

MINUTES

The Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government & International Studies
Regional School Board Meeting
1000 N. Lombardy Street, Richmond, VA

Thursday, March 17, 2016

9:08 a.m.

I. Call to Order

John Axselle, Chairman of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board, called the meeting to order.

This meeting garnered a high level of interest, so much so that some members of the public were asked to wait outside of the meeting space because of fire code room capacity requirements, but the door was left open so that those outside could hear. A request was made by a member of the audience to move this meeting to the auditorium; however, that suggestion was not supported by the Chairman who advised such a move would cause a long delay and jeopardize the board's proceeding with regular business.

II. Moment of Silence

The Chairman called for a moment of silence.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

IV. Introductions

Each Board member introduced him or herself and stated their locality (listed in alphabetical order by locality). Welcome Celestine Gaines, King & Queen School Board.

Present:

Ms. Martha Harris, *School Board*, Charles City Public Schools
Dr. Javaid Siddiqi, *School Board*, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Mr. John Wright, *School Board*, Goochland County Public Schools
Mr. John Axselle, *School Board*, Hanover County Public Schools
Mrs. Michelle 'Micky' Ogburn, *School Board*, Henrico County Public Schools
Ms. Celestine Gaines, *School Board*, King & Queen Public Schools
Mrs. Sarah Grier Barber, *School Board*, New Kent Public Schools
Mr. Kenneth Pritchett, *School Board*, Petersburg Public Schools
Mrs. Valarie Ayers, *School Board*, Powhatan County Public Schools
Mr. Reeve Ashcraft, *School Board*, Prince George Public Schools
Ms. Kimberly Gray, *School Board*, Richmond Public Schools
Dr. David Gaston, **Superintendent**, Charles City Public Schools (late arrival)

Dr. Marcus Newsome, **Superintendent**, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Dr. James Lane, **Superintendent**, Goochland County Public Schools
Dr. Michael Gill, **Superintendent**, Hanover County Public Schools
Dr. Melody Hackney, **Superintendent**, Hopewell Public Schools
Dr. Carol Carter, **Superintendent**, King & Queen Public Schools
Dr. David Myers, **Superintendent**, New Kent Public Schools
Dr. Linda Shifflette, **Interim Superintendent**, Petersburg Public Schools
Dr. Eric Jones, **Superintendent**, Powhatan County Public Schools
Mrs. Renee Williams, **Superintendent**, Prince George Public Schools
Dr. Jeff McGee, **Director**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Mrs. Barbara Marshall, **Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Mrs. Megan Perez, **Deputy Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School

Absent:

Dr. Deborah Marks, **School Board**, Hopewell Public Schools
Dr. Pat Kinlaw, **Superintendent**, Henrico County Public Schools
Dr. Dana Bedden, **Superintendent**, Richmond Public Schools

Also present:

- Stacey Haney – Regional School Board Attorney
- Dr. Wendy Ellis– MLWGS Administration
- Wendy DeGroat, Sharon Parker, Lynn Reed, and Deborah Snagg – MLWGS Staff
- Laura Lewis and Marianne Macon – GS Foundation
- Anne Hayes – PTSA Advocacy Committee
- Peggy Feldmann – PTSA President
- Kevin Guyer, Penny Moss, Kristi Turner, Karen Schwartzkopf, and Paula Chambers – MLWGS Current or Alumni Parents
- Kayla Aaron ('15), Sam Schwartzkopf ('15) and Andy Creery ('96) – MLWGS and GSGIS Alumni
- Students in Attendance: **Seniors** – Darby Anderson, Jaylaan Bell-Colley, Cecilia D'Arville, Dolan Edinboro, Anthony Holten, Ryan Lucia, Jack Miller, Robert Morris, Ana Murias, Austin Peters, Reshini Premaratne, Madeline Russo, Jonah Sweeney, Krystal Turner, Elijah Trexler, Natalie Weinberg and Camille Yoke. **Juniors** – Brennan Adams, Corrine Burch, Ryan Buscaglia, Mairead Guy, Emily Martin, Robin Schwartzkopf, Katherine Seltzer, Catherine Setaro, A.J. Temple and Hannah Tuten. **Sophomores** – Isabella Dula and Ben Widener. Two student names were inaudible on the recording and not listed above.

V. Approval of Amended Agenda

Dr. McGee requested a change to the agenda regarding the Director's Verbal Updates. He stated the regalia issue was modified at the beginning of this week and that parents/students were notified they will be allowed to wear all earned honor cords as well as one additional piece of regalia that has been vetted by a subcommittee and provides for student expression.

On motion by John Wright, seconded by Valarie Ayers, the amended agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved.

VI. Approval of Minutes

On motion by John Wright, seconded by Micky Ogburn, minutes for the regular meeting of February 18, 2016, were unanimously approved.

VII. Public Comments

The Public Information Period shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes. Each speaker will be allotted three (3) minutes to make his/her comments. Individuals representing groups will be allotted five (5) minutes.

Speakers should state their full legal name prior to addressing the Regional School Board.

Speakers will not be permitted to address or question the Director, Board Attorney, Board Clerk or Deputy Clerk, or any other staff member directly. Questions should be directed to the Chairperson, who may, at his/her discretion, solicit a response.

Speakers appearing before the Regional School Board will not be allowed to campaign for public office, promote private business ventures, engage in personal attacks of anyone, or use profanity or vulgar language.

Applause is permitted during the awards and presentations period only.

Citizens may express their views in writing in lieu of any oral presentation.

Hearing-impaired persons may contact the Regional School Board Clerk in advance to make arrangements for an interpreter.

The following remarks are provided by Danny Yates, Class of 2009, and included in the minutes of this meeting under Regulation 1024-R per Mr. Yates' request:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me on the phone yesterday evening/this morning. As I mentioned when we spoke, I am unable to attend tomorrow's Regional School Board Meeting due to my work obligations. However, I trust that you will keep the following points in mind when you and your colleagues meet and discuss the future of the Honor Council at Maggie Walker Governor's School.

I am highly disappointed in Director McGee's decision to suspend the MLWGS student-run Honor Council due to an isolated incident which was blown out of proportion on social media.

As a former four-year member and chairman of the Honor Council, I find Director McGee's decision quite disturbing and misguided. I credit my Honor Council experience for so much of

what I have achieved in the seven years since my graduation from MLWGS (undergraduate and law degrees from William & Mary, membership in the Virginia State Bar, and my current position as a law clerk to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia).

From my experience as a member and Chairman of the MLWGS Honor Council (2005-2009) and in the four years that my brother, Johnny Mac Yates, served on the Council (2009-2013), I can attest to the following:

- The Honor Council is well run and is fortunate to have a terrific advisor in history teacher, John Wilkes. Mr. Wilkes ensures that the Honor Council abides by its by-laws and confidentiality is at the core of every Honor Council proceeding.
- The Honor Council is elected by the students and is taken seriously.
- The Honor Council operates with strict guidelines of confidentiality, and members take these guidelines extremely seriously (for example, when my brother was on the Honor Council he couldn't even discuss cases with me since I had graduated).
- The Honor Council determines innocence or guilt, but the administration ultimately decides on any punishments. The Honor Council merely makes factual findings and suggests a course of action.
- The entire process is built for fairness and to offer a learning experience to students who have violated the Honor Code.
- Students invest real and significant effort in the entire process - from investigation to confrontation to trial to appeals. Honor Council members spend many evenings and weekends investigating cases, presiding over hearings, and working to educate the student body about the Honor Code.
- The shared/split responsibility of trial and sentencing assure that both the student body and the administration work together to create a school where honor is valued.
- Eliminating a student-run, faculty-advised honor council would damage the mission and reputation of MLWGS - educating gifted young people to be productive, responsible citizens.
- The Honor Council exists to help students and faculty. It helps keep a level playing field for all. It works with offenders to change behavior, not seek revenge.

- Finally in regard to any concerns raised about liability - the structure and oversight are in place to assure that it does not violate student rights. While it is modeled after the Honor Councils at many Virginia colleges and universities, it also contains more checks and safety valves, as appropriate for a high school.

I ask you to carefully consider the ramifications of Director McGee's decision. As an attorney myself, I am well aware of what it means to "take something under advisement and consult the school's lawyers." Such a course of action signals the death-knell of the MLWGS Honor Council.

By nature, attorneys are risk averse, and as with any school activity, the Honor Council involves a small amount of risk in terms of FERPA and other privacy concerns. However, high school sports are incredibly risky, yet they are an essential aspect of the American high school experience. Riding the school bus presents tremendous risk, yet school buses are a vital

means of transporting students to school each day. Similarly, the Honor Council is a fundamental part of the Maggie Walker Governor's School experience and academic culture.

The benefits of the MLWGS Honor Council far outweigh any risk of liability. I wholeheartedly urge you to support the longstanding and rich tradition of a student-run Honor Council at the Governor's School.

Thank you and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

The following remarks are provided by speaker Anthony Holten, Class of 2016:

Good morning, my name is Anthony Edward Holten and I am a current senior. Twenty years ago shortly after the establishment of this school, an advisory elected body of students was created as a bulwark emphasizing the Honor Code, fostering the culture of honor, and justifying the privileged trust Governor's Schools students receive.

Now our administration has curtailed our Honor Council, reasoning in secret, questioning if we ask too much of our Honor Council members. I have surveyed the great body of students, and their determinations are clear. Overwhelmingly, we condemn the indefinite curtailment, as we place far greater trust in matters of honor in our principled council than in our administrators. My survey showed that students feel they do not have a voice critiquing or influencing what they generally feel are administrative policies made neither in the best interest of the school nor with basic communication outlined in chapter 2000 of the Regional School Board's by-laws.

I immediately got a message from my father asking me what is happening to the Honor Council following the receipt of a superlatively vague email announcement from Dr. McGee on March 10th. It mentioned "last month's social media post," saying "our present issue has raised pertinent and important questions regarding what we are asking of our council." What the present issue is and what these important questions are undefined and left to unhealthy speculation. This administration time and again fails to communicate; we begin to worry if this is the administration's intentional modus operandi. What we ask of our Honor Council, it does, what we ask of administration, it disappoints.

So we are met at a crossroads that has been seen before in history at other prestigious educational institutions. Rumors and accusations of unfair discipline cannot be validated due to the necessary confidentiality of an Honor Council, creating an indeterminable web of word-of-mouth. Instead of addressing this issue constructively, this administration has punished those who have independently spoken their concerns. For learning to best occur, trust, communication, and understanding are imperative in the mutual relationship between administration and its students.

I will now ask my peers who have come today in defense of honor to please stand; I note that most are already standing, and I'm disappointed to have to recognize those who are standing outside. Thank you.

The first step moving forwards must be to nullify the curtailment of the Honor Council. Review is certainly an advisable process, yet needs a timeline and explicit goals, noting that

review of a body should be able to be conducted, and may even benefit, from a body in activity. This administrative fiat abandons the already waning trust we as students held in administration, and an affirmation of this decision from the Regional School Board will close the curtains on the window of executive trust that we as students value as an integral part of the health of our school. I encourage all those interested, especially the Regional School Board members and members of school administration, to view the survey report. There are paper copies here and it is also available digitally. Thank you.

[A copy of Mr. Holton's survey will be part of the permanent record of this meeting.]

The following comments are not recorded verbatim:

Emily Martin, Class of 2017, addressed the Board about its upcoming vote to approve the Director's decision to suspend the Honor Council. Emily spoke with pride about being able to attend a school that placed such a high value on honor and integrity and where the administration trusted students with the responsibilities to make these decisions. The unique existence of the Honor Council proved to her that she was attending an institution that placed great trust in its students.

Ms. Martin stated: "I think it is easy to dismiss the suspension of the Honor Council as merely a matter of circumstance, but these past few months would imply that this is not an isolated incident. There has been almost no information given to parents or students regarding the reason for a suspension. Official information has left me with many more questions than answers." She added, it is my understanding that the current reason for suspension may be related to federally mandated student privacy protections; however, this does not line up with anything she has witnessed in three years as a student. Ms. Martin said she places great trust in the Honor Council and has never seen them be anything but professional and confidential. Following the recent actions of the administration however, Emily said she could no longer place the same amount of trust in their ability to communicate with the student body. Their suspension of the Honor Council and the troubling trend towards decreased transparency it reveals, undermines the importance of this school as a place of robust student involvement.

Continuing, Ms. Martin said students are beginning to fear retribution for questioning what they perceive to be unjust policies. The initial Facebook post that triggered this controversy and investigation used no names and revealed no potentially identifying information. The school's response; disciplinary action over what she viewed as a completely innocuous Facebook post, seemed to further imply to the student body that any criticism of the administration could tarnish an individual's hard earned record. She added, I have even heard one student refer to the administration as the people who, 'quote', hold my transcript and school records hostage. This perception only further contributes to a fearful environment at the school where students feel having and voicing the wrong opinion could make them a potential target.

The decision to suspend the actions of the Honor Council is absolutely the wrong one for the Maggie Walker community. Allowing this proposal to pass silences one of the most meaningful aspects of our school. For the sake of transparency, trust, and honor, Ms. Martin asked the Regional School Board to vote against the suspension of the Honor Council.

The following remarks are provided by speaker Karen Schwartzkopf, MLWGS Parent:

Good morning members of the Maggie Walker community and members of the regional school board. My name is Karen Schwartzkopf.

I'm here as the parent of two Maggie Walker students, one alumni and one current, both of whom have served on the Honor Council for a combined seven years.

Until very recently, I would bet that the majority of the board members gathered here had never heard of the Maggie Walker Honor Council. Yet for close to twenty years, it has been the backbone of Maggie Walker Governor's School. For nearly twenty years, having a student-lead Honor Council has set Maggie Walker apart from most, if not all, traditional public high schools. I might go so far as to say even the majority of magnet schools for high-achieving students in Virginia don't have the kind of Honor Council that we have here at Maggie Walker.

Unlike many parents of students in the Maggie Walker community, because my daughters are/were members of the Council, I am aware of the circumstances which lead to the decision to suspend the activities of the Honor Council. I also understand that this step might be necessary because of what administration perceives as legal ramifications. While I understand this decision, I'm disappointed for the students of this great school. I don't have any data on the number of cases heard or the nature of the offenses. I imagine there are repeat offenders. These students who have been before the Honor Council multiple times aren't going to suddenly learn how to be honorable. These students are learning how to dig themselves out of a hole. How to get around the system.

It's the students committing infractions and appearing before the Honor Council for the first time that I care about. The part of the process that allows students to learn from their mistakes with their peers on the council (teens who are familiar with the pressure of trying to succeed academically) is invaluable. These kids are the ones who will suffer from not having this learning experience.

It is for this reason and for these kids that I call on the Maggie Walker administration to work with current senior members and past presidents of this student-lead body to put in place a new system as soon as possible. This student-lead organization should have transparency, clarity, and accountability. The Honor Council's decisions should bear more weight, not less. And the reinstatement of the new Honor Council will send a clear message to Maggie Walker students and their parents that the students' mental wellness comes first and that no grade, achievement, or college admission letter is worth sacrificing their honor.

The following remarks are provided by speaker Samantha Schwartzkopf, MLWGS Alum:

Good morning members of the board. My name is Sam Schwartzkopf. I am a Maggie Walker alum, Class of 2015. I am currently attending the University of Richmond.

I was on the Honor Council at Maggie Walker for all four years of my attendance. I am a passionate proponent of the Honor System at Maggie Walker, but I will attempt for these comments to put any ethical or moral validation of the system to the side and just state the facts.

I would like to address some misconceptions about the council's process.

The 1st misconception: the council is run entirely by students. The council is composed of twelve students. Three from each grade. These students are elected by their peers; they are not appointed and they do not simply volunteer. In a truly republican process, the Honor Council represents the will of the student who elected them in good confidence. Each representative on the council must face reelection every year. But perhaps more importantly, the council is not entirely run by students. Every decision the Honor Council; makes, every action it takes, whether it is pursuing a case or suggesting a sanction, is run by Mr. John Wilkes. Mr. Wilkes provides each member of the council with training at the beginning of his or her term. Mr. Wilkes is present at every trial. Mr. Wilkes has a strong, measured, and mature presence on the Honor Council.

The 2nd misconception: The council searches for cases. The Honor Council does not search for cases. Rarely does a member of the Honor Council even report a case. In my tenure on the Honor Council, every single case was brought to the Honor Council by a teacher. The council is not a police force – it acts when members of the community of trust approach it.

The 3rd misconception: The council punishes offending students. When the Honor Council completes the trial process, if the student decides to take the issue to trial, it suggests a sanction. Yes, there is a large range of sanctions, but ultimately the council does not have the power to force this sanction on a student or on the administration.

Think of the council itself as a jury. The jury determines guilt or innocence depending on the facts of the case. Think of the administration as the judge. The administration of Maggie Walker takes what the jury says to heart to determine a final punishment and ensure that punishment is carried out.

I am now on the Honor Council at the University of Richmond as a first year and have had the opportunity to compare Maggie Walker's system to the university's system. They are impressively similar, from my point of view. The same protections for the accused exist – anonymity in determining whether the case should be pursued, student lawyers, to name a few. But Maggie Walker is even more careful. To name just one example of how Maggie Walker's Honor Council is even more respectful of the rights of students, each student is afforded an informational consultation with Mr. Wilkes to learn about the process before coming before the council. This benefit that Maggie Walker offers is not even available in a collegiate level honor system.

I hope I have clarified some aspects of the Honor Council's process. And I hope you realize that as a student organization with a Constitution, we have standards we unfailingly uphold. No action of the council is left to individual or momentary discretion. It is impossible, based

on institutional checks and a lack of executive power, for the council to be rash or destructive in the rulings it hands to administration to execute.

The following comments are not recorded verbatim:

Kayla Aaron, MLWGS Class of 2015, addressed the Board using her perspective as a non-council member alum. She began her remarks by saying she was shocked when first starting her school life at MLWGS by the amount of freedom the students were allowed (ex: signing in/out of class, hour-long lunch periods). However, after settling in, she said she realized administration awarded such freedoms to students because there was, and still is, an atmosphere of trust and the Honor Council is at the center of this trust.

Continuing, Ms. Aaron added that Maggie Walker is a unique high school in that it applies a student-administered honor council to address honor code violations. The students elected to the council by their peers are held to the highest of standards and bound by strict confidentiality. They understand the importance of their job and have the utmost respect for the student body, teachers, administration, and the institution itself. And the school recognizes these efforts. Students and teachers alike value this system and see the need for student's direct involvement in an honor system in order to promote a culture of integrity here at Maggie Walker.

In light of recent circumstances, Ms. Aaron said she understood the pressure to review all systems to ensure they are working in the best interests of the students. However, she finds the suspension of the Honor Council disconcerting. Ms. Aaron added that she could not think of a time when the Honor Council has not operated since its creation twenty years ago. When she was a student here and a non-Honor Council member, she stated she was so proud to attend a school that held honor in such high regard and that we had a student-administered Honor Council to exemplify this. Now as an alum, it is important to Ms. Aaron that current and future students enjoy an Honor Council structure without which Maggie Walker loses an essential piece of what makes it special amongst other high schools in the community.

Concluding, Ms. Aaron asked the Board to take her comments into consideration.

The following comments are not recorded verbatim:

Kristi Turner, an MLWGS parent, addressed the Board to respectfully speak against the suspension of the Honor Council. Ms. Turner began with greetings and identified that she has a freshman daughter at Walker who serves on the Honor Council.

Ms. Turner read a quote she found and believed was applicable to this situation: "What this research tells us is that the administration cannot, by itself, reverse a culture of cheating; instead, student perception is a much larger factor in the culture of any school as students approach the issue of whether or not to cheat on an assignment. For that reason, not only an honor code but an honor council is an important and necessary element in combating against a culture of cheating, because a student-led committee which fights against cheating represents a vital link between the individual student and the values of the community (Gable et.al, 2005)."

Ms. Turned noted when her daughter was applying to high school last year the fact that Maggie Walker had a student-led honor council was a huge selling point to her. One of the principles of this school is leadership which involves constructive problem solving and conflict resolution. Having a student-led honor council is one way to assert this principle. Suspending the Honor Council would impugn the student's efforts to do their job as community representatives of the honor system. If the honor system is questioned and not seen as legitimate, punishment imposed by it will also not be seen as legitimate.

You say on the website, "trust and responsibility," which the Governor's School has always given its students and is reflected in the honor code. If you take this process away, even briefly, you have undermined this trust and responsibility.

The following remarks are provided by speaker Cecilia D'Arville, Class of 2016:

Hello everyone! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Cecilia D'Arville. I am currently a senior here at Maggie Walker from Henrico County. I am speaking before you all today due to a recent decision made at Maggie Walker regarding our school's Honor Council that has caused me a great deal of concern.

Just last week, the administrative team at my school chose to curtail the Honor Council to review the current policies. Although I respect their decision to review the policy, I found it incredibly alarming that in the released statement to students and parents there was no specified duration of this curtailment, implying an indefinite suspension of the Council, nor was there an explicit statement about what sections of the code would be under review. Personally, I do not think this curtailment is necessary during this period of review as the Council would not be required to act in any different manner until changes were voted on and officially changed within the handbook. However, if this suspension is deemed necessary during the review, I, as well as what I perceive to be a large number of students, would feel more at ease if there was a set time this suspension would be lifted.

Past the technical aspects though, I fear the impact this suspension of the Council could have on the school as a whole. The Honor Council serves as the foundation of what fosters the community of trust at Maggie Walker between students and teachers. Halting its proceedings undermines what has been an integral part of the Governor's School for years, and puts this foundation of trust at risk.

Our school's vision statement says "Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies will develop lifelong learners who embrace the responsibility of citizenship [and] the value of ethical leadership." I can think of no students within our school who better exemplify these qualities than those that serve on the Honor Council. Furthermore, our school's mission statement asserts "Our diverse and supportive community develops students' character and ability to contribute, collaborate, and lead." I can think of no organization within our school that better promotes this community than the Honor Council.

In my four years at this school, I have never held anything but respect, faith, and admiration for the Honor Council. I cannot imagine Maggie Walker being the institution of high regard that it is without the Council. Put simply, the Maggie Walker Governor's School is not the Maggie Walker Governor's School without the Honor Council.

I hope you all will take this into consideration when making any decisions regarding the status of the Honor Council at our school.

The following comments are not recorded verbatim:

Ryan Lucia, MLWGS Class of 2016, addressed the Board concerning the suspension of the Honor Council. Mr. Lucia stated he wanted to add his voice to that of his peers that the Honor Council is a critical part of this school and must be upheld. Transparency and guidelines should be put in place during any review process.

Mr. Lucia added; when he was looking into this school as an option for his education, a staple was the Honor Council. Additionally, during his time here it [*Honor Council*] has been integral to his experience and how he views his classmates, teachers, and the entire community of trust. Ryan said he has the utmost trust in the Honor Council and believes suspending the council, even temporarily, or getting rid of it entirely, is an extremely dangerous precedent to set and has the potential to cause upheaval within this community. Additionally, student expression within the school and on personal grounds is a very important thing, and as long as the critique is relatively tame, he believes silencing student expression is a very dangerous precedent and creates a chilling atmosphere.

The following comments are not recorded verbatim:

Josh Lee, MLWGS Class of 2016, addressed the Board regarding the suspension of the Honor Council. Mr. Lee shared with the Board that he is currently a class officer and has served in that capacity for three years.

Mr. Lee stated that the student body has felt disrespected by the administration, that promises made have not been kept, lies have been made to our student body, and we are currently feeling disrespected by this administration because of all the things that have happened at the school. He added; this is not a personal attack upon the administration, its frustration that has been caused by their decisions to not allow student input, parent input, faculty and alumni input, on major decisions that affect our school and the student body. Currently, as a member of that student body Mr. Lee feels that something has to change in order to allow input and to allow the whole process to be more transparent. Major decisions have been made in the past four years that have not been transparent, including school finances, the budget, and graduation, a senior issue that has almost been taken away from us [*students*], because the administration decided to make all major decisions themselves.

Overall, Mr. Lee stated the students are very frustrated with everything that has happened over the past four years and wanted the Board to know.

The following remarks are provided by speaker Andy Creery, GSGIS Class of 1996:

My name is Andy Creery, and I was fortunate to be a part of the 2nd graduating class from GSGIS in 1996. I came up through the Hanover school system, and have two children in Chesterfield County schools. My youngest has high hopes for attending Maggie Walker in a few years.

Recently some alumni social forums and emails have come to my attention regarding the possible suspension of the Honor Council. I realize that the general public is not privy to the details surrounding this, but unless there is demonstrable damage being caused to the organization, I urge you to reconsider during the evaluation process. If there is no harm in continued operation, then disbanding for a formal review is an unusual step, as it eliminates the ability for observation after the review criteria has been set. Something tells me that if you approve this decision it will be permanent.

The Honor Council is something that is unique to high schools in this area, but not at the collegiate level. I attended JMU for my undergraduate studies and VCU for my graduate work. Both institutions have student councils that work with the administration to help govern the student body. They do this because it gives students a sense of fairness and investment in the institution. Instead of issues being Students v. Administrators, the issues belong to the entirety of the Institution.

The Honor Council has been in place since the school's inception (or at least the 2nd years of operation, which I can personally attest to). I remember thinking of how wonderful it was that students that were handpicked to attend a school geared towards developing leaders allows the students to play an active part in their own honor code. It was empowering, and something those lucky enough to be a part of it took very seriously.

I also believe maintaining the Honor Council serves Policy 14 in the bylaws:

The Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board recognizes the student body as a significant part of the community and in the decision making process.

Student input is important in the data collection process, and on relevant issues students' views will be sought and considered by the director and the Regional School Board.

I plan on attending the meeting tomorrow morning to hear what is discussed on the subject. I was informed that the deadline had passed to register for public comment. I would like to point out however, that the Chair has the prerogative to open discussion for a total of one hour (30 minutes as indicated in the minutes plus an additional thirty at the Chairperson's discretion) for those in attendance whether or not they registered ahead of time, in accordance to both your bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order:

The Public Information Period is an opportunity for citizens to address the Regional School Board concerning the services, policies, and affairs of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School. The Public Information Period shall not exceed (30) minutes. Each speaker will be

allotted three (3) minutes (in the discretion of the Chairperson) to make his/her comments. Individuals representing groups will be allotted five (5) minutes. Citizens must schedule their appearance with the Board's Clerk, not later than 10:00am on the last business day before the meeting at which they desire to be heard.

In the conduct of its regular meeting the Chairperson shall extend the Public Information Period for an additional thirty (30) minutes to allow the public to address any agenda item to be voted on by the Board. No speaker on any such agenda item shall exceed three (3) minutes. The Chairperson may deny a request to be heard if the topic is not timely or germane or if he deems it necessary to hold a separate public hearing.

While I have not served on a School Board, I'm currently in my second term as a sitting president for the board of a local non-profit. I appreciate the need to move forward with business and not needlessly drag out public commentary. I think there's more value in hearing from multiple sources (in my case members, in your case students, alumni, and parents) before making decisions that may be considered controversial. I implore you to do the same.

I also have concern as to the approval of the Director's decision regarding the Honor Council is not following the rules of adoption per the bylaws:

Items for adoption, as well as revisions to existing policies and regulations, shall be submitted to the Director in writing prior to a Regional School Board meeting in which such proposed new or revised items are scheduled to be read and discussed. Generally, a vote for adoption may take place after the second reading. If circumstances warrant immediate action, the Regional School Board may bring the item(s) up for immediate adoption following a first reading. The purpose of first read is to discuss school matters to be voted on at a subsequent regular meeting.

As there are no approved minutes posted in a timely manner for February and no mention of it in prior minutes, a vote for ratification appears to violate the organization's bylaws. Doing that and having a limited period of public commentary if people do show up to speak does not reflect well on the Board, which I think we all agree should value transparency to a point of being beyond reproach.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Chairman thanked today's speakers and assured them the Board and administration would take their voices into consideration.

VIII. Closed Meeting

The Chairman directed the Clerk to announce items for closed session:

It is my understanding that the Regional School Board desires to enter into a Closed Session in accordance with Sections (§) 2.2-3711 and/or 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the Virginia

Freedom of Information Act, and specifically under the following enumerated subsection, the following items:

Number 2: Discussion or consideration of admission or disciplinary matters or any other matters that would involve the disclosure of information contained in a scholastic record concerning any student at Maggie L. Walker Governor's School. However, any such student, legal counsel and, if the student is a minor, the student's parents or legal guardians shall be permitted to be present during the taking of testimony or presentation of evidence at a closed meeting, if such student, parents or guardians so request in writing and such request is submitted to the presiding officer of the Regional School Board. And,

Number 7: Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the Regional School Board; and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the Regional School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. For purposes of this subsection, "probable litigation" means litigation which has been specifically threatened or on which the Regional School Board or its legal counsel has a reasonable basis to believe will be commenced by or against a known party. The closure of a meeting is not permitted merely because an attorney representing the Regional School Board is in attendance or is consulted on a matter.

On motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Martha Harris, the Board unanimously approved moving into closed session. The recorder was paused and the door closed.

At the conclusion of the closed session, the Clerk was invited back and asked to record a motion to reconvene in open session.

On motion by Martha Harris, seconded by John Wright, the Board unanimously approved moving into open session.

IX. Certification of Closed Meeting

The Chairman directed the Clerk to certify the closed session:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Regional School Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i-one) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements, and (ii-two) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting. Any member of the Regional School Board or committee who believes that there was a departure from these requirements shall so state prior to the vote, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place.

The Chairman asked if there were any statements or concerns from Board members. Being none, a motion was requested for closed session certification.

On motion by Kimberly Gray, seconded by Sarah Barber, the Board approved closed session certification.

Roll Call Vote on Closed Meeting Certification:

Martha Harris	Aye
Javaid Siddiqi	Aye
John Wright	Aye
John Axselle	Aye
Michelle Ogburn	Aye
Deborah Marks	Absent
Celestine Gaines	Aye
Sarah Barber	Aye
Kenneth Pritchett	Aye
Valarie Ayers	Aye
Reeve Ashcraft	Aye
Kimberly Gray	Aye

Mrs. Ayers made a motion to amend the agenda moving Action Items XIII to Item X due to the length of closed session and other conflicting calendar obligations for members. This motion was seconded by Kimberly Gray and the Board unanimously approved amending the agenda at this point.

X. Action Items

a. Ratify Director's Decision to Suspend Operation of the Honor Council During a Period of Review

Stacey Haney, Regional School Board Attorney, made a brief statement about the Honor Council process as outlined in the student handbook stating with her review as counsel she had serious concerns about the legality of the process in its current form, specifically under Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). It is counsel's recommendation that the process be reviewed and determine the next steps to bring it in-line with FERPA.

John Wright made the following motion: The Honor Council in its current form per Regional School Board legal counsel is in violation of the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). However, the Regional School Board understands the significance of this council to the school's community. Therefore, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School will retain its Honor Council; however, the Honor Council will not hear any cases until a revised process is approved by legal counsel and the Regional School Board, with input from a committee of stakeholders to include student representation. Sarah Barber seconded this motion and the Board unanimously approved.

The Chairman again thanked today's stakeholders for their input and assured the Board's action taken is the beginning of a process of review. A plan will be developed to review council procedures and make recommendation(s) back to the Regional School Board for resolution.

Mrs. Ayers, Mr. Ashcraft, Ms. Williams, Dr. Carter, Dr. Shifflette and Dr. Jones left the meeting.

b. Policy, Procedure and Form Proposals

The Policy Steering Committee offers the following for Board consideration:

Proc. No. 1070 – Procedures Related to International Travel *Amended*

Policy No. 3009 – Testing Programs

Policy No. 5001 – Personnel Records *Amended*

Policy No. 6013 – Public Complaints About Learning Resources

Form No. 6013.1 – Request for Reconsideration of Learning Resources

Policy No. 7003.2 – Financial Accounting

Dr. McGee noted that Policy No. 7003.2 directs the addition of a monthly financial statement to the Board's packet beginning August 2016.

All of these proposals were presented for first read at the Board's February meeting.

On motion by Kenneth Pritchett, seconded by John Wright, the aforementioned policies, procedure, and form were unanimously approved as a slate.

Ms. Gaines left the meeting.

c. New Courses for Academic Year 2016-2017

The following (2) course offerings for 2016-2017 are provided for board approval: World Literature and Composition I, Honors and Plus Levels, and Gender, Politics, and Consumerism in a Global Context (VCU Intl 368-Women & Global Politics/VCU Intl 203-Cultureal Texts & Contexts: Gender & Consumer Culture). Courses were presented for first read at the Board's February meeting.

On motion by Kenneth Pritchett, seconded by Martha Harris, the aforementioned classes were unanimously approved as a slate.

d. Personnel

The Director recommends approval of the personnel actions listed [*previously listed as Item XIII.d*] – Folder B (exempt folder).

On motion by John Wright, seconded by Sarah Barber, the Board approved personnel actions requested.

XI. Recognition

Due to the length of closed session, all recognitions were postponed until the April 2016 meeting.

XII. Director's Report

A. Verbal Updates

- **Graduation Regalia Update.**

Dr. McGee made reference to his agenda adjustment at the beginning of this meeting that addressed this matter. Noting again: students will be allowed to wear all earned honor cords as well as one additional piece of regalia that has been vetted by a subcommittee and provides for student expression.

- **Prospective Student Shadow Days by Division:**

- Monday, March 21st – Chesterfield
- Tuesday, March 22nd – Charles City, Goochland, Hopewell, King & Queen, New Kent, Petersburg, Powhatan, Prince George and Richmond
- Wednesday, March 23rd – Hanover and Henrico
- Thursday, March 24th – Division Visitation for Alternates

- **Alumni Showcase, March 25, 2016, at MLWGS**

On Friday, March 25th, about 50 alumni will return to the school to give presentations to current students on life after high school graduation. This biennial event has been a huge hit with both speakers and students in the past, and we're so excited about this year's speakers. They include the head of a financial tech startup, a Foreign Service officer, a producer for The Late Show, and a managing librarian in DC Public Libraries, along with so many other fantastic alums.

B. Coming Events

March 17, 2016, through April 21, 2016 (see page previously listed as IX.b for details)

XIII. Unfinished Business

None

XIV. Materials for Board Review and/or Discussion

Due to the length of closed session, all Materials for Board Review and/or Discussion were postponed until the April 2016 meeting.

XV. Information Items

Due to the length of closed session, Information Items were not reviewed. The Chairman directed members with questions regarding any of the items to contact Dr. McGee.

XVI. Superintendent’s Steering Committee Report

Dr. Newsome stated the committee met prior to this meeting and discussed items on the Board’s agenda that have already been reviewed.

XVII. Announcements/Additional Discussion

Dr. Hackney had a question regarding regalia; would the stole [from *Peer Mentors*] discussed at the January meeting be included on the approved list? The Director responded the committee was in the process of vetting proposals and that item was included in the proposals received.

XVIII. Adjournment

On motion by John Wright, seconded by Micky Ogburn, the meeting was unanimously adjourned.

Next Meeting

April 21, 2016, at 9:00 am. MLWGS, 1000 N. Lombardy St., Room 153, Richmond, VA 23220. 804-354-6800 x2190.

John Axselle III, Chairman

Jeffrey McGee, Ph.D., Director

Minutes Recorded by:
Barbara Marshall, Regional Board Clerk