

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

COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING

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

**October 5, 2021
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Vue called the Committee of the Board Meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Vue, J. Foster, Y. Carrillo, Z. Ellis, J. Kopp
C. Allen arrived a few minutes late.

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

Staff: Superintendent Gothard, C. Long, K. Wilcox-Harris, M. Schrul, C. Baker, K. Thao, T. Parent, M. Langworthy, K. McCarty, J. Allen, C. Anderson, M. Lochungvu, K. Kimani, H. Kilgore, A. Collins, B. Chan, M. Doud, Y. Vang, B. Hammer, D. Ginther, J. Turner, K. Wilcox-Harris, M. Vue

Public: J. Verges, P. Lindstrom

III. APPROVAL OF MAIN ORDER OF THE AGENDA

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

III. AGENDA

III.A. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the Committee of the Board Meeting on October 5, 2021, Superintendent Gothard welcomed everyone to the meeting, and provided a brief narrative regarding long-term student outcomes as the district's core focus, including race, ethnicity, culture, and identity as they intersect with academic readiness, college and career paths. He added that presentation content focused on a few of these areas, including: Culturally relevant instruction---ethnic studies graduation requirement that ensures access to well-rounded education; Strategic allocation of resources -- using resources carefully to improve long-term student outcomes; and Stakeholder engagement in district-level decisions and how best to accomplish that goal.

III.B. Updates to Policy 510.00 Graduation

Vice Chair Vue then turned to Superintendent Gothard to introduce the Updates on Policy 510.00 Graduation.

Superintendent Gothard noted that this update to graduation policy was tied to the academic plan to educate students to think critically, pursue their dreams and change the world. The critical ethnic studies requirement was an exciting addition that has been officially piloted in three district high schools, and he highlighted that the courses were going well. This policy added three words to the graduate requirement: Critical ethnic studies. He then introduced the three presenters of the policy change.

Presenters:

Darren Ginther, Director, Office of College and Career Readiness

Maijue Lochungvu, Assistant Director, Office of Teaching and Learning

Mouakong, Ethnic Studies Specialist, Office of Teaching and Learning

Presenters noted that board approval was required to adopt this graduation policy change and that the proposal before the Board would add three words to the graduation requirement -- critical ethnic studies. No action was being asked of the Board during this meeting; the presentation was a preview of the policy readings and that Board approval would be required at a future meeting to make this change. An important update for the Board was that critical ethnic studies was being piloted this semester as a two-credit human geography course for 10th grade students. Board readings of this policy would take place during Regular Meetings of the Board of Education over the next three months: October (1st reading), November (2nd reading), and December (3rd reading).

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Kopp asked the first question by requesting a few more details about the critical ethnic studies course.
- AD Lochungvu noted that the critical ethnic studies course would be a semester-length course required of all sophomores.
- Director Kopp thanked the presenters for the additional information.
- Director Allen then asked whether standards for this course were aligned with state standards.
- Specialist Vue noted that currently state standards were being revised, but that the development of this course for SPPS students involved reviewing similar course standards in a variety of other school districts and working with SPPS teachers to prepare the course to meet SPPS student needs. He emphasized that the critical ethnic studies course would continue to come alive in the classroom and would change and grow as it was taught in SPPS schools.
- Director Allen asked for clarification regarding the difference between critical ethnic studies and a history course on a similar topic.
- Specialist Vue noted that critical ethnic studies was the interdisciplinary study of race, identity, gender, sexuality and additional content, so it was more than a history course, because it incorporated the arts and music, emphasized intersectionalities and had ties to many disciplines in one course.
- Director Allen then asked whether an Asian American Studies course and Asian American History were essentially the same.
- Specialist Vue: Yes.

- Director Vue asked whether there were any courses in 9th grade that helped students prepare for this required course in 10th grade, such as by providing a framework or some foundation on which to build in the critical ethnic studies course.
- Specialist Vue responded by noting the 9th grade social studies curriculum included world history, which would help to lay the stage for the required course in 10th grade, but there were no prerequisites for the critical ethnic studies course. However, the expectation was that the critical ethnic studies course would lead students to take more courses in African American studies and other courses of their own interest.
- Superintendent Gothard added that the district did not see the critical ethnic studies course as students' only experience in this type of course. Furthermore, this course's content was not set in stone in terms of what the class offers because students also bring something to this course. Certainly, staff would be prepared to teach the course, and to provide a foundation, but the course content would be adjusted to meet students where they are.
- AD Lochungvu noted that units of this course were being piloted now, including 1.5 weeks dedicated to setting the stage for what ethnic studies is, which was followed up with 5-6 additional units.
- Director Vue concluded this discussion by reiterating the intention to return to three readings of this policy change during regular meetings of the board over the next three months.

III.C. Sustainability/Energy Update

Vice Chair Vue turned to Superintendent Gothard to introduce the Sustainability/Energy Update and the three speakers next on the agenda. Superintendent Gothard briefly noted the ways in which the promotion of specific initiatives such as sustainability and solar align with district and community needs.

Presenters:

Chelsea Moody, Environmental Specialist I, Facilities Department, SPPS

Tom Parent, Facilities Director, SPPS

Peter Lindstrom, Clean Energy Resource Teams Manager of Public Sector & Community Engagement, Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, UMN Extension

This presentation provided an update on sustainability and energy progress in recent months and the rationale for creating a Sustainability Advisory Taskforce with the long-term goal of using more renewable energy sources and reducing district operations' impact on the environment. They noted the foundation for this next step included existing partnerships among SPPS facilities and operations, plus Xcel Energy, UMN Extension and others, and the development of an Energy Action Plan. In 2019 the facilities team conducted a feasibility study on school solar projects on the district's 73 buildings, in which 6 buildings met all criteria (Eastern Heights, Four Seasons, Galtier, Washington Tech, Como Senior, and Nokomis South) for installing solar on some or all of the roof. With that, presenters emphasized that this question was not just about solar, but also about community resiliency, environmental health and a number of other questions.

Presenters cited excitement around taking action to address climate change and work toward climate justice, as noted in student survey results in which 85% of the more than 1,500 student respondents reported taking action on climate change and the climate crisis was important and 70% said they were likely to participate in climate action. A SPFE teacher group formed to advocate for solar, which has resulted in public comments at regular board meetings advocating for solar on school buildings and a town hall focused on solar action. Students and staff have channeled their enthusiasm in these ways already and district students have participated in climate strikes at the State Capitol in Saint Paul.

In addition to preparing for this work, the presenters also noted the need to tell the story of SPPS's good work around energy efficiency. The result was the creation of an energy dashboard, the sharing of impact data and what it means in relatable, real-world terms. At the same time, efforts have been made to research energy funding models and talk with other school districts with experience accomplishing similar goals. Since Board approval in July 2020, the team also had the challenge of developing creative ways to engage students when staff and students were not in buildings due to Covid. For example, they hosted a virtual energy talent contest to learn about energy at home and share ways they're saving energy at home, developed an Earth Day activity, and created energy kits as part of an online energy program with 10 schools in the district. These actions helped to create excitement in the community.

Peter Lindstrom's participation in the meeting highlighted SPPS's partnership with UMN Extension's Clean Energy Resource Team (CERT), which was a partnership of four public and private organizations that has worked for 20 years to help communities do clean energy projects across the state of Minnesota. Schools across the state were actively seeking information about clean energy and it's been CERT's pleasure to work with SPPS in recent years and to have spoken with Director Vue about clean energy over the summer. One of the reasons for increased interest in clean energy was the dramatic decrease in the cost of solar at the same time that interest among parents, students and staff had increased. They noted schools were interested in showing community leadership and solar was a visible way to show that leadership. In addition, utilities were typically a school district's second greatest overall operational cost after staff, thus funds can be saved and resources reallocated, in addition to linking these activities to STEM curriculum and career development thanks to 60,000 clean energy jobs in the state today and higher than average job growth in this field. Districts can position students to take advantage of those opportunities.

Still, there were complexities to making this decision because this was not a turnkey project. Many factors were involved such as solar project financing, but there were also innovative financing options including community solar gardens. Districts also needed to determine the scope of these efforts and whether to link them to the curriculum. Creating the Sustainability Advisory Taskforce was an important step and the UMN's CERTs team was ready to partner as a free, public resource for the team as needed.

The state legislature allocated \$16M for a solar on school initiative in which schools can apply for up to 10% of those funds and SPPS facilities would continue to raise awareness of such opportunities to the district.

Presenters noted the key next step was to create, by the end of this fiscal year, the Sustainability Advisory Taskforce grounded in the existing Energy Action Plan that would pull together stakeholders around sustainability -- climate resiliency, climate justice -- to advise the board on these initiatives that intersect with environmental health, access to healthy food and safe drinking water, and more. A first step would be to distribute a survey across the city to identify stakeholder groups to talk about sustainability and stakeholder group priorities in partnership with SPPS facilities and partners in the energy team. After the initial development of stakeholder groups, the next step would be to hold small listening sessions, followed by broad scope listening sessions, and ultimately developing a proposal to bring to the board that converts existing stand-alone efforts and involves technical expertise. In sum, with the board's approval to create the taskforce these steps can begin.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Vue expressed his feeling that the district was on the right path to identifying stakeholders and creating the best pathway to achieve priorities. He then asked for more

specifics about the timeline for creating the Sustainability Advisory Taskforce and what the role of board would be once the proposal was received.

- Specialist Moody noted that the proposal would help determine what the board's role would be, so it would be necessary to wait until the proposal (and intermediate dialogue along the way) to determine what the role of the board would be.
- Director Vue then asked once the taskforce was in place, how the taskforce would help the district more forward with sustainability.
- Director Parent noted that the taskforce would make sure the priorities were clear and help to show how those priorities could be incorporated into the capital plan and district decisions, such as around adaptive challenges and commitments long-term.
- Director Vue sought clarification from Manager Lindstrom whether once the district has direction from the taskforce if that would help the SPPS and CERT team partnership.
- Manager Lindstrom noted this team would help to educate the task force regarding options available, including financing options and curriculum models that could be tapped into. CERTS has a 'good, better, best' mantra to describe different school sustainability projects. Edina Public Schools were cited as an example of a project and Specialist Moody and Director Parent both met with Edina schools to learn about their work.
- Director Carrillo asked for more information about the stakeholder group involvement and how those stakeholder groups would be formed, what groups those were and who would be represented by them.
- Specialist Moody noted that the stakeholder groups would be identified through the survey mentioned during the presentation. Survey respondents would be asked to help the district understand who those key stakeholder groups were and that list may change and grow as the taskforce began its work with stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groups could be re-evaluated along the way.
- Director Parent added plans were in place to be very intentional about stakeholder engagement and thanks to the existing Partners in Energy program, and that the district had external partners such as Excel and the Center for Energy and the Environment to pull together resources to do better community engagement.
- Director Carrillo then asked when the survey would go out.
- Director Parent said the survey would be distributed after speaking with the board at this meeting.
- Director Carrillo asked for clarification about how parents can engage in the survey.
- Director Parent noted that was still to be determined.
- Superintendent Gothard thanked the three presenters for their leadership. He then asked whether there were examples of high schools that have taken the lead on curriculum integration and for additional details about the types of jobs there were among the 60,000 jobs noted in the presentation. This information could help inform the board about what that means for the district.
- Manager Lindstrom noted that CERT had a job board on its website where frequent job postings were for growing fields such as solar installers and wind technicians, in addition to positions in marketing, sales, and project management to shepherd complex 6-12 month projects to completion. Regarding schools, Edina, South St. Paul, Pine River-Backus, and Mounds View all have projects. In Mounds View a math teacher was one of the key supporters of their 13 solar arrays on district buildings, along with active students. He noted Mounds View has a video of student involvement in those efforts.
- Director Allen asked how much the plan benefitted community and not just SPPS.
- Director Parent expressed appreciation for this fascinating question that the taskforce could help to answer as part of its role. It's a social question about who really sees the benefit of reduction in energy use and how those benefits were distributed in Saint Paul -- to everyone in Saint Paul or only to some.

- Director Allen thanked Director Parent for this information.

III.D. Envision SPPS Update

Noting no further questions or comments, Vice Chair Vue turned to Superintendent Gothard to introduce the Envision SPPS Update.

Superintendent Gothard noted that during the Special Meeting of the Board of Education on Monday, October 4th, Chief Turner presented Envision SPPS data to the board and the presentation today was designed to respond to questions raised during the meeting discussion.

Presenters:

Jacqueline Turner, Chief Operating Officer, SPPS

Tom Parent, Facilities Director

Chief Turner began the presentation by providing a brief overview of presentation content regarding community engagement and communication plans as well as to respond to Director Allen's question regarding the costs of maintaining a building in which there were no longer programs or students.

Director Parent provided actual costs of owning a building without programming, such as the costs of heat and maintenance to avoid lasting damage to a building and also to follow regulatory requirements regarding heat, clearing of snow and other aspects. Those costs came to approximately \$1.50-\$1.70 per square foot, which was 65% less than the costs to have students in a building and less than costs to build a new building. There were real dollars to keeping and holding a building, but still those costs were much lower than with students and programs in them.

Chief Turner then showed a slide regarding the remainder of the timeline for Envision SPPS that began in 2020 and continued on Monday, October 11, 2021, with the formal presentation of recommendations to the board and a phase-in period in 2022-2023, following a board vote later this fall. Full implementation would take place in the 2023-2024 school year.

Speaker: Chelsea Moody, Tom Parent, and Peter Lindstrom (UofM Extension):

Chief Turner then cited the IAPS Spectrum of Public Participation when turning to focus the presentation on the intentional manner by which the district intended to engage the public in this process, while also noting that it was the board's responsibility to make the final decision. Chief Turner noted that as we look to provide engagement opportunities for feedback the district plans to hold:

1. Public Information Sessions on October 26 & November 8 -- virtual sessions, questions submitted -- with the purpose of providing balanced and objective information to assist community members in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions. Q & A format would be part of these sessions, given the success with virtual Q & A during previous meetings.
2. Public Hearings on October 28 & November 11 -- board listening sessions at 360 Colborne -- that would provide the opportunity to listen to stakeholders, including staff, families and general communities in person. Following a brief introduction, there would be time for public comments to help inform the board vote.
3. Site-based Meetings focused on Affected School Communities would take place in October-November 2021 & in Winter/spring 2021-2022. These meetings may be virtual or in-person depending on specific needs and circumstances.

Chief Turner provided additional details regarding this process by noting once the Board of Education had taken its vote on December 16, 2021, from December 17, 2021 until September 2022, this time would be dedicated to working with school communities to come together to implement the board's plan. Site-based meetings would take place during that time, in addition to targeted stakeholder meetings regarding impacted sites with parent advisory committees, with the NAACP & other language and race specific communities; policy-makers & other elected officials such as the mayor, council members, legislators, and critical partners and stakeholders such as the City of Saint Paul, Parks and Recreation, Wilder Foundation, and others.

Throughout that time, there would be ongoing communications and support, such as transitional planning for impacted families, individualized work with student placement and priority placement considerations, and program-specific outreach to families to ensure speciality program continuation.

As a reminder, Chief Turner reviewed next steps for the Board of Education, including the Special Meeting on Monday, October 11th, when public recommendations, including names of schools, would be made during a live-streamed meeting. That meeting would be followed by additional work sessions scheduled during Special Meetings in October, November and December 2021, in addition to Envision SPPS updates that would be provided during Committee of the Board meetings and discussions during Regular Meetings of the Board. The board would vote on the recommendations during the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education on Tuesday, November 16, 2021.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Director Kopp asked about support for affected communities and whether recommendations that include impacts on two programs if both programs would be engaged.
- Chief Turner responded by noting both programs would be offered engagement to help them.
- Director Carrillo asked why informational sessions were being held virtually and wondered if it was due to Covid concerns or something else.
- Chief Turner responded in the affirmative that it was because of Covid.
- Director Carrillo then asked how long the hearings and informational sessions would last.
- Chief Turner noted that the length of time had not been finalized yet and that those plans would be made in collaboration with SPPS Communications and board members to identify the amount of time for each.
- Director Carrillo noted that a lot of schools were involved and time would be needed to give parents time to speak. He emphasized there needed to be a time allotment so parents could speak up and board members could hear them; there was a need for equitable community/parent voice.
- Chief Turner cited plans for language-specific meetings in Spanish, Karen and Somali languages, for example, plus virtual meetings in English. Chief Turner noted district plans to target specific communities for engagement.
- Director Carrillo then asked who would be sent to speak with school communities.
- Chief Turner responded by noting a combination of Superintendent Gothard, Chief Turner, and others would be involved in making those decisions and more information would be announced at a later day. Thank you.
- Director Foster requested more clarity around how much time would be dedicated to community feedback, emphasizing that an hour was not enough time to have a robust dialogue.
- Chief Turner asked whether two hours for virtual meetings would be enough and whether the same would hold for in-person meetings.

- Director Foster noted SPPS had not previously in its history scheduled meetings like this longer than one hour and then asked whether the district knows how much time was needed and whether there can be flexibility in how much time was needed.
- Chief Turner response: Duly noted.
- Director Kopp noted that in-person public comments can become very emotional and for some members of the community participation in in-person meetings can be a challenge. In other words, it's a complex question, but she stated that given the gravity and emotion of what folks would be experiencing, the district needed to lead compassionately to allow people to say what they need to say.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Vue, finding no further questions or comments, concluded of the Committee of the Board meeting for October 5, 2021.

As reminders, Vice Chair Vue noted a Special Meeting of the Board of Education to discuss Envision SPPS was scheduled on Monday, October 11, 2021 at 4:30pm. Also, there was a Special Closed Meeting of the Board of Education to discuss labor negotiations on Monday, October 18, 2021 at 4:30pm and a Special Meeting to discuss Envision SPPS scheduled on Monday, October 18, 2021 at 5:30pm. A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was scheduled for Tuesday, October 19, 2021 beginning at 5:30pm with public comment.

Finally, Vice Chair Vue stated the next Committee of the Board meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021 beginning at 4:30pm.

Vice Chair Vue, seconded by Director Ellis, motioned to adjourn. The motion was approved by acclaim.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 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