

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SPECIAL CALLED SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
September 17, 2020 (3:30 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 (joined during the Closed Meeting)
Ramee A. Gentry (absent)
Jacinta Greene
Margaret Lorber
Michelle Rief
Christopher A. Suarez
Heather Thornton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Susan Neilson, Shanel Hill, Ashley Sanchez-Viafara, Lorraine Johnson, Jennifer Abbruzzese, John Contreras, Asst. Chief of Police Don Hayes, Julia Burgos, John Finnigan, Dr. Alicia Hart, Erika Gulick, Dr. Julie Crawford, Anita Cordova, Terry Werner, Dr. Stephen Wilkins

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting except for Ms. Alderton, who joined the meeting during the Closed Meeting, and Ms. Gentry, who was absent.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

2. Adopt the Meeting Agenda for the September 17, 2020 Virtual School Board Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the September 17, 2020 Virtual School Board Meeting. Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the meeting agenda for September 17, 2020 was unanimous, 7-0. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion carried.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

3. Closed Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved that the Board convene a Closed Meeting pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(7) for consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the Board; and pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(8) for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, 7-0, to convene a Closed Meeting. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion carried.

The Board moved into a Closed Meeting at 3:38 p.m.

4. Certification of Closed Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved that pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3712, that the Board certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, and which are lawfully exempted by the Freedom of Information Act, were heard, discussed or considered by the Board in the Closed Meeting held on September 17, 2020.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, 8-0, to certify the Closed Meeting. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion carried.

The School Board returned to open session at 4:27 p.m.

Moment of Silence

5. Observe a Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

6. Written Public Comments

Mr. Timothy Doyle, ACPS parent, wrote to the Board expressing that while recognizing the heightened concern for racism that exists throughout the country, he feels that the rush to rename institutions is being presented as a solution to these problems. He believes that the historical information provided in the petition to rename Matthew Maury Elementary School presents an inaccurate portrayal of Matthew Maury.

Mr. Iol Silversmith, community member, wrote to the Board about Matthew Maury, who is often portrayed as an academic who supported the Confederacy out of misguided patriotism. But a review of literature and writings reveals that Maury was an active advocate of slavery. Mr. Silversmith urged the Board to change the name of Matthew Maury Elementary School.

Ms. Terra Liddell, ACPS parent, wrote to ask questions about the Virtual Plus+ Learning Plan and if there are requirements for K-2 students that specify an hourly requirement. She suggested that students take a longer break in the middle of the day or shorter Zoom blocks so that students have 20-30 minutes away from their screens.

7. Report from Student Representatives Lorraine Johnson and Ashley Sanchez-Viafara

Ms. Johnson reported on student input and engagement with elementary and middle school students. She noted that interacting with elementary and middle school students during the pandemic is more difficult, but that it will not hold she and Ms. Sanchez-Viafara back from engaging with students. Ms. Johnson also shared proposals that will help increase student engagement for elementary students during virtual learning.

Ms. Sanchez-Viafara shared events specifically held for seniors such as the Last First Day event, Senior Sunrise, and adding student hand prints to the senior rock at T.C. Williams. She also reported on clubs that were meeting virtually, including the Black Student Union, which will be holding discussions around important topics. Ms. Sanchez-Viafara mentioned the recent article “Filling in the Blanks: Time to Let the Next Generation Lead,” written by both Student Representatives, which appeared in the Alexandria Times. The article addresses racial inequities and encourages students of color to be the voice that enacts change.

Consent Calendar

8. Personnel Actions for the Month of August 2020

9. FY 2022 Budget Process Resolution and Rules of Engagement

10. Minutes for the September 10, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting

11. Re-Appoint Lyndsi Cooper as the Student Representative to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee

12. Re-Appoint Melissa Reeves to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee

13. Re-Appoint Jim Lewis to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee and Grant a Residency Waiver

14. Re-Appoint Bob Trout to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee

15. Re-Appoint James Worden to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee and Grant a Residency Waiver

16. Re-Appoint James Clark to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee and Grant a Term Limit Waiver

17. Re-Appoint Wayne Sanders to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee and Grant a Residency Waiver

18. Re-Appoint Tracey Roberson to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee

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

Ms. Greene requested to pull the item “FY 2022 Budget Calendar” from the Consent Calendar.

The vote to adopt the amended Consent Calendar was unanimous, 8-0. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried.

Items Pulled from the Consent Calendar

19. FY 2022 Budget Calendar

Ms. Greene expressed concern about not having an alternate Budget Calendar for consideration that schedules Board budget adoption prior to presentation of the City Manager’s proposed budget. She expressed her hope that an alternate Budget Calendar will be presented in the future. Dr. Rief and Ms. Thornton also shared concerns about the Budget Calendar and the budget process.

Ms. Alderton moved to approve the FY 2022 Budget Calendar. Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the FY 2022 Budget Calendar was 5-3. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call. Ms. Greene, Dr. Rief, and Ms. Thornton voted against the motion.

Old Business & Action Items

20. Request to Rename Matthew Maury Elementary School

Ms. Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy and Board Initiatives, explained that the School Board had received a petition with the required number of signatures in August to rename Matthew Maury Elementary School. The rationale behind the request was that Matthew Maury was a Confederate soldier who fought in support of slavery. The renaming request proposed “The Parker-Gray Rosemont School” as the new name.

Vice Chair Nolan moved that

“Pursuant to Section III.B. of Regulation FF-R, that the School Board officially consider the request to rename Matthew Maury Elementary 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 Matthew Maury Elementary School.”

Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

The vote to consider the request to rename Matthew Maury Elementary School was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

21. Focus Area Update: Matthew Maury Elementary School Renaming

Dr. Hutchings introduced the “Identity Project,” which will address the renaming of both T.C. Williams High School and Matthew Maury Elementary School as a unified effort. Ms. Julia Burgos, Chief of School and Community Relations, gave an overview of events being held throughout the process, including discussions around the history of Alexandria and racial inequity.

A follow-up Board Brief on September 25th will provide specific dates and details about the events being held.

New Business and Reports to the Board

22. Review of Alexandria City Public Schools/Alexandria Police Department Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. John Contreras, Director of Safety and Security Services, introduced officers from the Alexandria Police Department (APD), in attendance for the ACPS/APD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) discussion. The MOU is being reviewed as required by the Code of Virginia. Mr. Contreras explained that the APD and ACPS staff are reviewing and revising the current MOU to ensure compliance with new legal requirements and to reflect the roles and responsibilities of both parties. He also reviewed the opportunities for public feedback on the MOU, including submitting the online survey, providing public comments at Board Meetings, and speaking at the public hearing on October 1. The updated MOU will be shared with the School Board prior to its renewal.

Board Members asked questions regarding the required annual evaluation of the MOU, clarity on the Board’s role in approving the document, staff and School Resource Officer (SRO) training, the staff role in revising the document, and about the availability of data on the SRO program.

Dr. Hutchings clarified that suspension and discipline decisions are not handled by police officers in ACPS schools. Those matters are handled by staff and administration.

The ACPS/APD MOU will be discussed further at the October 15, 2020 Work Session.

23. Summer Projects Update

Dr. Alicia Hart, Acting Executive Director of Facilities and Operations, presented information with her team about the progress of summer projects by the offices of Capital Programs, Planning and Design; Educational Facilities; and Maintenance and Custodial Services. Progress on projects in these areas will continue to be posted on the appropriate webpages to keep the Board up to date. A more comprehensive review will be presented during the CIP Quarterly Report in the near future.

Chair's Report

24. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson reminded the community about the October 1 public hearings on the FY 2022 Combined Funds and FY 2022-2031 CIP Budgets and the ACPS/APD MOU. Members of the public may sign up to speak at either of the hearings on the School Board Meetings webpage.

Superintendent's Report

25. Opening of Schools Report from Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr.

Superintendent Hutchings thanked staff, students and families for their grace and patience as schools opened in the Virtual Plus+ learning model. He reported that during the first week of school, 93% of students attended virtual learning more than 50% of the time, and that 70% of students had logged into Clever. There were some no-shows, but teachers and staff are following up with those students and families. Dr. Hutchings also shared that the ACPS Helpline, which was set up to support families by answering questions or giving technical support, received 2,367 calls, of which 1,851 were from non-English speaking families. Additionally, more than 32,000 meals were served to families by Office of Nutritional Services.

Dr. Hutchings indicated that ACPS has begun working on the Continuity of Learning 5.0 model for the second quarter of the school year. He encouraged families to participate in facilitated conversations, to read the weekly ACPS Express and website updates, and to respond to surveys about returning to school. He also reviewed the timeline and decision-making process being followed by various teams and partners working on the 5.0 model. Dr. Hutchings cautioned that the inability of some staff to immediately return to work in person may impact a full return to school. The final recommendation will be shared with the School Board at the October 15, 2020 School Board Meeting.

Board Members had questions about technology, professional learning, staffing, attendance and plans for students with disabilities to return to school.

Announcements

26. Board Member Announcements

Ms. Alderton reported on a possible partnership between ACPS and EduTutor, Inc., an organization that helps students meet their fullest potential by providing a safe environment where parents can take their children for academic help. The partnership is the result of multiple organizations and stakeholders brainstorming ways to support students during the shutdown.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

27. Closed Meeting

28. Certification of Closed Meeting

No Closed Meeting was held.

Adjournment

29. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Lorber and seconded by Mr. Suarez, the Board voted unanimously, 8-0, to adjourn. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The meeting ended at 6:51 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the October 15, 2020 School Board Meeting.