

PUBLIC
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
MINUTES OF MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2023

The information included here provides a summary of the agenda items presented and actions taken during the above meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County. The video recordings of the Board meetings are the official record of the meetings and can be viewed at: <http://www.hcps.org/boe/livestream/>. Informational reports are located at: <https://www.hcps.org/boe/boardmeetingschedules.aspx>

Open Session

The Board of Education of Harford County met in open session in hybrid format in person and via video teleconference on Monday, December 18, 2023. President Aaron Poynton called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM

Board Members Present

All Board members were present with the exception of Miss Madina Sabirova, who was absent.

In-person attendance: Mrs. Diane Alvarez, Ms. Carol Bruce, Dr. Carol Mueller, Mrs. Denise Perry, Ms. Lauren Strauss, Mrs. Melissa Hahn, and Dr. Aaron Poynton

Virtual attendance: Mrs. Terri Kocher and Mr. Wade Sewell

Motion, Second and Vote

Mrs. Alvarez made a motion to waive public comment in its entirety in light of the limited nature of the open session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Hahn and approved in a voice vote of 9-0. Miss Sabirova was absent.

Pursuant to Section 3-305(b)(9)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon a motion by Mrs. Hahn, seconded by Mrs. Alvarez and approved in a voice vote 9-0, the Board of Education of Harford County met in closed session in a hybrid fashion. Miss Sabirova was absent.

Closed Session

Board Members Present

All Board members were present with the exception of Miss Sabirova, who was absent.

In-person attendance: Mrs. Diane Alvarez, Ms. Carol Bruce, Dr. Carol Mueller, Mrs. Denise Perry, Ms. Lauren Strauss, Mrs. Melissa Hahn, and Dr. Aaron Poynton

Virtual attendance: Mrs. Terri Kocher and Mr. Wade Sewell

Staff Present:

Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent

Dr. Eric Davis, Chief of Administration

Dr. Mae Alfree, Director of Staff and Labor Relations

Eric Clark, Director of Budget

Deborah Judd, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services

Kimberly H. Neal, General Counsel

Ben Richardson, Assistant Director of Human Resources

Yvonne Rallo, Administrative Assistant and Recording Secretary

In-person attendance: Dr. Sean Bulson, Dr. Eric Davis, Dr. Mae Alfree, Kimberly Neal, Esq., Mr. Ben Richardson, and Mrs. Yvonne Rallo

Virtual attendance: Mr. Eric Clark and Ms. Deborah Judd

The Board of Education met in closed session for the purposes of discussing:

Topic: Discussion and possible decision regarding parameters for negotiations with bargaining units.

Reason for Closed Session: To maintain confidentiality of potential parameters, if any, of negotiation with bargaining units and discussions related thereto.

Mr. Ben Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, introduced Dr. Mae Alfree, Director of Staff and Labor Relations who discussed proposed bargaining parameters for the Board's consideration. Mr. Richardson, Dr. Alfree, Ms. Deborah Judd, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, and Mr. Eric Clark, Director of Budget, were available to answer the Board's questions. Dr. Alfree sought the Board's direction and approval to proceed with the proposed parameters as presented and discussed.

Motion, Second and Vote – Mrs. Hahn made a motion to accept the proposed parameters with the agreed upon revisions as presented and discussed by Dr. Alfree for the specific bargaining units. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Alvarez and approved in a voice vote of 9-0. Miss Sabirova was absent.

Note: Mr. Ben Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Dr. Mae Alfree, Director of Staff and Labor Relations, were excused from the following discussion

Topic: Consultation with counsel regarding legal advice

Reason for Closed Session: To preserve attorney-client confidentiality.
The Board sought advice from Kimberly H. Neal, Esq., regarding the process to discuss matters amongst the Board.

No formal action was taken by the Board.

Adjournment

With no further business, Dr. Mueller motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Alvarez, and with Board consensus, the closed session adjourned at 5:49 PM.

Business Meeting

Call to Order / Roll Call

President Aaron Poynton called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM. Roll call was taken. All Board members were present.

In-person attendance: Mrs. Diane Alvarez, Ms. Carol Bruce, Dr. Carol Mueller, Mrs. Denise Perry, Miss Madina Sabirova, Ms. Lauren Strauss, Mrs. Melissa Hahn, and Dr. Aaron Poynton

Virtual attendance: Mrs. Terri Kocher and Mr. Wade Sewell

Adoption of Agenda

President Poynton called for a motion to adopt the agenda.

Motion, Second and Vote – Mrs. Alvarez made a motion to adopt the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Hahn and adopted in a voice vote of 10-0. (Includes 1 preferential affirmative student member vote).

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice-President Hahn led the Pledge of Allegiance

Board Member Comments

Board member comments were provided.

Public Comments

Speakers were invited to the meeting to provide their comments for the record either in-person or virtually. President Poynton read a statement regarding protocol for public comments which included a provision that each speaker would have three (3) minutes to speak and speakers representing a group would have five (5) minutes to speak. Mrs. Yvonne Rallo, Board of Education Administrative Support Coordinator, called on individual speakers who were in

person at the meeting and had registered to speak at the Board meeting. The following sixteen (16) people registered and provided in-person public comment: Rabbi Kushi Schusterman, representing the group “Harford Chabad”, Melissa Williams, Chrystie Crawford-Smick, representing the group “HCEA”, Jeannine Cannito, Suzie Scott, representing the group “Moms for Liberty Harford County”, William Martino, Cathy Kowalewski, Sabine Whitney, Allison Weedn-Hughes, Charles Hicks, Tina Lanocha, Tina Graf, Jo Riedel, representing the group “AFSME”, Doug Rudd, Luka Riedel, and Alexa Sciuto. Mr. Kyle Andersen, Public Information Specialist, called on individual speakers who had pre-registered to provide public comments virtually. The following one (1) person registered to provide virtual public comment: Jodi Frey.

Old Business

President Poynton announced no “Old Business” was scheduled for discussion.

Item A. Consent Agenda

President Poynton called for a motion to approve the consent agenda as follows:

1. Monthly Personnel Report: November 2023
2. Minutes of Previous Board Meetings: November 6, 2023 and November 13, 2023

Motion, Second and Vote – Miss Sabirova made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Alvarez and the consent agenda was approved in a voice vote of 10-0. (Includes 1 preferential affirmative student member vote).

Item B. Sheriff’s Office Presentation on Drug Prevention Programs

Mr. Erik Robey, Director of Legislative & Community Affairs and Sargeant Joe Sanchez, both with the Harford County Sheriff’s Office, provided the Board a presentation on the proactive programs to keep kids drug free that are provided by the Harford County’s Sheriff’s Office. The presentation included information on the proactive approaches to reduce overdoses and overdose deaths in Harford County.

No formal action was taken by the Board.

Item C. Presentation on Swan Creek School

Mr. Mark Truskowski, Principal, Swan Creek School, Ms. Lorien Covelly, Assistant Principal, Swan Creek School, and Ms. Becky Pensero, Coordinator of Supplemental Instruction, provided the Board a presentation on the Swan Creek School, which is an alternative school, serving Harford County Public School students, with a variety of educational programming. The school provides a fully virtual, eLearning 2-12 program that allows for students to work remotely with live, daily, synchronous instruction. All courses and grade levels are taught by Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) teachers. A 6-12 hybrid program provides for student flexibility by combining both in-person and remote learning. Students are taught by HCPS teachers, utilizing HCPS curriculum, on in-person and remote days. Classes are intentionally kept small to allow for more personalized learning opportunities. An overview was given of alternative education within Harford County Public Schools with highlights about the redesign, student population, and continued opportunities for students at Swan Creek School.

Meeting Break

The Board recessed until they were called back to order by President Poynton.

New Business

Item D. Presentation on Proposed Inclement Weather Plan

Dr. Eric Davis, Chief of Administration, and Mr. Yakoubou Ousmanou, Manager of North Star Research and Program Evaluation provided the Board a presentation of the proposed Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) draft of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Virtual Day Instruction Plan for the 2023-2024 School Year. School systems may apply to use a total of eight (8) days as virtual school days for the described purposes. The days may be

synchronous or asynchronous; however, no more than three (3) of the eight (8) days may be used as an asynchronous day. A survey was sent to all Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) teachers and staff members, parents/guardians, and community members to inquire about their preference for the use of virtual instruction on inclement weather days. An overwhelming majority of HCPS teachers and staff members and the majority of parents/guardians and community members responded in favor of using asynchronous virtual days in lieu of a traditional closing for snow days. HCPS would like the Board's support to apply to use three (3) asynchronous days in the event of inclement weather during the 2023-2024 school year. If approved, this will allow asynchronous virtual instruction on three (3) of the six (6) designated inclement weather make-up days. This will result in the final possible day of instruction (with three (3) "traditional" inclement weather days) being Monday, June 10, 2024. Currently, with six (6) "traditional" inclement weather days built into the calendar, the final instructional day is scheduled for Thursday, June 13, 2024. The proposed MSDE Virtual Day Instruction Plan application will be posted on the HCPS.org website for public input until January 3, 2024, then Board approval of the plan will be sought at a subsequent Board meeting.

No formal action was taken by the Board.

Item E. Decision on Proposed 2024-2025 Harford County Public Schools Calendar

The Board received a presentation from Ms. Jillian Lader, Manager of Communications and Dr. Peter Carpenter, Director of Organizational Development, on the proposed 2024-2025 Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) calendar. Ms. Lader presented that this year, the membership of the 2024-2025 Calendar Committee was approved by the Board at the August 14, 2023 meeting. The committee met on September 7, 2023, and presented draft calendar proposals to the Board at the September 18, 2023 meeting. Both a pre-Labor Day start option and a post-Labor Day start option were offered in the survey, which was available for 60 days for the public to provide comments and feedback. The Calendar Committee met November 30, 2023 to review stakeholder input and attempt to come to a consensus to provide a recommended 2024-2025 Calendar to the Board. The presented 180-day student/190-day teacher calendar contained the following features:

- New teachers report on Thursday, August 15, 2024.
- Returning teachers report on Tuesday, August 20, 2024.
- School begins for students (K through grade 12) on Monday, August 26, 2024.
- School begins for pre-kindergarten students on Wednesday, August 28, 2024.

Ms. Lader presented a report on the survey results which focused on a compilation of cleaned comments that offered suggestions for the calendar. Further discussion took place, with some of the Board members requesting consideration of both the post-Labor Day start calendar (September 3, 2024) as well as the pre-Labor Day start calendar. Board discussion included aspects of both calendars and differing opinions regarding considering a post-Labor Day start calendar that was not the Calendar Committee's recommended pre-Labor Day start calendar. After a lengthy Board discussion, both presented calendar options were voted on and the Board took the following actions on the presented 2024-2025 HCPS School Calendars:

Pre Labor-Day Start - August 26, 2024:

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Perry to approve the Calendar Committee's pre-Labor Day 2024-2025 HCPS School Calendar start date of Monday, August 26, 2024, as presented. The motion failed in a roll call vote of 4-3. Casting the negative votes: Mrs. Kocher, Ms. Strauss, and Mrs. Hahn (Student member cast an affirmative vote, but it does not count). Mrs. Alvarez and Dr. Poynton abstained from voting.

Post Labor-Day Start – September 3, 2024:

Motion, Second and Vote – Mrs. Hahn made a motion, seconded by Ms. Strauss to approve the post-Labor Day 2024-2025 HCPS School Calendar start date of Tuesday, September 3, 2024, as presented. The motion was approved in a roll call vote of 5-4. Casting the negative votes: Ms. Bruce, Dr. Mueller, Mrs. Perry, and Mr. Sewell (Student member cast a negative vote, but it does not count).

Item F. Decision on Proposed New Board Policy, Fidelity in Student Achievement

Kimberly H. Neal, Esq., General Counsel, provided background on the status of the proposed new Board policy entitled: Fidelity in Student Achievement. This policy was first presented to the Board on November 13, 2023 and was posted for public comment on HCPS.org on November 14, 2023. Thirteen (13) comments were received through the website and shared with the Board for review and consideration. President Poynton shared that aside from the 13 comments additional feedback was received by some individual Board member via email and other formats. The feedback is substantial and some of the Board members shared interest in reviewing all of the feedback before voting on this policy. Ms. Neal reminded the Board that this policy does not go back to the Policy Committee for further discussion as it now sits with the Board.

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion to table this policy until the next meeting when the Board has had an opportunity to review all of the comments. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Alvarez and approved in a roll call vote of 9-1. Casting the negative vote: Dr. Mueller (includes 1 preferential affirmative student member vote).

Item G. Presentation on Proposed Changes to Board Policy 04-0020-000, Controversial Issues

Kimberly H. Neal, Esq., General Counsel, presented information to the Board regarding proposed adoption of the updated Board policy entitled: 04-0020-000, Controversial Issues. The original policy was adopted on May 6, 2002 and members of the Board proposed revisions that were shared with the Policy Review Committee. The Policy Review Committee conferred and agreed on additional edits. The most recently updated version of this policy was presented for the Board’s consideration. After discussion with Ms. Neal, and Board requested non-substantive changes, this policy will be posted for public comment on HCPS.org. Both the original policy and the rewritten policy are posted on the website for reference. Following the public comment period, Board approval of the recommended updated Board Policy 04-0020-000, Controversial Issues will be sought at a subsequent Board Meeting.

No formal action was taken by the Board.

Item H. Presentation on the Maryland Report Card Framework 2022-2023

Ms. Heather Kutcher, Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Mr. Phil Snyder, Supervisor of Accountability, and Ms. Rose Martino, Principal of Roye-Williams Elementary School provided the Board an update regarding the release of the Maryland Report Card results for Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) from the 2022-2023 school year. The presentation included the academic and non-academic measures that comprise the framework. Several metrics were shared, including proficiency rates on the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) in the core content areas, student progress with MCAP, chronic absenteeism, and graduation rates. The data showed a two-year trend of HCPS performance as well as a comparison to select counties within Maryland. In addition, Principal Martino of Roye-Williams Elementary School shared the successes and challenges of chronic absenteeism. The presentation included the following measures:

- Academic achievement based on MCAP results for English/Language Arts Literacy and mathematics
- Academic progress results based on MCAP
- English Language proficiency results based on the W-ACCESS assessment
- High school graduation rates
- Readiness for postsecondary success
- Chronic Absenteeism rates
- Climate survey results for educators and students
- Access to a well-rounded curriculum

No formal action was taken by the Board.

Item I. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Bulson's comments were provided.

Superintendent Bulson congratulated Ms. Deborah Basler, Supervisor of Physical Education and Health, for recently being named as the President-Elect of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA).

Adjournment

With no further business and with Board consensus the meeting adjourned at 10:37 PM.

Sean W. Bulson, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools and Secretary-Treasurer

Aaron S. Poynton, D.P.A.
President, Board of Education of Harford County



BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PARTICIPATION
MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2023

OPEN SESSION: 4:30 PM – 4:35 PM

This meeting will be conducted virtually with no public attendance due to the brief nature of this meeting and the logistical issues regarding allowing public attendance in advance of the 6:00 PM meeting.

*The only item the Board will consider during this open meeting is consideration of meeting in a closed session.

CLOSED SESSION: 4:35 PM – 5:45 PM

BUSINESS MEETING: 6:00 PM – ADJOURNMENT

This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid fashion and public attendance will be permitted as explained below:

DOORS WILL OPEN AT 5:50 PM AND THE MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 6:00 PM

The Board of Education of Harford County will hold a hybrid Business Meeting on Monday, December 18, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Board Room of the A.A. Roberty Building with Board Members, staff, and presenters in attendance both virtually and in-person. Seats will be available on a first come-first served basis. The meeting will be streamed live and archived for later viewing on the HCPS

[Website](#).

Public Comment Participation Call-In and In-Person Process

Individuals or groups recognized by Harford County Public Schools (i.e. – PTAs, unions, and other school system stakeholders) wishing to speak on an agenda item or to comment on an education-related matter not on the agenda may request to do so by sending an email to publiccomment@hcps.org or calling 410-588-5347.

Call-In Registrations must be received by 12:00 PM on Monday, December 18, 2023. All fields on the registration form must be completed.

1. First and Last name / if speaker is a Group Representative, then please state the name of the Group
2. Local Address
3. Email Address
4. Phone Number
5. Agenda item or subject your Public Comment pertains to
6. Will you provide in-person **or** virtual Public Comment
7. Registration forms are limited to one (1) per person

****Failure to provide complete information as required above will void the request to provide Public Comment.***

- Registered virtual speakers will receive an email from HCPS with a Call-in Phone # and a Conference ID #.
- Registered speakers are required to call-in and enter the conference ID# at 6:00 PM on Monday, December 18, 2023.
- **Important: If you are unable to take your phone off mute, you may need to dial *6.**
- If you are admitted from the virtual lobby to the meeting, you will be greeted by an HCPS staff member when it is time to begin your public comment. Expected hold time in the virtual lobby may vary based on number of registered speakers. The maximum wait time in the lobby is 30 minutes; should you be disconnected please call back.
- "Request to Appear Before the Board" cards will be available for in-person attendees prior to the Board Meeting for sign-up and must be submitted prior to the opening of the meeting.

The Board has authorized public comment in accord with its policy Public Participation at Board Open Meetings or Public Hearings and as summarized below:

- Each speaker shall be limited to no more than three (3) minutes and five (5) minutes for individuals representing groups. Speakers must state his or her name, and, if representing a group, must identify the group he or she represents. If a speaker identifies themselves as a representative of a group, then only one (1) representative from the group may provide comment for the identified group.
- The Board presiding officer may reduce the amount of time allocated to each speaker if allocating 3 minutes to each speaker will impede the Board's ability to complete scheduled business.
- The Board will receive in-person public comment first and virtual public comment second. The Board expects that all comments will be submitted with the decorum and respect appropriate to the conduct of public business.
- Topics such as personnel matters, pending appeals, specific student disciplinary matters or which constitute commercial solicitations are not permitted.
- Disparaging comments, personal attacks, and inflammatory remarks about specific schools, personnel, any person, or group are not permitted. Speakers who engage in these comments will be reminded of the rules and the Board reserves the right to remove the speaker. In addition, public comment is an opportunity for members of the community to address the Board of Education. Please direct your comments to the Board and not to other members of the public in the audience.
- All public comments submitted will be part of the records maintained by the Board office.

Speakers are reminded that public comments are considered public information and, as such, are subject to the Maryland Public Information Act.