

MINUTES
BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, February 29, 2024
[Meeting Video Recording](#)

ROLL CALL - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Chuck Pace, Mr. Graham Paige, and Student Representative, Ms. Fernanda Cisneros.

ABSENT: Ms. Allison Spillman

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Clare Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt; Chief Technology Officer Christine Diggs; Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Officer Helen Dunn; Clerk of the School Board Christine Thompson; and Director of Budget and Planning Maya Kumazawa

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING

At 5:58 p.m., Ms. Osborne offered a **motion that the Albemarle County School Board** go into a closed meeting as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia under Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. The purpose of the item in the closed meeting is to discuss legal issues in connection with a resolution for public sector collective bargaining; a potential contract dispute; and a class action lawsuit by school divisions around the country against social media platforms. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Osborne, Mr. Pace, Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, and Chair Le.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Ms. Spillman and Dr. Berlin

Motion carried by a 5:0:2 vote.

Dr. Berlin arrived shortly after the Board convened into the Closed Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Call to Order - At 6:28 p.m., Chair Le called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Closed Meeting Certification

At 6:28 p.m., Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each Board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the Closed Meeting. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Dr. Acuff, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Pace, Mr. Paige, and Chair Le.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Ms. Spillman

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence

Joined by the dedicated staff, Student Representative Ms. Fernanda Cisneros paid tribute to the School Board in celebration of School Board Appreciation Month with the following statement:

With admiration and appreciation, we extend our help from heartfelt thanks to the Albemarle County School Board for their remarkable dedication and leadership in shaping the educational landscape of our community. As stewards of our children's future, they navigate through challenges with unwavering commitment and grace.

Their role transcends mere governance; they are architects of vision, advocates for accountability, and champions of continuous improvement in student learning. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they stand united in purpose, weaving a tapestry of collaboration and collective action.

Beyond the confines of board meetings, they invest boundless hours in honing their craft through professional learning, engaging with the community, and immersing themselves in the vibrant tapestry of school life. Their passion for learning and compassion for students, staff, and community members alike, propel them forward in their quest for equity, excellence, family and community, and wellness in Albemarle County Public Schools.

In honoring their tireless efforts, we recognize February as School Board Appreciation Month. Let us seize this moment to express our gratitude and admiration for the Albemarle County School Board's unwavering commitment to cultivating a brighter future for our children.

In addition, a video from the school community was presented, which can be viewed at this [link](#) starting at 4:39.

Chair Le remarked that all Board members were taken by surprise. She expressed feeling honored to be engaged in this important work.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 [BUDGET WORK SESSION](#)

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Budget Work Session

Maya Kumazawa, Director of Budget and Planning facilitated the budget work session of the FY25 draft funding request. K12albemarle.org/budget

1. Overview of Technical & Non-Discretionary Changes – Maya Kumazawa
2. Compensation Market Update
 - Dan Redding, Executive Director, Human Resources
 - Jenny Stearns, Benefits Advisor
 - Brodie Downs, Director of Employee Services

Dr. Berlin stated that the health care cost is something that we should expect and should try to keep the costs low for our employees.

Dr. Acuff asked what percentage of ACPS employees versus other governmental entities are covered under our plan. ACPS employees and their dependents make up about 75% of the plan.

SUSTAINABLE WAGES – 76% – *That's how many of our 2,792 employees live in Albemarle County or Charlottesville City. In terms of housing, food, childcare, transportation, healthcare, taxes, and other necessities, Albemarle is one of the most expensive counties in Virginia.*

COMPETITIVE PAY – 60th Percentile – *The market rate of pay is considered to be the 50th percentile. Our goal is to offer wages in the 60th percentile in a market that includes Prince William County, Alexandria City, and Henrico County. To attract and retain high-quality employees, our wages must be more than sustainable; they must be competitive.*

STANDARDIZED INCREASES – Investing in Our Workforce – *Four years ago, the school board adopted the practice of applying pay increases across all job categories. When we've surveyed the community, compensation for employees has always been a top priority.*

Chair Le inquired whether the staff had calculated the costs for any of the three areas mentioned. Staff have assessed the implementation cost of unused sick leave, amounting to approximately \$400,000 annually.

Ms. Osborne inquired about the number of divisions with sick leave payouts. Mr. Downs was not certain. He estimated roughly half but will confirm and follow up with that information.

Dr. Berlin stated that she was not entirely sold on the idea of sick leave pay out. She would rather focus on things that can help employees now, rather than in the future.

Chair Le is open to seeing the models and weighing the options.

Dr. Acuff commented that she is open to looking at the total compensation package and how we can best support our staff and differentiate where we need to.

Agenda Item No. 3.2 Break – The School Board took a break from 7:35 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

3. Social Emotional Supports Overview & Proposal
 - Kevin Kirst, Executive Director of Student Services
 - Miles Nelson, Coordinator of Mental Health & Wellness

Dr. Acuff inquired about the role of SEL Coaches, expressing her belief that they were focusing on building resilience with students through staff collaboration. The position was initially needs-based when it was introduced in 2021, as schools exhibited different requirements. There were three distinct job descriptions. The three potential positions included a special ed counselor, a mental health professional or social worker, or the hiring of a social-emotional counselor. The term "social-emotional counselor" was adopted as an overarching description for these roles. While SEL Coaches continue to provide support, there are variations in their roles across schools. The discussion revolved around the importance of ensuring consistency through professional development and collaborative efforts.

Mr. Pace asked if these positions would be hired at the building level. That is the proposal and Central Office would be participating in the hiring process.

Dr. Acuff conveyed her gratitude for the fortunate opportunity afforded to the school division through the initial \$200,000 grant to kickstart mental health initiatives. She underscored the importance of securing COVID-related funding to maintain these endeavors, citing encouraging feedback from schools. Emphasizing the critical role of resources in supporting students' mental well-being, Dr. Acuff stressed the profound benefits of making such support readily accessible within school settings for children.

4. State Revenue Updates
5. Operating Principles for Budget Reductions

On April 25th, the budget adoption day necessitates a request for a balanced budget. Preceding this, on April 11th, a crucial school board meeting is scheduled where numerous decisions are anticipated. April 11th marks a significant internal milestone date.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 10.1 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 10.2 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 8:12 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk