

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD**

**Thursday, November 13, 2025 ~ 5:00 P.M.**

**Suffolk City Hall, 442 W. Washington Street, Suffolk, VA 23434**

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**Board Members Present:**

Heather Howell, *Chair*  
Sean McGee, *Vice Chair*  
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham  
Valerie Fields  
Karen Jenkins  
Tyron Riddick<sup>1</sup>  
Kimberly Slingluff

**Administrative Staff Present:**

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*  
Wendell M. Waller, *Esquire, School Board Attorney*  
Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*  
Keesha Johnson, *Deputy Clerk*

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**OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION**

➤ Call to Order

Board Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**MOTION TO GO INTO A CLOSED MEETING**

➤ Attorney Wendell Waller read the following motion

A motion is needed to go into a closed meeting to discuss the following item and subject pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act found at Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711:

1. The long-term suspension of a student from Mack Benn Jr. Elementary School where the discussion in an open meeting would involve disclosure of information contained in the student's scholastic record; and
2. The long-term suspension of a student from Lakeland High School where the discussion in an open meeting would involve disclosure of information contained in the student's scholastic record.

Which is authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, found at Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 (A)(2).

Board Member Jenkins moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to go into the closed meeting as read by Attorney Waller.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed by vote of 6 to 0.

Board Chair Howell reminded Board Members that personal devices are not allowed in the closed meeting, but SPS issued laptops are permitted in the closed meeting area.

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<sup>1</sup> Board Member Riddick arrived at the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

## **RECONVENE IN PUBLIC MEETING**

- Meeting Called to Order  
Board Chair Howell reconvened the public meeting.

## **CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING**

- Attorney Wendell Waller read the following certification  
A Resolution of Certification of the Closed Meeting of November 13, 2025 Pursuant to Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia

WHEREAS, the School Board of the City of Suffolk convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, requires a certification by the School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the School Board of the City of Suffolk hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this resolution of certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the School Board of the City of Suffolk.

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the Certification of the Closed Meeting as read by Attorney Waller.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed by vote of 6 to 0.

## **MEETING RECESS**

- Meeting Called to Order  
There being no further discussion, Board Chair Howell recessed the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

## **RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING**

- Meeting Called to Order  
Board Chair Howell re-opened the public meeting at 7 p.m.
- Pledge of Allegiance  
Board Member Fields led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Moment of Silence  
A moment of silence was observed by all in attendance.
- The Mission of Suffolk Public Schools  
Vice Chair McGee read the mission of SPS.

- Musical Selection – LHS Orchestra Quartet – Directed by Mary Sensabaugh  
The LHS Orchestra Quartet performed two selections Jupiter from “The Planets,” by G. Holst/arr. Deborah Baker Monday and “How to Train Your Dragon”, arr. Robert Longfield.

Board members offered expressions of gratitude for the stellar performance.

### **ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEM**

- Student Appeal Number 2025/26-3SA  
Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to uphold the recommendation from the Student Services Review Committee for Student Appeal Number 2025/26-3SA.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed by vote of 6 to 0 to 1.

- Student Appeal Number 2025/26-4SA  
Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Vice Chair McGee seconded the motion to uphold the recommendation from the Student Services Review Committee for Student Appeal Number 2025/26-4SA.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 6 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 1 (Riddick). The motion Passed by vote of 6 to 0 to 1.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- Approval of Agenda:  
Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Slingsluff seconded the motion to approve the agenda.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

### **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS**

- Citizen Comments on Agenda Items  
There were no public speakers on agenda topics.

### **REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT**

- Good News Report  
Melvin Bradshaw, Community Engagement Facilitator, shared good news happening within the division utilizing a PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Gordon, Division Superintendent, and Mrs. Howell, School Board Chair, recognized and congratulated Creekside Elementary and Lakeland High School for achieving Purple Star School status.

- Calendar of Special Events  
Dr. Gordon, Division Superintendent, highlighted information from the calendar of special events. Dr. Gordon thanked City Council Members Bennett and Rector for attending the VSBA Take Your Legislator to School event. He also thanked NRHS Student Government and staff for their tremendous assistance with the event. Dr. Gordon highlighted the NSES

Groundbreaking Ceremony and thanked the community for attending and Mr. Terry Napier for his hard work with the project since 2007.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

➤ Approval of the Consent Agenda

Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

➤ Ordinance 25/26-42: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 2, Article 2, Section 2-2.7:2 entitled “Appointment to Standing Committees and foundation boards; appointment to Citizen Advisory Committees; reports by committees; number of committee members” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board - Second Reading

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 25/26-42.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

➤ Payment of Bills and Payroll – October 31, 2025

Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve the Payment of Bills and Payroll – October 31, 2025.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 2 (Dr. Brittingham/Slingluff) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 2.

➤ Budget Amendment #1 2025-2026 Reappropriation by City Council

Dr. Gordon provided background information regarding the Budget Amendment. He explained that the budget amendment was due to receipt of back-ordered vehicles.

Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve Budget Amendment #1 2025-2026 Reappropriation by City Council.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ Budget Transfer #1 2025-2026 Summer School Adjustment for Actual Expenses

Board Chair Howell and Dr. Gordon led the discussion regarding this adjustment by providing background information for the expenses.

Vice Chair McGee moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Budget Transfer #1 2025-2026 Summer School Adjustment for Actual Expenses.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ Citizen Advisory Committee Member Updates

Board Member Jenkins moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the Citizen Advisory Committee Member Updates as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ Resolution 25/26-9: A Resolution Supporting Military Children And Families Adopted By The School Board For The City Of Suffolk, Virginia

Board Member Riddick moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-9 as presented.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ RFP Vendor Selection

Board Member Slingluff moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to direct the Finance Committee to meet and select two (2) vendors to provide auditing services by December 4, 2025, using the supplied rubric.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 7 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 7 to 0.

➤ School Administrative Office Staff (Info item only, no action required at this time)

Board Chair Howell and Dr. Gordon provided historical context to the School Administrative Offices. Dr. Gordon compared the current staff at SAO with other surrounding school division's administrative offices and discussed reasons for converting certain positions. He also talked about the organization chart, current condition of the building, and that the report provided great perspective which will prevent overcrowding in the future. Board members and Dr. Gordon engaged in additional conversation.

➤ Ordinance 2025/26-43 through Ordinance 2025/26-57

First reading only, no action required at this time nor was there any discussion.

## **PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS**

➤ Citizen Comments on Agenda Items

The Clerk read the statement of decorum for speakers who sign up to address the Board.

1. Marquita Goodhope-Colbert – Re: 1) Having Honors Geometry available in middle school, 2) After school bus for non-athlete students. Ms. Goodhope-Colbert supported athletics but felt that students should have equal access to afterschool transportation. She also felt that non-weighted vs. weighted courses approved and accepted by SPS as received from other school divisions are hindering the success of her son. She added that Honors Geometry should be offered at middle school.
2. Janet McKinney – Re: FOIA Request. Mrs. McKinney disagreed with the fees charged for a FOIA request she submitted based on a timesheet she received and suggested possible impropriety.

## **BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

### ➤ Comments and Reports by School Board Members

Board Chair Howell reminded Board Members of their five (5) minutes time limit. Board Members expressed their gratitude for the School Board Retreat, Dr. Gordon and his team, Behavior Specialists/Mental Health provider, the Transportation Department, Veterans, and the Suffolk Police Officers. They enjoyed the VSBA Bring Your Legislator to School event at NRHS, the Groundbreaking Ceremony at NSES, and student performances. They were excited to work together/collaboration, asked citizens to email Suffolk City Council to expedite the EFES project on the CIP, recommended additional engagement specialists and a L.I.T. Bus, and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- ### ➤ Board Chair Howell encouraged the board to look at the information items.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### ➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

There being no further discussion, Board Chair Howell adjourned the November 13, 2025 School Board Meeting at 8:31 p.m.

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Heather Howell, *School Board Chair*

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Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*