



**Board-to-Board, July 2020**

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

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***Charter School Advisory Committee Asks to Put its Name Recommendation on Hold***—At its July 7 meeting, the Charter School Community Advisory Committee decided to put its recommendation for a name for its new school on hold. Last month, the committee recommended to Schools Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, that the new school be named Rose Hill Community School.

Following that announcement, there were reports on social media that Rose Hill once was the name of a plantation owned by Thomas Jefferson and sold in 1800 to another landowner. The property eventually became the site of private homes and businesses owned by generations of members of the Black community after the Civil War. The present-day building housing the charter school dates back to 1959 when it opened as Rose Hill Elementary School. It served only Black students prior to integration. Sixteen of its students later integrated Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) and its faculty included several prominent teachers, including Asalie Preston, for whom Preston Avenue is named.

Committee members say that the delay will enable the committee, school faculty and staff to gather more input and complete additional research, both as a committee and side-by-side with students. This additional research and community outreach will extend into the new school year and the committee was hoping to conclude its work within the next six months. It next will meet in August.

The committee's recommendation followed two community public opinion surveys and two public meetings to consider more than 100 suggested names. Eventually, the committee narrowed its choices down to three before deciding upon Rose Hill Community School. There were no concerns expressed to the advisory committee about the Rose Hill Community School name during this process.

The community advisory committee included parents of students in the school, school staff, students, parents from feeder schools and members of the community who do not have children enrolled in the school. Information on the committee's meetings and resources can be found at: <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/school-naming-review/Pages/Murray-High.aspx>.

***2020-21 School Year for ACPS to Start on Tuesday, September 8***—During its retreat in June, the Albemarle County School Board voted to reopen schools on Tuesday, September 8. Details around the opening of schools, including instructional schedules and school bus route information, are expected to be finalized at the July 30 meeting of the Board.

A draft calendar presenting the September 8 start date was reviewed by the School Board during their meeting on June 18 and can be accessed at <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/calendars/202021CalendarDevelopment/2020-21-Calendar-Sept-8-Start.pdf>.

The 2020-21 calendar will protect traditional school breaks, including Thanksgiving, Winter Break, and Spring Break, to enable families to make holiday plans. Staff recommended September 8 as the start date for the 2020-21 school year based on a number of factors, including teachers' desire for additional preparation time; the results of a division-wide community survey on the calendar; and the planning of school schedules.

Also, the school division has published a *Return to School Planning Guide*, the product of several weeks of work by the Return to School Task Force in collaboration with more than 80 employees who serve the school division in various capacities. The four focus areas addressed by the guide include healthy environments, healthy staff, healthy students, and healthy learning. The guide can be found at <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/COVID19/Return-to-School-Planning-Guide-062620.pdf>. Additionally, a webpage with corresponding details the return to school planning can be found at <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/return-to-school/Pages/default.aspx>.

***Albemarle County School Board Hosts Three Virtual Town Halls for Parents, Students, Employees on COVID-19 and Back to School Plans for This Fall***—The Albemarle County School Board, in partnership with the Thomas Jefferson Health District, held online town halls in July in order to provide the latest COVID-19 information and to gain input from the school community about the reopening of schools in September.

The Director of the Thomas Jefferson Health District, Dr. Denise Bonds, opened each meeting with an update of the latest developments around COVID-19 and took questions from the online audience. The Board then received input from participants, which it will incorporate into an FAQ sheet on the division's Return to School website at [www.k12albemarle.org/returntoschool](http://www.k12albemarle.org/returntoschool).

All three town halls are posted on the division's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/user/k12albemarle>.

***Community Volunteer Committee Recommends Lakeside As the New Name for Sutherland Middle School***—The Community Advisory Committee reviewing the name of Sutherland Middle School has recommended to Albemarle County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, that the school be renamed Lakeside Middle School.

Haas will consider the committee's work and recommendation before sending his recommendation to the School Board at their August 13 meeting.

The recommendation from the committee of community volunteers follows two public meetings and three community public opinion surveys. Lakeside was the top choice of both parents and of students. In the most recent survey, more than 1,000 responses were received when members of

the school community were asked their preference among three names selected by the advisory committee as finalists—Lakeside, Rivanna and Willow Creek.

The advisory committee began its work on March 2 as part of a division-wide review of all schools named for individuals. Sutherland was the second school to be reviewed. The advisory committee included three members of the school faculty, three parents of students who attend the school, three parents of students who attend elementary schools that feed into Sutherland, two community members who do not have children enrolled in the school and a student.

Following the shutdown of school facilities on March 13 to protect against the spread of COVID-19 illness, the committee conducted the bulk of their community outreach through video conferencing.

On June 15, the advisory committee narrowed the list of names under consideration to three, eliminating Mortimer Y. Sutherland as one of the choices. At the time, the committee referenced research documents on Sutherland's votes and actions while a member of the county's Board of Supervisors. In 1963, for instance, Sutherland was the lone vote on the Board of Supervisors to uphold a ban on all school athletic and social activities that brought together white and black students.

The school division's policy on the naming or renaming of schools for individuals requires a review of the person's personal and professional life to determine if it exemplified the school division's four values of young people, respect, community and excellence.

The school division has created a web page to enable members of the public to track the progress of each school's name review. The page also has information on the relevant School Board policy. There are 14 schools in the division that are named for individuals. More information about this process and the work of the Sutherland advisory committee can be accessed at: <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/school-naming-review/Pages/default.aspx>.