

PUBLIC
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
MINUTES OF MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024

The information included here provides a summary of the agenda items presented and actions taken during the above meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County. The video recordings of the Board meetings are the official record of the meetings and can be viewed at: <http://www.hcps.org/boe/livestream/>. Informational reports are located at: <https://www.hcps.org/boe/boardmeetingschedules.aspx>

Open Session

The Board of Education of Harford County met in open session in hybrid format in person and via video teleconference on Monday, December 16, 2024. President Aaron Poynton called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM

Board Members Present

All Board members were present with the exception of Miss Sasha Pazoki, who was absent.

In-person attendance: Mrs. Diane Alvarez, Ms. Carol Bruce, Mrs. Terri Kocher, Dr. Carol Mueller, Mr. Wade Sewell, Mrs. Melissa Hahn, and Dr. Aaron Poynton

Virtual Attendance: Mrs. Denise Perry and Ms. Lauren Strauss

Motion, Second and Vote

Mrs. Kocher made a motion to waive public comment in its entirety in light of the limited nature of the open session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Alvarez and approved in a voice vote of 9-0. Miss Pazoki was absent.

Pursuant to Section 3-305(b)(1)(9) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon a motion by Ms. Bruce, seconded by Mrs. Hahn and approved in a voice vote of 9-0, the Board of Education of Harford County met in closed session in a hybrid fashion. Miss Pazoki was absent.

Closed Session

Board Members Present

All Board members were present with the exception of Miss Pazoki, who was absent.

In-person attendance: Mrs. Diane Alvarez, Ms. Carol Bruce, Mrs. Terri Kocher, Dr. Carol Mueller, Mr. Wade Sewell, Mrs. Melissa Hahn, and Dr. Aaron Poynton

Virtual Attendance: Mrs. Denise Perry and Ms. Lauren Strauss

Staff Present:

Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent

Dr. Eric Davis, Chief of Administration

Ben Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Dr. Mae Alfree, Director of Staff and Labor Relations

Deborah Judd, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services

Eric Clark, Director of Budget

Daniel Reimers, Human Resources Staff and Labor Relations Specialist

Kimberly H. Neal, Esquire, General Counsel

Yvonne Rallo, Administrative Assistant and Recording Secretary

In-person attendance: Dr. Sean Bulson, Dr. Eric Davis, Mr. Ben Richardson, Dr. Mae Alfree, Ms. Deborah Judd, Mr. Eric Clark, Mr. Daniel Reimers, and Mrs. Yvonne Rallo

Virtual Attendance: Kimberly Neal, Esq.

The Board of Education met in a closed session for the purpose of discussing:

Topic: Discussion and possible decision regarding parameters for negotiations with bargaining units

Reason for Closed Session: To maintain confidentiality of potential parameters, if any, of negotiation with bargaining units and discussions related thereto.

Mr. Ben Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, introduced Dr. Mae Alfree, Director of Staff and Labor Relations who discussed proposed bargaining parameters for the Board's consideration. Mr. Richardson, Dr. Alfree, Ms. Deborah Judd, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, Mr. Eric Clark, Director of Budget, and Mr. Dan Reimers, Human Resources Staffing Specialist, were available to answer the Board's questions. Dr. Alfree sought the Board's direction and approval to proceed with the recommendations as presented and discussed. The following actions were taken.

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sewell, giving Dr. Alfree the authority to proceed with a specific negotiation parameter option for a bargaining unit. The motion was approved in a voice vote of 7-2. Mrs. Alvarez and Mrs. Hahn cast the negative votes. Miss Pazoki was absent.

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kocher, giving Dr. Alfree approval to proceed with the recommended revised negotiation parameters as presented for specific bargaining units. The motion was approved in a voice vote of 9-0. Miss Pazoki was absent.

Note: Ms. Judd, Mr. Clark, and Mr. Reimers were excused from the following discussion.

Topic: Presentation of confidential information regarding recommended employee termination and to seek Board action

Reason for Closed Session: To preserve the privacy and confidentiality of information regarding the specific individual employee.

Mr. Ben Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, presented the Board information on an individual employee and sought Board approval of the recommended employee discipline matter.

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kocher, to approve the specific recommended employee discipline matter. The motion was approved in a voice vote of 9-0. Miss Pazoki was absent.

Adjournment

With no further business, Mrs. Hahn motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Kocher, and with Board consensus, the closed session adjourned at 5:49 PM.

Business Meeting

Call to Order / Roll Call

President Aaron Poynton called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Harford County Public Schools Student Presentations

The following HCPS student presentations took place as follows.

- North Harford High School Harmonics Students, directed by Ms. Katelyn Hemling, Music/Vocal Teacher, provided a musical performance for the Board.
- Miss Franzy Servano, Student at Joppatowne High School, was recognized as the 2024 Maryland Youth Apprentice of the Year, by Mr. Joe Connolly, Supervisor of CTE & Magnate Programs and the members of the Board of Education.

Board Members Present

Roll call was taken. All Board members were present.

In-person attendance: Mrs. Diane Alvarez, Ms. Carol Bruce, Mrs. Terri Kocher, Dr. Carol Mueller, Miss Sasha Pazoki, Mr. Wade Sewell, Mrs. Melissa Hahn, and Dr. Aaron Poynton

Virtual Attendance: Mrs. Denise Perry and Ms. Lauren Strauss

Adoption of Agenda

President Poynton called for a motion to adopt the agenda.

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion to adopt the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Alvarez and adopted in a voice vote of 10-0.

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice-President Hahn led the Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comments

Speakers were invited to the meeting to provide their comments for the record either in-person or virtually. President Poynton read a statement regarding protocol for public comments which included a provision that each speaker would have three (3) minutes to speak and speakers representing a group would have five (5) minutes to speak. Mrs. Yvonne Rallo, Board of Education Administrative Support Coordinator, called on individual speakers who were in person at the meeting and had registered to speak at the Board meeting. The following ten (10) people registered and provided in-person public comment: Brian Heinbaugh, Derek Noyes, Sonya Gallion, Ruth Oswald, Jennifer Walker, Jacob Bennett, Suzie Scott representing the group “Moms for Liberty Harford County”, Chrystie Crawford-Smick, representing the group “Harford County Education Association (HCEA)”, Christina Lanocha, and Tina Graf. There were no virtual speakers.

Board Member Comments

Board member comments were provided.

Old Business

President Poynton announced no “Old Business” was scheduled for discussion.

Item A. Consent Agenda

President Poynton called for a motion to approve the consent agenda as follows:

1. Monthly Personnel Report: November 2024
2. Contract Award: Ancillary Payroll Processing Services
3. Minutes of Previous Board Meetings: October 21, 2024 and November 4, 2024

Motion, Second and Vote – Mrs. Alvarez made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Kocher and the consent agenda was approved in a voice vote of 10-0. (Includes 1 preferential affirmative student member vote).

Meeting Break

The Board recessed until they were called back to order by President Poynton.

New Business

Item B. Decision on Schematic Design for the New Combination Harford Academy and Elementary School Project

Ms. Cathy Bendis, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Ms. Patti Jo Beard, Executive Director of Facilities Management, Mr. Chris Morton, Supervisor of Planning and Construction, Ms. Missy Valentino, Facilities Planner, Mr. Kieran Wilmes, AIA, LEED AP and Ms. Kerry Porter Hill, LEED AP, consultants of Grimm+Parker Architects, Mr. Randy Geyer, Principal of Harford Academy and Ms. Jennifer Drumgoole, Principal of Norrisville Elementary school, presented the Board background information of the new Combination Harford Academy and Elementary School project schematic design.

Grimm + Parker Architects collaborated with key stakeholders from both the Public Day School and the Elementary School to develop a schematic design (SD) for the new facility. During the SD phase, the overall concept and vision for the project was established. The presentation provided the Board and the community with an overview of the

schematic design layout, highlighting key design themes for the new facility. Following the presentation, Board approval was sought for the schematic design for submission to the State.

Motion, Second and Vote – Dr. Mueller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sewell, to approve the schematic design for the New Combination Harford Academy and Elementary School for submission to Maryland State, as presented. The motion was approved in a voice vote of 10-0 (Includes 1 preferential, affirmative student member vote).

Item C. Decision on FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program

Ms. Cathy Bendis, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Ms. Patti Jo Beard, Executive Director of Facilities Management, Mr. Chris Morton, Supervisor of Planning and Construction and Ms. Missy Valentino, Facilities Planner provided the Board a fourth presentation of the FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). They reviewed the local only funding needs as identified by Harford County Public Schools' (HCPS) stakeholders. The needs were prioritized using a decision matrix, and included, safety and security upgrades, technology refreshes, and projects addressing HCPS's critical compliance, facilities, and educational requirements. An overview of the identified needs and priorities were shared with the Board and their questions were addressed. Board approval was sought for the local FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program budget request in the amount of sixty-one million, three hundred thirty-nine thousand, five hundred one dollars and zero cents (\$61,339,501.00) for submission to Harford County government.

Motion, Second and Vote – Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the local FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program budget request in the amount of sixty-one million, three hundred thirty-nine thousand, five hundred one dollars and zero cents (\$61,339,501.00) for submission to Harford County government. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sewell and approved in a voice vote of 10-0. (includes 1 preferential affirmative student member vote).

Item D. Decision on Proposed 2025-2026 Harford County Public Schools Calendar

The Board received a presentation from Ms. Jillian Lader, Manager of Communications and Dr. Peter Carpenter, Director of Organizational Development and Continuous Learning, on the proposed 2025-2026 Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) calendar. Ms. Lader presented that this year, the membership of the 2025-2026 Calendar Committee was approved by the Board at the August 12, 2024, Board meeting. The committee met on September 5, 2024, and presented draft calendar proposals to the Board at the September 23, 2024 Board meeting. The proposals were posted for 60 days of public comment and feedback. The Calendar Committee met on December 3, 2024, to review stakeholder input and attempt to come to a consensus to provide a recommended 2025-2026 Calendar to the Board. The presented 180-day student/190-day teacher calendar contained the following features:

- New teachers report on Thursday, August 21, 2025.
- Returning teachers report on Monday, August 25, 2025.
- School begins for students (K through grade 12) on Tuesday, September 2, 2025.
- School begins for pre-kindergarten students on Thursday, September 4, 2025.
- Quarter end dates:
 - November 7, 2025
 - January 28, 2026
 - April 10, 2026
 - June 11, 2026

Discussion took place, with Board members considering the Calendar Committee's presented proposed HCPS 2025-2026 school calendar. A lengthy Board discussion included differing opinions and adjustments to the proposed calendar. After discussion, the following actions took place.

Post Labor-Day Start 2025-2026 School Calendar:

Motion, Second and Vote of Final Amendment – Mrs. Hahn made a motion, seconded by Ms. Strauss to approve the post-Labor Day 2025-2026 HCPS School Calendar start date of Tuesday, September 2, 2025, (*presented to the Board on slide 6 of exhibit, entitled “Proposed HCPS School Calendar With Edit For 2025-2026 SY*) with the following amendments: October 20, 2025 Professional Development Day moved to October 2, 2025; October 2, 2025 closure moved to November 11, 2025 School Closed for Students and Staff; October 31, 2025 is added as an early dismissal day; as presented. The motion was approved in a roll call vote of 8-1. Casting the negative vote: Ms. Bruce (Student member cast a preferential only affirmative vote (it does not count)). Mrs. Perry was absent.

Post Labor-Day Start 2025-2026 School Calendar:

Motion, Second and Vote of Full Calendar with Agreed Amendment – Mrs. Hahn made a motion, seconded by Ms. Strauss, to approve the post-Labor Day 2025-2026 HCPS School Calendar start date of Tuesday, September 2, 2025, (*presented to the Board on slide 8 of exhibit, entitled “Proposed HCPS Calendar With Board Member Motion 2025-2026 SY*) with the approved following amendments: October 2, 2025 Professional Development Day; November 11, 2025 School Closed for Students and Staff; October 31, 2025 early dismissal day. The motion was approved in a roll call vote of 8-1. Casting the negative vote: Ms. Bruce (Student member cast a preferential only affirmative vote (it does not count)). Mrs. Perry was absent.

Item E. Presentation of Harford County Public Schools Academic Performance: Local Assessments

Ms. Heather Kutcher, Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment and Mr. Phillip Snyder, Supervisor of Accountability, updated the Board on Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) local assessment data from the 2023-24 school year. The presentation highlighted key data points, including the performance of students on several local assessment measures in mathematics and reading. These assessments are aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and included the following: Student Numeracy Assessment Progressions (SNAP) math assessment for kindergarten students, math grade 1 benchmark, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, 8th edition (DIBELS) a universal screener for early literacy skills, and i-Ready diagnostic assessments in reading and mathematics.

No formal action was taken by the Board.

Item F. Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Bulson reminded the community that Friday, December 20, 2024, is a three (3) hour early dismissal day for both HCPS schools and offices.

Superintendent Bulson shared some of the topics discussed at this year’s Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference that he participated in last week.

Adjournment

With no further business and with Board consensus the meeting adjourned at 9:37 PM.

Sean W. Bulson, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools and Secretary-Treasurer

Aaron S. Poynton, D.P.A.
President, Board of Education of Harford County



BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PARTICIPATION
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024

Attachment

OPEN SESSION: 4:30 PM – 4:35 PM

This meeting will be conducted virtually with no public attendance due to the brief nature of this meeting and the logistical issues regarding allowing public attendance in advance of the 6:00 PM meeting.

*The only item the Board will consider during this open meeting is consideration of meeting in a closed session.

CLOSED SESSION: 4:35 PM – 4:55 PM

BUSINESS MEETING: 6:00 PM – ADJOURNMENT

This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid fashion and public attendance will be permitted as explained below:

DOORS WILL OPEN AT 5:55 PM AND THE MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 6:00 PM

The Board of Education of Harford County will hold a hybrid Business Meeting on Monday, December 16, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the Board Room of the A.A. Roberty Building with Board Members, staff, and presenters in attendance both virtually and in-person. Seats will be available on a first come-first served basis. The meeting will be streamed live and archived for later viewing on the [HCPS Website](#).

Public Comment Participation Call-In and In-Person Process

Individuals or groups recognized by Harford County Public Schools (i.e. – PTAs, unions, and other school system stakeholders) wishing to speak on an agenda item or to comment on an education-related matter not on the agenda may request to do so by sending an email to publiccomment@hcps.org or calling 410-588-5347.

Call-In Registrations must be received by 12:00 PM on Monday, December 16, 2024. All fields on the registration form must be completed.

1. First and Last name / if speaker is a Group Representative, then please state the name of the Group
2. Local Address
3. Email Address
4. Phone Number
5. Agenda item or subject your Public Comment pertains to
6. Will you provide in-person **or** virtual Public Comment
7. Registration forms are limited to one (1) per person

****Failure to provide complete information as required above will void the request to provide Public Comment.***

- Registered virtual speakers will receive an email from HCPS with a Call-in Phone # and a Conference ID #.
- Registered speakers are required to call-in and enter the conference ID# at 6:00 PM on Monday, December 16, 2024.
- **Important: If you are unable to take your phone off mute, you may need to dial *6.**
- If you are admitted from the virtual lobby to the meeting, you will be greeted by an HCPS staff member when it is time to begin your public comment. Expected hold time in the virtual lobby may vary based on number of registered speakers. The maximum wait time in the lobby is 30 minutes; should you be disconnected please call back.
- "Request to Appear Before the Board" cards will be available for in-person attendees prior to the Board Meeting for sign-up and must be submitted prior to the opening of the meeting.

The Board has authorized public comment in accord with its policy [Public Participation at Board Open Meetings or Public Hearings](#) and as summarized below:

- Each speaker shall be limited to no more than three (3) minutes for individuals and five (5) minutes for individuals representing groups. Speakers must state his or her name, and, if representing a group, must identify the group he or she represents. If a speaker identifies themselves as a representative of a group, then only one (1) representative from the group may provide comment for the identified group.
- *The Board presiding officer may reduce the amount of time allocated to each speaker if allocating 3 minutes to each speaker will impede the Board's ability to complete scheduled business.*
- The Board will receive in-person public comment first and virtual public comment second. The Board expects that all comments will be submitted with the decorum and respect appropriate to the conduct of public business.
- Topics such as personnel matters, pending appeals, specific student disciplinary matters or which constitute commercial solicitations are not permitted.
- Disparaging comments, personal attacks, and inflammatory remarks about specific schools, personnel, any person, or group are not permitted. Speakers who engage in these comments will be reminded of the rules and the Board reserves the right to remove the speaker. In addition, public comment is an opportunity for members of the community to address the Board of Education. Please direct your comments to the Board and not to other members of the public in the audience.
- All public comments submitted will be part of the records maintained by the Board office.

Speakers are reminded that public comments are considered public information and, as such, are subject to the Maryland Public Information Act.