiting list. She mentioned Journeys as an example of what a school could be. There always are opportunities and Bruce Vento presents such an opportunity. There are some steps to get there and passing Envision SPPS is the first step. From there we can look to create a more intentional program with diverse teachers.

SLIDE: Envision SPPS: Opportunities to Meet Emerging Needs

- Envision SPPS provides opportunity to welcome growth in :
 - Early Childhood Education
 - Special Education
 - Innovative Programming
- Opportunity to be strategic and planful

SLIDE: Envision SPPS: Opportunities to Meet Emerging Needs

- Envision SPPS provides opportunity to welcome growth in innovative programming
 - Culturally-specific programs
 - College and Career Programs
 - Full-Service Schools
 - Community Partnerships

SLIDE: Bruce Vento

- Flagship opportunity to define and meet the needs of the East Side with:
 - State-of-the-art PK-5 school
 - Early Childhood Education hub
 - Community services hub
 - Achievement and Integration, World's Best Workforce
 - Culturally representative staff

Vice Chair Vue called the first recess at 7:25 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Chief Turner continued the presentation by turning to:

SLIDE: SPPS Builds: Potential Actions by Area

Potential actions on December 14, 2021, including Area C (Vento), Area E (Wellstone), and Area F (Obama):

Presenting the mid-term items slide, Chief Turner noted the opportunity for a complete program overview such that there would be the opportunity to prepare Wellstone and other school buildings to see what the options are in technical terms and then engage in strategic planning of our schools and for our communities. Also, it's an opportunity to redefine Cherokee Heights.

SLIDE: Mid-term items (March-April):

- Complete program overview
 - Reviewing the timeline of all work currently identified at closed sites
 - Impacts to timing (if any) on all other currently planned projects
- Anticipate longer term envisioning processes
- Current or future early childhood hub needs
 - Include JJ Hill Gate Check 1 for future use
- Cherokee Heights strategic hold

Chief Turner continued the presentation regarding SPPS Builds: Potential Actions by Area, the longer-term planning process including engagement and program envisioning for Area B: Highwood Hills; Area C: JA Johnson; Area E: LEAP; and Area F: Jackson. For example, can we stop and re-group to discuss what Highwood Hills could be. The district has stated those conversations with families and staff and this is an opportunity to be intentional about what's coming. Open World, Washington, and Easton are examples of success through intentionality.

SLIDE: SPPS Builds: Potential Actions by Area

- Longer-term - Spring-Summer 2022: Engagement and program envisioning -- Area B (Highwood Hills); Area C (JA Johnson); Area E (LEAP); Area F (Jackson)
 - Meeting Stakeholders: School staff, families, neighbors, partners, businesses, policy makers
 - Define spatial opportunities / constraints
 - Define strategic academic opportunities (e.g. early childhood, career readiness, etc.)

SLIDE: Aligning SPPS Achieves, SPPS Builds and Envision SPPS

There was a question about why we did not specify what these buildings would be and when the appropriate time comes to involve community we want to do that. Now is the prime time to involve community, partners, and staff to build together at this time of creation.

Chief Turner continued that this was a one-time opportunity for the district. She said she knows it's a difficult decision to make, but she asked for Board members to think beyond the initial challenges to the impact long-term. She asked the board to think about 20-30 years from now.

Superintendent Gothard noted that in 2018 he did not come here with a plan for SPPS. He said he relied on data and talks with stakeholders, and he gained community trust by going to the public with a referendum for SPPS Achieves, including the strategic use of resources. He said that as we look at that, we have to look at this differently; we need to allocate our resources to do that; we have to be that kind of culture that we want to build. The middle school model was a much needed improvement. Those were very important and strategic decisions that we made. The last piece is SPPS Builds. It's not just for show that we refer to SPPS Achieves. These are three aligned plans. We stand ready for the Board's additional questions and guidance. These are three key plans that are going to guide our work no matter the outcome on the 16th. The question is how do we get to the places we want to go?

Director Vue then asked Board members if they had any SPPS Builds related questions.

Director Kopp: If communities are merging, the Board would appreciate access to the facilities plan timeline and also allows for the co-creation of those plans.

Director Brodrick: I think I made myself clear that we should be talking tonight that we make some modifications to this comprehensive plan. I'm interested in hearing from my fellow board members if they see some components that do not align with the general mission of this plan.

Director Vue: This is a good time to discuss possible outcomes of this plan if it doesn't pass too. What do we do if it does not pass? What I'd like to hear from the administration is about approving some but not all and if it does not pass what are the implications?

Superintendent Gothard: Removing one school out of consideration is not a simple removal process. As it relates to a no vote, what's next? I'm deeply concerned about what's next as the community is on egg shells now and there's been some hurt that's surfaced. We're looking for additional efficiencies. The goal is to get direction from the board about what those next steps are. We would need to communicate clearly with families to ensure they understand what does come next.

Director Vue: Responses from board members?

Director Carrillo: I think one of the questions that I had was from our community members, parents, and staff. The idea was to request an analysis that supports multiple scenarios, for more of an analysis within each scenario that includes much more realistic scenarios. Envision SPPS appears as a laboratory experiment with assumptions that students will move that puts the burden on the schools that are going through trauma to ensure students do make the move. Can we have a real analysis, a risk analysis. Do we have a risk analyst report of the cost estimate of the full Envision SPPS and provides for a certain percentage of kids who will not show up, and a percentage of families who will make what choices. What kind of outcomes are we expecting if the plan itself is too rosy and unrealistic. It could discuss dependencies, such as if we pull a site out, are we as a Board willing to do something in response because the issue does not go away. We as a district need to have a longevity plan. I'm concerned that the plan is not a longevity plan. My concern is sites that are currently well-rounded, well-utilized, and attractive to families are on the chopping block. As a result, the perception of families that my school is next. I have really big concerns about the expectations for the outcomes and what the reality is on the ground.

Director Carrillo: I think Wellstone and Riverview need to be separate and we need to boost West Side enrollment with another plan. I have concerns about longevity of dual immersion if we wholesale accept

the plan. Are we willing to foot the bill if we accept this plan? We could all say yes, and go forward. I personally think that's irresponsible given the information I have and we need to find a middle point. The risk is too high and we do not have real analysis to measure that risk.

Director Kopp: We have all been engaging with this plan in our own ways. During site visits, I talked with principals, teachers and families who are very concerned about where we're at. We've had community come into this space, met with people who are angry at us, at me, I take that in. I know what I know in my stomach and we need to hear that as fully and completely as we can. We've talked about not everyone coming here to say what's in their heart. People have told me that this is really hard but they think it needs to happen. They don't want to come say those things either. There are a lot of reasons for speaking or not speaking. I ask my colleagues as we are moving through this with great humility and thoughtfulness, there are people in our community who are struggling in our buildings. They are there for the kids because they do not want families to know that they are suffering. If we pause and say 'nope not now', this does not go away. It is grueling to try to attract new families to a school and it's unkind to ask families to do that another year. In addition to listening and studying. I've heard from my colleagues about what we do with the building. I know it's not popular, but I'm going to have to go back to look those principals in the eye next year. I will also say our responsibility is to student outcomes. Can we get to where we're going? I love this place; I love these kids and I want what's best for them. I want to be part of doing that. We sat at that dais this summer and heard students talk about the arts and how important that we provide those opportunities. No school board comes to close schools. This is the hardest thing schools and boards have to do. I did that for those kids so they could learn. I'm a big dreamer; I love big ideas. I like the impossible. If I thought there was a different way that could be different, but I've done my homework. We can disagree and that's okay too. Depending on where you sit this looks very different.

Director Allen: Thank you Director Kopp for centering us on students and outcomes, on well-rounded education. Some of that misdiagnosis comes from a lack of a well-rounded education. Students are not interested in learning and education. You see that very clearly on the middle school level. Students weren't engaged because they had not had a well-rounded education previously. I am concerned about the numbers and the math of all of Envision SPPS. I have not seen a really clear plan about how that happens. Sometimes those things don't all fall in line and that concerns me and I'm concerned in 2,3, or 4 years other schools will be on the list. It comes down to the buy-in of our community and developing solutions to create a plan that works for everyone. It's emotional for me and emotional for parents. It's important to speak with parents about developing a well-rounded experience. We have worked really hard and what would it look like if you did this work AND it was a well-rounded program. I'm thinking about that and how hard it is to be in those spaces. Who we're affecting, what programs we're affecting and here we are coming with another disruption now. Drastic things do not have to be traumatic. I want us to get to a place so we are all on the same goal -- to provide well-rounded schools. Where does this money come from if we don't make these drastic changes? Where does the money come from? I'm excited about the last hearing on Thursday, and to process the information we have. What is the long term of this? What will 5 yrs from now look like, when we have provided well-rounded schools and all-day pre-K? It's the right direction we need to go and drastic changes are needed and I'm still processing. I'm right here in the middle weighing everything.

Director Ellis: In 2016 I was sitting in a very similar spot, not as many buildings under consideration at that time but in a similar spot. Having not followed everything that happened prior to that meeting in 2016, being a new board member at that time. We did not have as much information as we do this time...There were a lot of questions that just never got answered at that time. I did not think I'd be in this place again. We've talked a lot about enrollment and programming and a lot of things that impact programs as staff

leave and we subsidize smaller schools. Understanding that connectedness now versus 2016, I struggle now about the building locations, the demographics, and that 10% of students are impacted. It's still an impact, and we don't know what that impact will be. Looking at the demographics of the students, when they're showing up to speak or stop you on the street, will they feel like they've been heard? We're talking about well-rounded schools and in doing that the drastic changes we make will have an impact on the district. If families are not envisioning what we are, families will leave. If students aren't going from point A to point B, what happens? It isn't just a matter of we make this plan, but rather how is this going to play out in the district in the next several years? The fact that we're losing enrollment is not a reason to vote yes. I'm processing everything. Families are looking to us to understand how it will go and how long the district will limp along. We are thinking about families and staff with so much uncertainty. It's a terrible cycle to put people through year after year. Envision to get students a well-rounded education and it's a continuous conversation to express concerns and listen to innovative, creative ideas for schools with limited resources. We need to own that we've put people in those positions with so few resources. To the point of not passing Envision SPPS, are there things from this plan at all that the district would try to bring forward? Do we have a plan to tell families if not every student will go from School A to School B? We have to be able to answer that question in order for community to go with us whatever the vote is. What will the district do? Key questions: 1. What is the timeline for achieving a well-rounded education; 2. Are parts of the plan still moving forward if it does not pass? Or will it be nothing at all?

Superintendent Gothard: How long does it take to get to well-rounded education? There's a lot of continuous work to do. Chief Turner please share scenarios that you've worked with your team.

Chief Turner: What is happening now and what would happen when schools are combined? Let me give you a real example. This would happen in fall 2022. We cannot guarantee that every family will go to the new school, but this happens every year. Every single school in the district has some mobility. Communication is critical and positivity is critical. The Galtier and Hamline merger is a real example based on enrollment and teachers: Galtier Kindergarten has 1.69 teachers now; Hamline, with 37 students, has 1.5 teachers. Galtier has 26 1st grade students and 1 teacher; Hamline has 24 students and 1 teacher. If combined, you get to 356 kids in the merged school, an ideal school size is 450 but it's much closer to that ideal size. A newly merged site would have 81 Kindergarten students, 3 teachers and 3 sections of programming. Thus there would be a team of teachers and it would look similar in the rest of the grades. Principal would have much more to work with. What if a lot of kids don't come? That's a concern, but we do have ARP money this year and next year to use for extra funding.

Chief Schrul: We have FY22 ESSR II funding for 99 FTEs at elementary sites, for specialists and additional prep time.

Director Ellis: That's short-term planning, ESSR. Will you be able to sustain things you've started with ESSR II funds? When it goes away will we still be able to sustain these? You don't build on temporary funding.

Chief Turner: If we can get the majority of our schools to a 3-section base or minimum 350 enrollment, schools would have a menu of options to choose their well-rounded options, which they do NOT have now: field trips, theater. Galtier cannot offer those things now. Once we have a strong product to sell we believe people will come back. We've seen it in middle schools; we've seen it in Washington. That happens when we invest in our programs.

Director Ellis: How is using ARP Funds and ESSR funds different from subsidizing? Is that not the way I should be looking at it?

Superintendent Gothard: It is short-term funding for strategic reasons is not the same thing as subsidizing a school that's unsustainable.

Director Brodrick: I've been preparing myself for the inevitability that we're going to have to close some unsustainable schools and thus I was very interested in learning how we'd go about doing that. Director Kopp talked about the danger of getting involved in a pause. I thought Envision SPPS was about right-sizing. I know the pain of a school closing. I've been getting myself prepared for this sad time and understand that a school merger has potential for good things. I've been involved in a merger that worked out wonderfully. But as a total plan, I'm concerned about 3 plan components: 1. North End/Rice Street is on the brink. There are a lot of things that I'm concerned about at Wellstone. Rice Street does not need an empty building on the top of the hill right now, a landmark building with its first graduating class in 1925. I cannot vote for any plan that does not tell me what's going to happen to that school. I'm concerned about the future of that landmark building 2. I have a global concern and that's that St. Paul has been a welcoming community for a very long time. The global situation now for immigrants and refugees is so precarious and we need to make sure we are a welcoming community. I'm very concerned we may need to make modifications to this plan: Highwood Hills is a community center for a couple different ethnic communities and LEAP. It's not the time to close LEAP either, though perhaps it could be reimagined. How do we ensure that our plan will not do harm but do good?

Chief Turner: Director Brodrick -- Wellstone will still be used by the city as a rec center and have staff housed in that building. Title I offices are there and if people are working there would that meet your expectations?

Director Brodrick: It's been a big part of that neighborhood since 1925, as a school. I want something that's truly tied up with education.

Superintendent Gothard: Director Brodrick I heard you say something to the effect of that we have to come back with something different, but we would not bring new schools into Envision SPPS.

Director Vue: I suggest that we do break down the plan to just 5% of students. Regarding LNFI merging, what made this plan work? We have not heard much from the LNFI community about this plan.

Chief Turner: LNFI has been looking at their data and they have seen the growth and the decline, so they began to work internally to understand the issues. They then suggested innovations. They also saw their specialists are driving between their two buildings and that it was not efficient. The merger idea came from the school community. They realized the impact on their own.

Director Vue: Regarding LEAP -- we've been getting a lot of feedback. Why hasn't that worked?

Chief Turner: I encourage the board to dig deep with this one. What part of LEAP is working and what part is not? LEAP is a comfortable place to be. The LEAP meeting was all staff and former students, but no current students. LEAP worked 30 years ago but it's not the most appropriate school experience now. I had to wonder about the student who spoke if she had other opportunities, with orchestra, an IB course or other opportunities that could happen if they were aligned with a comprehensive high school.

Dr. Sarah Schidt de Carranza, Executive Director, Multilingual Learning:

Regarding LEAP, when it was established we did not have other programs like it. Today, within our language academy high schools, we have those supports for LEAP students. I've spoken with school leaders and reviewed materials. What I heard loud and clear at the LEAP meeting was that students are worried about the level of care at other schools. I truly feel that we are able to provide care at our language academy high schools. At the office of multi-lingual learning, we have just as many students not choosing LEAP as the number who do. We have invested in providing layers of support to students and achievement is very similar across both school types (MCA, ACT, etc). I have not seen something that shows us that there's something better than another. We have over 1,000 seats that could be dedicated to our EL students. I hear the care and concerns about the LEAP staff and students, but at the same time there've been a lot of changes at our schools, there have been leaps forward in the field of ESL. We don't want to separate EL students but rather provide wrap-around services for them in language academies and I'm confident we can meet those needs. Please let me know if you can provide any additional content or detail.

Director Vue: I struggle with this plan that is clear direction and goal and building use for some, but for others it's not clear. I like the plan parts where it's clear what people are getting, but those other parts need a lot of work. Schools are part of neighborhoods; they're important. The community needs to know what they are getting in return and I don't see consistency in this plan that would allow all communities to know what they are getting in return. We can make hard decisions, but the way to do that is to do it together.

Chief Turner: We have taken 18 months to bring forth a thoughtful plan. We would like to work with the city, county, and the neighborhood to envision what the LEAP building could be. When the ribbon-cutting happens the community can be proud of that outcome. We are asking for 90 or 120 days to allow for the process. We do not intend to leave the Wellstone building vacant for long. We need a building potentially for Obama. If you look at the Hmong Immersion program, they want to know where the next Hmong Immersion program could be. Maybe it could be at Wellstone? Maybe. We need enrollment support to reopen these buildings.

Director Vue: The whole purpose is well-rounded education, but how and when we do it is also important. If we don't clarify what they will be getting in return, it defies the logic of this goal. They don't know what to expect and they weren't involved in this process enough. How can we create a reliable, trusted district? There are a lot of question marks and inconsistency throughout the plan.

Chief Turner: Is it fair to assume that you're uncomfortable with the lack of plans for some schools.

Director Vue: Yes, LEAP is an example. When does that end? What's the timeline and the process for making that decision? It could be 1, 2, or 3 years.

Chief Turner: I will work with the team to provide more specific time periods for each school. We could have put something in each school as part of this plan...but there are multiple interests in each of these buildings. For example, there could be some adult and some community planning. We won't have a problem filling the schools. The issue is meeting the demands of the community.

Director Vue: Regarding John A Johnson & Vento: When will the board vote on John A Johnson plans?

Chief Turner: John A Johnson will be used immediately for summer school as it's air conditioned.

Director Kopp: What I'm hearing is we need clarity and to provide specificity about buildings that will be empty, in addition to monitoring our progress and providing milestones as we discussed last night. This includes putting in timelines and when the Board would like a report.

Chief Turner: I think a little bit of both is very helpful. I appreciate your directness and transparency. Staff have put some drafts ideas together, but we have not shared those publicly. Every department represented here -- their work will change depending on what happens with the vote on November 16th. We can provide a framework about progress and monitoring that board could react to. SPPS Builds plan perhaps is a useful guide for this regarding transparent progress reporting. It would be public and have a dashboard.

Director Vue: There's one school that's brand new: Hmong Middle School. It's brand new and I want to make sure that school is supported with a clear plan.

Chief Turner: Yes, once approved by the board, there would be time through September to develop that plan. During implementation mode, Hmong Middle School will have that support.

Director Ellis: The Obama plan is to have Montessori and Middle School in the same school and that plan is not fully detailed in the materials. Are the budgets separate? Is middle school starting with 6th or would it immediately have three grade levels, 6th-8th? Need more details about the two programs that are different in one building.

Chief Turner: If you look at work with the Montessori group, they were looking for a community in which Montessori students could continue to be in a Montessori environment even if it was not a Montessori middle school. Best practice says we should start one grade at a time, but we will listen to the community to see how it should start 6th or 6th-8th or some other configuration. If SPPS academics were to choose, the middle school would start with one grade - 6th. But we want to give some autonomy to schools to make some decisions, including whether or not to combine budgets to fund specialists.

Chief Collins: There will be conversation with community to ensure people know what to expect.

Chief Turner: We have done this in the past. Not all issues are determined because those details begin after the vote on the 16th, and we have some flexibility in that. We want to give autonomy to schools to make some of those decisions.

Director Ellis: We're hoping part of Obama will be a viable middle school starting at 6th grade or possible 6th-8th. For now it's just JJ Hill. I'm thinking about what's a viable 6th grade class. At present the plan is too squishy for me to support.

Chief Turner: All of your questions, these are what the core admissions team has been working on for some time. They worked through many scenarios and we brought forth the scenario that would work best. It would be irresponsible of me to propose something that would not work with the anticipated numbers.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS:

- There's a need to discuss possible outcomes of the plan if it does not pass.
- There was a request for a risk assessment report that would provide a more realistic analysis for each school plan. The key question being: will students actually transfer to their new school?

- There's an appearance that the burden is being placed on schools to manage the trauma of change.
- There is a concern about the longevity of dual immersion programs with this plan.
- A request was made to consider those who are not raising their voices but who are struggling (including principals) in the current school structure. Also, that it's unkind to families to put off decisions for another time/year.
- An expression of love for the kids and a desire to have what's best for them, and an acknowledgement that depending on where you sit that can look very different.
- There's a need to center discussion on students and outcomes.
- There are concerns about the numbers and the math of Envision SPPS, and the need to consider the impact of not acting.
- Emphasis that drastic things do not have to be traumatic.
- It's difficult to know what impact Envision SPPS might be on students, families and the district.
- What is the timeline for achieving a well-rounded education?
- Are parts of the plan still moving forward if it is not passed? Or would it be nothing at all?
- Are ESSR II funded initiatives sustainable?
- Is it appropriate to consider RP and ESSR funds as subsidies?
- There's a need to ensure St. Paul remains a welcoming community and thus a need to modify the recommendations for Highwood Hills, LEAP High School and Wellstone.
- A recommendation to adjust the plan to impact just 5% of students.
- Why does it appear that some plans for mergers are accepted by those communities but others are not? What has been different about those processes?
- There's a perception that some aspects of Envision are very clear, but not others. Communities need to know what they are getting in return. The plan appears to lack consistency and there's a need to develop plans together.
- There's a need to ensure this is a reliable, trusted district.
- There's a need to provide clarity and specificity about buildings that will be empty, with monitoring of progress/milestones and timelines and reports to the Board.
- There's a need for transparency with community and with data presentation.

Vice Chair Vue called a second recess at 10:25 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 10:37 p.m.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/COMMENT BY BOARD MEMBERS CONTINUED:

- Is opening a middle school at Obama viable given there are three middle schools within a mile of that school? Is it a sustainable school on its own?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS/RESPONSES (PARAPHRASED):

Director Vue: I'd like to get to the point of hearing board members to express that board members are comfortable with and ask administration about the ability to break up the package and make separate votes on it.

Director Kopp: I would not be in favor of going one-by-one because they are very interconnected.

Superintendent Gothard: Member of the board, first and foremost. There is not an official motion before you now. A few things come to mind as I think about modifying this now or at a later date. We've publicly listed these schools. If we move some off but not all that's problematic. If not approved, we would go back

to the drawing board. As you know., you are the directors of the school district and the administration will take your lead and take your guidance.

Director Kopp: I shared before about my experience, but what I have not shared is that part of that process involved communities working together or possibly merging or closing. It was a facilitated process that provided meals over 8 months. It was transparent. At the end of it, when the recommendation for closure came it was as if none of that had happened. In the end, it is about the decision about which school closes even after an intensive 8-9 month process. My own experience tells me that there's more than one possibility there. I'm offering that as a real life experience, something very similar to what we're doing now.

Director Brodrick: The other night I mentioned that people do not come out and give us their feedback until they've seen something they understand and feels tangible to them. I will not second guess the amount of community engagement that took place before it was unveiled to us. I have heard that some groups were not populated by students and parents, but I can't say what impact they would have had had they been a part of that group. Consequently, I think once we entered into these last few weeks. I'm looking forward to the additional public comment hearing because what bothered me most about the first public comment was not so much that people were coming but that they were demonstrating their pain and sadness. I was disappointed in what they were dissatisfied with and a lack of trust in the district. I almost felt a sense of distrust in the district among the audience. That's one of the most basic things that we need. If we come back with the exact same recommendation that we brought to them a few weeks ago, they will say that despite so much feedback, they still did the same thing. I don't think we should get into the business of changing something to make it more palatable, but we certainly have to convey the message that we did indeed listen. We have to show the public that we did. Otherwise, parents and community people will not be involved in the district. We talk so much about transparency and establishing trust and then we seem to be a little cavalier in our process. Simply voting up or voting down the same proposal we were presented with a few weeks ago. Our parents have lost trust in SPPS and left the district. I'm still very proud of SPPS.

Superintendent Gothard: Based on comments by members of the Board. There's a week until our next meeting. There's time to continue to get feedback. By noon on Friday we'll have a presentation to present to the public that we'll present to the Board for a vote on Tuesday. There's a lot of work left.

Director Brodrick: I understand exactly what Dr. Gothard just said. It's unfair for us to not give you some concrete option or counter-recommendation. I might ask Vice Chair Vue's original question, what would we like to see in terms of an option to the recommendation? Administration has come forward with recommendations. Would it be possible for us to suggest that the administration come forward to their recommendations but also options that we could decide on then. I don't want to simply vote something down when we know we need to do something.

Director Vue: What we've heard tonight from the administration is that we have a complete package. What I hear from Superintendent Gothard is that we will receive a Board Book on Friday and then we could as a Board a motion could be made by the Board.

Superintendent Gothard: In terms of how the board would consider the recommendations. Could the Board make a proposal during the session on Monday?

General Counsel Long: Once the final presentation is made on the proposal, at that time the Board can

make a motion at that time on Tuesday to vote for or against the recommendation in its entirety or to amend the plan as presented to the Board.

Director Vue: It has to be done on Tuesday night.

General Counsel Long: Yes, that's how it was presented to the public that the vote will take place on Tuesday.

Director Brodrick: Will we see the recommendations in advance?

Superintendent Gothard: Yes, it will be listed in the presentation.

Chief Turner: We have been careful not to give too much pre-notice to avoid it being published in the paper before the board meeting. If the direction is to publish it in the Board Book that could happen.

Director Brodrick: If we have the recommendation via the Board Book is there any reason we cannot discuss it Monday night?

General Counsel Long: No, meeting on Monday is a continuation of our meetings where it is being further discussed.

Director Brodrick: Yes, on this particular Monday, the day before the Board meeting, we'll have digested what we heard at the public hearing and have in hand the recommendation that the administration will be presented formally on Tuesday. So, Monday is an important opportunity to discuss what will happen the next night. So decision we make is one we can live with.

Chief Turner: One of things that the team committed to throughout this process was to make some real time additions to the plan. What we heard from LEAP was the need to provide support. The plan is to provide that additional support. Washington has a guaranteed seat for Wellstone Biosmart students. Those things you will see in there. Those are some of the things we have made adjustments on in real time. Are those the types of things the Board is looking for in the final recommendation.

Director Vue: I think so.

Director Allen: I think that's part of it, but also what is the reassurance that we'll get where we're trying to go. We've listened to a lot of communities and trust is important. We need to think about how we collaborate to get there together. For me, I really would like the time to table this until December to take time to spend with people. Not necessarily to change the recommendations but to perfect them. Where is the input from community? I think Director Brodrick was trying to ask how we bring that in so we're all comfortable with this plan. We could all continue the conversation on Monday, but the official proposal still needs to incorporate what happens each day until then. So on Friday, the administration brought forth their best effort and we all collaborated together. That's what I'd like to see happen, but Thursday to Tuesday is tough. I know it's hard on Student Placement and others to postpone. We really want to show the community that we're all working together for your student. Parents know their kids and the board knows their constituents. You all are professionals.

Director Kopp: I have concerns about waiting. I want to walk into the meeting on Tuesday with chaos. It's bad for our community. I want us to know what we're walking in to do. I had experience with SROs votes

to end the contract. Surprising the community was a real disservice. If we're talking about building trust, we won't if we show up and we don't know what we're doing. People are going to have a reaction to that. However we proceed I just ask that we're confident in what we're planning to do that day. I just ask my colleagues and administration to please let's have that conversation about people who want this to happen. They are our community too. Let's remember that part.

Director Allen: We really do need to come in as a strong Board on Tuesday. If we're not going in that direction we're here to support well-rounded schools going forward. This was really hard for our community and we definitely need to figure that out before Tuesday.

Chief Turner: Will follow up with data and share about maps in response to director Carrillo.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Vue, finding no further questions or comments, concluded the Committee of the Board meeting of November 9, 2021.

As reminders, Vice Chair Vue noted a Public Hearing of the Board of Education is scheduled on Thursday, November 11, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., with public comment. A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Tuesday, October 19, 2021 beginning at 5:30pm with public comment.

Finally, the next Committee of the Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 7, 2021 beginning at 4:30pm.

Vice Chair Vue, seconded by Director Allen, motioned to adjourn. The motion was approved by acclamation.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 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