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Henrico County School Board Work Session, Thursday, December 18, 2025

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[00:00:57] Good afternoon. Welcome to the Thursday, December 18th, 2025 work session of the Henrico County School Board. The first item on the agenda is the Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence. Superintendent Cox. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America

[00:01:34] and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Please remain standing for a moment of silence. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Cox.

[00:02:00] The next item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Colleagues, is there a motion? Is there a motion for the approval? I'll make the school board approve the agenda for today's meeting. Moved by Ms. Kinsella. Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Mr. Young. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The agenda has been approved. The next item on the THE AGENDA IS CLOSED SESSION.

[00:02:27] COLLEAGUES, IS THERE A MOTION? I MOVE THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR THE DISCUSSION OF MATTERS UNDER ITEM A1 OF SECTION 2.2-3711 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA 1950 AS AMENDED, PERTAINING TO THE ASSIGNMENT, APPOINTMENT, PROMOTION, PERFORMANCE, DEMOTION, SALARIES, DISCIPLINING, OR RESIGNATION OF SPECIFIC SCHOOL BOARD EMPLOYEES.

[00:02:52] MOVED BY MR. IRVING, IS THERE A SECOND? SECOND. SECONDED BY MR. YOUNG. those in favor say aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. We're now moving into closed session.

[00:03:02] We will resume open meeting at its conclusion. Welcome back. Colleagues, do we have a certification

[00:16:04] of closed session? Move that the school board certify by a recorded vote that to the best of each school board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified AND THE MOTION AUTHORIZING THE CLOSED MEETING WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED IN CLOSED MEETING. MOVED BY MR. YOUNG, IS THERE A SECOND?

[00:16:29] SECOND. SECOND BY MS. ATKINS. ALL THOSE IN FAVOR SAY AYE. ANY OPPOSED? THE AYES HAVE IT. CLOSED SESSION HAS BEEN CERTIFIED. FOR THE NEXT ITEMS, I WILL TURN IT OVER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT. THANK YOU, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD. GOOD AFTERNOON. THE FIRST TWO ITEMS ARE POLICY-RELATED, AND ARE FOR YOUR REVIEW FOR THIS MEETING AND WOULD BE SEEKING YOUR APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED changes at the January 22nd meeting.

[00:16:54] The first one is a recommendation to retire policy P1-02 and include relevant language from that policy in the newly revised P1-01 goals of education as they pertain to individuals. And again, this particular policy and the next one are part of a comprehensive policy review.

[00:17:16] QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT I'LL JUST SAY 5.01 OR 5.02 SINCE THEY'RE TIED TOGETHER AS THE SUPERINTENDENT DESIGNATED. OKAY GREAT. ALL RIGHT. FOR THE NEXT ITEM THE BOARD WILL RECEIVE A PRESENTATION THAT WILL JUST PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE REQUESTED BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND OFFER CERTAINLY AN OPPORTUNITY SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS RELATED TO THAT AND Rachel Thayer is here to provide that presentation.

[00:17:55] Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the board, and Dr. Cashwell. Today I will be presenting the board with final requested boundary adjustment scenarios that respond to your August 28th request. This is the final presentation to quickly review the scenarios being considered for your vote today.

[00:18:14] Starting with Carver, the functional capacity for Carver is at 92.5% this school year, an increase of 4.3% from last school year. estimated impact of this scenario remains at eight elementary school students placing Carver at approximately 94 percent functional capacity and Mayberry at 93 percent this scenario would be implemented for school year 2026-27 with current year fourth graders being given the option to remain at Mayberry for their final elementary school year for Kweakwason this scenario is now only impacting the same neighborhood as seen in the Carver elementary scenario this would have

[00:18:53] these students moving from Tuckahoe Middle to Cuyahuan Middle the estimated impact of this scenario would be at around six middle school students placing Cuyahuan at 78.9 percent and Tuckahoe at 95.5 percent this scenario has an implementation date of school year 2027-28 and at that time school year 2026-27 seventh grade seventh graders would be granted the transition option of remaining at Tuckahoe Middle those are current year sixth grade students

[00:19:25] looking at the freeman scenario this scenario places freeman at an estimated 94.4 functional capacity and godwin at 94.3 functional capacity prior to ace center students being accounted for this scenario will impact an estimated 133 students and has an implementation date of school year 2026-27 for

the board's decision all current year 9th 10th and 11th grade students in the impacted areas will be given the option to stay at freeman until they graduate tucker has

[00:20:02] experienced a decrease in functional capacity by 1.9 percent from last school year to this school year the two sections under consideration would impact an estimated 274 students 168 in section one and 106 in section two this scenario would see tucker at an estimated 88.6 functional capacity and hermitage at an estimated 96.1 functional capacity prior to a center impacts being accounted for this scenario has an implementation of school year 2026-27 and would again provide the

[00:20:35] transition option to remain at tucker to current year 9th 10th and 11th graders finally reviewing the henrico scenario henrico has decreased in functional capacity by 2.6 percent from last school year to the current school year this scenario would impact an estimated of 242 total current students 181 in section 1 60 in section 2 and 1 in section 3 this scenario places henrico at an estimated 80.6 functional capacity once the new cyber security center and fairways development

[00:21:10] estimated student impact is yield is accounted for highland springs would be at an estimated 83.1 and hermitage would be at an estimated 73 this scenario has a school year 2026-27 implementation date and current year 9th 10th and 11th graders would be provided the option to remain at their previously zoned school this slide provides an overview of the high schools when all three scenarios are implemented simultaneously hermitage is impacted by two scenarios so it is important to note that those figures will not match prior slides for their estimated enrollments or functional

[00:21:47] capacity percentages and for the board's convenience here's a chart displaying the day one and day two estimated functional capacities for all six potentially impacted high schools using the school year 2025-26 enrollment data. Given the board's original timeline, this meeting serves as the stage for any final deliberations on the five scenarios presented today. After this presentation concludes, the board will move into a vote.

[00:22:17] Subsequent to your final decision, staff will begin to communicate with the impacted families in each of these zones about the changes to support students and families through transitions. You've received these scenarios, seen community feedback summaries and reports, ASKED QUESTIONS AND MADE ADJUSTMENTS ALONG THE WAY. NOW THE BOARD WILL PARTICIPATE IN ANY FINAL DELIBERATIONS AND MAKE A DETERMENT ON THE SCENARIOS THROUGH A VOTE. THIS CONCLUDES MY PRESENTATION.

[00:22:43] THANK YOU. THANK YOU SO MUCH MS. THAYER NOT ONLY FOR YOUR PRESENTATION TODAY BUT YOUR WORK THROUGHOUT THE FALL ON THIS PROCESS. THANK YOU SO MUCH. COLLEAGUES, WE'LL MOVE THROUGH FOR ANY KIND OF QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS BEFORE WE MOVE INTO VOTING. I'LL START WITH MR. YOUNG.

[00:23:01] AND IT'S DIRECTLY FOR QUESTIONS FOR RACHEL. IT COULD BE FOR RACHEL, COULD BE FOR COLLEAGUES. OK. BUT FIRST OF ALL, RACHEL, YOU, MR. PRITCHARD, MS. COI, DR. CASHWELL, STAFF TEAM, YOU GUYS DID A PHENOMENAL JOB GIVING US THE INFORMATION THAT WE'RE GOING TO VOTE ON TONIGHT.

[00:23:22] I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH. THE PROCESS WAS TRANSPARENT, IT WAS THOUGHT OUT. I KNOW THE PHONE CALLS YOU RECEIVED, THE EMAILS, EVERYTHING, RIGHT? You were so professional with dealing with all of our questions every single time, and you were flexible.

[00:23:40] I know we started this process, it was a lot bigger than what it is now. So we listened to the community, we received our feedback, we made changes. You made changes on the fly for us, I mean, up until the day of sometimes. So thank you all for the work you've done, but I do want to express my support for the redistricting efforts that have been put forward and worked through for the entire year.

[00:24:01] This plan allows us to reduce overcrowding, relieve pressure on schools that have had capacity issues, and then increase capacity at other schools in a thoughtful and intentional way when we went about this. So I do want to say that I do support this scenario right now as is, and I do want the public to know that the decision weighs heavily on me and probably some of my other board members here as well.

[00:24:23] That's why the process is tough, it's complicated, and it's not only the data and the planning, But you also have to have compassion when you're dealing with families and people that have purchased homes and moving. And I just don't want the public to think that we take that lightly as we move and as we vote through this process today that we do understand.

[00:24:41] But I do think we're doing the right thing by our high schools and by our students and our staff. And I think that's important to know. And on that, I'll yield back to you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Young. Ms. Kinsella.

[00:25:01] Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have any questions of you, Ms. Thayer. But I would like to thank everyone on the staff for what Mr. Young said for their work during this process and definitely the community for their feedback, whether it was online, in person, in the grocery store, wherever it was that you gave feedback, it's appreciated.

[00:25:23] The package we're voting on today fails to address certain issues of concern in the Brooklyn District. They should have been addressed pursuant to the goals for this process established by this board in September 2025. For example, there are currently five middle schools feeding into Tucker High School. Every other high school has two or three middle schools feeding into it.

[00:25:46] How can you have a sense of community and cohesiveness when a high school is fed by five middle schools? I'd like to personally thank every educator that contacted me to talk about the difficulty, especially in one of the most difficult transition years of ninth grade, and how difficult it is to meet the needs of students coming to you from five different middle schools. Also of concern in my district is the continued prioritization and displacement of

[00:26:20] zoned students in favor of program and center enrollment. A perfect example of this is and will continue to be at Moody Middle where a program makes up 62% of enrollment and the majority of zone students have been displaced over time. Despite my continued advocacy to fix these things, there was not enough support from my colleagues or the division leadership to do so. And this is just my opportunity for me to share how my constituents and others in Enrico schools have been asking for these issues to be fixed for years and are disappointed in this process for ignoring

[00:26:56] their concerns on those matters. All that said, the redistricting package we're voting on today includes some much-needed change. It alleviates capacity concerns at both Tucker and Freeman High Schools, and it also corrects a handful of K-12 feeder pattern issues and allows for rising 5th, 7th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders to remain at their current school if they have transportation.

[00:27:25] Madam Chair, the floor is yours. Thank you, Ms. Kinsella. Mr. Irving? Yeah, I'd like to echo the sentiment of my colleagues and just thank the staff for all of your work I I know that this is an enormous

undertaking and it's something that uh you know I think doesn't happen often um and I do know that you guys worked tirelessly so we are and I am incredibly appreciative of all the work that y'all put into this process we couldn't have done it without you I mean you know we we set up the timeline and we made the requests and whatnot but the staff are really the ones who did all of the

[00:28:02] the heavy lifting and you know we're forever grateful for y'all you know I'd like to echo what Mr. Young said about the the process I think that the process while nothing's ever perfect but I do think that it was a vast improvement over the last time that this was undertaken I think that it was transparent and I think that we should always be very it's always very important to remember that just because you may not like a specific result that doesn't mean that process itself is bad. And I think sometimes people confuse the two things and if the process is going to produce a result that I don't like, that means the process is bad, but that's not the case.

[00:28:41] I think that we have been very transparent. I think, you know, our community has shared their input and we appreciate that. And we will certainly, um, you know, make tweaks to this process moving forward with recommendations from the community to make sure that they know that we have heard them. And, you know, I think throughout this, we we've shown that we have heard them.

[00:29:00] we took scenarios off when the community was not supportive of them and we didn't think that we were doing the best thing possible for our students and staff. So I just want to say that I think the process was solid. We will improve it. It can be improved. Nothing's ever perfect, but I would be remiss if I didn't say that I think that this is still has come a long way.

[00:29:27] in terms of you know what we're doing today I think that when I started when we started back in September I said that for me to undertake a redistricting effort and to actually move kids it needs to accomplish one of two things either school has too many students in it in the case of Tucker and Freeman or too few students in the case of Henrico and I think that these scenarios should they happen accomplish both of those goals and reducing capacity at the the schools that were over capacity and giving you know henrico a sense of community and bringing

[00:30:02] them to a level um that feels like a responsible steward of public resources um so you know i i think that on net this is this is a scenario that accomplished both of those goals and i'm i'm glad that we've gotten there thank you mr irving miss atkins i share the same sentiments i want to begin by acknowledging the work as well uh it's how we got here so i commend this board our chair our vice chair in engaging in the hard and uncomfortable work of stewarding a process

[00:30:38] that is very sensitive and deeply personal and this time um it really did with this process compared to the last one was more transparent and there was a willingness to sit with some very difficult truths in this process and we're reaching a point where we are prepared to vote on an issue like this and that really does require acknowledgement so i'm appreciative and again of the chair the vice chair and this board i also know that water gets hot before it

[00:31:14] boils and so throughout this process i've kind of used that approach to take temperature checks so pausing to assess progress or whether it was regression or whether we needed to slow down while staying grounded in our why, while staying grounded in our policies, and staying grounded in the shared journey towards the 2030 academic achievement goal. And for those that are watching, so that goal is very clear. It is all students will engage in rigorous, meaningful learning experiences and receive the support they need to succeed.

[00:31:54] So as we consider these boundary scenarios tonight, I have to be clear that boundary changes should be a last resort. They should only be used when every other option has been fully exhausted and when the data shows a clear long-term solution, not a temporary fix.

[00:32:13] So loved ones for Verina, Sanston, and Highland Springs, the scenario before us would reassign students at Springer Nation to Henrico High School. And families who choose to remain at Springer Nation would be responsible for their own transportation. Yes, that is true.

[00:32:32] I do hear your concerns about the Henrico scenario, and I do agree, and they are valid concerns. And those questions, how do we address absenteeism without offering public transportation for Springer students? I do hear you.

[00:32:47] How do we ensure that those students will continue receiving the opportunity school supports that currently don't exist at Henrico High School? And then that last question that I've been getting over and over again is who carries the burden of a decision disrupts highland springs high school students and families um and then the one that is usually thrown back at me is our own logo which is the right to achieve with the support to succeed and so how do i ensure that those springer students receive access to the opportunity school supports

[00:33:24] how do i ensure stability with transportation ultimately resulting in their success and so i i do think about that often it does weigh on me heavenly it weighs on me as i speak through this microphone and as a certain servant leader i do i ask myself questions and the two main questions are am i truly listening you know and with the information that's confidential and the information that's shared publicly am i listening am i paying attention and i have listened i've listened to the surveys the emails the town halls the community meetings the one-on-one conversations

[00:34:03] and i will tell you one of the most important settings is sitting with students and asking them how they felt about the henrico scenario and it was shocking because not one of them supported it and i then began reaching out to holland springs high school alumni to get their thoughts on it as well and that one of those individuals i spoke to supported it i then began revisiting our former school board meeting i believe it was in november meeting and dr cashwell shared trend

[00:34:40] data showing continued enrollment decline across all of our high schools district-wide mrs cancello raised concerns about tucker having five feeder middle school patterns and she did so again today along with some of the implications of hermitage mr irving questioned whether declining enrollment across the division and if any of these moves we're making are truly necessary mr young spoke to the henrico scenario you know referencing reunification along with you know the jv girls

[00:35:15] basketball team since then there's even more additional information both public and confidential whether we're talking about the video e accountability standards and many other things and so holland spring sanston and varina i am listening i am responsible and ultimately i serve you and i also know when we disrupt our communities without a long-term solution it does found foundationally weakens that community and so i do urge us as a board to continue the work

[00:35:50] to fully exhaust all alternatives and focus on addressing root causes root causes to increase POPULATION IN OUR SCHOOLS, ROOT CAUSES TO DECREASE POPULATION IN OUR SCHOOLS, AND NOT REPEATING CYCLES OF FAST-PACED TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS. CHAIR SHEA, THE FLOOR IS YOURS. THANK YOU, COLLEAGUES.

[00:36:16] ANY REDIRECTS? THIS HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING PROCESS, BUT I AM GLAD WE ARE AT A DECISION POINT, SO OUR STUDENTS WILL KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING NEXT YEAR AND HOPEFULLY THAT WILL BE IN BUILDINGS THAT ARE UNDER 100% CAPACITY. SO RIGHT AFTER WINTER BREAK, OUR STUDENTS AND OUR SECONDARY STUDENTS WILL NEED TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT ENLISTING IN WHAT COURSEWORK THEY'LL BE TAKING

[00:36:53] AND FOR OUR RISING 9TH GRADERS, WHETHER THEY'RE GOING TO ENROLL IN SPECIALTY CENTERS THAT THEY'VE BEEN EXCEPTED TO. SO IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE COME TO THIS DECISION TODAY SO THAT THEY HAVE all the information that they need when we return to winter break to make decisions for themselves.

[00:37:09] So with that, colleagues, are there any motions on the floor with regard to the boundaries? I move that the school board adopt the boundary adjustments presented at today's meeting to include Rudy Carver, Section 1 Mayberry to Carver, Coyacuson Middle Section 1 Tuckahoe to Coyacuson, douglas freeman sections one two and three freeman to godwin jr tucker sections one and two tucker to hermitage henrico high school section one hermitage to henrico and section two and three

[00:37:49] highland springs to henrico moved by mr irving is there a second second seconded by mr young all THOSE IN FAVOR, PLEASE SAY AYE. ANY OPPOSED, PLEASE SAY NAY. ANY ABSTENTIONS. WITH THAT, THE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED. I JUST NEED CLARIFICATION. I WANT TO MAKE SURE

[00:38:25] THAT OUR RECORDS ARE ACCURATE THAT I AM A NO. THANK YOU. SO LET THE RECORD REFLECT THAT MS. ATKINS IS A NO. ALL OTHER MEMBERS ARE A YES. THANK YOU. AND THAT CONCLUDES ITEMS FROM ME MADAM CHAIR. THANK YOU SUPERINTENDENT AND AGAIN THANK YOU TO OUR PLANNING DEPARTMENT FOR THEIR EXTENSIVE WORK THIS FALL ON THIS PROCESS. NEXT ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS UNFINISHED

[00:39:00] BUSINESS. COLLEAGUES DO YOU HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS? I DO CHAIR SHEA. I WANTED TO SEE IF THERE WAS DR. CASHWELL AN UPDATE ON THE BOARD WAS UNANIMOUS IN EXPLORING HAVING A STUDENT PARTICIPATE on the board is there any update on that certainly um at the board's request i did spend some time thinking about our structure looking at others and ways we might leverage our student advisory or the superintendent student advisory committee so i think there are a number of potential ways

[00:39:36] should the board want to move forward on exploring those any more in depth where students from that THAT ADVISORY GROUP WHO ARE ALREADY IN A REGULAR MEETING STRUCTURE COULD PARTICIPATE IN SOME WAY, WHETHER IT BE ONE DESIGNEES OR PERHAPS A NUMBER OF DESIGNEES IN A ROTATIONAL STYLE TO PARTICIPATE IN SOME WAY WITH BOARD BUSINESS.

[00:39:56] AND I'M HAPPY TO EXPLORE THAT FURTHER OR BRING A PROPOSAL FORWARD FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION IF THAT'S YOUR WILL. THANK YOU. COLLEAGUES, ANY OTHER UNFINISHED BUSINESS? NEXT ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS NEW BUSINESS. COLLEAGUES, DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW BUSINESS?

[00:40:14] ALL RIGHT COLLEAGUES THE NEXT ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS A PUBLIC INPUT SESSION FOR THE BUDGET PRIORITIES THAT IS AT 6:15 SO WE ARE NOW GOING TO RECESS UNTIL 6:15.



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