

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
Held Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Meeting: The Prince George's County Public School Superintendent and staff

Mayor Jordan started meeting at 7:30 p.m., held in Council Chambers and virtually via Zoom.

In Attendance: Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L.K. Weaver and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff: Josué Salmerón, City Manager and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

Others present: Dr. Millard House II, Superintendent; Dr. Charoscar Coleman, Chief Operating Officer; Dr. Douglas Strader, Chief Accountability Officer; Shawn Matlock, Director of Capital Programs; Jason Washington, Associate Superintendent for Supporting Services; Roger Prince, Director Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries; Sam Stefanelli, Director of Building Services; Prince George's County Public Schools Staff (PGCPS) and others.

Greenbelt City Council and School System

Dr. House discussed the school system's commitment to providing students with a safe and inclusive environment. He spoke specifically in view of recent national immigration policies. He also shared data showing decreased student absenteeism and increased graduation rates among certain groups. Dr. House's team was present to address any concerns or questions about facility use, building updates and district staff.

Greenbelt Schools' Academic Performance

Dr. Strader discussed the academic achievements of schools within the Greenbelt municipality area. He presented a PowerPoint presentation including a heat map showing the density of students in Prince George's County and the boundaries of the five schools in question. Dr. Strader also shared data on student populations, trends, and the influence of multilingual populations on academic achievement. He highlighted the performance of Dora Kennedy French Immersion School, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Greenbelt Elementary School, Greenbelt Middle School, and Springhill Lake Elementary School. Dr. Strader stated that Greenbelt Elementary School is a Targeted Support and Improvement School due to its special education performance. He also mentioned that Springhill Lake Elementary School has a significant multilingual population and Community Reference Instructional (CRI) Program for students with profound needs.

Prince George's County Graduation Rates

Dr. House discussed recent trends in student performance and graduation rates in Prince George's County schools. He reported that while the district faces challenges including a large immigrant population and post-COVID impacts, they are progressing. The graduation rate has increased by nearly 6%, outpacing the state's average. Dr. Strayer explains that Prince George's

County has not seen significant declines in most student groups due to COVID-19, unlike state-wide trends. The district is working on strategies to improve attendance and provide mental health support to students. Dr. House mentions ongoing efforts to address teacher shortages and support students who don't graduate, though specific details on programs for non-graduates are not provided.

Exploring Partnerships for Athletic Fields

There were discussions about potential partnerships and collaborations between the City of Greenbelt and Prince George's County Schools (PGCPS). The Council expressed interest in accessing the athletic fields at Greenbelt Middle School in exchange for maintenance support. The school district acknowledged the challenges of deferred maintenance and the need for partnerships to address these issues. The idea of a shared use of facilities was also discussed, with the city suggesting the possibility of restoring the fields at Greenbelt Middle School. The school district agreed to consider this proposal and expressed openness to further discussions. Mr. Salmerón and Dr. House will schedule a follow-up meeting to explore these potential partnerships further.

Springhill Lake Elementary School Update

There was a discussion on the progress of the Springhill Lake Elementary School building project. Mr. Matlock presented a PowerPoint Presentation, which included the facility's design, site plans, proposed plants, and the construction schedule. The school will be designed with geo-thermal heating and cooling, solar panels, and native plantings for stormwater management. The school will have a secure vestibule, fencing and cameras for security. The construction is expected to start in August 2026, with the school ready for occupation by July 2028. He also discussed the site preparation, including demolition and potential stormwater management improvements. Mr. Matlock informed the Council that PGCPS is committed to quarterly town hall meetings. There was additional discussion regarding the construction at Springhill Lake Elementary, which included parking, forest preservation, and community engagement. Ms. Pope expressed concerns about parking, and Mr. Roberts expressed concerns regarding the conservation of existing forested areas, with the project team assuring ample parking spaces for staff and visitors. The capacity of the new school was discussed with the Council voicing concerns about overcrowding due to the expected increase in student population. Mr. Washington acknowledged these concerns but highlighted budget constraints and the need to manage the school's capacity within the available budget.

School Boundaries and Residential Development

There was discussion regarding the potential shift in school boundaries for Greenbelt students due to the residential development behind Beltway Plaza. Mr. Prince explained that PGCPS's goal is to plan for five to seven years, considering various data points such as community development, birth rates and school overcrowding. He assured us that PGCPS would look carefully at the data for the City of Greenbelt and provide information on any potential shifts in boundaries. Mr. Washington mentioned a workgroup working on this issue for two years but faced challenges due to a lack of information from the planning department.

Transition to Dora Kennedy French Immersion and School Design

There was discussion regarding transition of Dora Kennedy French Immersion School the design of new schools and use of new amenities. Ms. Knesel expressed concerns about underutilization of new spaces in schools. The Council also discussed the need for better communication between

the planning department, developers and the school administration to plan more realistically for future school sites. They expressed a need for better understanding of the enrollment projections and assignments for new schools.

School Transitions HVAC Issues and School Capacity

Dr. Coleman explained students' transition from Springhill Lake Elementary School to Dora Kennedy French Immersion School in 2026, with the construction of an eighteen-classroom modular at Robert Goddard to accommodate both schools. He also mentioned the need for adjustments to ensure the comfort of Springhill Lake students during their two-year stay at historic Greenbelt Middle School. Concerns were raised about the capacity of Dora Kennedy French Immersion campus to accommodate an additional 150 students.

The discussion revolved around issues with the HVAC system at Dora Kennedy French Immersion, which is causing discomfort for students and staff. The Council expressed concerns about the lack of plans to fix or update the systems and had questions regarding the accommodation of Springhill Lake Elementary students, as well as concerns about the capacity of the building and potential need for additional temporary structures. Dr. Coleman discussed relocation of ten (10) classroom modular to Robert Goddard Montessori campus that would increase capacity to 1,450 students. The decision to provide extra space for schools that are not currently at full capacity was also discussed to provide a permanent solution to the concerns raised.

Addressing School Facility Maintenance Challenges

The Council discussed the ongoing maintenance issues at Springhill Lake Elementary and the historic Greenbelt Middle School, with the latter being a significant challenge due to its age and the need for renovations. Dr. Coleman discussed the co-location of students in the Robert Goddard School, a modernized facility. Mr. Washington assured us that PGCPs is committed to addressing these issues and working on efficient transportation solutions for the new campus.

Educational Matters and Funding Updates

Dr. Strader discussed an upcoming town hall meeting at Greenbelt Elementary School regarding its ATSI designation related to special education performance. Dr. Strader explains that ATSI schools receive targeted support and professional development rather than additional funding. Mayor Jordan inquired about Roosevelt High School's overcrowding and Magnolia Elementary School and Ms. Pompei asked about the Safe Passage program. Dr. House updates the Council on the district's efforts to secure full funding for Blueprint for Maryland's Future and their contingency planning for potential changes at the federal level. The meeting ended at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen
Deputy City Clerk