

City of Jacksonville

*117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 9, 2026

10:00 AM

Council Chamber

Joint City Council & Duval County School Board

*Honorable Kevin Carrico
President, 2025-2026
District 4
(904) 255-5204*

*Honorable Nick Howland
Vice President, 2025-2026
At Large, Group 3
(904) 255-5217*

*Honorable Charlotte Joyce
DCSB Chairperson*

*Honorable April Carney
DCSB Vice Chairperson*

Meeting Convened: 10:01 am

Meeting Adjourned: 12:00 pm

Attendance: Council President Carrico; Council Vice President Howland; Council Members Boylan, Lahnen, Gaffney Jr., Arias, White, Amaro, Clark-Murray, Freeman and Johnson

School Board members: Reginald Blount, Melody Bolduc, Tony Ricardo, April Carney, Cindy Pearson, Charlotte Joyce and Darryl Willie

Also: Mary Staffopoulos and Carla Schell, OGC; Kim Taylor, Council Auditor; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

Meeting Call to Order

Council President Carrico convened the meeting at 10:01 am.

Welcome-President Kevin Carrico/ Chair Charlotte Joyce

CP Carrico welcomed the group, called for introductions, and reviewed the agenda.

Duval School Board Chair Joyce extended appreciation to CVP Howland for Ordinance 2025-867-E, approved by council January 13, 2026, that requires that input from the Duval County School Board be requested and considered when developing the proposed Capital Improvement Plan.

Introduction

Presentation- Career Technical Education (CTE)

Jill Fierle, Director DCPS Career and Technical Education, provided an overview of CTE programs. She talked about how the overall CTE program has grown from the 2020-21 to the 2024-25 school year, from 41 programs offered to 72, and from 3733 certifications earned to 12,114. Ms. Fierle spoke about awarded grant funds (state and federal) that help to support CTE programs. She highlighted the expansion of program enrollment to include elementary students, using a mobile "Career Lab" bus. Ms. Fierle talked about the Duval Ready Diploma which demonstrates a student's career readiness by completing modules on workplace topics. She noted that 1212 students earned such a diploma designation in the 2024-25 school year. Ms. Fierle mentioned future plans for the CTE program, including emergency response planning and maritime technology. CM Arias asked about financial literacy training and entrepreneurship. CM Freeman talked about the work of the Special Committee on Youth Empowerment, with a focus on youth aged 16-24. CP Carrico talked about how impressive the CTE programs are and suggested council members go see one in action, if they haven't already. Ms. Joyce talked about the partnership with Vystar that provides for real life training on banking where students operate a functional bank on school campuses.

Presentation- Be Safe, Be Seen

Dr. Albritton gave a presentation about student traffic safety. She mentioned the DCSB Resolution, 2025-05, that resolved that the Superintendent create a community action plan for pedestrian safety. She talked about bike and pedestrian safety awareness campaign activities, and bicycle maintenance and helmets. Dr. Albritton spoke about additional traffic gardens. She talked about the objectives and goals made by the Youth Traffic Safety Steering Committee, and the timeline for their upcoming meetings.

CM Boylan asked about scooters and E-bikes, and possible legislation to regulate the use of those.

CM Arias asked about the role of parents to affect safe riding behavior. He asked about bike repairs and helmet distribution, and how parents can know what services are available. Ms. Carney noted that in the Beaches communities, police are ticketing kids who are not riding safely, and that there is a safety training event planned at Fletcher High School this summer. CM Amaro asked if the safety campaigns are being conducted at charter schools. CM Freeman asked about ridership numbers, for students who ride to school, and he mentioned bike giveaways for students who need bikes. CP Carrico asked about cameras on school bus arms, which are in the testing stage currently. CP Carrico asked about cameras at school crossings, which have not been implemented at this time.

Presentation- Capital Improvement Projects (C.I.P.)

Nina Sickler, Public Works, talked about the CIP process and collaboration with the School Board. She spoke about study conducted about reduced speed school zones near middle schools. The results reflected a pattern of accidents in these areas, but fewer in the reduced speed zones. Ms. Sickler said the results led to a CIP request to include reduced speed zones by all middle schools, rolled out incrementally. Ms. Sickler spoke about 14 funded CIP school related projects, including raised crossings and signage. She listed projects under consideration at First Coast HS and A. Phillip Randolph Academy, and other future safety requests. Ms. Sickler talked about the coordinated process between DCPS and Public Works. Ms. Sickler mentioned the school safety committee, and projects stemming from their discussions. CP Carrico commended Ms. Sickler for the teamwork. Dr. Bernier highlighted safety efforts on Merrill Road. CVP Howland shared his support for how well the coordinated work has gone thus far. Ms. Joyce asked about the status of a list of projects drafted by the School Board, which will proceed next year when they are "shovel ready". CM Clark-Murray asked about how the projects are selected and what criteria is used for determination, and she encouraged equity in project choices. CM Amaro offered praise for the level of collaboration among parties to make safety improvements near schools. Ms. Bolduc asked about when reduced speed school zones would be placed near all middle schools. Mr. Blount asked about population growth and traffic planning, and new apartments near Ed White High School. Ms. Sickler mentioned the Mobility Plan update, currently in progress, that looks at long range traffic and development planning.

Superintendent Update- Dr. Christopher Bernier

Dr. Bernier talked about the state of DCPS, and he mentioned the importance of momentum. He spoke about the District's A grade and graduation rates. He said there are now no F schools. He talked about proficiency level increases across the district. Dr. Bernier talked about school quality as a recruitment tool for attracting businesses to Jacksonville. He talked about the essential role and impact of teachers. Dr. Bernier spoke about graduation rates, and how teachers make a differences in those numbers. He highlighted that the achievement gap, between races, has been eradicated. Dr. Bernier spoke about graduation requirements, and how they are more stringent than when he was a student. He emphasized all of the things teachers do outside of the classroom to support students. He talked about realities outside of the classroom that impact student performance, and how teachers navigate that. Dr. Bernier said teachers are the singular most important factor in student performance. He talked about teacher shortages, and how retention requires compensation. Dr. Bernier talked about the referendum to approve renewing the 1-mill property tax that provides district funding for school programs and teachers. He talked about how the 1-mill affects teacher salaries, recruitment and retention. He talked about how the funds from the 1-mill cover costs for campus improvements, for athletic fields and art programs. He noted how that serves as a visible investment in students. Dr. Bernier talked about accountability derived through required referendum renewals to reflect public support. He said that council's role is not to approve the 1-mill, but to direct the Supervisor of Elections to place the item on the ballot to be approved or denied by the public. CM Johnson talked about Dr. Bernier's passion for the education and the district. CVP Howland asked for clarification about the school board resolution requesting the referendum for the 1-mill to be continued, pending voter approval, and the role of council in the process. Dr. Bernier said council acts as a pass-through to put the item before the voters so funds may be collected to support schools and teachers. Ms. Staffopoulos, OGC, explained that after a letter of request is sent to the council president, legislation will be prepared to call for an election for the extension of the 1-mill, set the ballot date and language, require notice of the election from the Supervisor of Elections. CVP Howland asked if other funds are available to use instead of the 1-mill revenue, and Dr. Bernier said there is no other such sustainable pot of money available for this purpose. Dr. Bernier talked about state class size requirements, and how that takes investment for compliance. CM Clark-Murray asked about the average cost for a teacher plus benefits. Dr. Bernier said the average salary is about \$75,000 per year, with an additional 40% for benefits. Mr. Willie commented on the correlation between funding and educational quality. Ms. Bolduc shared her support for supporting teachers, and she asked what portion of the district's budget goes towards teacher and staff salaries. Dr. Bernier said roughly 85 percent. CP Carrico commented on the successful collaboration between the school board and council.

Public Comment

Time did not permit public comment, however speaker cards were submitted by Jamie Travis-Leonard, Denise Scott and Katie Hathaway.

Closing Remarks

Meeting Adjournment

CP Carrico adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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Posted: 4.15.26 5:00 pm