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

OFFICIAL REPORT

**Regular Board Meeting
St. Louis, MO
August 08, 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 McKinley Classical Leadership Academy, 2156 Russell Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63104.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting came to order at 6:36 p.m.

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

A quorum was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All recited the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:38 p.m.

APPEARANCES – PUBLIC COMMENTS

Marty Joe Murray, Jr., 7th Ward Democratic Central Committeeman and 78th District District Committee Chair, addressed the Board to advocate for the return of governance to the [Elected] Board of Education to ensure accountability to the people. Committeeman Murray stated: “Time and time again, I hear from my constituency that they are in favor of local control being returned back to this body. I have full faith. I know many of you all personally... I just wanted to come here and voice that support.”

Education advocate Susan Turk addressed the Board regarding the future of the St. Louis City Board of Education. Ms. Turk referenced a letter sent to the Board by the Special Administrative Board in June, 2017, which discussed exploring alternative forms of governance and submitting a report to the Missouri Board of Education. Ms. Turk expressed worries that the Special Administrative Board’s intention is recommend to that governance not be returned to the current elected Board of Education. Ms. Turk stated: “It has been my concern, as a St. Louis Public Schools Parent of a graduate from the Class of 2009, as a citizen of St. Louis since 1981, and a taxpayer in this city, that the city’s public schools be governed by the *elected* Board of Education—and that is this body. We don’t need an alternative form of governance.” Ms. Turk encouraged members of the public to help create awareness of the situation and generate community support for the Board. Ms. Turk had compiled contact information for relevant elected officials and decision-makers in education; she distributed printouts to citizens in attendance.

Psychiatrist Dr. Loon Lo addressed the Board with information on Well Health Corporation, a nonprofit community health center. Located in downtown St. Louis, the facility aims to provide a full range of integrated services including mental health and pediatric care. Ms. Lo announced that the organization is seeking new volunteers for its board of directors and welcomed referrals from all in attendance.

APPEARANCES – INVITED GUESTS

Local philanthropist and community organizer Tom Halaska addressed the Board regarding the citywide school supply drive he and his partner Laura Coppinger have organized for the past three years. Mr. Halaska and Ms. Coppinger have collaborated with several other establishments and St. Louis Public Schools Volunteer Director Ella Hungerford to provide SLPS students in need with necessary supplies.

Mr. Halaska gave the following information on the origins of the annual school supply drive:

- began at his establishment on Cherokee Street in 2014
- goal was to serve children in the Gravois Park neighborhood
- Mr. Halaska witnessed a correlation between behavioral issues and lack of means
- vision was to help kids feel like a part of the school system, rather than feeling isolated due to being without the tools they need to succeed
- began spreading to several other local businesses

- 2014 yielded approximately 6-7 car/truck loads of supplies delivered to SLPS District Headquarters

Mr. Halaska explained the process:

- supply lists for each grade level are compiled from the SLPS website
- patrons of participating businesses drop off backpacks and/or supplies in a designated box at each business; some merchants give discounts for donations
- each backpack is filled with all items from a grade level supply list
- school principals inform the District of students in need in each grade
- District distributes supplies to schools
- schools distribute supplies directly to students

Mr. Halaska and Ms. Coppinger gave information on the current status:

- over 50 businesses participated in 2017
- St. Louis County businesses have begun participating to assist SLPS
- some businesses host specific events structured around generating school supply donations
- most donors are in their early to mid-thirties

At 6:46 p.m., Ms. Katherine Wessling arrived.

- Mr. Halaska and Ms. Coppinger plan to continue and expand the program
- with increased reach and improved organization, they project the program has the potential to double the amount of school supplies donated for 2018
- supplies will be brought to District Headquarters on Monday, August 14, 2017

Mr. Halaska stated: “People are going out and kind of reliving their childhood, shopping for school supplies, and realizing that the kids they’re buying supplies for don’t get to have that particular enjoyment. It’s something that means a lot to us.” Mr. Halaska and Ms. Coppinger requested support from the District in getting information to the more of community via official communications and web/social media outreach.

Mr. Glenn Burleigh of the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council (EHOC) addressed the Board regarding free lead testing services for homes in St. Louis City. Mr. Burleigh stated that one of the more common issues EHOC receives assistance requests for is lead poisoning; EHOC’s goal is to help get information out to SLPS parents to let them know that preventative resources are available.

Mr. Burleigh provided the following information:

- Monroe Elementary and Froebel Literacy Academy, both in Mr. Burleigh’s neighborhood, report the highest number of lead poisoning cases in the City
- lead poisoning damage is permanent, and the height of impact is around 2nd grade
- St. Louis City offers a lead testing program to scan a structure’s materials, free of charge for any homeowner or renter
- most parents are unaware of lead remediation until they receive a letter from their child’s school informing them that the student has tested at dangerous lead levels

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- Mr. Burleigh is currently working with various neighborhood organizations, housing advocates, and City agencies to make the public aware of available resources
- the current program is reactive, rather than preventative
- EHOC seeks to prevent more lead poisoning cases by focusing on early childhood education centers and elementary schools

Mr. Burleigh stated EHOC hopes to include a lead testing flier in every enrollment packet sent to parents throughout the District, and seeks the Board's support in this effort.

APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF THE AUGUST 08, 2017 MEETING AGENDA

Mr. Bill Haas inquired about the dates of meeting minutes to be discussed under Agenda Item #6.

Ms. Susan Jones explained that the Board has been without a District-appointed secretary for several meetings. Ms. Jones stated that Board Secretary Natalie Vowell has been taking minutes while the Board is absent a District-appointed secretary, but that not all board members reply when Ms. Vowell sends out minutes to request edits. Ms. Jones cited this as both a District issue and an accountability issue among board members.

Mr. Haas requested information on the June Meeting Minutes.

Ms. Vowell explained that she had taken the minutes for June. Ms. Vowell stated she had sent the June Meeting Minutes to the full board both via e-mail as a PDF attachment and as Google Document, but that the District had failed to print hard copies of the document as requested by Ms. Susan Jones.

On a motion by Mr. Bill Haas and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, the Board voted to approve and adopt the August 08, 2017 Meeting Agenda, as amended, on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SESSIONS: APRIL 11, 2017

The Board opened discussion of the April 11, 2017 Meeting Minutes.

Ms. Charli Cooksey stated that the date on all pages of the document footer read March 14, 2017. Ms. Cooksey requested the footer date be amended to April 11, 2017.

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Ms. Natalie Vowell stated that Ms. Charli Cooksey's name was spelled incorrectly as "Charlie" instead of "Charli" throughout the document; Ms. Vowell requested that all instances of spelling errors be corrected.

Mr. Bill Haas raised a concern that he was reported as both absent and recorded as voting on issues; Mr. Haas requested that the minutes reflect his late arrival.

On a motion by Ms. Charli Cooksey and seconded by Ms. Susan Jones, the Board voted to approve the Meeting Minutes from April 11, 2017, as amended, on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SESSIONS: MAY 09, 2017

Ms. Charli Cooksey moved to approve the Meeting Minutes from May 09, 2017. Mr. Bill Haas seconded the motion.

The Board then opened discussion of the May 09, 2017 Meeting Minutes.

Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins stated that pages 2-5 of the document were identical to the previously discussed April Meeting Minutes, possibly due to a printing error.

Ms. Susan Jones explained that the previous District-appointed secretary had brought a physical copy and emailed minutes to the District, but that the document had not been printed properly and the correct hard copy had not been sent to the Board.

Ms. Charli Cooksey withdrew her motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from May 09, 2017. On a motion by Ms. Susan Jones and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, the Board voted to remove the Approval of Meeting Minutes from May 09, 2017 from the agenda, pending receipt of the correct document from the District, on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

RESOLUTIONS TO PRESENT

There were no resolutions to present.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Ms. Charli Cooksey reported on the following topics:

- Ms. Cooksey met with Board President Susan Jones to discuss professional development and identified a local consultant to provide training on operating more effectively as a board and building a healthy team dynamic. Ms. Cooksey stated that she and Ms. Susan Jones would be meeting with the consultant next week to learn more about available training to prepare for the return of governance.
- Ms. Cooksey and Ms. Susan Jones also met with community business leader Tony Thompson who is heavily engaged in many of the civic institutions in the region. Ms. Cooksey and Ms. Jones sought to learn more about developments in the Regional Business Council (RBC) and the direction it is headed.

Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins reported on the following topics:

- Ms. Rohde Collins completed, ahead of schedule, all preliminary work for the New Board Member Training offered by the Missouri School Boards' Association. She stated she will be attending the in-class training in Columbia, Missouri on August 26, 2017.

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

- Ms. Vowell presented statistics from the Facebook Live Conversation with Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams.
 - o Facebook users reached: ~9,000
 - o Video views: ~3,300
 - o Video likes: ~65
 - o Video shares: ~55
 - o Comments/questions: ~60
 - o New Board of Education page likes since Facebook Live video: ~40
 - o Results of Event Boost (paid for by Natalie Vowell)
 - \$20 spent
 - ad run: July 18-July 25
 - 22 event responses and/or RSVP's
 - 908 total Facebook users reached
 - peak results on July 24
- Ms. Vowell completed the Missouri School Boards' Association Sunshine Law Training, which Ms. Phyllis Barks of the MSBA recommended to all board members in her July 13, 2017 meeting presentation. Ms. Vowell began the reading assignment to earn her Advanced Board Member Training; she is reading *Incarcerations in Black & White: The Subjugation of Black America* by Dr. Christi M. Griffin. Ms. Vowell stated she believes the book provides critical insight for school board members who serve urban and/or high poverty districts.
- Because the August 08, 2017 meeting location was held in the 7th Ward, Ms. Vowell had reached out to 7th Ward Democratic Central Committeeman Marty Joe Murray, Jr., 7th Ward Democratic Central Committeewoman Marie Ceselski,

and 7th Ward Alderman Jack Coatar via email to invite them to attend. Ms. Vowell thanked Committeeman Murray for his attendance and his comments; she received no response from the other two 7th Ward elected officials.

- Ms. Vowell gave an overview of the July 2017 Sheriff's Tax Auction, and provided detailed spreadsheets of all properties included on the June and July auctions to all board members and interested members of the public.
 - There were 212 properties for sale, and the total owed on all properties combined was ~\$431,500.
 - Including all properties redeemed, all properties bid up, and all properties which received no bids, the total collected was ~\$547,400.
 - 47 properties went unsold and thus will be confirmed into the name of the Land Reutilization Authority.
 - Ms. Vowell stated the above were preliminary numbers, unofficial until the final Sheriff's Report of Sale is available.
 - Ms. Vowell reported that, out of dozens of occupied properties on the printed lists, one home was owned by an employed individual with 2 children in St. Louis Public Schools. The property was auctioned and purchased for less than \$2,000 by a bidder, and the family will be at the mercy of the individual who purchased their home.

- ❖ Mr. Haas inquired requested clarification on the difference between Facebook users reached and video views.
- ❖ Ms. Natalie Vowell explained that users reached referred to people who saw the event or the video in their news feed or shared by their friends; video views referred to users who tuned into the actual Facebook Live video, either during or after the live event.
- ❖ Mr. Haas commented on the tax auction data Ms. Vowell provided, and expressed concerns over occupied properties being auctioned for an average of \$2,000. "People losing their homes for \$2,000 in arrears? There ought to be a better way." Mr. Haas suggested considering ways the Board could ameliorate the issue.

Ms. Katherine Wessling reported on the following topics:

- For the last two months, Ms. Wessling has expressed concerns to the District regarding the solar eclipse. Ms. Wessling stated she had never received a response to her inquiries from the District itself, but that she had spoken to district employees who were able to respond. She stated that the District has purchased eclipse-viewing glasses for every student and has given each site information on the time and visibility of the eclipse. Ms. Wessling hopes children will receive a solid lesson in science in light of this event.
- Ms. Wessling remains concerned that there has been no response regarding how the District will manage transportation as over 100,000 eclipse-viewers are expected to visit the St. Louis region. Ms. Wessling hopes the District has made a plan to account for traffic on the day of the eclipse.

- ❖ Ms. Susan Jones pointed out that the transportation question had been posed to Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams during the Facebook Live Conversation, and stated that she would ask for specifics at the 2:00 p.m. meeting with the Superintendent on Wednesday, August 09, 2017.

NEW BUSINESS

The Board discussed the Facebook Live Conversation with Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams, hosted by the St. Louis City Board of Education. The conversation was broadcast from the Media Room at SLPS District Headquarters; the session lasted about an hour; board members present to facilitate were Ms. Susan Jones and Ms. Natalie Vowell.

The Board came to an informal consensus to hold the next Facebook Live Conversation in the evening with a “Back To School” theme, pending Superintendent Dr. Adams’ availability, and to gather community questions prior to the question and answer session to accommodate citizens who are unable to tune in live.

BOARD PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Ms. Susan Jones reported on the following topics:

- Ms. Jones gave a PowerPoint presentation, previously given to sitting board members, and presented for the first time to newly-elected members.
- Ms. Jones gave a status update on several board business items
 - o Polo shirts were ordered and distributed to all board members for the purpose of community outreach and official events
 - o Login information access to the Sunshine Law training module was sent via email to all board members by the Missouri School Boards’ Association; the Board will begin this training together at the next work session.
 - o The *Five Dysfunctions of A Team* training, as suggested by Ms. Charli Cooksey, will be implemented once resources and certified instructor are available,
 - ❖ Ms. Phyllis Barks of the Missouri School Boards’ Association inquired [from the audience] whether MSBA would be allowed to observe the *Five Dysfunctions of a Team* training session(s).
 - ❖ Ms. Charli Cooksey and Ms. Jones both stated the MSBA was invited to observe.

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- o Advanced board member training, as presented by Ms. Phyllis Barks at the July 11, 2017 Regular Board Meeting will be addressed in the next work session.
 - Ms. Jones announced upcoming Board of Education events:
 - Ms. Jones gave information on changes to work sessions.
 - Ms. Jones reached out to the District to request a “blanket board email address”. The new address is boardmembers@slps.org.
 - ❖ Mr. Bill Haas inquired about access to the board email address for all board members.
 - ❖ Ms. Jones replied that all board members should have access and it would be discussed further in a work session.

 - ❖ Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins requested information on who will be responsible for replies.
 - ❖ Ms. Jones stated that the email address had been set up; she would request the password from the District; and that best practices should be discussed in a work session.

 - Ms. Jones gave an update on transition. She stated that she had been contacted by numerous people regarding the letter sent to the Board of Education by the Special Administrative Board, but a decision has not yet been made regarding the specifics of how transition will occur. Ms. Jones emphasized that the only communication from the Board was an agreement to reconvene with DESE and the SAB to discuss the process further after the August 15, 2017 DESE meeting.

 - Ms. Jones listed the new members of the Missouri Board of Education appointed by Governor Eric Greitens.
 - o Delbert Scott
 - o Eddy Justice
 - o Melissa Gelner
 - ❖ Dr. Victor Lenz offered [from the audience] a point of information that Mr. Delbert Scott has withdrawn.
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- Ms. Jones was interviewed by the St. Louis Public Schools Foundation. She learned that the Foundation has a school board governance conversation team working toward developing possible plans and recommendations on different forms of school board governance. Ms. Jones stated, “I was told the interview was to learn more about me as President of this board, who I am, and my thoughts on school board governance. I did the interview and spoke my views, affirming that these were mine and not necessarily those shared by all members of our board.” Ms. Jones stated that upon receiving feedback on how her answers may

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be used, she learned that this interview might be part of a larger agenda. Ms. Jones was told that answers from herself as well as others interviewed were being used to assemble points of view regarding the best possible transition in governance of the District, and that the Foundation is working with the St. Louis Regional Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Jones expressed to the Foundation that she believes the contributing group “seems a bit biased”. Ms. Jones stated she had no interest in further involvement with the team unless the community was included in the process. Ms. Jones posed two questions to St. Louis Public Schools Foundation President Ms. Jane Donahue.

1. What is being done to let the community know that this recommendation is in process?
2. Are you using my thoughts and views as representation of the community?

Ms. Jones reported the St. Louis Public Schools Foundation’s reply was that they didn’t know if they were moving forward and they agreed that the community should be involved. Ms. Jones stated it is her duty as Board President to be transparent. Ms. Jones suggested that the topic of outside groups from the business community attempting to influence governance be discussed further at a work session.

- ❖ Ms. Charli Cooksey inquired whether the Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Regional Business Council were involved.
- ❖ Ms. Jones did not have a definite answer.

- ❖ Ms. Cooksey stated that when she and Ms. Jones met with Mr. Tony Thompson, it was brought to their attention that the Regional Business Council would be holding a meeting, at which the [school board’s] future governance structure was on the agenda.
- ❖ Ms. Jones stated the work session date would be sent out soon.

INFORMATION REQUESTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Donna Jones requested information on transportation and security to protect students as they wait for buses.

Ms. Natalie Vowell requested information regarding the inquiry she had sent to Ms. Susan Jones in a previous email.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on a motion by Mr. Bill Haas and seconded by Ms. Charli Cooksey, the Board voted by acclamation to adjourn at 8:03 p.m.

ATTESTED BY:

NATALIE VOWELL, SECRETARY