

A Special Meeting of the Albemarle County School Board was held on February 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m., via Zoom, Charlottesville, Virginia 22902.

**PRESENT:** Mr. Jonno Alcaro; Mr. Graham Paige; Ms. Katrina Callsen; Dr. Kate Acuff; Ms. Ellen Moore Osborne; Ms. Judy Le; Mr. David Oberg; and Student Representative Angel Pilkey.

**ABSENT:** None.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Dr. Matthew Haas, Superintendent; Ms. Debbie Collins, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Clare Keiser, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Bernard Hairston, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Christine Diggs, Chief Technology Officer; Mr. Phil Giaramita, Strategic Communications Officer; Ms. Rosalyn Schmitt, Chief Operating Officer; Dr. Patrick McLaughlin, Chief of Strategic Planning; Mr. Kevin Kirst, Director of Special Education; Mrs. Michele Castner, Director of Elementary Education; Ms. Maya Kumazawa, Director of Budget and Planning; Mr. Ross Holden, School Board Attorney; and Ms. Jennifer Johnston, Clerk to the School Board.

**Agenda Item No. 1.1. Call to Order.**

At 6:30 p.m., Mr. Paige, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

Mr. Paige said that the meeting is being held electronically pursuant to Virginia state law and Albemarle County ordinance because the Covid-19 pandemic makes it impracticable and unsafe to assemble a quorum physically in a single location. The meeting is being streamed live on the Albemarle County Public School’s website, and public comment may be offered through the Zoom waiting room feature in accordance with the School Board’s protocol or by written submission.

**Agenda Item No. 1.2. Moment of Silence.**

**Agenda Item. No. 2.1. Funding Request Presentation.**

Dr. Haas presented the Board with the FY2021-2022 Funding Request.

**Stronger Than Before**

As often is the case in our nation, the most difficult challenges and their resolutions can be eloquently addressed through the creative arts. Amanda Gorman, our country’s youngest inaugural poet, has written that “Being American is more than a pride we inherit, it’s the past we step into and how we repair it.”

This entreaty has universal utility, including today, when our community is combatting a devastating health crisis. Yet, at its most hopeful, history teaches us that adversity produces extraordinary acts of courage, dedication, resilience and, ultimately, triumph.

This school division funding request for the 2021-22 school year honors this truth.

No school division in our nation could have been fully prepared for the immediate and radical displacement of our school and family lives that confronted us in March of 2020. The price we paid was measured by the numbers of people affected by COVID-19, lives lost to the disease, and diminished economic opportunities. Almost overnight, we were forced to scale back our plan for the 2020-21 school year to align an appropriately conservative budget with revenue and enrollment uncertainties. Programs and services were scaled back, priorities were delayed, and such decent and compelling provisions as a \$15 minimum hourly wage for our lowest paid employees disappeared.

Less easily calculated were costs measured not in dollars, but in the economic, academic, social and emotional progress lost by students and families. It is during times like these that one is reminded of the words of Booker T. Washington—“There are two ways of exerting one’s strength: one is pushing down,

the other is pulling up.”

Nearly a year has passed since schools were closed across our Commonwealth and nation. And here, in Albemarle County, it is obvious which of Mr. Washington’s paths were chosen by our school community: We are rising, and we are pulling and being pulled up by the Albemarle community.

#### On the Frontline

Our choice to pull up is revealed in the 17 school nurses assisting with the COVID-19 vaccination program as members of the Emergency Medical Corps; in the countless visits to student homes by principals and teachers; in the hands that were raised by our Child Nutrition team members and bus drivers who volunteered to distribute student meals from schools empty of students; in the enthusiasm and commitment from a Technology team that brought internet service into the homes of thousands of our students across our 726-square mile county; in our Building Services staff whose job descriptions instantly broadened to become even more crucial to public health; and to all within our community whose devotion to our mitigation strategies, in the words of the health department, made our schools among the safest places in the community.

These are strengths that surely will outlive the pandemic and make more certain the fulfillment of our goal for students—that all become more successful throughout their lives as continuous learners, fully employed workers in careers that interest them, and valued contributors to their communities.

It will make us stronger than before.

Prior to March 13, 2020, online learning was a dormant resource for most K-12 public school divisions across our nation. This certainly was the case in Albemarle County; however, after their initial reaction to mandated school closures, our educators got to work and engaged in the necessary professional development to stand up a virtual school system where there had been none.

In this new learning environment, teachers and staff expanded the frontiers of creativity and engagement. And so did our families, who are often at the side of their children as they interact with teachers and engage with learning activities at home. Projects such as online art galleries to showcase student work, the use of computer modeling to conduct and display research, the distribution of mini-computers programmed by students in their homes, greater collaboration among schools, and newfound community partnerships have brought more learning resources into the homes of students of all demographic groups.

Much of what has been experienced and accomplished in a virtual learning world will be preserved and will springboard more innovative practices in future years.

We will be stronger than before.

In addition to the new capabilities, the innovative strategies and instructional practices brought to us by the online learning environment are the contributions from an engaged and thoughtful community.

School Board and community meetings that once counted 20 participants as a reasonable expectation zoomed to hundreds and even thousands of virtual participants when important decisions were being debated. With the valued assistance of our school administrators, and for the first time in our division, concentrated plans were put in place to specifically include the voices of community members historically underrepresented or absent as decisions were shaped and resolved. We conducted more surveys on more issues, heard from more families and employees, and received more insight than ever before on how to solve issues that continue to deeply impact family lives.

It is a collaboration that makes us stronger than before.

As the result of the critical decisions the pandemic demanded, we became more efficient and resourceful in matching operational and instructional needs to fewer resources. And a year later, as the result of better-than-expected economic results in our state and county, we are well-positioned to meet the highest expectations of our students and families and to restore greater competitive balance to our ability to recruit, develop, and support and retain exceptional employees.

Helpfully, 22 percent of the \$12 million increase in expenditures in this funding request will be devoted to the restoration of learning resources and support that were lost to the pandemic. Separately, over \$6 million in federal CARES funding will be allocated for learning recovery programs, such as universal eligibility for robust, community- and school-based summer programming to support the social, emotional and physical health of students.

We are considering the issue of a request for proposals to the community of highly experienced youth and service organizations in our local community to provide these services, which will be funded by CARES monies.

#### Meeting our Commitments to Students

This request also makes good on our commitment to provide students with the highest quality of support and services by furthering our ability to recruit, develop, and support and retain a highly competitive educator and support staff.

Nearly two-thirds of the increase in expenditures next year will be used to provide well-earned employee salary increases. We also will reinstate our decision a year ago to raise all hourly pay scales to a minimum of \$15 per hour for all full-time regular employees.

Two other commitments are addressed in this funding request:

Early last summer, the Albemarle County School Board voted unanimously to depart from our long-standing School Resource Officer program. We have been working on plans to create a team of School Safety Specialists who will report to school administrators and our Director of Student Services. Focused on best practices for student, employee, and school visitor safety, this team will be housed across our secondary schools and available as a resource for all schools feeding into them. This program will be designed to improve our school climates, student attendance, and relationships with students. We have set aside \$557,000 for this purpose with a net cost to the school division of \$292,000, since we no longer will be transferring \$265,000 back to Local Government to offset the costs of the previous program.

We also are increasing our Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) program by \$356,000, which has proven that as the population of teachers earning credentials in CRT grows, so do the positive results for their students. Effective next year, all new teachers hired by the division will be required to complete a CRT micro-credential or earn their CRT certification within their first three years of service.

This past year, the division earned two highly prestigious awards for striving to close achievement gaps for minority students through evidence-based practices, including the federal government's Blue Ribbon School designation presented to Baker-Butler Elementary and the state's Mary Peake Award to our team of equity specialists.

For the second consecutive year, the division's funding request is balanced, with a projected increase of 838 students—the equivalent of adding a large middle school. While many of these students joining our rolls will be new to our county or to kindergarten, I look forward to welcoming back those students who will return to the division after being enrolled elsewhere this year.

Recurring revenue is anticipated to be \$205.8 million, a 6 percent increase over the current year. This improvement is led by a \$6.9 million increase (5.2 percent) in revenues received from Local Government. Total revenue from Local Government is projected to reach \$141.1 million. State revenues are showing an

increase of nearly 10 percent, up from \$52.8 million in the current year to \$58 million for 2021-22.

The companion 6 percent increase (\$12 million) in expenditures includes \$7.7 million in employee compensation. The largest portion, \$3.9 million, will fund the establishment of the \$15 minimum hourly wage for full-time employees.

Other major components of this funding request's \$12 million increase include \$1.5 million to enable supports for student enrollment increases, including special education and students who are English Learners, and the restoration of instructional program reductions forced by the pandemic.

### Albemarle Rising

The year ahead offers even more opportunities to prepare our students for lifetime success as we modernize our strategic plan; mature our non-profit foundation to generate private resources to extend innovation and equity; more fully align student learning experiences with real-world employment and post-K-12 education demands; and reach out to more families, partners and employees to attain the best possible decisions for our schools and community.

I am deeply grateful for our School Board's guidance in developing this funding request. In addition, I greatly appreciate our strong working relationship with County Executive Jeff Richardson's outstanding team, which has kept us closely informed of economic and financial trends in our county, region and state.

Challenging times can either pull a team—a community—apart, or pull it together through the creativity and grit of its individual members. I have witnessed the coming together of our students, employees and families throughout 2020-21, and I am very proud to be part of this resilient community. Because of this resilience and the determination, the years ahead will prove prescient, the title of our 2019 message—Albemarle Rising.

I am reminded once again, of the words of Amanda Gorman: "When this ends, we'll smile sweetly, finally seeing in testing times, we became the best of things."

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Mr. Paige thanked Dr. Haas for his presentation. He then asked if there were any questions.

Ms. Le said that she appreciated the presentation especially the stories of the people who work in the Division. She asked Dr. Haas to send his notes on the presentation to the Board. She then asked about the phases to moving to \$15 per hour. In Phase 1, would the people who are in Phase 2 get some type of increase or will they just remain at the same rate? What percentage of the 17.8 percent are in phases 1 and 2. She also asked who was included in each phase. Finally, she asked what is the timeline for Phase 2.

Mr. Alcaro said that the information on learning loss was powerful. Ms. Sublette is a good choice to lead this work.

Ms. Callen said that Dr. Haas did a good job.

The Board took a break from 7:20 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

### **Agenda Item No. 2.2. FY 2021-2022 Budget Development Work Session #1.**

Ms. Kumazawa introduced the agenda for the budget work session. The work session will cover revenues, general enrollment, Special Education enrollment, and ESOL enrollment.

Ms. Kumazawa provided for the Board's consideration the revenue assumptions.

Ms. Osborne asked for the definition of fund balance.

Mr. Alcaro said that he has never seen the one-time use of fund balance included in the budget before. Why is that different now?

Mr. Alcaro noted that he sees the loss of \$175,00 from the CFA lease of Monticello High School. Did they find another location or did they change how they do business?

Mr. Alcaro asked how the Child Nutrition Program will make up for the lost revenues from the discontinuation of the Summer Feeding Program, and how will the workers make up for the lost hours.

Mr. Alcaro said that on page B-15 under lottery revenues, is the decrease in the number of eligible students for the lottery eligible programs related to the decrease in enrollment projections. He also asked for an explanation of the new infrastructure in operations per pupil because it is now broken out into recurring and non-recurring.

Ms. Kumazawa provided for the Board's consideration an overview of the general enrollment.

Mr. Paige asked how did we try to contact missing students and how many were we not able to contact.

Ms. Callsen asked if staff could reference page numbers when presenting from the budget.

Ms. Callsen asked for the enrollment at each school along with the per pupil expenditure per school. She also asked how per pupil expenditure is calculated.

Ms. Callsen asked for a definition of FTE and what is and is not included in an FTE.

Ms. Le asked about the five FTEs and how many additional students those FTEs would be covered.

Mr. Alcaro asked about school based staffing and getting it back to pre-COVID numbers. Is that the same as class size?

Mr. Kirst provided for the Board's consideration an overview of the Special Education enrollment.

Ms. Callsen asked how the transition went last year taking on services that were once provided by PREP.

Mr. Paige asked if all services were still being provided for those that the Division took over providing from PREP.

Dr. Acuff asked with the large dip in pre-K enrollment, is part of our learning recovery going to capture more the special education pre-K in the summer.

Mrs. Castner provided for the Board's consideration an overview of the ESOL enrollment.

Mr. Paige asked with the budget proposals will all of our ESOL students receive the same services as were provided prior to the pandemic.

Mr. Paige asked if information could be provided on where the ESOL students are coming from.

Ms. Callsen asked how the requested FTEs would be distributed among schools. She also asked if Ms. Castner felt like the Division was adequately serving ESOL students.

Ms. Osborne asked if this was one of the areas that we identified opportunity gaps. There is a need for improvement in this area.

Ms. Le said that the reading data for ESOL on the state site shows that we are near the bottom. This is an area that needs improvement.

Ms. Callsen asked about department expenditures for ESOL and how they are presented in the budget.

Mr. Paige asked if the summer program and if there are plans to address the achievement gap issues for our ESOL students.

Ms. Kumazawa then summarized the information that the Board received in the work session.

**Agenda Item No. 3.1. Other Business by Board Members/Superintendent.**

Dr. Haas thanked Ms. Kumazawa for all her work to prepare the budget.

Ms. Callsen thanked all staff for the work done to prepare the budget.

**Agenda Item No. 4.1. Adjournment.**

At 8:20 p.m., hearing no objections, Mr. Paige adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

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Chairman

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Clerk