

Meeting Minutes

City Council/School Board Subcommittee

November 24, 2025

5:00 p.m.

City Hall

301 King Street

In-Person with Zoom Access

(Links to this meeting are posted on the [City and ACPS Websites](#))

City Council and School Board Member Attendees:

Mayor Alyia Gaskins

Councilman John Chapman

School Board Chair Michelle Rief

School Board Vice Chair Christopher Harris

Item #1: Administration

October 27 Meeting Minutes approved.

Item #2: Redistricting Update

Dr. Marcia Jackson, Chief of Student Services, reviewed the focus areas guiding the redistricting process, emphasizing that it involves coordination across multiple departments, including logistics, operations, and transportation. She explained that notification letters were sent to nearly 10,000 families and employees on November 13 to ensure everyone was informed about the upcoming changes. Families eligible for redistricting deferrals must notify the school division by January 15, and staff are actively tracking responses and sending reminders through ACPS Express. More than 100 questions have already been submitted, many related to sibling placement, administrative transfers, and other policy matters.

She directed families seeking additional details to the updated school site locator, reminding them to select the 2026–27 school year, as well as to comprehensive documents posted on the division’s website outlining student impacts and relevant policies. An updated web page and additional outreach work are underway, and a formal update will be presented to the School Board on March 25. Dr. Jackson encouraged families to continue submitting questions.

Dr. Kay-Wyatt added that last year's redistricting work was extensive and complex. She clarified that no new capacity transfers will be processed and that all maps, decisions, and policy details are publicly available online. She also explained that some family questions stem from the multi-year nature of the deferral process, which can create confusion about current and future school assignments.

Item #3: Capital Improvement Plan/Budget

During the work session, the superintendent provided an update on school facility conditions, upcoming assessments, and ongoing capital planning efforts. She noted that ACPS relies on a unified platform for managing facility data and that schools are in varied states of repair. Over the summer, additional assessments were conducted, and the team has been reviewing building age, tenure, and needs across the division. Particular attention was drawn to the transportation facility, which currently has the lowest FCI rating and remains unfunded in the ten-year CIP.

She explained that when combining the cost of the Cora Kelly project with all non-capacity investments needed to maintain buildings in good repair, the total already exceeds the City's CIP guidance. As a result, options like adding modular classrooms, estimated at \$12–15 million for eight units at each middle school, would require identifying funding trade-offs. Staff noted that modularity could accommodate about 440 students and would likely need to be placed on existing courts, parking areas, or field space. The turnaround time would be nine to twelve months.

The superintendent also reviewed the timeline ahead: the school board will hold add/delete sessions on December 11 and, if needed, December 16, with final CIP adoption scheduled for December 18.

Council members then raised questions about the modular classroom concept, budget constraints, and the broader context of operating budget affordability. City staff and the City Manager explained that the current CIP, both city and schools, is not financially sustainable. Even under previous assumptions of modest revenue growth, the gap between available funding and the cost of existing capital projects was widening; with current revenue growth closer to 0.5%, the gap is even more significant. Both city and school projects will need to be scaled down, removed, or restructured. Departments have been directed to reassess their project lists, and the city emphasized that further reductions to the CIP remain necessary.

City Manager, Jim Parajon, and OMB Director, Morgan Routt, reiterated that budget guidance for ACPS, currently around \$285 million over ten years, will continue to shrink, and future investments will require new approaches, including sharing facilities, rethinking project delivery models, and exploring co-location and economic development opportunities. Large-scale revenue growth, whether from major or smaller redevelopment projects, could provide some relief, but without such wins, the city cannot fund modernization of all nine aging school buildings within a reasonable timeframe.

City Council subcommittee members underscored that the city has already eliminated over \$100 million in capital projects in recent years and is now in a position where some projects must be canceled or significantly reduced. They encouraged the school division to advocate at the state level, given that the scale of school facility needs exceeds what the City can finance.

School Board members acknowledged the fiscal constraints and affirmed their commitment to weighing needs against available resources. They noted that many ACPS buildings are more than 60 years old, and at the current pace of modernizations, it could take a century to address all facilities. Still, they recognized the importance of aligning their long-range plan with the city's financial reality.

The superintendent emphasized her obligation to present a needs-based budget to reflect legitimate concerns from staff and the community, while also preparing internally for the difficult prioritization that will follow once City guidance is finalized. She thanked the City Manager for ongoing collaboration.

The City Manager encouraged the school division to more clearly distinguish between funded proposals and longer-term unmet needs, similar to the city's master planning approach, to avoid presenting CIP requests that exceed what is realistically possible. Council members stressed the importance of shared dialogue and expressed interest in structuring upcoming joint work sessions, including the February meeting, to allow for deeper discussion of trade-offs, priorities, and sustainable approaches to capital planning.

Item #4: 2026 CC/SB Work Plan

The committee turned its attention to planning for the 2026 work year, reflecting on what aspects of the past year's meeting structure had worked and what had not. Members noted that experimenting with deep-dive topics, such as spending several months discussing the DASH proposal, offered opportunities for learning, but it also crowded out routine monthly updates and led to overly long meetings.

Chair Rief shared that she had reviewed three years of past agendas and observed that the subcommittee used to follow a consistent set of recurring topics, such as capital planning, budget updates, shared operations, safety, and major joint initiatives. She proposed developing an annual calendar that places these routine items at the most appropriate times in the year, such as student generation rates in March or youth employment updates in late spring, while leaving room to incorporate one-time or project-based updates. She emphasized that clearer structure would help both bodies and their staff plan more effectively.

School Board Member Harris echoed the need to clarify the committee's purpose. Reflecting on the lengthy DASH discussions, he noted the importance of ensuring neither body is blindsided by emerging issues, especially those with budget or policy implications. He stressed that meetings should help both bodies prepare for decision-making, not simply receive updates.

Mayor Gaskins raised a foundational question: whether the committee is still needed, and if so, for what. She questioned whether routine informational updates might be more efficiently handled via email, reserving in-person meetings for collaborative problem-solving and policy direction. She emphasized that if presentations continue, they should lead to meaningful action, not just information-sharing for its own sake.

Councilman Chapman described the subcommittee as an essential public forum for transparent cross-body communication, allowing councilmembers, school board members, and staff to ask questions, coordinate on shared initiatives, and avoid fragmented conversations that could create misunderstandings. He also suggested that the subcommittee could play a larger role in shaping joint legislative and policy efforts, serving as a hub for identifying shared priorities and coordinating advocacy strategies.

Moving forward, the committee agreed to begin structuring the year around monthly topics, such as budget structure, legislative collaboration, or major city initiatives, while also identifying a small set of standing items that might appear at every meeting. To begin drafting an annual calendar, ACPS will outline its major yearly topics and milestones, while the City Manager's Office and Council leadership will map out the city's. The two lists will then be aligned.

Given that January is too late for a budget-structure discussion, members suggested starting the year with a focus on legislative advocacy, particularly given the timing of the General Assembly session. They discussed inviting both bodies' lobbyists and ensuring the discussion leads to coordinated action rather than simply sharing updates.

Item #5: Other Business

Due to the City Hall construction, future meetings will be held at ACPS School Board Room for the next few years.