

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
October 15, 2020 (4:00 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, Lorraine Johnson, Ashley Sanchez-Viafara, Dr. Terri Mozingo, Dr. Gerald R. Mann Jr., Clinton Page, Dr. Elizabeth Hoover, Natalie Woods, Julia Burgos, Dr. Stephen Haering, Terry Werner, Ingrid Bynum, Rene Paschal, Pierrette Peters, Pree Ann Johnson, Kurt Huffman, Dr. Alicia Hart, John Finnigan, E. Scott Merriman

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

2. Adopt the Meeting Agenda for the October 15, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the agenda for the October 15, 2020 Virtual School Board Meeting.

Ms. Gentry seconded the motion.

Ms. Lorber moved that the items “2021 Proposed ACPS Legislative Agenda” and “Draft Presentation for the Joint City Council/School Board Budget Work Session” be removed from the agenda.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the agenda was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

The vote to adopt the amended meeting agenda for October 15, 2020, was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

The votes were taken by roll call.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

3. Closed Meeting

4. Certification of Closed Meeting

No Closed Meeting was held.

Moment of Silence

5. Observe a Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

6. Public Comments

Mr. Christopher Stephen, ACPS parent, thanked the School Board for their work with the current distance learning model and for the plan to re-open schools beginning with the division’s most vulnerable students. However, he argued against having students attend school at one central location as this model would go against the purpose of the redistricting project which was designed to ensure that children would attend schools within their immediate communities.

Ms. Jill Hoffman, ACPS parent, detailed her positive experience with the Virtual PLUS+ learning model, and commended the school division for their hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also expressed her concern with the length of the school day for younger students and encouraged the Board to re-examine this.

Ms. Jessica Buchanan, ACPS parent and George Mason Elementary School PTA President, thanked community members, teachers and staff for their hard-work and dedication to students during the pandemic. She recommended that the School Board develop a hybrid learning plan that will provide families with options for continuing with the Virtual PLUS+ model or the option for choosing in-person learning.

The following written public comments were received for posting on the agenda:

Mr. Carlyle Casella, ACPS parent, wrote to the Board suggesting that ACPS is failing the needs of students due to the lack of in-person learning. He noted that private schools and other organizations have figured out how to safely get students back to in-person learning, and that online learning is not beneficial to younger learners.

Ms. Amy Ford, ACPS parent, wrote that students in ACPS deserve a clearer re-opening plan. She did not agree with the plan to bring back the most vulnerable students to one school location and expressed the need for a more thoughtful and integrated approach especially for younger learners.

Ms. Katherine Glennon, ACPS parent, wrote to express that she did not support having School Resource Officers (SROs) in ACPS schools. She believes that the presence of police in schools

reinforces racial stereotyping and inequality. Ms. Glennon also offered comments on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ACPS and the Alexandria Police Department (APD).

Ms. Maura Leary, ACPS parent, wrote to express that virtual learning was inappropriate for her kindergarten student. She believes that students can safely return to in-person learning using masks and social distancing.

Mr. Matt Longley, ACPS parent, wrote in with questions regarding options for reopening of schools for students who are not Students with Disabilities. He also asked questions regarding an ACPS survey to parents, the response rate, and the data collected. Mr. Longley suggested that ACPS should align their re-opening plan with neighboring jurisdictions.

Ms. Sarah Mahoney, ACPS parent, wrote to encourage the Board to find a more balanced approach to learning by exchanging screen time for more creative activities, exploration, and playing.

Mr. Williams Olson, ACPS parent, wrote to the Board concerning statements made by Ms. Julia Burgos, ACPS Chief of School Communications and Community Relations, as reported in an October 8, 2020 Alexandria Times article about the ACPS/APD MOU. He believed that Ms. Burgos gave a misleading impression that she was offering the School Board's position on the MOU renewal. Mr. Olson stated that each School Board Member has a responsibility to consider and vote on the MOU using their own best judgement.

Mr. Jonathan Prather, ACPS parent, expressed that virtual learning is not working for younger students and expressed the need for a return to in-person learning by Spring. He is eager to hear the details of the plan to return all students to in-person learning.

Ms. Charlotte Preston, ACPS parent, wrote to suggest that ACPS prioritize sending all K-2 students safely back to in-person learning prior to the end of December. She also asked for more transparency on timelines, the decision-making process and barriers to in-person learning.

Ms. Pamela Vetrini, ACPS parent, questioned the decision to keep one high school in Alexandria to serve a prospective population of 5,500 high school students.

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

Ms. Lorraine Johnson shared her experience participating in an ACPS division transition team meeting in regards to the reopening of schools. She shared her excitement for the immense diversity of the team members which included School Board Members, EAA Representatives, PTAC members, Technology representatives, ACPS Leadership Team and Superintendent Hutchings. She shared that this diversity allowed for a broader perspective, ensuring that all stakeholders had a voice and could express their views which exemplifies ACPS's goal of transparency. Ms. Johnson further expressed her gratitude for the opportunity which allowed the student perspective to be heard.

Ms. Ashley Sanchez-Viafara shared that she and Ms. Johnson are hosting a series of student conversations during the month of October. The first one was held on Thursday, October 7, 2020, themed "Where We've Been" Ms. Viafara detailed this event as powerful and meaningful. The second student conversation was held on October 13, 2020, themed "Where Are We Now." She thanked the students who served on the panel or participated by sharing their personal experiences. Ms. Viafara shared a difficult situation that occurred during the most recent student conversation when she was called a racial slur. She expressed that this kind of behavior is mentally and physically wounding, and that she would continue to hold her head up high in order to continue the very intentional work she is doing.

Consent Calendar

- 8. Personnel Actions for the Month of September 2020**
 - 9. FY 2021 Preliminary Monthly Financial Report ending August 31, 2020**
 - 10. Expiration of Time-Limited Policy Provisions for School Year 2019-2020: Policy IKFA and Regulation IKFA-R (Locally-Awarded Verified Credits)**
 - 11. Superintendent Contract Provision: Other Work Activities**
 - 12. Appoint Asmerom Yakob to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Advisory Committee**
 - 13. Minutes for the September 29 and October 7, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meetings and the September 17 and October 1, 2020 Virtual School Board Meetings**
- Ms. Greene 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

There were no items pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Old Business & Action Items

14. Areas of Focus: Enhanced Continuity of Learning Plan 5.0

Superintendent Hutchings along with staff and guests, gave a comprehensive update of the *Enhanced Continuity of Learning Plan 5.0: Reimagining Schools*. They presented information about ways in which ACPS is engaging staff, students and the community in order to gather feedback on virtual learning experiences, considerations for improving instruction and schedules for Prek-2 students, and what is currently being considered to prepare staff and students for a safe return to in-person learning in schools. The presentation also discussed the highest priority students for return to in-person learning with a detailed plan for a phased in approach for reopening schools.

The Superintendent recommended that the School Board approve the *Enhanced Continuity of Learning Plan 5.0: Reimagining Schools* specifically, recommending:

- Adopt a phased-in approach for the most vulnerable Students with Disabilities to be housed at Jefferson-Houston Prek-8 International Baccalaureate (IB) School;
- Allow staff to proceed with a plan to phase in an approach for the most vulnerable English Learner (EL) students;
- Support staff in designing *Teaching and Learning Centers* for students in kindergarten through fifth grade to open in 3rd quarter to accommodate childcare and other services; and
- Endorse development of a plan to create a Virtual School Learning Option for PreK-12 families choosing not to return to in-person learning for the foreseeable future.

Board Members asked questions about the survey data, synchronous and asynchronous learning, COVID testing, access to technology, the communications plan, and why other local jurisdictions were able to make other decisions for reopening schools.

The School Board will vote on the Superintendent's recommendation included in the Continuity of Learning Plan 5.0 at the October 21, 2020 Special Called School Board Meeting.

New Business and Reports to the Board

15. FY 2020 CIP Reserve Account Update for Q4

Dr. Alicia Hart, Acting Executive Director of Facilities and Operations reported that the balance in the CIP Reserve Account is \$235,759.77.

16. FY 2020 CIP Quarterly Report for Q4

Mr. John Finnigan, Acting Director of Educational Facilities, reviewed the progress made on Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) projects in the fourth quarter of FY 2020 at the elementary and secondary levels, and reviewed anticipated progress for the first quarter of FY 2021. He also reported on the funds remaining in the CIP budget at the end of FY 2020.

Ms. Gentry moved to accept the FY 2020 CIP Quarterly Report for Quarter 4. Ms. Alderton seconded the motion.

The vote to accept the FY 2019 CIP Quarterly Report for Quarter 4 was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

The votes were taken by roll call.

Chair's Report

17. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson shared that the Public Hearing on the Renaming of Schools will be held during the School Board Meeting on Thursday, October 29, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. She directed potential speakers to visit the School Board Meeting webpage to sign up. Ms. Anderson also invited the community to participate in the Community Budget Forum which will be held on Monday, October 19, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. She also announced that the Joint City Council and School Board Budget Work Session on the CIP Budget is coming up and that date will be posted on the ACPS Calendar once confirmed.

Superintendent's Report

18. Report from Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr.

Superintendent Hutchings did not give a report.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

19. Closed Meeting

20. Certification of Closed Meeting

No Closed Meeting was held.

Adjournment

21. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Lorber and seconded by Ms. Gentry, the Board voted unanimously, 9-0, to adjourn. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The meeting ended at 9:01 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the November 12, 2020 School Board Meeting.