



**CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
School Board / City Council Joint Work Session
December 18, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.**

Walker Upper Elementary School Cafeteria, 1564 Dairy Road, Charlottesville, VA

The December 18, 2025, joint work session of the Charlottesville City Council and the Charlottesville City School Board was called to order by Chair Emily Dooley.

Deputy School Board Clerk Leslie Thacker called the roll for School Board Members, establishing a quorum, and Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas called the roll for City Council, noting the following members present: Mayor Juandiego Wade and Councilors Natalie Oschrin and Lloyd Snook. Councilor Brian Pinkston gave advance notice of his absence.

Chair Dooley called a vote for agenda approval, and the agenda was adopted unanimously.

Dr. Royal Gurley, Superintendent of Charlottesville City Schools (CCS), introduced Schools staff in attendance and City Manager Samuel Sanders, Jr. introduced City of Charlottesville staff.

Dr. Gurley began the presentation of City Schools FY27 budget priorities and estimates, as required by statute, and Councilor Payne joined the meeting at 5:06 p.m. Dr. Gurley stated that he has asked staff to evaluate barriers to success for Black students, and through continuous implementation of solutions, outcomes are beginning to improve. Regarding accountability and student outcomes, Dr. Gurley mentioned that it seems when improvements are apparent for students, particularly for students of color, the benchmarks for achievement seem to change, and funding is usually not available to meet the needs of students with the greatest challenges.

Mr. Gurley's presentation covered the topics of budget priorities, student demographics, Virginia's new accountability implications for 2026-2027, instructional funding next steps, staff allocation, salaries and benefits, and early childhood education. Budget priorities include:

- Staffing, Compensation, and Retention
- Student Support, Achievement, and Well-Being
- Facilities, Maintenance, and Capital Improvements
- Early Childhood Education

Kim Powell, Chief Operating Officer for CCS, presented on facilities maintenance operation costs, capital improvements, and the ongoing pupil driver shortage.

Renee Hoover, Director of Finance for CCS, reviewed Fiscal Year 2027 revenues, next steps before the School Board budget work session on January 22, 2026, and budget considerations.

Dr. Gurley and staff answered clarifying questions for Council.

City Manager Sanders summarized his understanding of the request presented for \$6.4 Million above the previous year's budgeted amount.

Chair Dooley opened the floor for comments from members of the community, and the following individuals spoke:

- Nikuyah Walker spoke about items she heard during discussion regarding salaries, outcomes

for students whose families are not in middle class, children with behavioral issues, and in opposition to the impending School Resource Officers (SROs) Memorandum of Understanding with the Charlottesville Police Department. She questioned why Schools were asking for additional funding if outcomes have not shown improvement. She asked for accountability, and why White student outcomes can offset scores for other students.

- Dr. RaShell Brackney, former Charlottesville Police Chief, spoke as an educator, and about successful models for educating poor and Black and Brown children. She encouraged using the term “successful” versus “proficient” when talking about outcomes for children. She gave an example of a successful program in Harlem schools. She expressed that the metrics for success changed across the State, and not just for Charlottesville. Regarding school transportation, she suggested using the public transportation system and contracting with churches to use church vans. She asked what problems are Schools attempting to solve by placing SROs in schools.
- Zyahna Bryant, member-elect to the Charlottesville School Board, stated that conversations about student outcomes tend to be circular and not productive. She expressed concerns about advanced classes tending to not have students of color enrolled, and about missed opportunities to provide wrap-around services that would help various students to be successful. She suggested connecting with local agencies to provide services in schools.

Chair Dooley gave closing remarks, listed future meetings, and adjourned the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council