

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, March 12, 2026 ~ 6:00 P.M.

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

Board Members Present:

Sean McGee, *Chair*
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham
Valerie Fields
Karen Jenkins
Kimberly Slingluff

Virtual Attendance:

Heather Howell, *Vice Chair*¹
Tyron Riddick²

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/WORK SESSION

➤ Call to Order

Board Chair McGee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He informed everyone that the honor graduates would be recognized after the closed session.

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 Code Section 2.2-3711:

1. Suspension Appeal 2025/26-8SA regarding the long-term suspension of a student from King's Fork 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 Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to go into the closed meeting as read by Attorney Waller.

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

¹ Due to personal illness, Vice Chair Howell attended the meeting virtually from Suffolk, VA.

² Due to attendance at the COSSBA National Conference, Board Member Riddick attended the meeting virtually from Louisville, KY.

Board Chair McGee reminded Board Members that personal devices were not allowed in the closed meeting. He also informed the audience that closed session would last for approximately 20-25 minutes.

RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING

➤ Meeting Called to Order

Board Chair McGee reconvened the public meeting at 6:30 p.m.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

➤ Attorney Wendell Waller read the following certification:

A Resolution of Certification of the Closed Meeting of March 12, 2026 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, 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 Jenkins 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: 5 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 2 (Howell, Riddick)³. The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 0 to 2.

PRESENTATION

➤ Recognition of Honor Graduates – King’s Fork High School

There were 174 honor graduates (125 were present). The honor graduates have thus far earned over \$18.5 million in scholarships and the number is still growing. They also have received over 981 acceptance letters on file to over 126 college and universities.

Board members were proud of the honor graduate’s accomplishments and they congratulated the graduates, their families and all who support the students.

To allow students and parents the opportunity to exit the meeting room, Board Chair McGee recessed the meeting for a few minutes.

³ Vice Chair Howell and Board Member Riddick explained that their abstention was due to their absence from the closed meeting.

PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

- Call to Order – Public Hearing on the 2026-2027 Operating Budget
Board Chair McGee called the Public Budget Hearing to order at 7:22 p.m.
- Public Comments Regarding the 2026-2027 Operating Budget
There were no speakers who registered to address the board regarding the 2026-2027 Operating Budget.

There being no speakers, the Public Budget Hearing on the 2026-2027 Operating Budget was adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

- Meeting Called to Order
Board Chair McGee re-opened the public meeting at 7:23 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 Jenkins read the mission of SPS.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Approval of Agenda:
Board Member Slingluff moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the agenda with the addition of an info-only item under New Business titled “Discussion Regarding the Use of Chromebooks in Elementary Schools.”

After a brief discussion regarding concerns with use of Chromebooks at the elementary level, the costs of repairs, and concerns about an already full agenda, Board Member Slingluff withdrew her motion with the understanding that the item would be placed on the agenda for the next school board meeting to allow for public comments.

Board Member Jenkins moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEM

- Student Suspension Appeal #2025/26 – 8SA
Board Member Jenkins moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion for the student to be placed at Turlington Woods School until the end of the year, with mental health services provided.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 2 (Howell, Riddick)⁴. The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 0 to 2.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

➤ Citizen Comments on Agenda Items

There were no speakers who registered to address the board.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

➤ Good News Report

Anthonette Dickens, Communications and Community Engagement Officer, highlighted the good news happening within the division. Dr. Gordon, Division Superintendent, and Mr. McGee, School Board Chair, recognized and congratulated the following:

- Joshua Cameron – NRHS (Teacher: Ms. Carol), Best in Show (Literature: *Engineering Hope*)
- Eddie Oliver – LHS (Teacher: Ms. Sensabaugh), Best in Show (Music: *Don't Get Lazy*)
- Naomi James – KFHS (Teacher: Ms. Patton), Best in Show (Art: *Learning the Past from the Present for Our Future*)
- Volunteers Charles and Sherese Britt, for their continued support and partnership with our students through their work with the Lions Club International.
- Tebyan Ali for being elected as Virginia State Vice President of the National Beta Club and representing Suffolk Public Schools and students across the Commonwealth at the state level.
- VHSL Girls Wrestling State Champions: Hayden Mayo (153lbs. Weight Class) and Akaila Gray (235lbs. Weight Class). Both are King's Fork High School Students.

Dr. Gordon provided news from the General Assembly regarding their adoption of a \$1,500 bonus for full-time employees that will cost about \$3.2 million. Additionally, \$1.6 million has been appropriated for this bonus however, SPS would have to cover the additional \$1.6 million needed to cover bonuses. He also stated that it would cost an additional \$200,000 if bonuses are also provided for long-term subs and priority subs.

➤ Calendar of Special Events

Dr. Gordon, highlighted information from the calendar of special events. He asked board members to wear purple in honor of Military Child recognition.

CONSENT AGENDA

➤ Approval of the Consent Agenda

Board Member Slingluff moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham 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.

⁴ Both board members explained that their abstention was due to their absence from the closed meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

➤ Creating An Onboarding Handbook for New School Board Members

Board Chair McGee appointed Vice Chair Howell, and Board Members Jenkins and Fields to serve on a special committee to create an onboarding handbook for new school board members and to be shared with the board at the first school board meeting in September 2026.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Fields seconded the motion to approve the special committee (Onboarding Handbook Committee) with board members Jenkins, Fields and Vice Chair Howell to set forth and establish an onboarding handbook for new school board members to be shared with the board at the first meeting in September, 2026.

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

➤ Ordinance 25/26-75: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 2, Article 2, Section 2-2.6:1 entitled “Aspirational Statements; School Board Norms; Protocols; Filing complaints; and Consequences for Violations” of the Policies of the Suffolk City School Board - First Reading - Second Reading

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to remove and nullify Chapter 2, Article 2, Section 2-2.6:1 from school board policy.

Conversation ensued as it was expressed that the information being considered in the ordinance was not consistent with the motion. It was recommended for the policy to go back to the Policy Review Committee (PRC) to consider removal and nullification of this item from school board policy. Attorney Waller clarified that the policy must go back to the PRC to remove and nullify. Board Member Dr. Brittingham amended her motion. Additional conversation was had regarding the reasons for the policy’s removal. It was also recommended for the policy to maintain or a separate policy be created which protects the process required to request a report from the Clerk, Superintendent, and the Attorney, and for the committee to review Sub-Section B, Section 2 which references board members speaking to the media. It was suggested that additional verbiage be considered to require board members to say that they are “expressing their own point of view,” before speaking to the media. This would possibly decrease the spreading of misinformation and established a unified message. Board members were reminded to submit their recommendations to the PRC via email. Additional conversation ensued.

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to send Ordinance 25/26-75 back to the PRC to consider removal and nullification of Chapter 2, Article 2, Section 2-2.6:1 from school board policy.

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

➤ Ordinance 25/26-76 through Ordinance 25/26-79

Board Member Slingluff moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 25/26-79 through Ordinance 25/26-79 as submitted.

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

NEW BUSINESS

➤ AV Equipment Recommendation for School Board Meetings

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve the school board purchasing AV equipment needed for school board meetings as requested.

Conversation occurred among board members and Dr. Gordon regarding the costs associated with having electronic voting and holding meetings at our own site versus city hall. Dr. Gordon suggested that board members have conversations with city council members regarding the School Board having precedence over usage by other committees holding board meetings at city hall, except when recognizing honor graduates.

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

➤ Payment of Bills and Payroll – February 2026

Board Member Riddick moved and Vice Chair Howell seconded the motion to approve the Payment of Bills and Payroll – February 2026 as submitted.

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.

➤ Resolution 25/26-16: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Approving an Award to Outdoor Concepts, LLC dba Atlas General Contractors Pursuant to Written Invitation for Bid Issued by Suffolk Public Schools

Board Member Jenkins moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-16, as submitted.

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

➤ Resolution 25/26-17: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Requesting that the City of Suffolk, Virginia Pay Fifty (50) Percent of the Costs for the Replacement of the Gymnasium Floor at Northern Shores Elementary School

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-17 as submitted.

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

➤ Resolution 25/26-18: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Approving the Terms of an Agreement Between the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia, and Eide Bailly LLP to Conduct a Forensic Audit of the Financial Records of Suffolk Public Schools

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-18 as submitted.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 4 / Nay: 3 (Fields, Jenkins, Riddick) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 4 to 3.

- Resolution 25/26-19: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Authorizing Use of End of the Year Funds From the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year in the Sum of \$104,000.00 for the Services of a forensic Audit of the Finances of Suffolk Public Schools by Eide Bailly LLP

Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-19 as submitted.

Board members expressed their support and non-support of this resolution.

Upon roll call vote, the vote was: Aye: 4 / Nay: 3 (Fields, Jenkins, Riddick) / Abstain: 0. The motion Passed by vote of 4 to 3.

- Resolution 25/26-20: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia, Granting the School Superintendent the Authority to Obligate by Encumbrance any Remaining Appropriated Funds Before the End of the Current Fiscal Year [June 30, 2026] for Certain Designated Repairs and/or Purchasing Needs of Suffolk Public Schools as Approved by the School Board

Board Member Slingluff moved and Board Member Fields seconded the motion to approve Resolution 25/26-20 as submitted.

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

- Facilities Study Update (Information Item Only)

Mr. Terry Napier, Director of Facilities and Maintenance provided a recap of the 2021 Cooperative Strategy Facility Study. He also gave a brief review of the study's inception for those members who were not on the board at that time. Mr. Napier shared that the study began in 2019 and concluded in 2021 and covers four general categories: 1) Demographic Analysis, 2) Facility Condition Assessments, 3) Facility Options/Recommendations, and 4) School Capacity and Cost Methodology, relative to the city's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). He explained and provided information regarding the Facility Condition Index (FCI), schools with the highest FCI, the reasoning for JFKMS and EFES being placed first on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and maintenance updates completed since the 2021 study. Dr. Gordon stated that SPS will always look at the items that have the greatest impact on the students and the items that have the greatest impact on safety, especially when addressing repairs, replacements, and updates. Mr. Napier concluded by stating that all of the projects in their entirety, including work orders, total an investment of just over \$50 million. This is a lot of money for a medium-sized school division to use towards buildings and infrastructure in a very short period of time over six years that people do not realize is being done.

Board members were appreciative of the information as it will be helpful when talking to city council members regarding projects on the CIP. Additional conversation occurred among board members and Mr. Napier as several questions were asked and answered regarding information about various facilities.

- Year End Priorities 2026 – UPDATED (Information Item Only)

Dr. Gordon shared information on the Year End Priorities 2026 list. He stated that it would cost \$19.8 million to complete all of the projects on the list and that SPS has an estimated \$1.96 million in surplus as of February 28, 2026. Dr. Gordon indicated that SPS is about \$1.6 million short for bonuses recommended by the General Assembly. He estimates that there will

only be about \$400,000 available in funds for items listed on the priorities list. Dr. Gordon also stated that he will continue updating the board as items are fixed and if appropriations need to be requested from the city for leftover funds if it goes beyond June 30th.

- Ordinance 25/26-81 (Information Item Only)
First reading only, no action required at this time.

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.

Mr. Terrence Parks – Re: HB182. Mr. Parks felt that HB182-Consideration for allowing African-American History or AP African-American studies as a substitute for World History I or World History to meet graduation requirements. He supports the bill and felt that denying these courses of study as optional substitutes, the School Board would literally be suppressing higher education and implored the board to consider the bill before the governor and be on the right side of history this time and give African-American History the merit it deserves, not just one month.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

- Comments and Reports by School Board Members
Board members congratulated the honor graduates from KFHS, students and staff who were highlighted in the Good News Report, students and coaches for their athletic successes, the Enchanted Steppers from BTWES for their competition win, and students and staff for being recognized in a national magazine (Business View Magazine). They also thanked Dr. Gordon and his team for all that they do, parents and the community for supporting the students and their events, and the transportation department and especially bus drivers for their hard work and patience while they navigate various situations. Board members enjoyed various student-centered events and encouraged parent's participation. They were also thankful for the productive meeting, an upcoming discussion regarding Chromebooks, and encouraged members to communicate with each other and to work together for the success of the division. Board Members thanked Mrs. Forsman and Mr. Napier for their years of service and hard work. They also asked for prayers for students, faculty and staff at ODU and NSU as they navigate through recent incidents at their university. Board Members apologized for their virtual attendance and wished all a safe rest of the week and a good night.

MOTION TO GO INTO A SECOND CLOSED MEETING

- Attorney Wendell Waller read the following motion:
A motion is needed to go into a second closed meeting to discuss the following items and subjects pursuant to the Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711:
 1. Record Review 2025/26-7RR regarding the assignment of a student to Turlington Woods 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 Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to go into a second closed meeting as read by Attorney Waller.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 2 (Howell, Riddick)⁵. The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 0 to 2.

Board Chair McGee reminded Board Members that personal devices are not allowed in the closed meeting.

RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING

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

CERTIFICATION OF SECOND CLOSED MEETING

- Attorney Wendell Waller read the following certification:
A Resolution of Certification of the Closed Meeting of March 12, 2026 Pursuant to Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia

WHEREAS, the School Board of the City of Suffolk (“School Board”) convened a second 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, 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 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 Jenkins moved and Board Member Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the Certification of the Second Closed Meeting as read by Attorney Waller.

Upon roll-call vote, the vote was: Aye: 5 / Nay: 0 / Abstain: 0 / Absent: 2 (Howell, Riddick). The motion Passed by vote of 5 to 0 to 0 to 2.

ACTION ON SECOND CLOSED MEETING ITEM

- Action On A Second Closed Meeting Item - Student Record Review #25/26-7RR
Board Member Dr. Brittingham moved and Board Member Jenkins seconded the motion to uphold the Student Services Review Committee’s (SSRC) recommendation.

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

⁵ Vice Chair Howell and Board Member Riddick exited the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Due to their remote location status, they were not attending the closed session meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Board Chair McGee encourage board members to review the items listed in the information section of the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

- Adjournment of Meeting:
There being no further discussion, Board Chair McGee adjourned the March 12, 2026 School Board Meeting at 9:42 p.m.

Sean McGee, *School Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*