

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

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**March 6, 2024
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: U. Ward, H. Henderson, E. Valliant, J. Vue, C. Franco, Y. Carrillo
Superintendent Gothard

C. Allen was absent.

Staff: C. Long, S. Dahlke, J. Turner, S. Gray Akyea, T. Parent, T. Sager, K. Thao,
L. Olson, L. Corey, A. Speed, J. Williams, A. Collins, T. Sager, K.
Arzamendia, Y. Vang, E. Wacker, J. Hernandez, M. Kasper, C. Anderson,
P. Thuente, S. Koppen

Community: A. DeRosier, T. Lonetree, M. Wall, K. Moo, B. Paw, M. Aye, C. Theh, M.
Wah, L. Jackson Sr., B. Burnside, H. Moo, L. Wah, K. Gewj, D. Bleh, W.
Sharro, N. Say, P. Htoo, P. Paw, N. Loo, B. Naw, K. Moo, H. Zan, T. Soe,
P. Joe, J. Hartmann, P. Htoo, E. Cay, R. May, P. Toleu, S. Htoo, W. Key,
H. Paw, T. Paw, M. Ru, L. Thaw, L. Shet, N. Htoo, C. Ree, S. Hser, G.
Mimi, T. Daw, P. Pway, L. Lir, E. Chit, J. Dwe, T. Moo, L. Paw, W. Soe, K.
Pee, E. Shwe, P. Nee, P. Paw, C. Hler, T. Aye, T. Da, B. Po, L. Paw, S.
Kef, S. Lahazariah, P. Thuente, J. Saw, M. Taw, Deh, A. Kyi, H. Pei, H.
Htwae, S. Gaw, S. Paw, M. Puay, S. Law, K. Htoo, B. Htoo, K. Moh, L.
Moo, T. Paw, L. Moo, K. Soe, H. Ler, N. Gey, L. Moo, Z. Eh, T. H., S.
Donald, P. Say, K. Say, H. Gay

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: Director Ward moved approval of the Order of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Henderson. It passed by acclaim.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard began by noting that last week we lost a dear friend and member of our staff, John Bobolink, Supervisor for Indian Education. Superintendent Gothard shared his experiences in being

welcomed by Mr. Bobolink when he began in SPPS, and his time shared in the Braided Journeys summer group on a canoe ride, which was a memorable experience with students, and Native elders. He recounted stopping at Fort Snelling, and listening to stories from the elders. He also shared that Mr. Bobolink was instrumental in the installation of the healing pole located outside the District Administration building, and that he was a special person who loved the Native community.

Superintendent Gothard also shared his experience in meeting a neighbor, who is an elder in his neighborhood, who walks with his dog, a husky. They began talking, and Superintendent Gothard asked questions about the neighbor's dog. One incredible moment that the Superintendent shared with Mr. Bobolink was learning the word "Bdote" – which means where two rivers meet. He has driven by Bdote many times, taken canoe rides past it, and flown in and out of MSP airport and seeing it from above. When asked about the dog's name, the elder neighbor responded that his name is Bdote. He went on to share about the symbolism in this world in sharing a conversation with a neighbor, an elder in the community, and a common thread, and how it relates back to the memorialization of Mr. Bobolink. The teaching and learning gained from him is a gift.

A moment of silence was then observed in honor of John Bobolink.

5. ONWARD SPPS

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Jackie Turner, Executive Chief of Administration and Operations to present Onward SPPS updates. He also especially welcomed members of the Karen community present to show their support.

The topics included within the presentation were:

1. Flexible Calendar Year Workgroup
2. Karen Culture and Language Workgroup
3. African American Program Workgroup

Flexible Calendar Year Workgroup

The first portion of the presentation focused on Crossroads Montessori and Crossroads Science. Information on their year-round calendar was shared, as well as workgroup members, staffing, and a data review. Next steps, including a vote by the Board on Crossroads to transition to a traditional calendar at the March 19th Regular Meeting, and support for staff, families, and students in transitioning to a new schedule/calendar to commence Spring 2024-Spring 2025.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Henderson request information on the original intentions of year-round programming. Response: There are three criteria that must be met for year-round programming including improved instructional quality, increased efficiency for lower costs, and resources that can be leveraged for the benefit of the community. Each year, there is a proposal to MDE, which is then vetted and approved by MDE before bringing to the Board. We don't feel we have met the criteria, and believe it is in the best interest to not apply for another year-round application.
- Information was also requested on the data showing that 0% of students showing proficiency in science in 5th grade. Response: Cohort size was noted, and the number of students in Montessori

at 5th grade is very low. It's also tricky to attribute success or failure from one cohort to another. We also are looking at this as unacceptable from a curriculum standpoint, which is also frustrating.

- Director Carrillo noted questions about persistent attendance and if there is a correlation between attendance and the starting and stopping of the year-round calendar. Response: While we cannot parse that information from the student information system, the school is tracking that information. Experiences were also provided by staff at Crossroads, including information on the intercession and the challenges.
- Director Valliant requested information if there are other schools performing similarly or less favorable, and if so, the impacts of the calendar. Response: We have looked at assessments and FAST data, and there are variations across the district. Information can also be provided for the ranking of schools, and data for Crossroads.
- There was also discussion around expectations around the increase of academic outcomes for Crossroads if they were to move to a traditional school year calendar. Superintendent Gothard noted that this work has brought to light greater issues, including that transition times are difficult for students and staff, and the recommendation is to look at the data and determine a different strategy.
- Director Carrillo requested information on the potential impact to enrollment if this change should be approved. Response: There will be an entire year of transition, and we don't anticipate that many families will leave the district, but may move to another school closer to their home.
- Director Franco requested information on the communication timeline for families and staff. Response: There have been informal surveys to families and staff, with 50% preferring the year-round calendar, and 50% preferring a traditional school year calendar. There have also been 2-3 staff meetings about this topic, and the local parent committee has also discussed it. Administration felt it was appropriate to bring this topic before the Board and then present it to staff, and since it was mentioned to families originally, there has been little in terms of concerns. There will also be an entire year of support with the transition.
- What will the science and Montessori program be losing in a transition to a traditional school calendar? Response: They will be losing the intercessions, however, they will continue to receive the other supports that other elementary schools have.
- Director Ward requested further information on the proposed cost savings mentioned in the presentation. Response: When the school is on intercession, there are still opportunities for families to bring their student to the school, and there is additional costs for staff to work through intercession and for extended time, as well as the additional costs for the fifteen buses to Crossroads throughout the intercession.
- Discussion also included information on the data, and with the pandemic the past three years, and the rationale for the trends versus seeing the data as an anomaly due to the pandemic.

Karen Culture and Language Workgroup

Within this portion of the presentation, the Karen Workgroup members were recognized. Background information was also provided, as well as facilities considerations. The pros and cons of the Wellstone site for this program were reviewed, as well as information on Karen communities located in Saint Paul by census data, and next steps of marketing and recruitment. Curriculum development in Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 were also presented.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Henderson noted this is exciting, and applauded the community for rallying and supporting these efforts.
- She also requested information about how to ensure this work continues and continues to be an investment, and what it will look like in 3-5 years, and 5-10 years. Response: This was a request from the Karen Parent Advisory Council, and they brought this idea forward, and we do anticipate the PAC will continue with their work as well and support this. From a community standpoint, the advisory committees have a stronger voice over the years. Mr. Craig Anderson also provided a perspective and experience with Jie Ming Mandarin Immersion, which began as a small program at Benjamin E. Mays, and then outgrew to Hamline Elementary, and they now have their own building and principal. It is an incredibly positive experience for families in the community.
- It was noted that in previous discussions, there was a desire for safety for students rooted in culture and well-being. Response: Yes, and that is the rationale for the choice of the Wellstone site for this program – other buildings may have been better for growth, but Wellstone feels like home for our families.
- Director Carrillo noted questions around the District's Human Resources team to launch this program and recruitment of Karen teachers, and the sustained power behind the recruitment and support of our Karen teachers. Response: SPPS has a great "grow-your-own" program where students have graduated, gone to college and graduated, and then want to return to SPPS to teach. There is a recruitment fair with students and staff. The goal is for two sections of kindergarten, and then for the program to grow from there.
- Will this be a community school or a magnet? Response: It will be a magnet program. Wellstone is currently the site of BioSmart and Spanish immersion, and this program will benefit from magnet bussing. The principal is currently on board with the program and for the strategy to work. We do need to balance the communication process, and information to staff to alleviate concerns.
- Will there be a fully staffed special education team? Response: Wellstone does have a special education program, and students in the Karen program will be supported as well.
- Director Franco noted he appreciates the community members and their organizing to this make happen, and to district Administration for making this a priority. He is proud of the work happening and the language and culture programs, and opening new sections for our youngest learners.
- Because there are already programs co-located at Wellstone, what do we foresee as challenges that may occur? Yes, there are three programs, and they will be able to co-exist, mainly due to size. We will be able to leverage other resources, such as specialists and food service, as well as transportation and building administration. There is flexibility in the space, with either the classrooms separate from the others, or together – that is a decision up to the building leadership.
- Director Franco also thanked the team and noted this will likely be a popular program, and he appreciates the work group in their continued efforts to organize and be upfront about how bright and beautiful this program will be.
- Director Vue requested information on the pathway for students in the Karen program. Response: Students from Wellstone, may then attend Washington Tech, as it is also a school for a number of Karen families in the area, as well as Karen staff, such as assistant principal Hsajune Dyan, and we anticipate a strong pathway from Wellstone to Washington Tech. Information was also provided on the request for a higher achievement rate with language proficiency, and about 44% of proficiency for Karen bilingual seals, whereas Spanish and French are about 75-80%, largely due to programming. We will be watching the bilingual seals data to see that achievement increase with additional programming.

Within this portion of the presentation, the African American Program Workgroup purpose statement was shared, as well as recognition of the workgroup members. Background information was presented, as well as next steps.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Franco echoed similar sentiments as earlier, and that Director Allen has been pushing for a program like this to exist in the district with culturally specific programs, and spaces where folks feel connected that is important, and appreciates the District's work in this.
- Director Vue requested information on bussing and if this would be a magnet program. Response: The idea is that it would be a magnet program, and looking at bussing zones to have access for everyone.

6. COMMUNITY USE OF FACILITIES (PERMITS)

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Tom Parent, Executive Director of Operations and Administration and Jenna Hernandez, Administrative Services Manager, Facilities Department, to present this report. Objectives were reviewed, including that the Board of Education will:

- Have a robust understanding of the policies, procedures, and practices that support community use of our facilities
- Learn of work underway to evolve the Permits program and preview upcoming Board-level actions to support that in the next year

It was also noted that the permits process includes a wide variety of events, from the filming of movies to basketball games.

Within the Permits History and Structure portion of the presentation, information included the policy, procedure, and history, profile of permits and volume of events through the years, categories of permits, and highest volume users of SPPS facilities. The permit revenue and expenses (2023) were also shared, as well as information for establishing fair space use costs, and permit categories, fees, and reduction criteria.

Within the Work Underway and Upcoming portion of the presentation, information included the Board policy and procedure work, and SPPS Achieves: Partnerships work as well.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Discussion points were centered around the revenue and expenses of permits. There is a percentage of space fees that are not recouped. It was noted that one of the pieces to track is the true ownership of buildings, and the usage of them, and strategic decisions to underwrite them to make our facilities available. Because of the volume of permits and evening events, there was a new job title created and shift for grounds crews into the evening, which was built into the Facilities budget. Further discussion also focused on the cost breakdowns within permitting.
- How many organizations are subsidized on average per year? Response: 189 events over the year.
- How many of them are youth athletics? Response: We can look into that data and provide follow-up information

- It was noted that Saint Paul Urban Tennis is the only true youth athletic organization that is a formal partner of the City of Saint Paul, and they act as an extension of the City, and not a standalone youth athletic organization. How do we more appropriately expand with the City of Saint Paul Parks and Rec department to have more organizations fall under their umbrella? What role are we taking in this? Response: We are on our way and looking at opportunities to expand this, with key voices at the table. Saint Paul Parks and Rec is close to our youth athletics, and comparisons were noted with the City of Woodbury and E-STEM, and their clear relationships with youth athletic associations. The City is a great partner, and also a large land owner, and our usage goes back and forth, and partnerships to maximize opportunities for students. The conversation that is taking place is more about a programmatic partnership, especially post-pandemic, and seeing the role of athletics for students. We have known this is a longstanding frustration point, and wonderings about the timeline. The origination of youth athletics for students was also noted and leagues on their own, such as the Saint Paul Rattlers and West Side Boosters.
- Do we have a timeline? Response: This is a topic of discussions, and we are meeting with the City staff, but do anticipate within the year, or 12-18 months to be discussed by both governing bodies, and the legal relationship and MOAs for both organizations.
- It was noted that board members have connections at the City and they were encouraged to collaborate with them in order to push this agreement forward.
- Ms. Hernandez noted that there is a not a formalized athletic feeder program like in other districts, and there is a need for that. Many of the formalized processes are about educating youth, not athletics, and this was a prompt for how to utilize colleagues with the City, and the City Permits, with SPPS.
- What is the goal? Response: The goal is to bring forth the policy to determine if it will need to be updated, as well as the procedure and fee structure. With the reviews, it is also to bring forth the official partnership with the City. There are three goals. With the partnership with the City, the goal is to be able to have Saint Paul Parks and Rec be the umbrella of community-based organizations. Another example with the partnership between the City of Woodbury and E-STEM was noted, and that anyone who permits the E-STEM gym for basketball is seen as the City of Woodbury, with no cost. However, pickleball is becoming increasingly popular, and they also permit E-STEM.
- What would that look like in terms of income for SPPS? Response: It would mean we would absorb all, except the direct costs, such as custodian costs. Others would be in-kind contributions. Chief Turner also noted that some in-kind costs are not actual costs in the moment, but over time become real costs. The resurfacing of the gym floor was an example, as well as projectors that only run for a certain number of hours before needing to be replaced, as well as soccer goals and their replacement after so much usage.
- Superintendent Gothard noted that the Facilities team monitors the permits, and use has increased throughout the years, and they are being used longer and more each day. The Board has made several important statements and investments, including artificial turf and lighting for more playable hours and more days of the year.
- Director Franco encouraged further uplifting of the organizations doing this work and out-of-school programming for extended school days, and also encouraged further partnership with organizations and setting expectations, including in terms of cleaning after an event, and while those values pieces can be difficult to be written in policy and procedure, we can have accountability through conversations. He also noted the communications around this process and its importance. He went on to note that thinking about permitting for events is a positive in keeping students in safe spaced and uplifting those who volunteer in these spaces. He appreciates the work of Parks and Rec, and looks forward to our continued partnership.
- Director Valliant noted the fiscal partnership with the City of Saint Paul and SPPS.

- Mr. Parent noted the rationale for the partnership and the administration aspect, as well as insurance requirements.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Director Ward moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Valliant seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

8. WORK SESSION

The Board then conducted a work session regarding the discussion of Board goals and the community engagement process for the Board goals.

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