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Manassas City School Board Meeting - June 23, 2026

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtmoMEC7qP0>

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[00:00:05] - Good evening. - Could we all please stand for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:00:29] - Public, my nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. - Could you please call the roll? - Yes, ma'am.

[00:00:47] Chair Spall? - Present. - Vice Chair Jones? - Here. - Mrs. Siebert? - Mrs. Stevens? - Present. - Mrs. Brescia? - Present. - Ms. Brown? - Here. - Ms. Miles? - Here.

[00:01:02] - Thank you. Madam Chair, we have a quorum. - Dr. Newman, are there any additions or deletions to the agenda? - No, ma'am. - Chair, I move that the school board of the city in Manassas approve the public meeting agenda as presented.

[00:01:17] - Second. - I have a motion by Ms. Stevens, seconded by Ms. Dr. Jones, that we approve the public agenda. Any discussion? All those in favor?

[00:01:33] Any opposed? It's a 6-0 vote. We will move to board committee reports. Anybody have a board committee report? - Chair, I do. - Great.

[00:01:48] you thank you the policy committee meeting will be tomorrow Wednesday 20 June 24th at 3 p.m. at central office the VSBA is issued near approximately 60 policy updates several of which require board approval by the end of July during last week's retreat we discussed creating a more user-friendly approach to presenting the policy updates to the public one that is clear accessible and easy to understand

at tomorrow's committee meeting will begin brainstorming practical strategies to improve implement this improved format thank you much any other the next item

[00:02:28] is the consent agenda these items are considered routine and may be approved by a single motion unless a board member requests an item to be removed for separate discussion can I get a motion chair I move that the school board of the city of Manassas approve the consent meeting the consent agenda as presented I have a motion by Miss Stevens seconded by Miss Brescia that the school board of city of Manassas approved the consent agenda as presented Is there any discussion? All in favor? Any opposed? That is also a 6-0 motion, Ms. Garza.

[00:03:02] We'll now move to discussion agenda. Oh, I sure did. I'm sorry. Okay. At this time, we welcome members of the public who wish to speak about services, policies, and affairs of the City of Manassas Public Schools.

[00:03:20] Because we have an agenda to complete, we ask that comments be limited to three minutes. We appreciate the time you've taken to be here, and we treat public comments as a public hearing and do not engage in conversation with speakers. The lack of an immediate response to your comments should not be taken as a lack of interest or concern.

[00:03:36] Please be respectful when presenting your comments. Do we have anyone signed up? Okay. Anybody want to speak? Okay. Now we're going to move on to the discussion agenda, and the first item is accountability.

[00:03:53] Dr. Jennifer Cassata executive director of accountability and finance will present an update on the process and timeline for the development of our new strategic plan thank you dr. I can tell you when to if you want I'll start good evening chair Spall vice chair Jones school board members and dr. Newman tonight I will be providing an update on the process and timeline for the

[00:04:26] development of the new strategic plan to the school board and the public switch alright the purpose of tonight's presentation is to provide the board and public with an update on the process mcps is using to develop the new strategic plan which will launch next july so july of 2027 and cover fiscal years 28 through 32. i'll cover the process we're using and some themes that have emerged thus far i will discuss the components that currently exist in our plan and what will be included in the structure of the new plan i will conclude by sharing the timeline and next steps it's important to note at the outset that mcps will

[00:05:06] be maintaining the same architectural metaphor with student academic success supported by pillars At the outside of the development process we engaged a strategic plan steering committee. This committee is a representative group from across all schools and central office. The group was brought together first in December of 2025. In December the group reviewed the existing MCPS vision and mission statements and identified a set of potential core values that have been considered by additional groups. This spring they provided input into key components and potential structure after reviewing examples from other school divisions. This group will continue to review drafts and provide input throughout the fall this spring was phase one of the development process

[00:05:45] over the course of the spring we collected data from a variety of stakeholder groups i met with principals and assistant principals during their respective regular meetings met with multiple central office departments and we discussed the strategic plan at cabinet meetings also held teacher and school-based support staff focus groups the invitations to these focus groups were provided through principals to

all staff these sessions were extremely helpful in the development of the new plan each group reviewed the vision and mission statements and provided feedback each group also looked at one or more pillars to provide insights and meaningful sorry insights into potential indicators of success or success metrics finally each group identified

[00:06:20] barriers to success for more students as the school board members know i provided an update on this process at last week's school board retreat in addition school board members reviewed and provided input in division and mission statements school board members also engaged in an activity aimed at narrowing and defining a set of core values for mcps across all groups so far, some key themes have emerged. Overall, there is support for maintaining the structural concepts and pillars. Later in the presentation, I will discuss how the new iteration of the plan will go deeper with each pillar. One theme that has emerged is that the culture of caring pillar needs a new name to focus on climate and environment, as well as to be more inclusive of

[00:06:56] staff. Consensus is that this strategic plan has given MCPS a better common framework and language than in the past. A big theme is that consistency and alignment are critical to the success of the plan. This means consistency with the implementation of strategic priorities, consistency across schools, and consistency in alignment among departments and between departments and schools.

[00:07:17] Another theme is that clearer objectives and metrics for success are needed. I will discuss what this will look like later in the presentation. And finally, a universal theme is that the language in the plan needs to be more accessible to the community, as free of jargon as possible, and be as clear and concise as possible. As I mentioned earlier, all groups with which we've worked have provided input into the vision and mission statements. Initial feedback on both is that they are too wordy and redundant.

[00:07:41] In particular, feedback on the mission statement is that it is confusing and convoluted. For the vision statement, interest in broadening the vision to be about all students, not just graduates, was shared. Of course, the goal is to get all students to graduate, but the vision is about what we would want to create for all our students along that journey.

[00:07:57] As I shared, the school board provided input into the vision and mission statements at their retreat. This input, along with the input previously gathered, will be used to generate drafts for new vision and mission statements. Over the summer, the school board will review provide further input on these draft vision and mission statements as well as core value statements these drafts from the school board will be shared with the community for input during the fall the new plan will identify i'm sorry will include a set of identified core values written into value statements these values will be another way initiatives efforts successes can be linked to the strategic plan currently the plan has a set of belief statements a few of these will remain

[00:08:32] but a set of easily recognizable core values will help the plan become infused into everyday efforts to identify the thought the values we follow this process first the steering committee brainstormed and identified a large set of potential values multiple groups have narrowed the list through sorting and ranking exercises the list will be further narrowed this summer and a set of value statements will be written the school board will review this set of value statements and provide feedback surveys will be conducted in the fall with stakeholder groups including staff students parents and community that will include ranking of these values and then the final set of core values will be included in the new strategic plan strategic plans tend to have some common key

[00:09:09] components they may have different names and look different if you look at different plans but this table shows how those key components what they are and whether they exist in the current mcps plan vision and mission our current plan has these and they will be revised for the new plan as we've discussed already tonight core values our current plan does not have identified core values we have belief statements the next plan will have a set of core values as we've already discussed goals our current plan has aspirational targets we will have these in the new plan as well Key components and goal areas. These are our pillars. We will continue having the pillars in our next plan, but the names may change slightly. Strategies. We have strategic priorities by pillar

[00:09:45] in our current plan. The new plan will have enhanced specificity for strategies under each one. And performance indicators and metrics. Our current plan does not have identified performance indicators spelled out for the pillars and strategies. The new plan will have this added layer which will help us in tracking progress. So this slide shows the general hierarchical structure for the new plan. So vision, mission, and values. This section of the plan will include the vision and mission statements and the set of core values which as i said will be infused throughout the pillar sections as well student academic success this section will include goals and aspirational targets at the macro level we'll also include information about our aligned systems and define

[00:10:23] operational strategies that support all of the pillars and then each pillar will have a goal statement strategic priorities with supporting strategies and performance metrics tentatively being called building blocks to support the architecture metaphor in order to make the plan more transparent and accessible to the community we're going to be developing an interactive strategic plan website we'll be able to highlight efforts and initiatives under each pillar we're also going to be developing a strategic plan document that will be parallel and structure to the budget and cip documents as well as communication flyers that will be public facing graphics will be updated and modernized so stay tuned this slide shows the timeline and next steps

[00:11:00] for the development of the plan and although they go in order some of it is iterative so over the summer as i've said we're going to build an initial draft of the structure based on the input received thus far the steering committee and school board will provide input and feedback on the draft specific strategies and performance indicators are going to be developed for each pillar surveys and focus groups will be conducted in the fall with stakeholders staff students parents and community the school board will be engaged throughout the fall at work sessions and then a draft will be finalized by the cabinet in late fall early winter the goal is to present the plan to the board in january of 2027 we then need to hold a public hearing and then have the

[00:11:38] the school board approve the new plan in early February 2027 to coincide with the next budget cycle thank you for your time this evening thank you dr. Sada that was a thorough explanation both last week and tonight and this new strategic plan promises to be really refined and targeted and the addition of core values and KPIs I think so I just want to be clear on

[00:12:14] the community opportunities because surveys were mentioned but then also on that second to last slide focus groups were mentioned so focus groups I'm using as a catch-all phrase we're gonna try and use what we've done so far I'm glad you asked that question the process we've tried to use is use existing structures where people are already coming together so we have a lot of parent advisory groups SIAC is an example to be able to go to meetings like that but then we also can the public hearing is another way

people can come in person but we will do targeted things for the four community members to be able to participate in person as well as the surveys are really designed to

[00:12:52] provide feedback on a draft as well as particularly with the core values since they're new okay so most members of the general public if there is someone out there in the general public who wants to weigh in their best offer to first and best opportunity is going to be in the survey and then their next and we will advertise yes so we don't have dates or anything for those things set for the fall but that will all be communicated out but the survey will be available to anyone who wants to complete it there'll be various versions for staff in the community and students but that's a way that anyone can express their opinions and then we'll have opportunities that will be advertised for other in-person

[00:13:31] opportunities gotcha so because the public hearing is fairly late in the process yes that's that's a statutory requirement so that is not that is like your last chance when you really see after we present the actual draft then people are coming and saying oh I don't like this or oh I really in support of it and so but that's not where you're giving the meat of your feedback so this will all happen before that so if there is someone watching out there who wants to be engaged in the process don't wait for the public hearing like there will be surveys and we will add that we will advertise those things early in the fall

[00:14:03] Good. Thank you. That's it. Steven? Yes. Thank you. You started to mention a website. Can you, I know you're very early in the process, but can you possibly give me a little bit of my vision for that?

[00:14:23] Yes, your vision is a non-website person. So my vision is, and from looking at lots of research with other places, so I want the strategic plan to be something that is more living and breathing. One of the reasons we like the idea of the core values and having icons for those is we can link them across the various parts of our existing website, but having a website where you would click on a pillar and you'd be able to see videos or stories about certain things that allows us to highlight, it allows us to provide information, what is a cycle that works and go into those things and have it all under the structure of the strategic plan so it wouldn't just be a document right that's linked on a page it would be interactive in a way where

[00:15:02] you can get more information and allows us to use it to tell our story and highlight things so now when you envision the website i want to make sure you and i are envisioning the same thing because here my brain goes is that something you're going to start getting up before putting together before the strategic plan is approved in February is that something people can look to throughout the process that's that's a great question so some of that will occur so though we'll set up the shell but most of the interactive pieces won't come until after but there will be that's where you can go and see we will post versions we will post links to the surveys we will we will set start

[00:15:39] sending people there but it'll really become its full thing once it's approved okay yeah and so well going back to it miss Brescia said will this be well they'll were excuse me will there be a feature within this website where people can participate maybe provide thoughts provide comments so there'll be yes so when I say surveys there'll be links to ways people can provide feedback that'll be featured on the website and we'll advertise those through all the typical typical channels and then once I envision this not just for the launching of the plan but over the course of the five years right there'll be dashboards and progress because having these indicators are going to allow us to show

[00:16:17] progress in real time in a variety of ways, not just, you know, test scores at the end of the year. So we'll be able to have those kinds of dashboards will all be part of this website. Yeah, I think, I think

that's really great because although we, we are using the strategic plan and we're following the strategic plan and we have updates to the strategic plan, it doesn't feel like it's a living artifact, so to speak. It feels for many people like this piece of paper that you're just referring back to. But I think if it's built into an interactive website that people can see that anyone can go to to see where we are what we're doing what the progress looks like i think

[00:16:54] that's going to be very helpful to the public especially so that's the goal i look forward to seeing that being developed thank you anybody else miss miles so i noticed that you put on there that we're going to be engaging um during work sessions are these going to be separate work sessions like our budget sessions are separate or they're going to be included during our work sessions our normal work session? So that is, of course, that is up to you. You have existing work session time, so however you prefer to do it. So my goal would not be to create additional meetings for you,

[00:17:31] but it would be touch points along the way using, ideally, again, your existing meeting structure should the board find that acceptable. Okay, and the other question is, I know, like Ms. Brescia said about the surveys the focus groups will we get updates on how those are going um along the way okay that's kind of what the at the work sessions you'd be getting um synthesis of here's what we've heard here's where we're at here's changes that are being recommended as the drafts proceed okay and the public hearing is that going to be during a regular school board meeting

[00:18:06] or is that going to be at a separate date in a separate location typically the public hearings are scheduled is like through us through a school board meeting so it would be the in-between one between when we present it just like we do for the budget um again that's a that's a statutory requirement that is just kind of a last chance effort for for comment um yeah so that would be an existing board meeting in addition to that the surveys the focus groups and the public hearing are we will we have translators for our families who speak other languages how will we um make sure sure it's equitable so any survey would be would would exist in other languages and then anything

[00:18:45] that we would do that was targeted to parents in the community that was in person we would I'll work with communications to make sure we have that okay and especially for the public hearing if there's a parent who wants to share will we be able to have a translator on hand so that way we can understand what yes okay thank you that's all I have thank anybody else thank you very much Dr. Casado. Thank you. I don't even know what to do. It's 619. It's time for board member comments.

[00:19:19] Ms. Stevens, you're up. Thank you. I think this is the first time I'm going first, so it's very unusual. I'm not used to being first, because I usually listen to what everyone else has to say, and that tells me what I still need to say, but being the first person to speak, wow, it's different.

[00:19:35] So last week's retreat was an important opportunity for self-reflection, thoughtful, and sometimes difficult discussions and meaningful updates across our division it allowed each board member to gain a deeper understanding of well how well our division is performing and the work being done to make it stronger one highlight for me was the update on alternative education specifically evening school in the pathways program both have demonstrated encouraging success in pathways two students graduated representing nine percent of those in roles enrolled in evening school which serves 74 students 34 students graduated in May and another 18 are expected to

[00:20:14] graduate by the end of July these outcomes reflect our division strong commitment to student success and our belief that every student deserves the opportunity to learn grow and achieve thank you

Miss Brown I would be really brief but I just wanted to mention that thank you for making comments about the retreat and today in the consent agenda we actually approve the priorities and the number one priorities to have our schools on track and this will take investments not just from families but also our whole community and it will

[00:20:52] also take city council and school board collaboration and continued dialogue and tonight to show our commitment to this priority and the consent agenda we approve over 10 million dollars in contracts and operational expenditures that include technology international teacher recruitment transportation maintenance and utilities just to mention a few so we are all committed and I think we're going to be seeing some changes I also like to congratulate or give just a little bit of shout out to students who are attending summer school session I

[00:21:31] know that in Prince William where my employer is I spent the last two days working with students who started their school summer session today and that also is a commitment for families to make sure that your students continue to learn and grow through the summer months but it's also a huge commitment for teachers and staff who go above and beyond to give a little bit extra to all of our families and students so thank you to everyone in every district in particular this district who is doing that for all children and so I think

[00:22:08] that's all my comments for today thank you Miss Brown miss miles thank you yes last week we went on our school board retreat and we discussed lots of things we got some updates on quite a few departments which was very enlightening and seeing the retention rates of our teachers and how many teachers are excited to bring friends to our school district was very encouraging. I also enjoyed the heavy discussions that we had on our priorities and I think that if you would look at our school board priorities you would be very encouraged

[00:22:46] to see that we came up with three very sound priorities for our school board to get behind. In addition, I hope everyone is able to come out to our joint session on Thursday so you can kind of learn a little bit more about that as we present it to the city council.

[00:23:05] And I wanted to give a shout out to all the fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, mentors, father figures who make a difference in the lives of our children and community. On Sunday, we celebrated Father's Day and the men that show up with love, guidance, patience, unwavering support. I know that without a strong father figure, my dad, in my life, I would not be the person I am today. From whether it's you're helping with homework, cheering from the sidelines, attending school events, or simply being a steady presence, fathers play an invaluable role in helping our students thrive. And as a school board member, I know that strong families and

[00:23:43] supportive adults are essential partners in education. I know it's the summertime, but um without those uh mentors or father figures in your life um students sometimes go astray so i really appreciate um all that you're doing to invest your time your wisdom and hearts into raising the next generation and i hope that you enjoyed your father's day that's all that i have thank you thank you miss miles miss pressure thank you everybody is so eloquent so i'm not going to belabor any points but the one thing i do want to add is to publicly recognize and thank our clerk miss garza who she hates she hates public recognition we're going to do it anyway

[00:24:20] because you deserve it for handling that retreat so well and especially considering all of the hurdles that came up in your way logistically actually a very successful retreat and you give so much of

yourself to us and you do so much for us so i just wanted to take this moment to thank you for a successful retreat please forgive me very nice thank you miss pressure dr jones um at At the Obama Presidential Center opening, Obama stated, quote, the single most powerful word in our democracy is the word we.

[00:24:55] We the people, we shall overcome, yes we can. The word is owned by no one, it belongs to everyone. Oh, what a glorious task we are given to continually try to improve this great nation of ours, end quote. The moment I heard these words, I knew I wanted to share the power of the word we.

[00:25:15] As we close out the 25-26 school year and move into the 26-27 school year, let us intentionally use the word we more often. We reminds us that our greatest successes come through collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective responsibility.

[00:25:32] Many well-known quotes reinforce the power of teamwork. John Haywood wrote, many hands make like work. An African proverb, if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Maddie Stepper, unity is strength.

[00:25:50] When there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved. Helen Keller, alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much. And Mother Teresa, I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things.

[00:26:07] As educators, families, students, and community members, we have unique gifts and perspectives. By embracing the power of we, we can continue building schools and communities where everyone contributes and everyone succeeds.

[00:26:23] Together we educate, together we achieve, together we make a difference. Thank you, Vice Chair. That was very nice. Before we adjourn, I'd just like to leave our community with a bit of encouraging news from Richmond. Yesterday, the General Assembly approved a budget package that is expected to receive final approval from the governor in the near future.

[00:26:44] While our staff is still reviewing the final details, and we will have more to share once the budget is officially enacted, the legislation contains several provisions that are expected to positively impact our school system. The Commonwealth's investment in public education reflects an understanding of the challenges school divisions are facing across Virginia, from recruiting and retaining exceptional educators to meeting the increasing academic, social, and emotional needs of students.

[00:27:09] We anticipate that some of those investments will benefit our division directly. I don't want to spoil all the details tonight, but I'm excited about what this could mean for our students, our staff, and our community. Once the governor takes final action and our team completes its analysis, we look forward to sharing exactly how those changes will be reflected in MCPS.

[00:27:29] As always, I'm grateful for our partnership between our local community, our elected officials, and the Commonwealth as we continue working together to provide every student with the opportunities they deserve. Thank you, and have a wonderful evening. Let me get a motion. Chair I move that the school board meeting adjourn I have a motion by Ms.

[00:27:51] Stevens seconded by Ms. Brown that the school board meeting adjourn is there any discussion all in favor aye any opposed that's 6-0 Ms. Garza thank you everyone



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