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**BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF
THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS**

OFFICIAL REPORT

**Regular Board Meeting
St. Louis, MO
September 12, 2017**

MINUTES

The Board of Education of the City of St. Louis met in Open Session pursuant to Board Bylaw B9350 on the date noted above at Wilkinson Early Childhood Center at Roe Elementary, 1921 Prather Ave, St. Louis, MO 63139.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting came to order at 6:35 p.m.

Present: Charli Cooksey, Donna Jones, Susan Jones,
Dorothy Rohde Collins, Natalie Vowell, Katherine Wessling
Absent: Bill Haas

A quorum was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All recited the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:36 p.m.

APPEARANCES – INVITED GUESTS

Show Me Arts Academy Founder Marty Casey arrived late and was unable to address the board.

Computers For The People Executive Director Dustin Bateman addressed the Board to give information on workshops available to SLPS students to stimulate an interest in STEM studies. Programs offered include coding, hardware repair, and creating mobile apps/games. Upon requests from board members, Mr. Bateman provided the following information:

- Computers For The People is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization
- programs focus on serving high school students but could be made available to junior high grade levels as well, generally ages 15 and up
- workshops typically span 8 weeks, one day per week
- workshops to be held at schools for student/parent convenience if possible
- all necessary equipment is provided, but access to a computer lab, library, or other work space would need to be granted by SLPS
- community spaces and other venues are also an option
- programs include BEAM robotics using spare parts from old electronics to build fact finding, troubleshooting, and problem solving skills
- 25% of student body participates in workshops currently being piloted at Vincent Gray Academy (East St. Louis, IL)
- improvements noted in both academic performance and graduation rates, but no specific data points given
- Computers For The People would like to meet with Board(s) and Superintendent to identify school locations whose students would benefit the most from workshops
- pilot workshops would be no cost to SLPS; further programs would rely on grants

APPEARANCES – PUBLIC COMMENTS

SLPS food service worker Cortez Sparks, Sr. (of Southwest Foodservice Excellence) addressed the Board on behalf of himself and his co workers to express disappointment regarding the minimum wage increase and subsequent decrease. “We are essential to the schools. Just as the teachers and janitors,” stated Mr. Sparks. “I feel that to raise it to \$10 an hour...and then to drop it a couple months later just feels like a blow. It’s discouraging.”

20th Ward Republican Committeeman Erik Shelquist addressed the Board to inform us that the Republican Central Committee had discussed local control of the school board at their last meeting. He affirmed his support of the [elected] Board.

24th Ward Democratic Committeewoman Teri Powers stated that she and Mr. Shelquist are working together to support the return of governance.

Retired educator and Vietnam veteran Joe Prichard appeared before the Board to express his belief that the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* provide inadequate coverage of education issues. Mr. Prichard suggested the Board consider making a formal request that the newspaper hold a forum

for citizens to express various views on education.

APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2017 MEETING AGENDA

On a motion by President Susan Jones and seconded by Vice President Katherine Wessling, the Board voted to approve and adopt the September 12, 2017 Meeting Agenda, on the following roll call vote:

Aye: Charli Cooksey, Donna Jones, Susan Jones,
Dorothy Rohde Collins, Natalie Vowell, Katherine Wessling

The motion carried.

EXCUSED ABSENCE FOR MR. BILL HAAS

On a motion by Vice President Katherine Wessling seconded by President Susan Jones, the Board voted to excuse Mr. Haas' absence, on the following roll call vote:

Aye: Charli Cooksey, Donna Jones, Susan Jones,
Dorothy Rohde Collins, Natalie Vowell, Katherine Wessling

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SESSIONS:

APRIL 11, 2017

MAY 09, 2017

JUNE 13, 2017

JULY 11, 2017

AUGUST 08, 2017

On a motion by President Susan Jones and seconded by Secretary Natalie Vowell, the Board voted to approve all above Meeting Minutes, on the following roll call vote:

Aye: Charli Cooksey, Donna Jones, Susan Jones,
Dorothy Rohde Collins, Natalie Vowell, Katherine Wessling

The motion carried.

TRANSITION UPDATE

President Susan Jones stated she received correspondence from the Special Administrative Board on August 30, 2017. The letter extended an invitation for up to two Board of Education

members, in a limited capacity, to participate in Special Administrative Board meetings. The Board then opened discussion on crafting a response to the letter.

Vice President Katherine Wessling moved to respond to the letter stating that the Elected Board would not be participating in the Special Administrative Board's next meeting on September 28, 2017. The motion was seconded by President Susan Jones.

Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins proposed an amendment to the motion which added an invitation for the Special Administrative Board to attend a meeting on a specific date with a specific list of items to discuss. Vice President Katherine Wessling accepted Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins' amendment to her motion with the set date being the next Board of Education Regular Business Meeting on October 10, 2017.

On a motion by Vice President Katherine Wessling and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, the Board voted to respond to the Special Administrative Board's letter declining their invitation and reply with an invitation to discuss the transition process at the Board of Education's next Regular Business Meeting on October 10, 2017, on the following roll call vote:

Aye: Charli Cooksey, Donna Jones, Susan Jones,
Dorothy Rohde Collins, Natalie Vowell, Katherine Wessling

The motion carried.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins reported on the following topics:

- Ms. Rohde Collins received her Board Member Certification from the Missouri School Boards' Association on August 26, 2017.
- Ms. Rohde Collins compiled a document with considerations and discussion topics for conducting listening sessions with the community and distributed a printed copy to all members present. (See Attached)

Secretary Natalie Vowell reported on the following topics and distributed a printed copy of her report to each board member :

- Secretary Vowell stated she and Ms. Donna Jones would be attending the Missouri School Boards' Association's Annual Conference on October 05, 2017 through October 08, 2017. She provided a list of conference sessions and invited board members to request her to attend additional relevant sessions if possible.
- Secretary Vowell met with Ms. Donna Jones to obtain firsthand information on the Board's history surrounding the state takeover of the District in order to compile a document for consistent messaging for all board members when engaging the public on the topic of regaining local governance. Topics to be covered will include:
 - o responsibilities of a school board
 - o members of the current board

- o history and timeline of events surrounding the loss of governance
- o specific community calls to action:
 - attend Special Administrative Board meetings
 - communicate with DESE members
 - request support from local elected officials

Secretary Vowell stated she would send the final document to all board members via email.

- Because the September 12, 2017 meeting was held in the 24th Ward, Secretary Vowell had reached out to 24th Ward Democratic Central Committeeman Anthony Brescia, 24th Ward Committeewoman Teri Powers, and 24th Ward Alderman Scott Ogilvie. Secretary Vowell thanked Committeewoman Powers for her attendance and her comments. Committeeman Brescia no longer serves on the committee and his seat has been filled by Danny Rastogi-Sample; no response was received from Alderman Ogilvie.
- Secretary Vowell invited State Representative Bruce Franks (D-78) to the meeting. Representative Franks was called to veto session and unable to make this meeting.
- Secretary Vowell attended the St. Louis City Republican Central Committee's September meeting to give an overview of the Board's history and current status and to suggest they pass resolution supporting the Board's return to governance.
- Secretary Vowell and Ms. Donna Jones attended Mayor Lyda Krewson's town hall meeting on September 05, 2017 to make the mayor aware of educational inequity. Secretary Vowell asked, "Do you [Mayor Krewson] support return of governance to the Elected Board?" and stated that Mayor Krewson did not reply with a yes or no.
- Secretary Vowell was contacted by SLPS graduate Robert Taylor who had conducted an unofficial poll via his Facebook group for graduates of North St. Louis City schools. Mr. Taylor's poll included over 120 participants' input on what should be done with vacant school buildings, and he requested it be passed along to the Board, the Special Administrative Board, and the Superintendent. Results were as follows:
 - o Rehab and Reopen: 88
 - o Apartments/Shelters for Homeless Veterans: 33
 - o Apartments for Low-Income Families: 20
 - o Sell: 4
 - o Other: 3

BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Susan Jones reported on the following topics:

- President Jones identified most of the local activist groups, elected leaders, and education advocates and began compiling an email list to send them notifications.
- President Jones has been attending various ward meetings, created a template for communications, and compiled meeting dates into a calendar for the Board so that other members may begin attending these meetings as a team.

- President Jones reached out to Mr. Ray Cummings from the American Federation of Teachers Local 420 to arrange for Local 420 President Sally Topping to participate in a meeting with the full Board of Education.
- President Jones was in attendance at the town hall where Ms. Donna Jones and Secretary Natalie Vowell spoke and thanked them for speaking.
- President Jones stated she would send her template and calendar to the Board via email.
- President Jones stated that her petition will be back online soon and she hopes to gather 1000 signatures by December 01, 2017 to submit to the State Board of Education.
- President Jones spoke at the Democratic Central Committee meeting on September 09, 2017. She reported that committee members were receptive to her message and she had the opportunity to clarify the difference in the appointed and elected boards for some attendees.

NEW BUSINESS

Special Administrative Board Consent Agenda from August 29, 2017

- no comments or questions at this time
- questions may be posed to the Superintendent and the SAB at their next meeting

SLPS Foundation

- President Susan Jones received an email from SLPS Foundation President Jane Donahue to inform her that the Foundation's Governance Conversation Team continues to meet. Ms. Donahue's communication included a general overview of their vision for the Board of Education to review. Ms. Donahue also conveyed that the SLPS Foundation Board welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions the Board of Education may have.
- President Jones had invited Ms. Donahue to the Board of Education's September 12, 2017 meeting, but she was unable to attend. Ms. Donahue stated she would arrange to come to a future work session.
 - ❖ Ms. Donna Jones stated she would like more information on SLPS Foundation board members and other organizations currently collaborating with them.
 - ❖ Ms. Charli Cooksey inquired about the reasons the SLPS Foundation is the primary facilitator of governance discussions, that the leaders of the discussion were not reflective of the community, and they lack experience with board governance.

Superintendent's Back To School Report

- ❖ President Jones requested information from Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams regarding the reason for surveying the first four days of school.

FINAL

- ❖ Dr. Adams explained that ambassadors typically report to schools for three days, but not past four days. Due to the solar eclipse, it was reasonable to have additional support in this feedback effort.
- ❖ President Jones cited 270 teachers per year leaving SLPS; she inquired about methods used to retain and recruit qualified staff.
- ❖ Dr. Adams stated the District has hired former Carver Elementary Principal Anna Westlund as a recruitment professional to develop strategies to address this issue. The District has also integrated a \$300,000 liquidation cost into teacher contracts. AFT Local 420 President Sally Topping will also be collaborating with the District to encourage teachers to remain in SLPS, particularly math and science teachers.
- ❖ Vice President Wessling inquired whether exit interviews are conducted with math and science teachers leaving the District to determine causes.
- ❖ Dr. Adams responded that exit interviews are conducted; the cause is typically that more competitive salaries are offered in surrounding districts.

INFORMATION REQUESTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice President Wessling expressed concerns regarding college entry for students from the less academically intensive high schools and inquired if tracking is still being conducted for students who require remedial courses upon entering college.

Secretary Natalie Vowell informed members of the board and the audience that *The Washington Post* had published an article titled “The Sad Story of Public Education in St. Louis” by Jeff Bryant. Secretary Vowell encouraged all in attendance to read and share the article to help the community gain perspective on SLPS’s history and current situation.

President Jones announced she attended her first PTO meeting as a parent along with Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins at Wilkinson Early Childhood Center.

President Jones announced she had canceled the 2017 Halloween Trunk-Or-Treat.

President Jones announced that future Facebook Live events have been canceled by the District.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on a motion by President Susan Jones and seconded by Ms. Donna Jones, the Board voted by acclamation to adjourn at 7:48 p.m.

ATTESTED BY:

NATALIE VOWELL, SECRETARY