

MINUTES
VIRTUAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
April 8, 2021 (5:00 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. As a result, this meeting is being held electronically pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), for the purpose of providing for the continuity of operations of the School Board for the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities. All members of the School Board are participating via Zoom with no more than four members meeting in-person in the School Board Meeting Room. Public participation remains virtual and may be accessed by the public through the live broadcast on Comcast channel 71 in Alexandria, through the livestream on the ACPS website, or via Zoom by following the link at the top of the posted agenda.

ROLL CALL

THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

BOARD MEMBERS: Meagan L. Alderton
Cindy Anderson
Ramee A. Gentry
Jacinta Greene
Margaret Lorber
Veronica R. Nolan
Michelle Rief
Christopher A. Suarez
Heather Thornton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Susan Neilson, Shanel Hill, Lorraine Johnson, Ashley Sanchez-Viafara, Peter Balas, Dr. Julie Crawford, Erika Gulick, Dr. Alicia Hart, Kurt Huffman, Dr. Terri Mozingo, Darrell Sampson, Dr. Steven Wilkins, Rene Paschal, Pierrette Peters, Christina Chommanard, Lina Zimmerman, Sean O'Donnell, Andrea Shaw, Omar Calderon

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Alderton

Chair Alderton called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting.

Chair Alderton read the following statement:

On March 12, 2020, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, this meeting is being held electronically pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), for the purpose of providing for the continuity of operations of the SB for the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities. All members of the School Board are participating via Zoom with four members of the School Board in person in the School Board Meeting room. Public participation remains virtual and may be accessed by the public through the live broadcast on Comcast channel 71 in Alexandria, through the live stream on the ACPS website, or via Zoom by following the link posted at the top of the agenda.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

2. Adopt the Meeting Agenda for the April 8, 2021 Virtual School Board Meeting

Ms. Lorber moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the April 8, 2021 Virtual School Board Meeting.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

Ms. Anderson moved to amend the agenda by dropping item “Appoint Ashley Simpson Baird to the Special Education Advisory Committee” from the Consent Calendar.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the agenda to remove the application of Ashley Simpson Baird from the Consent Calendar was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

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

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

3. 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, specifically a contract related to the Douglas MacArthur Project.

Ms. Gentry seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, 9-0, to convene a Closed Meeting. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The Board moved into the Closed Meeting at 5:12 p.m.

4. Certification of Closed Meeting

Ms. Anderson 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 April 8, 2021.

Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, 9-0, to certify the Closed Meeting. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The School Board returned to open session at 5:32 p.m.

Moment of Silence

5. Observe a Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

6. Public Comments

Mr. Anthony Yianilos, ACPS student, spoke about his desire to be in school full-time and shared his experience returning to in-person learning. He asked the Board to assure that all students will be in-person next year.

Ms. Cindy Hart, ACPS parent and Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Committee, shared the concerns of special needs families in regard to the current return to school plan and CDC guidelines.

The Honorable Hal Caldwell, alumnus, parent and former School Board Member, spoke about the renaming process and shared his support of renaming T.C. Williams High School to The City of Alexandria High School.

The Honorable Helen Morris, ACPS parent and former School Board Member, spoke in support of the School Board's endorsement of the Children and Youth Master Plan. She asked the Board to think broadly and innovatively on behalf of our youth and families and to use this great resource which highlights safety and positive experiences for students.

Ms. Erika Melman, ACPS parent, shared her frustration with ACPS's current plan for the remainder of the school year.

Ms. Maureen McNulty, ACPS parent, shared her concerns with the approach she believes ACPS has taken in regard to HVAC systems in schools and outdoor lunches during the pandemic.

Ms. Amanda Ruff, ACPS parent, advocated for adherence to all CDC guidelines and other preventive strategies. She suggested that in order for schools to be healthy that there needs to be improved ventilation and air filtration.

Ms. Lee Abbott, ACPS parent, inquired on the decision-making process of the School Board in regard to the re-opening of schools.

Mr. Chris Pyke, ACPS Parent, shared his concerns in regard to ACPS effectively managing the air quality in schools.

Written Comments

Ms. Jessica Hughes, ACPS Parent, submitted comments expressing her concerns about class scheduling at T.C. Williams for the next school year.

Ms. Yuan Yuan, ACPS parent, wrote in to express that ACPS should follow CDC guidelines which will allow more students to return to in-person learning.

Ms. Meagan Reing, ACPS parent, wrote that she was concerned that ACPS' strategy for ventilation in our schools is insufficient for addressing the spread of COVID-19.

Ms. September Howard, ACPS parent, suggested that the setup and schedule for virtual learning should be reviewed and revised to allow students to have more interaction with their teachers.

Ms. Shantia Smith, ACPS Parent, wrote in to suggest that there is too much asynchronous time for students at the elementary school level. She feels that these students cannot be left to learn on their own and many will be falling behind.

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

Ms. Johnson shared her experience in committing to sharing the student voice and experience throughout the renaming process and the process in the decision to make the high school a connected network. Ms. Johnson thanked the students and the community for all of their hard work in regard to advocating for change.

Ms. Sanchez-Viafara shared a recent event where the T.C. Williams JV football team members were subject to racial discrimination. She noted that it is disheartening that students of color have to experience these traumatizing events that will carry with them throughout high school and beyond. Ms Sanchez-Viafara also gave context to why the current work of ACPS and the City on racial equity is significant.

Consent Calendar

8. FY 2021 Monthly Financial Report ending February 28, 2021

- 9. Personnel Actions for the Month of March 2021**
- 10. Douglas MacArthur Project GMP Contract**
- 11. Contract Change Order: TCW Stadium Project**
- 12. Appoint David Mercer to the Athletic Hall of Fame Advisory Committee**
- 13. Appoint Selena El Hajji to the Budget Advisory Committee**
- 14. Minutes for the March 18, 2021 Virtual School Board Meeting**

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

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

Items Pulled from the Consent Calendar

There were no items pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Old Business & Action Items

15. Superintendent's Naming Recommendation: T.C. Williams High School

Superintendent Hutchings gave a brief overview regarding his recommendation to the School Board to rename T.C. Williams High School to Alexandria High School in accordance with Regulation FF-R. The new name would become effective at the start of the 2021-22 School Year on July 1, 2021. As part of the school renaming, the Titan school mascot and school colors will be retained and continue in the long-standing tradition of "Titan Pride."

Vice Chair Nolan moved that the Board rename "T.C. Williams High School" to "Alexandria High School."

Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Discussion between Board Members included adding the words "The City (T.C.) of" before the name Alexandria High School of which there had been much community feedback on as well as other proposed options. Board Members remarked that distinguishing the name from the section of Fairfax County, also named Alexandria, was important. Ms. Greene moved to amend the motion to add "The City of" before the name Alexandria High School.

Dr. Rief seconded the motion.

Ms. Sanchez-Viafara felt that students did not wish to be tethered to the "T.C." name, when the purpose of renaming and views of the students was to redefine and distance the school from the previous name. Mr. Balas supported the name "Alexandria City High School" and would want the students to weigh in on any use of the letters "T.C." Ms. Johnson commented that the Titan mascot and Titan Pride will remain which would keep T.C. Williams alumni connected to the new name. Suggestions were made that the branding of "T.C." could be incorporated into the sports program with the understanding that it referred to the "titan community."

Ms. Gentry made a substitute motion amend the original motion to add the word "City" so that the name would read "Alexandria City High School." She felt that this would further reduce any confusion, and support the student engagement process.

Vice Chair Nolan seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the substitute motion to amend the original motion to include the word "City" after "Alexandria" was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The vote to rename T.C. Williams High School to Alexandria City High School was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

16. Superintendent's Naming Recommendation: Matthew Maury Elementary School

The Superintendent recommended that the School Board rename Matthew Maury Elementary School to Naomi Brooks Elementary School in accordance with Regulation FF-R. The new name would become effective at the start of the 2021-22 School Year on July 1, 2021. Superintendent Hutchings shared a brief overview on Ms. Naomi Brooks and the community support for renaming Matthew Maury in her honor.

Ms. Anderson moved to rename Matthew Maury Elementary School to Naomi Brooks Elementary School. Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

Ms. Jacinta Greene moved to amend the motion to rename Naomi Brooks Elementary School to Naomi L. Brooks Elementary School. She explained that the family requested the addition of the middle initial in her name.

Dr. Rief seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the motion to add the middle initial "L" to the name was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

The vote to rename Matthew Maury Elementary School to Naomi L. Brooks Elementary School was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

17. Endorsement of the Children and Youth Master Plan 2025 (CYMP 2025)

The School Board was presented information at the March 18, 2021 School Board Meeting regarding the Children Youth Master Plan (CYMP) 2025 and how it connects to the ACPS Strategic Plan 2025: Equity for All and the Alexandria Health Department's new Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The School Board, as well as the City Council have been asked to endorse the new CYMP 2025.

Ms. Greene moved to endorse the Children and Youth Master Plan 2025.

Ms. Gentry seconded the motion.

The vote to endorse the Children and Youth Master Plan, was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

18. The High School Project: Design Concepts

Ms. Erika Gulick, Director of Capital Programs and Design, reminded the Board that at the March 18, 2021 School Board Meeting they were presented with three design concepts: Hand, Crescent, and Pinwheel. The Board would be voting to select one of the design concepts at this meeting, as well as selecting one of two site plans which have different placements of the bus loop. Members of the architectural firm of Perkins Eastman gave an updated presentation of the design concepts following feedback from stakeholders received since the presentation at the last meeting. They also presented a comparison of the three concepts and how each one fills a list of building goals, as well as costs of the building designs and optional programs such as an aquatic facility and co-located City programs.

Board Members asked questions about costs and timeline for adding the aquatic facility, and location of parking.

Ms. Greene moved to approve the "Pinwheel" design concept for the Minnie Howard site of the High School Project.

Ms. Gentry seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the "Pinwheel" design concept was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

Ms. Gentry moved to approve the site layout plan option "B" with the bus loop located on Braddock Road.

Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the site layout plan option “B” was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

19. Hybrid Reopening 5.0 Update: Building Blocks for a Successful and Safe Return

Superintendent Hutchings addressed the public about the updated CDC guidelines of 3 feet distancing between students. He indicated that this will allow ACPS to bring additional students into ACPS schools in a prioritized manner.

Dr. Terri Mozingo, Chief of Teaching, Learning and Leadership, along with various ACPS staff members gave updates on the Enhanced Continuity of Learning Plan 5.0 which focused on updates to social/physical distancing, childcare status and support services, phased reentry of hybrid students, Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (SEAL) Support Mondays, and the ACPS COVID-19 Dashboard. Ms. Lina Zimmerman and Christina Chommanard, from the Alexandria Health Department presented current health guidance and metrics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Alexandria Health Department (AHD).

Board Members expressed frustration and concern regarding communication to families over pivoting to the new CDC guidelines on social distancing. Board Members expressed their desire for schools to begin physical and social distancing at the CDC recommendation of 3 ft. in order to get more student back to in-person learning.

Dr. Rief moved that ACPS transition to 3 feet of physical distancing between desks to the greatest extent possible in accordance with CDC guidance for the remainder of the current school year.

Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

The vote to approve transitioning to 3 feet of physical distancing between desks to the greatest extent possible for the remainder of the school year was unanimous, 9-0. The motion carried.

The School Board asked questions about communication to families, air quality and ventilation, HVAC systems, the prioritization of returning students, and SEAL Mondays. They also asked about capacity and City Council offers for space and funding support.

Dr. Hutchings indicated that additional information on Spring, Summer and Fall learning as well as information on air quality in schools will be presented at the April 22, 2021 School Board Meeting.

New Business and Reports to the Board

There were no New Business items.

Chair’s Report

20. Report from Meagan Alderton

Chair Alderton reported that ACPS will be hosting sessions for families, staff and students who have questions regarding hybrid learning, summer learning, and the outlook for the fall via Zoom on April 19, 21 and 22. She further shared that each panel will include two School Board Members and encouraged community engagement. More information on the sessions may be found on the ACPS website.

Superintendent’s Report

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

Superintendent Hutchings did not give a report.

Announcements by Board Members

22. Announcements

There were no announcements by School Board Members.

Chair Alderton announced a recess at 9:18 p.m. for the purpose of a work session.

The meeting reconvened at 9:27 p.m.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

23. Closed Meeting

Vice Chair Nolan moved that the Board convene a Closed Meeting pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(1) for the discussion and consideration of employment, performance, and contractual matters for five (5) specific public employee(s). She further moved that the Board convene a Closed Meeting pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(3) for discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the Board.

Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, 9-0, to convene a Closed Meeting. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The Board moved into a Closed Meeting at 9:28 p.m.

24. 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 April 8, 2021.

Ms. Gentry seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, 9-0, to certify the Closed Meeting. The motion carried. The vote was taken by roll call.

The Board returned to open session at 10:04 p.m.

Adjournment

25. Adjourn

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

The meeting ended at 10:06 p.m.



Meagan Alderton, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the April 22, 2021 School Board Meeting.