

MINUTES

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

Thursday, September 17, 2020

9:03 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Micky Ogburn, Chair of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board, called the meeting to order.

II. Moment of Silence

There was no moment of silence because of the virtual setting for this meeting.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

There was no pledge of allegiance because of the virtual setting for this meeting.

IV. Introductions

Each member present is listed in alphabetical order by locality.

Ms. Michelle 'Micky' Ogburn, **School Board**, Henrico County Public Schools
Ms. Harwood Hall, **School Board**, King & Queen Public Schools
Ms. Sarah Grier Barber, **School Board**, New Kent Public Schools
Mr. Kenneth Pritchett, **School Board**, Petersburg Public Schools
Dr. Dalphine Joppy, **Superintendent**, Charles City Public Schools
Dr. Carol Carter, **Superintendent**, King & Queen Public Schools
Mr. William Barnes for Dr. Lisa Pennycuff, **Superintendent**, Prince George Public Schools
Dr. Robert Lowerre **Director**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Ms. Barbara Marshall, **Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Ms. Megan Perez, **Deputy Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School

Not in Attendance:

Mr. John Wright, **School Board**, Goochland County Public Schools
Dr. Amy Cashwell, **Superintendent**, Henrico County Public Schools

Also present:

Dr. Wendy Ellis and Michael 'Max' Smith – MLWGS Administration
Wendy DeGroat and David Bortz – MLWGS Staff
Colleen Williams-Goochland Parent and Manisha Ashar-Henrico Parent

Not Required to be in Attendance:

Mr. Royce Paige, **School Board**, Charles City Public Schools
Ms. Debbie Bailey, **School Board**, Chesterfield County Public Schools

M. John Axselle, **School Board**, Hanover County Public Schools
 Ms. Linda Hyslop, **School Board**, Hopewell Public Schools
 Ms. Valarie Ayers, **School Board**, Powhatan County Public Schools
 Ms. Jill Andrews, **School Board**, Prince George Public Schools
 Mr. J. Scott Barlow, **School Board**, Richmond Public Schools
 Dr. Mervin Daugherty, **Superintendent**, Chesterfield County Public Schools
 Dr. Jeremy Raley, **Superintendent**, Goochland County Public Schools
 Dr. Michael Gill, **Superintendent**, Hanover County Public Schools
 Dr. Melody Hackney, **Superintendent**, Hopewell Public Schools
 Mr. Brian Nichols, **Superintendent**, New Kent Public Schools
 Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin, **Superintendent**, Petersburg Public Schools
 Dr. Eric Jones, **Superintendent**, Powhatan County Public Schools
 Mr. Jason Kamras, **Superintendent**, Richmond Public Schools

V. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Sarah Barber, seconded by Harwood Hall, the agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved on a voice vote.

VI. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Kenneth Pritchett, seconded by Sarah Barber, the minutes of the Regional School Board meeting of August 20, 2020, were unanimously approved on a roll-call vote.

The Regional School Board roll-call vote is recorded here:

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| Mr. John D. Wright (Vice-Chair), Goochland County Schools | Absent |
| Mrs. Michelle Ogburn (Chair), Henrico County Schools | Aye |
| Ms. Harwood Hall, King and Queen Schools | Aye |
| Ms. Sarah Grier Barber, New Kent County Schools | Aye |
| Mr. Kenneth Pritchett, City of Petersburg Schools | Aye |

VII. Recognitions

- None.

VIII. 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.

There were no public comments.

IX. Director's Report

A. Verbal Updates

- **Summer Activities**
 Since the end of school in June, the following activities have taken place on the school campus:

- Max Smith applied for and the school received a grant as part of the CARES Act to purchase PPE, distance learning supplies such as upgraded Zoom licenses, mobile hot spots, etc., and funding for additional staff development for teachers to conduct online instruction.
- The Dragon Academy was created to provide a supervised environment for teachers working on campus this fall where their children could keep up with their schoolwork while allowing their parents to continue teaching our students.
- A virtual College Boot Camp was held to help students prepare their college applications.
- A virtual Dragon Boot Camp was held for our students who were identified as needing a little extra boost to transition to our 9th grade World Literature classes.
- An in-person socially distanced freshman orientation was held. About 175 students participated and were able to spend some time on campus.
- Textbooks and material distribution days were conducted the week before the opening of school.
- Professional Development was held for teachers on the various electronic platforms that we will use this fall.
- Barbara Marshall worked on ADP WorkForce Now carrier connections for benefit enrollment or changes of staff through their profiles. This is particularly beneficial with faculty working remotely. Safety training was also scheduled for all staff on COVID Safety and a Substance Free Workplace in the ADP Learning Center.

- **Opening of School**

- School opened for instruction in the virtual environment on September 8th.
- All indications are classes went smoothly and there were no major technical issues.
- About 25% of the staff is choosing to work on campus.

Ms. Ogburn asked Dr. Lowerre about feedback he's received from parents regarding their student's workload and getting it done. Dr. Lowerre replied the number one feedback response he's received was about Zoom fatigue; 8:45 am-3:00 pm in front of a computer. Adjustments will be made on the instructional side that includes off-screen time during classes. However, due to the reality of many of our classes being advanced and/or dual enrollment or AP, teachers feel pressure to teach the content at the same pace they normally would. The school homework policy has not changed.

- **Virtual middle school information visits begin shortly**

- Districts are beginning to schedule information nights in their localities,
- We will attend either virtually or in a socially distanced fashion.

- **A Strategic Plan Implementation Team is being created and will begin to meet to put the approved Strategic Plan into action.** The team will include students, parents, teachers, alumni as well as operational staff to start making the plan a reality. A standing agenda item on Strategic Plan implementation will be included for future board meetings.

- **GS Foundation News**

We are excited to introduce you to the Foundation's new Fiscal Assistant, Julie Eckstein. Julie will be helping manage our bookkeeping needs as well as processing our enhancement grants. Julie is also a Dragon parent - her daughter Elisabeth is a sophomore. Please welcome her to MLWGS.

B. Coming Events:

Back to School night will be hosted virtually on the evening of September 24th.

September 17, 2020, through October 15, 2020:

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| Thursday, September 17 th | Executive School Board Meeting, 9:00 am, Virtual |
| Friday, September 18 th | Asynchronous School Day – Facility Closed for Cleaning |
| Thursday, September 24 th | Virtual Back to School Night, 6:30 pm |
| Friday, September 25 th | Asynchronous School Day – Facility Closed for Cleaning |
| Thursday, October 1 st | Finance Committee Meeting, 8:30 am, TBD |
| Friday, October 2 nd | Asynchronous School Day – Facility Closed for Cleaning |
| | Interim Reports Available Online |
| Friday, October 9 th | Asynchronous School Day – Facility Closed for Cleaning |
| Thursday, October 15 th | Regional School Board Meeting, 9:00 am, TBD |

C. 2020-2022 Division Enrollment

As MLWGS begins the planning process for the next school term as directed by Policy 1029 adopted May 18, 2000, amended December 18, 2014, and December 17, 2015, it annually seeks this slot commitment statement from participating divisions.

Letters will be provided to the RSB in October for participating school divisions for their 2021-2022 student enrollment commitment. Note that each letter should be executed by the division superintendent and school board member, and returned to MLWGS by December 1, 2020.

X. Unfinished Business

A reminder was made to the ESB that policies submitted at the August 2020 meeting for first-read are scheduled for approval at the RSB October 15, 2020 meeting.

Ms. Ogburn began a discussion during this section of business on a follow-up Zoom meeting she, Ms. Barber, and the director had with the public comment speakers (alumni) from the August meeting of the Regional School Board who were dissatisfied with the vote and discussion at that time on the Strategic Plan. Many questions were asked by the alumni, and a consensus was reached regarding process and admissions policy, and clarifications were provided for some of their misconceptions. A few of the alumni participants at this meeting will be included in the Strategic Plan Implementation Team. At the end of their call, Ms. Ogburn felt the participants were in a better place regarding the understanding of the process, stating, ‘equity of opportunity and diversity for our applicants is a goal we all share.’ Dr. Lowerre added, the alumni want to help partner with us and felt they had a productive meeting.

Mr. Pritchett asked if participating districts are having discussions about admissions with your constituents, adding, it seemed the smaller districts who are not encountering this issue

[diversity] are being lumped in with the larger divisions that are. Ms. Ogburn stated Henrico has begun meetings with their gifted coordinator(s) and team members to discuss their current practices for admission. The staff has developed a few potential scenarios of change as we assume dictates are coming from the State that will strip in some way our current policies. To get ahead of the issue, the staff is examining what we do now and what is the possibility of adjustments being made. However, we recognize the movement at the State level that runs the gamut of some members of the General Assembly (GA) wanting to defund and eliminate Governor's School, some members wanting to keep them as is, with everything in-between. Virginia's Secretary of Education Atif Qarni is on a mission to bring more equity and diversity to Governor's Schools. RSB members have been forwarded an article by the chair that was for their information about Thomas Jefferson GS [aka TJ, Fairfax] who has been a primary focus of attention and TJ's efforts to advocate for letting their admission process work as they choose. The TJ focus has started a conversation around the State for all Governor's Schools to look at their admissions policies to see if there is anything in them that puts walls or roadblocks in front of having a more diverse population.

Secretary Qarni appears to be interested in a quota system. However, reverting to Mr. Pritchett's question, how could we implement a quota system for the small division that maybe sends 1-5 students to MW; how would they meet that quota? Secretary Qarni's quota suggestion would require student identification by ethnicity, cultural identity, or socioeconomic identity but it is against the law to identify students by these markers as affirmed by the Henrico legal team.

There is also a movement to use socioeconomic identifiers. One of the TJ issues faces is they have several affluent families that can pay for enhancements such as test prep services and tutors, and other mechanisms to prepare their children for the application process to get in; however, families that are experiencing poverty on any level cannot afford these same services so Fairfax is finding no diversity of socioeconomic areas representative of the community. The Fairfax superintendent has recently proposed elimination of the admission test to level the admission field, while also recommending they take the pool of students who qualify and create a lottery, but this is going to be a very controversial change. The chair stated as a group we should follow what happens with TJ because at some point in time it will affect us too.

The chair added currently in Henrico they practice the following; to accept one student per middle school then the rest of the applicants from a common general pool based on their rubric of criteria, but it is not a lottery. Henrico is looking at increasing the MS slots to two because the county is so large they are finding a good number of students from the common pool come from locations with a gifted center. But Henrico is obviously at the beginning of this process and the chair recalled the last time their division changed its MW admission policy was a combative process. If Henrico does make a change, it will be after careful consideration.

The director remarked we need to remember TJ is a different school from Maggie Walker GS because they are a Fairfax Public School and their school board has complete control over the admission practices of that school. For Fairfax County to change their policies will affect everyone in their system, whereas we have a regional school board with twelve divisions with different admission practices and that is part of the MW charter. He added it appears the State is interested in outcome numbers and if the larger divisions such as Chesterfield, Henrico, and Richmond make changes to improve diversity in their accepted students, their outcomes should not impact the smaller divisions because the overall numbers will have moved enough each district will not be required to do something unusual. All of this work is being done with the best of intentions, but at the State level, it is political and will be required to be reviewed

and acted on at the GA involving committee and sub-committee work, passage in both chambers, and signed by the Governor. The director is looking for a much subtler change than TJ is proposing with the result being a more diverse and inclusive Maggie Walker. He added there is a belief that changing our admission process will lower standards, but Dr. Ellis has documented data that shows the correlation of success versus a composite score that stretches down into the 70's that a student with those scores on the composite admission score has excellent success rates. We measure success by grade point average and by graduation from our very rigorous curriculum with a 3.5-3.7 GPA or above, we won't have to adjust our standards at all.

Dr. Lowerre is open to more transparency in the process and more parental involvement and helping families to understand what we are doing. He believes a lot of fears are based on misconceptions when we are not transparent.

XI. Consent Items

On a motion by Sarah Barber, seconded by Kenneth Pritchett, the following consent items were unanimously approved as a slate on a voice vote: September 2020 personnel actions (none), fiscal status reports of July 31, 2020, the donations report of July 31, 2020, and a one-time rebate from Anthem Insurance for 2019 MLR (medical loss ratio required in the ACA).

XII. Action Items

a. Bullying Prevention Proclamation

To promote awareness of school bullying, the Regional School Board has designated the month of October as Bullying Prevention Month.

Childhood bullying is a significant problem nationwide. It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, poor self-esteem, and, in some cases, school violence. Over twenty percent of all school-aged children are bullied each year – upwards of 13 million students.

School board members, administrators, teachers, and parents play a critical role in creating a climate where bullying is not tolerated. When adults and children stand together, bullying ends.

On a motion from Sarah Barber, seconded by Harwood Hall, a Proclamation declaring the month of October as Bullying Prevention Month, with the intention that the issue of bullying and its prevention be discussed in the classroom during that time was unanimously approved on a voice vote.

XIII. Materials for Board Review and/or Discussion

There were no items for first-read.

XIV. Information Items

- Virtual College Visits at MLWGS
- Virtual Back to School Night, September 24th

- Welcome new MW Faculty
- MW Senior wins 3rd Place in U.S Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit Essay Contest

XV. Announcements/Additional Discussion

The chair thanked Dr. Lowerre for his management of all that has been coming his way from the Strategic Plan to his leadership of the school during this time of a pandemic, stating feedback she has received have been very positive from the community.

Dr. Lowerre thanked his amazing team for this measure of success and the school board for their support.

XVI. Adjournment of Regular Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 am.

Next Meeting – Regional School Board

October 15, 2020, at 9:00 am. MLWGS, 1000 N. Lombardy St., Room 153, Richmond, VA 23220. 804-354-6800 x2190.

Michelle Ogburn, Chair

Robert Lowerre, Ph.D., Director

Minutes Recorded by:
Barbara Marshall, Regional Board Clerk