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JOINT CITY COUNCIL/SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

November 6, 2025
10:00 a.m.

Location: City Council Chamber, City Hall

City Council Members: Carrico, Howland, Freeman, Gay, Lahnen, Amaro, White, Miller, Boylan, Salem, Arias, Clark-Murray, Johnson and Pittman

School Board Members: Ricardo, Carney, Pearson, Willie, Joyce, Blount and Bolduc

Also: Kim Taylor and Phillip Peterson, Council Auditor's Office; Mary Staffopoulos and Carla Schell, Office of General Counsel; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research; Dr. Christopher Bernier, DCPS Superintendent

Meeting Convened: 10:01 am

Council President Carrico convened the meeting and called for introductions. Dr. Christopher Bernier, DCPS Superintendent, gave a presentation about Duval County Schools. He recognized the efforts of his cabinet and staff. Dr. Bernier shared several points of pride, including a 95.3% graduation rate, increased school grades, increased levels of proficiency, and a focus on career and college readiness. When asked how to retain the district's A grade, Dr. Bernier said that progress monitoring is a huge component of that success. Dr. Bernier highlighted the district's vision that every student can succeed and be prepared for success regardless of career path. He noted the challenges that many students face outside of the classroom. CM Freeman asked about recruiting more male African American teachers, especially at the elementary level.

Be Safe. Be Seen: Jackson Short, Chief, DCPS Police, and Dr. Heather Albritton, Director, DCPS Health & Physical Education, spoke about pedestrian/bicycle safety in transit to school. Chief Short said that last year, 43 student were hit by cars while walking or biking to school, with 3 fatalities. Thus far for this school year, there have been 10 students hit and 2 fatalities. Most of the incidents occurred outside of designated school zones. Dr. Albritton talked about the 3 pillars of the campaign, education, visibility and engagement. She described the endeavor to collaborate with schools, families, and local agencies to decrease the number of pedestrian and bicycle injuries and fatalities involving children and teens by teaching proactive, preventive safety habits. Dr. Albritton spoke about building a culture of shared responsibility on the road to foster a community mindset where every individual understands their role in keeping others safe.

She talked about school traffic gardens, implemented to provide safe, vehicle-free spaces for children to build early walking and biking habits, practice real-world traffic skills, designed to advance equity by bringing mobility education to areas lacking safe infrastructure. CM Freeman asked about the number of schools without crosswalks. CM Salem asked about safety near Merrill Road Elementary. CM Gay expressed concerns about safety near New Berlin Elementary. CM Pittman asked about the sufficiency of funds for crossing guards. School Board member Bolduc said that there are no crossing guards near most middle and high schools. CM Clark-Murray advocated for more safety equipment and reflective gear, like brightly colored uniforms, to increase visibility.

Chris LeDew, Chief of Traffic Engineering, talked about infrastructure safety measures in and around school zones, like flashing beacons, speed humps and raised crosswalks. He talked about the current coordination between city departments, FDOT, North Florida TPO, the school district and JSO. Mr. LeDew talked about requests related to increasing school crossings, improving queuing in neighborhoods and additional sidewalks. Mr. LeDew talked about the importance of bus enforcement cameras. CM Arias asked about prioritizing school related projects over other road improvements, and an expedited permit process for such. Nina Sickler, Public Works, indicated that more resources would be needed to effectuate those changes. School Board member Carney expressed disappointment that no one from FDOT was in attendance. She also shared frustration with the pace of the timeline for getting projects completed. School Board member Bolduc also expressed the desire for process improvements to get school safety projects completed faster. There was some discussion about enforcement of student jaywalking and drivers who fail to yield. CVP Howland recommended DCSB coordination with the City's budget office in the capital project planning process in January. CP Carrico indicated that he will hold a future meeting related to school transit safety.

The scheduled presentation on DCPS career training programs was postponed to a later meeting due to time constraints.

Meeting adjourned: 12:02 pm

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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