

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

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING  
Via Telephonic and Video Conference; Available via Live Stream at [www.spps.org/boe](http://www.spps.org/boe)**

**March 9, 2021  
4:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. ROLL CALL**

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

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

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

**MOTION: Director Vue moved approval of the Order of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Foster and Director Allen.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes

**IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Superintendent Gothard noted he will share his announcements during the On-Site Update.

**V. SPPS ON-SITE UPDATE**

Superintendent then provided a narrative and recap on the timeline for return to in-person and on-site supports, the Safe Learning Plan, and the relation of Ramsey County case rates to the decisions and actions of SPPS. He noted the gradual increase of case rates, the SPPS resolution regarding COVID-19

and Board action on it, notes on hybrid planning, move to in-person for Stage 1 schools and programs in SPPS, and safety protocols. He also noted the case surge in November and December, and the move back to full distance learning. He provided a recap on the Governor's message to prioritize the return of our youngest learners, and the plan to move to in person for grades PreK-2 on February 1, and grades 3-5 on February 16. He went on to provide details on the vaccinations, which started in February. He noted pride in our elementary leaders, staff, parents, and students, who have all done a remarkable job.

He also noted the challenges, and protocols for safety measures and questions - we want to do this right, and are constantly looking for ways to improve. We are increasing the amount of social emotional learning and togetherness that many of our students, staff, and families have missed. But the distance learning model is not set up to provide what each student needs. The Governor also issued further guidance to also prioritize in-person instruction and support for secondary students, who are very different in terms of space usage and transmission of the virus. This proposed model for in-person secondary supports is built on the model of the Academic Support Center at Washington Tech. He noted the impacts of this decision, including the schedule changes for students, as well as the most recent case rates that show a gradual decline in rates. He also shared more information about vaccines available to staff.

There have been many great discussions on this topic, and both distance learning and in-person learning have been of benefit to students. With the latest case rates, he is confident in the plan to return to secondary in-person supports, and that we will continue to follow our safety protocols.

Dr. Delich then provided a brief update on return to in-person learning for secondary students. SPPS is planning to begin in-person learning for all 6-12 grade students who want it starting Wednesday, April 14. Until then, secondary students will continue in distance learning while we work to grow the in-person support. Secondary students who want to stay in full-time virtual learning for the remainder of the school year are asked to sign up by Thursday, March 11. SPPS will follow all of the health and safety measures as described in the Minnesota Safe Learning Plan and the SPPS COVID-19 Student and Family Guidelines. Details on the in-person school schedule were also provided.

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

- Director Brodrick noted questions about efforts to reach out to staff to find out if they need more information on acquiring the vaccine or having trouble finding information. Response: We did send information out to all staff and invited them to register for the vaccine, and there will be a survey as well to find out more data on numbers of staff who may still need or want a vaccine and haven't received one yet. Staff are invited to email or contact Communications, Chief Turner, their supervisor, manager or principal for more information as well. We are also working with our partners at Ramsey County and the State, as well as providing vaccine information to new employees and staff as well.
- Director Kopp noted questions about the slide decks shared with the school community, and how they are holding their own-site based sessions. Is that information that could be also shared on the District website? Response: Right now, they are specific sites, and more detailed for site leaders for talking points. We are working with Communications to help in messaging for more in-person learning, and are working to finalize them for parents and families.
- To confirm, students who are choosing virtual learning are choosing to do so for the remainder of the year? Response: Yes.
  - Does it work in reverse for students choosing in person, who may at some point want to choose VLS? Response: That is something that our Student Placement Center and sites can work though. In considering secondary items, there is different movement in terms of guidelines and

procedures. It's important for families to choose their preferred learning model for the best model of support for their children.

- In thinking about how students move in secondary sites, how are we thinking about passing times, hallways, etc? Response: Those plans will be unique to the building layout, and are working to create patterns to provide as much safety as possible. In working with sites, our assistant superintendents, Facilities team, and Operations teams are analyzing buildings to help support, give guidance, and patterns for movement. We will also be working through those plans after enrollment numbers are finalized, and there will be new routines to be learned.
- Director Vue requested more information on ways the District is reaching out to specific language groups and how we are hearing their concerns. Response: We have been intentional in ensuring messaging and translations in the native language, with emphasis on secondary leaders to also share the messaging to capture the voice of that school community. We take equitable communications very seriously, and all communications are translated into the four languages of Somali, Spanish, Karen and Hmong. Robocalls are also translated and sent in multiple languages, as well as information on the website. We do ask families to note their language and hearing preferences in order to be as equitable as possible, but is an ongoing challenge with 130 languages and dialects in our district.
- What are we learning now that we can use in full reopening? Response: We are learning how much in-person learning and support impacts relationships, and the excitement and opportunity to help and support our students. Those connections are so important - not only for academic achievement but also in overall achievement as well. Our staff are doing a remarkable job at classroom sites, and parents and families are excited about moving to in-person. The logistics plan at sites have also been helpful as data points.
- Further clarification was requested on preparation and planning days for staff in 6-12 as we move to in-person. Response: We have 2 planning days on April 12th and 13th to allow for prep and planning for the return of students to buildings. Those two days are non-instructional days which MDE has set up when we move into a new transition.
- Superintendent Gothard thanked everyone for their work, an update on vaccination rates, and that we will continue to make education and learning meaningful for students in virtual learning, and look forward to ongoing reports as we move forward to April 14th.

## **VI. FIVE-YEAR FACILITIES PLAN: FY2022-26 - PART 2**

Superintendent Gothard then introduced staff to present Part 2 of the Five-Year Facilities Plan for FY 2022-2026, for a presentation of SPPS Builds, and the FY22-26 five-year implementation plan for improvements to SPPS facilities, including background, priorities and funding structure.

He noted there is still much to do for our schools and community including:

- Continue to create great environments for learners that are safe, respectful, and include essentials for learning including good lighting and air movement
- Most criteria is not connected to enrollment, but entryways, gyms, etc. which are important for any school regardless of enrollment
- SPPS adopted the middle school model as SPPS Achieves

The plan is based on models that are relevant for today, with flexible learning environments, and opportunity for movement.

They reviewed the agenda, action at future meetings, review of the previous meeting, and the FMP External Review Recommendations. Within the topic of Financing Structures, the capital funding structure and options, capital funding source restrictions, and current levels of the funding structure. Within the Five-Year Plan, upcoming projects were reviewed, including major renovation projects, and major infrastructure projects. A graph showing the breakdown of smaller projects to capital improvements and asset preservation was also shared. Improvements to athletic facilities were detailed. The BOE gate checks approvals up to funding were reviewed, and included Gate Check 2 projects of Jie Ming and Ramsey Middle Schools. Financing strategies were presented, including financing requirements, and financing options for FY 21-22. Finally, next steps were also reviewed, including the action on the five-year plan at the March 23 Regular Meeting, Gate Check 1 for most projects, Gate Check 1A for the resolution outlining the funding capital program, and action on Gate Check 2 for Ramsey Middle and Jie Ming. Future meetings will include specific projects approvals for financing, including COP projects and LTFM Bond projects, and LTFM application revision approvals.

Additional supporting documents, as well as the full presentation, can be found in the BoardBook.

#### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PART 1:**

- Director Ellis requested further information and clarification on the gate check approval process.
- Director Foster thanked staff for the presentation and is glad to turn to this chapter, and looks forward to moving forward with better knowledge and awareness of the process.
- Director Brodrick noted the public deserves great transparency in this process, and included his 20 years on the Board, and 50+ years of experience as an SPPS member. He noted this process is about the future generations and future of our schools. Facilities matter; equity matters; inner-city kids matter. Also, taxpayers matter, and the reasoning to exercise transparency and have robust conversation about this topic. He noted he was the only person on the Board when SPPS embarked on the original Facilities Master Plan. He recounted his uneasiness about this process, and the experience of Ramsey Middle School and increases in dollar amount to the construction projects at that school. He reviewed the timeline and budget changes to the projects at Ramsey, and his uneasiness about the other large construction jobs, and how we will be able to address both those large projects and smaller projects that may have tremendous value to the community. Response: Clarification was noted that SPPS Builds is not Facilities Master Plan 2, and that is considered to be complete when we began the external review team. This capital plan aligns with SPPS Achieves and Envision SPPS. The action on March 23 will determine the direction for the next 5 years.
- Director Brodrick noted that the ultimate responsibility rests with the Board, and he hopes to learn more about Ramsey to talk about the budget increases.
- Director Allen noted learning more about the funding sources, and experiences in construction to warrant a higher budget, including the stream that once ran where the Ramsey Middle School building was built. She encouraged transparency and information to know what brought us to this place of understanding and the costs.
- Director Kopp appreciated the review of the gatechecks, and the monthly updates have been helpful. She is excited to close the book on FMP and open a new book on SPPS Builds.

#### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PART 2:**

- Director Ellis requested further information on the \$105M projected costs. Response: The \$105M is the average for the next 5 years, and will fund incrementally year by year. Gate check 3a was also noted as when the project is presented for financing.
- Further information was requested on the capital funding structure, which can vary, depending on the levy and anticipating the tax level. There will also be information forthcoming around the funding

options. The differences in projects were also discussed, including differences in infrastructure and renovation projects, and operations. How do we balance the needs of the school district? Response: The facilities condition assessment is helpful. For roofing needs, we anticipate the roofing needs based on the past 25 years, and are able to look ahead to determine potential dates; also looking at systems that should be replaced, but may not be up to current standards for energy efficiency.

- Director Ellis also encouraged the team to be as transparent as possible, and include updates to the Board to the public as well.
- Director Brodrick noted the two main upcoming projects of Ramsey and Jie Ming, and those two projects may make up 85% of the yearly budget for SPPS Builds. What do those projects do to the pie chart, which includes the smaller projects and maintenance? How many projects have been pushed back or pushed out because of these larger projects? Response: It is a balancing act with a facilities portfolio that dates back to 1964. The work around priorities by the school board, and using data as presented to be able to do real and transformational value work. Some projects are quite large, but they are an investment to the community and building, and to create a learning environment for the building to make a sound and good investment. Those two items come together in the charter - infrastructure and changes to align with the learning model. This is the best attempt to balance these projects for the next 5 years.
- Director Brodrick noted the priorities we set must be a reflection of the teachers, coaches, staff, students, and families.
- How many projects have been pushed back in order to prioritize a more expensive project? Response: There is a strategic effort at gate check 3a where budgets become the complete budget, which is then acted on by the Board and does not move. We are also financing those projects currently in the works, including AIMS, District Service Facility.
- Within the External Review Team, there was a recommendation for continued communication between Facilities and Finance. Response: With the highly complex work, having a strong partnership is critical, and there are biweekly touch base meetings, sharing of information, cash flow and revenue strategy discussions.
- More information was also requested on the consent agenda items for purchases over a certain amount and gate checks and the review process.
- Director Kopp requested further information on potential future changes to learning models, and how the buildings are able to change. Response: The design team is given direction to maintain flexibility and multiple ways for the organization. The requests for 21st century learning around vision, space for personalized learning, spaces for large and small group instruction all align with the academic direction. The design is not so rigid that it is locked into a specific area, as education is always evolving, but to think about how to connect students differently and better, and for future generations. E-STEM was noted as an example.
- Further clarification was also requested around the work of SPPS Builds and Envision SPPS. Response: They are running together - not parallel. We will be reviewing the first recommendations from the work groups in late spring or early summer, and the core team will take that data to turn into scenarios to review with the Board and Superintendent. All will come together with SPPS Builds to align and see those structures coming together.
- Director Vue requested further information on the feedback from staff and students, and how that is incorporated into the plans when they may not be at that site when the construction is completed. Response: Director Parent provided more details on the work with school communities on the design process, and tailoring for programs within the community, and the choreographed process as students enter and leave the schools. He noted the communication plans with principals and teachers to know the scenarios if they should need to relocate or change, and a constant conversation amongst the team, work sites, and staff in buildings.

- Director Brodrick echoed Director Kopp's questions around the alignment of SPPS Builds and Envision SPPS, as well as potential risks and factors to consider when determine enrollment figures with building plans. Response: With Jie Ming, they are expected to continue to grow as a high-demand immersion program, and with the middle school model at Ramsey, we are beginning to see families return to SPPS, and the location of the site is also very important to the neighborhood. Similarly, there is a pause on work to Obama until the Envision SPPS process is determined.
  - Director Brodrick noted that there are also other buildings that may be a close-second to Ramsey, and are serving historically underserved students, and as we make decisions in terms of Envision SPPS and others, to also think of equity in terms of which school is getting which projects.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PART 3:**

- Director Brodrick asked his colleagues if they feel comfortable voting for the gate checks of Ramsey and Jie Ming on March 23rd. Response: Board members responded with answers. Director Allen requested more information on the financing options for Jie Ming and a tour of the site may help to answer questions. Director Kopp thanked the team for their time to dig into questions and answers on the plan and feels excited about the project and is confident in moving forward on March 23rd. Director Ellis noted that she has also had time with the team to ask further questions and feels ready to move forward on March 23rd. Director Foster echoed similar comments with time to review with the team. Director Vue noted that while he is not ready to vote that night, but the additional time to March 23rd will help to answer questions. Director Brodrick again noted concerns about projects that may be pushed back and out indefinitely because of the larger scale projects and requested time to discuss further. Chief Baker noted that he will work with staff to ensure board members have the information needed before March 23rd and ask additional questions.
- Superintendent Gothard noted the history of the FMP and his inheritance of the plan. SPPS Builds will make the plan better and to align with the strategic plan and mission of the future of SPPS. He noted the approval of the Board to move forward with projects, and the impact of pushing the plan out or coming back with the plan including costs and loss of momentum, including the large projects and smaller projects. He knows there are large dollar amounts, and knows that the community deserves facilities to be proud of; there are 3 large strategic efforts to strive for excellence in the District and have plans and the team to do the work. It is important to ask thoughtful questions, and to have conversations in public for the community to further understand the process, and the checks in place for accountability. He noted the work of principals of sites with major construction and mentoring of other principals who may be in the same position. He thanked the team. It's important for the theme to be that this is the people's plan and the plan of the people, and for the community to feel involved in this, in both equity and timing. He wants the Board to feel comfortable with the decision on March 23rd, and to ask for specific direction.

## **VII. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2020**

Superintendent Gothard then introduced Marie Schrul, Chief Financial Officer, to present the Quarterly Financial Report for the period ending December 31, 2020. Included in the report were the highlights of the Financial Projection Report, Financial Projection Report for the period ending December 31, 2020, and a glossary of financial terms.

The full report can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Kopp thanked the team for the presentation, and noted questions about the CARES funding, and knowing there is more federal money possibly being sent? Response: Yes, that is correct.
- Superintendent Gothard provided further details on the federal funds that will continue to come in, and will share more information with the Board, and likely a special presentation to provide insight to funds we receive in rounds 2 and 3.

**MOTION: Director Vue moved that the Board accept the Financial Projection report for the period ending December 31, 2020. The motion was seconded by Director Foster.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes

#### **VIII. FISCAL YEAR 2020-21 FIRST BUDGET REVISION**

Chief Schrul then reviewed the FY2020-21 First Budget Revision, including the Revenue Changes - All Funds, Expenditure Changes - All Funds, and Fully Financed Funds. Details within each of these changes were also provided including the dollar amount changes for each.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

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

- Director Allen noted that when round 2 and 3 of CARES funding comes in, the Board can expect to see another revision.
- Superintendent Gothard noted that this has been a year like no other. He thanked everyone for their work in these times.

**MOTION: Director Vue moved approval of the Fiscal Year 2020-21 first budget revision as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Kopp.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes

#### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

- Director Ellis wished Director Allen a happy birthday the following day

- Director Brodrick noted he is proud to serve on this Board, and thanked Administration for the dialogue and conversation.
- Superintendent Gothard noted the upcoming family forum and staff forum, and appreciation of the work of schools.

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

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 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