

MINUTES
SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
September 9, 2021 (7:00 p.m.)

ROLL CALL

THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Susan Neilson, Shanel Hill, Emily Milton, Sylvia Rahim, Dr. Anne Gaddy, Dr. Julie Crawford, Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Dr. Clinton Page, John Cafferky, Julia Burgos

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Alderton

Chair Alderton called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting except for Ms. Nolan who was absent, and Ms. Lorber who notified the Board Chair she would be joining the meeting electronically.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

2. Closed Meeting

3. Certification of Closed Meeting

There was no Closed Meeting held.

Moment of Silence

4. Observe a Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

5. Adopt the Meeting Agenda for the September 9, 2021 School Board Meeting

Ms. Gentry moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the September 9, 2021 School Board Meeting. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Ms. Gentry moved to amend the agenda to add "Allow Participation of Board Member Margaret Lorber by Electronic Means". She further moved to drop "MINUTES" from the Consent Calendar and "COVID-19 Update" from Old Business.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the agenda was unanimous, 7-0. The motion carried.

The vote to adopt the meeting agenda as amended was unanimous, 7-0. The motion carried.

6. Allow Participation of Board Member Margaret Lorber by Electronic Means

Ms. Gentry made the following motion:

Whereas Margaret Lorber has notified the Chair that she is unavailable to be physically present for tonight's School Board meeting due to a medical reason, specifically illness and whereas she has not participated in more than two or 25% of Board meetings by electronic means during 2021 and whereas Margaret Lorber requests the opportunity to participate in the meeting via video or telephone conference call from Alexandria, Virginia where the video or telephone conference call shall be heard by all participants in this Board room; and whereas a quorum of the Board is physically assembled in this Board room;

Madam Chair, I move, pursuant to Virginia Code 2.2-3708 that the Board approve the participation of Margaret Lorber in this meeting by video conference call.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to allow Margaret Lorber to join the meeting by electronic means was unanimous, 7-0. The motion carried.

Ms. Lorber joined the meeting via Zoom.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

7. Public Comments

Ms. Amy Hillis, ACPS parent, encouraged the Board to swiftly implement COVID-19 satellite testing for students.

Ms. Elizabeth Seltzer, ACPS parent, spoke about circumstances which has led her to withdraw her student from George Washington Middle School.

Ms. Samrawit Teklegiorgis, ACPS parent, spoke about the safety of her student getting home from school.

Ms. Bridget Shea Westfall, ACPS parent, spoke about the responsibility of ACPS to keep students safe by advocating for outdoor lunch, and COVID testing for staff and students.

Ms. Mollie Kaiman, ACPS parent, shared her views about lack of security at Alexandria City High School.

Mr. Ricardo Roberts, ACPS parent, thanked the Board for reopening schools, and stated that administrators are not following the same rules.

Mr. Patrick Lapid, APCS parent, spoke in support of COVID testing for students and staff, and shared a do-it-yourself filter that might be a good project for students in the classroom.

Ms. Meagan Perri, ACPS parent, spoke about her student's experience having to quarantine, lack of COVID testing and lack of outdoor lunch options.

Ms. Heather Ashburn, ACPS parent, thanked the Board for their work, and urged the Board to focus on additional COVID-19 prevention measures.

Ms. Maureen McNulty, ACPS parent and PTAC President, spoke about a survey released by PTAC and suggested solutions for reducing COVID transmission.

8. Report from Student Representatives Emily Milton and Sylvia Rahim

Ms. Emily Milton and Ms. Sylvia Rahim introduced themselves. Ms. Rahim talked about wearing masks and how to further engage students with an education plan. She also mentioned the recent visit by T.C. Williams graduate and Olympic Bronze medalist Noah Lyles, who spoke to students about his mental health struggles. She also spoke about attending the Youth Leadership Conference along with other students.

Ms. Milton, spoke about the new stadium at ACHS and the first game to be played under the lights. She also shared about the long lunch period, "Lunch and Learn" in which students are able

to eat as well as meet with teachers, counselors and students. She also reported on the transportation issues around Chinquapin Circle after school and during student pick up.

Consent Calendar

- 9. Personnel Actions for June, July and August 2021**
- 10. Superintendent Contract Provision: Other Work Activities**
- 11. Re-Appoint Annika Eelkema as the Student Representative to the Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) Advisory Committee**
- 12. Re-Appoint Allen Lomax to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee**
- 13. Appoint Patrick Corr to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee**
- 14. Appoint Kobe Jackson to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee**
- 15. Re-Appoint Laura Rose to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Advisory Committee**

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

The vote to adopt the Consent Calendar was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber indicated her vote orally.

Items Pulled from the Consent Calendar

No items were pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Old Business & Action Items

16. 2021-2022 Areas of Focus

Dr. Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer, gave an update on the 2021-2022 ACPS Areas of Focus which were first presented at the August 26, 2021 Work Session. He specifically reviewed how the Areas of Focus align directly with the Strategic Plan goals.

Ms. Anderson moved to adopt the Areas of Focus.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the 2021-2022 Areas of Focus was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber gave her vote orally.

17. Update on COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing for Staff

Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Executive Director of Human Resources, gave an update on the levels of vaccination by staff members, the timeline for staff to report their vaccination status, and weekly testing for non-vaccinated staff. She reported that 84% of staff are currently fully vaccinated. She also reported on the hiring of school monitors and health monitors for schools.

Board Members asked questions about how many staff members are awaiting their second dose of the vaccine, what reasons are given by staff for not getting the vaccine, shortages of monitors, and consequences for staff who won't get vaccinated. Board Members expressed their support for requiring staff to get the vaccine and supported adding policy language that would require the vaccine for staff members.

At the suggestion of adopting a resolution, Mr. John Cafferky, School Board attorney, recommended to the Board that the language would need to be well thought out as it could have significant legal implications.

Mr. Suarez moved that a policy be presented to the Board requiring vaccination of all staff to the fullest extent the law allows at the September 23, 2021 School Board Meeting.

It was determined a motion to amend the agenda would be needed to make this item an action item.

Mr. Suarez withdrew his motion and moved to amend the agenda to add “COVID-19 Vaccine Policy Update.”

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the agenda to add “COVID-19 Vaccine Policy Update” as an action item was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber voted orally.

Ms. Anderson moved to adopt the agenda as amended.

Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the agenda as amended was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber voted orally.

18. COVID-19 Vaccine Policy Update

Mr. Suarez moved that ACPS provide a proposed policy to the Board at the next School Board Meeting on September 23, 2021 that will require vaccination of all staff to the fullest extent the law allows.

Ms. Greene seconded the motion.

The vote that ACPS provide a proposed policy to the Board at the next School Board Meeting that will require vaccination of all staff to the fullest extent the law allows was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber voted orally.

New Business and Reports to the Board

19. COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing for Students

Dr. Julie Crawford, Chief of Student Services, provided an update on COVID-19 testing programs for ACPS students. She reported that ACPS has been actively engaged with the Virginia Department of Health since June to participate in the student COVID-19 testing program known as ViSSTA. Recently ACPS learned that that program will not be ready for implementation as expected. Therefore, ACPS is pursuing COVID-19 testing through an outside vendor which will come before the Board for approval at a future meeting. Dr. Anne Gaddy, Director of the Alexandria Health Department, reported on COVID-19 case data for the City of Alexandria which has been increasing, and the city is experiencing a high level of community transmission, largely due to the Delta variant.

Board Members asked questions about availability of families to get vaccinated, school health annexes, when will the vendor contract for testing be finalized, air purifiers for classrooms, notification for contact tracing, and the dashboard for COVID infections by school.

Ms. Gentry moved that the School Board approve ACPS to conduct COVID-19 surveillance testing of students.

Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

The vote to approve COVID-19 surveillance testing of students was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber voted orally.

20. Policy Revisions Related to COVID-19

Ms. Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy and School Board Initiatives, reviewed policies and regulations that were revised for SY 2020-2021 to incorporate COVID-19 public health protocols and distance learning related guidance. The policy and regulation revisions presented have been updated to delete time-limited provisions for SY 2020-2021 or to reflect recently updated public health guidance.

A Board Member asked a question about clarifying language needed in case a student refused to wear a mask. Ms. Abbruzzese indicated that language can be developed and returned to the Board for re-approval.

Ms. Gentry moved that the School Board approve the policy and regulatory revisions related to COVID-19 for the 2021-2022 school year.

Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the policy revisions was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried. Ms. Lorber voted orally.

21. Opening of Schools Report

Dr. Hutchings reported on all the great things that have happened since the start of school. He noted the new system to respond to parent's questions and concerns called "ASK at ACPS" (ask@acps.k12.va.us) which will allow parents to get faster responses to their questions. Dr. Hutchings highlighted the new language line which will allow parents to talk to staff in their own languages before reaching out to staff or schools.

Dr. Hutchings also invited the public to attend the reopening of the new Parker-Gray stadium at ACHS on Friday, September 17, and noted the Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Saturday, September 18, 2021. Lastly, Dr. Hutchings showed a short video highlighting the reopening of schools.

Board Members asked questions about the language line, overcrowding on buses, and allowing open windows on buses.

Chair's Report

22. Report from Meagan L. Alderton

Chair Alderton had no report.

Superintendent's Report

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

Superintendent Hutchings gave his report during the Opening of Schools Report.

Announcements

24. Announcements

Dr. Rief reported on the work of the Ad Hoc School Board Advisory Review Committee.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

25. Closed Meeting

26. Certification of Closed Meeting

The was no Closed Meeting held.

Adjournment

27. Adjourn

On a motion by Mr. Suarez and seconded by Ms. Greene, the Board voted unanimously, 8-0, to adjourn. The meeting ended at 10:46 p.m.



Meagan L. Alderton, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the October 7, 2021 School Board Meeting.