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

OFFICIAL REPORT

**Regular Board Meeting
St. Louis, MO
July 11, 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 Carr Lane Visual Performing Arts Middle School, 1004 N. Jefferson Ave, St. Louis, MO 63106.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting came to order at 6:39 p.m.

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

A quorum was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All recited the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:41 p.m.

APPEARANCES – INVITED GUESTS

Ms. Phyllis Barks, Associate Executive Director of Leadership Development of the Missouri School Boards' Association, addressed the Board with advanced training opportunities to assist with preparing for returning the [Elected] Board of Education to governance. Ms. Barks was accompanied by and introduced Ms. Patty Polster, Director of Continuing Improvement of the Missouri School Boards' Association. Ms. Barks stated the MSBA intends to attend and observe St. Louis City Board of Education meetings for at least a few months to learn about the Board's dynamic in order to suggest tailored trainings to prepare for the upcoming transition. Ms. Barks distributed to each board member present a suggested reading list and a packet, sent by MSBA Executive Director Ms. Melissa Randol, which included information on requirements for each level of certification. Each board member present was given a personalized report of their credits and certifications earned; currently all board members are working toward the Advanced Certification Level. Ms. Barks then accepted questions from board members.

- Ms. Katherine Wessling asked whether it would be more effective for board members to diversify their strands of study in each area to cover a broader range of knowledge, or for board members to approach each study strand as a group.
 - Ms. Barks had no strong opinions in either direction and suggested this decision be made by the Board as a team. She proposed starting with the “Board Operations and Governance” strand as it is the majority of any school board's work and would be beneficial in demonstrating the Board's preparedness to resume governance duties.
- Mr. Bill Haas inquired as to whether Ms. Barks had any success stories of boards who had learned to change their dynamic for improved cooperation as a result of MSBA.
 - Ms. Barks replied that the MSBA doesn't often have the opportunity to work with boards repeatedly or through a series of trainings. She stated the MSBA has been invited to offer training on particular topics and has seen boards improve on specific processes, build better relationships, and function as a more cohesive team. Ms. Barks said there are many factors to consider and the improvements cannot definitively be attributed to MSBA training alone.
- Mr. Bill Haas asked if there are “substantive trainings” for school board members to help them become more knowledgeable on specific issues facing their particular district, such as special education, achievement, and school finance.
 - Ms. Barks explained that many of these foundational areas are addressed in the Essential Training for new board members. She welcomed board members of all experience levels to learn about the many changes in education over the years by enrolling in the current online training and participating in a one-day classroom training. Ms. Barks said classroom trainings allow board members from around the state to engage with one another to discuss common issues and learn new ways to address them.

Ms. Barks then listed the requirements for earning the Advanced Board Member Certification:

- Earn Essential Board Member Certification
- Earn 12 additional credits with 4 credits in one study strand
- Attend 2 MSBA core meetings, at least one in the year of application
- Read 2 books related to education or board governance topics; at least one in the study strand
- Write a brief 2-3 page reflection discussing a topic from the study strand in the context of the board member's district and board service

At 6:58 p.m., Mr. Bill Haas cited a work schedule conflict, announced his departure, and left the meeting.

Ms. Barks concluded her presentation with an overview of the materials included in the packet sent by Ms. Randol.

Dr. Molly Metzger, Assistant Professor and Chair of Social and Economic Development at Washington University and Founding Member of Team TIF St. Louis, addressed the Board regarding the basics of tax increment financing (TIF), tax abatement, and their effects on education and public services funding. Ms. Metzger stated she would “focus on how we might use these tax breaks better, to be more careful and judicious about how we give out these tax breaks so we aren't bleeding the school budget.” Ms. Metzger gave a PowerPoint presentation which covered the following information:

- contrast between areas with new TIF-funded developments, primarily in the Central Corridor and near-southside, and primarily northside areas that have endured several decades of economic disinvestment
- current use of TIF/abatements which perpetuate lasting effects of historically racially-motivated housing and economic policy
- Over the last 15 years, tax abatements to developers have totaled over \$700,000,000 diverted from the school budget and City budget.
 - o ~\$19 million per year diverted from City budget
 - o ~\$28 million per year diverted from SLPS budget
- the process by which TIF's and abatements are approved begins with the St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC), “a quasi-governmental entity”.
 - o TIF proposals are sent to the TIF Commission
 - o Abatement proposals are sent to the Land Clearance Reutilization Authority (LCRA)
 - o Both TIF's and abatements are sent to the Board of Aldermen where a bill must be proposed and assigned to one of two committees:
 - TIF's go to Housing, Urban Development and Zoning (HUDZ) Committee
 - abatements go to Neighborhood Development Committee
- brief explanation on what is referred to as “aldermanic courtesy”, which has led to

- a lack of oversight and recent “controversial” steps toward reform
- broad definition of “blight” by state statute as “an area which, by reason of the predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, deterioration of site improvements, improper subdivision or obsolete platting, or the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, or any combination of such factors, retards the provision of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social liability or a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare in its present condition and use.”
 - difference in tax abatement and TIF
 - o property taxes are based on assessed value, 19% of determined market value
 - o taxes are levied as \$8 or \$0.80 of every \$100
 - with abatements, taxes/assessed value are frozen for a period of time: five, ten, or fifteen years
 - can be used for building on a vacant lot or rehab, but buyer pays taxes as if property value had never increased
 - over \$300,000,000 in tax revenue diverted by tax abatement since the year 2000
 - sometimes used appropriately in low-income areas, but more often abused for development in more affluent areas that don’t truly meet the definition of “blighted”
 - examples: one home, appraised at \$600,000 pays only \$400 per year in real estate taxes due to abatements; in another case, taxes avoided equal \$25,000 to \$40,000 for some abated properties.
 - no cap for the total abatement amount
 - o state legislation proposed in 2016 would have protected school district revenue from abatements, but did not pass
 - o Mayor Krewson’s stated plan originally called for a roundtable on incentive reform, but Krewson has remained quiet on the topic so far.
 - o Alderman Roddy introduced Resolution 33 for incentive reform, but is “non-binding and there is nothing to suggest that they [the Board of Aldermen] would really stick to it”.
 - o TIF is typically offered for bigger developments
 - examples: IKEA and Cortex developments received large incentives; Central West End Whole Foods received a \$10,000,000 TIF, citing a crack in the sidewalk as “blight”.
 - developers propose projects; then alders propose blighting bills on behalf of those projects
 - in theory, the base assessed value is for vacant lots, brownfields, abandoned industrial buildings, and flatline parcels, which are assumed to produce no value.
 - if a TIF is established, the would-be tax revenue is placed in a special fund which pays for infrastructure or repayment of developer debts. Payments in lieu of taxes, or (PILOT’s) are paid into the fund.
 - o problem is acknowledged by some alderpersons, but a solution has yet to

be agreed upon.

- end goals and guiding principles of Team TIF:
 - transparency of the incentive process
 - help public understand immediate effects and long term impact
 - community engagement/input
 - racial equity
 - development without displacement
 - prevention of pushing kids out of SLPS School District
 - inclusion and livable wage
 - hold elected officials accountable
 - provide accessible, proactive information on policy and Board of Aldermen committee hearings
 - lower student churn and prevent student homelessness
- specific recommendations:
 - cap eligible home values by setting thresholds
 - limit sale price of abated properties to no more than twice the median home value in the City
 - cap abatements by location/neighborhood, such as areas with <10% poverty rate
 - inclusionary zoning - earmarking of certain number of units for low-income households
 - reporting requirements to prevent overpayment to developers
 - make sure projects are completed to original specifications
 - ability to recoup public funds when projected ROI is not met

In closing, Ms. Metzger announced upcoming hearings and events.

- Ms. Susan Jones inquired about the relation between the TIF Commission and SLPS, and what input the District has on the choices being made.
 - Ms. Metzger explained that the school district has two representatives on the TIF Commission.
- Ms. Susan Jones requested copies of the presentation.
 - Ms. Metzger stated she would follow up by sending it via e-mail.

APPEARANCES – PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public made comments before the Board.

APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF THE JULY 11, 2017 MEETING AGENDA

On a motion by Ms. Susan Jones and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, the Board voted to approve and adopt the June 13, 2017 Meeting Agenda on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SESSIONS: JUNE 13, 2017

On a motion by Ms. Susan Jones and seconded by Ms. Natalie Vowell, the Board voted to table the approval of the June 13, 2017 Meeting Minutes on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

RESOLUTIONS TO PRESENT

Transition Plan/Letter:

Ms. Katherine Wessling, Chair of the Board's Transition Committee, reported that the Committee met on July 06, 2017 to review the Transition Plan originally proposed and finalized on March 15, 2016. The Committee brought before the Board:

- On Page 4 of the Transition Plan, in italics, the transition process is discussed. The Committee recommended that the italicized portion be revoked from the plan, so as not to be bound by an outdated process.
- The Committee addressed a letter sent to the Board by DESE regarding receipt of the Elected Board's request to resume transition meetings. The Committee recommended requesting that transitions begin over a period of 6 months to 1 year.
- The Committee recommended the Board have no desire to explore alternative forms of governance, and that an elected board is the proper form for a school board.

The Board then opened discussion on the above recommendations.

Ms. Susan Jones stated that Ms. Katherine Wessling, Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, and herself had agreed on the above recommendations.

Ms. Natalie Vowell stated that, while she did not receive a copy of the document being discussed, she had had a prior conversation with Ms. Katherine Wessling regarding the Transition Plan. Ms. Vowell stated she was in favor of the gradual transition and trusts that the Committee is working on a very smooth transition.

On a motion by Ms. Katherine Wessling and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, the Board voted to accept the Transition Committee's recommendation to revoke the italicized paragraph on Page 4 of the Transition Plan on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

Ms. Susan Jones stated that a letter will be drafted from the Board of Education to the Special Administrative Board to reflect the above, and that she looks forward to the outcome of the next meeting of the Department of Education and Secondary Education regarding the letters sent by the Board of Education to DESE and the Special Administrative Board to plan the next meeting of the Transition Committee.

- ❖ Dorothy Rohde Collins inquired as to whether DESE had responded to the letter the Board of Education sent.
- ❖ Ms. Susan Jones requested this topic be discussed in a future Work Session.
- ❖ Ms. Jones responded that DESE had not responded but that it would be addressed at DESE's next meeting.

- ❖ Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins asked for the date of the aforementioned meeting.
- ❖ Ms. Susan Jones stated she did not have a date yet, but would get the information to the Board the next morning.

Board Member Representation Regarding Transition:

This resolution was proposed by Mr. Bill Haas, who left early.

On a motion by Ms. Susan Jones and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins, the Board voted to table this resolution on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

Social Media Norms:

Ms. Vowell referenced the June 13, 2017 Regular Board Meeting at which the Board had voted to accept the Social Media Policy document as proposed by Ms. Vowell and Ms. Charli Cooksey. Ms. Natalie Vowell gave a brief overview of the conversation which took place at the Board's June 27, 2017 Work Session in which the Board discussed ways to refer to itself as an entity through social media and official communications. At this Work Session, the Board

reached the consensus that while the name “The St. Louis City Board of Education” for use on social media graphics and communications was accepted via vote at the June 13, 2017 meeting, “The St. Louis Board of Education” was the new preferred name.

- ❖ Ms. Dorothy Rohde Collins requested clarification that the vote pertained to graphics only.
- ❖ Ms. Vowell confirmed.

On a motion by Ms. Vowell and seconded by Ms. Susan Jones, the Board voted to amend the Social Media Policy to replace some instances of “The St. Louis City Board of Education” with “The St. Louis Board of Education” on the following roll call vote:

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

The motion carried.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Ms. Natalie Vowell reported on the following topics and distributed a printed copy to each board member present.

- Ms. Vowell reported that within 12 hours of publishing the Board of Education’s Facebook page, it received over 100 likes. Ms. Vowell Stated that she and Ms. Charli Cooksey will be meeting periodically to discuss adjustments to the social media strategy as needed.
- Ms. Vowell updated upcoming graphics to reflect the change from “The St. Louis City Board of Education” to “The St. Louis Board of Education”.
- Ms. Vowell reported that the June 2017 Sheriff’s Tax Auction included nearly 250 properties for sale and the total owed on all properties combined was ~\$500,000. She stated that detailed data from the June 2017 auction as well as the July 2017 auction would be available at the August 2017 Regular Board Meeting.
- Prior to the June 27, 2017 Work Session, Ms. Vowell reached out to Ms. Debby Duermeyer, Administrative Assistant for Board Member Training, Certifications, and Award Criteria of the Missouri School Boards’ Association. The information Ms. Vowell intended to provide was covered by Ms. Phyllis Barks’ previous presentation, therefore Ms. Vowell did not proceed with this portion of her report.

At 7:33 p.m, Ms. Donna Jones arrived.

- Ms. Vowell stated that while the Board is absent a secretary from the District, she would be compiling meeting minutes and distributed a printed copy of the first draft of the June 13, 2017 Regular Board Meeting Minutes to each board member present, and stated she would be providing each board member with access to an

online document which would facilitate efficient responses to requests for updates. Ms. Vowell stated that Ms. Susan Jones, Ms. Katherine Wessling, and herself would be discussing preferred standardized format and expectations for both Ms. Vowell and the next District secretary.

- Ms. Vowell reported that she had spoken to or met with other elected officials to request their advocacy for the Board's return to governance. She stated she would be reaching out to both the Democratic and Republican Central Committees in a bipartisan effort to gain support for the return of local control. Elected officials Ms. Vowell contacted included:

- o Rasheen Aldridge - 5th Ward Democratic Central Committeeman
- o Annie Rice - 8th Ward Democratic Central Committeewoman
- o Eli Karabell - 17th Ward Republican Central Committeeman
- o Robert Vroman - 22nd Ward Republican Central Committeeman
- o Anthony Brescia - 24th Ward Democratic Central Committeeman
- o Teri Powers - 24th Ward Democratic Central Committeewoman
- o Megan Green - 15th Ward Alderwoman
- o Bruce Franks, Jr. - 78th District State Representative

Ms. Vowell reported that the above individuals are enthusiastic regarding support for local control.

- ❖ Ms. Susan Jones inquired as to methods by which these elected officials are offering their support.
- ❖ Ms. Vowell said her intention for now is requesting these elected officials to begin conversations on the return of local governance at any available opportunity. She stated the next phase of this support should include the Board as a whole begin exploring options such as letters or resolutions presented to entities such as the Board of Aldermen.

Ms. Susan Jones reported on the following:

- Ms. Jones announced the Facebook Live Conversation with Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams. She stated it would be streaming live from the St. Louis Board of Education's Facebook page. Ms. Jones stated she had requested that Dr. Adams share this information on his social media as well as the District's website. Ms. Jones also reached out to members of the media to request news, press, and radio coverage.
- Ms. Jones emphasized the importance of board members sharing the Facebook Live Conversation event on their personal social media and inviting their contacts to follow the Board's Facebook Page. Ms. Jones reported that many community members expressed a lack of connection to SLPS, and that the goal of this effort by the Board and Dr. Adams was to provide transparency and create more interest and engagement with the public.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items under Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS

There were no items under New Business.

INFORMATION REQUESTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Katherine Wessling requested information from Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams regarding a plan for SLPS students to view the total solar eclipse which will occur on August 21, 2017. Ms. Wessling stated she hoped SLPS students would have the same opportunity to view the eclipse as students in more affluent charter and private schools.

Ms. Wessling requested information regarding whether the District had given consideration to transportation and bus routes to account for the influx of traffic that may be arriving from eclipse-viewers traveling to the St. Louis region.

Ms. Donna Jones expressed concerns over the long wait times and broad range of arrival times of buses. Ms. Jones requested information regarding transportation and the safety of SLPS students at bus stops, and whether Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams had a plan to assure parents and community members of the students' safety.

- ❖ Ms. Susan Jones added that she had been working with Ms. Rachel Seward of the District regarding transportation in general as well as the Back To School Bus Ride event, which is an effort to increase SLPS enrollment. Ms. Jones stated many parents choose charter schools over SLPS, in part, due to transportation safety concerns. Ms. Jones stated she will discuss the matter with Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, upon a motion by Ms. Susan Jones and seconded by Ms. Katherine Wessling, the Board voted by acclamation to adjourn at 7:51 p.m.

ATTESTED BY:

NATALIE VOWELL, SECRETARY