

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

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

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

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Ward.

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: U. Ward, H. Henderson, J. Vue, C. Franco, C. Allen
Y. Carrillo arrived at 4:35 p.m.
E. Valliant arrived at 4:58 p.m.

Staff: Superintendent Thein, C. Long, S. Dahlke, S. Gray Akyea, T. Sager, K. Thao, L. Olson, A. Collins, E. Wacker, J. Danielson, K. Morris, S. Schmitt de Caranza, H. Nistler, N. Páez, M. McHenry, B. Schmidt, C. Green, D. Moser, P. Pratt-Cook, Y. Vang, C. Anderson, J. Grathwol, A. Kunz, M. Vincent, S. Ly

Director Ward noted the recent election results, and reiterated the values that we as a District have expressed, including that everyone can join, grow, learn, be respected, and be supported in SPPS. Board members then expressed their thoughts on the recent events.

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 Thein noted that with the recent election, he thanked our staff for caring about our students during this time, and taking care of them during the election season. He noted the mock elections that were educational for students, and the 14 schools that were polling places. He thanked staff for going the extra mile, and to administrators who helped direct community members at our schools to vote, so that building staff could focus on our students.

He also noted that United Healthcare and HealthPartners have settled their agreements, and he thanked the Board for showing that they care about our employees, and he feels it worked out well, and is proud and grateful for that work.

He also noted the enrollment report, and it continues to show increases, even up 16 students from last month.

5. CELL PHONE POLICY PLAN

Superintendent Thein welcomed Jodi Danielson, Director of Schools and Learning, to present this agenda item. The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

Within the presentation, objectives were reviewed, including to solicit clear, agreed-upon guidance from the Board related to the district cell phone policy with discussion and clarity at each discussion point, as well as to ensure common understanding of the plan to develop the cell phone policy. The main points of the presentation included information on the current state, policy examples and assumptions, and the engagement plan.

For the current state portion, details were shared that there is no Board-adopted school district policy specific to cell phones, but that cell phone procedures are handled at the building level. The misuse of cell phones would be included in the SPPS Rights and Responsibilities under "Technology Misuse/Violation." Details were then shared on the current SPPS procedures and expectations at the building level. The current impact and percent of referrals by school year was also shared.

Within the policy examples and assumptions portion, details were shared on the policy options including the Board directs administration to establish rules and procedures by building/grade level, some restrictions to devices, or full restrictions to devices, with the exceptions for medical needs to the latter two examples. For the Board Directs Administration option, it was noted that the district administration would establish rules and procedures, it should minimize the impact of cell phones on behavior mental health, and achievement, and may be individually designed for specific buildings, grades, or other criteria. For Some Restrictions option, the Board would direct administration, and guidelines would be built into the policy including by grade level. For the Full Restriction option, bringing personal devices is at the risk of the owner, they should be kept out of sight, and personal devices may be confiscated for misuse.

The Board then discussed.

- **What level of detail in the district policy are you seeking?**
 - Director Allen noted that it will be important to require enough detail to support teachers with enforcement in the classroom, but also not so much detail as to not over penalize our students.
 - Director Carrillo noted that the clarification about the need to not over penalization of students should be a statement in the policy. He would also like to see differentiation for elementary, middle, and high school, because the experiences are very different, and maturity levels are very different, so there should be different approaches.
 - Director Vue noted there will need to be clear expectations when devices can be used and when they are not to be used. There will also need to be a clear distinction about the types of devices covered in this policy. There also needs to be a means to enforce it, as well as a restorative aspect.
 - Director Henderson noted questions related to the level of details depending on the intensity of the policy, if there is a full ban or partial ban, and if a situation occurs, the pathway for that.
 - Director Ward noted the different options from MSBA, and if the Board determines it should be up to Administration for details and procedures, or a policy where the Board decides the rules across the district.

- Director Allen noted that it is necessary to have rules across the district, as opposed to variations by class or school because that can create confusion amongst young people.
- It was also noted that this policy could be more rigid at the elementary level to help set expectations for future years, and to reinforce that cell phones do not belong in the classroom.
- Director Carrillo noted that uniformity will be important for the student experiences
- Director Ward noted that generally the policy sets the rules for the district, as well as the specific guidelines for how it is enforced and penalties.

The next portion of the presentation included a review of the assumptions:

- Personal devices should be managed during instructional time at all grade levels
- Procedures will include expectations around wireless accessories (e.g., watches, glasses, earbuds, etc.)
- Cannot be cost prohibitive
- Cannot put undue burden on families (e.g. school dismissal/suspension)
- Cannot perpetuate inequitable practices across student racial and ethnic and other traditionally marginalized groups
- There will need to be an exception for medical needs
- Adoption in spring; implementation in September 2025

The Board then discussed.

- **Do you support grounding the process and outputs in these assumptions?**

- Director Allen noted questions about the implementation timeline, and wondering if it would be easier in the summer. Administration noted they did consider that, but in the summer, students are focused on finishing the work of the previous school year rather than starting the new school year, and implementation in September would be a clean, fresh start to this new policy.
- Director Vue requested information about the exceptions for medical needs. Response: In terms of medical needs and technology, it is related to apps that are not permissible on their district device, with a major app being for diabetes management and information related to the student's management of this condition. Use of the student's mobile phone for this reason would be included in their 504 plan or IEP for accommodations with clear guidance that the phone is permitted only for their medical care.
- Director Allen requested information on the cost for those apps and ways for the app to be included on the student's district device. Response: No, there are not costs associated with these apps. We have had discussion with Technology Services, but one of the reasons these types of apps are not permitted are due to data sharing that is student-specific, and there are also limitations to the number of devices for communication. It was also noted that the phone does need to be in close proximity to the monitor.
- It was also noted that there are other apps, like calming apps for regulation, that do not store personal data, and we can have conversations on adding them to the district-available apps.
- Director Franco noted that another assumption should be a tiered response protocols where there are infractions. The teaching of the policy and requirements are taught and provided to district administration for all students, and the communication and training around that.
- Director Ward noted that when mobile phones are used during instructional time as part of the class, while they are generally not used during instructional time, there will be questions on use during non-instructional time, such as lunch and passing times.
- It was noted to be clear about the implications of the policy and the distractions that a cell phone can cause. Instructional purposes are different than texting or using social media.

- Director Allen noted that the draft policy contains a statement about not perpetuating inequitable practices. How can this policy ensure that? Any time there is a policy like this, it is through the eyes of the individual who determines that infraction. That is a concern – how to ensure those enforcing this policy are not having biased thoughts about children and how they are using a cell phone in those moments. It was also noted that this is ongoing work that will not stop once the policy is approved, and we need to be intentional about the implementation as well.
- Director Valliant requested additional information on the medical needs of apps and cell phones.
- Director Franco noted thoughts about modeling this policy as adults and staff, and the possibility of extending to a staff policy and the process for that.
- Director Ward noted collective accountability and how to hold staff accountable when we have a set of expectations for students.
- Director Carrillo noted that this is a community agreement, and the classroom is a community where people come together to learn and educate, and while this policy may not directly apply to staff, we do need to have that conversation.
- Director Ward noted that there needs to be details of expectations for students and staff, while Director Allen noted that this needs to be a schoolwide policy and is not targeted, but is an expectation across the school.
- Director Valliant noted that while it does make sense to share expectations, students may need to check their phones throughout the day, such as researching an item, just as adults sometimes need to check their phones as well. She then shared a personal situation where a family member needed to contact her at school for help.
- Director Ward noted that typically students are contacted by someone outside of school, such as a parent or family member familiar with the school system, and to contact the office to relay that message to the student; whereas that may not be true for adults for whom multiple people outside of the school may be contacting them and not familiar with the system.
- Director Franco noted that grace needs to be added to the policy as well, since there may be emergency exceptions or a student may be the main person in the family able to translate.
- Director Allen noted in the past how families and students knew the emergency procedures and contacting the school and we need to get back to the priority of checking-in on students in school and working together for parents and families and school staff to be in relationship and connect with students and raising our children together. Everyone is really dependent on their phones, and we need to get to a place where students are able to give 100% in the classroom. Director Ward noted that this is a fairly strict policy, and there needs to be an effective way of communications to meet the needs of families.
- Ms. Danielson noted the need to communicate with students in certain situations from families, and the questions planned for parent engagement and surveys.
- Ms. Schmidt also noted that virtual visits with healthcare professionals, primarily mental health, are primarily done on a device, and the recent legislation on this topic, as well as the need for guidance.

The final portion of the presentation included details on the engagement plan, including the flow chart for policy creation and engagement framework, a review of community engagement requirements before the first reading in order to inform the policy which includes the cell phone policy work group meeting, student roundtable, translated survey, and PACs discussion; community engagement after the first reading in order to adjust the policy and inform implementation including public comment each month and focus groups; and the timeline with the March 15, 2025 deadline for policy adoption.

The Board then discussed.

- **Do you support a first round of engagement before the 1st reading, and then further engagement after the 1st reading? Are you comfortable with the proposed policy being modified from 1st reading to 3rd reading if feedback lends itself to adjustments? With which of these engagement strategies would you like us to proceed?**
 - Director Ward noted that he does not object for this policy to go back to the Policy Work Group if there are changes after the First Reading, and it will be important to avoid a walking quorum.
 - Director Allen noted that for the enforcement of this policy, there will need to be specific engagement for the classroom educators, and skills and tools for them to have students put away their phones.
 - It was also noted on the reduction of certain focus groups for an additional staff focus group. We are prioritizing maintaining as many student focus groups are possible to craft and co-create the implementation strategy with students and young people for a successful operation.
 - Director Ward noted the consensus to ensure we are engaging with groups and staff, and a reduction in the parent focus groups, and to separate parent and staff since the PACs are also engaged.
 - Director Ward also noted that in this policy, clerks will need to be trained since they may be charged with holding a phone due to an infraction and giving it back to the student or parent.
 - The timeline of engagement within the readings process was also discussed.

6. SPPS DRAFT 2025 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Superintendent Thein then welcomed Jim Grathwol, District Lobbyist, to present this report.

The 2023-24 session fiscal impacts in FY26-27 were reviewed, noting that the 2025 Legislature needs a November forecast projected surplus greater than \$1 billion to tolerate any new state spending in any spending category. The SPPS draft 2025 legislative agenda was also reviewed describing a changing political landscape. A legislative agenda should be education, aspirational, and obtainable. The categories for the agenda include:

- General education formula
- Special education formula
- English learner formula
- Compensatory revenue formula
- Extended time revenue
- Fund state mandates
- School district levy authority

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Protections for students, and planning for scenarios was discussed, including the history of attacks against K-12 funding, and our work with partners.
- Director Vue requested reporting to the Board and Community about the legislative process. Director Henderson expanded on this to try and motivate the legislature with hearing from community members and staff in buildings. It will be helpful to have weekly updates to share with community and staff. She also noted hearing that a neighboring district has a list serv which informs and empowers parents, families and community members, and also lets the delegation know that the community is engaged and concerned.

- The Board also noted reviewing the entire legislative agenda and the dollar amounts for each proposal, as well as the competitive grant process.
- Dr. Thein noted the importance of a unified front when testifying at the capital, and the work of AMSD.
- The Board also noted a question about medical reimbursements for mental health.

7. FACILITIES MASTER PLAN 2.0

Superintendent Thein then introduced Jackie Turner, Executive Chief of Administration and Operations, to present this report.

Within the presentation, the agenda includes a purpose statement, planning process phases and timeline, decision-making structure, core planning team and workgroup membership, and next steps.

The purpose statement was defined as to update the original 10-year Facilities Master Plan and its foundational documents (vision, principles, standards, criteria for prioritization) to align future major capital improvement projects with current and future teaching and learning needs of students while being equitable, fiscally responsible, and good stewards of community resources.

The FMP 2.0 planning process timeline was also reviewed, as well as the decision-making structure and planning process.

Within Roles and Responsibilities, details were shared about the core planning team, workgroups, and focus groups. Further details were then shared on each.

Next steps include to outline the core planning team and workgroup meeting cadence, launch Facilities Use and Utilization study in November, and to hire a demographer.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Carrillo requested further details on the facilities use and utilization report, and if that will be conducted by an outside firm or internal? Response: It will be both-and, including data we have used before and we know our buildings very well.
- Director Franco noted that a part of the work group should be the infrastructure investments and in relation to the staffing and best practices for upkeep of our facilities – with concerns about a large reduction in facilities staff, and as we approach winter and snow removal. Response: We will be purposeful on the core team and the assistant director of facilities maintenance to be involved in those conversations as well.
- Director Franco noted that it should be examined if the facility upkeep work occurs in a separate work group, but should be a consistent component of this work.
- Director Vue requested information on the impacts of enrollment shifts. Response: It will be important to engage with the demographer and complete the facilities utilization study and look at the data collectively with the Board and community whether all facilities are still needed, and grapple with that as a community.
- The phases of the plan were discussed, with a review of each building to determine interests and marketability, as well as feasibility in the potential need to sell or maintain them and questions to ask.

- Director Franco noted questions about the checkpoints for reporting back to the Board, and the cadence for that information. Response: There will be a report back to the Board at the end of each phase – typically about two times per year. There will also be a report on the demographic and utilization study with a report in late-Spring to early-Summer. The role of gate point checks in the financial and facilities work was also noted, and the FMP and master plan, to begin to assign dollar amounts.
- Director Carrillo requested information on the engagement and consultation work. Response: The Board will participate in a facilities workshop, and prioritizing projects and buildings within the plan to be able to articulate that to community as well.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Director Ward noted that while there is not a work session regarding B.I.G.G.: Board Initiated Goals Governance after this meeting, there is work to be completed prior to January, including the Research Work Group, and the Community Engagement work to be planned. He encouraged members of the groups to schedule meetings for this work.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:28 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