

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
RIO DISTRICT CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Thursday, January 16, 2025

[Interviews Link](#)

ROLL CALL - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Graham Paige, and Ms. Allison Spillman

ABSENT – None

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 1.1 Call to Order – At 6:30 p.m. Chair Acuff called the Albemarle County School Board meeting to order.

Agenda Item No. 1.2 Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 1.4 Moment of Silence

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 SPECIAL MEETING BUSINESS

Chair Acuff made the following statement: “As you know, unfortunately, we have a vacancy in the Rio District seat on the School Board for Albemarle County due to the passing of former colleague Chuck Pace. Under VA Code Sec. 24.2-228, the School Board has the option to appoint an interim School Board member, provided that we do so within 45 days of the occurrence of the vacancy. Additionally, the School Board must hold a public hearing at least seven days before the appointment, at which the candidates that are being considered are identified.

This School Board decided to solicit applications and tonight will interview the seven individuals who have applied. Before we get to that, I’d like to thank all of them who are willing to commit to public service.

Each will be questioned with the same panel of questions. Each may begin with a 1–2-minute opening statement. After the interviews, the School Board will meet in a closed meeting tonight but will not make a decision.

At our regular Work Session on January 23rd, we will begin with a Public Hearing to receive comments from members of the community about the candidates. Then, at the end of that Work Session, we will hold a closed meeting, at which the School Board will deliberate and make a decision about an interim appointee. The School Board will announce its decision in the open session following its closed meeting. The interim School Board member will attend his/her first School Board meeting on February 13th.

Note that this interim appointment will last through December 31, 2025. There will be a general election for the Rio seat in November for a regular 4-year term.”

Agenda Item No. 2.1 School Board Candidate Interviews

The School Board Interview Process was outlined by Dr. Berlin, emphasizing fairness and consistency. Each candidate was given up to two minutes for an opening statement, followed by 15 minutes to answer a set of predetermined questions.

Question #1

What do you see as the role of a School Board member? What are the biggest issues facing the students, families, and schools of the Rio district, and how will you represent your constituents?

Question #2

You will be starting your board position at the beginning of the budget process. This is a challenging time for the board as there are so many important items to continue funding and new initiatives that are needed. What process will you use to get up to speed on the budget process and determine your recommended budget priorities?

Question #3

The board adopted an anti-racism policy in 2019. In what ways do you think we have been successful in implementing it, and in what areas could you help us improve?

Question #4

Recruitment and retention of our employees is incredibly important. In what ways has the division done this well? How would you propose improving?

Question #5

Working on a board requires working collegially as a team even when views differ, being a problem solver, focusing on long-term strategies and governance, and being able to thoughtfully engage with the public. How does your experience illustrate these skills?

A timer was displayed to keep track of the time for each segment.

Candidates were asked to wait in the atrium until their turn, and interviews proceeded in the following order:

1. [Leslie Adair Pryor](#)
2. [Susan Friedman](#)
3. [Jim Dillenbeck](#)
4. [Sarah Jenkins](#)

Agenda Item No. 2.2 The School Board took a break from 7:50-8:05

5. [Gail Lovette](#)
6. [Sean Moynihan](#)
7. [John Wharton](#)

The structured format ensured a fair and organized process for all applicants.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 Closed Meeting

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Closed Meeting - At 8:38 p.m., Ms. Le 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) subsection 1 of the Code of Virginia to discuss the seven candidates for appointment as a School Board member for the Rio magisterial district for the remainder of the 2025 calendar year. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Osborne, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, Ms. Le, and Chair Acuff
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

Agenda Item No. 3.2 Closed Meeting Certification - At 9:21 p.m., Ms. Le 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**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Spillman, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Paige, Ms. Le, and Chair Acuff
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
Motion carried by a 6:0 vote

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA – None

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:21 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Acuff adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk