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Henrico County School Board Monthly Meeting, Thursday, November 14, 2024

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[00:00:01] Good evening. Today is Thursday, November 14th, 2024. Welcome to our Henrico County School Board monthly meeting. Also, this meeting is being live streamed on the HCPS website. The first item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Is there a motion? I move that the school board approve the agenda for tonight's meeting. Is there a second? Second. All in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed?

[00:00:38] The ayes have it. The agenda is approved. On behalf of the school board, we warmly welcome our visitors and express our sincere gratitude for your presence today. Your involvement is invaluable to the progress of our schools and the broader community.

[00:00:57] Additionally, we also want to acknowledge our county manager, Mr. Vitokas, is with us this evening. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the board, and good evening to our visitors. We'll begin our meeting, as we always do, with the Pledge of Allegiance, which will be followed by a brief moment of silence.

[00:01:17] And we are so thrilled to have students from Short Pump Elementary School here this evening who are going to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. And they are joined by Ashley Council, their associate principal, and Alyssa Harrison, fifth grade teacher, who will come to the podium and introduce the students, and then we'll begin the pledge.

[00:01:36] So if you'd come forward and introduce the students, please. Thank you for having us this evening. I'd like to introduce Georgia Dickerson, Edith Waldron, Alice Coulter, Kennedy Garland, Sylvie Ruane, Kamakshi Sharma, Krishna Gosavi, Sawyer Loving, Julia Nelson, Nariksha Samanthula, Auden Disipris, and Obi Naka.

[00:02:16] Welcome. We're so pleased you're here. If you would please stand in the audience for the Pledge of Allegiance. And one additional over there, we have Jereen Robin. And lead us when you're ready.

[00:02:34] 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.

[00:02:53] And if you would please remain standing as you're able for a moment of silence. And that concludes our moment of silence. How about a round of applause as we're getting seated for our short pump students.

[00:03:13] And our next item is a performance highlight. So as you're taking a seat, we're actually going to come to the audience to join you so that we can enjoy the highlight as well. All right. Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the board, Dr. Cashwell, colleagues and guests.

[00:03:51] My name is Christopher Mosley. I am the Education Specialist for Performing Arts. And it is my pleasure to introduce for our performance highlight this evening, the Highland Springs High School and Verina High School combined course. We have members from both schools tonight.

[00:04:07] They are under the direction of Ms. Ariel Mitchell. Ms. Mitchell is in her third year of teaching in Henrico, and this is her 11th year as a music educator. She's a member of the National Association for Music Education and the Virginia Music Educators Association.

[00:04:24] They will perform an acapella selection tonight entitled Sing for Joy by Sally Albrecht. Please help me welcome them to the stage.

[00:04:35] A big thank you again to the students who joined us for leading the pledge, as well as our incredibly talented musical performers.

[00:07:48] Madam Chair, we'll now move on to the recognition portion. That was a wonderful performance. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. The next item on our agenda is our recognition portion, starting with National School Psychology Week.

[00:08:08] Ms. Shea, would you do the honors? Whereas school psychology has more than 60 years of established, recognized, and highly effective practice and standards that are articulated in the National Association of School Psychologists' model for comprehensive and integrated school psychological services.

[00:08:27] And whereas Henrico County Public Schools Department of School Psychological Services includes 27 school psychologists, three school psychology interns, and six educational diagnosticians. and whereas school psychologists help students thrive by nurturing their individual strengths across both personal and academic endeavors, and whereas school psychologists are trained to assess student and school-based barriers to living, to learning, and individual strengths,

[00:09:03] utilize data-based decision-making, implement research-driven prevention and intervention strategies and evaluate outcomes and improve accountability. Now, therefore, be it proclaimed that the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools recognizes November 11th through 15th, 2024 as National

School Psychology Week. Recognized by the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools this 14th today of November, 2024. Thank you, Mrs. Shea. We're going to keep

[00:09:37] the recognition going. Next is recognition of Family and Community Engagement Month. Mrs. Kinsella, would you do the honors? Family and Community Engagement Month, November 2024. Whereas Henrico County Public Schools recognizes that the partnership between schools, families, and the broader community is essential to the academic success and personal growth of each student. And

[00:10:06] Whereas, research consistently demonstrates that students thrive academically and emotionally when families are actively engaged in their education, supporting their goals, and fostering a culture of learning. And whereas Henrico County Public Schools is committed to strengthening family and community connections, encouraging open communication, mutual respect, and a shared dedication to the success of every child.

[00:10:36] And, whereas, the support of families and community partners enriches the educational experience by bringing diverse perspectives, skills, and resources to our schools, inspiring a positive learning environment for all.

[00:10:51] And whereas the month of November serves as an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the countless ways in which families, educators, community leaders, and volunteers work together to create inclusive and supportive schools.

[00:11:07] Now, therefore, let it be proclaimed that the School Board of Enrico County Public Schools recognizes November 2024 as Family and Community Engagement Month and encourages all families, community members, and HCPS staff to join in celebrating the invaluable role that family and community partners provide in educating and nurturing our students.

[00:11:33] recognized by the school board of Enrico County Public Schools this 14th day of November, 2024. Madam Chair. Thank you, Mrs. Kinsella, and we're going to continue with recognition. Created in 2021, the HCPS John Vitoka's Community Impact Award seeks to recognize and honor individuals who embody the spirit of service and profoundly impact our community. The award is named in honor of John Vitokas, Henrico County manager and Tucker High School alumnus, the first honorary

[00:12:11] recipient. Mr. Vitokas, a naturalized citizen and native of Greece, immigrated to the U.S. as an infant with his parents. At a young age, he learned the value of leaving it better than you founded. That foundational principle informed his legacy of community service. This annual award is presented to others who embody the same spirit. Dr. Cashwell. All right. I know we're going to get ready to honor the recipients. And while you're preparing those remarks, the board members and I

[00:12:51] are going to come forward so that we can also greet the recipient. Madam Chair, members of the board, Dr. Cashwell. My name is Mike Dussel and I am the Director of Teaching and Learning who

[00:13:25] proudly supports our ESL department led by Ms. Sarah Modrak. Now in ongoing recognition, a diverse committee of staff and community leaders considered a variety of impact criteria to help select the outstanding recipients of this award after the nomination process. Criteria included outreach to the community of Henrico, the scale of service given to others, length of impact over time and a guiding principle to put others first rather than seek recognition for themselves. Henrico County Public Schools appreciates and recognizes the work of this committee and if you are a member

[00:14:05] of this committee and are present, please stand to be recognized. Tonight we are honored to recognize both the 2023-24 school year and the 2024-25 school year John Votokas Community Impact Award winners. Our 23-24 school winner is Robert Evans. Now, Coach Evans, as he's affectionately known throughout Henrico, is the founder of East End Lightning Track and Field. He has mentored

[00:14:43] youth track and field athletes across Richmond and Henrico for over 40 years. Evans consistently shows up for children and youth, inspiring and motivating them to put forth their best effort and building the self-confidence and high esteem. He is revered by children and families across Virginia and continues to stand as a pillar of positivity and wisdom for Henrico community.

[00:15:10] Coach Evans has even impacted children and adults in this very room today. Coach Evans, thank you for your dedication to leaving Henrico better than you found it through your commitment to serving Henrico's youth. And I think there's some folks here to support Coach Evans, so do you want to stand right now and recognize him?

[00:15:29] Many outstanding nominations for the 2024-25 school year.

[00:15:59] The selection committee couldn't choose just one winner. The recipients of the 2425 John Patukas Community Impact Award are Clover and Peyton Harris and Kate Ayers. All three honorees were chosen for their commitment to the community at large, impacting both adults and children, and especially Henrico's diverse immigrant and refugee population.

[00:16:27] Peyton and Clover have transformed Henrico into a welcoming haven for immigrant families and an opportunity for locals to serve and connect. Having lived and served in international communities in Kazakhstan and Turkey, Peyton and Clover feared losing that connection upon returning to the U.S.

[00:16:45] Yet their passion found a new purpose in Henrico. As pastors of River of Life International Community Church, They provide a pivotal, vital support system for hundreds of families from diverse backgrounds. These supports include hosting English and citizenship classes, cultural and American celebrations, spaces for fostering connection through movie nights, art and more, and resource mobilization for new arrivals, helping to ease their transition to the United States.

[00:17:19] Knowing what it feels like to be an immigrant, they visit homes and participate in cultural traditions. demonstrating empathy and understanding. Peyton greets with basic phrases that somehow he learns in their native languages, providing that sense of belonging and bringing a smile to their faces.

[00:17:40] Clover ensures that everyone feels special by incorporating cultural elements into celebrations. Their work serves as a powerful example of the spirit of service and the positive impact it can have on our community. Thank you, Peyton and Clover, for your dedication and service to Henrico families.

[00:17:57] Please come forward to be recognized.

[00:18:20] Former special education teacher supports a wide variety of community through her work as the executive director with Re-Establish Richmond.

[00:19:00] Through her work, Re-Establish Richmond has expanded their reach to include all newcomers to the country, offering driving classes, community support, education, and even a dedicated multicultural festival. In her spare time, she often volunteers at Henrico schools and partners with several departments in HCPS. She continually advocates for all students to have equitable access to the same great

opportunities. Kate is a past member of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board and her dedicated efforts continue to build a supportive, trustworthy community for refugees

[00:19:38] and immigrants living in Richmond. Ms. Ayers, please come forward to be recognized. Tom, I'd [00:20:31] like to invite Mr. Votokas up to the podium to offer his remarks. Madam Chair, members of the school board, Superintendent Rousseau, I want to start by thanking Dr. Dessault and Sarah Modrak and the committee. You've got some remarkable employees who took on the difficult task of selecting these outstanding honorees who embody the foundational principles of community service

[00:21:09] and servant leadership. You know, to say that I'm deeply honored and humbled would be an understatement to be here this evening as we celebrate the remarkable contributions of our 23-24 honoree, Robert Evans, Coach Evans, once again, and our 24-25 honorees, Clover and Peyton Harris and Kate Ayers. You know, collectively, through your tireless work, coaching our youth,

[00:21:42] To greatness on the track and in outreach and support for our immigrant and refugee communities, you foster connectivity and selflessly give your time and resources. You have demonstrated what it means to leave it better than you found it.

[00:22:02] Your efforts have left a positive and lasting mark on our county and the many lives you've touched. To each of you, thank you for your dedication, compassion, and remarkable commitment to our county. You've made our community a better place, and I'm deeply grateful to each of you.

[00:22:20] You know, it was a moment of just reflection. I think we were talking just a little while ago, both Tucker graduates, and reflecting back to when we graduated from Tucker High School, which would have been the early and mid-80s, there really wasn't a whole lot of diversity throughout the school system. And now you look at Tucker, one of the most diverse schools from what I understand in the Commonwealth, number one. And what you all are doing to bring in and

[00:22:58] welcome new communities, I wish you had been here when my mom and dad arrived in Richmond. It would have been an absolute, it would have been remarkable. But thank you because you define the heart of our county.

[00:23:14] To the school board, I want to thank you for starting your day with Dr. Cashwell and I. We did the state of the county at 7.30 in the morning. So we've all been kind of running since then. And I want to thank you for your service. Thank you for everything that you all do. Have a great evening, everyone.

[00:23:55] All right. Congratulations again to the award winners. Our next item are our Henrico Highlights, and it's our time to showcase incredible teaching, learning, and innovation that's taking place all across Henrico County schools.

[00:24:12] And tonight's highlight hits just the right note as we take in the sights and sounds of the annual Marching Band Showcase. Take a look, or should I say, lend an ear.

[00:24:25] Marching Band Showcase is designed as a space for us to just perform, no stress, just exhibition, no competition, no trophies, share with the community what we've been doing.

[00:24:58] I love seeing other bands perform. It's great seeing how we perform and then seeing another band. The difference is really nice to see. I am on the flag squad. When we get on the field, we're in parade rest, we get called to attention, and I'm like, okay, I got this, we got this, we're going to do it.

[00:25:19] And my toss was lovely, it was calm, it was collected, it was in time, it was really fun. I'm a dance girl for the band. When you listen to music you want to dance so you know we just get the people hyped.

[00:25:35] Kind of like a dream. I feel like I'm a pop star in a movie and all eyes are on me and it's just like lights, camera, action. We kind of want to show off a little bit. We want to show off our school and our school's potential to be great.

[00:25:57] and it's like you're coming to my school to watch us play and also have fun with us so we'd like to show off ourselves and how good we are i play the trombone i think it was a little special i guess for me specifically because i'm a senior it was my last time doing it so i think there's a lot of a lot of heart in that so i think i think there's a lot of sentiment

[00:26:22] and nostalgia behind it in our show this year specifically i really enjoy the company front It's when we're all in a line, and there are two lines stacked, and then we play the theme from The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

[00:26:49] I am the drum major, one of two drum majors. You're standing on the podium just conducting with the big arms, and when you pull up the big arms, it's just like the crowd goes wild. The flags, color guard with just the big strides. It's just in your face, like big energy music, so that's my favorite part.

[00:27:07] The six C's, you know, those things that come up, the communication, creative thinking, all of those things are connected. And so marching band is a great example of those things coming to life. I love the showcase because we get to see all the cool things that the other bands do.

[00:27:32] And the support of the band members is just really great. Like, all the bands in Henrico are doing really great things. I love just the community it builds since day one.

[00:27:49] The drum line, I see those as like my brothers and cousins and sisters. It was very nice to always be able to do something because I always like to be doing something. It's just so much fun to be here and be with everybody that I know. And we're all just going out there and putting our best foot forward and doing what we have to do.

[00:28:07] Well, the pageantry and excitement of the marching band showcase are phenomenal. But did you know that the event is also a tremendous example of our Henrico Lerner profile coming to life?

[00:28:28] Students are demonstrating collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and mastery of math and geometry concepts needed for the intricate field presentations. And that, of course, is music to my ears. Moving from song to skateboards now as we celebrate an unusual heart of Henrico.

[00:28:47] As educators, everyone in Henrico County Public Schools is committed to building relationships with our students and making connections with them as individuals. For some, that's through a band or athletics, and for others, the connection point is academic and career interests, and sometimes a relationship can be built based on something as simple as a skateboard.

[00:29:10] Take a look. You guys have been so resilient. You guys have been so brave and so courageous that I thought to myself, what better way to celebrate than to have a skateboard party?

[00:29:32] - So Josh, I want you to open your eyes. This is a skateboarder. - What is it? - Nice. - Nice. - We had a former principal come to our county, and he gave this huge talk about what it means to be relentless.

[00:29:57] - You're not a judge. You ain't one person sitting in this room. They're just not-- - If there's someone sitting in here right now that thinks they know a kid that is self-judged needs a community needs a connection get crazy off the count of three if i see you getting it one two three you were the first person that came to my mind when he said i got a skateboard i'm giving out and i did scream as loud as i could the brand is relentless right because that's mr brewer's message to all educators to all students to be relentless to be relentless in your pursuit

[00:30:35] of mental health of mental wellness of just being yourself and it's just excellent so what did we say, you guys are what? Relentless. You never give up, no matter what. In the back of the skateboard, it like reminded me like I have to like keep like pushing myself to do it. Like I can do it. Like nothing can stop me, nothing at all. I'm being resilient today because I'm independent. I'm very like loving about the skateboard and I'm really like starting to try,

[00:31:07] try, try. Thank you, Mr. Brewer, very much for this group. And I would also like to thank Hamish Brewer for donating a skateboard to one very lucky Henrico student. Mr. Brewer is an accomplished principal, author, and motivational speaker known as the Tattooed Skateboarding Principal, and he leads professional learning and consults with school divisions and companies on topics such as leadership and culture and organizational performance and change and, of course, improvement.

[00:31:41] And as you saw in the video, he joins the Henrico team in embracing every student every day. That concludes our highlight. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. The next item on our agenda is the mission statement.

[00:31:58] Mr. Young, would you please read our mission statement? Absolutely. Enrico County Public Schools, an innovative leader in educational excellence, will actively engage our students in diverse educational, social, and civic learning experiences that inspire and empower them to become contributing citizens.

[00:32:16] Thank you. The next item is our public forum. This is a time when citizens are invited to address the school board on any matter of concern about the school division. Citizens have signed up in advance and will be given three minutes to address the school board.

[00:32:34] Speakers will be called to speak in the order in which they signed up and may not relinquish their spot to someone else. We ask that each speaker come to the microphone and clearly state your name and school affiliation, if applicable, and the subject of your remarks before speaking.

[00:32:54] After stating your name, please place the number you were given in the cart near the podium. Speakers must present their remarks to the school board and not the audience, and may provide copies of their comments to the school board clerk.

[00:33:10] The use of obscenity or defamation is strictly prohibited and will be ruled out of order. To assist you in tracking your time, there is a timekeeping system displaying the elapsed time on the screen. Speakers will also receive a notice from me when the time has expired.

[00:33:30] The school board is here today to hear from you. We will not be responding to speakers' concerns or questions during the public forum. However, a Henrico staff member will follow up with speakers. Stakeholders have also had the opportunity to provide written comments through an online form in advance of the meeting.

[00:33:53] Those comments are shared with the school board members prior to attending the meeting and posted in board docs. Equal consideration and attention will be given to both written and in-person comments.

[00:34:08] To the contributors of written commentary and speakers assembled here today, thank you in advance for your participation. Your presence, expertise, concerns, acknowledgement of progress, and engagement enhance our understanding of our community's diverse perspective.

[00:34:27] Once again, thank you. And we will start with speaker number one. Speaker number two. My name is Marlene Sherlock, and our family lives in the Fairfield District.

[00:35:02] When I called Ms. Burton yesterday to be added to this evening's public comment speaking list, I wasn't quite sure what I was going to talk about and casually thought it might be about our cell phone policy and whether or not it meets the Virginia Department of Education recommendation. That's still a question I have, but after reading more thoroughly through today's agenda, I finally noticed a new addition of a half-credit class for the health component to be paired with JROTC to satisfy the health PE graduation requirements for 9th and 10th grade.

[00:35:35] As a very proud mom of two Marine Corps JROTC cadets at J.R. Tucker High School, one alum and another in their third year, I applaud the district's willingness to create this new option. I closely followed Virginia House Bill 98, which would ultimately affect State Code Section 22.1, and there was considerable discussion over if school divisions were already allowed to accept JRTC's satisfaction of PE requirements and whether divisions would be required or not to accept them.

[00:36:06] The compromise was to expressly allow schools to do so. Since Henrico currently chooses to combine the state PE and health requirements into one class there was some concern whether the current curriculums regardless of branch could or would be sufficient. I'm very glad Henrico has stepped up to the plate and created this health component to make the spirit of House Bill 98 happen. For freshmen and sophomores and even more so for those in specialty centers it can be difficult to fit JROTC in what is often their sole elective. Giving students the option to combine the rigors of JROTC activities including

[00:36:43] PT with the new health class will make JROTC more enticing for students to explore. Today's modern JROTC programs aren't the military recruiting vehicles you might remember from years gone by. The programs emphasize discipline, decorum, patriotism, and service.

[00:37:03] Cadets aren't just taught leadership principles. They're given active opportunities to put those lessons into action on a daily basis. Tucker, JROTC cadets have participated in national academic and drill competitions, toured a Navy amphibious assault ship, attended the Oceana Air Show with a flyover that'll just take your breath away, and met the sergeant major of the entire Marine Corps at the historic 8th and I barracks in Washington, D.C.

[00:37:30] Our kids have taken a broad cross-section of course offerings from HCPS, and I know they would tell you JROTC has provided some of the most life-ready skills. As a third-generation Army family, it hurts a little bit, but I have learned to say, hoorah. Thank you, thank you, thank you for making it easier for future cadets to leverage their active JRTC participation into part of their graduation requirements.

[00:37:55] Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number three. Speaker number three. All right, that concludes our public forum section.

[00:38:12] The next item are approval of consent items. Dr. Cashwell? Yes, they are consent items and can be taken as a block. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. Before moving forward, I want to turn the floor over to Mrs. Kinsella for any feedback or comments.

[00:38:29] Yes, Chair Atkins, I would appreciate if we could break out item 9.02, which is the approval of proposal for an asset management project, phase one, mechanical facility condition assessments. I think to separate this out and highlight it would be important given the topic of conversation that we've been talking about in terms of assessing our buildings.

[00:38:57] All right, Dr. Cashwell, if he would start with the first and we'll flow on down. All right, so for the item just mentioned 9.02, I actually saw Mr. Pritchard jump up excitedly because he's excited about this item, but I think I can speak to it and he can fill in any gaps. But again, seeking your approval here for an asset management project for mechanical and facility condition assessments. And so as the board knows, we certainly engage in ongoing preventative maintenance for our HVAC systems, as well as have a replacement cycle. But this takes a much more comprehensive look at all of our school systems and, you

[00:39:34] know, the multi parts related to HVAC, not to get overly complicated, but chillers, air handlers, etc. So this is a more comprehensive study to accompany our regular preventative maintenance schedules and replacement cycles. As you know, we've been dealing with some challenges, some due to age, others unforeseen, and want to make sure we really understand all of our systems and their age condition so that we can best be prepared to address needs. Any other feedback or questions all right with that i will move forward with consent is there a motion i move that the

[00:40:14] school board accept adopt approve and or award items 9.01 through 9.13 on the consent agenda as presented? 9.14. Wait a minute, 9.11. I believe there's 9.11. There are items 9.01 through 9. actually 11, which is the academic and career planning guide.

[00:40:46] Oh yeah, it is. 9.13. That's correct. Oh yes, that is correct. You were correct. all right is there a second second all in favor say aye would you mind clarifying which consent agenda items would you like me to say it again yes please all right i move that the school board accept adopt approve and or award items 9.01 through 9.13 on the consent agenda as presented

[00:41:17] all right is there a second all in favor say aye aye any opposed the ayes have it they have been The next item on our agenda is unfinished business.

[00:41:39] Is there any unfinished business? Hearing none, we will move on to new business. Colleagues, do you have any new business? Hearing none, we'll move on to the last agenda item which is the announcement of meeting dates.

[00:41:57] The next meeting will be a work session scheduled on Thursday, December 12, 2024 at the New Newbridge Learning Center Auditorium. The meeting time may be adjusted as needed and this meeting is adjourned.



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