

**MINUTES
SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
JANUARY 23, 2020 (6:30 p.m.)**

ROLL CALL

THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

BOARD MEMBERS: Cindy Anderson
Veronica R. Nolan
Meagan L. Alderton
Ramee A. Gentry (arrived during the Pledge of Allegiance)
Jacinta Greene
Margaret Lorber
Michelle Rief
Christopher A. Suarez
Heather Thornton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Susan Neilson, Shanel Hill, Wilmer Carranza, Dominic Turner, Erika Gulick

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting except for Ms. Gentry who joined the meeting during the Pledge of Allegiance.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

2. Closed Meeting

Vice Chair Nolan moved that the Board convene a Closed Meeting pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(29) for the discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the term or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the Board.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, 8-0, to convene a Closed Meeting. The motion carried.

The Board moved into a Closed Meeting at 6:34 p.m.

3. Certification of Closed Meeting

Vice Chair Nolan 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 January 23, 2020.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to certify the Closed Meeting was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. The Board returned to open session at 7:04 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

4. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by students from James K. Polk Elementary School. Students shared reasons why their school is a great place to learn. Students also invited the School Board to visit Polk. The James K. Polk Owls Cheerleaders then performed a series of cheers.

Moment of Silence

5. Observe a Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

6. Adopt the Meeting Agenda for the January 23, 2020 School Board Meeting

Mr. Suarez moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the January 23, 2020 School Board Meeting. Ms. Alderton seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the meeting agenda for January 23, 2020 was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

7. Public Hearing on the FY 2021 Combined Funds Budget

Ms. Katy Matthews, ACPS parent and PTAC President, thanked the Board for its support and encouraged the Board to increase funding for FACE center personnel, parent liaisons for every school, GPS software for all school buses, a health assistant position and a salary increase for paraprofessionals. Additionally, she encouraged the Board to increase funding for more equipment for vision/hearing screening by school nurses and for the ACPS Executive Chef's programs in schools.

Ms. Jennifer Kukorlo, ACPS parent and kindergarten paraprofessional, asked the Board to compensate paraprofessionals properly for the full amount of hours they work. She expressed that the demand for paraprofessionals has increased, and their salaries should be reflective of the change.

Mr. Ricardo Roberts, ACPS parent, spoke about safety concerns at George Washington Middle School.

Ms. Mary Gaddis, ACPS staff member, thanked the Board for the Compensation Study review. She noted, however, that it did not address the living wage for paraprofessionals. She further expressed that the responsibilities for paraprofessionals have increased and the pay should be reflective of the additional work they are doing.

Ms. Cynthia Barron, Reading Specialist, encouraged the Board to consider funding benefits for part-time employees.

8. Public Comments

Ms. Sharon Yandian, ACPS parent, gave a brief overview of the Dual Language Program.

Ms. Annwyn Milnes, ACPS parent and John Adams Elementary School PTA Vice President, spoke about the achievement data and accountability issues surrounding the Dual Language Program. She encouraged the Board to more actively support data sharing.

Ms. Olga Bolivar Rodas, ACPS parent, thanked the Board for the progress that has been made with the Dual Language Program. She also spoke about expanding the Spanish language literacy component of the program to third through fifth grades in elementary schools.

Ms. Martha Davis, ACPS parent and Mount Vernon Community School PTA President, spoke about positioning ACPS students for success in the Dual Language Program that is being expanded into middle schools next fall.

Ms. Sally Hunnicutt, ACPS parent, spoke about creating a Dual Language PTA Committee at Francis C. Hammond Middle School. She encouraged equitable access to opportunities for dual-language learning in Alexandria beyond the current model. Ms. Hunnicutt asked the Board to consider expanding the program so that it is accessible to all ACPS students regardless of neighborhood boundaries.

Ms. Teofila Gomez, ACPS parent, spoke through an interpreter about recruiting and retaining qualified Dual Language Program teachers and staff in ACPS.

Ms. Carol King, community member, spoke about the Douglas MacArthur modernization process and expressed her concern for and opposition to any colocation housing options, as she believes student safety should be the primary focus.

Ms. Sharon Solorzano, ACPS parent and teacher, spoke on behalf of Grassroots Alexandria. She asked the Board to renew their commitment to restorative practices to help minimize racial disparities so that all students can receive an equitable education.

Ms. Sarah Hoffman, ACPS parent and George Mason Elementary School PTA President, thanked the Board for funding and prioritizing the rebuilding of George Mason Elementary School. She expressed concerns regarding inaccurate information that was initially circulated to the community and asked for release of the full George Mason rebuild feasibility study.

Ms. Dana Chambers, ACPS parent, spoke on the Douglas MacArthur Modernization Project, her concerns about colocation of public services on the school site, and asked the Board to ensure the community has access to any proposals the City has recommended.

Ms. Lisa Porter, ACPS parent and Douglas MacArthur Advisory Group member, spoke about the Douglas MacArthur modernization process and soliciting community feedback for both the “Y” and “Forest” concept designs. She shared concerns from the community on both of the designs.

Mr. Ricardo Roberts, ACPS parent, spoke about ensuring equitable and consistent consequences for students who bully other students.

Mr. Andrew Wilson, community member, expressed his concerns with the transparency surrounding the George Mason rebuild feasibility study. He questioned why ACPS would involve itself in workplace housing.

Ms. Jenny Ware, ACPS parent, expressed her disappointment in the layout designs for play areas that were outlined in the George Mason rebuild feasibility study and the potential loss of green space on the site.

Mr. William Pfister, ACPS parent and Douglas MacArthur Advisory Committee member, shared community feedback regarding the “Y” and “Forest” concepts for the Douglas MacArthur Modernization project and the proposed colocation of services.

Mr. Kyle Tanger, community member, expressed concerns regarding the George Mason Elementary School rebuild project including siting, water issues and the loss of park space in the neighborhood.

9. Report from Student Representatives Wilmer Carranza and Amiya Chisolm

Mr. Carranza informed the Board that Ms. Chisolm was absent due to her participation in the “We the People” Competition and wished her team good luck. He shared that on January 10th, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine visited T.C. Williams High School’s JROTC cadets in order to discuss the conflict with Iran and hear their thoughts on how to de-escalate the conflict. Mr. Carranza noted that the second quarter would be ending on January 30, 2020. Parent-teacher conferences

will be held on February 13 and 14 for elementary school students, February 20 and 21 for middle school students and February 6 and 7, 2020 for high school students.

Mr. Carranza then shared a report from the Francis C. Hammond Middle School Student Representative, Taylor Frazier. Ms. Frazier reported she had distributed a survey asking students what they enjoyed and what could be improved at their school. The results displayed concerns about poor meal options and the overall appearance and sanitation of the building.

Consent Calendar

10. Personnel Actions for the Month of December 2019

11. Preliminary Financial Report Ending November 30, 2019

12. Donation to ACPS

13. 2019-2020 School Health Advisory Board Scope of Work

14. Appoint Asha Mede to the Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee

15. Accept Resignation of Cherlyn Jenkins from the Special Education Advisory Committee

16. Minutes for the January 9, 2020 School Board Organizational Meeting and the January 16, 2020 Special Called School Board Meeting

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

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

Items Pulled from the Consent Calendar

No items were pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Old Business & Action Items

17. The High School Project

There was no report given.

New Business and Reports to the Board

18. FY 2019 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)

Mr. Dominic Turner, Chief Financial Officer, introduced Mr. Greg Bussink from the auditing firm of CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, which reviewed the FY 2019 ACPS Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Mr. Bussink reported that ACPS received an unmodified (or clean) opinion, which is the highest level of assurance that can be given for the financial report. He explained that the report fairly represents the financial position of ACPS as of June 30, 2019. He indicated that no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses of internal control or instances of noncompliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts or other matters were noted.

Ms. Lorber moved to accept the FY 2019 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the FY 2019 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report was, 8-0. Ms. Gentry was absent during the vote. The motion carried.

19. Feasibility Study: George Mason and Cora Kelly

Chair Anderson addressed the community regarding the inclusion of colocation information in the George Mason rebuild feasibility study and that it had not seemed transparent to the public. Board and City Council Members were unaware that examining the potential for work force housing had been included in the feasibility study. Chair Anderson reminded everyone that housing was just one option for colocation of services and that the lengthy process ahead would provide many opportunities for review and feedback.

Dr. Hutchings apologized to the community for any confusion that had occurred. He reminded everyone that the feasibility study was intended to examine several possible site scenarios. He assured the public that nothing in the study was definitive at this time.

Ms. Erika Gulick, Senior Planner, and Mr. John Burke from Studio Twenty Seven Architecture, gave an update on the feasibility studies for the George Mason and Cora Kelly modernization projects. Such studies are used as planning tools to anticipate challenges, costs and potential programs, and help identify site possibilities without committing to a design or set program. Based on the evaluation of the existing building conditions and educational adequacy, the study recommends that both George Mason and Cora Kelly should be complete building replacements. George Mason's rebuild will occur first.

Next steps will include community engagement, determining energy requirements and finalizing the site surveys. This information will be provided to the Board in the spring of 2020.

20. Douglas MacArthur Concept Design

Dr. Hutchings thanked the Douglas MacArthur Advisory Committee and DLR Group, the project facilitator, for all of their hard work. He noted that there is discussion in the Douglas MacArthur community regarding colocation of services and affordable or work force housing. Dr. Hutchings noted that the agreement with the City of Alexandria would ensure that the educational needs of students are the first priority. Colocation of services and work force housing is a secondary priority and ACPS will focus on the educational component.

Ms. Gulick presented the proposed concepts being considered for the new Douglas MacArthur School. Architects from the DLR Group developed five preliminary concepts for the Douglas MacArthur site and shared them with the community prior to Winter Break. After feedback from the Douglas MacArthur Advisory Group, staff and the community, two preferred design concepts emerged. The Board will select either the "Y" or "Forest" site concept on February 6, 2020. Once approved, the project will progress to the design phase. Final designs will go to City Council for approval in early fall 2020.

Chair's Report

21. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson did not give a report.

Superintendent's Report

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

Superintendent Hutchings reported that he will be accepting Ms. Mary Gaddis' offer to visit John Adams Elementary School to see the work being done by paraprofessionals.

He also shared that he recently had the privilege of substitute teaching at Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy. He expressed his gratitude to all educators and paraprofessionals for their hard work and daily commitment to students. He noted that the new technology utilized by students in the classroom was very enlightening. Dr. Hutchings shared that he plans to substitute teach when available for the rest of the school year along with his Leadership Team. He commented that substitute teaching reminded him why he got into education to begin with.

Announcements

23. Announcements

Ms. Gentry noted that she ran into Dr. Hutchings on the day he had substituted. She also reported that the new Strategic Plan development process was coming to an end. She thanked everyone who took the time to participate, and shared that the Board will be seeing a draft soon

Ms. Greene, the School Board Liaison for the Athletic Hall of Fame Advisory Committee, shared that the Committee is now accepting nominations for 2020 Athletic Hall of Fame inductees.

Vice Chair Nolan encouraged everyone to nominate female athletes for the 2020 Athletic Hall of Fame. She also noted her frustration regarding the community perception around the release of the Feasibility Study. Vice Chair Nolan assured the community that the Board will give them enough time to absorb and engage in decision making for the rebuild project.

Dr. Rief thanked the parents that came out to advocate for the Dual Language Program. She shared a dual-language resource book for parents called "Practical Ideas for Supporting Spanish Learning at Home," which was created by some of the parents who had spoken earlier in the evening.

Ms. Greene thanked the community members who stayed for the entire meeting.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

24. Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

There was no Closed Meeting held.

Adjournment

25. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Gentry and seconded by Ms. Greene, the Board voted unanimously, 9-0, to adjourn. The meeting ended at 10:42 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the June 5, 2020 Special Called School Board Meeting.