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City of Fairfax School Board Special Meeting, Monday, August 4, 2025

Date Monday, August 4, 2025
Place City Hall, City of Fairfax, Virginia
Length 0h 30m (video)

- Official meeting video (city, Granicus): https://fairfax.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4295
- Agenda: https://fairfax.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4295
- Minutes: https://fairfax.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4295&doc_id=f9951c90-72f7-11f0-a766-005056a89546

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-12. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:14] Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is a special meeting of the City of Fairfax School Board. It is Monday, August 4th of 2025. Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[00:00:41] Okay, there are no changes to our agenda this evening. The only announcement we have is that Ms. Cessary, school board member Ms. Cessary, is on vacation, so she will not be attending this evening's meeting.

[00:00:59] The first item is the agenda adoption. May I have a motion, please? Madam Chair. Ms. Kelsey. I move that the City Fairfax School Board adopt the agenda as written and distributed. May I have a second? I second.

[00:01:15] Okay. Ms. Kelsey moved and Ms. Bartle may second it. all those in favor signify by saying aye aye none opposed the adoption of the agenda passes unanimously presentations to the school board citizen participation we do not have anybody signed up this evening so we will move on to our presentation from dr. Phyllis Pajardo she is the educational education consultant who will be presenting

about the superintendent selection process and timeline. Welcome, Dr. Bajardo. Well, welcome back, Dr. Bajardo.

[00:01:54] Well, thank you very much, Chair Pitches. It is actually good to be back here. I had some wonderful years here in the city, and I just, I come with a full heart, with a very, very full heart to be back in a place that has a piece of my heart. And I want to, again, thank the city for my great time as a superintendent, as an assistant superintendent, and I especially thank you for naming the library at Katherine Johnson after me.

[00:02:32] It has warmed the heart of my family. So they think their little baby sister has done pretty well. So with that, as Chair Pitcher said, I'm back. I'm back with a new title, Retired and Educational Consultant.

[00:02:49] I congratulate two of you on your re-election, three of you on your re-election, one of you on your new election, and congratulations to Mr. Phillips on being named acting chair, not acting chair, acting superintendent.

[00:03:05] Carolyn is still the chair of the school board, exactly. All right, I'm going to get in this groove after a while. It's been a few years since I've had to do a presentation, you know, at the microphone, And I'm going to have Ms. King here to just kind of help me out. So as we move to the item, I want to make sure that you and the public know that we're discussing a proposed search timeline for your new superintendent.

[00:03:32] And at the end of today's discussion, with questions being answered, you're going to put a motion forward to approve the timeline as it's being presented or approve the timeline with any amendments to that. So let's rock and roll in terms of the timeline.

[00:03:52] But first, let me reintroduce myself to some. And this is more for the public than for you. I am pleased to let you know that I have been in public education for 45 years. You can do the math and know that I am very happily in my 60s and a proud person to be in that age demographic.

[00:04:18] I served here as your superintendent for five great years, retiring in 2022. Prior to that, I was the assistant suit and was also the assistant suit in Fairfax County for HR and for Cluster.

[00:04:35] And so I'm going to rely very heavily on that HR experience that I had, as well as with being a superintendent and knowing the responsibilities that go with it. You can also see that I have been an elementary school teacher, assistant principal and principal, and still love the kiddos at elementary.

[00:04:56] Since I have left the city of Fairfax, I have been engaged as a consultant. I am an author with an organization called ASCD. I'm on faculty there, and I present around the country and work with school divisions on leadership development, planning, and programming, as well as working with school boards and other organizations on something that is very dear to me, which is strengths-based leadership, which is the Gallup work, as well as on change management.

[00:05:26] And so I come to you still working, but in a part-time capacity. But it will not interfere with the work that we have before us, which is some very, very serious work. And so I would start with sharing with you board members that you are about to embark on a very major decision, a decision that's going to impact 5,000 students, a large community, for a lifetime.

[00:05:58] If we believe that the teacher in the classroom has lasting legacies on students, then we have to believe that who is hired as the superintendent has an even larger impact. So with that, let's buckle up and

talk about what we're gonna be doing over the next couple of months so and I put this in months that would be easier for the public to understand and for you to digest as well so we start with this month being very busy with many activities meeting with you all individually we did a lot of planning and

[00:06:34] preparation before we got to this so I don't want the public to know that this is your first time hearing about this timeline we wouldn't have ever gotten to this place without many conversations with you and with staff. It is the intention of the board to advertise this position beginning on Wednesday and then to let that advertisement run at least two weeks. We are in the middle of a lot of schools opening in this area and across Virginia and so to allow the vacancy to be posted and run a couple of weeks is important to give us some of the

[00:07:09] better candidates across the commonwealth they i've already been working with mrs dorsey to dedicate a section of the website to keep the public updated on what is happening as well as to keep potential applicants and candidates updated as well this month will be a big time to collect input from folks who are your constituents parents students mayor city council and with working with Ms. Staff, you know, in which the superintendent will be supervising, I've already been working with Mrs. King,

[00:07:48] and there have been a number of meetings set up with elected officials here in the city, with staff in the city, FCPS. I'll be working with Mr. Phillips around connecting with the PTA presidents, the superintendent advisory team, your student representative it's Abby or I am blanking on the other young the young man Kevin okay yes because I did see a board meeting where they were announced and so I will work with mr. Phillips and this came to get with them

[00:08:23] as well as to hear the student voice so a number of meeting individual meetings a number of group meetings we have a community forum plan later this month August 26th that will be in person 6:30 at Fairfax High School and I would invite you to attend you know that where we can hear from a number of people during that meeting as well as all community members staff students will have an opportunity to submit their comments in an online survey miss Dorsey and I have been working on that survey it's not quite complete yet but we will Make sure that you see it before it goes live.

[00:09:02] It, in essence, is asking people around characteristics, experiences, challenges, priorities, opportunities, uniqueness to the city, and to collect that over a period of probably at least three weeks.

[00:09:19] But we are kind of beta testing that with the right tool to make sure that it gets the answers that we need it to get. So that's August in a nutshell. All righty? you're still buckled up let's go into september so in september uh we'll continue to collect the online survey information and then there will be an online community forum a virtual community forum so those folks who can participate in person can participate on september 17th it'll be at 6 30 and we will get information out and post information about that but prior to that on

[00:09:57] September 15th I will be back in front of you with an update that will also be a time for you to consider and for us to consider if there's been anything that's been wonky in the timeline it would be the chance to publicly talk about that and to make adjustments while I am all in and I know you are all in to doing things none of us can predict the future and so if we may need to make adjustments we would do that and be informed of that you have every right as the hiring manager to make some adjustments in your timeline okay so you

[00:10:34] know I want to be clear you know what you're committing to tonight is a timeframe but you always as a hiring manager can make adjustments we could progress it a little further you could go into fifth gear if you needed to or we can pull it back a little bit also on September 15th I'm gonna give you some initial data around information from the survey and from the stakeholder meetings and share a little bit with you. Behind the scenes in September, I'll be pre-screening the applicants

[00:11:09] based upon the minimum qualifications, number of years of experiences, certifications, etc. All right. And then we move into October. Now, this is where you have to hang on to your hats, because every week in October, board members, you are going to be involved with some pretty intense work, beginning with an update to you on October 6, where I do put together a, we call it a profile of the superintendent.

[00:11:46] That is all of the input that's been gained from the stakeholder input, from the surveys, from the meetings, and share with you what the public said about the next superintendent. Following that meeting, I will also share with you a slate of candidates, and then you're going to make a decision about how many folks that you want to bring in for the initial round.

[00:12:13] and we will also finalize the interview questions that first week in October. Moving to the next week in October. Again, there's something every week in October. The week of October 13th, you will be involved in the first round interviews.

[00:12:32] The next week in October, you'll be involved in the second round of interviews and you may decide to bring one finalist back. You may decide to bring two finalists back. I think unlikely you will bring three, but, you know, we haven't done the interviews just yet, and we don't know who's applying, et cetera.

[00:12:51] But you will be bringing another round. You will have another round of interviews, and you'll have a finalist or two. And if everything works in our favor, then at the end of October, you will offer a contract to an individual that's been vetted, that meets the qualifications, that fulfills the desired characteristics and qualities that you want and that the community has said that they want.

[00:13:24] Um, and in November, uh, November 3rd, uh, again, if everything works as the way it's supposed to, then you will be presenting that, uh, person to, uh, the community.

[00:13:41] And Mr. Phillips is going to breathe a sigh of relief on that night, or he might cry, you know, just a little bit, because he will have to go down from the chair that he's in now on the dais and return to his assistant superintendent position I fully expect that it there is going to be some level of transition that has to occur there has to be knowledge building with the candidate candidate the finalist time for mr. Phillips to share and get them up to speed as well as I am

[00:14:15] confident that whoever you choose is employed right now and that they will have some level of transition that they must have with their current employer if if things go the way that I think that they're going to go you're going to have someone that's in a pretty high level in their organization and so that organization will likely want probably what's generally expected It is a two-week time frame that's kind of general practice with some negotiation of time back, et cetera.

[00:14:50] So while you intend to announce on November 3rd, the person very likely may not report until later November. But I think it meets your needs with a November 3rd announcement. And for candidates or anyone who's interested in this to know that this process will take care in the fall, I think will be very, very helpful.

[00:15:17] I did put this bullet in because when you endeavor in a process such as this, there should really be time for reflection. I think at the end of this process, it's a time for you to think, how did we work as a board? Were we able to come together?

[00:15:35] Were we able to share differences and still have a great candidate and a great finalist? You certainly need to evaluate me as a search consultant. How did I do? Did I meet your expectations? We need to look at glows and grows, and we need to memorialize that just for future search opportunities, as well as for you to think about if there's anyone else in the staff that you may be replacing.

[00:16:02] It's good to memorialize the glows and grows of the process. That's not on the timeline itself, but I do want to put that out to you to have some time for reflection. So we are now at the point of questions.

[00:16:18] I do need to say, having been in HR and run a number of processes when I was in Fairfax County, we must address the what ifs. What if no one applies? I don't think that that's going to be the case.

[00:16:36] What if you get to the finalists and they decline the offer? That can be real. What if you get to a point in the process where you really cannot come together, okay? There are always a number of things that are beyond our control.

[00:16:56] It's just a matter of continuing to work toward it to keep the public engaged and let them know what is happening and if we have any of these things, because there are a number of things that have to come together for you to name a new superintendent and for me to just get back to life as usual, retired life as usual. There is an email address that has been created for folks to send their search inquiries to so that we will be able to keep track of anyone who's asking questions about this process, et cetera. And with that, I am able to entertain

[00:17:35] questions share pitches okay thank you Dr. Bajardo do you have any questions um I think it looks great the timeline and I appreciate all the detail um so I think it's very transparent both to the applicants and to the community so thank you thank you you're welcome Ms. Kelsey hi um can you possibly share just for the community kind of what the community forums are going to look like um and where exactly they need to go to find out more information about them yeah I appreciate that

[00:18:09] thank you ms kelsey so for one we are going to post this information on the website it will be in the dedicated space for the superintendent search as well as likely front page of the website to be involved in it i know that as i've been talking with ms dorsey that as you are entering your back to school night activities that we're going to put flyers qr codes that actually allow people to click on them do a pre-registration for those forums whether it is the in-person or the

[00:18:44] online the idea of the forum is to have a place a safe place for people to share their concerns it is not a i am a a trained facilitator so it will not be a say everything that you want to say about the city of fairfax board what's working what's not working the focus is on the qualities and characteristics of the next superintendent the experiences that you think are important for that superintendent to have the potential challenges that that superintendent is likely to face and

[00:19:20] then what the opportunities are so there will be a very strict protocol of discussion on the in person as well as the virtual and then folks will actually submit they can do some things online while we are there in person and obviously when they are online they'll be able to click on some links and complete the information right during the forum so that that is the nature of the structure of both the in-person

forum and the online forum great thank you i appreciate you explaining that absolutely miss hickman i want to thank you for the work that you've already put

[00:19:58] into this and the work that's going to come ahead and you know for being our guide in this absolutely happy to work with you okay um i know we're going to we have lots of opportunities for advertising the survey are we going to look at like through city scene or through the sort of city government side of things yeah that's where miss dorsey and i are looking right now the city already has a engage fairfax that has been used to engage our community on a number of projects and we've seen some good success with that and so that's the kind of the portal that we're looking at now we had

[00:20:38] initially you know looked at some other ways to host the survey but we want to make sure that we host it in a way that is convenient to people, chair pitches, as well as accessible to them.

[00:20:54] So right now, but this is not confirmed yet, that we will look at the, I think it's called Public Engage site that is on the city website right now. And then there will be a link from the city schools page to that.

[00:21:12] Okay. And there won't be any written survey mailed out? No, there will not. if people are participating in the form the in-person forum i certainly would give some the opportunity to write things down and submit some people are you know are just kind of wonky and don't want to do things online they feel like there's a digital footprint that's linking back you know and i have to respect that so uh there is no intention beyond that community in person to to have any paper surveys.

[00:21:44] When I am doing the one-on-one interviews as I have done with you all and as I'm gonna do with a number of stakeholders, I am writing information down. I almost feel like I'm in my doctoral data collection again. And so I am writing down things that people are saying and looking for themes, et cetera, but they are not writing anything down.

[00:22:08] - Okay, and can you speak to how you are going to We know how we're going to collect this data, how you're going to use the community feedback throughout the process. Yes, great, great, great question, because as people are involved, they want to know that you're going to look at what they say, right?

[00:22:26] So one, it is creating that profile of the city of Fairfax superintendent, not anybody else's superintendent, but the city of Fairfax. So that input will be used to create that. From there, Mrs. Pitches, I think it is important that when you are developing your interview questions and your look-fors, et cetera, that you consider that feedback as well in the questions that are asked of the candidates.

[00:22:54] So, one, it being used to develop the profile, two, it can be used as part of a screening process for me, and at least I plan to engage another HR professional or another sitting superintendent or retired superintendent to review the applications, and we will look for that.

[00:23:17] And I'll share that with you in presenting the slate of candidates, and then finally in the interview process. And I think each of you as elected officials, you're going to carry that input. That input is going to weigh on you as you're interviewing these candidates because you're going to be looking for, does this meet the match of what you expected and the community expected?

[00:23:39] Okay, great. I think that's all of the questions I have. Oh, I was thinking about in the event that we have a community member who wants to speak with the consultant, you, one-on-one, they don't feel

comfortable filling out the survey, they cannot attend the community forum.

[00:24:00] I don't suspect that this, you know, we would have 25 people who want to do this, but say there is one or two community members, could we have them reach out through the... Through that email address. Through the email. That's there, okay, and I will work with Mrs. King to schedule time with them.

[00:24:20] it may be a telephonic conversation, it might be a Zoom, it may be in person. There will be a period of time where we will stop collecting input. So I don't want anyone to think in November that they can call me up, ring me, and say, hey, I'd like to give input.

[00:24:36] I will say that that window has closed, and we can make that. Once we have the survey ready to roll, we will make it clear this is open until X period of time. But I've already been working with Mrs. King now on a number of, I think today we probably scheduled about 20 people all along.

[00:24:55] But if folks want to meet with me outside of them being already kind of on our list of key stakeholders, they can certainly reach out via that email address or directly to Mrs. King or to call the city school's office and I will work to accommodate them.

[00:25:13] Will we have sort of a drop dead date for input that will be advertised? Absolutely, because in order for us to move forward in October with the really heavy lifting, the input has got to stop.

[00:25:28] You know, you have got to, we have got to, you know, as a group, have the desired qualities, the superintendent profile. People can share things, but it will not be in that data set that you'll get on October 6th.

[00:25:45] And as well as I would say this chair pitches, once a new superintendent is hired, people should be able to reach part of that person's role is connecting with stakeholders.

[00:26:00] And so I would also say if there's a community member that misses the stakeholder window, then, you know, we could, and this is the time to talk with me, that we should probably keep a running list. And when the new superintendent comes on board, that we share, you know, that with the new superintendent.

[00:26:20] We are incredibly grateful that you have agreed to take this on. And, I mean, just hearing you speak takes me back to the pandemic and the work that you and I. I take you back to the pandemic. Well, remember, you and I worked very closely during that time.

[00:26:37] And we had a lot of community, you know, feedback, input, whatever, however we want to. And I think that was a great strength of yours as superintendent. So I think that you know exactly what is necessary to be successful in the role.

[00:26:58] Dan can attest to that. I think he was sitting principal at the time at Providence. So we are incredibly grateful that you have agreed to do the search for us and work with us. Absolutely. Well, and I thank you for the confidence that you have to invite me back.

[00:27:17] You know, you tolerate, I don't think you tolerated me. I didn't have to talk, believe me. Tolerate was not, is not an appropriate word. We did work seamlessly together, not always agreeing on things, but always finding a path forward. We both have strong personalities. Absolutely, absolutely.

[00:27:33] And I appreciate the opportunity to do this work. As I said in the beginning of this, a part of my heart is truly in the city. I couldn't have done the work without the number of students, of staff, parents,

who I interacted with, who I believe are still here or who've gone on to do other, you know.

[00:27:59] They're just in our office. So it's kind of, you know, kind of coming home in a way. So thank you. Mr. Phillips, would you like to say a few words or have a question or two? No questions at all. I just appreciate Dr. Pajardo. first I just appreciate you all together. I just had such a great experience working with you and I wouldn't be in this seat right now if it hadn't been for you and your guidance and just again we went through the COVID process together before and after. Always gave me good guidance and you were honest with me and you were compassionate and caring and all the things that you'll bring to this role too. So I'm thankful for that and I know we're going to find a great candidate and I

[00:28:36] look forward to working with you and helping. Absolutely and a little known secret Dan was my first hire as an assistant soup I was on his panel when he was in the vetting process for Providence so to see his progression as well because I know your heart is here too it definitely is absolutely glad to be back thank you madam chair any go backs nope all right thank you and we will be spending a lot of time together I'll just say see you soon absolutely absolutely thank you Thank you, Ms. King.

[00:29:09] Thank you. Okay, we'll move on to public hearings, which we have none, and on to action items. Okay, let's approve this, what we just were discussing. The superintendent's search timeline that was presented this evening.

[00:29:29] May I have a motion? Madam Chair. Ms. Hickman. I move that the City of Fairfax School Board approve the superintendent's search timeline as printed and distributed. May I have a second? I second.

[00:29:40] Okay. Ms. Hickman has moved. Ms. Bartlemy has seconded. City of Fairfax School Board approved. The superintendent search timeline as printed and distributed. Are there any changes, additions, or modifications? Okay. Being none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Aye. Aye. No members are opposed, so the motion passes unanimously. Okay. Very quick meeting. All right. If there's nothing else before the board, I will adjourn the meeting at 7.

[00:30:13] 7-0-1.



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