

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOL BOARD
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2020

The Staunton City School Board convened for the regular monthly meeting in the Chambers of Staunton City Hall, 116 W. Beverley Street, Staunton on Monday, August 10, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., with members in attendance as follows:

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed Amy Darby as the City Council liaison.

III. AWARDS, RECOGNITIONS, AND PRESENTATIONS

None.

IV. REPORTS

A. Reports from Superintendent

Dr. Smith confirmed that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had both taken oaths of office for this year.

Report on School Reopening Plan for 2020-21:

Dr. Smith reported on the complexities of determining a path forward as he makes a recommendation to the School Board regarding the school reopening plan for 2020-21. He noted three considerations factoring into tonight's recommendation:

- Staff concerns – Staff have expressed concern regarding safety for themselves and their families. Several have or are caring for family members who have underlying health conditions. Staff indicated that they would feel safer if masks were required at all times. Local health experts agreed that this would add another layer protection. SCS mask guidance was changed to indicate that masks be worn at all times, with scheduled mask breaks. Today, updated guidance was received from VDH supporting use of masks at all times for students and staff.
- Quality of teaching and learning experiences – With the change in mask guidance, the percentage of families choosing the virtual-only option has risen even further to 36% (with one school as high as 44%). The ability of our administrators and teachers to adequately staff and deliver two different models of instruction at a high level of quality becomes more difficult as our virtual numbers grow.
- Predicted increase in COVID-19 cases in the Valley – The University of Virginia COVID-19 Model, which has been tracking Virginia Department of Health (VDH) data since the beginning of the closure, projects a statewide upward peak in cases in the first week of September.

Recommendation: With these considerations in mind, Dr. Smith recommended beginning instruction in a **virtual-only option** for the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year, and that the start date be backed up from August 18 to **August 25** to allow families and school personnel time to adjust to this change in direction. He indicated his recommendation also included the following provisions:

- Preschool students will report to Dixon for in-person instruction four days per week.
- Some students with disabilities will report for in-person instruction in small groups.
- Students who are determined to need direct specialized instruction will report for in-person instruction as determined by IEP teams.
- Students working toward GED testing will continue to receive in-person instruction in small groups.
- The school division will work with partner agencies to provide space for students who would normally receive outpatient counseling or day treatment services to be able to continue to receive these services.
- School counselors will continue to reach out to students to provide direct support.

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- School counselors, speech language pathologists and special education teachers will continue to provide direct instruction and support for development of social skills.
- Clinic staff will reach out to parents of students with health care plans in place to ensure information is current and staff are aware of any health concerns.

Dr. Smith indicated this will be a challenging year and urged the SCS family to come together and support each other. He indicated that all SCS staff are committed to giving families and students their best efforts.

School Board members engaged in a question and answer discussion regarding Dr. Smith's recommendation, the impact on the academic calendar, food service, community partnerships regarding childcare, technology needs of students, preparedness of students and staff for virtual learning, etc. They also discussed the ability to quickly move back to the blended model, if the virus transmission rates were under control and the situation permitted, and also to continue in the fully virtual model if necessary.

Following the discussion, Kenneth Venable, Chair, called for a motion on Dr. Smith's stated recommendation.

A motion was made by Natasha McCurdy that the School Board begin the 2020-2021 school year in an all-virtual format to eligible students through the first semester ending in December 2020, subject to periodic review by the Superintendent and his recommendation to return to a blended model as the situation progresses. Ronald Ramsey seconded the motion. The School Board approved the motion unanimously as per the votes recorded below:

**Votes: Christine Poulson–aye Robert Boyle–aye Kenneth Venable–aye
Amy Wratchford–aye Natasha McCurdy–aye Ron Ramsey–aye**

The Board thanked Dr. Smith and the administrative team for their work on this recommendation.

B. Reports from School Board Members

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

Christine Poulson:

- Participated in a video conference with Senator Warner.

Robert Boyle:

- Congratulated Amanda Warren on her work and the recent announcement regarding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) approval for SCS.

Amy Wratchford:

- Thank you to the team at SHS for their creative work in keeping the marching band involved during this time. Also noted the exciting prep work being done in the theater department at SHS.

Natasha McCurdy:

- Attended PTA meetings for several schools and noted that the PTAs are working to get families connected.
- Participated in SCS University sessions and other state meetings.

Ronald Ramsey:

- Completed required trainings for new school board members.
- Thanked Dr. Smith for the tour of the SHS construction site. Very exciting to see all that is coming to fruition after many years of discussion and planning.

Kenneth Venable:

- Also participated in the session with Senator Warner.

As a public reminder of the School Board's commitment, the Chair read aloud the VSBA School Board Code of Conduct (see below), which was approved and signed by the School Board at the July 2020 meeting.

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VSBA Code of Conduct for School Board Members

As a member of my local school board, I will strive to be an advocate for students and to improve public education and to that end:

1. I will have integrity in all matters and support the full development of all children and the welfare of the community, Commonwealth and Nation.
2. I will attend scheduled board meetings.
3. I will come to board meetings informed concerning the issues under consideration.
4. I will make policy decisions based on the available facts and appropriate public input.
5. I will delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent, and establish a process for accountability of administrators.
6. I will encourage individual board member expression of opinion and establish an open, two-way communication process with all segments of the community.
7. I will communicate, in accordance with board policies, public reaction and opinion regarding board policies and school programs to the full board and superintendent.
8. I will bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures, upholding and enforcing all laws, state regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools.
9. I will refrain from using the board position for personal or partisan gain and avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety.
10. I will respect the confidentiality of privileged information and make no individual decisions or commitments that might compromise the board or administration.
11. I will be informed about current educational issues through individual study and participation in appropriate programs, such as those sponsored by my state and national school boards associations.
12. I will always remember that the foremost concern of the board is to improve and enhance the teaching and learning experience for all students in the public schools of Virginia.

Therefore, I will always strive to demonstrate appropriate behavior/conduct as a public school board member.

V. UPDATES AND INFORMATION

A. Finance Update by Brad Wegner, Budget Director

Brad Wegner reviewed the finance report.

B. Instruction Update by Amanda Warren, Director of Nutrition Services

Amanda Warren provided a report the work of the School Nutrition department for the 2019-20 school year, including efforts to continue to provide meals and other grocery items for students and families during the COVID-19 closure.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

The Chair opened the public input portion of the meeting. The following persons were present at the meeting to provide comments:

- David Woolston, teacher at Shelburne Middle School, thanked Dr. Smith for listening and trusting teachers to provide quality virtual education, and the Board for approving the virtual start.
- Christine Hawley, SEA President, thanked Dr. Smith for the time spent with staff to listen and respond to concerns, and for his actions in the best interest and safety of students and staff in this very complicated situation.

The Chair noted that the requirement for social distancing has created limited seating capacity and therefore an alternate call-in procedure was provided for public input by any who were listening to the meeting via the website or SCS-TV13. He noted that Mr. Lundquist, Director of Technology was serving as the host for any citizens calling in who would like to comment at this time. He reminded any speakers to please identify themselves by name and address and to keep their comments to two minutes or less.

Mr. Lundquist indicated that there were callers were holding in the queue, however, the callers were not able to connect to provide comment. The Board encouraged any caller who had been unable to connect, to please send their comments via email.

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VII. CONSENT AGENDA

The Chair invited Board members to review the items listed on the consent agenda and indicate if there were any of those listed that the Board would like to vote on separately.

- Minutes for the Work Session and Regular Meeting on July 13, 2020
- Minutes for the Called Work Session on July 22, 2020
- Personnel Actions
- Release from Compulsory School Attendance for Student A and Student B

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

**Votes: Christine Poulson–aye Robert Boyle–aye Kenneth Venable–aye
Amy Wratchford–aye Natasha McCurdy–aye Ron Ramsey–aye**

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of the VPSA Reimbursement Resolution

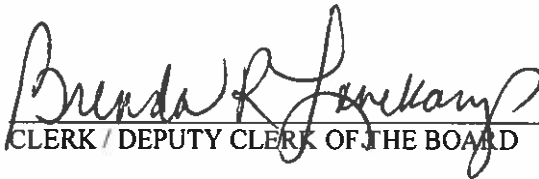
Tom Lundquist, Director of Technology, briefly reviewed the exhibit and requested approval.

On a motion by Amy Wratchford, seconded by Robert Boyle, the Board voted as follows to approve the reimbursement resolution as presented.

**Votes: Christine Poulson–aye Robert Boyle–aye Kenneth Venable–aye
Amy Wratchford–aye Natasha McCurdy–aye Ron Ramsey–aye**

The Board encouraged any caller who had been unable to connect during the alternate public input period to please send their comments via email.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.


CLERK / DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD


CHAIR OF THE BOARD