PORTSMOUTH CITY SCHOOL BOARD
PORTSMOUTH, VIRGINIA

MINUTES
March 26, 2026

The members of the Portsmouth City School Board held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, **March 26, 2026** in the Sixth Floor Conference Room, which is located in the City Hall building, 801 Crawford Street, Portsmouth, Virginia.

3.1 – CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Patillo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Jillian D. Cheeks, Clerk of the Board, recorded the proceedings of the meeting. The Board and the audience paused for a moment of silence. Taylor Whitted, Fifth-Grader, Hodges Manor Elementary led the Pledge of Allegiance. Journey Idechong and Kia Couther, Sixth-Graders, Hodges Manor Elementary offered statements. Ms. Arnette D. McSwain recited the mission statement.

3.6 – ATTENDANCE

(School Board Members Present) Ms. LaKeesha S. Atkinson, Mrs. Irene S. Boone, Dr. Melvin Cotton, Jr., Ms. Quniana D. Futrell, Ms. Arnette D. McSwain, Mrs. Lateacia A. Sessoms, Ms. Tamara L. Shewmake, Dr. Jaclyn T. Walker, and Dr. Cardell C. Patillo, Jr.

(Present) Dr. Elie Bracy III, Superintendent

3.7 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Ms. Futrell moved to approve the agenda for Thursday, March 26, 2026. The motion carried by a unanimous roll-call vote.

4.1 – STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Ms. Alexis Daughtry, Student Representative to the School Board, presented an update on the Thrive Together Initiative and recent student achievements. Ms. Daughtry reported that the initiative has expanded to 35 student ambassadors across Manor, Norcom, and Churchland High Schools, with monthly meetings now established to support consistency. She highlighted upcoming student-led video content focused on mental health topics, such as managing school stress and breaking the stigma around asking for help. Additionally, the report featured the upcoming Mental Health Resource Fairs scheduled for late March and early April at all three high schools. Ms. Daughtry concluded by celebrating the Manor High School Girls Basketball team and the Churchland High School Indoor Track and Field team for their respective 2026 Class 4 State Championship titles. The Board commended Ms. Daughtry for her leadership and the impactful work of the student ambassadors.

5.1 – RECOGNITION – CHURCHLAND HIGH SCHOOL BOYS INDOOR TRACK STATE CHAMPIONS

The School Board recognized the Churchland High School Boys Indoor Track team for winning the Track State Championship. Ms. Shani Twyman announced the names of the student-athletes and coaching staff, who were then invited forward to be honored by the Board. Chairman Cardell C. Patillo, Jr. and Superintendent Dr. Elie Bracy III presented each student with a certificate in recognition of their outstanding athletic achievement and dedication to excellence. Members of the Board and the audience celebrated the team's success, noting the pride and distinction they have brought to the Portsmouth Public Schools community.

5.2 – RECOGNITION – CHURCHLAND HIGH SCHOOL INDOOR TRACK INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

The School Board recognized several student-athletes from Churchland High School for their exceptional individual achievements during the Indoor Track State Championship season. Ms. Shani Twyman read the names of the award recipients, highlighting their specific accolades and state-ranking performances. Chairman Patillo and Dr. Bracy invited the students forward and presented them with certificates of recognition. The Board commended the students for their hard work and personal dedication, noting that their individual successes contributed significantly to the overall excellence of the Portsmouth Public Schools athletic program.

5.3 – RECOGNITION – PPS HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS INDOOR TRACK INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

The School Board recognized student-athletes from across the division for their individual achievements during the Indoor Track season. Ms. Shani Twyman read the names of the honorees, who were invited forward to be celebrated for their state-level performances. Chairman Patillo and Dr. Bracy presented the students with certificates of recognition for their athletic excellence. The Board commended the students for their hard work and the positive distinction they brought to Portsmouth Public Schools.

5.4 – RECOGNITION – MANOR HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

The School Board recognized the Manor High School Girls Basketball team for winning the State Championship. Ms. Shani Twyman read the names of the student-athletes and coaching staff, who were invited forward to be honored for their achievement. Chairman Patillo and Dr. Bracy presented the team with certificates of recognition for their athletic excellence. The Board commended the students for their hard work and the positive distinction they brought to Portsmouth Public Schools.

6.1 — PUBLIC COMMENT – NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No Comments.

6.2 — PUBLICN COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS

No Comments.

7 – CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

7.1 — Consideration of Resolution Recognizing Public School Volunteer Week, April 19-25, 2026
7.2 — Consideration of Resolution Recognizing School Library Month – April
7.3 — Minutes – February 26, 2026 and March 19, 2026
7.4 — New High School Course: AP African American Studies and AP Seminar
7.5 — Employee Transaction Report – February 2026
7.6 — Resolution Increase FY 2025-26 Grant Funds of Carryover Funds
7.7 — FY 2025-26 Revision to General Fund Budget
7.8 — Financial (Budget) Report – February 2026

Ms. Futrell moved to approve the consent agenda items 7.1 – 7.8. The motion carried by a unanimous roll-call vote.

8.1 – MONTHLY REPORT – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION – Social Studies

Dr. Nicole DeVries, Chief Academic Officer, reported that her updates are available in BoardDocs and highlighted various content areas within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. She introduced Mrs. Karla Jakubowski, Elementary Social Studies Coordinator, and Mr. Kris Troch, Secondary Social Studies Coordinator, who presented a report titled "Exploring the Past, Shaping the Future: Social Studies in Portsmouth Public Schools." The report outlined the department's focus on aligning K-12 curriculum with the Profile of a Graduate by developing students' literacy, inquiry, and critical thinking skills. The coordinators highlighted key initiatives, including professional development focused on student ownership in assessment, the use of interactive notebooks, and "Visible Learning" practices. The presentation also showcased several student-centered projects, such as the Butterfly Project at I.C. Norcom High School and the upcoming 2026 History Bowl. Following the presentation, the Board and the coordinators discussed the impact of evidence-based practices on student achievement.

9.1 – MONTHLY REPORT – SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Bracy congratulated the Churchland High School Boys Track team and the Manor High School Girls Basketball team for their state championship titles. He extended appreciation to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction for the success of the STEAM

Expo held on March 14, as well as the Office of Title I and Special Programs for hosting "Math Madness." Dr. Bracy announced the upcoming "Spring Break Snacks & Packs of Books" event scheduled for April 2 at the J.E. Parker Recreation Center, which encourages student reading through the distribution of free books and activities. He concluded his report by reminding the Board and the community that all schools and administrative offices would be closed from April 6 through April 10 for Spring Break.

9.2 — CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD - APRIL

Dr. Lauren Nolasco, Chief Communications Officer, read a resolution recognizing April 2026 as the "Month of the Military Child." The resolution highlighted that five percent of the Portsmouth Public Schools student population is military-connected and noted the division's commitment to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The resolution encourages all schools and offices to show appreciation for the unique sacrifices and valuable insights provided by military-connected children and their families.

9.3 — ROLL CALL VOTE – POLICY UPDATE – STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Ms. Futrell moved to approve the proposed policy update regarding the Student Representative to the School Board. The motion carried by a unanimous roll-call vote.

9.4 — ROLL CALL VOTE – CONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL BOARD'S PROPOSED BUDGET FY 2026-27

Ms. Futrell moved to approve the proposed policy update regarding the Student Representative to the School Board. The motion carried by a unanimous roll-call vote.

9.5 – BOARD MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Ms. McSwain provided a summary of her recent visit to Douglass Park Elementary for the "King Madness" event hosted by Mr. Johnson and Mr. Cooper. She commended the staff for their incredible work with the young men in the program and expressed her public apologies to the organizers for a misunderstanding regarding the program's agenda, noting that she was grateful for the opportunity to offer motivational remarks to the students.

Dr. Walker highlighted several recent division events, beginning with the "Divine Reading Day" at Cradock Elementary hosted by Principal Foster and Assistant Principal Dr. Warren. She noted that six board members participated in reading to students and discussing the importance of community service. Dr. Walker also praised the "Math Madness" event hosted by the Office of Title I and the Mathematics Department for its successful integration of athletics and academic problem-solving. Finally, she recognized her father, a 1959 graduate of I.C. Norcom High School, along with her sister and niece visiting from Indiana, who were in attendance at the meeting.

Ms. Shewmake reported on the recent School Board/City Council Liaison meeting, noting that topics included budget updates, office relocation, and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects. As a member of the HR subcommittee, she shared highlights from the March 18 job fair, which saw 88 teacher candidates in attendance and resulted in 29 successful hires and 33 commitment letters. She commended the HR department for its multi-phase advertising campaign across regional radio and television outlets. Ms. Shewmake also showcased a "positivity bag" created during a February event at Douglass Park Elementary and thanked Principal Lakisha Jolly-Foster and the staff at Park View and West Haven Elementary schools for hosting recent "Read Across America" events. She noted her participation in the COSSBA conference, specifically the "Women in Leadership" session, and invited the community to an upcoming alumni scholarship basketball game. Finally, she led the Board in a birthday recognition for Mrs. Boone and her twin sister.

Ms. Atkinson congratulated the "Big Homies" community outreach program on their groundbreaking ceremony for a new 11,000-square-foot facility in the Southside area, acknowledging the support of state leaders and the organization's ongoing mentorship within Portsmouth schools. She shared her experiences from the Olive Branch Little League opening day and announced the upcoming opening for Charles Peete Little League. Ms. Atkinson also discussed her attendance at the COSSBA conference, where she focused on sessions regarding student nutrition and federal food policy compliance. She extended her appreciation to Chartwells for their partnership and support of the Board.

Vice Chairman Cotton echoed the sentiments of his colleagues regarding the successful reading event at Cradock Elementary and the "King Madness" event at Douglass Park Elementary. He thanked Mr. Johnson and Mr. Cooper for the opportunity to serve as a presenter and panelist for the students. Dr. Cotton also reported on his participation in regional leadership meetings as the Regional Vice Chair, where he collaborated with other boards to compare best practices. He concluded by expressing his support for the upcoming alumni basketball game and the importance of community involvement in student athletics.

9 – ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Patillo adjourned the meeting at p.m. 8:18 p.m.

Cardell C. Patillo, Jr., Ph.D., Chairman

Jillian D. Cheeks, Board Clerk

April 30, 2026

Date of Adoption by the Board