

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, August 4, 2026
[Meeting Video Link](#)

Roll Call - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

Board Members - Dr. Kate Acuff via Zoom, Mr. Bob Beard, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Mr. Jim Dillenbeck, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, and Ms. Allison Spillman.

Absent – None

Staff Members – Acting Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Legal Officer Josiah Black; Assistant School Division Counsel Erin Stone; Chief Communications Officer Jason Grant; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 1.1 Call to Order - At 10:00 a.m., Chair Berlin called the Albemarle County School Board meeting to order.

Chair Berlin opened the special meeting to discuss and consider an independent review and investigation. Dr. Kate Acuff participated remotely due to a family matter, with the Board's consent. Chair Berlin explained that the meeting was being held in the smaller room so Dr. Acuff could participate without the audio delay associated with the larger meeting space.

During roll call, At-Large Board member Ms. Allison Spillman announced that she would resign from the School Board, with her final meeting scheduled for August 13. Ms. Spillman said she had been considering the decision for several months and had remained on the Board longer than originally planned to help support the superintendent transition. She reflected on her service, expressed pride in her work on behalf of students and families, and said the personal impact of public service on her health and family had become unsustainable.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 SPECIAL MEETING BUSINESS

Chair Berlin reviewed the limitations applicable to a special meeting under Virginia law and School Board policy, noting that discussion would be limited to the publicly noticed purpose of considering an independent review and investigation.

CLOSED MEETING - At 10:00 a.m., Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** that the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia go into a closed meeting as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia under Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. The purpose of this item is for the School Board to seek legal advice regarding an independent investigation of recent personnel issues and the Division's policies and practices concerning the response to allegations of sexually inappropriate conduct by staff. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.**

CLOSED MEETING CERTIFICATION - At 11:56 a.m., Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** that the Board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each Board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the Closed Meeting. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.**

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County School Board direct the Division's Superintendent and Chief Legal Officer to engage the law firm of Harman Claytor to conduct a thorough, independent investigation of recent personnel issues and the Division's policies and practices concerning the response to allegations of sexually inappropriate conduct by staff and to share the firm's findings with the School Board at the earliest possible date. And further moved that the Chief Legal Officer be directed to ensure that Harman Claytor is afforded access to all documents, data, witnesses and other evidence that will be necessary to conduct such an investigation. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**.

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Discussion and Consideration of an Independent Review/Investigation – The Albemarle County School Board discussed the scope, cost and structure of an independent review/investigation related to recent events in the division.

Mr. Beard emphasized the importance of a thorough, timely, and robust investigation and stated that the firm should have full access to the facts. The member said the Board wants to understand what occurred, ensure the safety of students, staff, and families, and identify steps needed to prevent similar incidents from occurring again.

Mr. Dillenbeck expressed support for the independent investigation and said outside review is important to the health of the school division. The member also stated an intention to propose, at a future meeting, an independent inspector general-type review or annual audit of ACPS policies and procedures to provide ongoing external oversight.

Mr. Dillenbeck also shared several questions as part of the investigation. These included whether ACPS had a mechanism to identify patterns of concerns involving the same staff member over time, whether reporting procedures were clearly understood and consistently followed, and whether concerns were elevated beyond the school level to individuals with authority to act. The member emphasized that the purpose of the review should be to identify where systems failed, strengthen those processes, protect students, and rebuild public trust through transparency.

Ms. Spillman expressed full support for the independent investigation and emphasized the need to examine the division's response from the school level through central administration. She said the review should identify both strengths and systemic failures, determine where gaps exist, and provide clear, actionable recommendations for improvement.

Speaking as both a Board member and an ACPS parent, Ms. Spillman stressed the importance of student safety and said families should be able to trust that their children are safe at school. She expressed confidence in the division while acknowledging that weaknesses may exist and said an outside legal team should review the matter comprehensively, establish the facts, and recommend improvements for staff, students, and families.

Ms. Osborne expressed support for the investigation and emphasized that the Board should remain focused on the central goal of making Albemarle County Public Schools safer and stronger for students, families, and employees. She said the Board's work moving forward should center on identifying what can be learned from the situation and what changes are needed to improve safety across the division.

Ms. Le emphasized the importance of ensuring the safety of students, staff, and the entire ACPS community. She noted that, following Ms. Spillman's departure, she would be the only current ACPS parent serving on the Board and said the safety of children and everyone within the school community is especially important to her.

Dr. Acuff expressed support for the independent investigation and stated that conducting the investigation was in the best interest of both students and the school division, now and in the future.

Chair Berlin expressed support for a robust investigation focused on protecting students and ensuring the safety of children, employees, and families. She said the review should identify failures in the division's policies, procedures, and practices and determine how those systems can be improved going forward.

Board members acknowledged that the independent investigation would likely be a lengthy process and that some information may not be available for public release. They asked the community for patience while emphasizing the Board's commitment to improving safety and strengthening division systems.

The Board discussed receiving updates from the investigators approximately every 60 days rather than waiting until the investigation is complete. Members said any actionable findings identified during those updates should be addressed as soon as possible. They also emphasized that the investigation does not replace the safety and improvement work already underway within the division under the Superintendent's leadership.

The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 ADJOURNMENT – At 12:06 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Berlin adjourned the special meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk