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School Board Meeting

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Agency: Akron Board of Education

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Summary

- Akron Board of Education members lauded Student Board Member Cochise Griffin for his outstanding tenure on the board. He began as a freshman, and exits Akron Public Schools to become a student-athlete at Central State University, an HBCU located in Wilberforce, Ohio.
- The board heard about new laptop policy protocols outlined by APS' Executive Director of Information and Technology Zach Hanshaw. The plan will save close to a \$1 million over a four-year time period for the district based on an assumption of zero Chromebooks reported stolen, damaged or otherwise made inoperable (though Hanshaw said this isn't likely).
- The board heard plans for the implementation of Houston-based [Raptor Technologies](https://www.raptortechnologies.com)' ID kiosk, which would match government-issued IDs against a sexual offenders' list. Hanshaw reported that this would add a security layer to protocols and precautions already in place. He stressed along with his co-presenters that the kiosk is not set up to perform background checks. Questions were raised about the prevalence or lack of IDs among the district's residents..

Follow-Up Questions

- The latest version of the school district's proposed redistricting plan offers only tentative reasons for keeping open schools that were previously designated to be closed. Will there be additional cuts in the proposed savings previously presented to the board?
- What is the rationale behind the new Raptor kiosk? Has the district seen an uptick in sexual offenders attempting to enter buildings?

Notes

Opening gavel: 5:47 p.m. Closing gavel: 8:36 p.m.

Roll confirmed:

In attendance were board President Diana Autry, Summer Hall, Carl Jackson, Bruce Alexander, Job Esau Perry, Rene Molenaur, Barbara Sykes and Cochise Griffin, who is the student on the board.

<https://www.akronschools.com/district/board-of-education/board-members>

Also in attendance was Superintendent Michael Robinson, who is currently serving the first of a fiveyear term with APS.

Media Present:

Fox 8 News, Summit 93.1 FM, [Signal Akron](#)

No agenda was posted inside the room.

Number of public speakers: 1

The bulk of the first hour of the meeting was spent lauding local schools, student leaders and various citywide school concerts.

Community notes/reflections:

- Student Board Member Cochise Griffin will be a first-generation college student at Central State University, a historically Black college or university (HBCU). He spoke to the mentorship program and the benefits accrued to him at APS.
 - Leaning toward a degree in business. Hall thanked him profusely. It was a warm reception.
 - Alexander encouraged him as well to keep breaking the chain.
 - Jackson relates coming on the board at the same time as Griffin did. Thanked him for hard work
 - He will appear in a PBS documentary later this year. Cochise did not elaborate on the exact subject to be covered.
 - <https://www.hudl.com/profile/14770703/cochise-griffin>

Community reflection:

- Jackson spoke about the arts programs in many schools.
- Perry attended the city-wide jazz bands concert
- Hall went to North High School and met Michael Hall, who created an app with Samsung and also has a song on YouTube.
- A North classroom is set up as an office, with a boardroom. Also, several students are CPR-certified.

Public comments

- Chris Davis, a parent with two children in APS, talked about STEM High School and college prep. They praised the board for working during and after COVID. Had two requests related to restructuring:
 - Central Hower High needs addressing: wants to rename it Akron STEM High
 - Wants to continue [Akron STEM High](#) alignment with the University of Akron.

Restructuring plan:

Purpose, according to the PowerPoint presentation

- To establish attendance boundaries
- Facility capacity
- Fix imbalance in enrollment
- School closures
- Efficiency
- Initial plans were submitted in July 2023.
- No votes were taken, but several members expressed concerns, including:
 - proposed changes in the areas of transportation
 - contradictions (some schools initially slated to close are now slated to remain open)
 - How the amended plan affected cost savings projections
- Goal is that there will be pre-K across the district, with some buildings remaining open depending on capacity needs.

Minutes from last meeting

- approved by roll call vote

Two presentations:

- New [Chromebook](#) procedures in the district.
 - Figures presented:
 - Damaged and lost or stolen total cost of \$324,000 last year Majority of data usage is during the summer (don't students need access to computers during the summer?)
 - New protocol:
 - K-5 devices are left at the school but assigned to students for the year.
 - K-8 devices stay at school over the summer and are redeployed at the start of the school year
 - Return on investment over four year: \$952, 800 based on the idea of zero loss
 - Was not clear how these savings will accrue.
 - Several board members expressed concern about homework and summer learning opportunities where the Chromebook might enhance performance and the learning environment.
 - Hanshaw indicated that issues would have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Raptor Technologies visitor kiosk
 - Adds an additional level of security to schools. Does not override any existing procedures/protocols. Implementation parameters and policies are the province of the board and safety officials.
 - Includes real time monitoring for sex offender check. Autry expressed concerns about parents who may have sexual offense backgrounds who want to be involved in their children's education. One proposed solution would have that family member escorted by a security guard.
 - Kiosk initiates contact, scans state/government ID and produces a visitor badge.
 - Keeps a digital record of an individual who enters the school and records entry and exit times. Raptor also keeps account of the number, location and nature of building access in real time, creating an accurate picture of traffic around APS.
 - Officials said it is not a background check
 - Fall 2024 rollout to elementary schools

- Spring 2025 rollout to middle schools
- Part of the funding is provided by a federal ESSER grant (<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/elementary-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund/>), which would cover the first \$30,000 of implementation costs with the remaining \$134,000, covered by the district, according to the presentation.
- Officials stressed that this does not represent a new policy but adheres to current policies and procedures.
- Board members had several questions about the use or non-use of government-issued IDs. The kiosk only requires name and date of birth. How does it check for past sexual offenses?
- Discussion about which ID would be required. Several officials stressed that policies would be up to the board.
- Another issue raised was about parents who are registered sex offenders. Would they be able to pick up their children? One idea floated was to have a security person escort that parent into the building. One member said that registered sex offenders are not allowed to live within the vicinity of a school and should not be able to enter the building. The discussion ended without definitive answers. Final protocols should be established by BOE.

Committee reports

- Various committees reported no new findings or agenda items

A vote was held to move to executive session to discuss a personnel issue. Sykes, who felt the meeting ran too long and had an overly ambitious agenda, voted against the motion. Two members stepped out of the meeting prior to Sykes' objection.

The meeting recessed into executive session at 8:36 p.m.

Notes to reader: Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@signalakron.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line.