

**St. John's Constituent District 9 Board of Trustees  
Regular Board Meeting (Via Zoom) Minutes  
September 7, 2021**

**Board Members Present:** Monica Smith, Dr. Karen Simmons, Leon Green, Rev. Gertie Smalls-Ford, Pat Cline, Tamy Lockhart, Renea Bligen

**Board Members Absent:** Monica Smith, Dr. Karen Simmons

**Proceedings:**

**I. Call to Order & Moment of Silence:**

The board meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Board Vice Chair, Tamy Lockhart.

**II. Adoption of Agenda:**

Leon Green moved, with a second by Tamy Lokhart, to adopt the agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

**III. Approval of Minutes:**

Rev. Gertie Ford moved, seconded by Pat Cline, to approve the minutes from the August 24, 2021 meeting with the necessary corrections. The motion passed 5-0.

**IV. Visitors/Public Comments:**

Comments submitted by Paul Bowers regarding the Board of Trustees decision on masks attached.

**V. District Updates:**

Ms. Terri Nichols, Board Liaison, provided an update on vacancies in District 9.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events**

- Oakland Elementary placed on virtual
- September 13, 2021 – Committee of the Whole
- September 20, 2021 – Progress Reports going out
- September 24, 2021 – Early Release/Teacher Workday
- September 27, 2021 – Board of Trustees Meeting

**VI. Constituent Board Report:**

No report shared.

**VII. Constituent Board School Liaison Report:**

A. School Updates – Report attached.

**VIII. Old Business:**

No Old Business discussed.

**IX. New Business:**

A. ESSER Funds – The board discussed District 9 priorities for ESSER funds.  
*Notes from the discussion are attached.*

**X. Announcements:**

Committee of the Whole Meeting – September 13, 2021  
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting – September 27, 2021

**XI. Adjournment:**

Board Vice Chair, Tamy Lockhart, adjourned the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS:

**From:** Paul Bowers <[paul.m.bowers@gmail.com](mailto:paul.m.bowers@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** A dereliction of duty

Good morning,

Please accept this letter for the record as a public comment for all upcoming Constituent Board meetings.

PMB

To the Charleston County School District Board of Trustees:

I am writing to register my deep disappointment at your dereliction of duty to protect my children, the children of my community, and the vulnerable adults in their lives.

I was heartened to see the board (with the exception of Cindy Bohn Coats) take action on Aug. 16 to mandate masks in all Charleston County schools. It was a bare minimum precaution that every district should have taken, but it took real courage to stand up to state-level demagogues and the small but vocal mobs of the misinformed. I breathed a little easier sending my three young children to school on the 18th, knowing that the district had our best interests at heart. I briefly let myself believe that the return to in-person school might be something other than an unmitigated disaster.

And then you capitulated. Without placing a policy proposal on the agenda, without taking a public vote, you issued a statement from the dais that nullified your own policy less than a week after you passed it. I don't know if you were cowed by reactionaries or if you just got bad advice from the district's legal counsel, but with a single prepared statement, you reversed all the good you had done just a week before. A rule without enforcement is no rule at all.

I would like to single out the Rev. Eric Mack in particular for his cowardice as board chairman. Rev. Mack, in your prepared statement, you expressed hope "that everybody will continue to comply with the mask requirement for the greater good of all" and then called on the legislature and Gov. McMaster to "come together and help us combat this COVID situation."

Rev. Mack, what in your experience would lead you to believe that the people screeching about the minor inconvenience of wearing a cloth mask and the governor who has steadfastly refused to lift a finger as his people die painfully by the thousands would lead you to believe that you can appeal to their better angels? They are not to be reasoned with; they are to be resisted and defeated. Your job right now is to protect our children, and you are failing.

I will refer you to your own policy manual, where you will find [Policy ADD](#) ("Face Covering"), which reads in part:

Failure or refusal to wear a face covering by a staff member or student may result in discipline in accordance with district policy and codes of conduct, as applicable.

That policy is still on the books. You did not revise or repeal it. Enforce it.

Some of you are under the mistaken belief, propagated by Board member Coats, that your district will lose its state education funding if it enforces a mask mandate. In the base case, you have a moral responsibility to defy a law that endangers children and district employees. But if you don't want to take that stand, there are easy loopholes and workarounds.

I would direct you to the budget proviso in question, Proviso 1.108. Like the Heritage Act and other poorly worded laws written by our incompetent state legislature, this proviso can be thwarted if you have the will. Just this last week, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona [told school districts](#) that they can use Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to enact safe in-person school policies such as mask mandates. Use those funds instead of state funds to enforce the mask mandate if you are seriously worried about the state yanking its funding.

As the stewards of one of the largest school districts in the state, you should know that your action (or inaction) ripples outward. Your reversal on Monday night sends a signal to smaller, poorer, less politically powerful school districts. Again, you have failed in your duty as leaders.

Some of you remember me from my time as the only full-time education reporter in Charleston County. You will recall that I do not give up easily. I want all of you to know that I am still here, and I am livid. May the shame of August 23rd follow you to the next election and beyond.

Paul Bowers  
North Charleston, S.C.

## District 9 School Updates

September 7, 2021

### Frierson Elementary – Rev. Gertie Ford

Dr. Davis-Cummings, Principal of E.L. Frierson Elementary School shared the following information:

- “First and Foremost, we stress Family Safety First. There have been reported Covid-19 Cases at Frierson Elementary.” ***COVID cases reported by school is available on the COVID dashboard located on the CCSD website.***
- Isolation and contact tracing protocols were and are in place. “This information can be found on the Frierson website.”
- The playground is slated to be completed September 30, 2021.
- The School Improvement Council (SIC) President, Ms. Poole, has obtained a grant for the Tennis program at Frierson. This grant will cover the driver(s) needed for transportation to and from the program. However, Frierson is still seeking a CDL Driver with P/S Endorsement to drive the bus. A driver has been identified but they are only able to pick students up.

## **Constituent District 9 ESSER Funding Discussion – September 7, 2021**

### **AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS**

- Consistency among three elementary schools in District 9 for after school and summer school programs.
- Replicate Angel Oak’s program in Elementary Schools in District 9.
- Do funds allocated support transportation and meals?
- What are we doing with students in the after school program?
- District 9 needs a program that focuses on academics and areas the students are weak in.
- Making after school programs with adequate support a priority.
- Program should be managed by certified teachers/not after care workers.
- Research local organizations/churches for services offered.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- Provide transportation for school-based events and activities, after school programs and activities, and events/programs sponsored by community groups.

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

- The need for more mental health support for kids
- Not enough people in the buildings to support the mental health needs of students.
- Cost of mental health - Is there any way to make mental health services affordable to our students?
- What is the actual cost for mental health services if a family doesn’t have Medicaid? How are services being provided?
- Can the district hire its own mental health professionals?

### **STAFFING**

- Make an effort to find and keep qualified administrative and teaching staff.
- Parent Advocates in all District 9 schools.
- Would Parent Advocates be able to conduct home visit?

### **SERVICES IN DISTRICT 9 SCHOOLS**

- Could ESSER funds be used to support Communities in Schools, Reading Partners and other organizations partnered with in the past?

### **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Funds allocated to Improving Air quality in District 9 schools.
- Increase bandwidth and broadband in rural areas.
- Provide Chromebooks at home and at school; students may forget to bring devices.
- Provide training for parents regarding digital learning.

**Approved 9.21.21**