

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SESSION
OF THE SOUTH BEND EMPOWERMENT ZONE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
3/15/23**

MINUTES

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

LOCATION

- SBCSC Boardroom

QUORUM

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

SUMMARY

The March board meeting began with a celebration of Navarre Middle School's girls varsity basketball team and their undefeated regular season. Team members, and their families, coaches, and building leaders, were present for recognition by the board.

The board's discussion focused primarily on different pieces of data—about students, staff, and finances—that describe the Zone's current status, and offer a look ahead to SY2023-24. The specific topics included (1) the Zone's financial status, including funds held by SBCSC, and a brief look ahead to budgeting for next year; (2) an update on students who are currently promotion in doubt and plans to support them; (3) an update on the balanced calendar exploration; and (4) survey results of Zone staff's intent to return.

The open question remains about the Zone's financial sustainability, which will be discussed in more detail with the preliminary budget for SY2023-24 (expected in the April board meeting).

AGENDA ITEMS

I. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

- Motion to approve agenda: Jeff Rea
- Seconded: Stephanie Ball
- Discussion: None
- Approved unanimously

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- February 16, 2023: Motion passed unanimously

III. BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

The Board President discussed the importance of community engagement and shared his contact information for any who would like to connect with him. He commended the Zone students and staff for the Black History Month Showcase at the Morris Performing Arts Center.

IV. ZONE CHIEF REPORT

Recognitions

- Members of the Navarre Middle School girls varsity basketball team were recognized for their undefeated regular season
- International Women's Day: The Chief shared the story of Paula Gonzalez, who came to South Bend as a seasonal day laborer in the 1960s, and went on to found the League of the United Latin American Citizens Council of South Bend, among many other contributions to the community.

Personnel

In the month of February, the Zone onboarded two employees (SBCSC) and separated from five employees (one Zone, four SBCSC).

V. FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Board reviewed the Zone's 501(c)(3) funds, as well as the funds held by SBCSC. The primary concern is the impact of ESSER funds ending next year, as well as the high cost of transportation. However, the Zone is currently under budget and cautiously optimistic about continuing to decrease planned spending for next year. The Finance Committee anticipates sharing a preliminary budget for SY23-24 in the April board meeting. Motion to approve: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Ryan Matthys. Approved unanimously.

VI. **FOCUS TOPICS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Promotion in Doubt update

As of the board meeting, 234 elementary students and 30 middle school students are considered promotion in doubt. Approximately half of these students are promotion in doubt due to academics only, and approximately half are due to at least two concerns (e.g., academics and attendance, attendance and behavior). This number is expected to decrease as students make progress in their plans, with remaining students attending summer school.

Board questions:

- *Is the number of promotion in doubt students trending up or down?*
This data is new and was not previously tracked.
- *Are measurements used consistently across schools? The number of students at Harrison stands out.*
Principals do have some discretion on identifying students who are potentially promotion in doubt, however the Chief and the Executive Directors of Teaching & Learning and Student Services review the list to probe more deeply and look across schools. Harrison is also the largest school.
- *Have the action plans begun? How long do students have to make progress before summer school?*
The process of creating action plans in parent conferences must be complete by the end of next week. Some schools have already begun implementing the action plans with students. Students have until May to “turn around” before the need for summer school is determined.

[Balanced calendar update](#)

The Zone has continued its progress through the community outreach and research calendar. One hundred eighty-four staff responded to the balanced calendar survey. 71% of respondents were in favor of the balanced calendar to some degree (i.e., somewhat, mostly, and very). 29% of staff respondents were not at all in favor of the balanced calendar. Survey participation by families has been limited, however there has been strong engagement online with the town halls with mixed feedback. A board member indicated the desire for more feedback from families and staff.

SBCSC Bilingual has suggested that the balanced calendar may give families more flexibility in their extended trips to visit their home countries, and decrease the cases of having to disenroll (then re-enroll) students due to prolonged absences. SBCSC SpEd identified logistical challenges based on the three-week breaks and the required time periods for creating plans and providing services.

Board questions:

- *What is the process from now until the vote in April?*

All research will be available to the public on the Zone website, both supporting and against a balanced calendar. This will also include the disaggregated survey responses and comments.

Intent to return

This year, more staff participated in the intent to return survey in terms of both percentage and absolute number—moving from 64% last year to 74% this year. A key point was a ten percentage point increase in the number of classroom teachers intending to return to their current role and school.

However, there was a decrease among SpEd teachers' and paraprofessionals' intent to return. This decrease is attributed primarily to a change in state licensure requirements. For some staff, another factor may be the important internal changes to increase in rigorous oversight and accountability. Hiring certified teachers for both general and special education remains highly challenging. There was also a decrease in intent to return among building-level student support staff.

Board questions:

- *How are we trying to fill teacher positions, given the national and local shortage?*
The Zone is both posting its positions, using staffing firms, and reaching out within its network. The SpEd teacher market is incredibly difficult everywhere, it is not specific to the Zone.
- *What are the top three actions taken that have improved the Zone's support of students in Special Education?*
 - (1) Ensure school leaders and teachers understand the policies and procedures, both through training and by creating an easy to use web site for their reference.
 - (2) Being highly visible in the buildings (a) makes it easier for teachers to ask for help, and (b) gives greater insight into current challenges so they can be addressed more quickly.
 - (3) Regular audits of compliance with SpEd requirements. For example, with suspension procedures, identifying whether students had had a manifestation determination conference.
- *It's not possible to achieve 100% teacher retention, but what is the target benchmark?*
Many schools are expected to achieve at least 70% retention of classroom teachers. The Zone retained approximately 60% of teachers from last year, despite bonuses, which suggests there are important non-financial factors (e.g., burn out, mental health, culture), which we are working on.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

A Zone parent asked about the plans and preventive measures SBCSC and SBEZ have, or will put in place, to prevent incidents like the one following the Navarre basketball game.

VIII. OTHER DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Motion to reschedule April meeting to April 24: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Ashley Northern. Approved unanimously.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Duane Wilson. Seconded: Jeff Rea.
The board unanimously approved the motion to adjourn at 7:37pm.