

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SESSION
OF THE SOUTH BEND EMPOWERMENT ZONE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
5/16/23**

MINUTES

- Meeting Time Start: 6:12 pm
- Meeting Called to Order: Sam Centellas, Board President
- Meeting video is available on [Youtube](#)
- Meeting presentation is available on the Zone [website](#)

LOCATION

- SBCSC Boardroom

QUORUM

- Attendees:
 - Sam Centellas, Board President
 - Rosa Hiestand, Board Secretary
 - Ryan Matthys, Board Treasurer
 - Stephanie Ball
 - Jeff Rea
 - Sonya Watkins
- Absent:
 - Kareemah Fowler
 - Ashley Northern
 - Leslie Wesley
 - Duane Wilson
- Quorum Established (Y/N): Yes

SUMMARY

The May meeting focused on adoption of a number of items first presented in the April meeting, exceeding the required ten days for public comment. The finance items included (1) March financial report, (2) April financial report, (3) Auditor's report for 2021-22 school year, and (4) Budget for the 2023-2024 school year. In addition, the board voted on student transfer and student transportation policies, and discussed a potential new public comment policy for future meetings.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

- Motion to approve agenda: Ryan Matthys
- Seconded: Jeff Rea
- Discussion: None
- Approved unanimously

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Motion to approve minutes of April 24, 2023: Jeff Rea
- Seconded: Sonya Watkins
- Discussion: Minutes to be corrected with the addition of motion to approve SBCSC Facilities Master Plan
- Approved unanimously

III. **BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT**

Announcement of new public comment policy under discussion, to be voted on in June meeting. Celebration of West Side Refresh and end of year celebrations.

IV. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

The Board President introduced a new proposed Public Comment policy. The goal of the proposed policy is to provide members of the public the opportunity to hear the information on each topic and comment, before the board votes on it. Each topic, excluding normal business (e.g., monthly financial reports) will have a set length of time, with individuals still permitted to comment for three minutes, in the order of sign up. There will still be a public comment period at the end of the meeting for any topics not on the agenda. The board will vote on a new policy in the June meeting.

VI. **STUDENT SERVICES**

Student Transportation Policy

The transportation policy was shared again as in the April meeting.

Board questions and comment:

- To what extent have changes to the transportation policy been socialized with parents and administrators? Are people aware of it?
 - Standing policy has always been that transportation may or may not be provided to students attending a school that is not their home school.
 - The policy has been discussed with principals; communication with parents is pending specifics
 - We are focused on increasing awareness of and reinforcement of the policy, including the “walk zone” for students who live within a specific

- distance of their home school—we are not forcibly removing students from our schools
- Overtime, we expect natural overall alignment with the feeder structures of the Master Facilities Plan, as both SBCSC and the Zone enforce the transfer and transportation policies
- We have a fiduciary responsibility, and there is a significant expense for transportation so it is important to enforce a policy's guardrails.

Motion to approve the policy: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Stephanie Ball. Approved unanimously.

Student Transfer Policy

The student transfer policy was shared again as in the April meeting. The Executive Director provided an overview of the shared SBCSC and SBEZ policy, as well as the SBEZ's policy addendum. The main items of the policy include exceptions for: (a) students who have attended their school for several years, even if they move in their 5th or 8th grade year; (2) keeping siblings at the same school; and (3) children of SBCSC or SBEZ staff.

Board questions:

- As attendance is part of the transfer policy, have we established a standard threshold for the number of excessive absences (i.e., so there is equity in the transfers and consistency across the buildings)?
 - For a student to be in “good standing,” they must have (a) an attendance rate of at least 90% (10% is 18 days of school), (b) no more than 5 days of in- or out-of-school suspension, and (c) on track to graduate (for high school students)
- Do you have any concerns about parents being able to produce the documents requested in the form?
 - The specified documents are also standard (e.g., utility bills, lease) and families have 30 days to provide them
 - This is a starting point for verifying a family lives within a school's boundary; we can amend specific documents if necessary. If families are making a good faith effort, we will work with them
- What if there are special circumstances? For example, families who are evicted, living with other families, living at a homeless shelter, and don't necessarily have their names on documents? Are there procedures for that?
 - Yes, it is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which ensures the educational rights and protections of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Our Director of Student Wellness knows who the students are and works out transportation for the family.

Motion to approve: Stephanie Ball. Seconded: Jeff Rea. Approved unanimously.

VII. FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Executive Director of Business Services presented four reports or financial documents for the board's approval: (1) March financial report, (2) April financial report, (3) Auditor's report for 2021-22 school year, and (4) Budget for the 2023-2024 school year. Items (1), (2), and (3), were first presented in the April board meeting, and exceeded the 10 day requirement before the board can vote to adopt.. The April financial report was not voted on in the April meeting.

The board discussed the Zone's financial structure and sustainability. It explained funding sources (primarily per student government grants) and expenditures. For context, SBCSC holds 97% of the Zone's budget and executes transactions on its behalf. In preparation for the end of ESSER funds, the Zone cut more than \$2M in 2022-23, and has reduced the 2023-24 budget by an additional \$3M. The Zone received a clean audit report.

- (1) March financial report: Motion to approve: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Stephanie Ball.
- (2) April financial report: Motion to approve: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Ryan Matthys.
- (3) Auditor's report for 2021-22 school year: Motion to approve: Ryan Matthys. Seconded: Stephanie Ball.
- (4) Budget for 2023-24 school year: Motion to approve: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Ryan Matthys.

The board approved all four items unanimously.

VIII. ZONE CHIEF REPORT *Recognitions*

The Zone Chief recognized Teacher Appreciation Week and National School Nurse Appreciation Week. In particular, he noted teaching is the profession that teaches all other professions, and the need to increase society's appreciation for that work. He also remarked on the Zone's ideas for investing in teacher wellness (e.g., improving breakrooms, relieving them of certain administrative tasks). He also noted the integral role of school nurses in ensuring students have both care and as much instructional time as possible.

Personnel

The Zone Chief praised the strong start of the new principal of Harrison Elementary School, Ms. Francesca Jimenez, and her accomplishments in just the first month in the role. He also recognized the former principal of Harrison Elementary School, Mrs. Karla Lee.

Future of the Zone

The Zone Chief provided an update on the future of the Zone past its fifth year (2023-24 school year), including the “State of the Zone” presentation to the SBCSC trustees on May 1st, which emphasized the philosophy of pursuing “progress not perfection.” It is expected that the Zone will continue beyond its first five years, either through the automatic renewal clause of the original MOU, or through a new agreement between the SBCSC Trustees and the Zone’s Board of Directors. The SBCSC Board of Trustees and the Zone Board of Directors are expected to finalize an agreement and vote on the Zone’s extension in June.

IX. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Rea discussed the importance of communicating with the community about the Zone, as lack of information and understanding may increase doubts. He recognized the Zone’s accomplishments, and also that the work is not finished and there is a strong interest in figuring out what the Zone’s next steps will be. He encouraged members of the public to share their input and feedback, and not just at board meetings.

Mr. Matthys echoed Mr. Rea’s comments, in particular noting the challenges schools faced during the pandemic. He recognized that the Zone has hit its stride and made encouraging progress. He also commented that it is important for the public to know there is thoughtful discussion between SBCSC Trustees and the Zone, with tough but fair questions to inform what is next.

Ms. Hiestand discussed her visit to a pre-K class at a Zone school, and complimented the school’s teachers. She emphasized the importance of highlighting them and how we are impacting young children and families.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.