

# The Alamance News



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August 22, 2022  
Electronic Mail

Ms. Sandy Ellington-Graves  
Chairman  
Alamance-Burlington Board of Education  
and  
Dr. Dain Butler  
Superintendent  
Alamance-Burlington Schools  
1712 Vaughn Road  
Burlington, North Carolina 27217

Dear Chairman Ellington-Graves and Superintendent Butler:

We are very puzzled about an item included on tonight's school board agenda, and how, precisely, a so-called "community committee" was formed, apparently held some number of meetings (over an unknown span of time), and came to a conclusion making a recommendation for the naming of the school system's newest high school, now under construction along NC 119.

The members of this committee, as outlined in a "quick summary/abstract" in tonight's board packet was made up of "parents, community members, students, staff, administrators, and Central Services."

As such, this group constitutes a public body, all of whose meetings should have been publicly announced pursuant to the North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

My question remains, "What public notice was given about this committee's meeting schedule, much less its very establishment?"

I am unaware of any public announcement of the appointment of such a committee nor of *any* of its meetings.

I find no exemption from the state's Open Meetings Law that would have permitted this committee to be assembled and meet without any public notice.

Perhaps the school system has conflated the makeup of this committee with the authority (pursuant to N.C.G.S. sec. 142-318.10(a)(c)) that allows "a meeting solely among the professional staff of a public body" to conduct business without notification.

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However, the inclusion of parents, community members, and students clearly expands and transforms this group into a “public body” subject to the terms of the North Carolina Open Meetings Law – and all the more so because of its task to make a recommendation to the school board about the name of the new high school.

I want to stress the severity of this violation of the Open Meetings Law.

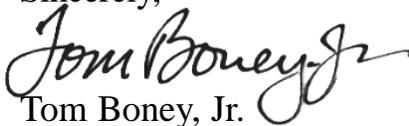
Perhaps it should also be emphasized that in the event this procedure were to be successfully challenged in court, a judge may consider declaring the action of the committee – and, by extension, potentially the school board itself if acting upon such improperly conducted deliberations and recommendations – null and void.

In light of the failed process of this committee’s deliberations, we would ask, pursuant to both the North Carolina Open Meetings Law and the North Carolina Public Records Law: to examine and inspect all tapes or video recordings made of each of the committee’s meetings; to examine and inspect any minutes, summaries, or notes taken by anyone who attended the meetings; and to examine and inspect all correspondence to, from, and between committee members regarding the selection of a name for the new high school.

The significance of a naming decision underscores all the more the importance of openness and transparency, which the school system should readily have known.

We would respectfully request that all further consideration by the school board of the high school naming issue – item E2 on tonight’s agenda – be suspended until this information is provided . There is clearly no rush to make a decision inasmuch as the school’s actual opening is approximately one year away.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,  
  
Tom Boney, Jr.  
Publisher