

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 ~ 6:00 P.M.

King's Fork Middle School, 350 King's Fork Road, Suffolk, VA 23434

Board Members Present:

Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham

Valerie Fields

Heather Howell

Karen Jenkins

Sean McGee

Tyron Riddick

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*

OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

➤ Call to Order:

Dr. John Gordon III, Division Superintendent, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

➤ Pledge of Allegiance:

Board Member Dr. Brittingham 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:

Board Member Howell read the mission of SPS.

ELECTION OF CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR, CLERK AND DEPUTY CLERK

➤ Nomination and Vote for Chairperson

Dr. Gordon opened nominations for School Board Chairperson.

Board Member Fields nominated Board Member Jenkins and Board Member Dr. Brittingham nominated Board Member McGee for the position of School Board Chairperson.

Board Member Dr. Brittingham highlighted qualifications in support of Board Member McGee for the position of Board Chair while referencing the previous year comments made by Mr. Riddick supporting Mr. McGee for Vice Chair. Board Member Riddick clarified that he was not endorsing Board Member McGee for Chair.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was:

- Karen Jenkins received three (3) votes (Fields, Jenkins, Riddick)
- Sean McGee received four (4) votes (Dr. Brittingham, Howell, McGee, Slingluff)

Board Member Sean McGee was elected as School Board Chair by a vote of 4 to 3.

Dr. Gordon passed the gavel to Board Chair McGee to preside over the meeting.

➤ Nomination and Vote for Vice-Chair

Board Chair McGee opened nominations for School Board Vice Chair.

Board Chair McGee nominated Board Member Howell and Board Member Fields nominated Board Member Jenkins for the position of School Board Vice-Chair.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was:

- Heather Howell received four (4) votes (Dr. Brittingham, Howell, McGee, Slingsluff)
- Karen Jenkins received three (3) votes (Fields, Jenkins, Riddick)

Board Member Heather Howell was elected as School Board Vice-Chair by a vote of 4 to 3.

SETTING OF SALARIES

➤ Setting of School Board Members and Chair Salaries

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved to approve Resolution 25/26-11 (A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia ratifying its earlier vote to increase the yearly salary for members of the school board from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and that the chair of the school board receive an additional yearly salary of \$1,400.)

School Board Attorney Waller reminded the board about its earlier vote to increase the yearly salary for members. He indicated that any change in the salary of school board members will not take effect until January 1, 2027 following the next general election scheduled for November 3, 2026.

Due to an oversight in order, selection of the clerk and deputy clerk was bypassed. Upon clarification from Attorney Waller and there being no second to the motion by Board Member Dr. Brittingham, Board Chair McGee moved the meeting back to the item of selecting the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

ELECTION OF CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR, CLERK AND DEPUTY CLERK cont.

➤ Appointment of Clerk and Deputy Clerk through December 31, 2026

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Fields seconded the motion to appoint Tarshia Gardner as Board Clerk and Keesha Johnson as Deputy Clerk through December 31, 2026.

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

SETTING OF SALARIES cont.

➤ Setting of School Board Members and Chair Salaries

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingsluff seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-11 (A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia ratifying its earlier vote to increase the yearly salary for members of the school board from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and that the chair of the school board receive an additional yearly salary of \$1,400, effective January 1, 2027.)

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

SETTING OF SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

➤ Setting of School Board Meeting for the 2026 Calendar Year

Board Chair McGee opened the discussion regarding school board meetings and if the Board wanted to continue having two school board meetings per month.

Board members discussed having two meetings per month with the flexibility to cancel the second meeting, if necessary. They also discussed the first meeting being a business meeting, the second meeting being a work session, setting time parameters for all meetings, and starting meetings at a time which is conducive for working citizens to attend board meetings. Dr. Gordon also joined the conversation to share information regarding the impact the time changes would have on students and others being recognized at the meetings. Attorney Waller provided clarification regarding the Board's responsibility to decide dates and times of meetings; and the Chair, in collaboration with the Superintendent, develops the layout of the meeting in terms of the agenda contents.

Board Member Riddick moved and Board Member Howell seconded the motion that school board meetings remain as scheduled with the first meeting (normal business meeting, the second Thursday of the month) beginning at 7 p.m. and the second meeting (fourth Thursday of the month) to be a work session, beginning at 5 p.m.

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

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

➤ Approval of Board Member Committees Appointments

Board Chair McGee indicated that items four through nine (ACCESS College Foundation Board of Directors, The Governor's School for the Arts, SECEP Board Member, Suffolk Education Foundation, Virginia School Board Association, and WHRO-HRETA Educational Advisory Board) will be tabled due to previous approved vote for the Board to appoint members to committees/boards at a later meeting (June) so that members duties can coincide with the start and end of the school year, July to June.

Board Member Slingluff moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to table Items four through nine (ACCESS College Foundation Board of Directors, The Governor's School for the Arts, SECEP Board Member, Suffolk Education Foundation, Virginia School Board Association, and WHRO-HRETA Educational Advisory Board), until June 2026 meeting.

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

Board Chair McGee recessed the meeting at 6:28 p.m. to collaborate with Vice Chair Howell to appoint board members to standing committees. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair McGee at 6:37 p.m.

➤ Board Member Appointments to Standing Committees

The Clerk read the following recommendations:

Finance Committee

Members – Tyron Riddick, Dr. Dawn Brittingham, Heather Howell

Alternate – Sean McGee

Policy Review Committee

Members – Kimberly Slingluff, Sean McGee, Valerie Fields

Alternate – Karen Jenkins

Citizen Advisory Support Committee

Members –Karen Jenkins, Valerie Fields, Tyron Riddick

Alternate – Heather Howell

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve appointments to the Standing Committees as read.

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

SUPERINTENDENT’S DESIGNEES

- Superintendent’s Designees to Execute Documents/Appear at Meeting in the Absence of the Superintendent

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to approve Dr. Okema Branch, Chief Academic Officer, and Dr. Rodney Brown, Chief of Administrative Services, to serve at the Superintendent’s Designee as recommended.

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

NEW BUSINESS

- Pending Discussion/Vote Regarding School Board Meeting Dates for the 2026 Calendar Year - Adjustment to School Board Second Meeting Date: January 22, 2026 - Move to January 29, 2026, 6 p.m. at KFMS

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to move the January 22nd meeting to January 29, 2026, 6 p.m. at King’s Fork Middle School, as recommended.

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

ADJOURNMENT

- Adjournment of Meeting:

There being no further discussion or questions, Board Chair McGee adjourned the January 6, 2026 School Board Organizational Meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Sean McGee, *School Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*