

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, August 13, 2026 ~ 6:00 P.M.

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

Board Members Present:

Sean McGee, *Chair*
Heather Howell, *Vice Chair*
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham
Valerie Fields
Karen Jenkins
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
Board Chair McGee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- Pledge of Allegiance
Board Member Slingluff 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 Dr. Brittingham read the mission of SPS.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Approval of Agenda:
Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Slingluff 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.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON AGENDA TOPICS

- Citizen Comments on Agenda Items
The Clerk read the statement of decorum for speakers who signed up to address the Board.

1. Travis McKinney – Re: Safety Issues. Mr. McKinney shared information that he felt would elevate safety awareness and bring focus to what he believes is dangerous and problematic behaviors in our national school systems. Mr. McKinney indicated three institutional failures regarding protecting children from predators: 1) The pattern of life and the awareness has not been evaluated to the point of a crisis or to the point of where

the decision makers understand that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. 2) Apathy or the reactions to these events. Child predators have become so common that institutionalized education systems keeps information hidden and quiet. 3) The institutionalized denial of the right of the parents to be informed of all things that are going on with their children especially, when it comes to human sexuality. Mr. McKinney stated that a trusted adult is the equivalent to leaving your safe open. He asked the board to exact policy that protect children from predators.

REPORTS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

➤ Good News Report

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

- Bob Arnette and Steven Hallstead for the Edge Volleyball Partnership with Turlington Woods Schools. This partnership is a unique opportunity to provide upgrades to TW, eliminate some of the negative perceptions about the alternative school, and for students to have the opportunity to participate in volleyball clinics. This partnership shows that each of our schools and students are special. Mr. Arnette presented a check for \$20,000 to Dr. Gordon and Board Chair McGee.

➤ Calendar of Special Events

Dr. Gordon, presented information from the calendar of special events. Dr. Gordon welcomed back new teachers and long-term substitutes at their orientation, congratulated principals and HES for their collaboration and their renewed focus on building cleanliness, and stressed importance of all students and staff being present and ready to start the school year on August 24th with 100% attendance from both students and staff.

CONSENT AGENDA

➤ Approval of the Consent Agenda

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS

➤ Resolution 26/27-6: A Resolution of the School Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Adjusting the Annual Salary of the Clerk of the School Board by Five Percent (5%) and Awarding Her a \$5,000 Bonus

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the Resolution 26/27-6 as submitted.

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 Additions: 1. Dr. Cynthia R. Tyler - Career and Technical Education Advisory Council 2. Danasha Edwards - Title I Parent Advisory Council
Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Members Fields seconded the motion to approve the addition of Dr. Cynthia R. Tyler to the Career and Technical Education Advisory Council and Danasha Edwards to the Title I Parent Advisory Council, as recommended.

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

- School Safety Advisory Committee Report

Mr. McKinney, Chair of the Safety Advisory Committee, presented information from their annual report. Mr. McKinney provided information regarding areas of concerns for the committee. They included: transportation and bus operations, physical security, traffic and playground safety, staff conduct and safeguarding, victim advocacy, and protocols for notifying families of violence and student absences, and data on suspensions and expulsions of reportable behavior which require a comprehensive review of policy to effect positive change. He expressed the need for increased salaries for S3s and SSOs, clearly identified expectations of their position, and a zero-tolerance policy regarding employee/student fraternization. He concluded by recommending that the board review and prioritize the committee's recommendations and, where action items require collaboration across departments or coordinator with municipal agencies, assign them to the appropriate subcommittees or administrative teams for development and implementation.

Board Members, Mr. McKinney, and Dr. Gordon engaged in conversation regarding recommended policies for victim advocacy response protocol and parental notifications after acts of violence. They also discussed committee collaboration, communication with the City regarding traffic at Florence Bowser Elementary School and a possible round-about to minimize traffic, committee meetings attendance/dates/times, and committees reports. Additionally, they discussed security vestibules, fencing requests/installation, SSOs/S3s pay scales, and funding of recommendations vs. repairing sinkholes. Board Members thanked Mr. McKinney for his thorough report.

Board Member Slingluff requested that the School Safety Audit Committee review the policy titled *Value of Teacher Student Relationships*, Chapter 7, article 9, Section 7-9.3 and provide the Policy Review Committee (PRC) with any feedback, opinions, or recommendations to be considered. Board Member Slingluff also asked Attorney Waller to provide the PRC with information from the Virginia State Code regarding "Victim Advocacy Response Protocol" and "Parental notifications after acts of violence," and SPS' current policy on these issues so that the PRC can review and discuss the policy to consider what the School Safety Audit Committee's recommendations.¹

- Discipline Data Review 2025-2026 School Year

Dr. Brown, Chief of Administrative Services, commended the board for their commitment to safety, the city, and parents for their investments in students safety. Using PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Brown reviewed the discipline data for the 2025-2026 school year, highlighting discipline data comparisons, student discipline data by school, discipline data by location, discipline data by school level, the top five (5) incidents, and reviewed student/safety initiatives. Dr. Brown shared the new initiatives for the 2026-2027 school year which included

¹ Minutes edited to include comments from Board Member Slingluff.

the following: 1) a grant-funded Behavior Specialist for KFHS, 2) effective classroom systems training for staff, 3) Virginia Rules lessons taught by our School Resource Officers, 4) updated bus camera system, 5) additional cameras installed at our high school athletic stadiums, 6) Raptor and Zero Eyes integration, 7) bus expectation lessons, 8) expand innovation teams, 9) school-based substance abuse teams, 10) administrative review conference, and 11) school-level pre-administrative hearings.

Board Members, Dr. Brown and Dr. Gordon engaged in discussion regarding real-time bus cameras, support to address incidents at KFHS, parental involvement/relationships, students with multiple incidents, discipline codes, the top 10 incidents, and the effectiveness of the various programs in place to support disciplinary issues. Board Members thanked Dr. Brown for his thorough report.

➤ SPS Instructional Overview

Dr. Okema Harper, Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Stenette Byrd III, Chief of Schools, Kimberly Warholak, Director of Special Education, and Dr. Katelyn Leitner, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, using PowerPoint presentation, gave an overview of instruction, supports, and leadership. They highlighted information from the 2026 SPS Summer Series (including preliminary pass rates data, SOL assessments, preliminary data discoveries, Comprehensive School Support Plans (CSSP) and targeted & intensive support), 2026-2027 SPS Instructional Overview (including Special Education and its cycle of support using team collaboration, and Curriculum Optimization using instructional resources, supports, programming, and leadership.) They explained that the next steps in the process include: 1) to continue refining curriculum resources to support consistent, high-quality instruction, 2) strength Tier I Instruction through implementation of evidence-based instructional practices, 3) provide ongoing professional learning and coaching to build educator capacity, 4) monitor implementation fidelity through learning walks to ensure consistency across classrooms, 5) utilize continuous feedback cycles to inform improvements and support instructional decision-making, 6) continue to optimize personnel to provide targeted, tiered support for schools, teachers, and students, 7) and continue leveraging the expertise of the Curriculum and Instruction team through participation on state-level committees.

Board members and the team discussed supports for the different tiers, writing data/scores and its affect spilling into other content areas. Board Members thanked Dr. Harper and her team for their report.

➤ New Course Proposal (Camp Community College Courses Additions)

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Members Slingluff seconded the motion to approve the New Course Proposal, as recommended.

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

➤ 2027-2028 Budget Development Calendar

Mr. Anthony Lebron, Chief Financial Officer, using PowerPoint presentation, discussed the 2027-2028 Budget Development Calendar. He stated that the guiding principals for building the calendar include transparency, collaboration, data-driven decisions, fiscal stewardship and strategic alignment. He also highlighted key milestones, enhancements, and the School Board's role by providing policy direction, community engagement, oversight, and final budget approval.

Board Members thanked Mr. Lebron for his in-dept presentation.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Members Dr. Brittingham seconded the motion to approve the 2027-2028 Budget Development Calendar, as recommended.

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

➤ Capital Improvement Plan Update

Mr. Anthony Lebron, using PowerPoint presentation, shared an update regarding the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He highlighted investments between the years 2016 through 2026 which included the construction of Florence Bowser Elementary School (completed 2018), Col. Fred Cherry Middle School (completed 2018), and John F. Kennedy Middle School (completed 2026), and the addition to Northern Shores Elementary School (in progress). Mr. Lebron also provided information about projects slated for 2026-2036 which includes a new Elephant's Fork Elementary School (2027-2029), Nansemond River High School Addition (2028-2031), and the replacement of Kilby Shores Elementary, Forest Glen Middle, and Nansemond Parkway Elementary Schools 2031-2035. Mr. Lebron concluded his presentation by providing information regarding a funding gap relative to preventative maintenance. He indicated that the benchmark for funds for preventative maintenance is less than 2% of the current replacement value (CRV) and that SPS needs a dedicated fund for scheduled servicing, roof inspections, HVAC and equipment maintenance.

Board Members, Dr. Gordon and his team engaged in conversation regarding the status of land and the replacement of Elephant's Fork Elementary School. Board Members thanked Mr. Lebron for his report.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS

➤ Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items

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

1. Travis McKinney – Re: Clean Up. Mr. McKinney discussed his concerns with the Discipline Data Review Report and the disconnect from disciplinary measures or actions. He felt that the disciplinary reports and actions are ineffective. He explained that the older children that have been under PBIS for the last five years are the ones that are misbehaving. Mr. McKinney requested answers regarding his FOIA request that was dated August 6th regarding information discussed in the Discipline Data Review, was returned to him indicating that the data did not exist.
2. Tiffany Reyman – Re: Transportation. Ms. Reyman shared her concerns with the denial she received for a Out of Zone Waiver for her children to attend Forest Glen Middle School. Ms. Reyman asked the Board to review the policy regarding staff participation in the Out of Zone Waiver program.

BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS

➤ Comments and Reports by School Board Members

Board Members congratulated the Summer school graduates and shared best wishes for their future, Alyssa Neild for her first place win for the welding simulator contest, and the new teachers and staff and wished them a wonderful school year. They were also excited about the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new JFKMS and thrilled to welcome staff and students to a

wonderful building. Board Members encouraged the public to give their input to the budget process and the Capital Improvement Plan. They also thanked their constituents for their support, everyone who participated in National Night Out, and thanked all of the presenters for their reports. Board Members shared their desire for immediate action to build a new Elephant's Fork Elementary School. Board Chair McGee discussed his participation in The Hunt Institute's Virginia Hunt State Policy Fellows – Cohort #2 thanked Dr. Siddiqi for a wonderful program that is focused on kids and not political group membership. Board Member Dr. Brittingham thanked the Board and Dr. Gordon and his staff for their kindness and thoughtfulness during the passing of her father. Board members wished students, staff, and parents an enjoyable rest of the summer and a great start of the school year.

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 items and subjects pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act found at Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711:

1. The discussion and/or consideration regarding the performance evaluation of the School Superintendent; and
2. The discussion and/or consideration regarding the performance evaluation of the Attorney for the School Board.

Which is authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, found at Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1).

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Fields seconded the motion to go into a 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.

Board Chair McGee reminded Board Members that only approved, school issued electronics are allowed in the closed session meeting room.

RECONVENE IN OPEN MEETING

➤ Meeting Called to Order:

Board Chair McGee reconvened the public meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

➤ Certification of Closed Meeting

Attorney Wendell Waller read the following certification:

A Resolution of Certification of the Closed Meeting of August 13, 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 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.

Vice Chair Howell moved and Board Member Riddick seconded the motion to approve the Certification of 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.

ACTION ON CLOSED MEETING ITEM

There was no action on closed meeting items.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Board Chair McGee reminded the board that the second school board meeting for August 27th was cancelled and the next meeting would be September 10th. He also reminded board members that their CIP recommendations are due to the Clerk by noon on September 9th for calculations.

ADJOURNMENT

- Adjournment of Meeting:
There being no further discussion, Board Chair McGee adjourned the August 13, 2026 School Board Meeting at 10:28 p.m.

Sean McGee, *School Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*