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Manassas City School Board Meeting - August 25, 2026

Date Tuesday, August 25, 2026
Place Manassas City Public Schools / School Board meeting, Virginia
Length 1h 16m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaFKrn14pPY>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-16. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:05] School Board of the City of Manassas, the time is 6 p.m. Please join me for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Pledge of 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.

[00:00:43] Madam Clerk, will you please call the roll? Yes, ma'am. Chair Spall? Present. Vice Chair Dr. Jones? Here. Mrs. Sieber? Here. Mrs. Stevens? Present. Mrs. Borrecia? Present. Mrs. Brown?

[00:00:58] Present. Mrs. Miles? Present. Mr. Emun? Mrs. Albuquerque? Present. Thank you. Madam Chair, we have a forum. Thank you. Dr. Newman, are there any additions or deletions to the agenda? Yes, ma'am. Chair Jill Spauld requested that a closed session be added to the agenda.

[00:01:20] I move to amend the proposed agenda by removing the item titled 2026-2027, school calendar observance of Good Friday from discussion chair is there a second second okay it's been moved and seconded by miss miles then miss Brescia that the proposed agenda be removed from the item titled 26 27 school calendar observance of Good Friday from the discussion is there any discussion thank

[00:01:59] you chair after hearing the concerns raised by our staff regarding September 11th I have decided to amend my calendar proposal and bring it back to a school board work session rather than move forward with the proposal as originally presented. A number of staff members have shared that they already have appointments and commitments on September 11th and would have difficulty changing them. I've also heard the concern that if possible we should look at an option that allows our students families and staff to have both days off.

[00:02:25] With that feedback in mind I'm proposing that we look at converting one of our teacher work days January 8th or February 1st into an instructional day. In doing so, we could use that instructional day to allow Good Friday to become a day off without adding another day to the school calendar.

[00:02:43] I believe also bringing this back to a work session gives us the opportunity to have a thoughtful conversation with Dr. Newman and his staff, hear their feedback, discuss what is operationally possible, and give our community an opportunity to weigh in before our board makes a final decision.

[00:03:01] And I appreciate everyone who's taken the time to share their thoughts through emails and also Facebook posts. As a school board member, I believe our job is to listen, to ask questions, consider different options, and make decisions that are in the best interest of our students, families, and staff.

[00:03:17] And I look forward to continuing this conversation. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. Miles. Is there any other discussion? All in favor? Aye. Any opposed? That vote, 7-0. Can I get a motion to approve the agenda as amended?

[00:03:36] I move to approve the agenda as amended. I have a motion by Ms. Miles seconded by Ms. Brescia that the agenda is approved as amended. Any discussion? All in favor? Aye.

[00:03:53] That's a 7-0 vote. May I get a motion to enter into closed session? Chair, I move that the school board of the city of Manassas enter into a closed session pursuant of 2.2-3711 Part A, Paragraph 7 of the Code of Virginia for the following purposes.

[00:04:19] Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual litigation where such consultation and open meeting would adversely affect the litigating posture of the public body. I have a motion by Ms. Stevens, seconded by Ms. Jones, that the School Board of the City of Manassas enter into a closed session pursuant to 2.2-3711A7 of the Code of Virginia for the following purpose.

[00:04:42] Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual litigation where such consultation and open meeting would adversely affect the litigating posture of the public body. Is there any discussion? All in favor? Aye. Anyone opposed? That motion follows 7-0.

[00:05:04] We will now move to closed session. We apologize for the delay.

[00:10:00] I have a motion by Ms. Stevens seconded by Dr. Jones that the school board of the city of Manassas return to open session.

[00:17:32] Is there any discussion? All in favor? Aye. Any opposed? That's 6-0, Ms. Garza. Can I get a certification motion? Oh. Chair, I move that the school board certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard discussed

[00:18:11] or considered. I have a motion by Ms. Stevens, seconded by Vice Chair Jones, that the school board certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened or heard discussed or considered is there any discussion all in favor aye any opposed that motion carries 6-0 dr. Newman are there any announcements or spotlights we are at

[00:18:50] the beginning of the school year so we will have some soon enough we will now move to board committee reports it's now time for public comment 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 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 we would treat public comments as a public hearing and do not engage in conversation with speakers the lack of an immediate response to your comment should not be taken as a lack of interest or concern

[00:19:26] please be respectful when presenting your comments and I do have a list first up mr. Michael Gramajo good evening everyone over the last several weeks this community has heard about an investigation first amendment rights and accusations about how we arrived here tonight I want to put those events that led us here on the record on June 1st school board members Sarah Brescia approached me at Baldwin Elementary where I work as the family liaison and asked to speak to me privately about matters she could not discuss on school

[00:20:05] grounds she asked for my number and texted me saying it was fairly time sensitive and asked and said i wouldn't ask if i didn't think it was important i declined and i told her i don't believe it's appropriate she responded there are things happening that i cannot control and i know that if it were me i would want to know i reported this to hr and two weeks later on june 15th i shared my story on tick tock after that parents started coming to me forward with their own experiences in writing one parent reported that on school grounds miss brecha displayed a photo of

[00:20:41] a photo and information about a school board candidate from her phone and passed it around another parent reporting witnessing miss brecha discussing my personal life and relationship with parents again on school grounds i submitted these written statements through the appropriate channels to my superintendent and ultimately to the school board on july 30th i received a response from the board chair stating that because Miss Brescia is an elected official board disciplinary policy did not apply then at a public school board meeting Miss Brescia referred to my already publicized relationship I need to correct that statement my relationship had never been publicized to the

[00:21:19] families I serve at Baldwin Elementary the reason they knew about it was because Miss Brescia brought my personal relationship into conversations with these parents so let me be very clear this did It did not begin because someone disagreed with Ms. Brescia. It did not begin because someone wanted to silence her First Amendment rights.

[00:21:38] It began because parents reported the conduct of an elected official on school grounds involving an employee's personal life. I reported it, parents documented it, I followed the process, and when I was told that there was nothing the board could do, I took the next steps. But my experience has also exposed the gap, that is, that this board needs to address.

[00:21:58] If current policy provides no meaningful mechanism to address this kind of conduct by an elected board member then that policy needs to change the absence of a policy cannot become an excuse for the absence of accountability accountability is not retaliation an investigation is not censorship and being an elected official should never mean being beyond beyond accountability i did not ask to be a part of this political fight i asked for my workplace my privacy and my professionalism to be respected and i will continue using every appropriate channel available to make sure that they are i have officially filed a charge of discrimination with the equal employment

[00:22:35] opportunity commission the evidence is now in the hands of an independent federal agency to determine whether what happened to me crossed the line from inappropriate conduct into unlawful discrimination thank you mr gramajo miss victoria diaz my message tonight is to shine a light on the truth following the recent articles videos and hearsay in the media for those who don't know

[00:23:13] Monday Market is free food for MCPS families distributed on the Baldwin Intermediate side of the school. It is run by the intermediate liaison along with Michael, the elementary liaison. On June 1st, I went to assist with Monday Market. After the Monday Market was over, Michael and I were taking excess food into a room where staff could help themselves in an effort to have zero waste. As I was coming out of that room, I saw Sarah Brescia standing with Michael in the foyer. I walked over to greet her and I witnessed part of their conversation where she asked for his

[00:23:50] personal cell phone number. He gave it to her. She then explained that she was there to gather content for social media to essentially advertise to parents what MCPS offers families during the summer. I'm not at every Monday market, but this program has been established for over four years.

[00:24:07] Sarah has been on school board member. She has been a school board member for four years and has identified herself as a content creator for some time. If her purpose was to gather content she could have requested it from staff or simply returned the following Monday if she did not already have content from the four-year-old program. What I witnessed instead was my co-worker become extremely uncomfortable after the text messages began to come in. So my questions to Sarah and the board are where is the Monday market content and does the school board have a budget for defending itself against a lawsuit brought by one of its own members someone who is also

[00:24:46] responsible for reviewing that same budget and is supposed to make decisions in the best interest of our students and families along with fulfilling the other responsibilities for which she was elected to serve i'm not here to spread hearsay i'm here because i was there i witnessed what happened and i believe the board and our community deserve to know the real truth thank you thank - Thank you, Ms. Diaz.

[00:25:07] Ms. Plovaniak. - Well, I was here to talk about Ms. Miles' proposal for the Good Friday observance.

[00:25:24] Since that's been changed, I agree with them. Hopefully the other two dates that you've come up with will be something that can be worked out. Also, I see down here, you know, the school board encourages participation of all city residents. So my kids have been out of this school system for many years, but my tax dollars pay for the things that go on in the city.

[00:25:47] I've decided to get back involved and it had been mentioned that one of the school board members here said she has no business being at these meetings she doesn't have any children in the school but I do I pay taxes and I'll be here all the kids in the community are my kids and and this is a question and I know you guys can't answer kids came to my door today from Mets selling candy bars the young man was very polite I don't know if it was legitimate there was nothing no paperwork nothing that showed that just uh bringing an awareness that and i said what's it for and they

[00:26:22] said sports it was a fundraiser so i just want to make sure that you all are aware if there's kids out there yes okay good thank you because i gave him the two dollars and told him keep the candy and he just i know he i said you keep the key are you kidding so he was very very polite so thank you for letting me

know that it is legit maybe they need something showing that they are from the school because um you know teenagers do stuff we all did stuff but uh that's good to know that that is legitimate all right and i'll be seeing you at more meetings thank you thank you

[00:26:58] next up is miss jones i'm so glad to be here and see you all i care about education and i've been a long time resident since 1978 my daughter went to osborne and she's a successful very successful woman. And it's because of y'all, because of the school system. One thing that I noticed is

[00:27:31] absentee rate. How to get students in seats is important. And I know that you have an all-hands-on-deck policy. I was trying to look for it to see what that involved. I noticed there was a great deal of celebration for the opening of schools. It looked fantastic. Very happy faces. It's interesting to me because I also know that the SOLs, you've got a new vendor coming. Pearson LLC has a reputation among teachers as being unreliable. For years and years and years, they have gone after teachers

[00:28:07] that have mentioned their many errors in reporting. I didn't know if you knew about that, but that has been a thing. Also, there's a Patrick Welch who worked at the school in Virginia. He's rather famous. And he, like me, feels that we've been professionally developed for years and years and years to try and make schools better, but it hasn't moved. He's the member of the Titans. It hasn't moved the needle. It's just more professional development. I wanted a way to measure student

[00:28:44] progress. And one thing I came up with, a mixed hybrid of portfolio. They showed they could do an interview. They showed they could do a research paper. They showed what they could do. They even built a future where when they were 35 they wrote a diary of what they would be like when they were 35 as eighth graders they have told me they kept these and added them to them there's a very novel way that you can engage students to become corporate teams in the classroom where they become researchers and presenters and they want to show up and occupy a seat in the building

[00:29:22] there's so much you have a very small school system that can be a win-win situation but they have to want to be there youtube can make them know how to play the piano that happened with my great nephew he learned it on youtube he's now the head of an acapella group at jmu for his senior year please think of all you can do with such a wonderful school student body and have an

[00:29:54] exciting year thank you miss jones next up is miss anna damario hi good evening um i was really originally going to start speaking about the calendar change i just want to say thank you for listening to the feedback and changing that um i think the other ideas are better ideas but i also think we go enough hours we could also just take good friday off without having to take a work

[00:30:32] day so um but i also want to speak about protection for staff members when it comes to harassment or or intimidation by school board members? What recourse do staff members have when a school board member oversteps their role and discusses employees with members of the community?

[00:30:50] What happens when an elected official uses their power and position to publicly target or intimidate a staff member? Why would a school board member come to a staff member's workplace and ask to meet with them outside of school hours or away from school property? If the purpose is legitimate school business, why would the meeting need to take place outside of school hours and away from school property.

[00:31:12] I have looked through the division's policies and there is a lot of language addressing bullying and harassment, but I could not find clear protections or a process for when it comes from a school board

member. I also didn't see anything about the harassment of staff mentioned in the school board code of conduct.

[00:31:29] I'm asking this board to reflect on how you treat the people who work for MCPS and how you hold yourselves and your fellow board members accountable when lines are crossed. Our staff deserve to feel safe, respected, protected at work they should not have to worry that speaking up doing their jobs or being involved in the community could make them a target of an elected official the board needs to establish a clear and accessible form of recourse for staff members who feel threatened intimidated or harassed by a school board member accountability should apply to everyone including those who have been

[00:32:04] elected to lead us thank you thank you mr maria next up is miss williams shanequa williams good evening school board members and Dr. Newman my name is Shanique Williams and tonight I'm here to talk about accountability as well. As an employee of this school division we're asked to set goals reflect on our performance and be accountable for our actions. Our supervisors are also asked to do the same all of which we do willingly because reflection and growth should

[00:32:41] be something we strive to do so we are accountable for ourselves. Our elected school boards should do the same. When concerns are brought forward about treatment of an employee or the conduct of someone in a position of authority, those concerns deserve to be taken seriously, regardless of who's involved. Part of your responsibility as elected officials is not only to make decisions for our school division, families, and employees, but to also be good financial stewards and hold each other accountable. In my opinion, this is your moral obligation. Ethically and morally, you should strive to be the people you were elected to be, even if that means having difficult conversations with a colleague or standing up for someone who may not have the same power you do.

[00:33:20] a true testament to someone's character is what they do when no one's watching so in these times it reveals our moral character whether we're willing to step up step in and help protect someone who's being mistreated so it asks you to think about a time that you had a job or career that really truly mattered to you and think about a time when you needed someone to stand up for you what would you want them to do would you wanted them to turn around and look the other way because that conversation is uncomfortable? Would you want them to say, this isn't right? We need to address it. Our employees deserve that same courage from the people who lead this division. So I'm asking

[00:33:58] you not just to hold staff accountable, but to hold yourselves accountable and to protect the people who work for this division. I would also ask you to do an honest accountability check of your own leadership. If power has been misused, knowingly or unknowingly, it deserves to be acknowledged and addressed accountability should not depend on who holds the power who is involved or how uncomfortable that conversation may be thank you thank you miss williams the next person

[00:34:30] on our list is miss leanne best i think first i need to point out that i'm old because i have my notes on paper i must move to an iphone i'm sorry about that um good evening i need to make sure i understand the situation as of today i'm an asa city public school school board member currently for re-election, made unnecessary and irrelevant comments about another school board candidate in what appears to be an attempt to smear and discredit him before the election.

[00:35:03] Those comments became knowledge, thanks to public media, and the school board was compelled to look into them, as they have probably broken school board laws. Because of the legal and

sensitive matter of the investigation, investigating members of the school board had a meeting to discuss the school board member without that school board member present.

[00:35:21] So then the school board member filed a suit complaining about the meeting that was held without her because it was about her, and now she has said she will remove her lawsuit if the investigation is ceased. That strikes me as bullying, intimidating, immoral, and an incredibly poor use of school board power.

[00:35:42] As a citizen of Manassas City and a mother whose children proudly attended and benefited greatly from Manassas City Public Schools, I'm embarrassed and kind of disgusted at the behavior up here. I pay attention, and the members of this board who seem to be in it primarily for, honestly, social media likes, platform, popularity, shame on you.

[00:36:02] Your job is to represent the children, is to improve the education here, and is not to make yourself more visible in the community, whether it's to run for a future officer, just to be popular. Likes, follows are not why you're here, and I hope everybody elects somebody who cares about the schools, cares about our children, and not people who are just in here for social media.

[00:36:22] Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Best. Next up is Ms. Gretchen Almstead. It saddens me to come to the school board to confront the current and corrosive drama that is playing out as this school year begins.

[00:36:46] Our school board is charged with governing with stability and thoughtful judgment to support school employees and promote student achievement. And yes, we do need to hold our elected officials accountable. They are role models for our children and need to conduct themselves and the business of the school board with that in mind.

[00:37:07] And while we're all subject to relentless toxicity on the national stage, it doesn't benefit the children and the adults within our little city, which we call home, to follow that mean-spirited and divisive pattern.

[00:37:23] My sons graduated from Manassas Public Schools a long time ago. But as a retired teacher and social worker, it's still very important to me that we value the educational outcomes and the well-being of all of the children in our community that attend our public schools. I was among many who observed Sarah's remarks during the last school board meeting, and I was really quite disturbed by it.

[00:37:48] What she glossed over as her right to free speech involved aggressively intimidating more than one potential school board candidate. Having heard her politically motivated maneuvers back in June, I was surprised that she would so publicly call attention to her behavior.

[00:38:07] And while Sarah and I have had a lot of good conversations while we stood outside greeting people at the polls during early voting for the last several years, it seems that she's either oblivious or intentionally ignoring her own accountability in this situation.

[00:38:24] And there are those who bemoan the politicization of an elected nonpartisan school board. In Manassas, our school board operated for decades in a very nonpartisan manner. In 2016, Robin Williams requested a Republican endorsement, and it wasn't until three years later in 2019 that Lisa Stevens first asked for a Democratic endorsement.

[00:38:50] So despite the culture wars that have been embroiled in some communities, our school board has kept the focus on how to best educate students addressing the needs of a diverse student population.

And I appreciate all the time and energy and effort and expertise you've expended to help improve and strengthen student outcomes.

[00:39:11] I really hope we can soon move beyond this to get back to promoting the well-being and academic achievement of all students. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Olmstead. Next up is Mr. Richard Meyer. Thank you very much.

[00:39:33] Richard Meyer, Grant Avenue, Old Town. Lived here since 98. I have – it's no one's business for who I voted for, but I voted for mainly Democrats as opposed to Republicans, but I have voted for some Republicans, too.

[00:39:54] In my yard right now, I have a sign for Jill and I have a sign for Sarah. I've always hoped they could work together, and I think they have, and I'm hoping they can work with each other again.

[00:40:12] I've expressed during this episode that I support Sarah still in this election, and I support Jill, certainly. And I've had some behind-the-scenes conversations with people, but I don't think they became public.

[00:40:31] And when I walked in here tonight, one good friend told me repeatedly, like three times in a row, I was wrong for supporting Sarah. Okay, that's their business. another person said, doesn't matter who, they said, I can't sit next to them. If I did, they'd have to move. That's not the kind of town I want to live in. I haven't done anything inappropriate. I'm bipartisan. Now, in terms of Sarah speaking with people, I wasn't there.

[00:41:04] Okay. But the thing is, what I keep hearing is that she approached someone and wasn't this at a public meeting where parents were invited with their kids? Maybe not. Okay. I don't know. I don't know. I'm just leaving that alone. But I'll say this, the school board stays pretty close to things, don't you all? You try to stay on top of what's going on, don't you? And one of the ways you do that is by speaking with teachers. And sometimes they may disagree with you. And sometimes

[00:41:42] they may agree with you. Do you want to be accused of putting pressure on people anytime, a school board member, anytime you speak with them. Now, I'm not talking about the context. I wasn't there. But part of this has to do with school board members speaking with teachers. And I think it's ridiculous. And I think, I don't know what happened in the closed meeting tonight. I guess I'll find out at some point. But I think you're digging a hole that's going to be real hard to get out of. I don't like it, but I don't have to like it. But please think about

[00:42:20] what you're doing all right and I say that with respect to the school board very special respect to Jill and and respect also for me for Sarah thank you very much thank you thank you Mr. Meyer Ms. Tammy Dehaven I didn't bring any proper prepared remarks so no paper no phone um Tammy

[00:42:56] Dehaven I'm a teacher here and a community member one of the things that I think is most disturbing about this. I understand school board members can come talk to us at our jobs, but I have never had a school board member come to me to try to talk about something completely different and ask for my phone number. I have the phone numbers of some school board members, but they have always gotten my phone number in an appropriate manner and said, are you willing to talk about this? And definitely didn't come to see if I was on my lunch yet. That shouldn't happen. That tells me if we were waiting

[00:43:34] for his lunch break, he was doing his job. And the fact that we even have to be here and question whether the teachers, the people you pay to work with our students, should have the right to be able to do our jobs without feeling threatened in that way, it's just really sad to me. I'm going to go back to a comment I've made before. Our working conditions are your students' learning conditions. If we cannot feel safe, which part of our strategic plan, and it looks like it's going

[00:44:07] to be part of the next strategic plan. Your kids aren't going to feel safe either. We have to do better. We just have to. Thank you, Ms. DeHaven. There has been a request that the school board take a five-minute recess for a discussion that's been requested between Ms. Brescia and her lawyer.

[00:44:41] We will recess for five minutes. I make a motion to make a recess for five minutes, Chair.

[00:45:03] Second. Was it Lisa? Okay. There's been a motion and a second to recess for five minutes. Can we please reconvene at 7 30. is there any discussion no all in favor aye any

[00:45:27] opposed nay that's a 6 1 vote miss Garza there's been a motion and a second to reconvene so I'd like to welcome everyone back a motion by Miss Seberg seconded by Miss Brown is there any discussion is there any discussion all

[00:46:04] in favor aye any opposed the next item is the consent agenda these items are considered routine and may be approved by a single motion unless a board member requests an item be removed for separate discussion um i spoke to her sorry um miss sarah brusher requested that the august 3rd 2026 special meeting minutes be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately

[00:46:41] you will see it in the action agenda may i please get a motion chair i move that the school board of the city of manassas approve the consent agenda as modified second i have a motion by miss brescia seconded by miss miles at the school board of the city of manassas approve the consent agenda as modified is there any discussion chair i need to recuse myself from vote on that as i was not present at the august 3rd meeting that's for the minutes right if the minutes include a closed session that i was not present at i don't feel it would be appropriate for me to vote too i think

[00:47:19] that that'll happen in the action okay i believe so this is just to you want the whole consent agenda okay so miss brescia made a motion seconded by miss miles that the school board of city of manassas approved the consent agenda as modified which is everything but the meeting that you weren't in okay um any discussion any other discussion all in favor aye any opposed that

[00:47:49] motion follow that motion is 7-0 approved 7-0 we will now move to the discussion agenda the first item is the attendance awareness month proclamation miss seberg will read the manassas city public schools attendance awareness month proclamation the school board will discuss the proclamation recognizing september 2026 as attendance awareness month throughout the school division and advance of adoption of the at the september 8th meeting the regular business meeting thank

[00:48:24] you chair whereas regular school attendance is essential to student achievement engagement well-being and long-term success and every day a student is present at school provides an opportunity to learn build meaningful relationships and access important academic and social supports and whereas chronic absenteeism defined as missing 10 or more of the school year for any reason can significantly affect a student's academic progress and connection to school beginning as early as the elementary years and continuing through graduation

[00:49:01] and whereas improving attendance requires more than simply responding to absences it requires strong relationships among students families schools and the community as well as a commitment to understanding and addressing the barriers that may prevent students from attending school regularly and whereas manassas city public schools recognizes that attendance is a shared responsibility and is committed to partnering with students and families through early outreach supportive interventions consistent communication and access to resources that help students remain

[00:49:35] connected to their schools and whereas educators school leaders attendance professionals families community organizations and other partners each play an important role in creating welcoming safe and engaging school environments where students know they are valued supported and missed when they are not present and whereas the beginning of the school year provides an important opportunity to establish strong attendance habits strengthen relationships with students and families and reinforce the message that every school day matters now therefore be it proclaimed that the

[00:50:10] Manassas City School Board recognizes September 2026 as Attendance Awareness Month and encourages students, families, staff, and community partners to join together in promoting regular school attendance and reducing barriers that contribute to chronic absence. Be it further proclaimed that Manassas City Public Schools reaffirms its commitment to a positive, proactive, and supportive approach to attendance, one that uses data to identify needs early, strengthens relationships with students and families connects families with appropriate resources and ensures that every student has the opportunity to be present engaged and successful together we affirm that showing up

[00:50:50] matters and every day in school is an opportunity for every student to learn connect and thrive thank you ms seberg next we will have hispanic heritage month proclamation where ms brown and ms breja will read the manassas city public schools hispanic heritage month proclamation the school board will discuss the proclamation which recognizes hispanic heritage month and celebrates the history culture and contributions of hispanic and latino communities throughout the throughout the division in advance of an adoption at the september 8th 2026 regular business meeting miss brown and miss brushia thank you chair it's going to go the reverse miss brush is going to

[00:51:27] start and miss uh miss brown's going to finish whereas the observation started in 1968 as hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 through the legislative encouragement of Congressman Esteban Torres of California to cover the period at which it is celebrated today, September 15th through October 15th, and whereas the study of Hispanic Americans' rich heritage celebrates their immeasurable contributions to our nation and provides a study of our essential perspective of life in America today, and whereas by virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution of Virginia and in

[00:52:03] governor of the commonwealth of virginia september 15th through october 15th is officially recognized as his as hispanic and latino heritage month and whereas hispanics and latino americans are the largest ethnic minority group in the country the fastest growing minority in the commonwealth and make valuable contributions to the commonwealth and the city of manassas's business government education the sciences arts and faith and whereas the manassas city public schools recognizes inclusive and collaborative learning environments and a culture of caring as foundation foundational pillars and whereas Hispanic and Latino students staff and families are value and respect the members of our community and contribute to the rich diversity of

[00:52:41] Manassas City Public Schools and whereas 70% of enrolled students in our school division are Hispanic and are a vital part of a school community and whereas 22% of all MCPS employees are Hispanic and are committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for every student and whereas during National Hispanic Heritage Month the Manassas City School Board recognizes and celebrates the rich cultural traditions and honors the significant achievements of our Hispanic and Latino American communities through educational programming cultural celebrations and family inclusive

[00:53:19] events that promote understanding appreciation and community engagement such as Latin American history AP Spanish literature and culture student new students graduating with bilingual fluency Spanish and English now therefore we resolve that the Manassas City School Board and the superintendent of schools recognized September 15th through October 15th as a National Hispanic Heritage Month in Manassas City Public Schools and urge all citizens to participate in this important time of exploring learning appreciating and saluting the contributions of all Americans to our country we encourage

[00:53:55] all students and staff to participate in the events of this month and to join us in celebrating the profound and positive impact of the latino community in our schools and on our city i would like to just take one extra second here to thank council member jasonia maya for collaborating with me in the writing of this proclamation i appreciate all your guidance since it was the first proclamation thank you thank you ms brown and ms presha we will now move to the action agenda the first item is mr taff kelly director of finance has already presented the fy 2028 draft budget development

[00:54:30] calendar at the august 11th board meeting can i get a motion i make a motion that the school board approve the fy 2028 budget calendar is presented second i have a motion by miss miles seconded by miss seaberg that the school board approved the fy 28 budget calendar as presented is there any discussion all those in favor aye any opposed that motion carries seven oh miss garza the next action

[00:55:08] item is school board minutes the august three minutes special meeting minutes minutes of the school board meeting are hereby presented for review and approval by the school board miss sarah brezza requested that the august 3rd 2026 special meeting minutes be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately by the action agenda can i get a motion yes uh chair i move that the school board of the city of manassas approve the august 3rd 2026 meeting minutes as presented second

[00:55:43] sorry i have a motion by miss breccia seconded by miss miles at the school board of the city of manassas approved the august 3rd 2026 special meeting minutes as presented is there any discussion yes um are these the original minutes that were presented yes ma'am they were pulled directly from consent. That's all I need to know. Thank you. So I will. Other discussions? Yes.

[00:56:13] Ms. Brescia. Thank you. Okay. So I will briefly discuss these August 3rd, 2026 meeting minutes. We do have one more. We have one more thing we have to do. It is my full intention that this is the last thing that we have to do, but there is one more thing. On the advice of my privately retained legal counsel. I am making this statement tonight regarding the August 3rd meeting minutes for two reasons. One, to bring myself into personal compliance with Virginia FOIA laws,

[00:56:53] and two, to protect my children for reasons that will become clear. Please note that I have no intention to name any specific names in this statement, as I do not believe it to be necessary in this context. If, however, we have protracted debate on this issue, that calculation can obviously change and i do want to support that board member stevens was not present on october 3rd 2026 yeah august sorry

october august 3rd 2026 so i did want to support that so it's my one exception that i will support that she was not there so in virginia meetings of public bodies are open to the public by default the public may only be excluded from a public body's deliberations

[00:57:32] only under very narrowly defined circumstances on august 3rd 2026 the school board met for a closed session pursuant to section 2.2-37118 of the Code of Virginia for the publicly stated purpose of consultation with legal counsel retained by a public body regarding a specific employee legal matter requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

[00:57:54] At the end of this closed session and at the end of all closed sessions, board members must vote to certify the meeting, essentially to make a representation to the public that the only topic discussed in the closed session was the topic advertised at the start of the closed session. Board members are obligated by Virginia FOIA to vote accurately on that certification. We are additionally obligated by statute to correct the record when or if we become aware that a closed session meeting was inappropriately certified. It opens the board to litigation if its members do not do so. On August 3rd, I was one of the six votes who voted to

[00:58:30] certify the closed session, Member Stevens being absent on the occasion. Upon further reflection and upon legal advice, I understand now that this vote was inappropriate, as the school board did discuss topics outside of the advertised open meeting exemption. I am therefore, with this statement, fulfilling my statutory obligation to correct the record now with this statement, and more importantly, I am doing this to protect my kids. On August 3rd, 2026, the school board discussed matters not permitted by the FOIA exemption for a specific employee legal matter.

[00:59:06] The school board persisted in this discussion, despite multiple warnings from myself and from the division legal counsel who was on the phone, that the discussion was not covered by this open meeting exemption. Specifically, the school board engaged in a persistent and intense discussion of my two school-age children, ages six and eight, and their out-of-zone placement at Baldwin Elementary School. Three members of the school board, and one in particular, made it clear to me during this closed session that my girls transfer waiver to attend Baldwin was a courtesy and made it clear to me additionally that they were willing to use the official power of the

[00:59:44] school board to forcibly remove my children from this school if I did not agree to pull my children willingly. The school board in that meeting also questioned the private personal safety arrangements developed for my children. That topic is also not covered by the open meeting exemption nor is it any of their business it is not possible to deny that this happened all present witnesses all present witness this including our division council my children again ages six and eight

[01:00:18] had no legitimate role to play in any discussion of any specific employees legal matters and there is no argument that any board member could possibly make today to say that the discussion of my little girls was at all appropriate. Division counsel and myself advised them of such during the meeting. Since August 3rd, I have had to retain counsel to review and advise on this situation. My attorneys confirm what the school board attorney stated in the meeting. The board

[01:00:54] violated FOIA when it used the closed session to discuss my children. My private attorney also advises that I must make this a public record in order to preserve my rights and to protect my girls from any future attempts at retaliatory actions from this school board. And on a personal level, when my kids

are old enough to understand these events, I want them to watch this meeting and I want them to see their mother choose them, regardless of public perception or any electoral

[01:01:31] price I want my girls to see their mom speak and protect them so as far as my vote tonight I will not be voting to violate FOIA so despite the fact that I was made the motion I will not be approving these minutes today I urge any other honest board members to do the same if by some miracle this motion fails I will offer an alternative motion to attend amend the August 3rd minutes to add the phrase except for the portion of the closed meeting we're in the school placement and safety plan for board member Brescia's children was discussed over her objections.

[01:02:09] So the rest is up to you. All in favor. I make it. Ms. Brescia made the motion seconded by Ms. Miles that the school board of the city of Manassas approved the August 3rd, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. All in favor. Didn't we just discuss it? Is there any further discussion?

[01:02:39] Okay. I call for a vote. All in favor. Anyone opposed? That is one abstention, two approvals,

[01:02:55] We have two no's in Miles and Brescia, two yes's with Spall, Seaburg, Brown, and Jones.

[01:03:38] The motion carries as is. We will now move to board member comments. Mr. Imun, welcome back. Okay.

[01:03:55] Good evening, everyone. I am happy to see everybody here today and hope you're all well. As the school season is coming back, I hope everyone had a good summer and are ready for the times we have ahead. To parents who may be watching or are here today, please talk to your kids about joining some clubs or even make their own, as it is a perfect way to make this year a great year for them, make this year a more lighter year for them due to all the, you know, work they might have. And yeah, that's it. Thank you so much. And we are very happy to have you back.

[01:04:29] Ms. Aboukher, we're so happy to have you. And we're very anxious to hear your comments. And most meetings won't be quite like this. Thank you. Good evening, Superintendent Newman, members of the school board and the Manassas community. My name is Lamar Aboukher, and I'm very honored to be a student representative alongside Hanak for the Manassas City School Board this year. And I can't wait to see what it brings. It's been great getting back to school and seeing all of my peers as well. I'd love to use my platform to highlight certain events and accomplishments in the school district, like the wonderful opening ceremony for the new Jenny Dean Elementary School, which was especially meaningful for me as I was a Dean Dolphin myself. It was

[01:05:08] great getting to hear from and meet Mrs. Lillian Sloan, who attended the original Manassas Industrial School where Jenny Dean Elementary stands today. I hope the students are enjoying their beautiful new school. As we all come into the new school year, I'm excited to help ensure that the voices and insights of the students in Manassas are represented in decisions that affect them. Thank you for welcoming me, and I look forward to working with the board and my fellow student representatives. Thank you so much. Ms. Miles. Thank you, Chair. First, I want to thank all our community members and staff members for their comments tonight. I know it takes courage

[01:05:47] to stand before the board to speak your thoughts and opinions, so thank you. I appreciate that. And I really encourage anyone who has comments to come. But I want to welcome our new student representatives for this school year.

[01:06:03] Welcome back, Mr. Hanak Man. So glad to have you again as our student representative. And our hearty welcome to our new student representative, Lamar Aboukair. I hope I'm pronouncing that right. We look forward to working with you both this school year and having you represent the schools from the students' perspective.

[01:06:22] So a brand new school year is officially underway. I was happy to greet our high school students at Osborne and Baldwin Elementary, our elementary students there on their first day of school. I'm wishing all of our students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff a wonderful year filled with learning, growth, new friendships, and new opportunities.

[01:06:40] To our educators and staff, thank you for all you do to prepare for our students' success each day. I know sometimes we stay late, we come early. I know as an educator myself, tireless nights sometimes, planning, report cards, all those things.

[01:06:55] So we appreciate you. And to our families, thank you for trusting us with what matters most. As a school board member, I'm excited for the year ahead, and I look forward to continuing to listen, advocate, and work together for every student in Manassas City. And here's to a great school year. That's all for me, Chair.

[01:07:11] Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Miles. Ms. Brescia. Thank you. I do want to welcome our school board member, or our school board student representatives, So very good to see you guys back here. It is wonderful to see you here, and I cannot wait to hear what you have to share.

[01:07:30] So I'm gonna keep my comments very brief tonight. I was hoping to resolve this tonight, to resolve all of this tonight, but unfortunately that was not to be, though hopefully soon.

[01:07:46] I share the frustration expressed by many that we find ourselves here. I share that, and I do look forward to getting out to the other side so we can focus on what we're all supposed to be here for, which is for our kids in the NASA City Public Schools.

[01:08:04] And I will have more to say on this issue, of course, through my newsletter soon. Thank you all for coming. Thank you, Ms. Bersha. Ms. Stevens. Thank you, Chair. First, I'd like to welcome Mr. Moon and Ms. Labukeller.

[01:08:21] You are two lovely, intelligent young people who want to have a positive impact in our division and to each act as a voice for our student body I am very happy to welcome you both here I look forward to a great year with you and to talk about Hispanic Heritage Month people often wonder why it starts on September 15th as opposed to September 1st a Hispanic Heritage Month starts on the 15th because the date marks the independence anniversary for Costa Rica El Salvador Guatemala Honduras and Nicaragua who all gained independence from Spain in 1821 The date is purposeful, not coincidental.

[01:09:00] Tonight, I'd also like to honor the passing of an amazing woman, Dolly Park. She wasn't just a student, she was a philanthropist to devote her time to managing children around the world. It started with the Dollywood Foundation in the 1980, supporting the educational success for children in her hometown, a steadier, I don't know if I can ask that correctly, County, Tennessee.

[01:09:22] She later went on to donate more than 300 million books to children around the world. And this is what she said about her acts. She was named one of the people of the year 2021. She said, I'm kind of addicted to giving, knowing that I'm doing something good for someone else.

[01:09:42] At the end of the day, that's why we're all doing it, to do something good for someone else. And that's what we need to keep our minds on and our eyes on because at the end of the day, that's what matters. thank you miss stevens miss seaberg thank you chair vdoe released the federal pass rates this morning at 10 a.m and i look forward to the public presentation of the results celebrating our successes and sharing plans to address areas where improvement is needed on another subject we do have a board development committee that has been tasked over the past 19 months with updating

[01:10:20] our operating protocols code of ethics and school board member handbook a great deal of progress has been made and i would like to thank the committee led by mrs breja with members mrs stevens and mrs miles for their work in advancing these important documents however one critical component the development of remedies when expectations or protocols are not followed has not yet been addressed and this omission has contributed to some challenges recently we've

[01:10:54] tried to resolve them in closed session without success therefore i think it is critical for the board development committee to revisit this work asap with a focus on identifying appropriate remedies refining our operating protocols and strengthening policies where necessary before bringing them to the full board doing so will provide clearer guidance for navigating conflicts should they arise and help ensure that we continue our work together effectively and in the best interest of who we serve thank you thank you miss seberg miss brown i'm just going to use a quote

[01:11:32] from robert frost one of my favorite poets i always entertain great hopes and i'm encouraging all of manessa city to do the same thank you thank you miss brown vice chair jones uh welcome to our two school representatives for this year i want to let you all know that dr alice howard passed away she was a principal at valwyn elementary school when i came into the division and she later became a superintendent at colonial beach in virginia she was an educator that cared for students and teachers and she will truly be missed her funeral services will be on tomorrow august 26 at 10 o'clock

[01:12:11] well 11 o'clock a.m the school year the school year is well underway and i'm sure everyone has settle into routines you heard the first reading of the attendance awareness proclamation attendance is so important as a school board member as a school board and along with our dedicated teachers we want all students to learn how to read and write how to solve math problems for real life situations how to problem solve and how to think critically these are the core skills that prepare them for life after high school whether that means entering a vocational trade or going to college

[01:12:47] when i was in school you didn't miss a day unless you were sick later during my time as an administrator i remember setting a goal that absenteeism would be five percent or less today absenteeism rates are much higher but we have a strategic plan in place right now to reduce the days our students miss when students come to school they learn missing even a few days can leave a child with severe gaps in learning if we work together to help our students come to school regularly we will see additional learning across every grade level. But how do we build a school environment where students want to show up every day? It starts by grounding our

[01:13:24] school culture in a simple foundational principle, the golden rule. Treating others may be the way we want, treating others the way we want to be treated is not just the lesson for elementary playgrounds. It's a powerful catalyst for boosting academic achievement and improving consistent attendance through three profound elements. Belonging drives attendance. Students do not want to go to a

place where they feel invisible, isolated, or judged. When peers practice a golden rule, schools become a sanctuary of safety. When a child knows they are valued and respected by

[01:14:01] their friends, they look forward to showing up. Safety accelerates learning. Real learning requires vulnerability. It takes courage to raise your hand, ask a question, or make a mistake in front of others when the golden rule rules guys at classroom students know their peers will treat them with respect don't that emotional safety lowers anxiety opens the brain to critical thinking and allows academic growth relationships build community no student succeeds in isolation by teaching children to listen to support and to collaborate with one another we

[01:14:39] build strong peer-to-peer relationships these connections turn classrooms into teams where students lift up each other our commitment to the golden rule is also a direct commitment to our attendance and learning goals let's continue to work together to ensure our students attend school regularly treat one another with dignity and respect and unlock the limited potential of every student in our district thank you vice chair jones i'll be brief with my closing i love our schools i love our kids i love all of our kids for almost 30 years i have actively

[01:15:16] and consistently cared about and invested in this community through the good times and the difficult ones nothing and no one will keep me from continuing to do that including whatever it is that this is having a I hope you all have a great evening and I appreciate you all taking the time to be here with us thank you and I get a motion to adjourn chair I move that the school board meeting adjourned I have a motion by Miss Stevens seconded by Brown that the school board meeting adjourn is there any discussion all in

[01:15:52] favor any opposed the motion carries 7-0



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