



## MINUTES

### Charlottesville City School Board/City Council Joint Budget Work Session

February 9, 2026 (5:00 p.m.)

Walker Upper Elementary School Cafeteria

1564 Dairy Road, Charlottesville, VA

[Video Link](#)

**1.1 Call to Order:** School Board Vice-Chair Amanda Burns and Mayor Juandiego Wade called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**1.2 Remote Participation by a School Board Member (Lisa Torres):** Ms. Dooley offered a motion to approve Ms. Torres' remote participation for the February 9, 2026 Joint Budget Work Session due to a professional school board conflict (VSBA Federal Relations Network Event). Ms. Bryant seconded the motion, and the motion carried with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Torres connected via Zoom following this vote. Ms. Torres attended the meeting via Zoom from her hotel room in Washington, DC.

Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas called the roll for City Council, noting the following members present: Mayor Juandiego Wade, Vice Mayor Natalie Oschrin, and Councilor Lloyd Snook. Councilor Jen Fleisher requested to participate electronically over Zoom while on vacation in Costa Rica. Councilor Payne joined the meeting at 5:17 p.m.

On motion by Mr. Snook, seconded by Ms. Oschrin, Council by a vote of 3-0 approved electronic participation by Councilor Fleisher.

### **2.1 Roll Call:**

**School Board members present:** Ms. Zyahna Bryant, Ms. Amanda Burns, Ms. Shymora Cooper, Ms. Emily Dooley, Mr. Chris Meyer, Ms. Nicole Richardson, and Ms. Lisa Torres (via Zoom).

**Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present:** Dr. Royal Gurley (Superintendent), Dr. Anna Isley (Chief Academic Officer), Ms. Kim Powell (Chief Operations Officer), Ms. Renee Hoover (Director of Finance), Ms. Maria Lewis (Director of Human Resources), Ms. Rachel Rasnake (Director of Student Services), Ms. Amanda Korman Simalchik (Community Relations Supervisor), Ms. Carolyn Swift (Director of Assessment and Accountability), Ms. Leslie Thacker (Board Clerk), Ms. T. Denise Johnson (Supervisor of Strategic Initiatives), and Ms. Julia Green (Board Deputy Clerk).

**City Staff Members present:** Mr. Sam Sanders, Ms. Krisy Hammill, Mr. Mike Goddard, Ms. Kyna Thomas, Mr. James Freas, Mr. John Maddus, and Mr. Remy Trail.

**3.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda:** Ms. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve the proposed agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, and Ms. Richardson voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Torres was not present for this vote.

Dr. Royal Gurley, Superintendent, announced a successful collective bargaining meeting held earlier that day, resulting in the Charlottesville Education Association (CEA) agreeing to put forth a tentative contract for a vote in time for the Board's budget approval on February 19. Dr. Gurley thanked Ms. Torres and Ms. Gillikin for their work,

noting that while there may be difficult moments ahead, the division will navigate them together. This agreement includes a 10.5% raise for support personnel.

**4.1 Joint Budget Work Session: Presentation of the Superintendent’s Proposed FY 2027 Budget:** Dr. Gurley presented the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, which addressed budget priorities, trends in state enrollment and CCS Fall membership, the impact of the state budget on the division, and expenditures such as salaries and wages.

The FY 2026 - 2027 Budget Development Update included:

- **Budget Priorities**
  - Staffing, Compensation, and Retention
  - Student Support, Achievement, and Well-Being
  - Facilities, Maintenance, and Capital Improvements
  - Early Childhood Education
- **Strategic Alignment:** The budget is designed to increase academic achievement, provide a culture of safety and wellness, support staff (including recruiting teachers of color), and ensure efficient operations.
- **Revenue:** The school division relies on multiple funding streams, with the majority coming from local sources:
  - Local Composite Index (LCI): Charlottesville's LCI for 2026-2028 is 0.7666, meaning the city is required to pay roughly 76.66% of minimum educational costs. This is significantly higher than the state average of 41.18%.
  - Enrollment Trends: Both statewide and local Average Daily Membership (ADM) are projected to decline. CCS enrollment has stabilized at roughly 4,440 students but is expected to decrease due to lower birth rates, which directly reduces state funding.
  - State Impact: CCS expects a decrease of \$57,722 in projected State Revenue for FY 2027.
- **Expenditures:**
  - Allocation: 74% of the FY 2026 budget is for employee compensation.
  - Staffing Levels: The division employs 905 total staff, including 560 licensed personnel, 279 support professionals, and 66 administrators.

<b>FY 2027 Compensation Increases - Option A</b>		
Collective Bargaining - Licensed Personnel	Annual 5.5% salary & benefits increase (1.5% step + 4% raise)	2,767,329
Collective Bargaining - Support Professionals	**Annual 3% salary & benefits increase (1.5% step +1.5% raise)	392,862
Administration	3% salary & benefits increase (1.5% step + 1.5% raise)	290,777
Health Insurance	2% employer increase	184,124
Savings	Reconfiguration and vacancy savings	(2,669,480)
	<b>Total Increase in Personnel Cost</b>	<b>\$ 965,612</b>
** Updated since the February 5, 2026 School Board presentation		

<b>FY 2027 Compensation Increases - Option B</b>		
Option B contingent upon the bargaining unit voting on the current draft agreement for Educational Support Professionals prior to the School Board's approval of the FY 2027 budget on February 19, 2026.		
Collective Bargaining - Licensed Personnel	Annual 5.5% salary & benefits increase (1.5% step + 4% raise)	2,767,329
Collective Bargaining - Support Professionals	Annual 10.5% salary & benefits increase (1.5% step + 9% raise)	1,375,015
Administration	3% salary & benefits increase (1.5% step + 1.5% raise)	290,777
Health Insurance	2% employer increase	184,124
Savings	Reconfiguration and vacancy savings	(2,669,480)
	<b>Total Increase in Personnel Cost</b>	<b>\$ 1,947,765</b>

- **Personnel Savings:** The Walker reconfiguration generated \$1,102,669 in savings by eliminating 10.0 FTE positions.

<b>Non Discretionary: City Maintenance &amp; Transportation Contracts</b>		
Maintenance	4.4% increase due to personnel cost	\$ 232,212
Transportation	5.19% Increase due to personnel cost related to collective bargaining	238,346
	<b>Total Increase in City Contracts</b>	<b>\$ 470,558</b>

<b>Budget Requests</b>		
<b>Positions</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Cost</b>
CHS Health & Medical Sciences Teacher	.5	\$ 55,644
CHS Agricultural Science Teacher	.5	55,644
CHS/Lead Gifted Teacher (Specialist)	.6	55,017
***Bilingual Instructional Assistants	4.0	226,197
Director of Facilities Operations	**	48,242
Director of Organization Support	**	40,751
CHS School Counseling Director	**	24,412
LEAP Elementary Teacher	**	10,927

Total Budget Requests for Student Improvement	5.6	\$ 516,834
<p>*** Updated since the February 5, 2026 School Board presentation.  ** Positions without FTEs reflect repurposed roles aligned to student needs and Safety &amp; Security &amp; Facilities enhancements.</p>		

Summary of FY 27 Budget Changes - Option A	
State revenue loss	\$ <u>- 57,722</u>
Expenditures	
Compensation	965,612
Non-Discretionary City Contracts	470,558
Students Needs/Improvements	516,834
Total Expenditure Increases	\$ <u>1,953,004</u>
<b>Request from City</b>	<b>\$ 2,010,726</b>

Summary of FY 27 Budget Changes - Option B	
State revenue loss	\$ <u>- 57,722</u>
Expenditures	
Compensation	1,947,765
Non-Discretionary City Contracts	470,558
Students Needs/Improvements	516,834
Total Expenditure Increases	\$ <u>2,935,157</u>
<b>Request from City</b>	<b>\$ 2,992,879</b>

- **Budget Calendar**

**Discussion/Questions:**

- Ms. Bryant opened the discussion by reaffirming her consistent support for the 10.5% salary increase, noting her belief that this has been the Board's position from the beginning. She expressed concern over recent "drama" and miscommunications, seeking to clarify the exact requirements and deadlines needed to move forward. Dr. Gurley confirmed that the Board is indeed advancing the 10.5% increase, attributing recent friction to "lessons learned" on both sides as they navigate a brand-new collective bargaining process.
- The conversation pivoted to the specific steps required for finalization. Dr. Gurley clarified that the 10.5% agreement is contingent upon the bargaining unit (CEA) voting on and ratifying their contract. While the exact date of the vote was not yet confirmed, the discussion established that it is expected to occur before the 19th. Ms. Bryant emphasized that for the sake of the public record, these deadlines must be

transparent so that the Board does not unfairly penalize parties for "missing" expectations that were never clearly defined.

- In response, Ms. Burns acknowledged the Board's responsibility to improve its diligence regarding the budget calendar. She suggested that the Board must work closely with the collective bargaining team to establish firm "drop dates" for contract ratification. The members agreed that moving forward, there must be clear, upfront communication to eliminate any "gray area," ensuring the budget accurately reflects ratified agreements without further confusion.
- Ms. Bryant initiated a discussion regarding the 10.5% salary increase, stating her position that this had been the intended direction from the start. She requested clarification on the specific deadlines and procedural requirements to ensure clear communication moving forward. Dr. Gurley confirmed that the Board is advancing the 10.5% increase and noted that the current process has provided "lessons learned" for all parties involved in the new collective bargaining structure.
- The discussion focused on the timeline for a ratified contract in relation to the February 19th budget vote. Dr. Gurley explained that the 10.5% increase requires the bargaining unit (CEA) to vote on and ratify their contract. He committed to providing the Board with a written update following a consultation with Ms. Gillikin and Ms. Taylor to establish the specific dates for when the contract will be presented to the bargaining unit.
- Ms. Bryant stated that expectations and deadlines must be clearly defined for the record to avoid claims of missed timelines. She requested documented protocols to ensure all Board members understand the collective bargaining process and accountability measures. Ms. Burns noted that the Board would work with the collective bargaining team to establish firm "drop dates" for contract ratification to align with the budget calendar. The session concluded with the understanding that the administration will provide the Board with the necessary voting dates and written clarification on the upcoming schedule.
- Mr. Meyer inquired whether the proposed transportation budget increase includes sufficient funding or a change in staffing strategy to ensure a full complement of bus drivers. He specifically questioned if the current figures account for a solution to chronic driver vacancies.
- Ms. Powell clarified that the current budget figure is based on the "status quo" model, which maintains existing 30-hour positions. She noted that while conversations are ongoing to determine the optimal solution for driver vacancies, those details have not yet been finalized. Consequently, the current number does not yet reflect a new staffing model.
- Mr. Meyer noted that the budget figure will likely increase once a final strategy is implemented to ensure all driver needs are met. Ms. Powell confirmed that while an additional funding request is probable, the administration is currently working to identify the most cost-effective way to transition to full-time positions. She added that the proposed solution aims to eliminate vacancies and may include potential cost savings depending on the final model.
- Mr. Sanders, City Manager, advised the Board on the current status of the city budget, noting that the city is working to balance the budget ahead of the March 2nd message to Council. He reported that while the current draft has \$2 million allocated for the school system's request, the city is aware the Board's actual request has moved from an initial \$6 million to \$2.9 million.
- Mr. Sanders stated that he and Ms. Hamill are currently working to balance the budget as closely as possible. He informed the Board that he will either present a balanced budget to the Council and identify any unfunded items for their final decision, or engage in further discussions regarding increased revenues if necessary. He concluded by noting that he could make final decisions immediately if given direction by the Board, or continue to refine the figures over the next two weeks.
- Mr. Snook provided an overview of the City Council's role in the budget process, noting that Council members had not reviewed the school proposals or the City Manager's working draft prior to the meeting. He stated that this lack of preliminary information is a result of the standard administrative process.
- Mr. Snook reported that based on fiscal stress monitors and current taxing levels, the city is near its maximum taxation capacity. He noted the necessity of balancing school funding requests against other city priorities, such as homelessness, affordable housing, and transit. He concluded by stating he awaits the City Manager's formal budget presentation to see how these competing needs are reconciled.

- Mr. Payne noted that the primary decision for City Council involves reconciling the current \$2 million allocation with the school system's \$2.9 million request. He requested the specific date for the next update on revenue collection data to determine if actual collections are trending higher or lower than current projections.
- Ms. Hammill stated that a quarterly report will be included in the Council's packet for the next February meeting, though no formal presentation is currently scheduled. She clarified that no additional formal data would likely be presented until after the proposed budget is released.
- Mr. Payne asked if further information would be available before the final budget adoption. Ms. Hammill confirmed that there would be at least one to two additional months of revenue data available to analyze trends before the budget is finalized. Mr. Payne concluded by stating that this data will be essential for balancing the budget and determining final funding levels.
- Mr. Payne asked for clarification regarding the \$2.9 million funding request and the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). He specifically questioned whether the \$2.9 million figure covers only the 10.5% salary increase or if it includes all other components and provisions within the CEA contract.
- Dr. Gurley confirmed that the \$2.9 million request is all-inclusive. He stated that this figure covers the salary increases as well as all other items currently outlined in the draft collective bargaining agreement.
- Meeting Summary: Legislative Timelines and Collective Bargaining Process
- Mr. Payne noted the administrative difficulty of the City Council having to adopt a budget before the General Assembly finalizes the state budget. He stated that this lack of complete state-level data, dictated by the city charter, limits the Council's ability to make fully informed decisions.
- Mr. Payne also addressed the ongoing collective bargaining processes, noting that these negotiations are a new experience for both elected officials and staff within the city. He emphasized the importance of adhering to the established legal process: if a disagreement cannot be resolved through direct discussion, the matter proceeds to a neutral arbitrator for fact-finding, with the City Council serving as the final decision-maker if an impasse remains. He stated that maintaining this structured process has historically led to fair outcomes for workers while acknowledging the city's fiscal realities.
- Ms. Oschrin acknowledged the recent communication challenges, noting the significant time and effort spent by Board members and staff over the weekend to move toward a resolution. She expressed support for identifying the additional \$900,000+ required for the full school funding request, emphasizing the importance of competitive and livable wages for instructional assistants and non-licensed staff to ensure retention and quality of education.
- Ms. Oschrin detailed the fiscal options available to the Council to meet these funding needs. While confirming Mr. Snook's assessment that the city is nearing its fiscal stress level regarding its four state-regulated tax levers, she identified a fifth lever: expanding the tax base by increasing the number of contributors within the community. She noted that while revenue increases may present short-term challenges, they are necessary to support school staff and students. Additionally, she highlighted the transition of the health and medical sciences teacher to a full-time position as a positive feature of the proposed budget.
- Mr. Wade concurred with Ms. Oschrin regarding the progress toward a budget compromise. Drawing on his experience as a former school board member and substitute teacher, he highlighted the essential role of Instructional Assistants (IAs) in the classroom, noting that their support is critical to daily operations and student assignments. He expressed his intent to advocate for the additional \$900,000 to fully fund the school request, characterizing it as a necessary investment in the district's and city's future.
- Mr. Wade noted that while collective bargaining introduces new complexities, the process is an expected part of addressing the community's difficult fiscal decisions. He stated that while the city works to increase revenue through housing and an expanded tax base, the Council is prepared to make the necessary tough decisions in the interim.
- Regarding specific budget items, Mr. Wade requested clarification on the proposal for a full-time gifted teacher at Charlottesville High School. He asked for a description of the position's responsibilities, noting his previous understanding that gifted services at the high school level were primarily delivered through Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) coursework.

- Dr. Gurley provided clarification on the proposed full-time gifted teacher position at Charlottesville High School. He noted that the current role is staffed at a 0.4 FTE (part-time) level and that the school division's gifted model has evolved to encompass over 80% of the student population.
- Dr. Gurley explained that the position provides direct support for students in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework, specifically focusing on advanced essay writing and "pushing in" to classrooms. Furthermore, the administration is revamping the role to consolidate the duties of the Lead Gifted Teacher. Currently, these responsibilities are distributed across the division; the proposal aims to centralize these tasks under one lead teacher who will serve as the specialized division-wide lead for the gifted program.
- Mr. Payne requested an update on the current city budget imbalance. Mr. Sanders reported that the budget process began with a \$13 million deficit, which has been reduced to just over \$4 million through various administrative adjustments. He noted that the city expects to bring that number significantly lower by Friday. However, he clarified that this calculation does not yet include the \$900,000 difference for the school's request or the \$1.4 million city share for transit investments. The final balanced budget is scheduled to go to print on Friday for the March 2nd presentation.
- Mr. Payne and Ms. Hammill discussed the fiscal impact of a real estate tax increase. Ms. Hammill confirmed that one cent on the real estate tax rate generates approximately \$1.2 million, which nets out to roughly \$900,000 after accounting for tax relief programs. Mr. Payne suggested that the Council must prioritize funding teacher salaries over other investments, such as the downtown mall street team (estimated at over \$1 million annually).
- Mr. Payne further observed that while the city has increased "regressive" taxes like the meals tax to their state-wide maximums, the real estate tax rate remains lower than it was in the early 2000s. He characterized the previous 10-cent reduction in the real estate tax as a "long-term structural challenge" and argued that a rate adjustment must be considered as it is the most progressive revenue lever available to fund critical priorities like the school system.
- Ms. Oschrin followed up on the discussion regarding city revenue levers, identifying the four primary taxes available to the Council: real estate, personal property, lodging, and meals tax. She noted that while property tax is statistically considered the "least aggressive" (most progressive) option, the Council must remain cognizant of the city's specific demographics. With over 60% of residents being renters, she cautioned that real estate tax increases are frequently passed through to tenants, potentially impacting a majority of the community.
- Ms. Burns concluded the discussion by thanking the City Council members and expressing the Board's commitment to moving forward in partnership with school administration and union leadership. She emphasized the importance of establishing clear roles, adhering to timelines, and maintaining accountability to ensure staff receive fair compensation. She noted that the Board remains focused on a transparent process and expressed optimism regarding further positive updates later in the week.

### **5.1 Comments from Members of the Community:**

- Brice Estes, a second-grade teacher at Trailblazer Elementary, spoke in support of school support staff and the CEA, emphasizing that custodians, instructional assistants, and nutrition staff are essential to daily operations. While Mr. Estes expressed appreciation for the 10.5% raise for support staff, he criticized the district's recent communications as misleading, arguing that the district unfairly scapegoated the union for contract delays caused by unresolved communication from the administration. Additionally, he raised concerns regarding upcoming staffing decisions, noting that increased class sizes and a loss of instructional assistants would undermine the district's goal of closing the achievement gap for diverse learners. Mr. Estes concluded by urging the board to fully fund the proposed budget, engage in good-faith negotiations with the CEA, and restore a culture of transparency and respect.
- Shamika Henson, an Instructional Assistant at Jackson-Via Elementary, shared a personal account of a November 2024 incident where her vehicle caught fire while she was at work, resulting in a total loss. Ms. Henson expressed deep disappointment in the lack of support from the District and the Superintendent, noting that while community members organized a GoFundMe, the central office

provided no assistance or outreach. She highlighted the financial and emotional strain the event caused her family, pointing out that her current salary is insufficient to cover such losses. Ms. Henson questioned the District's priorities, contrasting the lack of employee support with recent expenditures like the new football field, and urged the division to begin tangibly supporting its staff during times of crisis.

- Abigail Johnson, a first-grade teacher and union representative at Jackson-Via Elementary, urged the Board to pass a budget funding a 10.5% raise to ensure a living wage for support staff, noting that the currently proposed 3.5% increase is insufficient for basic needs like rent and utilities. Ms. Johnson strongly defended the Charlottesville Education Association (CEA), highlighting its role in advocating for both educators and students, and expressed deep concern over recent communications from the Superintendent and School Board that she characterized as disparaging and factually inaccurate. She argued that attempts to undermine the union's work create a lack of support that may drive educators to leave the district. Ms. Johnson concluded by calling for a formal apology from the School Board regarding Friday's communication and a commitment from the City Council to fully fund the requested raises.
- Michael Salvatierra, a 16-year teacher at Trailblazer Elementary and Vice President of the CEA, utilized his time to read a letter from a colleague who was unable to attend due to working a second job. The letter, written by a 27-year Instructional Assistant (IA), described the emotional toll of the District's recent communication, which the author characterized as "unprofessional" and a "shocking" dismissal of staff value. The IA highlighted the financial reality of needing to work two full-time jobs to make ends meet after nearly three decades of service, noting that their second position pays as much as their tenure at CCS. Mr. Salvatierra and the letter's author both emphasized that the District's actions—specifically the perceived "shifting of blame" onto the union—undermine the dedication of long-term employees and fail to reflect the respect and material support they have earned.
- Alix Heintzman, a parent of two Charlottesville City Schools students, shared a personal account of how an instructional assistant was instrumental in helping her child transition into kindergarten. Ms. Heintzman highlighted the stark financial reality for support staff, noting that the educator who supported her child had to leave immediately after school for a second job at a grocery store that offered higher pay. She characterized the CEA-negotiated 10.5% raise as the "bare minimum" staff deserve and described the District's attempts to blame the union for contract issues as "shameful." Ms. Heintzman concluded by urging the City Council to fully fund the budget to provide for the staff members who care for the community's children.
- Christine Esposito, a 26-year teacher and city resident, emphasized the "village" concept of the school division, stating that teachers cannot effectively do their jobs without the essential support of instructional assistants, custodians, cafeteria staff, and administrative technicians. Ms. Esposito urged the City Council to fully fund the budget to include the 10.5% raise for support personnel, whom she described as the "backbone" of the schools. She described the District's Friday email as "jarring" and counterproductive, noting that finger-pointing undermines the collective goal of supporting staff. Ms. Esposito concluded by calling for the Board and Council to move forward by tangibly taking care of all members of the school community.
- Emily Kingsley, a sixth-grade English teacher at Walker Upper Elementary and CEA member, called on the City Council to fully fund the school budget, specifically the 10.5% raise for Education Support Professionals (ESPs). To illustrate the urgency, she read a statement from a Walker custodian who described working seven days a week across two jobs to support a multi-generational household, noting that the raise would allow him to stop working weekends. Ms. Kingsley also condemned the "anti-union rhetoric" found in the District's recent email, characterizing it as a confusing and inaccurate attempt to blame the CEA for contract delays. She clarified that the bargaining team's insistence on a revised contract was a deliberate effort to protect the interests of all workers and ensure equity, concluding with a reaffirmation of her support for the union's advocacy for a more transparent school community.
- Teri Stipe, a 19-year music teacher and building representative at Sunrise Elementary, opened by thanking Dr. Gurley for presenting a budget that honors the originally bargained 10.5% raise for support professionals. However, as both a teacher and a CCS parent, she addressed the "whiplash" and harm caused by the District's recent email, which she stated eroded morale by publicly praising staff for their hard work one day and then blaming the union for the loss of their raises the next. Ms. Stipe condemned

the use of anti-union rhetoric and communications that pit educators against one another, noting that such actions undermine trust in the collective bargaining process and negatively impact students. She concluded by urging the City Council to fully fund the budget as a step toward restoring cooperation and accountability within the school community.

- Dedrick Nelson, a Care & Safety Assistant (CSA) at Walker Upper Elementary, advocated for the 10.5% raise by highlighting the multifaceted roles support staff play daily. Mr. Nelson shared that he currently maintains three jobs—working full-time at the school, part-time at the YMCA, and running a part-time business—to make ends meet. He detailed how CSAs and custodians frequently step beyond their primary duties to act as unofficial counselors, nurses, and administrative support when other staff are unavailable, building vital relationships with students despite a lack of formal training in those areas. Mr. Nelson emphasized that the "village" of support staff is essential to the school's function and concluded by urging the Board to approve the raise and maintain current staffing levels.
- Teletha Howard, a Care and Safety Assistant (CSA) at Walker and a member of the CEA bargaining team, spoke in support of the school board adjusting the budget to honor the 10.5% raise. Reflecting on her experience on the bargaining team, she described the extensive time and commitment required to reach an agreement aimed at fairness and the long-term well-being of both staff and students. Ms. Howard emphasized that many Education Support Professionals (ESPs) are currently forced to work two jobs, causing significant personal and familial strain. She urged the City Council to fund the increase so that staff can earn a living wage, improve their mental health, and spend meaningful time with their families rather than working additional hours to make ends meet.
- Sydney Reid, a Special Education Instructional Assistant in the LEAP program at Jackson-Via Elementary, expressed gratitude for the progress toward the originally proposed budget. However, she stated that the District's Friday email was deeply hurtful to both support professionals and the CEA members who worked extensively to reach the initial agreement. Ms. Reid concluded by requesting a formal apology from the District for the nature of that communication and thanked the Board for listening to the staff's concerns.
- Esa Schenck, a sixth-grade math teacher at Walker Upper Elementary, urged the City Council to fully fund the budget and the 10.5% raise, framing it as the "bare minimum" required for student success. Referencing the Superintendent's call to close the achievement gap for students of color, Mx. Schenck argued that these goals cannot be met unless the staff who keep students fed and safe are paid a living wage. They highlighted the stark contrast between the financial struggles of support staff—who face unpaid bills and uncompensated property losses—and the Superintendent's contract, which includes a \$212,000 salary, a provided vehicle, and fully covered healthcare premiums. Mx. Schenck concluded that the district can only be "better together" when every worker is fully compensated and supported.

**6.1 Upcoming School Board Meetings:** Ms. Burns read the list of upcoming meetings.

**7.1 Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 6:29 p.m.

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Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

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Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk