



Board-to-Board, August, 2023

A monthly report from the Albemarle County School Board to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

ACES report presented—At its August 10 meeting, the Advisory Committee for Environmental Sustainability (ACES) presented an annual report to the Albemarle County School Board. The ACES advises and informs the School Board and Superintendent Haas about measure to help Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) develop and reach sustainability goals and foster an integrated series of tools and knowledge for the growth of environmental awareness.

A significant part of ACES' mission is to guide and coordinate the implementation of the County's Climate Action Plan as it relates to schools. Implementation will involve goals related to the five sectors of the Climate Action Plan: Transportation and Land Use; Buildings; Renewable Energy Sourcing; Sustainable Materials Management; and Landscape, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. In addition, annually the School Board may identify issues of interest for ACES to investigate and make recommendations.

ACES is comprised of twelve members; eleven voting members: one selected by each School Board member, three representatives selected by the Superintendent, and the Climate Protection Program Manager for Albemarle County and one non-voting student member selected by the Superintendent through an open application process.

ACES holds meetings 6 times a year, approximately bimonthly, during which the group learns of updates in ACPS, interactions with experts in the real of sustainability and conservation, and opportunities for members to visit successful sustainability projects.

Among the earliest needs identified by ACES was the need to visualize data to better understand where the division stands on various sustainability metrics and to establish a baseline to track progress of committee goals. The interactive buildings dashboards were created to support this need, and additional dashboards are forthcoming.

RECs: School Division Staff looked to the ACES Committee for guidance and leadership on whether to monetize Renewable Energy Credits on ACPS PV solar projects. Renewable Energy Credits, often referred to as RECs, entitle the owner to claim the environmental benefits associated with clean renewable energy. One REC equates to 1 Megawatt of energy generated by a solar array. A market exists where other entities are willing to pay for a REC so they can claim the environmental benefits associated with it. Selling a REC equates to forfeiture of that claim. With input from experts in the field of solar energy and an understanding of ACPS's goals, the committee advised that ACPS retain ownership of its RECs. Though ACPS does not presently have a policy or goal for renewable energy, the committee felt that one would likely be

recommended, and it would be necessary to own the RECs at that time for any existing and future solar arrays.

Conservation mowing: Conservation mowing, or mowing reduction, aligns with numerous actions identified in the Landscape, Natural Resources, and Agriculture sector of the Climate Action Plan including reduction in carbon emissions associated with landscaping equipment and improvements in soil health, wildlife habitats, and stormwater runoff. Co-benefits include staff safety and noise reduction. ACES adopted a conservation mowing SMART goal that aims to reduce the area of mowed, non-athletic, field grassy areas by 15% by year 2024, and further reduce mowed grass by an additional 5% each year thereafter.

Conservation mowing began as of July 2023, prioritizing steep slopes and unused mowed areas. Signage will be used to educate students, staff, and the public on the benefits of this intentional reduction in mowing and to help reframe the narrative on how sustainable open space can look.

Sustainable Building Policy: the Sustainable Building Policy was drafted with significant input from ACES. The proposed policy sets forth ACPS' plan for compliance with Virginia's House Bill 2001 (HB2001), commonly known as the High-Performance Building Act. The law requires all new major construction or renovation of governmental buildings to be certified by LEED v4, Green Globes, or Virginia Energy Conservation and Environmental Standards (VEES). ACES advised that ACPS not restrict itself to a single certification standard, but to allow each project to be matched with the standard that is the best fit.

The policy goes further and states that ACPS' commitment to environmental sustainability exceeds the minimum standards and that all new major construction or renovation projects will be a minimum of LEED v4 Silver, two Green Globes, or VEES compliant. It also states that all new buildings and renovations will be designed and constructed to be Net-Zero Ready.

Finally, the proposed Sustainable Building Policy establishes sustainable practices which must be incorporated into new buildings and major renovations regardless of certification standard selected for compliance with HB2001. These include solar-ready design and that no fossil fuel will be consumed in the building's normal operations.

Collaboration with SWAAC: During the 2022-23 school year, a group of ACES members teamed up with Local Government's Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee (SWAAC) to educate students and staff on composting and to develop cafeteria composting at numerous schools. With support from the volunteers, student groups have embraced the opportunity to lead their peers in sorting their lunch waste into compostable waste, recyclable waste, and trash. Planning is already in progress to expand the cafeteria composting programs to additional schools during the 2023/2024 school year.

U.S. Department of Energy's Energy CLASS Prize: ACPS was one of only 25 school divisions in the country to be selected for the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy CLASS Prize. The prize includes an initial prize of \$100,000 and energy management training and coaching for Building Services staff. At the end of the program, ACPS is eligible for an additional \$50,000

prize. Preliminary plans for the prize money include a sustainability liaisons program, student energy management internships, and energy improvement projects in one or more facilities.

Going Forward: During the upcoming year, the ACES plan to:

- Advise on sustainable design of Center II and Elementary School 1
- Implement a large scale solar PPA project
- Expanding the cafeteria composting program to additional schools
- Electrification Master Planning
- Adding additional alternative fuel vehicles to ACPS's fleet

Center II updates—ACPS is moving forward with plans to open Center II which, like Center I, will allow students to pursue coursework outside of the traditional classroom setting. The School Board heard updates on the second center's development at its July 13 meeting.

Center II is expected to accommodate 400 students by 2026. While the center will in part help alleviate some overcrowding, it could also contribute to providing a substitute for programs at the Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center.

The first center opened in 2018, housing nine lab spaces and three pathways: game design and development, cybersecurity and media communications.

There will be no application process at Center II, and students will be able to request to participate by registering through their school counselor or selecting a pathway while course requests are open. High school students from all over the division are welcome at the center.

The building is going to be functional for collaborative learning and for individual learning, and will be a home to Career Learning Communities (CLCs), a program that includes seven different pathways and that deployed at the beginning of this school year.

ACPS plans to locate the new center near the Lambs Lane Campus, which houses Albemarle High School, Journey Middle School, Greer Elementary School, Ivy Creek School and other division buildings. Early plans by Quinn Evans Architects include open co-working spaces, a café and an outdoor project space. The firm says it will begin the bidding process by September of 2024.

New southern feeder pattern elementary school updates—ACPS has begun its planning for a new elementary school to be built in the southern part of the county. The school, which will be constructed near Mountain View Elementary School, will alleviate capacity issues at Mountain View in a fast-growing part of the county.

The school division will work with VMDO Architects on this planning process, and will go through a process of collecting feedback from a planning committee, stakeholders committee, and the public.

Mountain View is currently the largest elementary school in the county, and the school is already undergoing construction projects to provide increased capacity. The new elementary school will

create a sustainable way to accommodate the increase in population in the southern feeder pattern of Albemarle County, where new housing developments are planned and under construction.

The new elementary school is on a trajectory to be completed by fall of 2026.

Redistricting study—At its August 10 meeting, the Albemarle County School board heard a presentation regarding a new redistricting study. The study is a response to overcrowding at Baker-Butler Elementary School and planned developments along the 29N corridor. Based on timing of funding, the school will open in time for the 2029-30 school year.

Proposed Study Objectives: The primary objective of the study is to recommend a two-phased approach to creating new boundaries in the northern feeder pattern. The study should produce a recommendation that will address current and projected enrollment issues and a preliminary recommendation for a boundary for the new elementary school.

Objectives of phase one of the study include: Decreasing enrollment at Baker-Butler; Decreasing enrollment at Woodbrook; Increasing enrollment at Stony Point; increasing or decreasing enrollment at other schools to accomplish above objectives; Adjusting middle school boundaries if needed based on the other objectives; Finalizing the location of new elementary school, and; Creating preliminary boundary for a new elementary school* and increase or decrease enrollment at other schools to accomplish.

Phase two objectives include: Finalizing the boundary for a new elementary school and increase or decrease enrollment at other schools to accomplish this objective and adjusting middle school boundaries if needed.