

**Budget Advisory Committee
June 22, 2021 at 7PM**

Location: Zoom

MINUTES

Budget Advisory Committee Members Present: Erin Dahlin (Chair); Nancy Drane (Secretary); Selena el Hajji; Sukumar Rao; and Ryan Reyna (new BAC member)

ACPS Staff Liaison Present: Robert Easley, Budget Director (arrived late)

School Board Liaison Present: Ramee Gentry, Board Member

Also in Attendance: Susan Neilson, Board Clerk

We were joined by the newest BAC member, Ryan Reyna. Chair Dahlin started the meeting with a round of introductions to introduce everyone to Ryan.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Approval of our May 2021 minutes was tabled. Minutes will be circulated via e-mail for approval.

Staff Report

- ACPS staff was not in attendance at the time of the staff report, so this agenda item was mostly tabled. Ms. Gentry will ask ACPS staff to provide a written report to BAC in lieu of attendance.
- Ms. Neilson mentioned that the Board will have its first work session on the budget on September 9, and will settle on a FY22 budget calendar at that time. The Board reviewed three options for the FY22 budget calendar at a recent School Board meeting. Those options were developed by ACPS staff, and directly influenced by the BAC memo that our committee produced. Two of the three calendar options explicitly had Board approval *before* the City Manager issues his budget, in response to BAC's memo and concerns raised by some Board members.

American Rescue Plan Resources

- The School Board will have a public hearing on August 3 regarding ARP resources. ACPS will provide a report at that time on proposed spending for ARP resources coming to ACPS.
- One BAC member inquired as to the deadline for ACPS to submit its ARP plan. Ms. Gentry believes it is in September.
- Ms. Gentry shared that ACPS may focus on one-time costs because ARP funds are relatively time-limited funds.

Follow-up on BAC Report and Subsequent ACPS Response

- This was intended to be an opportunity to debrief the memo that was submitted by BAC and the formal response from ACPS staff with ACPS, but ACPS staff was not present.
- Ms. Dahlin emphasized that the process of developing the memo was inclusive and collaborative, where ACPS staff had an opportunity to weigh in, suggest changes, etc. Because of that, the ACPS response was surprising and frustrating.
- Some of the ACPS response focused on things that were corrections and/or disagreements with language in the memo. It was disappointing to receive that in a formal memo, as opposed to through the process that pre-dated the issuance of the memo – especially knowing that ACPS staff had the opportunity to comment in advance.
- ACPS staff did acknowledge and thank us for our work, which we appreciate, but we would've liked concerns aired within the committee as opposed to via formal exchange of memos.
- Other BAC members similarly expressed the view that they saw this as a collaborative process, and have enjoyed the dialogue with Dominic and Robert throughout the process. There was some frustration at seeing a formal response from staff disagreeing/correcting some of the content of the memo when staff had ample opportunity to comment before it was submitted to the Board. It is not the substance of the comments that were concerning – it was the process. And it had the potential to undermine the committee and its work.
- BAC members felt that going forward, we should avoid this type of process issue. If there are areas of disagreement we cannot resolve, we can note those – but we should communicate on those before formal communication to the Board.
- Ms. Gentry shared similar concerns with the Superintendent and the CFO. Ms. Gentry's view is that if ACPS staff wanted a "wall" like you'd find in an audit where they withhold comment until after the report is issued, staff should express that from the beginning.
- Ms. Gentry wants to seek real clarity on what the staff's role will be going forward. Even if there is disagreement – there should be an opportunity to talk those through and if there is an inability to reach consensus, then to note the disagreement.
- Before the work session where the ACPS staff report was released, Ms. Gentry reached out to entire School Board to be sure that they were aware of the opportunity for ACPS staff to provide feedback prior to the issuance of BAC's report.
- As far as the Board is concerned, Ms. Gentry has received nothing but raves about the memo and that this is a model for what they want all School Board Advisory Committees to do.
- Chair Dahlin intends to send a formal response to Dr. Hutchings, Dominic, and Robert to share our experience and feedback on the process. The goal of the response is to also emphasize ensuring two-way communication going forward (e.g., sharing information, etc.)
- The good news is that there is an Ad Hoc Committee working on better defining the role of School Board Advisory Committees. Ms. Gentry will be passing along some feedback to Dr. Rief, who is Chairing the Ad Hoc Committee.

- On substance – BAC noted that while the calendar issues were an initial focus of the memo, there are numerous recommendations regarding communications and public engagement. How is ACPS is going to move those forward?
- ACPS staff discussed how BAC can help with implementing elements of the BAC memo, which is great. We need guidance from staff, however, and a fuller complement of members to take on a more active role.
- Ms. Gentry shared that the Communications staff reorganization has just concluded, meaning this is a good time to move forward with these budget engagement issues. We can express this in a proposed Scope of Work for 2021-2022.

Leadership of BAC Going Forward

- Chair Dahlin shared that her BAC term is expiring, and she will be transitioning off the committee. She would like to propose transitioning leadership to BAC Secretary Nancy Drane. There was a motion to elect Nancy Drane as Chair that was seconded and voted on unanimously.
- BAC Secretary position remains to be filled.
- We need a strategy to build membership, and need School Board help in recruiting members.
- With the City equivalent, BFAAC, each Council member is responsible for recruiting and securing a member. Could School Board take a similar approach?

Next Steps

- Ms. Nielsen suggested that BAC do a very brief End of Year Memo that would summarize its 2020-2021 activities.

Adjournment

- With that, the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.