

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
October 29, 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. Alicia Hart, Dr. Marcia Jackson, Kennetra Wood, Terrence Wilson, John Contreras, Chief Michael Brown (APD), Dominic Turner, and Dr. Stephen Wilkins

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting except Mr. Suarez who joined during the moment of silence.

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 29, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the agenda for the October 29, 2020 Virtual School Board Meeting. Ms. Gentry seconded the motion.

Ms. Gentry moved to remove the “ACPS 2021 Legislative Agenda” item from the agenda.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to approve amending the meeting agenda was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

The vote to adopt the amended agenda for October 29, 2020 was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The votes were taken by roll call.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

4. Public Hearing on the Renaming of Schools

Mr. Harry P. “Bud” Hart, community member, shared the many accomplishments of Judge Nolan B. Dawkins, a lifelong resident of Alexandria and a product of ACPS. Judge Dawkins became the first and only African-American judge in Alexandria. Mr. Hart suggested that renaming T.C. Williams High School to Judge Nolan B. Dawkins High School would be a selection all could be proud of.

Mr. Greg Hittelman, ACPS parent, read a statement from a group of T.C. Williams High School students who expressed that by retaining the name of T.C. Williams, ACPS is allowing systemic racism to remain, causing harm and trauma to students and families of color. Mr. Hittelman, in his own remarks, shared that Thomas Chambliss Williams (T.C. Williams) was a racist and an ardent segregationist, who refused to integrate our public schools for over 30 years. He asked the School Board to vote now to remove T.C. Williams from the high school name.

Mr. Glenn Hopkins, representing Hopkins House, a nonprofit, community-based learning center for children, youth, and families, shared a brief history on the collaborative efforts between Hopkins House and Alexandria City Public Schools that spans more than eight decades. He further shared that T.C. Williams High School was named after a racist superintendent and that Hopkins House strongly supports changing the high school’s name in order to rid the City of this hateful, divisive symbol.

Ms. Karin Purugganan, ACPS parent, alumnus and staff member, stated that ACPS prides itself on equity and celebrating diversity, however, having a school named after a racist and segregationist does not embody these principles. She pleaded with the School Board to vote in favor of changing the name of T.C. Williams High School and show that Black and Brown students matter.

Ms. Tricia Maher-Miller, ACPS community member, spoke in favor of changing the name of T.C. Williams High School which honors a man who thought African-Americans and children with learning disabilities should be educated in segregated, anything-but-equal schools. She expressed that changing the name of the high school will show Black and Brown students that exclusion and racism will no longer be honored in Alexandria.

Mr. Elliott Waters, community member, spoke in support of changing the names of Matthew Maury Elementary School and T.C. Williams High School. He shared compelling reasons for the change including that the former Superintendent T.C. Williams failed to make an extraordinary contribution to the school system, and Mr. Maury maintained his allegiance to the Confederacy and supported slavery.

Mr. Mark Munson, ACPS parent, shared concerns he had with the possibility of changing the name of T.C. Williams High School. His concerns included that the T.C. Williams name is

largely familiar to admissions offices and college coaches. He also expressed that changing the name could send a message that a simple name change could solve the serious problems that students and the community face, and that by working together to embrace our diversity is the way to overcome these issues. Mr. Munson further shared that the name has already been redefined and T.C. Williams High School now represents good-will and overcoming racism.

Ms. Sharon Henderson, community member, spoke in support of renaming T.C. Williams High School in honor of both her father Coach Herman Boone and Coach Bill Yoast. Ms. Henderson shared that Herman Boone and Bill Yoast had a far greater impact on the community of Alexandria than was portrayed in the movie *“Remember the Titans.”* Both men were relentless advocates for students toward social justice and equality, and that renaming the high school in their honor would be one of the greatest honors the legacies of Coach Boone and Coach Yoast could receive.

Ms. Colleen Hadow, ACPS parent, expressed her dissatisfaction in the School Board being able to quickly and decisively act on the decision to rename the schools while neighboring jurisdictions have been renaming schools at a much quicker pace. She encouraged the School Board to take swift action to rename Matthew Maury Elementary School and T.C. Williams High School and echoed the suggestion of renaming the high school after Judge Nolan B. Dawkins.

Ms. Michelle Chapman, ACPS alumnus, spoke in favor of renaming T.C. Williams High School, sharing that it’s never too late to right a wrong. She shared her knowledge of an incident where Superintendent T.C. Williams and others were responsible for taking land from Black families in order to build a school in which he did not want students of color to attend. Ms. Chapman further expressed that his perceptions of Black people guided how they were treated, not only in the schools, but also in the community and that this perception has lingered. Ms. Chapman encouraged the School Board to vote in support of renaming the school.

Mr. Wayne Sanders, ACPS alumnus and ’71 Titan, spoke in favor of renaming T.C. Williams High School to Boone-Yoast High School. Mr. Sanders expressed that both Coach Boone and Coach Yoast prided themselves on being educators first, and further expressed that their leadership during a tumultuous time helped establish the City of Alexandria and T.C. Williams High School for what it is known for today.

Ms. Pamela Wurst-Vetrini, ACPS parent, spoke in favor of renaming Matthew Maury Elementary School and T.C. Williams High School. She shared a historical overview of Matthew Maury as a proponent of slavery and supporter of the Confederacy. She also shared that Matthew Maury Elementary School was named by an unelected School Board who did not engage with the community on a school name. Ms. Wurst-Vetrini encouraged the School Board to rename the schools.

The Board received the following written comments regarding renaming of T.C. Williams High School and Matthew Maury Elementary School:

Mr. Dino Drudi, community member, wrote to the Board explaining that public buildings typically acquire their names at their time of construction and the names chosen represent the views and values of those responsible for designing, building, and funding these projects. He further stated that the names do not represent our views **today** because they (not we) erected these buildings. By changing these names now, we imply that we are the ones responsible for what others have done.

Ms. Beth Gillus, ACPS alumnus, wrote to the Board requesting to change the name of T.C. Williams High School, named after a segregationist, to John Hampton Sr. High School. She reported that when she attended TC, Black students were treated differently, segregated within the school, and were allowed to fall through the cracks.

Mr. Allen Irwin, ACPS parent, submitted written comments asking the Board to expeditiously commit to renaming T.C. Williams and Matthew Maury schools. He stated that The Identity

Project sessions have highlighted what was already evident, and believes that a decision to rename the schools now would allow resources to be better focused on the positive engagement of selecting appropriate honorees.

Mr. Nathan Macek, community member, encouraged the School Board to rename both Matthew Maury Elementary School and T.C. Williams High School. He stated that our schools should not be named after white supremacists and asked the Board to proceed with initiating a public process to identify more inclusive names for these schools.

5. Written Public Comments

Ms. Rebecca Anderson, ACPS parent, submitted written comments asking the Board to consider opening schools as soon as possible, starting with the elementary schools. She wrote that children are not driving the transmission of COVID-19 especially in the school setting. Ms. Anderson noted that children need the social, emotional and academic environment of in-person learning.

Mr. Patrick Byrnett, ACPS parent, wrote asking the Board to support part of the Quarter 2 Phased Reentry of Students plan, but asked the Board to support an accelerated timetable for in-person learning for Level 1 and 2 English Language Learners, students in primary grades, and high school students enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses requiring hands-on experience for industry certifications.

Mr. Dino Drudi, community member, submitted written comments in support of the ACPS/APD Memorandum of Understanding. He encouraged the Board to vote to keep the MOU because of the number of unrecorded incidents that did not happen due to police officers in the school, as well as the number of students who were prevented from going down the wrong path under the guidance of police.

Ms. Jennifer Glade, ACPS parent, wrote to the School Board expressing her disappointment that the 3rd quarter school reopening plan provides in-person learning only for grades K-5. She does not believe the plan adequately acknowledges the other issues beyond education that in-person learning facilitates, such as the safety, physical health, and mental health of students. Ms. Glade encouraged the Board to reconsider the current plan.

Mr. Brian Hoffer, ACPS parent, submitted comments to the School Board that Elementary and Middle School students have not been taught virtual learning habits. He expressed his concern about the effects of the length of time student have been distance learning. Mr. Hoffer stressed that kids need some in-classroom contact with teachers, even if just for one day a week.

Ms. Jessica Hughes, ACPS parent, submitted comments to the School Board about the plan to return to schools. She expressed her frustration that the current plan did not include students at the secondary level. Ms. Hughes shared that other jurisdictions have successfully re-integrated students into schools for in-person learning and encouraged the Board to ensure that the Superintendent and his team, create concrete plans to for all ACPS students who wish to return to in-person learning.

Mr. Nathan Macek, ACPS parent, submitted comments to the School Board about the revised Virtual Plus schedule for elementary school students. He stated that the reduction of screen time and an added mid-morning break was a welcome improvement, however, he was disappointed to see the reduction in time for Encore classes. Mr. Macek asked the Board to reinstate the full 45 minutes for these classes.

Ms. Margaret McLaughlin, ACPS parent, wrote to the Board expressing that the new plan should contain only minor schedule modifications and also keep the unified lunch and recess period. She explained that families use this lunch and recess time to interact with other neighboring students and families, enabling all students to return to class at the same time. Ms. McLaughlin also disagreed with the rolling of science and social studies curriculum into the reading and math blocks.

Ms. Cassie A. Powell, an attorney with the Youth Justice Program of the Legal Aid Justice Center, wrote to urge the Board to listen to the perspectives of students in ACPS, especially students of color, who are disproportionately impacted by the presence of police in schools. She urged the Board to vote to terminate the relationship between ACPS and the Alexandria Police Department (APD).

Ms. Dawn Ramsburg, ACPS parent, submitted comments to the School Board about the negative effects the extended school closures have had on her child. She suggested that the Board find more options to help overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic, and consider staggered and hybrid schedules as well as alternative spaces that would allow more students to attend school in person.

Ms. Heather Rosner, ACPS staff member, submitted comments to the School Board regarding the Virtual Plus Learning Model and her concern for returning to an in-person learning model. She believes that returning to school would jeopardize the health and safety of all involved. Ms. Rosner also suggested focusing on making virtual learning more meaningful by reducing screen time, and prioritizing connection and emotional health by finding creative ways to relieve the stress of families and students.

Dr. Ashley Simpson Baird, George Mason Elementary School PTA Representative, wrote to thank the Board and the Superintendent for their commitment to Alexandria children and families during this unprecedented time. She expressed her views about technology challenges with virtual learning including internet connectivity, insufficient orientation to devices and applications, hardware issues and lack of technical support. Dr. Baird encouraged the Board to address these issues to ensure every student has the resources they need to be successful at virtual learning.

Ms. Kristina West, ACPS parent, wrote to the Board asking about what health indicators and what threshold/benchmark of COVID infections will ACPS consider when deciding to reopen or close schools. Ms. West cited several articles with guidelines for reopening schools and stated that Alexandria's infection rate, which continues to increase, is much higher than what guidelines recommend for reopening of schools.

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

Ms. Johnson, shared that she and Ms. Sanchez-Viafara are beginning to receive emails through the student representative email account. She invited students to reach out with questions or to share about their experiences. Information on how to email or follow the high school student representatives on social media is available on the student representative webpage. Ms. Johnson also reported on the interest from T.C. Williams High School students to take a survey on school reopening that covers mental health, work load, access to resources and the impact of virtual learning on their academic success. She noted that she is working with Ms. Julia Burgos, Chief of School and Community Relations, and T.C. Williams Principal Peter Balas on this request to see if the survey is possible which will give insight into the student experience. She will keep you informed on its progress.

Ms. Sanchez-Viafara reported on the final student conversation that was recently held on the renaming of T.C. Williams as part of The Identity Project. She reported that two student conversations were previously held that covered the topics of "Where We've Been" and "Where We Are." This last conversation was on the topic of "Where We Are Going." Ms. Sanchez-Viafara noted that these conversations have led to other engagement opportunities and conversations throughout the City. She repeated a quote from one of these conversations from Mr. Christopher Harris, President of the Alexandria NAACP, that she felt was appropriate and bore repeating: "Changing the name is just the first step in tackling the racial inequity in our school division."

Consent Calendar

7. Minutes for the October 16 and October 22, 2020 Virtual Special Called School Board Meetings

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

Ms. Gentry asked to pull “Re-Appoint Sean McEneary to the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC)” from the Consent Calendar.

Ms. Greene asked to pull the “Community Use of Facilities, September 2020” and the “Community Donation to ACPS” from the Consent Calendar.

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

8. Community Donation to ACPS

Ms. Greene pulled this item to publicly thank Ebenezer Baptist Church, Keeping it Moving Ministries, and Dr. Shakina D. Rawlings, Pastor of Kingdom Fellowship, for their generous donation stating that during these unprecedented times disadvantaged families would value the assistance. Ms. Greene further expressed her appreciation for all of ACPS’s community partners.

Ms. Greene moved to approve the Community Donation to ACPS. Dr. Rief seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the Community Donation to ACPS was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

9. Community Use of Facilities, September 2020

Ms. Greene pulled this item to ask for clarification regarding a parking fee of \$600.00 at George Washington Middle School listed in the report. She also asked if there was a list that she could see that states the standard rates that ACPS charges the community for using the facilities during this time.

Dr. Alicia Hart, Acting Executive Director of Facilities and Operations, clarified that she believed the \$600.00 charge was a donation; however, she would need to verify that information with her team and bring it back to the Superintendent to share with the Board at a later date. She further explained that ACPS does not charge community partners for using ACPS facilities or parking lots and that all other activity at ACPS facilities have been suspended at this time.

Ms. Greene moved to accept the Community Use of Facilities Report for September 2020. Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

The vote to approve Community Use of Facilities, September 2020 was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

10. Re-Appoint Sean McEneary to the Budget Advisory Committee

Ms. Gentry pulled this item to thank Mr. Sean McEneary for returning to serve on the Budget Advisory Committee and all committee members for their service. Ms. Gentry encouraged her fellow School Board Members to actively recruit members of the community to serve on the Budget Advisory Committee as they are actively looking for new members. Further, she shared that the focus of the Budget Advisory Committee this year will be on the Budget Calendar.

Ms. Gentry moved to re-appoint Sean McEneary to the Budget Advisory Committee. Ms. Alderton seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the reappointment of Sean McEneary to the Budget Advisory Committee was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

Old Business & Action Items

11. Area of Focus Update: Policy Equity Audit Timeline

Ms. Kennetra Wood, Executive Director of Equity and Alternative Programs, presented an Area of Focus Update on the Policy Equity Audit Timeline. Racial equity is the foundation of the ACPS Strategic Plan 2025: Equity for All, and as part of the ongoing equity conversations, the School Board committed to an equity audit of School Board policies. Members of the Senior Leadership Team have supported this effort by proposing The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) as the group to conduct the audit and support the need for policy alignment to our strategic plan goals

Mr. Terrence Wilson, Regional Policy and Community Engagement Director at IDRA EAC-South, gave an overview of IDRA which is a federally-funded equity assistance center that works with local education agencies to create asset-based solutions that result in equitable educational opportunities. Ms. Wood further reviewed the timeline for the audit which is expected to be completed by Spring 2021.

School Board Members asked questions about integrating the disparities noted in the Student with Disabilities audit in the equity audit, deliverables to expect from the audit, how COVID-19 will impact the process, and equity training.

12. Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) – Alexandria Police Department (APD) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Mr. John Contreras, Director of Safety and Security Services, reviewed the MOU between ACPS and APD which would set forth the powers and duties of School Resource Officers (SROs). As part of the review process, ACPS and APD formed a joint-committee to review the past and proposed MOUs, held a public hearing, obtained community feedback, and presented the proposed MOU at the Board work session on October 15, 2020. Mr. Contreras also highlighted the latest changes incorporated into the MOU based on recommendations from the School Board. Board Members asked for clarification on the funding for SROs and security services grant money, the use of police liaisons instead of SROs, the feasibility of unarmed SROs in schools, and evaluation and data collection of student contact with SROs.

Ms. Alderton moved to approve the revisions to the MOU and authorize the agreement between ACPS and APD. Vice Chair Nolan seconded the motion.

Ms. Lorber offered a friendly amendment to approve the MOU for one year. Ms. Gentry cautioned that we may not be able to collect all the data in one year. Mr. Suarez clarified that the Board has the authority to rescind the MOU at any time and did not believe the amendment was needed. Ms. Lorber rescinded her amendment.

Mr. Suarez clarified that he would like to be sure that the motion language would capture his earlier comment about preventing the release of student to police. Dr. Hutchings replied that student records are not released. Chief Brown explained that if student records are needed due to a criminal investigation, they would be subpoenaed through the courts.

The vote to approve the revisions to the ACPS-APD Memorandum of Understanding and authorize the agreement between ACPS and APD, was 6-3. Ms. Greene, Dr. Rief, and Ms. Thornton voted against the motion. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

New Business and Reports to the Board

13. 2020-2021 Superintendent Evaluation Goal Setting

Vice Chair Nolan shared an update on the current status of the Superintendent's Evaluation. The Superintendent is evaluated annually and the evaluation process includes a goal setting conference to be completed in the fall of each school year. The outcome of the goal-setting

conference is mutually agreed upon goals and what evidence of goal attainment is acceptable to the Board and Superintendent. Since the shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, many of the metrics for evaluating the Superintendent were unavailable. During the 2020-2021 school year, a hybrid version of the Superintendent Evaluation Criteria has been developed to reflect a combination of pre- and post-COVID-19 evaluation metrics.

Chair's Report

14. Report from Cindy Anderson

Chair Anderson reminded community of the upcoming key budget dates:

- November 12, 2020--Presentation of the FY 2022-2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget
- November 16, 2020 4:00 p.m.—CIP Budget Work Sessions #1
- November 17, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.—Joint City Council/School Board CIP Budget Work Session
- November 23, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.--Public hearing on the FY 2022-2031 CIP Budget followed by the CIP Budget Work Session #2.

Members of the public who wish to submit comments or sign up to speak at the virtual public hearing should do so by Noon, one day prior to the public hearing.

Chair Anderson also noted that updates to the Virtual+ Plus and phased reopening plan will be reported on at School Board Meetings on November 12th, 23rd, December 3rd and 17th.

Superintendent's Report

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

Superintendent Hutchings reported on updates for transitioning to in-person learning and staff will be reporting on the cost and feasibility of technology components and infrastructure at the next update.

Dr. Hutchings also shared his participation in a return-to-school simulation for city-wide program students with disabilities that was held at Jefferson-Houston so that staff and parents could see what in-person learning would look like under COVID-19 safety measures. He noted that many aspects of school will be different than what students experienced prior to the shutdown in March. Dr. Hutchings also thanked the parents who allowed their students to participate in the simulation. Lastly, Dr. Hutchings spoke about the Intent to Return survey form for staff members. This survey is to determine the number of staff members that are able to return to in-person teaching. It will also help identify why staff cannot return to work, such as child care issues, health concerns, age, a member of their household with a compromised immune system, or even fear. He explained that fear is a real issue and the social and emotion needs of staff is very important. Once the division can identify the barriers to staff return, ACPS can work on solutions.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

16. Closed Meeting

Vice Chair Nolan moved that the Board convene a Closed Meeting pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(6) for discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved and, where, if made public, would adversely affect the financial interest of the Board.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, 9-0, to convene a Closed Meeting. The motion carried. A roll call vote was taken.

The Board moved into a Closed Meeting at 7:58 p.m.

17. 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 October 29, 2020.

Ms. Gentry seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, 9-0, to certify the Closed Meeting. The motion carried. A roll call vote was taken.

The Board returned to open session at 8:42 p.m.

Adjournment

18. Adjourn

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

The meeting ended at 8:44 p.m.



Cindy Anderson, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the December 3, 2020 Virtual School Board Meeting.