

MINUTES
SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD
September 23, 2021 (7:00 p.m.)

ROLL CALL

THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

BOARD MEMBERS: Meagan L. Alderton
Cindy Anderson (absent)
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, Emily Milton, Sylvia Rahim, Dr. Julie Crawford, Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Dr. Anne Gaddy, John Cafferky

Call to Order

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Alderton

Chair Alderton called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. All members of the School Board were present at the start of the meeting except for Ms. Anderson who was away on personal travel.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

- 2. Closed Meeting**
3. Certification of Closed Meeting

No Closed Meeting was 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 23, 2021 School Board Meeting

Ms. Greene moved to adopt the meeting agenda for the September 23, 2021 School Board Meeting. Ms. Lorber seconded the motion.

Ms. Gentry moved to amend the agenda to add "Personnel Actions for September 1-22, 2021" to the Consent Calendar. Vice Chair Nolan seconded the motion.

The vote to amend the meeting agenda was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried.

The vote to adopt the meeting agenda as amended, was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried.

Communications & Addresses to the Board

6. Public Comments

Ms. Roxanna Guerra, ACPS parent, spoke about concerns she had regarding fights at her student's school.

Ms. Sindy Carballo Garcia, Tenants and Workers United Youth Organizer, spoke about the unique challenges of the school year and the trauma experienced. She advocated to improve the school system both academically and school climate and applauded the decision to remove police officers from schools.

Mr. Eric McGlinchey, ACPS parent, spoke about his student's experience during quarantine learning and expressed appreciation to the GWMS administration for their responsiveness to his concerns. He suggested that the School Board revisit the quarantine learning plan.

Ms. Deborah Ash, ACPS parent, spoke against employer-mandated vaccinations and warned the School Board against civil liability for adverse effects due to these vaccines.

Mr. Ricardo Roberts, ACPS parent, spoke about strategies for reducing the number of fights during lunch at ACHS and GWMS.

Ms. Mary Gaddis, ACPS staff member, who spoke about the power of love, and how our students and educators need to see and hear more messages of love.

The following written public comments were received:

Ms. Amy Slavin, ACPS parent, urged the Board to vote to approve a COVID testing program, and also to plan and implement an outdoor lunch program immediately to reduce the spread of COVID.

Ms. Kim Bulgur, APCS parent, wrote to suggest that the Superintendent spend more time focusing on educating our students and less on other activities.

Ms. Heather Ashburn, ACPS parent, asked the Board to adopt one of the easiest and effective ways to cheaply reduce the risk of COVID transmission by implementing outdoor lunches.

Mr. Charles Kotuby, ACPS parent, wrote regarding recent bus transportation issues experienced by the Boys Cross-Country team.

7. Report from Student Representatives Emily Milton and Sylvia Rahim

Ms. Rahim reported on the first football game held on the newly renovated Parker-Gray Stadium field and the Athletic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony held on Saturday. She reported on the success of the marching band in local competitions, and the Alexandria Youth Council where students get involved in the community.

Ms. Milton reported on upcoming School Board Candidate events on October 2 and 13th. She also reported on free COVID vaccine events for students being held through the Teen Wellness Center. Ms. Milton further reported on the excellent rankings received by ACHS, FCH and GWMS in the areas of diversity and equity, and the excellent graduation rate.

Both students shared their views that they believe students and staff should be vaccinated for the safety of all.

Consent Calendar

8. FY 2023 Adoption of Budget Process Resolution, Rules of Engagement, and Budget Calendar

9. Minutes for the August 19, September 16, and September 17, 2021 Special Called School Board Meetings

10. Personnel Actions for September 1-22, 2021

Dr. Rief moved to adopt the Consent Calendar. Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

The vote to adopt the Consent Calendar was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried.

Items Pulled from the Consent Calendar

No items were pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Old Business & Action Items

11. COVID Update and Testing Plan for Students

Dr. Julie Crawford, Chief of Student Services and Equity, provided an update on COVID-19 health and safety measures including vaccinations for students 12 and older. She explained that ACPS would begin requiring vaccinations for student athletes for the winter and spring seasons, plans to enhance the COVID dashboard and the details of the contact tracing process. Dr. Crawford also reviewed the quarantine recommendations for COVID exposure. Dr. Anne Gaddy, Acting Director of the Alexandria Health Department, reviewed the rationale behind the vaccination of student athletes.

Board Members asked questions about quarantine learning, COVID testing for vaccinated staff, hiring of additional staff for contact tracing, and outdoor lunches.

Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Executive Director of Human Resources, presented information on the status of vaccinations and COVID-19 testing for ACPS staff. Approximately 2225 staff are fully vaccinated and 362 require weekly testing. She noted that the number of staff members who achieve full vaccination status continues to steadily increase.

Board Members asked questions about the number of staff members who are unable to be vaccinated, how many are interacting with students, and the status of hiring of classroom monitors.

Ms. Gentry made the following motion:

“Madam Chair, I move that ACPS staff members be required, to the fullest extent permitted by law, to submit documentation of their completed COVID-19 vaccination status by November 15, 2021.

Only employees who satisfactorily establish medical or religious exemption by law may participate in weekly COVID-19 testing in lieu of vaccination. Documentation of such testing must be submitted to the Department of Human Resources on a weekly basis. Employees who fail to provide the necessary documentation by November 15, 2021 may be required to take leave without pay or may be separated from service.

I further move, Madam Chair, that this requirement be added to Policy GBE: Staff Health, upon approval of this motion.”

Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the motion was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried.

Ms. Gentry moved that beginning November 8, 2021, that ACPS require documentation of completed COVID-19 vaccination status for any student participating in Virginia High School League (VHSL) winter and spring sports, including conditioning, for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year.

Vice Chair Nolan seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the motion requiring documentation of completed COVID-19 vaccination status for students participating in winter and spring sports for 2021-2022 school year, was unanimous, 8-0. The motion carried.

New Business and Reports to the Board

12. Policy Revisions

Ms. Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy and Board Initiatives, presented School Board policy and regulatory revisions in order to reflect the Virginia Department of Education’s (VDOE’s) Model Policies for the Treatment of Transgender Students in Virginia’s Public Schools (“Model Policies”), developed in response to the amendment of Va. Code § 221.-23.3 by the Virginia General Assembly. The revisions highlight eight common issues, identified in the legislation,

regarding the treatment of transgender students. They are required to be addressed by School Board policies at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, in a manner that is consistent with the “Model Policies.”

These policies will return at a future Board Meeting for adoption.

Chair’s Report

13. Report from Meagan L. Alderton

Chair Alderton reported on upcoming Board events including the Joint City Council/School Board Subcommittee Meeting on September 27th, the School Board Retreat on September 28th, and the Community Budget Forum on September 18th being held via Zoom. She also shared about the all-day agenda setting meeting held with the Superintendent and Leadership Team in which they made sure that agenda items for the year align with the strategic plan, budget priorities and areas of focus.

Superintendent’s Report

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

Superintendent Hutchings thanked Jennifer Abbruzzese for her outstanding work on policies. He also acknowledged some of the incidents that have been happening in our schools and the importance of Social Emotional and Academic Learning (SEAL) for supporting students who have been isolated during the pandemic. Dr. Hutchings noted that security and safety measures are important for student and staff and is looking forward to discussing the SRO program with City Council at Monday’s Joint City Council/School Board Subcommittee Meeting.

Announcements

15. Announcements

Ms. Greene commented on the first game under the lights at Parker Gray Stadium and thanked former School Board members, community members and City Council for working together to make it happen. She also noted the Athletic Hall of Fame Induction event and thanked the committee for their hard work.

Closed Meeting and Certification of Closed Meeting

16. Closed Meeting and

17. Certification of Closed Meeting

No Closed Meeting was held.

Adjournment

18. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Lorber and seconded by Ms. Gentry, the Board voted unanimously, 8-0, to adjourn. The meeting ended at 9:12 p.m.



Meagan L. Alderton, Chair



Clerk/Deputy Clerk

These minutes were adopted at the October 21, 2021 School Board Meeting.