

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOL BOARD
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2021

The Staunton City School Board convened for the regular monthly business meeting in the Rita S. Wilson Council Chambers of Staunton City Hall, 116 W. Beverley Street, Staunton at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, June 14, 2021, with members in attendance as follows:

Kenneth Venable, Chair
Robert Boyle Natasha McCurdy Amy Wratchford, Vice-chair
Christine Poulson Ronald Ramsey
Dr. Garrett Smith, Superintendent/Deputy Clerk
Brenda Lovekamp, Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. REPORTS

A. Reports from Superintendent

Dr. Smith introduced Steve Cash as the new Assistant Principal at Bessie Weller Elementary School. Mr. Cash will be serving alongside Sandra McGrath who, with the retirement of Rich Fletcher, is taking over as Principal on July 1.

B. Reports from School Board Members

Members offered the following reports relative to their service on the School Board.

Christine Poulson:

No report.

Robert Boyle:

➤ Acknowledged the SCS staff for their outstanding efforts in getting through this difficult year.

Ronald Ramsey:

- Viewed several virtual webinars.
- Took part in the recent VCTC Board meeting where work continues on the integration of the two regional programs housed on that campus –VCTC and SVGS.
- Enjoyed a final visit with Ms. Linhares' class and pen pal at Ware.

Natasha McCurdy:

➤ Enjoyed a visit with my pen pal at Ware. The pen pals made a beautiful book with portraits of their respective pen pals.

Amy Wratchford:

- Congratulated SVGS and all of those involved on the successful VDOE audit of their program.
- Expressed tremendous appreciation for all SCS staff for the extraordinary efforts of getting through this school year.

Kenneth Venable:

No report.

IV. UPDATES AND INFORMATION

A. Finance Update by Brad Wegner, Budget Director

Brad Wegner, Budget Director, reviewed the year-to-date finance report through May 31.

B. Equity Committee Report by Dr. Garrett Smith, Superintendent; Charm Bullard, VCIC Director of Programs; and Ruth Jones Turner, Director of Strategic Planning & Partnerships

Dr. Smith started the report and shared that the presentation would include information on the past, present, and future equity work.

As background information, Dr. Smith reviewed the lengthy list of past equity-related work completed in SCS since 2017, including:

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOL BOARD
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2021

- Partnered with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC).
- Provided training for all employees on equity and inclusion.
- Changed the way we handled student discipline by adding restorative justice practices and creating the alternative suspension center.
- Launched a cycle of continuous school improvement through classroom observations and providing constructive feedback to all teachers on teaching techniques.
- Worked with VCIC to form and train equity teams in each school.
- Worked with VCIC to hold focus groups to obtain input from students, staff, and community on the name of our high school, which ultimately resulted in the name being changed to Staunton High School in 2018.
- Bessie Weller, after seven years of being denied accreditation, earned full accreditation in 2018.
- Started SCS University, an internal professional development mechanism to continuously improve teacher expertise.
- Began providing health insurance coverage to bus drivers to ensure all employee groups were provided equitable benefits.
- Ware Elementary School was recognized as a national ESSA Title I Distinguished School due to high academic performance and reduced achievement gaps for two consecutive years.
- Shelburne Middle School math progression excelled in all reporting groups.
- Staunton High School's on-time graduation rate reached 98% for black students and 97% for students with economic disadvantages or disabilities.
- Opened an Equity First Fund with citizen donations. This fund addresses issues of equity for students and staff and has been used to cover student fees, etc.
- Dropped out of the regional Genesis Program and instead focused on our alternative suspension model to get students back in their home schools quickly.
- Entered into a mental health partnership with UVA and VDOE.
- Bridged the digital divide by providing hot spots and Chromebooks to all SCS students and families who needed at-home technology. This effort started before the pandemic shutdown in partnership with T-Mobile.
- VDOE data released in 2020 confirmed there were no disproportionalities in suspensions among black students and non-black students in SCS.
- Qualified for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). With this in place this school year, all students were provided free breakfast and lunch. Have recently learned that next school year, we will be able to add free snacks for all students as well.
- Created SCS's first-ever Equity Committee in 2020.
- Next school year, SCS will begin to provide Upstander Training through VCIC for groups of students in elementary, middle, and high school. In this training, students will learn to stand up to bullying and discrimination of any kind.

To continue with the presentation, Dr. Smith introduced Charm Bullard of VCIC, who participated virtually in the meeting, to share the present work of the Equity Team.

Charm Bullard reviewed the extensive work of the Equity Committee since the meetings began in December of 2020 and have taken place monthly through May. She thanked the Equity Committee members for taking time out of their busy schedules to do this work. The members are:

Andrea Cornett-Scott, citizen
Diana Black, citizen
Cristina Casado, citizen
Laura Faircloth, citizen
Emily Sproul, parent
Lisa Shipman, parent
Michele Kielty, parent
Karen Painter, parent
Sabrina Burress, parent
Stephanie Haskins, employee

Lisa Warren, employee
Donte Montague, employee
Betsy Conyers, employee
Ryan Blosser, employee
Saarangi Kaimal, student
Jaida Crawford, student
Jean Carlos Morales, student
Ruby Preston, student
McKinley Armstrong, student
Madyson Sumner, student

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOL BOARD
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2021

She shared the committee's recommendation for an equity plan, reviewing the five categories of the recommended plan, along with the specific recommendations and suggested measures under each of these categories:

- Community Collaboration
- Curriculum & Pedagogy
- Hiring
- Professional Development
- Student Experience

The Board expressed appreciation for the presentation and the depth of the work of the Equity Committee.

Dr. Smith invited Ruth Jones Turner to address the future work.

Ruth Jones Turner addressed the next steps and reviewed how the plan would look in execution. She reminded that the equity plan would be embedded in the broader four-year strategic plan for the school division. She spoke of the ongoing work in developing the strategic plan, including a needs assessment that was completed in May to gather input from staff, students, and families. The feedback from this assessment highlighted our stakeholders' desire to see the school division continue and deepen our ongoing equity efforts. She reminded that the Board had informally set goals for the 4-year strategic plan and that staff was currently working on developing strategies to meet those goals. She shared that as the strategic planning process continues over the next several months, recommendations from the equity plan would be considered and included in the strategies for completion as the budget resources are available. It is anticipated that a draft of the strategic plan, with equity initiatives embedded, would be available for School Board and public review at the end of the summer, with a request for the School Board to adopt the final 4-year Strategic Plan in November.

The floor was opened for any comments or questions from School Board members. Christine Poulson shared that the seriousness of this work would need to be kept in mind as future budgets are developed in order to provide the necessary resources.

V. PUBLIC INPUT

The Chair opened the public input portion of the meeting. There were no speakers present nor calling in to comment.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

The Chair invited Board members to review the following items listed on the consent agenda:

- Minutes of Work Session and Regular Meeting on May 10, 2021
- Minutes of Board Development Session, Work Session & Called Meeting on May 24, 2021
- Personnel Actions
- Out-of-State or Overnight Field Trips: SHS Girls Basketball Team to Liberty University for Team Camp, June 25-27, 2021
- VHSL 2021-22 Membership Application

On a motion by Amy Wratchford, seconded by Ron Ramsey, the Board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

A. VPSA Reimbursement Resolution

Tom Lundquist, Director of Technology, reviewed the briefing and requested the School Board approve the reimbursement resolution for education technology grant funds.

On a motion by Amy Wratchford, seconded by Christine Poulson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the reimbursement resolution as presented.

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOL BOARD
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2021

B. Surplus Property

Earl McCray, Director of Operations, reviewed the briefing outlining the items deemed to be no longer usable by the school division. He requested the Board authorize the surplus/disposal of these items.

On a motion by Robert Boyle, seconded by Christine Poulson, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the surplus/disposal of the listed items, as noted.

C. Donation of Surplus Items

Earl McCray, Director of Operations, reviewed the briefing outlining the items that had been previously approved as surplus but not yet listed for sale on GovDeals, and requested that these items be donated to the local educational non-profit organization, Project GROWS.

On a motion by Amy Wratchford, seconded by Christine Poulson, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the donation of the listed surplus items to Project GROWS.

D. Annual Budget

Brad Wegner, Budget Director, reviewed the remaining shortfall after City Council's approval and appropriation for FY22 and explained that the shortfall was covered from the school division's fund balance reserves in order to balance and maintain the overall budget of \$40,515.866. He asked that the School Board approve the revised FY22 budget.

On a motion by Amy Wratchford, seconded by Christine Poulson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the FY22 budget, which includes appropriations of \$13,625,250 from the City of Staunton General Fund and \$223,750 from the Staunton City Schools' Fund Balance Reserves, as noted.

E. Surplus Technology Items

Tom Lundquist, Director of Technology, reviewed the briefing outlining the technology items deemed to be no longer usable by the school division. He requested the Board authorize the surplus/disposal of these items.

On a motion by Ronald Ramsey, seconded by Natasha McCurdy, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the surplus/disposal of the listed items, as noted.

F. Suspension of Policy KG-Community Use of School Facilities

Earl McCray, Director of Operations, reminded that the facilities rental policy had been suspended this school year due to COVID restrictions and that since the CDC guidance for face coverings and physical distancing has not changed for school facilities, this request is for that policy to be suspended again for the 2021-2022 school year. He noted that should the CDC guidance change, the policy would be reviewed again for possible reinstatement.

Christine Poulson asked if the enforcement of the CDC guidance and mandates could be passed along as the responsibility of the renting organization. Dr. Jelisa Wolfe, Executive Director of Student Services shared that, under the current guidance, anytime a child is in our buildings, the mandates are in effect regardless of who is using the building. Since the school division is responsible for any exposure within our buildings, to ensure safety for students and staff and avoid any possible future closings due to exposure, this recommendation is the safest route for Staunton City Schools until the guidance changes.

On a motion by Amy Wratchford, seconded by Ronald Ramsey, the Board voted unanimously to approve the suspension of Policy KG-Community Use of School Facilities for 2021-22.

VASS Superintendent of the Year Recognition

Kenneth Venable, Chair, reported that the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) has historically recognized eight regional superintendents of the year and from those eight, has selected one as Virginia's superintendent of the year. Due to the extraordinary leadership of the 133 public school division superintendents during the 2020-21 school year and their roles in serving their communities through the COVID pandemic, VASS is honoring all 133 division superintendents as Virginia Superintendents of the Year.

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOL BOARD
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA

Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2021

In keeping with this, he announced that the Staunton City School Board would like to honor Dr. Garrett Smith with a resolution from the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, the Virginia School Boards Association, and the Staunton City School Board, recognizing his outstanding leadership of Staunton City Schools during this past school year. He read the resolution aloud, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

School Board members thanked Dr. Smith for the great job in steering the school division during the difficult past year; praised his ability to manage one thing after another since taking the helm; and shared that he was certainly deserving of this recognition as the sole recipient for the state if that process were in place this year.

On a motion by Ronald Ramsey, seconded by Christine Poulson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the resolution, as read into the minutes.

The School Board also presented a gift to Dr. Smith as a token of appreciation.

The Chair declared the regular business meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m. and indicated that the Board would return to the 2nd floor to complete the work session agenda.


CLERK / DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD


CHAIR / VICE-CHAIR OF THE BOARD