

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SPECIAL CALLED SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
August 7, 2020 (12:00 p.m.)

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 Mazingo, Julia Burgos, Mahlet Tefera, Ruth Larico, Tesfaye Amberber, Dana Chambers, Dr. Julie Crawford, Dr. Stephen Wilkins, Dr. Alicia Hart, Dr. Marcia Jackson, Dominic Turner, Ms. Jasibi Crews, Ms. Ginja Canton, Clinton Page, Kurt Huffman, Cynthia Hormel, Terry Werner, Jane Richardson, Dr. Elizabeth Hoover

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 August 7, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting

Ms. Greene moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the August 7, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting.

Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

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

Communications & Addresses to the Board

4. Public Hearing on the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0

Ms. Dana Chambers, ACPS parent, spoke about providing safe and supportive child care options through ACPS, community partners and City programs. She suggested that these programs can serve as learning pods for those students enrolled.

Ms. Janet Eissenstat, ACPS parent, spoke about how virtual learning does not work for every student, specifically for students with disabilities. She suggested that once these students learn the recommended safety procedures, they could return for hybrid or in-person learning.

Ms. Cindy Hart, Special Education Advisory Committee Chair and ACPS parent, encouraged safety to be considered first, and that learning for students with disabilities would be most successful with in-person instruction. She suggested a “start slow and strong” approach.

5. Public Comments

Ms. Lisl Brunner, ACPS parent, wrote in strong support of a learning model that brings students back to the classroom for as many days of the week as possible, maintaining precautions that are necessary to protect the health of students, teachers, and school staff.

Mr. Patrick Earle, ACPS staff member, encouraged the Board to act with caution when reopening schools so that staff in high risk categories and students would remain safe. He asked the Board to start the year with 100% virtual learning.

Ms. Sheryl Jahns, ACPS parent, asked the Board to emphasize a structure for classes for middle and high school students which include a similar daily schedule, attendance taking, and engaging with teachers virtually. She also asked about ways to prepare and train teachers in order for them to teach effectively.

Ms. Jacquelyn Paulin, ACPS parent, requested that the Board take a more innovative approach to learning than virtual learning and provided articles as examples of ways in which at-home and virtual learning can surpass the traditional school model.

Ms. Dena Penner and Ms. Maeve O’Connor, ACPS parents, provided information about how the virtual learning environment has impacted students with disabilities. The information was obtained through their own survey. They requested that the Board give consideration to these students’ needs as ACPS moves forward with the Virtual+ model for the fall.

Ms. Jennifer Reading, ACPS parents, suggested that teachers who work with deaf and hard of hearing students wear clear masks or shields that allow for better visibility for lip reading and observation of the speaker’s emotions.

Ms. Reading submitted a second public comment suggesting that Zoom classes have a smaller number of students to increase engagement and real face time with teachers and fellow students.

Mr. Reed Semedo-Strauss, ACPS parent, noted that without a proven vaccine for COVID-19, parents must put the safety of their students in the hands of ACPS. He encouraged the Board to be direct with information to parents.

Ms. Sandra Sheehan, ACPS parent, suggested that ACPS re-open for in person learning for grades K-6 and provided suggestions to maximize classroom space for these grade levels.

Ms. Blair Van Valkenburgh, ACPS alumna, expressed her strong support for the removal of the T.C. Williams name from the high school in order to right the myriad of wrongs that have been done to people of color in this country.

Tanika Wade, ACPS parent, asked whether parents would be able to choose between the virtual and hybrid learning models.

Ms. Meredith West, ACPS parent, requested that incoming kindergarteners be given some in-person learning in order to gain experience in a formal classroom setting.

Ms. Marcelle Yeager, ACPS parent, shared insights on virtual learning from families in other divisions that used smaller Zoom classrooms. Through the use of breakout rooms, students had a greater depth of learning, problem solving and engagement with peers.

Mr. Elliot Waters, community member, asked that for the health and well-being of staff and students, that the Board immediately approve renaming T.C. Williams High School and carry out the necessary process to engage the community on new names for consideration.

Consent Calendar

6. Personnel Actions for the Month of July 2020

7. Minutes for the July 17, 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

8. Enhanced Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0: Reimagining Schools

Dr. Hutchings gave opening remarks about the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0. He explained that Virtual Plus is the most feasible option for learning in the fall given the health and safety concerns of staff and students, as well as the limitations presented by social distancing requirements. He noted that this plan represents the diverse perspectives of the Cross Functional Planning Teams, who were committed to addressing the health, safety, and well-being of students and staff.

Dr. Terri Mazingo, Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership was joined by the ACPS Senior Leadership Team to present an assessment of ACPS constraints, internal and external inputs, and a summary of how the reopening plan aligns with the *ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan: Equity for All*. They also reviewed the details of the recommended Virtual PLUS+ model that will provide support for students, staff and families in the new school year. ACPS will reassess the feasibility of providing in-person instruction throughout the year based on a number of assessments. The Virtual PLUS+ model will be submitted to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) for approval by August 14, 2020.

Board Members asked questions about the plan submission to VDOE, tracking students who have not been engaged so far in distance learning, the family meal cards, learning pods, assistive technology for students with disabilities and communication to families about the reopening plan.

They also asked about eligibility and logistics for child care, and how families will be connected with community partners.

Ms. Alderton moved that the Board approve the ACPS Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0. Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0 was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. A roll call vote was taken.

Superintendent's Report

1. Report from Dr. Hutchings

Dr. Hutching did not give a report.

Chair's Report

2. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson reminded the public that the work session on August 27th will include discussions relating to the FY 2022 budget, the T.C. Williams renaming, and Board policies.

Ms. Greene acknowledged Ms. Sahar Wiltshire for the excellent job she did running the Virtual PLUS+ presentation during the meeting.

Adjournment

3. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Greene and seconded by Ms. Alderton, the Board voted unanimously, 8-1, to adjourn. A roll call vote was taken. Ms. Gentry was experiencing technical difficulties and was unable to vote.

The meeting ended at 3:35 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the August 14, 2020 School Board Meeting.