

COUNTY OF HENRICO, VIRGINIA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
SPECIAL MEETING  
June 23, 2020

The Henrico County Board of Supervisors and School Board convened a joint special meeting on Tuesday, June 23, 2020, at 5:00 p.m., in the Glen Allen High School Commons located at 10700 Staples Mill Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060.

**Members of the Board Present:**

Thomas M. Branin, Chairman, Three Chopt District (*arrived at 5:30 p.m.*)  
Daniel J. Schmitt, Vice-Chairman, Brookland District  
Tyrone E. Nelson, Varina District  
Patricia S. O'Bannon, Tuckahoe District

**Member of the Board Absent:**

Frank J. Thornton, Fairfield District

**Members of the School Board Present:**

Roscoe D. Cooper, III, Chairman, Fairfield District  
Michelle F. Ogburn, Vice-Chairman, Three Chopt District  
Alicia S. Atkins, Varina District  
Kristi B. Kinsella, Brookland District  
Marcie F. Shea, Tuckahoe District

**Other Officials Present:**

John A. Vithoukaskas, County Manager  
Amy E. Cashwell, Superintendent  
Christopher A. Sorensen, Chief Financial Officer, Schools  
Leonard G. Pritchard, Chief of Operations, Schools  
J. T. (Tom) Tokarz, Acting County Attorney  
Megan L. Watkins, Assistant County Attorney, Schools  
Barry R. Lawrence, CMC, Assistant to the County Manager/Clerk to the Board  
Tanya B. Harding, CMC, Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant  
Deborah N. Ward, Clerk to the School Board  
Cathy D. Harris, Deputy Clerk to the School Board  
Meghan F. Coates, Assistant Director of Finance  
Benjamin A. Sheppard, Director of Public Relations

Mr. Schmitt called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and welcomed everyone who was present. He explained Mr. Branin was running behind schedule due to heavy traffic and would arrive while the meeting was in progress.

Mr. Schmitt first recognized Mr. Cooper, who added a welcome and announced the meeting was being streamed online. He then recognized Mr. Vithoukaskas, who noted the last joint

meeting of the Board of Supervisors and School Board was held in Spring 2018 before Dr. Cashwell joined Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS). Mr. Vithoukaskas pointed out the previous joint meeting resulted in additional funding for schools. He alerted the audience that the meeting would need to end by 6:45 p.m. because the Board of Supervisors had a 7:00 p.m. regular meeting scheduled at the County's Government Center. Mr. Vithoukaskas reviewed the items on this joint special meeting agenda, identified the presenters, and asked the presenters for brevity to allow as much time as possible for dialogue among the elected officials.

### **School Resource Officer Program**

Mr. Vithoukaskas recognized Lieutenant Colonel Linda Toney from the Police Division. Lt. Col. Toney gave a brief biography of her career with the Police Division and referred to a timeline that was distributed to the members of the Board of Supervisors and School Board highlighting the history and evolution of the County's School Resource Officer (SRO) Program. She elaborated on the role of SROs and the enhanced training they have received since 2015. The Division of Police and HCPS signed a memorandum of understanding in 2013 relating to the SRO program. Lt. Col. Toney also reviewed changes in SRO school coverage that have been implemented during the past several years and how the Police Division's School Services Unit has supported the Achievable Dream Academy established at Highland Springs Elementary School in 2017 and other student programs. She emphasized the importance of the personal relationships that SROs have developed with school officials, students, and parents.

Mrs. Ogburn pointed out she supported the decision to return SROs to middle schools the year after their removal in 2018. At Mrs. Ogburn's request, Lt. Col. Toney explained the factors contributing to this decision in response to a request from parents. Mrs. Atkins raised concerns regarding the use of pepper spray by SROs to de-escalate certain school situations and the trauma this may cause for students. She also questioned the level of training received by SROs.

In response to a question from Mr. Nelson, Mr. Vithoukaskas and Lt. Col. Toney confirmed that changes in juvenile arrest procedures were implemented in 2015 to place more emphasis on diversion and on SRO discretion. Mr. Nelson expressed concerns about the school-to-prison pipeline and asked to see data documenting the number of minority students charged with crimes before and after the policy went into effect. Mr. Vithoukaskas assured Mr. Nelson that staff can provide this information. Mr. Nelson acknowledged SROs generally have positive relationships with students in the schools in his district but wants assurances that SROs are not being used to bring more charges or make more custodial arrests against African-American students. Lt. Col. Toney noted the decision to place two SROs at six of the County's high schools was based on the number of calls for service originating from those schools.

Mr. Branin commented on the educational opportunities afforded to students through programs supported by SROs. These include Signal Blue, the Police Athletic League, and Police Educators and Kids among others. Mr. Branin commented he would like to continue the conversation on how resources can be shared between teachers and SROs. He voiced his support for keeping SROs in schools while at the same time finding ways to enhance the relationships between SROs, students, and school officials.

Mr. Cooper questioned how HCPS and the County are going to determine what reforms need to be made during the coming year to ensure SROs are sensitive to the current social climate. Lt. Col. Toney assured Mr. Cooper that the Police Division is prepared to have conversations and to work with HCPS to begin the healing process with students and families and to better understand perceptions and fears that exist in the community. In response to a question from Mrs. Kinsella regarding SRO training, Lt. Col. Toney reiterated the need for open and calm conversations to re-establish relationships.

### **COVID-19 Update and Reopening**

Mr. Vithoukias recognized Dr. Cashwell, who began by referring to HCPS' outstanding relationship with Henrico's emergency management staff, especially Fire Battalion Chief and Emergency Manager Jackson Baynard. Dr. Cashwell noted that with the abrupt and unfortunate closure of schools during the spring semester, HCPS had to ensure that students had the equipment necessary to finish their assignments and that meals were provided to qualifying students on a daily basis. She further noted HCPS is in the midst of wrapping up several days of celebrating the high school graduating classes of 2020. Dr. Cashwell referred to the guidelines for school reopening in the fall that were released by Governor Ralph Northam on June 9, which assume that the Commonwealth will be in Phase Three with continued social distancing, daily health screening, cleaning spaces between use, and other public safety practices. She pointed to social distancing as the most challenging guideline and advised that HCPS is still looking at several different hybrid models and working through many options to balance classroom and remote learning. HCPS is in the process of surveying parents and employees. Dr. Cashwell has heard from many parents who are not comfortable sending their children back to school until a vaccine is available, and HCPS will provide a totally virtual option for those students. At Mr. Vithoukias' request, Dr. Cashwell offered an example of the cleaning protocols for an art class and advised that daily health checks will be in place for school personnel and students. She concluded her presentation with assurances that HCPS will be working closely with the County's Emergency Operations Center in developing reopening plans and mitigation strategies.

At Mrs. Ogburn's request, Dr. Cashwell addressed the public perception that the School Board has the authority to reopen schools on its own. Mr. Branin pointed out that the Board of Supervisors has no legal authority over school operations. In response to questions from Mr. Branin, Dr. Cashwell explained that HCPS must adhere to lengthy and detailed guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and the Virginia Department of Education. Mr. Branin requested that HCPS share these guidelines with Henrico citizens on its website. In response to a follow-up question by Mrs. Ogburn, Ms. Watkins stated that HCPS staff could address legal considerations relating to the guidelines during a closed meeting. Mrs. Kinsella requested that HCPS staff put together a document with frequently asked questions and answers and inquired about the timeframe for releasing a plan to the public for the fall semester. Dr. Cashwell confirmed with Mr. Nelson that HCPS has not yet made a decision on this plan but assured him that there will be a totally virtual option for parents who are not comfortable sending their children back to school. Mr. Nelson encouraged Dr. Cashwell and the School Board to take their time in deciding on a plan. Ms. Atkins asked Dr. Cashwell to elaborate on the research HCPS has undertaken and the data sources it is drawing from to ensure there will be adequate personal protective equipment for teachers and students when they do return to school. Mrs. Atkins relayed concerns from teachers who have underlying health issues. Mr. Schmitt emphasized the importance of sharing the

Commonwealth's June 9 Phase Three guidelines with parents and acknowledged the challenges HCPS faces in reopening schools. He suggested HCPS think about what it can do to support families as well as teachers and students.

Mr. Branin inquired about the status of school redistricting. Mr. Cooper responded that the School Board has not recently discussed this issue but will revisit it within the next few months. Mrs. Ogburn clarified that the School Board is awaiting the fall semester and new enrollment numbers before putting redistricting back on the table.

### **Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**

Mr. Vithoulkas recognized Ms. Coates, who narrated a slide presentation titled *Schools Capital Improvement Plan Update*. Ms. Coates provided budgetary information on school projects included in the County's 2016 general obligation bond referendum. She pointed out two of these projects, the construction of new facilities for J. R. Tucker and Highland Springs High Schools, are requiring significant financial resources. Ms. Coates reviewed funding plans for remaining projects and a revised CIP process for Fiscal Year 2022, which will allow advance planning for a future bond referendum. Ms. Coates completed her presentation by highlighting future school needs that were identified at the Board of Supervisors' January 2020 retreat.

In response to a question from Mrs. Atkins, Mr. Pritchard explained plans for the renovation and partial replacement of the Virginia Randolph Education Center. Mr. Nelson shared information he received from staff documenting how meals tax revenues have been allocated equitably throughout the County for school capital projects. He stressed how the Board of Supervisors and School Board have in recent years tried their best to address a perception in the community that there is inequity in the distribution of financial resources for Henrico schools. Mr. Branin concurred with Mr. Nelson's comments in this regard.

Mr. Branin noted he had been asking since the beginning of the year for a joint meeting of the Board of Supervisors and School Board. He suggested the two bodies consider meeting quarterly to demonstrate unity and strength

Mr. Schmitt thanked Police Chief Hum Cardounel for 32 years of public service and also thanked the General Government and HCPS staffs for bringing the Board of Supervisors and School Board together. In addition, he thanked the School Board for their participation. Mrs. Shea remarked that it was great to have this collective communication and pointed out the new School Board members have been building relationships with their district representatives on the Board of Supervisors.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.



Chairman, Board of Supervisors  
Henrico County, Virginia