

# Midtown Cluster Advisory Team

## Meeting Minutes

Date	Time	Location
February 17, 2025	4:30 pm-5:30 pm	Zoom
Organizer	Facilitators	Meeting Type
Cluster Advisory Team		Special Called Meeting
Meeting Objective & Scope		
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### I. Roll Call

SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL	PRESENT (P) or ABSENT (A)	CLUSTER REPRESENTATIVE	PRESENT (P) or ABSENT (A)
Centennial Academy	Ms. Jessica Olowoyo	A		A
David T. Howard	Ms. Tekeshia Q. Hollis	P	Deonne Malick El-Deiry	P
Midtown HS	Dr. Betsy Bockman	P	Tamara Jones	P
Hope-Hill	Ms. Keisha Gibbons	A	Derrick Ross	A
Mary Lin	Ms. Denise Bringslid	P	Lynley Teras	P
Morningside	Mr. Brian Baron	P	Chappelle Washington-Freer	A
Springdale Park	Dr. Jennifer Toney	P	Tim Langan	P
Virginia-Highland	Mr. Terry Harness	P	Melissa Clark	P
Kindezi O4W	Ms. Faith Wilbanks	A		

**Guests present: APS representatives including but not limited to Audrey Sofianos and Travis Norvell**

**Quorum Established: Yes**

### I. Action Items

- a. **Approval of Agenda:** Motion made by: [Deonne El-Deiry](#); Seconded by: [Melissa Clark](#)  
**Members Approving:** unanimous  
**Members Opposing:**  
**Members Abstaining:**  
**Motion Passes**

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#### II. Discussion Items

##### a. Discussion Item: FY26 School Based Budgets Process and Allocations

- i. Tamara began discussion about school-based budget allocation for the upcoming 2025-26 school year expressing concerns about the compressed budget timeframe and significant reduction in funding for Howard and Midtown. She also mentioned the budget process lacked meaningful feedback and input from the GO Team. Elementary schools are receiving transition funds, small school stipends and baseline supplements for 25-26 school year, but those are expected to be stricken from budgets in the following years.
- ii. Deonne raised concerns about the lack of additional funds for Howard and the impact of the budget on the community, particularly the exhaustion of parents filling the gap. She mentioned that the gap that parents are expected to fill in the Midtown Cluster grows larger each year.
- iii. Travis clarified the duration and impact of transition funds and the step down process of small school supplements. It has not been determined yet if the small school supplements will be deleted completely as part of the facilities master plan. That decision is made in the fall of each year as the budget commission reviews the weights allocated.
- iv. Tamara mentioned that items are being pulled out of the administration budgets and put into school based budgets.
- v. Deonne expressed concern about the base funding of signature programs, which is formula based rather than zero sum based.
- vi. Travis responded stating that every school receives funding for an instructional coach position, software and certification fees, although the actual cost may be different between IB and STEAM and \$100 per pupil based on number of students per school. Last year's signature funding budget was \$18 million, this year APS left about \$3 million in reserves that can potentially be requested by individual schools.
- vii. Tamara highlighted that schools may not receive additional funding after the consolidation or closure of schools. Based on APS timeline, none of the cost-savings would be seen for two years. She expressed concern that the significant budget deficits becomes the new normal.
- viii. Travis responded that any decisions about facilities would be made by December 2025, taking effect in the fall of 2026, potentially impacting budgets for the 2027 fiscal year. This could also be a phased approach, based on what the Board votes.

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- ix. Tim inquired about the teacher impact at Midtown and Howard. It was revealed that the preliminary budget could result in the loss of 5 to 7 teaching positions at Midtown and going down to a .5 arts teacher at Howard, at a minimum.
- x. The team discussed the issue of the “leveling date” which affects school funding, with the consensus being that the district should consider the pattern of late enrollment in their budget. Audrey mentioned APS will be looking at the 15 day count data as well as growth during the year, actual student number projections, etc.
- xi. Tamara suggested finding alternative funding sources and APS assisting schools in finding partners to fill the APS budget holes, as it is unsustainable to continue to ask parents for supplemental funds.
- xii. Travis shared that the district will not be selling property for funds, but at the upcoming Board meeting APS will work with the city to look at leasing surplus properties for affordable housing or other community needs.
- xiii. It was discussed for CAT to move forward into an advocacy role and draft correspondence to the district expressing concerns about the budget process and timeline.
- xiv. Motion made by: Deonne Malick El-Deiry for the CAT to draft and send a written letter to APS and the Board outlining concerns that the current budget allocations are having on our schools, teachers, students and families. Additionally, the letter will express concern about the budget process and the GO team role in the process. Seconded by: Lynley Teras
  - Discussion:
    - a. Agree to develop and circulate the letter amongst the CAT team. Midtown CAT will be asking for an extension on their budget approval. CAT will look more at the bigger picture and push that to the district as feedback. Discussion included budget timeline concerns but also fear of retaliation and impact on the schools.
    - b. Travis added a comment on the timeline, how can APS engage GO teams earlier in the process even when you don’t know the impact on your school. To allocate the budgets, you need enrollment projections. School budgets are built before revenue projections are made. APS also doesn’t want to get behind other school districts and be behind on hiring top talent.

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- xv. **Members Approving:** unanimous
- xvi. **Members Opposing:**
- xvii. **Members Abstaining:**
- xviii. **Motion Passes**

#### III. **Announcements:**

#### IV. **Public Comment:**

- a. Wykeisha Howe: expressed appreciation for the team's efforts in reviewing the budget. She also voiced concern about the rushed process and the potential impact on schools.
- b. Tamara then read public comment from Brittany Schwartzwald highlighting the need for sufficient funding for schools and the importance of art programs.
- c. Travis commented on a new development this year on how schools earn positions and the staffing of those positions, he will send that information out.

#### V. **Adjournment**

Motion made by: **Deonne Malick El-Deiry**; Seconded by: **Lynley Teras**

**Members Approving:** unanimous

**Members Opposing:**

**Members Abstaining:**

**Motion Passes**

**ADJOURNED AT 5:30 PM**

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**Minutes Taken By:** **Lynley Teras**

**Position:** **Secretary**

**Date Approved:**