



TISHAURA O. JONES
MAYOR

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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August 2, 2024

Dear Auditor Fitzpatrick,

At the start of the 2023-24 school year, SLPS had a general operating budget surplus of \$17 million. It now has a projected deficit of \$35 million. Recent reporting has illuminated several concerning aspects of many contracts SLPS issued in the past year. Many went to vendors who have connections to the current superintendent, who has been placed on administrative leave. Others escaped competitive bidding requirements and the scrutiny of the SLPS Board of Education, because they were for under \$50,000.

In addition, at least 12 administrators and employees from the superintendent's former employer, and some of their spouses, appear to have received SLPS employment contracts as top staff. At the same time, existing SLPS teachers and staff were told that raises approved by the SLPS Board to begin in the 2024-25 school year would be delayed due to "logistical issues." This raises questions about whether and what kind of vetting was performed on these contracts, and how decisions to approve them were reached.

As Mayor, I have extremely limited authority over SLPS or the SLPS Board. However, shortly, the City will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for auditing services for the SLPS Board, for a period of three fiscal years, beginning with the 2023-24 school year. This is required under state statute and has been provided by the City in the past. I believe that, under the current circumstances, having a companion audit performed by your office that fully assesses recent SLPS administrative and Board practices is also necessary.

I thank you and your team for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Tishaura O. Jones,
Mayor, City of St. Louis