

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SPECIAL CALLED SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
July 10, 2020 (12:00 p.m.)

Meeting Held via Zoom

On March 12, 2020, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, in accordance with Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2(A)(3) and Acts of Assembly Chap. 1283 § 4-0.01(g), virtual School Board meetings held during the State of Emergency are limited to:

- addressing the public health emergency declared on March 12, 2020 (Va. Code § 44-146.17); and
- business that is necessary to continue school division operations and to discharge the School Board's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities.

Notice of any virtual School Board Meetings will be posted on the ACPS Calendar and on the School Board Meeting web page, where the public may link to join or watch live meetings. Virtual Special Called School Board Meetings may also be watched live in Alexandria on Comcast Channel 71. Video recordings and minutes for these meetings are posted online as soon as available after the meeting.

ROLL CALL

THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

BOARD MEMBERS: Cindy Anderson
Veronica R. Nolan
Meagan L. Alderton
Ramee A. Gentry
Jacinta Greene
Margaret Lorber
Michelle Rief
Christopher A. Suarez
Heather Thornton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Susan Neilson, Shanel Hill, Dr. Terri Mozingo, Simma Reingold, Natalie Hall, Dr. Gerald R. Mann Jr., Dr. Julie Crawford, Clinton Page, Sandra Hardeman, Erika Gulick, Dr. Alicia Hart, Dominic Turner, Julia Burgos, Kurt Huffman, Ashley Sanchez-Viafara, Lorraine Johnson

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting.

Moment of Silence

2. Observe a Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

3. Adopt the Meeting Agenda for the July 10, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the July 10, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting. Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the meeting agenda for July 10, 2020 was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

4. Public Comments

Written public comments were submitted regarding the strategic plan, modified calendars, the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0, and the renaming of T.C. Williams High School. Chair Anderson reminded the public that comments may be submitted using the [online form](#) and must be submitted by Thursday at Noon to be included in the next day's meeting.

5. Public Hearing on Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0

Ms. Sharon Widmayer, ACPS parent and professional educator, explained that as much as everyone wishes to return to normal, it may not be possible to return to the classroom and teach as they did prior to COVID-19. She emphasized that a return to school this fall must take into account the need to prevent COVID-19 infections and spread through social distancing, wearing masks, frequent cleanings, limits on type of furniture and materials used in the classroom, and limits on movement throughout the building. Ms. Widmayer urged the School Board to look carefully at science, listen to teachers, and think clearly about what is in fact possible and what will actually be safe.

Ms. Carolyn Meza, ACPS parent, expressed her concern as a parent of a special needs student. She feels that the current plan does not adequately address differentiation needed by students with special needs, English learners, or other struggling groups. Ms. Meza described her experience of working with a student with special needs without the normal supports, which resulted in her student falling behind.

Ms. Kita McCord, ACPS parent, complimented ACPS on looking for learning solutions that most closely resemble in-school learning and hoped that ACPS is also exploring outdoor classrooms, indoor swing spaces, different solutions for different grades, and different times throughout the day for synchronous learning. She also suggested ways in which community stakeholders can invest in educating students by offering one-on-one, small-group or class-sized learning in safe indoor and outdoor spaces. She advocated that the community do all it can to ensure students stay engaged and are excited to learn, and more importantly, feel valued by their community.

Ms. Cindy Hart, SEAC Chair and ACPS parent, thanked the school system and teachers for their tireless work with students during this unusual time. She explained that for parents of students with special needs, the instruction models are unsustainable as many of these students require direct support by adults who possess behavioral supports. Ms. Hart also suggested that priority for returning to in-school learning be given to students with special needs.

Ms. Nusaybah Abo-Issa, ACPS parent and staff member, explained that parents and staff need further information to make an informed decision regarding the reopening of schools for children and for themselves as staff members. She hopes that ACPS will show thought and care for their faculty and staff as well as their children by considering how staff may return to work when faced with the lack of childcare. Staff should not have to choose between taking care of their families and being part of the ACPS team.

Ms. Katrina Ambrose, ACPS parent and staff member, spoke about her disappointment in the ACPS parent survey, which only allowed her to answer questions based on her oldest child. She has students in elementary, middle and high schools. She also expressed that as a teacher, she was not given the option to choose fully virtual teaching on the staff survey. Ms. Ambrose complimented ACPS on the wonderful job they did getting internet capabilities to students and believes that the same efforts need to be made for staff by securing discounted or upgraded service on their home networks.

Mr. Andy Baker-White, ACPS parent, expressed his concern that students, staff, and teachers need to be able to return to school safely and believes that the classroom setting will only increase the spread of COVID-19. He supports the fully virtual option not only because it is the better option to help stop the spread of the virus, but because Alexandria's community spread is not sufficiently low, testing and contact tracing in schools must be adequate, and social distancing and social gathering guidelines under the hybrid option will be difficult to maintain. Although he wants his children to return to school, he fears that under the current circumstances the physical reopening of schools in any manner will allow the virus to spread even more widely.

Ms. Lindsay Stuart, ACPS staff member, advocated for her and her students' safety and suggested that ACPS not return to in-classroom learning for the fall. While she believes that in-person learning is better, the academic needs of students cannot come before the safety of students, staff members and their families. Ms. Stuart advocated for an improved virtual learning plan for the fall which will also give ACPS more time to figure out how to open schools in a way that is safer for all.

Ms. Christine Bohringer, ACPS staff member, spoke about her desire to return to teaching at Samuel Tucker Elementary School, but only when it is safe. She sympathized with the difficult decisions faced by the division to return to school. She had concerns, however, about students being able to physically distance and wear masks, the availability of PPE and the cleaning of buildings. She stressed that school as we know it is gone for the foreseeable future, and asking teachers to choose between their job, their health and the health of their families is unconscionable.

6. Introduction of Student Representatives to the School Board for 2020-2021

Chair Anderson introduced and welcomed ACPS' new Student Representatives to the School Board, Ms. Lorraine Johnson and Ms. Ashley Sanchez-Viafara. Their appointment will be approved on the Consent Calendar.

Consent Calendar

- 7. Appoint Lorraine Johnson and Ashley Sanchez-Viafara as the 2020-2021 Student Representatives to the School Board**
- 8. Social Studies Textbook Adoption**
- 9. Community Donation to ACPS**
- 10. Personnel Actions for the Month of June 2020**
- 11. Re-Appoint Mary Beth Walker to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Advisory Committee**
- 12. Re-Appoint D Ohlandt to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Advisory Committee**
- 13. Re-Appoint Julia Egy to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Advisory Committee**
- 14. Re-Appoint Reesey du Pont to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Advisory Committee**
- 15. Minutes from the June 26, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting**

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the Consent Calendar. Ms. Alderton seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the Consent Calendar was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

Items Pulled from the Consent Calendar

No items were pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Old Business & Action Items

16. Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0 Update

Dr. Terri Mozingo, Chief Academic Officer, along with ACPS staff members, presented information about the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0 for reopening schools in the fall of 2020. The overview included the accomplishments of the Cross-Functional Planning Teams (CFPTs), a description of current activities and essential actions for the successful reopening of ACPS schools and buildings. Efforts have been made to include voices of many diverse stakeholders throughout the decision making process. Information was also provided about the CFPT rosters and a template of the committee workbook being used by each team. Lastly, upcoming deliverables related to the reopening plan were introduced such as information about transportation, facilities capacity, employee impact and community engagement. Details on the different learning models will be presented at a future meeting.

Board Members asked questions about the ACPS Survey to staff and parents, community engagement, translation and language line services for additional language groups and how feedback from parents and staff should be submitted to the committees. There were also questions about the hybrid model for certain grade levels, the impact of the different models on staff and students, professional learning for staff, and CARES funding.

Dr. Hutchings emphasized how important it is to remain flexible given that the situation regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing.

The Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0 will be updated at the July 17th and August 6th Special Called School Board Meetings and must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Education by August 14 for final approval.

New Business and Reports to the Board

17. FY 2022 Draft Budget Calendar

Mr. Dominic Turner, Chief Financial Officer, briefly reviewed the FY 2022 Draft Budget Calendar with the School Board and noted key budget process dates that the School Board should be aware of. Mr. Turner requested that the Board give feedback on the budget calendar.

School Board Members asked questions about the timeline for adopting the Combined Funds Budget. They expressed their preference for returning to a model where ACPS adopts their budget prior to the City's presentation of its budget.

The FY 2022 Budget Calendar will be reviewed during August and September work sessions and will return for approval in September.

18. Request to Rename T.C. Williams High School

Ms. Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy and Board Initiatives, reviewed a request submitted to the School Board to rename T.C. Williams High School to Tubman-Chavez High School. The request was accompanied by a petition of more than 100 signatures as required by Policy FF. The rationale for the request was that former Superintendent Thomas Chambliss Williams was a segregationist.

Ms. Abbruzzese also explained the process set out in Regulation FF-R for the renaming of an existing school where the School Board first votes on whether or not to pursue the request. Upon doing so, the School Board would direct the Superintendent to oversee a robust public engagement process to solicit community nominations, as well as to develop a timeline and cost estimate for a name change. The Superintendent would present renaming recommendations to the Board for information, followed by a public hearing prior to any Board vote to rename the school.

Members of the School Board expressed their support to pursue the request to rename T. C. Williams High School.

Mr. Suarez made the following motion:

“Madam Chair, I make the following motion:

In recognition of Juneteenth and to reaffirm that Black Lives Matter, the Alexandria City School Board unanimously approved a Resolution Condemning Systemic Racism and Affirming a Commitment to Educational Equity for All Students, Families and Staff. The Board resolved in that Resolution to foster an inclusive educational environment where every student, staff member, parent and community member is treated with dignity and respect, and reaffirmed its commitment to continue fighting for racial justice.

On June 26, 2020, the School Board adopted the Equity for All 2025 Strategic Plan, which will guide the school division’s work from 2020 through 2025. The plan has a forward-looking vision of “empowering all students to thrive in a diverse and ever-changing world,” and dictates that “racial equity will be at the center of every decision that the school division will make.”

The Strategic Plan references the fact that ACPS resisted desegregation efforts throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and even into the 1970s, well after the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision. The Strategic Plan acknowledges that modern day segregation still exists and that the School Board’s work to eradicate de facto segregation is not yet done.

Madam Chair, on June 15, 2020, the School Board received a request to rename T.C. Williams High School that was accompanied by 100 signatures of Alexandria residents as required by Regulation FF-R. It is well documented that throughout his tenure as Superintendent, Thomas Chambliss Williams exhibited racism, fought to maintain segregation in ACPS, and promoted the school division’s massive resistance to desegregation efforts. This is inconsistent with the forward-looking vision and values expressed in the Equity for All 2025 Strategic Plan. The Board condemns Thomas Chambliss Williams’ past actions to promote segregation and racism within ACPS, and agrees that this is an appropriate time to examine a name change for Alexandria’s only high school.

I therefore move, pursuant to Section III.B. of Regulation FF-R, that the School Board officially consider the request to rename T.C. Williams High School. Accordingly, the School Board hereby empowers the Superintendent to initiate the public engagement process, outlined in Section I. of the regulation, to solicit community feedback and possible nominations for renaming T.C. Williams High School.

I further move that at the August 27th Work Session, the Superintendent and School Board shall discuss the scope and process involved in a name change. Given the global pandemic and the school reopening planning currently underway, the Superintendent shall initiate the public engagement process in the fall of 2020 and present a report with recommendations to the School Board by the spring of 2021.”

Ms. Alderton seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the motion to begin the process to pursue a name change for T.C. Williams High School was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

Chair’s Report

19. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson reminded the public that there will be two additional opportunities to speak on the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0 at the public hearings scheduled on August 6 at 7:00 p.m. and August 7 at noon.

Superintendent's Report

20. School Board Weekly Q&A with Dr. Hutchings

Dr. Hutchings welcomed recently hired administrators and central office staff to ACPS. He indicated that a press release was issued naming the newly filled staff positions and reminded the community that in January the School Board approved the reorganization of staff positions in ACPS.

Adjournment

21. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Gentry and seconded by Ms. Greene, the Board voted unanimously by roll call 9-0, to adjourn. The meeting ended at 3:28 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the July 17, 2020 School Board Meeting.