

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, November 9, 2023

[Meeting Video](#)

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

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Mr. Jonno Alcaro, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Graham Paige, and Student Representative, Ms. Opal Kendall

ABSENT - None.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Board Attorney Ross Holden; 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.

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:

1. Subsection 1 for the 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. The purpose of this item in the closed meeting is to: (1) review and discuss candidates for interim appointment to the School Board to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Katrina Callsen; and (2) review and discuss candidates for School Board Attorney;
2. Subsection 3 for discussion or consideration of the 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 a lease for Property A;
3. Subsection 7 for consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. The purpose of this item is to discuss the current status of the lawsuit Mais v. Albemarle County School Board; and
4. 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 the interim appointment to the School Board, a resolution for public sector collective bargaining, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Charlottesville City Schools establishing certain operating procedures for CATEC.

Mr. Alcaro seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Dr. Berlin.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

Dr. Berlin arrived shortly after the closed meeting began.

Not feeling well, Mr. Alcaro left the meeting after the closed meeting finished.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

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

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Closed Meeting Certification

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. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County School Board appoint Candidate A as the School Division Counsel. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County School Board approve the lease of Property A. Dr. Berlin seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda - Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. 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. Osborne, Mr. Paige, and Ms. Le.

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

4.1 Approval of Consent Agenda

4.2 For Information: 2024-2025 Middle School Program Guide and High School Program of Studies

4.3 Personnel Action

4.4 Proposed FY 25 CIP Request

4.5 For Action: Policy, Review and Revision

4.6 For Information: Policy, Review and Revision

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Haas shared with the Board that he attended a field hockey game at Monticello High School Tuesday night and was able to witness history being made. Ava Barnes, a Monticello High School goalie, recorded her 500th save. According to the Virginia High School League (VHSL), Ava is the first student in VHSL history to record 500 saves in field hockey.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.1 PUBLIC COMMENT

Vernon Liechti, President of the AEA High School Association. Asked the board to endorse the mid-year pay increase proposal that will be presented to the School Board by Central Office.

Ms. Kathryn DeAtley, an APCS teacher, voiced concerns on behalf of her colleagues. Instead of addressing their requests for essential support like increased staffing, resources, and smaller class sizes, they're required to navigate a series of mandatory events like DLPs, CPDs, and convocations that consume valuable time. Moreover, rather than collaborating with teachers and heeding their input, the administration spends significant sums on external consultants, whose proposed solutions only exacerbate an already overwhelming workload. The relentless demands and expectations are taking a toll on teachers' well-being, compromising their ability to perform their jobs effectively. The sacrifices expected in terms of mental, physical, and financial health, as well as time with family, are unsustainable. Without meaningful change, the division risks losing dedicated educators, ultimately depriving students of quality education and jeopardizing the division's reputation. DeAtley urged the administration to shift its approach, advocating for collaboration and genuine listening to address the needs of teachers. Trusting educators to fulfill their roles effectively is crucial for the success of both staff and students.

Ms. Shea Hale, a Senior at Albemarle High School, and a member of the Student Council, spoke to the board with concerns about the direction of her school. Acknowledging their roles as returning members following the recent election, she hopes her address will prompt consideration of necessary changes during their next term. Observing her high school environment, she feels disheartened by the grading policies that seem to prioritize second chances over long-term skill development, leaving students ill-prepared for college. Hale expressed frustration with a mindset that diminishes the importance of effort and preparation, resulting in a lack of essential skills among students. She highlighted the testimonies of former classmates who lament the inadequacies of their high school education in preparing them for the challenges of the real world. She finds it unfair that students who exert minimal effort can pass with the same grades as those who diligently work. She shared her desire for a school environment where she doesn't feel disappointed or ashamed. Recognizing the potential for growth among both students and teachers, she advocated for fulfilling this potential to create a more enriching educational experience for everyone.

Mr. Michael Strickler, a teacher at Albemarle High School with students enrolled in Albemarle County Public Schools, participated in the meeting via Zoom. He voiced his dissent regarding the 7+1 academic schedule and the mandatory freshman seminar. Strickler emphasized the necessity for additional data before proceeding with these initiatives.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC HEARING ON CANDIDATES FOR THE RIO DISTRICT

Mr. Gary Taylor lives in the Rivanna district and spoke on behalf of Mr. Jim Dillenbeck.

Ms. Jane Duffey lives in the Rio district and spoke on behalf of Mr. Jim Dillenbeck.

Mr. Lance Weisend lives in the Jack Jouett district and spoke on behalf of Mr. Jim Dillenbeck.

Mr. Kevin O'Shea lives in the Samuel Miller district and spoke on behalf of Mr. Jim Dillenbeck.

Mr. Scott Hawken lives in the Rio district and spoke on behalf of Mr. Jim Dillenbeck.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 SCHOOL BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT BUSINESS

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to give the employees of Albemarle County Public Schools a half-day of administrative leave on Wednesday, November 22, 2023, the day before Thanksgiving off. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

SUPERINTENDENT BUSINESS

Assistant Superintendent Clare Keiser acknowledged the dedication and efforts of the principals from various schools within the division who attended the board meeting. She specifically recognized Jen Underwood from Scottsville, Jen Sublett from Western Albemarle, Beth Costa from Monticello, Seth Kennard from Mountain View, Steve Saunders from Greer, Josh Walton from Walton, Darah Bonham from Albemarle High School, Amy Morris from Broadus Wood, and Leslie Wills-Taylor from Stone Robinson. Dr. Keiser expressed gratitude to each of them for their presence at the meeting and for their ongoing commitment to the students and communities they serve.

Agenda Item 8.1 TRANSPORTATION UPDATE – Rosalyn Schmitt

ACPS is fully serving all students in the morning and has zero routes that are fully opened in the morning and afternoon only and this is impacting 160 students if all goes as expected. Two of our five trainees have completed training, and the rest are scheduled to complete training this week. They will do ride-alongs on their future routes next week and then, effective November 20th,

will take the remaining open routes. Our staffing continues to bring challenges and our applicant pool has dwindled. We are committed to continue to work on this challenge.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.1 – High School Seven Academic Schedule – Jay Thomas

ACPS will investigate the value of implementing a seven-period academic day with one additional period for enrichment/intervention in high schools. One measure of success would include reduction in the number of high school students enrolling in study hall reported by school. [Presentation](#)

Dr. Berlin believes we need to hear more from our students, middle and high school students. How can we make sure we get enough information from them? What does it mean for electives? The students want more choice.

Dr. Acuff commented that she was taken aback by the history of the 8-period schedule, noting its apparent lack of academic rationale. The decision seemed to unfairly burden teachers with budgetary responsibilities, made without thorough study or adequate notice. Despite any purported benefits mentioned in letters or comments, they observed no significant academic improvements for students. They emphasized the need to rectify this decision, suggesting that while some benefits may have emerged, the primary motivation appeared to be financial rather than educational.

Mr. Paige asked what we are doing to get as much input from teachers as possible. Staff have asked the HS principals to speak to as many teachers as possible.

Ms. Le remarked that with the available data at our disposal, we are triangulating information. In gathering data, could we later analyze it to observe any repetitive patterns and assess how these patterns might impact student choice and how those affect electives? ... One recurring perspective staff encountered stemmed from veteran teachers who often reminisced about past practices, expressing a sentiment of longing for a perceived "better" time. This historical perspective was a familiar narrative among seasoned educators, echoing sentiments of nostalgia for previous methodologies or systems. Additionally, teachers drew upon their involvement in various committees and conversations within the school community. Engaging with individuals who volunteered to participate in these committees provided them with a distinct viewpoint, one characterized by a strong investment in the process and a wealth of opinions. These conversations offered a more concentrated and certain set of perspectives, reflective of the individuals deeply engaged in the decision-making process.

Ms. Le commented that being a mother of a nearly high schooler, she finds the idea of intervention very attractive. She also inquired, if you're a teacher, would all the kids have a teacher during that time? ... Separating the two. What does that look like - seven vs eight. schedule. The advantages and disadvantages.

Ms. Le asked about using the anti-racism and anti-bias decision tools and how that would work. In our initial meeting, rather than establishing norms, we focused on crafting operating principles. Recognizing the need for guidance in discussions concerning various scheduling options,

we believed having clear operating principles was essential. The group assembled, comprising approximately 15 to 20 individuals, collaborated to formulate these principles. Subsequently, each member was responsible for disseminating them among staff for feedback, with a window of 2 to 3 weeks allocated for this process. After gathering input, the principles underwent refinement, ensuring they accurately reflected the collective perspectives. From that point onward, all discussions were framed within the context of these refined principles, serving as a framework to evaluate the viability of different scheduling options.

Ms. Le believes there are a lot of compelling reasons for doing this. She wants to make sure we don't put ourselves in a similar situation as last time.

Dr. Acuff expressed her admiration for the diverse range of stakeholders involved in the process. She found the presentations by all staff members to be particularly impactful. Regarding the switch to an eight-period schedule, she sees little advantage. Most students and teachers now experience longer and more in-depth classes, which aligns well with the goal of getting to know students better, a key objective in our strategic plan. She concurs with Chair Le's caution against hasty decisions akin to those made two decades ago. However, she harbors concerns about the potential strain on our staff.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 – Legislative Agenda – Helen Dunn

The annual Legislative Agenda articulates the School Board's legislative priorities and positions on key policy issues to state legislators. [Presentation](#)

Dr. Acuff asked if staff had coordinated with the Board of Supervisors in setting up the annual meeting with the legislators.

Dr. Acuff asked how the legislative priorities align with the Virginia School Board Association's (VSBA) legislative agenda. The VSBA has adopted similarly a lot of what came out of those reports.

Dr. Berlin offered a motion to approve the 2024 Legislative Agenda. 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. Paige, Dr. Acuff, and Ms. Le.

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 – The School Board took a break at 9:02 p.m. – 9:13 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 9.4 – [FY24 Budget Update](#) – Maya Kumazawa

This is an update for the management of the FY 24 Budget, to include health care fund premiums, mid-year pay increase, and the appropriation of state revenues. The School Board received the FY 24 budget updates for information and will request the Board of Supervisors appropriate the funding as presented and amend the appropriations ordinance accordingly.

Dr. Berlin offered a motion to request the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors appropriate the state revenue funding as presented and amend the appropriations ordinance accordingly. Dr. Acuff **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:1 vote.

Agenda Item No. 9.5 – ACPS State of the Division Report 2023 – Patrick McLaughlin

The [State of the Division](#) report looks back on the 2022-2023 school year to celebrate our accomplishments and identify areas for continued focus as we work to meet the goals outlined in our strategic plan, "Learning for All."

Dr. Berlin commented that she would like to look at the Panorama student/parent survey. She also commented that she loved the facility conditions assessment.

Dr. Acuff commented that looking at the percentage of our capital – we do a lot of self-editing. We have a lot of trailers and core buildings that are old. We are not communicating forcefully enough our capital needs.

Ms. Le commented that she appreciated seeing all the data.

No. 10.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Le congratulated Dr. Berlin, Ms. Osborne, and Ms. Spillman who will be joining the Board in January 2024. Ms. Le stated that it was a very important job, and she looks forward to working with everyone for another four years.

Agenda Item No. 10.1 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 10.2 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:58 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk