



# VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHARTING THE COURSE

## School Board Services

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**Kimberly A. Melnyk, Vice Chair**  
District 7 – Princess Anne

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At-Large

**Sharon R. Felton**  
District 6 – Beach

**Jennifer S. Franklin**  
District 2 – Kempsville

**Dorothy M. Holtz**  
At-Large

**Laura K. Hughes**  
At-Large

**Victoria C. Manning**  
At-Large

**Jessica L. Owens**  
District 3 – Rose Hall

**Trenace B. Riggs**  
District 1 – Centerville

**Carolyn D. Weems**  
District 4 - Bayside

**Aaron C. Spence, Ed.D., Superintendent**

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### ***School Board SPECIAL Meeting MINUTES***

**Tuesday, January 19, 2021**

School Administration Building #6, Municipal Center  
2512 George Mason Dr.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

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- 1. *Call to Order and Electronic Roll Call:*** Chairwoman Rye called the special meeting of the School Board of the City of Virginia Beach to order at 5:00 p.m. in the School Board Chambers at the School Administration Building.

Pursuant to School Board Bylaw 1-46, a Special Meeting of the School Board has been called by the Superintendent with the concurrence of the School Board Chair for Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. via Zoom. The purpose of the Special Meeting is a work session for administration to discuss with the School Board operational plans to return students to school under the terms of the approved motion.

Pursuant to the State of Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor's Executive Orders, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act as amended by the Virginia General Assembly and the School Board's April seven, 2020 Emergency Resolution, this special meeting of the School Board of the City of Virginia Beach will be conducted electronically with School Board members participating remotely by telephone or on an online platform. Members of the public will be able to observe the School Board Meeting through livestreaming on [www.vbschools.com](http://www.vbschools.com), broadcast on VBT Channel 47, and on Zoom.

All School Board members were present via Zoom: Beverly Anderson, Sharon Felton, Jennifer Franklin, Dorothy Holtz, Laura Hughes, Vicky Manning, Kim Melnyk, Jessica Owens, Trenace Riggs, Carolyn Rye, Carolyn Weems.

- 2. *Adoption of the Agenda:*** Without any modifications, Chairwoman Rye called for a motion to approve. Ms. Riggs made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hughes. Without discussion, Chairwoman Rye called for a vote. The School Board Clerk announced the motion passed unanimously.
- 3. *Discussion on Operational Plans to Return Students to School Under the Terms of the Approved Motion***

Dr. Spence reviewed that at the January 12 meeting a recommendation was made for students returning to school, elementary PreK-grade 5, grade 6, and self-contained special education students returning to school on February 1 and then grades 7-12 students will be returning to school February 22, following a period of monitoring for the effective of health and safety mitigations. After a conversation at the January 12 meeting, there were subsequent motions to change the recommendation. The following substitute motions were read from the January 12 meeting:

*“The substitute motion that I’d like to make would be that we move forward with Dr. Spence’s plan of a February 1st goal to get the elementary and pre-K grade six self-contained, as written there, if the community positivity rate shows a decline for seven days or after the first week that we see a decline for seven days, and all mitigation standards are met and then that next group would come in either on February 22nd if the February first one starts on time or whenever three weeks after the first group started.” (from Ms. Owens)*

There was a request during the discussion for a repeat of the substitute motion:

*“My substitute motion is that we move forward with Dr. Spence’s plan that he’s put for the first group to start February 1st if the community positivity rate shows a decline for seven days or after the first week that we see a decline for seven days, and all mitigation standards are met, and then that next group, the February 22nd group, can start February 22nd if the February 1st timing worked out. If the February 1st group ended up being delayed, then the next group would start three weeks after as long as things were showing the way we expected them to.”*

Information was communicated Thursday of that week. There were questions raised following that communication, so it was decided that a conversation with the Board. It was noted that three items needed clarification: 1) seven consecutive days/seven-day decline trend; 2) metrics – test positivity rate we have been using, eastern region; 3) when would students go back in a seven-day decline: Monday (asynchronous day) begin on Tuesday – mid week seven-day decline bring students back the following week, but there were also operational decisions having to think about which included transportation, food stock, and teachers having a day to prepare their classrooms for face-to-face. Also, regarding the metrics, looking at the Virginia Department of Health eastern region metrics, it lags by 4 days, so January 12 it was 21.5 test positivity for the eastern region, and the next seven days reporting data there was a seven-day decline. Clarification needs to be made that the seven-day wording was met. There is also another mitigation that needs to be met, contact tracing, which was one of the reasons for delay.

There was conversation regarding the date data reporting should have started and using the wording seven-day decline and not the wording seven consecutive days (which was not indicated); when students will start after the seven-day decline – a day is needed to prepare for students in the classroom; need to get more assistance with contact tracing – made a lot of progress on our end internally, feel confident by February 2 we will have what is needed – it has been proposed to add an epidemiologist, two investigators and a couple of contact tracers – position statements have been communicated with Dr. Spence and he offered to give what is

needed – looking at getting a dedicated email address to separate our cases from the city cases; having a four-day lag period indicating we have met a seven-day decline; no language in motion starting on a specific date and it did decline for seven days; there is still a concern about providing contact tracing, and this topic will be discussed more at the next meeting; want to make sure the right information is being communicated – we are on track as long as the fifth element of mitigation has been met, contact tracing; teachers would feel safe with vaccines; community assisting with getting resources to help with contact tracing – individuals can contact the Department of Health if interested.

Dr. Spence reminded the public that phasing in was specifically at the request of public health so that as we brought students back, we would have sufficient time to monitor students and to make sure all mitigations were working and not adding to community spread. This had aligned with the original thinking to bring back in groups.

In summary, Dr. Spence stated there was general agreement to see an overall decline over a week and in test positivity in the eastern region, leaving us in a position to move forward assuming there is no dramatic change tomorrow. The health department feels confident they can support in contact tracing when students are brought back to face-to-face instruction. There was no pushback assuming we will be open on February 2; there will be time on Monday to prepare in-person instruction. If school can't start on February 2, we would arrive at a place during the week. We would need to pause instruction for a day, have an asynchronous day, and the next day there would be instruction. Hearing no objection, Dr. Spence was told he could proceed with the understanding provided.

Mrs. Rye noted that at the regularly scheduled meeting next week, an update will be provided on contact tracing capacity, and she reiterated the appreciation for the proactive aggressive engagement of the school division and city leadership in conjunction with the health department.

Dr. Spence mentioned vaccination efforts have ramped up over the course of the weekend. We were asked for an additional 3,000 names yesterday, which was provided. He encouraged employees to speak to their supervisors if they had any questions.

**4. Adjournment** – Chairwoman Rye adjourned the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Regina M. Toneatto, Clerk of the School Board

Approved:

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Carolyn T. Rye, School Board Chair