

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, January 23, 2025

[Video Link](#)

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. Graham Paige, Ms. Allison Spillman, and Student Representative Margaret Lee

ABSENT – None

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Division Counsel Erin Stone; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 1.1 Call to Order – At 6:30 p.m. Chair Acuff called the Albemarle County School Board meeting to order.

Agenda Item No. 1.2 Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 1.4 Moment of Silence

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Approval of Agenda – Ms. Le offered a **motion** to approve the Agenda. Dr. Berlin seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

Mr. Paige offered a **motion** to approve a [Proclamation Celebrating Marting Luther King, Jr. Day](#). Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 3.1 School Board/Superintendent Business

On behalf of the student representatives and Western Albemarle High School, Margaret Lee shared [updates and concerns](#) from the student body.

Superintendent Haas shared [information](#) with the Albemarle County School Board and thanked them for the opportunity to address an important topic on the minds of many in our community. Recent inquiries about the potential impact of immigration enforcement activities in our schools have prompted timely discussions and preparations within our leadership team and School Board.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Agenda Item No. 4.1 Public Comment – other matters

Keith Kobyra, a resident of the Rio District, spoke in support of the Junior ROTC program, particularly the one at Monticello. He urged the board to reconsider its decision to terminate the program, emphasizing its positive impact on students and the community. Mr. Kobyra shared his daughter's success story, which included receiving a four-year ROTC scholarship and two nominations to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, opportunities he attributed to the Junior ROTC program. He acknowledged the program's low participation but explained that this was due to its opening during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected many educational programs. He pointed out that the program's participation has already doubled this year, including freshmen. Mr. Kobyra also raised concerns about the termination process, stating that a 12-month notice is typically required by contract. He asked the board to extend the program for at least one more year to comply with the notice requirement and allow more students to benefit from the program's opportunities. He concluded by urging the board to reinstate the program to continue providing life-changing experiences for students.

Agenda Item No. 4.2 Public Hearing – Rio School Board Seat Candidates

Michael Powers, a parent of two Monticello High School graduates and an Albemarle County taxpayer, expressed his support for the Junior ROTC program, emphasizing its value in promoting diversity and enhancing school opportunities. He also took a moment to offer condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Chuck Pace, praising his participation in the democratic process. Powers highlighted the importance of democracy and the elected board members' responsibility to uphold it. He noted that the board members had all earned significant votes from their communities in their respective elections, which gives them the opportunity to honor those democratic decisions again by appointing Jim Dillenbeck to the board. Powers stated that Dillenbeck had earned 4,069 votes in his recent election and had already done the work of engaging with the community, making him uniquely qualified to step into the role immediately. He concluded by urging the board to appoint Dillenbeck to honor the democracy of the community and the voters who supported him.

Andrew Cox, a parent of two children in Albemarle County Schools, expressed his support for Jim Dillenbeck's appointment to the school board. Mr. Cox shared his positive experience with the robust support his freshman son has received at Monticello High School, particularly highlighting the support for his son's IEP. He then emphasized his concern for all students in the district, particularly underprivileged students, who continue to struggle despite past efforts. He noted that Jim Dillenbeck's commitment to data-driven decision-making and his experience as a teacher uniquely position him to address these ongoing challenges. He also pointed out that Mr. Dillenbeck received a significant portion of the vote in the recent election, further underscoring his community support. For these reasons, he urged the board to appoint Jim Dillenbeck to the position.

Beth McDowell, a resident of the Rio District, strongly recommended Jim Dillenbeck for the open position on the school board. She shared that she has known Mr. Dillenbeck for nine years and has seen him work diligently with youth in their church. Ms. McDowell highlighted Mr. Dillenbeck's experience as the only applicant who has taught in Albemarle County Schools, specifically noting his seven years of teaching at Albemarle High School. She emphasized his understanding of the needs of teachers, students, and parents, which would be a valuable asset to the board. She also pointed out that he was the only applicant to campaign for the position and won 47% of the vote, with over 4,000 votes from the Rio District. She concluded by praising Mr. Dillenbeck's character, work ethic, and commitment to providing excellent education to the community's youth, urging the board to consider his appointment.

Rydell Payne expressed his support for Jim Dillenbeck, noting he has known him since 1985. Mr. Payne shared that Mr. Dillenbeck has had a diverse career, including working in the county, spending time in Seattle, and later returning to work for Northwestern Mutual for many years. He highlighted Mr. Dillenbeck's sincerity, curiosity, and collaborative nature, describing him as someone who listens, asks thoughtful questions, and follows up on concerns. Mr. Payne also mentioned working with Mr. Dillenbeck on a charity biking challenge that raised significant funds. He emphasized Dillenbeck's caring nature, both personally and professionally, and underscored his dedication, pointing out that he received 4,000 votes in his recent campaign. He urged the board to select Jim Dillenbeck for the position.

JT Maxwell, a resident of Woodland Road, spoke in support of Jim Dillenbeck, emphasizing his personal character and professional integrity. Mr. Maxwell shared that he has known Mr. Dillenbeck for over 25 years, first as a teacher and coach in Albemarle County. He praised Dillenbeck's trustworthiness, highlighting his ability to work well as a team player both with colleagues and elected officials. He also pointed out that Mr. Dillenbeck's commitment to public service is demonstrated by his repeated willingness to offer his services. He concluded by urging the board to consider Dillenbeck as a colleague, noting that he would be an asset to the community and the school system.

Victoria Lee spoke in support of Leslie Pryor as a candidate for the Albemarle County School Board, representing the Rio District. Ms. Lee shared her background, having lived in the area since 2005, with both of her children graduating from UVA. She emphasized her strong belief in the value of education, having returned to school in her 30s to complete both her BA and master's at Georgetown University. She described her professional relationship with Leslie, having worked closely with her at

the family court in collaboration with Region 10 and CASA to help families recover from addictions. Ms. Lee highlighted Ms. Pryor's extensive background, including her service as an Army Reserve

officer, her work with youth and families, and her leadership in various community roles, such as coaching, scouting, and teaching. She praised Ms. Pryor's work ethic, integrity, and dedication to service, both professionally and personally. She concluded by offering her unequivocal recommendation for Leslie Pryor for the Albemarle County School Board.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- 5.1 Approval of Consent
- 5.2 High School Centers Name Recommendation
- 5.3 For Action: Policy Review and Revisions
- 5.4 For Information: Policy Review and Revisions
- 5.5 Personnel Action

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA - None

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 CLOSED MEETING

Agenda Item No. 7.1 Closed Meeting – Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** that the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia 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:

1. Subsection 1 for discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment and the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers appointees, or employees of any public body; to represent the Rio magisterial district for the remainder of the 2025 calendar year; and
2. Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel; the purpose of this item is to discuss the application of school board policies on admission and student organizations.

Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

Agenda Item No. 7.2 Closed Meeting Certification – Dr. Berlin 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. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

Chair Acuff acknowledged the board’s decision regarding the appointment to fill the vacant Rio District seat following the passing of Board Member Chuck Pace. She emphasized that this was not an easy decision, as seven highly qualified community members with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and experience stepped forward, each demonstrating a strong commitment to public education and service.

The board carefully reviewed all applications and conducted interviews during a special meeting, expressing appreciation for the candidates’ dedication, preparation, and engagement. Chair Acuff noted that the selection process was challenging, but the board prioritized enhancing its collective skills, experience, and perspectives in making the final decision.

The appointed individual will receive a briefing from the school board attorney and board members in the coming weeks and will officially join the board at its February 13, 2025, meeting. Chair Acuff also clarified that this interim appointment will extend only through December 31, 2024. The Rio District school board seat will be on the general election ballot on November 4, 2024, with the elected candidate serving a full four-year term.

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County School Board appoint Leslie Pryor to represent the Rio Magisterial District. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 Other Business by the Board Members and the Superintendent

Ms. Le commented that she was very impressed that seven individuals from the community stepped up to apply for a very difficult and important job. She was impressed by all the candidates, especially Ms. Pryor and she looks forward to working with her.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 8:02 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Acuff adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Clerk

Chair