

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

March 5, 2026

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

***In Attendance:*** Autumn Anderson (Zoom), Melanie Cook, Kelly Fowlkes, Dr. Ben Henry, Yvonne Hollins, Ryan Jones, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Dr. Lori Suski, Doug Thompson Leader, Chantal Waters-Maddox (Zoom), Dr. Tamara Willis

- *Mrs. Hollins welcomed everyone to the meeting.*
- *Dr. Marcia Stokes reviewed the [power point](#) she presented at the Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority's (ICA) monthly meeting.*

***Meeting Summary:***

***School District Financial Challenges Overview***

*Dr. Marcia Stokes, CFO, presented a detailed overview of the School District's financial journey, highlighting challenges with declining taxable assessed values and the impact of the City's financial distress on the District's monitoring status under Act 141. The discussion explored issues with property assessments in Dauphin County, including the lack of periodic reassessments and difficulties in appealing assessments. Dr. Stokes noted that while the District can contest some appeals, the evidence often doesn't support their stance due to discrepancies between market values and assessed values. The conversation concluded with a discussion about potential legal action regarding the current state of the law and the challenges it presents for both the City and School District in recovering financially.*

***Harrisburg Economic Development Strategy***

*The discussion focused on economic development strategies for Harrisburg, with Autumn Anderson and Dr. Stokes agreeing that the School District needs a more robust approach beyond just sending a letter to secure funding and needing to address the District's underfunded status. They discussed the need for a comprehensive communications plan including media outreach, social media presence, and meetings with elected officials, rather than immediately investing in expensive lobbying firms. The conversation highlighted the challenges of balancing multiple priorities while addressing systemic underfunding issues, with Ms. Anderson emphasizing the importance of collaboration between the City and School District to address shared economic challenges.*

***Harrisburg City-School District Relations***

*The meeting focused on discussions regarding the relationship between the City of Harrisburg and the School District. Dr. Stokes expressed concerns about businesses not contributing to the School*

*District despite their success, while Ms. Anderson clarified her point about tax revenue benefits. The group discussed challenges with a recent City survey and the need for more regular meetings between the City and School District leadership. They also addressed issues with town hall meetings, including agenda control and public notification. The conversation touched on financial challenges facing both the City and School District, including tax-exempt properties and funding issues. The conversation ended with plans to focus on academic topics in the next meeting on April 9, including discussions about kindergarten readiness and corrective reading programs.*

**Next steps:**

- **Ms. Anderson:** *Talk to Board President Roslyn Copeland about ensuring the cost of advertising for joint City-School District town hall meetings is shared between the City and the School District and clarify where and how public notices are being posted.*
- **Ms. Anderson:** *Discuss with City Council (and/or relevant leadership) the possibility of making town hall meetings more focused on specific topics and moving toward solution-oriented working meetings; and assess public and City Council interest in this format change.*
- **Dr. Henry:** *Present data at next month's meeting (April) regarding the principal monitoring program initiated in January, including evidence of principals being out and about in buildings, and share dashboard data as available.*
- **Dr. Henry:** *Present data in April or May on instructional reviews observed over the last several months, and (in May) present data on the return on investment for the Corrective Reading program, including Dr. Sabina Grant-Spencer's data on Pre-K students' progress as they matriculate through grade levels.*
- **Kelly Fowlkes and Dr. Henry:** *Coordinate to systematically plan and present the academic data (kindergarten readiness, principal monitoring, instructional reviews, corrective reading) for the April and May meetings.*
- *Dr. Suski announced the next meeting date of Thursday, April 9, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.*
- *The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.*