



At-Large

School Board Member Application

Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 21, 2020



Name Kurt Burkhart

Home Address [REDACTED]

**You must be registered to vote in Albemarle County. You can determine this by checking your voter card or by calling the Voter Registration Office at 434.972.4173.*

Phone [REDACTED]

Cell Phone [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Do you currently have children/grandchildren in ACPS?

☐

YES

☒

NO

If no, have you had children/grandchildren in ACPS?

☒

YES

☐

NO

How long have you resided in Albemarle County 17 years, 7 months

Have you previously served on the Albemarle County School Board or an Albemarle County Public Schools Committee or Council?

If so, please explain your previous committee/council work.

An additional sheet is attached with this application that provides more space to answer this question.

Please indicate why you are interested in serving on the School Board.

An additional sheet is attached with this application that provides more space to answer this question.

Please indicate where appropriate, areas in which you have experience or knowledge:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ School Construction | ☒ Research |
| ☐ Education/Curriculum | ☒ Strategic Planning |
| ☐ Databases | ☒ Finance/Budget |
| ☒ Community Engagement | ☒ Nonprofit and Human Services |
| ☒ Public Administration | ☒ County Government |
| ☒ Policy Development | ☒ Statistics/Demographics |
| ☒ Governance | ☒ Other |

Please further describe the experience, education, and leadership skills you would bring to the School Board.

Additional sheets are attached that provide more space to answer this question.

Indicate if you are attaching additional information pertinent to this application.

- ☒ Attachments are provided
☐ No attachments were necessary

Signature  Date August 21, 2026

Please be advised that, upon submission, this application and any supporting documents become public records and may be disclosed or published by Albemarle County Public Schools.

Applications may be submitted by email or delivered/mailed to:

M. Christine Thompson, Clerk of the Board
Albemarle County School Board
401 McIntire Road, Room 345
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Phone: 434-296-5820

cthompson@k12albemarle.org

At-Large School Board Member Application

continued, supplemental pages

Have you previously served on the Albemarle County School Board or an Albemarle County Public Schools Committee or Council? If so, please explain your previous committee/council work.

Yes, in January 2021, I was selected by School Board Member Judy Le to fill a vacancy on the ACPs Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LRPAC). During my brief tenure, I eagerly engaged with major initiatives, including reviewing consultant plans for the Lambs Lane project at Albemarle High School. Around this same time, the Albemarle County Circuit Court also appointed me to the Albemarle County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). Upon attending my first BZA meeting, I learned that Virginia statutory law strictly limits BZA members to a single concurrent public appointment (as an election official). Although I was deeply committed to continuing my work with the LRPAC, I immediately tendered my resignation from the committee to maintain full legal compliance.

Please indicate why you are interested in serving on the School Board.

I am a firm supporter of public education, and my goal is to ensure that every student in Albemarle County receives a world-class education focused on academic excellence. Like many in our community, I am deeply concerned by recent trends in student achievement gaps and standardized test scores. The disruptions of recent years left a significant impact on our classrooms, and our primary focus must return entirely to measurable educational outcomes. To achieve this, we must move past divisive external distractions and recenter the conversation on core teaching and learning.

My commitment to this mission is personal. For thirteen years, my wife and I partnered closely with Albemarle County Public Schools to support our daughter's education. We learned firsthand that student success requires an active, time-intensive partnership between dedicated educators and engaged parents. I understand how taxed our teachers are, and I know that the school board must provide them with the clear, unburdened framework they need to help students excel. I am applying for the school board vacancy to offer independent, stable leadership that prioritizes academic fundamentals and organizational excellence above political pressures.

Please indicate where appropriate, areas in which you have experience or knowledge.

Community Engagement

Effective leadership requires deep community roots, and engagement has been a core pillar of every role I have held. Serving in a key gubernatorial role handling communications placed me directly in front of the public. As I transitioned to leading DMOs, community engagement became vitally important to staying connected with the local residents and diverse stakeholders who relied on our office.

Public Administration

My career is built on more than 17 years of public sector service across diverse jurisdictions, providing me with a deep understanding of public administration and interdepartmental collaboration. This includes six years with the government of the U.S. Commonwealth of the

Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), 18 months with the City of Flagstaff, Arizona, and nine and a half years with the City of Charlottesville. Through these varied roles, I have mastered the mechanics of local and regional governance, developing a clear, comprehensive understanding of how departments within government interact to deliver public services effectively.

Policy Development

This administrative foundation directly informed my work as a principal policy advisor to the Governor of the CNMI for four years. Working as part of a small team, I helped advance key legislative and economic initiatives, including the chief executive's successful revamp and alignment of executive branch functions. My policy focus centered on major economic growth and protection initiatives for the CNMI. Most notably, I spearheaded the launch of a new film office to diversify the island's economy, advocated for stronger protections for overseas contract workers, and advised the governor on expanding direct foreign trade opportunities across the region, specifically targeting partnerships with the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Indonesia.

Governance

These varied public and private roles have allowed me to master governance and accountability from two distinct angles. In government, I developed a deep expertise in institutional oversight, consensus-building, and strict adherence to administrative law. In the private sector, I translated those core principles into nonprofit compliance, risk mitigation, and efficient decision-making frameworks. I don't just follow governance rules; I know how to design operational processes that protect an organization while keeping its mission moving forward.

Research

Rigorous research has been the data-driven backbone of my entire career. My foundational experience includes serving as a research assistant with the U.S. Senate Joint Economic Committee, a Federal Election Commission analyst, and a Senior Consultant for the production of *The PAC Directory*. This background taught me true mastery of primary sources and thorough fact-finding.

I applied these precise research standards during the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Saipan, where I had just three weeks to write a gubernatorial speech honoring Japanese soldier survivors. By meticulously corroborating firsthand accounts from veterans and local indigenous survivors, the resulting speech deeply moved survivors, U.S. military leadership, and the Japanese Consulate General. I bring this same dedication to rigorous fact-finding and historical accuracy to every challenge.

Strategic Planning

The policy initiative to launch the film office naturally transitioned into a need for long-term operational planning. I led the major initiative to establish this new industry from the ground up by authoring the CNMI's first comprehensive film strategic plan. This foundational roadmap spanned location filming, production, post-production, and a forward-thinking proposal to establish a certified film career curriculum at the Northern Marianas College. Building on this specialized planning expertise, I later collaborated with outside consultants across three distinct destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to develop tailored strategic plans that successfully promoted each unique location.

Finance/Budget

My analytical framework translates seamlessly into fiscal management, backed by over three decades of public and private sector financial oversight, strategic budget management, and revenue forecasting. Beginning as a gubernatorial special assistant and continuing through my tenure directing three destination marketing organizations (DMOs)—including the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau—I have consistently designed balanced budgets that align anticipated expenses with projected revenues. This work includes extensive experience collaborating with municipal government bodies, such as the City of Charlottesville's Office of Budget & Performance, where I worked closely with Maya Kumazawa (now the Director of Budget & Planning for ACPs).

Nonprofit and Human Services

Complementing my public budgetary experience is a comprehensive working knowledge of 501(c) tax-exempt organizations. For eight years, I successfully led the Carlsbad (California) Convention & Visitors Bureau, a 501(c)(6) entity. Beyond this executive role, I have dedicated myself to community governance, serving as a board member and officer for numerous nonprofits in Flagstaff, Carlsbad, and Charlottesville. My deep ties to local civic and business networks are reflected in my involvement with the Charlottesville Rotary Club, Downtown Business Association of Charlottesville, Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association, and the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce.

County Government

My commitment to local civic service is further demonstrated through two distinct, nonpartisan roles in Albemarle County. First appointed in May 2021 and recently reappointed to a second five-year term in May 2026, I serve as Chairman of the Board of Zoning Appeals. In this role, I collaborate with the Zoning Administrator, county staff, and the County Attorney to deliberate on appeals, variances, and special use permits. Additionally, I serve as an appointed election official at the Pantops precinct, working election days since March 2020 to support the democratic process independent of political party affiliation.

Statistics/Demographics

My reliance on deep research carries directly over into my work with audience metrics. Over a career spanning more than two decades as a destination marketing leader, I leveraged statistical analysis to shape high-impact marketing programs across three DMOs. By integrating visitor demographics and psychographics with robust data, I consistently drove measurable results. To ensure my strategies remain aligned with shifting population trends across the Commonwealth and Albemarle County, I regularly study employment, demographic, and population reports from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

Other: Ethical Compliance & Integrity

Ultimately, I view strong ethical compliance not as an obstacle, but as the foundational framework for sound, low-risk leadership. My commitment to ethical compliance, state law, and organizational integrity is absolute. Throughout my career, including in high-stakes executive briefings and cabinet meetings, I have relied strictly on data and objective analysis to guide decision-making under pressure.

I focus on proactively protecting organizations from severe legal and compliance risks. For example, I have successfully navigated complex situations by ensuring procurement processes strictly adhered to confidentiality rules. Furthermore, when managing sensitive requests from

external entities, I safeguard institutional boundaries by requiring strict adherence to legal authorization and formal disclosure protocols before sharing information. I pledge to bring this same dedication to integrity, fact-finding, and compliance to the service of our school board.

Please further describe the experience, education, and leadership skills you would bring to the School Board.

My educational foundation began at High Point University, where I earned a Bachelor of Arts with a dual major in history and political science. Driven to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application, I proposed and executed a pioneering independent study—the first of its kind approved by the university. Through this program, I earned academic credits while working as a paid staff member on a national presidential campaign, gaining rare, hands-on access to virtually every element of political strategy and operations.

This early commitment to experiential learning set the tone for my career, during which I have consistently sought advanced training to elevate my professional impact. When establishing the framework for a new film office in the Northern Mariana Islands, I secured formal certification as a film commissioner through Film Commissioners International. To deepen my leadership within tourism and economic development, I also pursued the prestigious Certified Destination Management Executive designation through Destinations International. Upon joining the Albemarle County Board of Zoning Appeals, I took a proactive approach to my civic duties; to ensure I could contribute effectively from day one, I completed the Land Use Education Program through Virginia Commonwealth University's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. Throughout my journey, I have blended academic rigor with specialized credentials to successfully navigate complex, high-stakes fields.

Experience and leadership skills have been thoroughly covered in the preceding section.

August 21, 2026

Albemarle County School Board
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Dear Members of the Albemarle County School Board:

Please accept this letter and resume as part of my formal application for the upcoming appointment to the At-Large Representative position on the School Board.

A Deeply Rooted Commitment to ACPS

My connection to public education and Albemarle County is both deeply personal and long-standing.

- **A Deliberate Choice:** Having grown up in Northern Virginia and graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School when Fairfax County public schools were recognized as the best in the nation, I understand the profound impact of an elite school system. When my family relocated from San Diego County, we chose our home in Key West for one singular reason: the reputation of Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS).
- **An ACPS Family Success Story:** Together with my wife, it has been the pleasure of a lifetime to watch our daughter, Melani Burkhart, progress entirely through the ACPS system—from Stony Point Elementary to Burley Middle School, and finally graduating from Monticello High School in 2022.
- **A Legacy of Board Engagement:** Some members of this Board may recall appointing Melani as your very first non-voting student representative. Having recently graduated from UVA's McIntire School of Commerce, she is now excelling as a financial analyst on Wall Street. I credit her academic and professional achievements directly to the foundation, instructional support, and dedicated mentoring she received from ACPS educators, particularly Ms. Lisa Frazier and Mr. Andy Johnson at Stony Point.

Proven Public Governance and Community Trust

For over 17 years, I have proudly served the Albemarle County community in leadership roles that demand putting service above self.

- **Judicial Appointment and Leadership:** This past May, the Albemarle Circuit Court reappointed me to a second five-year term on the Albemarle County Board of Zoning Appeals, where I currently serve as Chairman.
- **A Unique Perspective and Rigorous Preparation:** Much like my role on the BZA, I would join the School Board with a set of fresh eyes, objective judgment, and an unwavering commitment to due diligence. Before every vote, I personally inspect sites, dig deeply into policy, and ask hard questions until all necessary data is brought to light. I never pre-judge an issue; I keep an open mind, look at the evidence, and respect the process.
- **Diverse Background:** My professional background spans roles as a research assistant with the U.S. Senate Joint Economic Committee, a Capitol Hill staffer, an analyst at the Federal Election Commission, a national labor union organizer, and an investment banker. These diverse experiences have provided me with a robust toolkit in policy, finance, negotiation, and structural accountability.

Restoring Accountability and Rebuilding Trust

While seeking elective office was not on my immediate radar, the announcement of Ms. Allison Spillman's resignation changed my trajectory. In the days that followed, I was overwhelmed with messages from friends and neighbors across the community urging me to apply because they know my deep passion for education and public service.

I have spent the last two weeks carefully weighing the immense demands of this seat. Let us be frank: public trust in our school division has been deeply shaken. Our community is highly frustrated, fatigued by crises, and searching for absolute transparency. They do not want a representative who simply checks boxes or maintains the status quo. They want an objective, independent leader who is ready to do the hard work of rebuilding institutional trust.

My five year record on the Board of Zoning Appeals proves that I do not shy away from difficult governance. Therefore, I am ready to support the School Board's commitment to independent accountability, will step up to ask the rigorous questions the public deserves, and will strive to ensure our community feels genuinely heard, protected, and respected.

Your charge during this selection process is immense, and the decisions ahead will shape our community for years to come. I encourage you to be bold. I offer you a proven record of trusted local governance, an objective and analytical mindset, and a lifelong commitment to the success of our students.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Sincerely,


Kurt Burkhardt


KURT BURKHART

Albemarle County, Virginia | pacificdiver@gmail.com | 434.260.2506

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Dedicated professional and public servant with a career anchored in community prosperity, sustainable regional development, and public-private partnerships. Proven track record of supporting civic leaders, bringing diverse stakeholders to the table, and executing data-driven regional marketing campaigns. Guided by high ethical standards and transparent communication to ensure responsible economic growth and shared civic success.

CORE STRENGTHS & ATTRIBUTES

- **Strategic Leadership:** A career history of uniting public and private interests around shared regional tourism and economic goals.
- **Media Relations:** Proven expertise in collaborating with media outlets to shape constructive public narratives during regional tourism events and initiatives.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Demonstrated success in optimizing organizational efficiencies and scaling high-return marketing investments.
- **Community Partnership:** A legacy of cultivating authentic relationships with merchants, local governments, community stakeholders, and residents.
- **Cultural & Civic Humility:** An established background as an advisor, speaker, and advocate for sustainable regional development.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Managing Consultant & Founder | Destination Strategies Group, LLC

Charlottesville, VA | 2018–Present

- Establish a data-driven advisory firm providing actionable organizational solutions to Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to optimize operational efficiency and stakeholder alignment.
- Expand international dialogue and reach by producing and hosting a premier weekly talk-radio broadcast on travel and hospitality that achieves a multi-continental listenership and a significant digital footprint.

Executive Director | Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau

Charlottesville, VA | 2009–2018

- Orchestrated regional public relations initiatives and high-impact campaigns that generated over \$50 million in earned media coverage and exceptional returns on marketing investments.
- Directed a Washington, DC metro campaign that achieved a 57:1 return on investment, generating over 73,000 room nights and \$23 million in visitor spend.
- Secured marquee international sports tourism partnerships, such as hosting USA Cycling/Team USA for the UCI Road World Championships.
- Led tourism communications for the region, resulting in multiple major industry awards for public relations, broadcast promotion, and digital media excellence, including the Adrian, Magellan, Virgo, and W3 awards.

Executive Director | Carlsbad Convention and Visitors Bureau

Carlsbad, CA | 2000–2008

- Championed regional funding sustainability by pioneering and winning unanimous lodging industry and city council approval for the area's first Tourism Business Improvement District in Carlsbad and San Diego County.
- Accelerated local economic and retail activity through strong merchant alliances and expanded regional cooperative marketing opportunities for regional tourism partners, delivering a verifiable 25% year-over-year growth in stakeholder participation.

Director | Flagstaff Convention and Visitors Bureau

Flagstaff, AZ | 1999–2000

- Re-engineered regional brand positioning from a transit gateway stopover into a preferred, stand-alone travel destination through aggressive, community-backed promotional campaigns that yielded greater brand awareness and increased visitation.
- Built a strong regional marketing coalition, securing pilot project funding from the Arizona Office of Tourism to establish the Northern Arizona Marketing Coalition.
- Introduced high-visibility community-wide events like "Good Morning, Flagstaff," which featured a live global satellite broadcast.

Co-Owner & Vice President | Adventure Dives and Tours, Saipan, Inc.

Saipan, CNMI | 1996–1998

- Led scaling efforts for a regional marine tourism and retail company, successfully positioning the organization as Micronesia's largest retail dive equipment provider and exclusive wholesale agent.
- Enhanced operational customer service, improved product delivery to retailers, and built specialized inbound receptive tour operator infrastructure for international recreational travelers.

Film Commissioner | Northern Mariana Islands Film Office, Office of the Governor

Saipan, CNMI | 1996–1998

- Established and built the territory's first film commission under gubernatorial mandate, introducing a vital new channel for local economic diversification and enhanced tourism.
- Generated million dollar-plus direct economic impact by reducing the regulatory red tape that attracted international film productions and location scouts, and earned global industry acclaim and promotional awards, which included accolades from the Association of Film Commissioners International.

Special Assistant to the Governor for Tourism and Trade | Office of the Governor

Saipan, CNMI | 1995–1998

- Collaborated with the governor on high-level international trade and tourism infrastructure portfolios, which included over \$140 million in foreign capital resort investment that resulted in more than 1,800 domestic jobs and critical new air services.
- Developed robust global media campaigns, including a comprehensive 12-month advertising campaign on CNN International reaching over 3 continents.
- Coordinated international trade missions for the governor across major Asian economic centers to build cross-border trade partnerships.

Deputy Public Information & Protocol Officer | Office of the Governor

Saipan, CNMI | 1994–1995

- Served as principal executive communicator, speechwriter, and official government spokesman for the governor during critical administrative and legislative oversight periods.
- Co-designed comprehensive inter-governmental crisis communication networks and managed high-level federal, congressional, and international diplomatic protocol for visiting officials.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

- **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), History and Political Science** | High Point University, High Point, NC
- **Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME)** | Destinations International
 - Submitted 5 capstone research papers fulfilling professional mastery requirements.

SELECT PRESENTATIONS & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- *How The CVB Responded After Crisis Events* | Speaker & Panelist, Virginia State Tourism Summit
- *Crisis Communications* | Speaker & Panelist, VA-1 Annual State Summit
- *Best Green Practices for DMOs* | Speaker & Panelist, Virginia Green Travel Alliance

- *National Heritage Areas* | Speaker & Panelist, Destination Marketing Association International / Journey Through Hallowed Ground Conference

CIVIC & CAREER AFFILIATIONS

- Albemarle County Board of Zoning Appeals | Member and Chairman
- Albemarle County Election Official | Dedicated Volunteer
- Piedmont Master Gardeners | Certified Master Gardener
- Destinations International | Former Member
- Rotary Clubs of Flagstaff, Carlsbad, and Charlottesville | Paul Harris +2 Fellow
- Virginia Green Travel Alliance | Former Charlottesville-Albemarle Chapter Member
- Leadership Charlottesville | Chamber of Commerce Graduate
- Chambers of Commerce | Former active Member (Flagstaff, Carlsbad, Charlottesville)
- Pacific Basin Development Council | Former adviser to the Council President (Honolulu, HI)