

MINUTES
ORGANIZATIONAL AND BUSINESS MEETING OF THE
ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, January 11, 2024

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

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

ABSENT – None.

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 Phil Giaramita; and Clerk of the School Board Christine Thompson.

At 5:30 p.m., Dr. Matthew Haas called the January 11, 2024, Albemarle County School Board to order.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING At 5:30 p.m., Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County Public 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 3, which allows a closed meeting for discussion or consideration of acquisition of real property for a public purpose or the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The purpose of this item is to discuss the purchase of property adjacent to an ACPS school; and Subsection 1 for discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment and the assignment, appointment, promotion, appointees, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; the purpose of this item is to discuss an offer of employment to a candidate for a position within the Superintendent Cabinet; and Subsection 8, which allows for a closed meeting for the purpose of consulting 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, and with the administration of the School Board's Policy concerning the Treatment of Transgender and Gender Expansive Students (Policy JBA). Ms. Le seconded the **motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne.

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Ms. Osborne arrived shortly after the Board went into closed session.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Call to Order - At 6:30 p.m., Dr. Haas called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Closed Meeting Certification - At 6:31 p.m., Dr. Acuff 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. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Dr. Acuff offered a motion to accept Candidate A for a position within the Superintendent's Cabinet. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence

Agenda Item No. 2.6 – Election of Officers

Dr. Haas opened the floor for nominations for School Board Chair. Dr. Acuff nominated Ms. Judy Le for Board Chair. Hearing of no further nominations, Dr. Haas closed nominations.

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to appoint Ms. Le as the Albemarle County School Board Chair. Dr. Rebecca Berlin seconded the **motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Chair Le opened the floor for nominations for School Board Vice Chair. Ms. Osborne nominated Dr. Acuff for Board Vice Chair. Hearing of no further nominations, Chair Le closed nominations.

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to appoint Dr. Acuff as the Albemarle County School Board Vice Chair. Mr. Graham Paige seconded the **motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** to appoint Christine Thompson as the Albemarle County School Board Clerk. Mr. Pace seconded the **motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None
Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Chair Le introduced the Board’s new student representative, Fernanda Cisneros, a junior at Albemarle High School. One of the Board’s goals for student representatives is not only to provide them with the opportunity to learn about the work and policy making that happens on a local government level but also to gain insight from their voice as members of the student body.

Agenda Item No. 2.7 – 2024 Committee Appointments

After discussion of the full Board, Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** for the following listed 2024 Committee Appointments. Dr. Berlin seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Dr. Acuff, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Pace, Mr. Paige, Ms. Spillman, and Chair Le
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Accountability Committee for Environmental Sustainability (ACES)	Judy Le Chuck Pace
Albemarle Education Foundation	Rebecca Berlin Kate Acuff
Audit Committee	Ellen Osborne
CATEC (end June 2024)	Allison Spillman Chuck Pace Judy Le
CIP Advisory Committee – The Board will keep this as an ad hoc committee	Kare Acuff Rebecca Berlin
Collective Bargaining Resolution Committee	Ellen Osborne Rebecca Berlin
Communications Committee	Allison Spillman Judy Le
Discipline Committee	Graham Paige Chuck Pace Judy Le Alternate – Rebecca Berlin
Diversity & Equity Committee	Allison Spillman
Employee Voice Action Advisory Committee	Board Members will attend on a rotation basis
Legislative Committee	Rebecca Berlin Allison Spillman

New School Board Member Orientation	Ad hoc
Piedmont Regional Education Program (PREP)	Rebecca Berlin Alternate - Graham Paige
Thomas Jefferson Adult & Career Education Regional Board	Ellen Osborne

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda – Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to approve the agenda with an amendment to add a ten-minute break. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

- 4.1 - Approval of Consent Agenda
- 4.2 - Approval of the Minutes
- 4.3 – Personnel Action
- 4.4 – Personnel Action – Athletic Coaches

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 6.1 Spotlight on Education - Presented by Student Representative Ms. Fernanda Cisneros.

We have the privilege this evening of recognizing DonorsChoose, a national nonprofit organization with over 4 million donors across the country whose mission is to “make it easy for anyone to help a teacher in need,” invites members of the community to “Support a Classroom, Build a Future.” For more than two decades, the organization has made it possible for teachers across the country to design and implement classroom learning experiences that have enhanced the way children learn.

Over the years, Albemarle County Public Schools teachers have raised more than \$300,000 for nearly 700 classroom projects. This year, in collaboration with the division’s Family Council, which includes parent representatives from every school, the division established a formal partnership with DonorsChoose that has provided new opportunities to advance the division’s strategic goal of thriving students.

The strategic plan commits the division to “facilitate learning experiences grounded in high expectations, networks of care, and student curiosity to ensure academic and social-emotional development

for all students while eliminating opportunity, access and achievement gaps.” By supporting teacher projects, every member of our community can join with our teachers in adding authentic, challenging, relevant and inclusive learning experiences for students. Community members can support teacher projects seeking funding in total amounts ranging from \$140 to \$1700. Requests range from helping to expand learning resources, to providing food for students in need to combatting bullying or eliminating chronic absenteeism.

Donors have an opportunity to contribute any amount. In many cases, a contribution can be matched by another donor, increasing the value of even a modest gift. The formal partnership offers special and targeted matching funds for equity schools, which include schools that have populations of 50% or more students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. The partnership with DonorsChoose offers another pathway to fulfilling all four of the school division’s values—equity, excellence, family and community and wellness. Community members can gain more information about the partnership and its objectives on the ACPS website.

This evening, we are happy to have Ms. Heidi Gilman Bennett, Family Council President, who will share information about the progress of the initiative and introduce ACPS educators Ms. Brigette Sears and Ms. Brandi Orshoski who will highlight DonorsChoose projects that have offered unique learning opportunities for their students.

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to adopt the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Proclamation Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

WHEREAS, just a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, in 1963, Dr. King and allied forces marched on Washington and delivered the revered “I have a Dream” speech, advocating for the end of racial segregation and societal inequality; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King, Jr, and other civil rights leaders devoted their lives to the expansion of civil rights and public service to all Americans; and

WHEREAS, in honoring his legacy, MLK Day is the only federal holiday to designated as a National Day of Service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities; and

WHEREAS, Albemarle County has invested in creating a more equitable and inclusive society by centering Community as an organizational value, which states that “we expect diversity, equity, and inclusion to be integrated into how we live our mission” to serve all members in our community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that we, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors, do hereby recognize and celebrate January 15, 2024, as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and encourage our employees and residents to work towards his vision for a more equitable and inclusive society.

Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Daphne Keiser presented the following:

Last evening, Mr. Graham Paige, School Board Member, retired Albemarle County Educator, and lifelong Esmont resident, received the proclamation award from Albemarle County Local Government in recognition of his devoted community service in numerous charitable and service organizations.

Mr. Paige has lived through some racial history himself — growing up in Albemarle County, he attended school during segregation. Originally born in Charlottesville, Mr. Paige grew up in the Esmont area

in Albemarle County. The town within Albemarle County originates and gets its name from the purchase of an old plantation, and the area's population has been predominantly Black.

Mr. Paige went on to earn his bachelor's degree from Hampton University, a historically Black University-College, before earning his master's degree from the University of Virginia. He spent much of his career in Albemarle County Public Schools as an earth science and biology teacher before becoming a school board member. He was first elected during a special election in 2015 and later re-elected in 2017.

Mr. Paige is currently serving in his third term on the Albemarle County School Board, he is an officer on the national Odd Fellows Board, church trustee, and active board member on several boards in the community, including the Scottsville Museum, the Charlottesville-Albemarle NAACP, the 100 Black Men of Central Virginia, the Yancey Community Center JABA Seniors, the Yancey Community Center Advisory Panel, and also, a member of the Southern Albemarle Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Annual Celebration Day Committee. In his many years of service on the M.L.K committee, Mr. Paige has served as chair and administered the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Award for youth.

We appreciate Mr. Paige's commitment and dedication to upholding the mission and vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Albemarle County Public Schools through his service and work with the students, families, and community to promote equitable opportunities and outcomes for all.

The Community is encouraged to volunteer and invited to attend the following MLK, Jr. Day Events:

On Sunday, January 14th beginning at 2:30 p.m. Yancey Community Center will host a community program to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King. This is a long-running tradition in southern Albemarle that has been coordinated by the M.L.K Day Committee.

Woodbrook Elementary School invites the community to "walk for a cause" during the 10th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Walk held on Monday, January 15th from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. on the Woodbrook Track. Participants will walk and record miles for a cause of their choice, engage in a poster-making contest, enjoy hot cocoa, tasty treats, and socialize with members of the community.

Mr. Paige thanked the School Board for recognizing him and the Board of Supervisors for recognizing the Martin Luther King Holiday. He shared details about the upcoming Yancy program. Commonwealth Attorney Mr. Jim Hensley discovered that a black man, Mr. John Henry James, had been falsely accused of assaulting a white woman and lynched around 1898 near Farmington. Mr. Hensley expunged the record and will present his research and the court case at the County Courthouse in Yancy.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT - None

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 SCHOOL BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT BUSINESS

Dr. Haas thanked the following Principal's for coming out to this evening's meeting: Maureen Jensen, Stony Point; Jim Kiner, Brownsville; Leslie Wills, Woodbrook; John Hobson; Murray Elementary; and Seth Kennard, Mountain View; Brad Hendrick, Baker Butler.

Dr. Haas had a great visit to Scottsville Elementary School.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.1 – ELA Adoption - Dr. Chandra Hayes

[Presentation – K-5 Core Literacy Adoption](#)

Dr. Berlin appreciated how inclusive the process was. She liked that it was a decision made by teachers, for teachers, and believed it was an excellent example of ACPS listening to both teachers and family concerns regarding the past while implementing a different process for the future. She was exceptionally pleased with the 85% response rate. Dr. Berlin expressed gratitude to the teachers who dedicated their time to ensuring the creation of a professional development plan, emphasizing that curriculum is just a book, and what truly matters is investing in the teachers themselves.

Mr. Pace asked if we were compensating teachers in July to come in. We also compensated them for their work on the committee throughout this process.

Ms. Spillman mentioned that a constituent had reached out with concerns about a lack of diversity. Specifically, the constituent was referring to the first-grade readers she had reviewed. Ms. Spillman asked for insight into this issue and requested opinions on the matter.

As the team evaluated the six state-approved curriculums, they considered diversity not just in characters, but also in the authors and the experiences portrayed. This particular series ranked among the highest of the six in terms of diversity. Given the available options, it offered better diverse representation than the others. Moreover, this series uses real textbooks available in libraries, online, or on Amazon, rather than being specially created for the curriculum.

When asked if the program allowed for supplemental materials from teachers or strictly adhered to the reading program, the response clarified that it's designed to be a comprehensive reading program. According to a teacher who has used it before, everything needed for a unit is included within the program. It starts with a guiding question, includes read-alouds and student books, and integrates phonics, grammar, and handwriting in one comprehensive package. While teachers have opportunities to supplement, the program is meant to be all-encompassing.

Mr. Paige asked if all those resources are going to be available – completely with the program. Yes, everything will be available.

Dr. Acuff asked about the consumables and if this was something that HMH will update or varies from year to year. This is something that we do not know yet. They are committed to providing them to the division as standards evolve.

Chair Le commented that she believes it is a real plus that Charlottesville City has the same curriculum – as some of our students go back and forth. She also thanked staff for all the work that had been done on this project.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 – 2024-2025 Academic Calendar and 2025-2026 Early Start Discussion – Jamie Gellner - [2024-25 School Year Calendar Recommendation](#)

Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) started its annual calendar development process earlier than usual with a plan to approve a two-year calendar for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years by fall 2023. Throughout the development process, the Calendar Committee, which is composed of teachers, parents/guardians, and school and central office administrators, considered feedback from students, employees, families, and community members, as well as new state and internal requirements. The work prioritized the following goals:

- Create a calendar that meets state requirements for instructional hours and supports the division's efforts to engage students and improve opportunities and achievement.
- Enable time for division-level and school-based professional learning and collaboration for staff to deepen their understanding of instructional practices that support student learning.
- Embed time for teachers to work individually on such tasks as updating lesson plans, grading assignments, preparing materials, etc. Limit the number of half-days for students.

After careful review, the committee does not recommend an early start for the next school year and will not pursue a two-year calendar adoption. The committee has recommended a calendar option for the 2024-2025 school year (attached) and will like the School Board to advise on their willingness to move to an earlier start date in the 2025-2026 school year.

Ms. Spillman observed that the committee included only one parent representative, who now appears to be a teaching assistant at Woodbrook. She suggested increasing parent representation on the committee, noting that many parents have valuable input, as evidenced by numerous emails and survey responses. She recommended incorporating more parents for their insights and contributions moving forward.

Ms. Spillman also inquired about the teacher workdays, specifically the one requiring teachers to return the Monday after all students have finished. She wondered who decides these workdays and what benefit there is to having teachers return after the students are already out. Typically, we assign a teacher workday at the end of a quarter to complete report cards, etc. That is not a change it's been like that for a while.

Dr. Acuff stated that she thinks the calendar looks good for the next school year.

Dr. Berlin agreed that we need to have more parents on the committee. Ms. Gellner stated that more parents were invited, and it was taken to the Parent Council. She said she would ensure that more parents on the committee going forward.

Staff asked the Board for guidance on the 2025-2026 Calendar.

Mr. Paige asked if we had any input from teachers or staff whether they would prefer an early start or not. There is not a strong preference on either side. We couldn't think of any academic reason to do it.

Dr. Acuff stated that since they're not a strong academic reason and little support, her preference would be not to act at this point.

Chair Le asked if we did move to an early start for 2025-2026, how many days would that shave off the summer? It would only be a week in terms of business days, but we don't know how long in terms of staff planning.

Mr. Pace asked if we still had to apply for a waiver to start early. No, we do not.

The Board took a break from 8:22 p.m. to 8:32 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 – [FY 25 Budget Development](#) – Maya Kumazawa - Staff provided a brief update on the development of the FY 25 budget and asked for further feedback from the School Board in preparation of the Draft Funding Request presentation scheduled for February 22.

Ms. Spillman asked if the current gap about \$10 million – yes, in that ballpark.

Ms. Spillman's request for an organizational chart of the central office, categorized by salary and benefits, and identifying which employees are student-facing reflects a strategic approach to addressing a critical issue. By understanding the structure and allocation of resources within the central office, she aims to identify opportunities to bridge existing gaps.

Dr. Berlin asked if there would be a change in the LCI. Staff understand that the LCI would not change, but we could request or advocate for additional hold harmless funding. But the LCI doesn't change.

Ms. Spillman emphasized the importance of public advocacy to the Board of Supervisors and Richmond legislators for increased funding. She noted that insufficient funds hinder the ability to meet classroom and teacher needs. While the board allocates funds as effectively as possible, she urged the public to advocate for more funding from the Board of Supervisors and Richmond to bridge the gap and protect classroom resources.

Dr. Berlin asked if there was any other COVID funding that we still have available. Our biggest COVID grant was ARP funding and that will run out this year.

Dr. Acuff asked for an explanation on how the Bright Stars funding has decreased. The Bright Stars funding is provided based on LCI, but for that program our LCI is capped at .5, which means that currently the state provides 50% of the funding. If they remove the cap, they use our actual LCI next year .69.

Mr. Paige shared that the Capital Conference is on January the 22nd and 23rd and those would be the days that we would have a chance to talk to legislators.

Agenda Item No. 9.4 – [High School Center II Schematic Design](#) – Lindsay Snoddy

Albemarle County Public Schools is designing a new high school center on the Lambs Lane Campus. High School Center II is planned to serve 400 students per day at a size of approximately 60,000 SF. In accordance with Policy FEA, an ACPS committee received proposals and selected Quinn Evans Architects as the architect for the project.

The design committee includes a diverse group of stakeholders and has been highly involved with community engagement to enhance the design process. Community engagement efforts have included presentations and listening sessions for students, the Georgetown Green community, the Albemarle High School PTSO, Making Connections, and the Career Learning Community Leader Steering Committee. The committee has also set up information tables at the recent High School Curriculum Fairs to request input from parents and students.

Dr. Acuff reminded the public and her colleagues that the board originally chose the high school center model over building a new high school, which would have cost about \$140 million. Instead, they opted for the center model and renovations to existing high schools at a more economical \$90 million. However, funding to upgrade all the schools has not been provided. The \$32 million approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2019 was frozen due to COVID-19, leading to increased costs.

Dr. Acuff further highlighted the importance of flexibility to expand and accommodate up to 600 students, which is also a cost factor. She urged the BoS who approved the \$32 million in 2019 to recognize the impact of COVID-19 on rising costs. Cutting back on plans has historically led to insufficient facilities, and the community supports improving school infrastructure.

Dr. Acuff emphasized the board's obligation to request funding based on needs and advocated for transparency about the realistic costs of building a first-class facility. She also noted that funding has not been allocated to upgrade other high schools.

Dr. Berlin agreed, stating that we need to continue sharing with the BoS the actual cost of the total implementation of this work.

Mr. Pace added that this is a progressive direction that we're going to Center II as opposed to a comprehensive high school which is an older model.

There was a discussion about the Loop Road connection and the traffic study, and how this would impact the already congested area.

Chair Le asked if students are bused to the Center from their home schools, then there would only be AHS traffic at once and then Center II traffic separate. They would be at different times.

Dr. Acuff asked about green space and the landscaping. No low areas and sloped areas. We would like to find the balance between good robust landscaping and easy to maintain landscaping. We'll work closely with the facilities groups to pick and choose plants that are hardy, drought resistant, all native. Within the courtyard space pick plantings that are representative of what the natural Piedmont ecosystems are around Charlottesville to illustrate that for science classes and things may be happening here.

Dr. Acuff asked about the data center and collocating it versus standalone, and if that is within the 43 million dollars? Staff are still looking at the cost estimate and estimate a few different options. What we are forced into now with the relocation of building services to accommodate the site is we must move the data center first. So, we're looking at while the initial plan was to have it as part of the facility, it may be more cost effective to have it as a free-standing building. We're still evaluating that, and we'll be working closely with technology to figure out the best spot and the most efficient place for that to be.

Agenda Item No. 9.5 – [Southern Feeder Pattern elementary School Schematic Design](#) – Lindsay Snoddy Albemarle County Public Schools is designing a new elementary school within the division's Southern Feeder Pattern. The assumed building size is 72,500 square feet, with an anticipated capacity of 500 students. In accordance with Policy FEA, an ACPS committee received proposals and hired VMDO Architects, P.C. as the architect for the project.

The design committee includes a diverse group of stakeholders and has been highly involved with community engagement to enhance the design process. Community engagement efforts have included presentations at PTO meetings and Making Connections, surveys accessible in multiple formats and languages, and a teacher steering committee. Community engagement efforts have also focused on feedback on a potential upper (grades 3-5) and lower (grades PreK-2) school model for Mountain View and the new elementary school.

Staff and VMDO presented the schematic design for the Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School at the December 14th School Board meeting. This presentation included an update on value engineering and budget progress.

Dr. Berlin emphasized the importance of avoiding scenarios where we cannot afford to open certain schools and cautioned against making illogical cuts. Surveys indicate that students and teachers prioritize having more windows, so reducing light should be a last resort. She further exclaimed that the proposed sterile exterior area raises concerns as it seems to pose a significant security risk. Whether as a parent, community member, or principal, the idea of children being outside unless for emergency evacuation purposes only is worrisome.

Mr. Pace asked if the solar tubes were in the hallways. Yes.

Ms. Spillman inquired whether the proposed changes were acceptable to both the community and the school as a whole, or if essential elements were being compromised. The principal of Mountain View, who serves on the design committee, addressed the concerns, emphasizing the focus on student and staff safety and experience during passionate discussions on value engineering. Regarding the exterior staircase, he explained that the internal staircases are wide, with one designed as a focal point for daily movement. The exterior staircase facilitates recess access without disrupting the school and allows for potential future expansion.

Despite concerns about capacity cuts due to growth in the southern feeder pattern, the principal felt reassured by the design committee's focus on minimizing disruptions to student experiences. Regarding reduced natural light, the architect demonstrated that areas losing solar tubes already had large walls of light. Additionally, resizing the solar tubes to a standard size would be more cost-effective.

The principal further expressed concerns about reducing three classrooms, potentially necessitating expansion sooner than desired. However, he felt positive about the overall student experience and common spaces provided by the current design.

Dr. Berlin asked what the projected enrollment would be. The estimate for a 10-year projection is 750-800. For the 2026-2027 school year would be 375-400.

The board asked the design team to take a second look at the elevator designs.

Dr. Acuff expressed concerns regarding Mr. Kennard's presentation, which suggested that the shift to a K-2 versus grades three through five model was a pilot intended to test its viability, a strategy effective in other communities. However, the proposed structural changes would eliminate the flexibility to revert to previous models if needed. Initially comfortable with the idea of expanding to 800 square feet, Dr. Acuff realized that this expansion would confine the school to this specific educational model permanently. She is not opposed to experimenting with new methods, as other school divisions do, but she is wary of making irreversible decisions that lock the school into a single pedagogical approach and potentially reduce enrollment.

Mr. Pace commented that the schools are right next to each other, which is one way of thinking of it. But the flexibility goes out the window with the cuts.

Dr. Acuff stated that we're basically looking at making our classrooms too small to accommodate younger kids. Removing three classrooms and we lose sixty kids, and we are still \$4 million over.

Chair Le asked how Mountain View classrooms were configured – if some were 800 sq and some 1000 sf. She further noted that it locks us into the most efficient thing being these as three through five. Chair Le continued that it is the most efficient thing and it's possible to put smaller kids in them. It just won't be as efficient.

Staff clarified that 30% of our elementary classrooms have bathrooms. There were two schools that do not Red Hill and Scottsville. At Mountain View specifically, the average classroom size for classrooms without bathrooms is 804 sf. For those classrooms that do have bathrooms, the average size is 928 sf and there are ten classrooms at Mountain View with bathrooms.

Dr. Berlin emphasized that she will not support building a school that fails to meet essential needs. Drawing on her experience, she highlighted the challenges of teaching in a kindergarten classroom without a bathroom and a pre-K classroom without a bathroom, describing these situations as untenable. She stressed

the importance of ensuring that the school's design supports both teacher and student needs effectively, especially considering the intention for the school to serve the community well for the next 20 years.

Mr. Paige noted that historically, the board has often had to settle for less-than-ideal outcomes. He expressed strong concerns about making cuts or changes without first informing the Board of Supervisors of the planned approach. He emphasized the need to communicate the primary plan to the BoS and only resort to alternatives if necessary.

Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** to direct Staff to proceed with a PreK-2nd grade configuration at the current Mountain View Elementary School and 3rd-5th grade configuration at the new Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School. Ms. Osborne seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to approve the Schematic Design of the new Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School and direct staff to proceed to the Design Development phase. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: Mr. Paige, Dr. Berlin,

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 5:2:0 vote.

Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** to direct the Chair of the School Board to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors outlining the difficult construction market conditions and formally requesting additional capital funds to cover the current funding gap for the Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School project and Center II High School Project. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

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 10:11 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk