

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
October 1, 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 (joined during Public Comments)
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, Clinton Page, Dr. Anthony Sims, Dr. Terri Mozingo

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 except for Ms. Gentry, who joined the meeting during the Public Comments.

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 October 1, 2020, Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the October 1, 2020, Virtual School Board Meeting.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Nolan moved to amend the agenda to add “Donation to ACPS” to the Consent Calendar. Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the meeting agenda was unanimous 8-0. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion carried.

The vote to adopt the amended agenda for the October 1, 2020, Virtual School Board Meeting was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

4. Written Public Comments

Ms. Lara Payne, ACPS staff member and parent, wrote about the wonderful job Douglas MacArthur Elementary School teachers are doing. She noted that her students have been fully engaged in synchronous learning and encouraged that there be more. Her students are not as engaged during asynchronous learning, which in turn, affects her ability to teach.

Ms. Ginger Root, ACPS parent, wrote to the Board expressing her concern that virtual school hours are too long, especially for the younger grades. She suggested that MTSS be dropped, that students be allowed to choose if they want to participate in virtual Encore or submit an activity log, and to split virtual classes into smaller groups to increase participation.

Mr. Matt Quon, community member, wrote to advocate for renaming T.C. Williams High School to Alexandria High School, as it is the only official high school in Alexandria. He also advocated against naming T.C. after an accomplished individual. Instead, Mr. Quon suggested honoring individuals of various accomplishments by naming athletic fields or other buildings after them.

Chair Anderson reminded the public that comments may be submitted using the online form by Thursday at noon to be included in the next day’s meeting.

5. Public Hearing on the FY 2022 Combined Funds and FY 2022-2031 Capital Improvement Program Budgets

Ms. Carolyn Lyle, community member, asked the Board to prioritize designs for new construction that comply with the net-zero energy requirement of the City of Alexandria Green Building Policy 2019. Ms. Lyle thanked the Board for its decision to make Douglas MacArthur net-zero. She asked the Board to continue prioritizing energy technologies in school designs, either new or retrofits, which do not emit carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases.

6. Public Hearing on the ACPS/Alexandria Police Department (APD) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Mr. Rafael Lovo, ACPS student, spoke in favor of ending the contract between the Alexandria Police Department and ACPS. He expressed that having a police presence in schools gives students stress and anxiety and suggested that if ACPS wants to create a safe environment for all students, then the Board should vote to end the MOU.

Ms. Ruth Kebebew, ACPS student, spoke in favor of ending the MOU with the Alexandria Police Department. She shared that studies have shown that a cultural bias exists where Black students

are more likely to get arrested at schools than other racial demographics. She also believes that police in schools do more harm than good.

Ms. Alessandra Guevara, ACPS student, asked the School Board to end the agreement between ACPS and APD. She stressed that the presence of police in her school makes her and other students feel scared and uncomfortable. Instead of police in schools, she advocated that the Board improve the implementation of restorative justice practices.

Ms. Sesen Tesfay, ACPS student, believes ACPS should have police-free schools and that the police presence in schools increases the school-to-prison pipeline. She advocated for implementation and funding of restorative justice in schools, which allows youth to be heard, understood and given a second chance.

Ms. Mily Palma Moran, ACPS student, shared that while she was a student at George Washington Middle School, a School Resource Officer (SRO) accidentally discharged his weapon in the school. She asked that the Board reimagine and improve the school climate by investing in other programs that will be effective.

Ms. Abenaa Buabeng, ACPS student, believes that police should not be in schools because of police involvement in racial injustices against people of color in the community and around the nation. She stated that students of color feel intimidated by the police presence and that the City's funding for SROs could be used to hire additional administrators, deans, counselors, social workers and psychologists.

Ms. Karen Adu-Poku, ACPS student, spoke in favor of removing police from schools and ending the agreement with the Alexandria Police Department. She indicated that students feel uncomfortable and unsafe having police in schools.

Ms. Teofila Gomez, ACPS parent, encouraged the Board to defund the MOU with the Alexandria Police Department and instead use the money to invest more in educating students and improving their learning environment.

Ms. Sarah Feinberg, ACPS parent, spoke in favor of terminating the agreement between ACPS and the APD, stating that school is for educating, not making children accessible to law enforcement. Personal student and family information stored at the school should not be available to officers without a warrant. Further, she expressed that the current MOU results in the criminalization of students.

Ms. Shira Eller, community member, asked the Board to terminate the agreement with the Alexandria Police Department. She expressed that in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement nationally, data has shown that SROs criminalize Black and Latino students, which exacerbates the school-to-prison pipeline.

Mr. Kevin Brady, community member, shared that in the past, collaboration between parents, staff, and families occurred when student behavioral issues happened. Now there are armed officers in schools. Mr. Brady expressed that no current evidence shows the benefits of having a police presence in schools. He asked the Board to discontinue the MOU with the Alexandria Police Department.

Ms. Amanda Eisenhour, ACPS alumna, shared her personal experience as a former student at T.C. Williams High School and that she, as a white female, was treated differently than minority students. She noted that this kind of institutional racism is rooted nationwide, including in ACPS, and is why police should not be in schools. Ms. Eisenhour stated that it is time to end the MOU because Alexandria can do better.

Ms. Marie Eberlein, community member, asked the School Board to end the agreement with the Alexandria Police Department and invest the money in the students instead. She expressed that police do not belong in schools with children and stated that data has shown the presence of

SROs leads to higher rates of student arrests and lower high school graduation rates. She stated that there is no evidence available proving a police presence makes schools safer.

Mr. William Olson, ACPS parent, shared that his child with special needs was pulled out of class and interrogated by an Alexandria Police Officer without he or his wife's knowledge. He encouraged the Board not to renew the MOU unless there is a modification stating that reasonable efforts will be made to contact parents prior to questioning, as well as educating students on their rights if being questioned.

Ms. Rebecca Zeiger, community member, urged the Board to discontinue the MOU with the Alexandria Police Department. She also shared that the MOU states a School Resource Officer's role is to act as a role model for students. Ms. Zeiger suggested that ACPS should be investing in programs, counselors, and mentors for students instead of relying on officers for mentorship.

Ms. Adrienne Fikes, former ACPS parent, asked the Board to immediately terminate the agreement between Alexandria City Public Schools and the Alexandria Police Department.

Ms. LaDonna Sanders, ACPS parent and Alexandria NAACP Representative, spoke about the work between ACPS, Tenants and Workers United, Grassroots Alexandria and the NAACP to implement restorative practices, which preserve the dignity of students of color. Further, she expressed that the MOU does the opposite of the work that the NAACP has been doing regarding restorative practices. She stated that ACPS has not provided any data showing why it is helpful to have SROs in schools.

Student Representatives

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

Ms. Lorraine Johnson shared personal experiences she has had with police in the community and in school. She expressed that SROs should be trained in a more strategic way. Ms. Johnson said that she does not believe the SRO program should end, but that revisions need to be made to the MOU.

Ms. Ashley Sanchez-Viafara reported on the upcoming Student Engagement Chat on October 7th from 6-7 p.m. about The Identity Project on school renaming. The first Student Engagement Chat, "Where We've Been," will focus on feelings and experiences in ACPS up to the present. There are two additional chats on October 13th and 20th, covering "Where We Are" and "Where We Want to Be."

Ms. Sanchez-Viafara also voiced her opinion that significant changes should be made to the SRO program and expressed that revisions to the MOU are needed.

Consent Calendar

8. FY 2020 Preliminary Monthly Financial Report ending June 30, 2020

9. FY 2020 Preliminary Monthly Financial Report ending July 31, 2020

10. FY 2020 Quarter 4 Budget Transfer Report

11. FY 2022 Combined-Funds (CF) Budget Priorities

12. FY 2022-2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget Priorities

13. SY 2019-2020 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) Annual Report

14. Donation to ACPS

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

15. Equity for All Strategic Plan Measurement Update

Superintendent Hutchings introduced Mr. Clinton Page, Chief of Accountability and Research, who gave an update on The Equity for All 2025 Strategic Plan. Mr. Page outlined seven key performance indicators and additional measures aligned to the five goal areas. These will help the Division achieve its vision of empowering all students to thrive in a diverse and ever-changing world. The next step in implementation is to outline the process and system of measurement for gauging progress over the next five years. The process for updating the Board was also outlined with consideration given to the impact of COVID-19.

Board Members asked questions about how the plan will allow the Division to make adjustments, qualitative data, survey timelines, establishing a data baseline for this year, how data is filtered down to teachers for course correction, student assessments, and the equity dashboard.

Board Chair's Report

16. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson reminded the public about upcoming events related to The Identity Project, including the Community Read-In scheduled for after the Board Meeting. The Read-In will be led by Dr. Douglas Reed, author of *Building the Federal Schoolhouse*, and will focus on Alexandria's history to provide context for The Identity Project. Chair Anderson indicated that more information about upcoming events may be found on the ACPS website.

Chair Anderson reminded the public about the upcoming Public Hearing on the Renaming of Schools, which will take place during the October 29, 2020 School Board Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Superintendent's Report

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

Superintendent Hutchings asked every family and staff member to complete the online surveys related to returning to school. He also spoke briefly about the renaming of schools.

School Board Announcements

18. Certification of Closed Meeting

Ms. Greene reported on Key Club students from T.C. Williams High School, who are helping with weekly voter registration events and doing a great job.

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

The meeting ended at 6:31 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

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