



MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Thursday, February 5, 2026 (6:00 PM)
Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School
[Video Link](#)

A Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., in the Division Annex Exceptional Education Conference Room, 1400 Melbourne Road, Charlottesville, VA.

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

School Board Members Absent: None

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present (Disciplinary Hearing): Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. (Superintendent); Dr. Lamont Trotter (Disciplinary Hearing Officer); Ms. Latoya Brown (Knight School Program Administrator); and Ms. Leslie Thacker (School Board Clerk)

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present (Personnel Matters): Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. (Superintendent) and Ms. Maria Lewis (Director of Human Resources)

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Absent: None

Call the Closed Session to Order: Lisa Torres, School Board Chair, called the closed session meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

1.1 Closed Meeting: at 4:00 p.m., Ms. Burns offered a motion to go into a Closed Session as authorized by Section 2.2-3711 (A) (2) of the Code of Virginia, for the discussion of student disciplinary matters. Ms. Cooper seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Bryant did not attend the disciplinary hearing.

Closed Meeting Certification: At 4:26 p.m., Ms. Burns offered a motion that the board certify by recorded vote that, to the best of each board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed, or considered. Ms. Richardson seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays.

Action: At 4:26 p.m., Ms. Dooley offered a motion that the board uphold the Superintendent's recommendation for expulsion of Student EXP-02052026-01. Ms. Richardson seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Bryant was not present for this vote.

Remote Participation by a School Board Member (Zyahna Bryant): at 4:31 p.m., Ms. Burns offered a motion to approve Ms. Bryant's remote participation due to personal illness. Ms. Bryant attended the meeting via Zoom from

her home. Ms. Richardson seconded the motion, and the motion carried Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Closed Meeting: at 4:32 p.m., Ms. Burns offered a motion to go into a Closed Session as authorized by Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia, for the discussion of personnel matters. Ms. Cooper seconded the motion, and the motion carried Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Closed Meeting Certification: At 5:05 p.m., Ms. Burns offered a motion that the board certify by recorded vote that, to the best of each board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed or considered. Ms. Cooper seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Action: None

The board recessed from 5:06 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

1.3 Call to Order: The School Board Chair called the public meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1.4 Remote Participation by School Board Member: Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Mr. Meyer, to approve Ms. Bryant's remote participation due to personal illness. Ms. Bryant attended the meeting via Zoom from her home.. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays. The motion carried.

2.1 Moment of Silence: Ms. Torres, Board Chair, asked all those present to observe a moment of silence.

3.1 Pledge of Allegiance: The Board will begin the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The board began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

4.1 Roll Call of Board Members: Roll call was conducted to confirm attendance.

School Board Members Present: Ms. Zyahna Bryant, Ms. Amanda Burns, Ms. Shymora Cooper, Ms. Emily Dooley, Mr. Chris Meyer, Ms. Nicole Richardson, Ms. Lisa Torres, and Ginger Craghead-Way (Student Representative)

School Board Members Absent: None

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

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Absent: None

5.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda: Mr. Meyer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley, to approve the proposed agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Special Recognition

6.1 Virginia School Principals' Appreciation Week: Dr. Isley and the School Board formally acknowledged the efforts of school principals across the Division. Dr. Isley highlighted the principal's role as a vital instructional leader and expressed appreciation for their leadership and dedication to student and teacher success.

6.2 National School Counseling Week: Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, invited the Board to recognize February 2–6, 2026, as National School Counselor Appreciation Week, noting its concurrent recognition by the Virginia Department of Education. Ms. Rasnake and the School Board expressed appreciation for the vital services counselors provide to students, families, and staff. The following Charlottesville City School Counselors were recognized for their dedication and leadership: Rebecca Baber, Abigail Lawhorne, Jacob Horen, Kristin Ullrich, Allison Pillow, Sarah Shedd, Delaney Desman, Jaclyn Jacobson, William Ullrich, Tessie King, Maddie Bryant, Rachel Cullimore, Melanie Key, Kirstena Lilley, Kira Maker, Aloise Phelps, David Wilkerson, and Adriane Butler.

6.3 Virginia School Boards Association School Board Appreciation Month: Amanda Korman Simalchik, Supervisor of Community Relations, presented a recognition of February 2026 as School Board Appreciation Month, as designated by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA). Ms. Simalchik highlighted this year's theme, From Strong Roots, Come Endless Possibilities, noting the vital role school board members play in providing the resources necessary for students to reach their full potential. This month-long observance serves to build a stronger community understanding of the crucial role school boards assume in a representative democracy. On behalf of the Division, Ms. Simalchik expressed gratitude to the Charlottesville City School Board members for their continued commitment and dedication to the students, staff, and families of the Division.

6.4 Virginia School Boards Association School Board Clerk and Deputy Clerk Appreciation Week: Amanda Korman Simalchik, Supervisor of Community Relations, presented a recognition of the third week in February as "School Board Clerk and Deputy Clerk Appreciation Week," as designated by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Board of Directors. Ms. Simalchik noted that this observance aligns with the Division's Strategic Plan (Priority #3: Support Our Staff) by acknowledging the essential administrative support provided to the Board. On behalf of the Charlottesville City School Board and the community, she thanked School Board Clerk Leslie Thacker and Deputy Clerk Julia Green for their dedicated service and contributions to the Division's governance and success.

7.1 Comments from Students: The Charlottesville City School Board welcomes comments from students. Speakers were encouraged to keep their comments to three minutes.

- Solomon Schwarzmann, a student at Charlottesville High School and a member of the "Green Bacon" Environmental Club, addressed the board to express his strong support for Item 11.1, the solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). He urged the Board to quickly establish the agreement for solar panels at both Charlottesville High School (CHS) and Charlottesville Middle School (CMS), emphasizing that it would be an "amazing and economic way of establishing long-term green energy" and would reduce the overall cost of electricity. Schwarzmann also stressed the importance of the Board acting on the city's lofty climate goals and noted that this opportunity aligns with the goals of finance, the environment, and student choice, citing the proven success of solar panels at CATEC (Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center).
- Katherine Scharf, a student at Charlottesville High School and a participant in the environmental club, voiced her support for the solar panel installation (Item 11.1, Power Purchase Agreements). She described the solar panels as an "incredible opportunity to use renewable energy" that will power the school and save money for the school system in the long run. Ms. Scharf noted that this is a great step toward the city's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 and expressed that the student body supports the board pursuing pro-environmental policies.
- Everest Koester, a senior at Charlottesville High School and President of the "Green Bacon" Environmental Club, spoke in support of the solar panel Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). Kuster acknowledged the prior progress with solar installation at CATEC ("K-tech") and stated that the new PPA for CHS and Charlottesville Middle School would expand this excellent progress toward clean energy.

Kuster emphasized the school's responsibility to create environmentally aware citizens, noting that the physical systems of the school have a direct impact on students. Kuster concluded by stating that installing the solar panels would demonstrate to students that the schools and city care about the environment and would inspire students to think more consciously about their actions and inactions concerning the environment.

- Lila Castleman, a senior at Charlottesville High School and Vice President of the environmental club, spoke in support of the solar panel installation at Charlottesville City Schools. She thanked the Board for their efforts, including the past installation of solar panels at KEK, but emphasized that more work is needed. She argued that local government, especially the school system, has a crucial role and responsibility to act on environmental issues given national inaction. She stated that installing the solar panels would not only make the schools greener but also inspire students and restore their faith in democracy by showing a commitment to their future. She urged the Board to take this next step in the Power Purchase Agreement to protect the earth that her generation will inherit.

7.2 Comments from Members of the Community: The Charlottesville City School Board welcomes comments from community members. Speakers were encouraged to keep their comments to three minutes.

- Susan Cruz, Executive Director of the Community Climate Collaborative (C3) and a parent of two Charlottesville City School students, spoke in support of the proposed Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for solar panel installation at two of the city's most energy-intensive schools. She noted that C3 has partnered with CCS since 2021 to bring climate education into classrooms. She explained that PPAs offer a "practical and fiscally responsible" way for city schools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without upfront capital costs or ongoing maintenance, while also taking advantage of federal tax credits that are set to expire soon. Ms. Cruz stressed that acting quickly is financially prudent and aligns with the urgency of the climate crisis. She concluded by urging the Board's support, stating it would "send a clear signal to Charlottesville students... that their future matters and that their school is willing to lead."

7.3 Public Hearing/Comments on the Proposed 2026-2027 Budget: The School Board held a public hearing to receive formal comment from parents, staff, and community members regarding the Superintendent's Proposed FY 2026-2027 Operating Budget.

- Alix Heintzman, a parent of two CCS students, spoke in opposition to the Board's decision to return police to schools, which she argued prioritized administrative convenience over child safety. She noted that language forbidding collaboration between the Charlottesville Police Department (CPD) and immigration enforcement (ICE) was removed from a draft document. In light of a recent city resolution condemning ICE, she urged the School Board to reconsider and adopt a similar resolution, statement, or amendment that would specifically prevent CPD officers or other staff and partners from collaborating or cooperating with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or ICE. She cited a recent instance of a student in Virginia being reported to ICE by a School Resource Officer (SRO) as evidence that this is a current, non-theoretical threat requiring the school leaders to prepare and protect the students.
- Ashlyn Stevens, a 24-year-old full-time paraprofessional at Charlottesville City Schools, spoke in favor of the collective bargaining agreement, advocating for a living wage for herself and hundreds of other hourly staff. She shared her personal financial struggle, noting that her \$1,600 monthly take-home pay is less than her \$1,750 rent, forcing her to rely on secondary income and government assistance, despite being bilingual, having a two-year degree, and five years of experience in special education. She emphasized the "vital role" paraprofessionals play in student learning, safety, and dignity, arguing that their current hourly wage "does not reflect any of that." Ms. Stevens urged the Board to implement continued change, as a living wage is "the minimum," and noted that many hourly staff cannot attend the meetings because they are working their second jobs.
- Allison Carr, a CSA at Charlottesville High School, read a letter on behalf of the Charlottesville City Schools Care and Safety Associates (CSAs), urging the School Board to honor the commitment in their collective bargaining agreement and fully fund their promised raises. The letter emphasized that the

CSAs serve as the "specialized backbone" of the school safety model, being state-certified security officers trained in critical life-saving and restorative skills. They argued that fulfilling the raises is a "human choice" to provide a living wage, noting that the "unprecedented financial pressure" of the cost of living crisis in Charlottesville, including rising housing, utility, and healthcare costs, is making the city unaffordable for many employees. Finally, the letter pointed to a "functional cost to the division," stating that underutilizing trained CSAs and relying on volunteers for vital security functions "does a disservice to the safety of our students, staff, and guests," and urged the board to act to ensure CSAs can thrive, not just survive, in the city.

- Jessica Taylor, Charlottesville Education Association, urged the School Board to stand firm and unapologetic in their support of the proposed collective bargaining agreement with the CEA, and to send a unified, forceful message to City Council to defend the full budget ask, clarifying that a scaled-back budget would be a direct cut to student services, and that the city must pay School Support Professionals (SSPs) enough to thrive.
- Jenn Horne, CHS Teacher, urged the School Board to fund the proposed budget and cut other items before reducing funds for 'incredible humans' like paraprofessionals, custodians, and CSAs, emphasizing that these integral support workers are necessary for creating nurturing, safe, and healthy places where children can be educated and that they deserve a living wage.
- Abigail Johnson, a first-grade teacher at Jackson-Via, spoke in favor of the collective bargaining agreement, emphasizing the crucial role of Education Support Professionals (ESPs), such as instructional assistants and administrative tech. She highlighted the financial hardships faced by many ESPs, noting that several have been "priced out of Charlottesville" and have to commute long distances or work a second job, with some reporting being unable to afford basic needs like their phone bill or rent. Ms. Johnson stated that a significant portion of Charlottesville City Schools (CCS) employees cannot live off their current salary. She argued that failing to support the contract would deny employees the "material conditions for necessary hope, growth, and learning," which directly contradicts the CCS vision of eliminating barriers and making possibilities limitless.
- Peter Davis, a teacher at Charlottesville High School, spoke passionately in support of the support staff and the collective bargaining agreement. He stressed that staff support, particularly noting the hard work of custodians during a recent ice event, must be delivered through concrete action and not just words. Recognizing that the city is the primary entity controlling the funding, he urged the School Board not to "back off" or "back down" from advocating for the full agreement and to continue lobbying the city for the support staff's wages. He argued that securing this for the support staff, similar to the positive impact of the CEA agreement on teacher retention, is "only good for kids" as it will create better, safer, and cleaner working environments for everyone in the schools.

8.1 Charlottesville High School Student Representative Report: Ginger Craghead-Way, Student Representative to the School Board, thanked all individuals, including Dr. Gurley, Mrs. Powell, and city partners, who contributed to clearing paths and making the decisions to cancel or delay school following the recent storm. While acknowledging the importance of returning to class, she highlighted the significant and "stressful and disorganized" difficulties students faced, particularly on Monday morning, due to conditions across the schools. She detailed specific issues at Charlottesville High School (CHS), such as icy sidewalks at the drop-off zone and visitor parking, snow banks reducing visibility at crosswalks, families' cars stuck in ice, and city streets that were too narrow for two-way traffic or had inaccessible sidewalks, forcing pedestrians into the road. She acknowledged the city's efforts to address these problems but urged the Board to consider these factors for decisions regarding future weather events. Finally, she thanked her fellow students for speaking about the solar panel PPA and all others for their comments.

9.1-6 Adoption of Consent Agenda: The following items were included in the consent agenda: [Personnel Recommendations, Business, Financial, Routine Reports; Minutes from the December 4, 2025, School Board Meeting; Superintendent's Designee to Attend Board Meetings in His Absence;](#) and [2026 School Board Member Committee Assignments.](#)

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Burns, to move consent agenda item 9.6, School Board Member committee assignment, to 10.0 Items Pulled from the Consent Agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Ms. Torres then called for a motion to approve the consent agenda with item 9.6 removed. Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bryant, to approve the adoption of the consent agenda without item 9.6. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

10.0 Items Pulled From Consent Agenda: Discussion around the **2026 School Board Member Committee Assignments** included:

- Ms. Dooley stated that she cannot support committee assignments that are not directly related to school board operations, school division operations, or directly connected to student outcomes.
- Ms. Bryant agreed with Ms. Dooley's comments, specifically noting that the scholarship committee is directly tied to money being allocated to students, which makes Ms. Dooley's "evaluation of the situation" fair and correct.
- Ms. Burns thanked Ms. Dooley for raising the issue of committee assignments, stating that the discussion provided an important opportunity to review the "why"—specifically, why they are serving on certain committees and what the impact is. She emphasized the need to evaluate whether the assignments truly benefit the division, its operations, and the students, and she echoed the same concerns expressed by Ms. Dooley.
- Ms. Torres acknowledged that the topic of committee assignments had previously come up in board governance discussions. She mentioned that there was a conversation about continuing with the current list of assignments through the academic year, with the intention of revising it later after "digging in a little bit more" and reviewing the individual committees.
- Ms. Dooley stated that she had planned to vote against the committee assignments but, in light of the supportive conversations, she changed her position. She then moved to approve the assignments list, contingent on the elimination of representation on two specific bodies: the Public Education Fund of Charlottesville, Albemarle, and the Charlottesville Scholarship Program.

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Burns, to approve the assignments list with the elimination of representation on two specific bodies: the Public Education Fund of Charlottesville Albemarle and the Charlottesville Scholarship Program. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, and Ms. Richardson voting aye, and Mr. Meyer and Ms. Torres voting nay. 5 ayes, 2 nays.

Action Items

10.1 Action - Adoption of High Quality Instructional Materials: At the January 8, 2026, meeting, Melissa Mitchem, Coordinator of Math, presented information on High Quality Instructional Materials recommended for adoption by the School Board for the 2026-2027 school year. The textbook adoption was presented for action.

Ms. Mitchem also provided an update on the proposed High Quality Instructional Materials adoption and announced a pause on considering the math AI tutor priced in the quote from Mathspace. The decision to pause was made after she and Pat Cuomo met with their representative, conducted more investigation, reviewed current policies, and considered the prior experience with the EDIA math AI tutor.

The reasons for pausing the AI tutor adoption are:

- Teachers should focus on learning the new instructional materials, how to assign work online, and respond to the resulting data.

- Teaching students to interact with an AI tutor, including how to ask effective questions for guidance in completing assignments, is an additional professional learning component.
- It is best to focus on the core tier one instruction until they better know the program and how to best utilize it with students, after which they can reconsider the AI tutor.

This adjustment results in a savings of \$21,347. Ms. Mitchem also stated that they will consider adding classroom textbooks, as suggested by Mr. Meyer, which would be available for students who need to do work on paper instead of completing assignments online.

Mr. Meyer thanked Ms. Mitchem for the clarification regarding the math AI tutor. He asked for clarification on the availability of "non-screen learning opportunities" in the new math curricula that are being approved, specifically for Mathspace (which he noted is for sixth grade to twelfth grade). He acknowledged that books would be available in the classroom but asked if teachers would still be prioritizing the use of online learning tools and screens.

Ms. Mitchem clarified that the teachers will be using resources that they can project on their Promethean or Bonics boards, and emphasized the distinction between online learning and teacher-led learning with an online practice component. She stated they are not doing "online learning" as part of the pilot or implementation plan.

The plan is for teachers to assign two tasks per week that align with the instruction delivered by the teacher. These tasks are currently between eight and twelve questions long and take a student approximately 20 minutes each to complete.

Mr. Meyer asked if a family that does not want their child to have a Chromebook would still be able to receive their math instruction without one. Ms. Mitchem responded, "Absolutely. Yes."

Mr. Meyer concluded his discussion with Ms. Mitchem by stating that the explanation—that a family or student would not be required to use a Chromebook and would have options for non-screen learning—was what he had been looking for. He then thanked her.

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Burns, to adopt Mathspace for the secondary level and a dual curriculum model for elementary, which includes Bridges in Mathematics for Kindergarten through 3rd grade and STEMscopes Math for 4th and 5th grade. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Items for Discussion

11.1 [Power Purchase Agreements \(PPAs\)](#): Kristel Riddervold, Director of the city's Office of Sustainability, provided an update on the solar Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) for Charlottesville High School (CHS) and Charlottesville Middle School (CMS). The PPA model offers a strategy to rapidly install solar on the city's largest eligible projects without local capital investment, while also advancing climate goals and providing projected cost savings.

Strategic Background

The project is a key implementation strategy of the city's 2023 Climate Action Plan (CAP).

- **Climate Goals:** The City of Charlottesville is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050.
- **Climate Action Plan (CAP):** Adopted in 2023, the CAP identifies solar installation on municipal properties as a key strategy to reduce electricity bills and greenhouse gases.
- **Implementation Strategy:** The City prioritizes installing solar systems immediately following roof replacements to align the life of the roof with the life of the system.

The PPA Model (Power Purchase Agreements)

- Definition: A PPA is a contract where a private solar developer finances, installs, and operates a solar array through a long-term site access arrangement.
- Financial Structure:
 - The developer provides 100% upfront capital and maintains the array.
 - The City purchases the electricity at a negotiated rate for a predetermined period, usually up to 25 years.
 - The developer receives stable revenue and utilizes federal tax credits.
- Urgency: The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (H.R. 1), passed July 3, 2025, requires construction to be initiated by July 4, 2026, to secure the 30% federal investment tax credit.

Current Proposals & Project Status

The City is negotiating with Madison Energy Infrastructure for two major school sites:

- Charlottesville High School (CHS): 960 kW AC capacity; 70% electrical offset; projected \$2.5 million savings over 25 years.
 - Party Alignment: The School Board will be the party to the agreement, as CHS is owned by the School Board.
 - The project also includes a student education and engagement component.
- Charlottesville Middle School (CMS): 720 kW AC capacity; 100% electrical offset; projected \$1.4 million savings over 25 years.
 - Party Alignment: The City of Charlottesville will be the party to the agreement, as CMS is owned by the city.

Key Benefits

- Feasibility: Enables rapid installation of large solar arrays without local capital investment.
- Cost Savings: Combined, the projects are projected to save nearly \$4 million over the 25-year terms.
- Price Stability: Locks in electricity rates with a 1% escalation rate, providing long-term budget certainty.

Upcoming Timeline

- Feb 2026: Finalize CHS PPA proposal; provide updates to City Council and CCS School Board.
- Mar/April 2026: Target for CCS School Board action and authorization for Dominion grid upgrades. The agreement must be signed first, as the grid upgrades are direct project costs.
- May 2026 – Late 2026: CHS project construction and activation.
- Ongoing: Continue diligence, design, and negotiations for the CMS PPA.

Note: The construction timeline for both projects is subject to the execution of the agreements and Dominion's 18-month window to complete grid upgrades.

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Richardson asked Ms. Riddervold to explain the difference between the 70% electrical offset projected for Charlottesville High School (CHS) and the 100% offset projected for Charlottesville Middle School (CMS). Ms. Riddervold clarified that the offset percentage is determined by the amount of available roof space for the solar system compared to the building's current power use. She noted that while CHS currently consumes more power, resulting in a 70% offset, the high school also has "unique opportunities" for future energy efficiency and energy improvement projects that are expected to decrease the building's energy use over time, thereby increasing the system's effective production percentage.
- Ms. Richardson asked Ms. Riddervold about backup plans for delays in the solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) project, such as equipment breakdown or procurement delays. Ms. Riddervold responded that their primary responsibility is to finalize the agreements, after which the project delivery and management of delays would be handled by Madison Energy Infrastructure, the developer. Megan Milo, Director of Solar Empowered Schools from Madison Energy Infrastructure, explained that the PPA

structure aligns incentives for both the developer and the customer to get the systems online as quickly as possible, since the developer does not get paid until the systems are operational. She stated that the most serious consequence would be a delay in contract signing relative to the federal tax credit deadlines, which would create a domino effect on receiving the Investment Tax Credit (ITC). However, she confirmed that for construction delays outside of their control, Madison Energy has backup plans, such as allocating "safe-harbor equipment" to potentially extend the federal deadline, a process that begins with the contract signature.

- Ms. Richardson asked for more background on Madison Energy Infrastructure, the solar developer. Megan Milo, Director of Solar Empowered Schools for the company, replied that Madison Energy Infrastructure is a clean energy solutions provider with an office in Charlottesville on the Downtown Mall. She stated that they have installed solar on 150 schools nationwide and almost a hundred in Virginia. Ms. Milo, a former teacher, also manages their solar-powered schools' curriculum integration program, which aligns lessons with learning standards. She emphasized that Madison Energy operates entirely through the third-party ownership PPA model, serving as the long-term owner and operator for the full 25-year term.
- Ms. Burns asked Kristel Riddervold who would receive the cost savings from the solar projects at the high school and middle school. Ms. Riddervold explained that budgeting would be based on projected electricity costs, whether purchased from the solar system or Dominion Energy. She stated that while they can guarantee a predictable cost for solar-generated power over 25 years, she cannot predict Dominion's rising prices, meaning there may be a "wash" if more is spent on Dominion electricity than anticipated. Ms. Riddervold concluded that determining who receives the savings is a "policy and a political conversation" between the School Board and City Council, which is outside the scope of her project.
- Ms. Milo, Director of Solar Empowered Schools for Madison Energy Infrastructure, elaborated on the education program that accompanies the PPA partnership, noting that it includes both digital resources and interactive learning modules designed to engage students with the solar technology on their roof. Examples of these resources include a solar circuit challenge, recently conducted with CMS students in a STEM class using mini solar panels to teach about circuits and photovoltaics, and a dashboard lesson that helps students interpret live energy production data and make predictions based on weather forecasts. Mr. Meyer, citing the urgency expressed by students and the public, stated his full support for the PPA and hoped the board would approve it for a vote next month. He confirmed that construction for CMS, like CHS, would still allow the project to take advantage of the tax credits. Mr. Meyer then raised the possibility of "safe harboring" a potential solar project at Sunrise Elementary, whose roof is being replaced in summer 2026, to meet the July 6 construction deadline. Ms. Riddervold responded that while they are interested in more solar, they must focus on finalizing the CHS and CMS agreements first, and the challenge with safe harboring Sunrise is that it requires a procurement commitment, which cannot be made without approved funds. Ms. Riddervold explained that Sunrise is a smaller building and would require a separate financial assessment to determine if a PPA is the best approach versus owner-financed solar, like the project at CATEC, to which Mr. Meyer expressed concern that the potential 30% tax savings might be lost due to the time needed for the study. Mr. Meyer concluded by emphasizing the need to save money to pay staff and urged the team to use the lessons learned from the CHS and CMS models to pursue more projects.
- Student Representative Ms. Craghead-Way echoed the comments of her fellow students in support of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for solar panel installation (Item 11.1), stating that the initiative is very important for the school and the future of the city.
- Ms. Torres initiated questioning regarding the Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) by asking for an explanation of the difference in the indicative rates between Charlottesville High School (CHS) and Charlottesville Middle School (CMS). Kristel Riddervold explained that the rate difference is driven by project characteristics, including the size of the project, the varying costs based on the specific realities of each building, and slightly different interconnection costs shared by Dominion. Megan Milo confirmed that the calculation essentially reflects the cost of the project that needs to be recovered over time. Ms. Torres then inquired about the upfront capital cost if solar had been integrated into the CMS project

when its roof was made solar-ready, asking for a ballpark figure. Ms. Riddervold estimated that integrating solar into the project cost would have added \$3 to \$4 million to the budget. When asked if this amount was comparable to what the PPAs are now investing for both buildings, Ms. Riddervold confirmed it was in the same ballpark. She noted that she had previously put in Capital Improvement Project (CIP) requests to owner-finance both projects, and while she couldn't say if the cost would be more or less expensive under owner-financing, it would incur the same interconnection costs and be in the same general range as the PPA model. Finally, Ms. Torres asked about the expected maintenance costs over the 25-year term. Ms. Riddervold highlighted the benefit of a PPA, noting that maintenance is "their problem, not ours". Ms. Torres then asked how much the school is saving by not having to manage that maintenance. Ms. Milo estimated the savings would be "thousands of dollars a year," and Ms. Riddervold offered to follow up with a specific estimate.

11.2 5th Grade Elementary Reconfiguration Transition (Instructional): Dr. Anna Isley, Chief Academic Officer, provided an update on the 5th-grade instructional transition as part of reconfiguration. Information presented outlined the strategic plan for reintegrating 5th-grade students into neighborhood elementary schools for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Strategic Priorities

- Academic Achievement: The division aims to increase achievement through rigorous, evidence-based PK-12 programs in literacy and math, fully aligned with Virginia standards.
- Operational Efficiency: A key strategy is the successful reintegration of all 5th-grade classrooms into neighborhood elementary schools.

Student Daily Experience and Curriculum

- Instructional Model: Students will transition between three different core academic classrooms daily, rotating through three 85-minute instructional blocks.
- Core Subjects: Each student will have three distinct teachers: one for literacy, one for math, and one for science and social studies.
- Typical Schedule: A standard day includes arrival/breakfast, morning meeting, three core academic blocks, lunch, recess, specials, and dismissal.
- Support: Students will receive additional support from specialists during "WIN" (What I Need) time.

Assessment and Grading

- SOL Testing: 5th graders will take Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in Reading, Math, Science (covering 4th and 5th-grade content), and Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW).
- Grading System:
 - Academic Courses: Students will receive traditional grades.
 - Specials: Music, art, and PE will use a 3-2-1 scale (Meeting, Nearly Meeting, or Below Expectations).

Teacher Collaboration and Planning

- Uniformity: A common 5th-grade schedule will be implemented across the division.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Teachers will have common planning time for both school-based and content-based collaboration.
- Virtual Collaboration: Content-specific teachers (e.g., all 5th-grade math teachers) will meet via Zoom to collaborate on instructional strategies.

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Shymora Cooper initiated a discussion on the 5th-grade reconfiguration by asking if the classes would be physically grouped—like in a specific wing—to ensure students transitioning between classes

would not distract other grade levels. She cited instances during past school visits where some third-grade classes appeared scattered. Dr. Anna Isley confirmed that Ms. Powell has been working with principals on the location and reintegration of 5th-grade classrooms, assuring Ms. Cooper that the goal is to place classes in proximity by grade level, similar to how first and second grades are currently grouped. While Dr. Isley acknowledged that cohort sizes occasionally fluctuate from the typical three classrooms (ranging from two to four), which can lead to some scattering, she ultimately confirmed that the plans for the reconfiguration ensure that classrooms for every grade level are situated near each other.

- Mr. Meyer asked about the potential for overstaffing if a grade level only had 40 kids with three dedicated teachers. Dr. Isley clarified that the three teachers are based on projected enrollments. She stated that while three teachers per grade level is typical, the model can adapt to grade levels that occasionally require two or four teachers. In such cases, the departmentalized model would still be used, but the subject areas would be reconfigured. For example, this might look like a teacher covering literacy and social studies, and another covering math and science. Dr. Isley confirmed that they have worked out the model to maintain consistent planning time for teachers regardless of the configuration, and that the current presentation focuses on the three-teacher model because that is what is currently slated.
- Ms. Craghead-Way asked about the scheduling split between social studies and science, wondering if they would alternate daily or weekly. Dr. Isley clarified that, generally speaking, 5th graders currently have both classes every day, and the allocated time allows for instruction in both subject areas. Dr. Isley noted, however, that the schedule could be flexible to allow time to be traded as needed—for instance, extending a science lab block at the expense of a shorter social studies block—especially since the 5th-grade curriculum is "science heavy."
- Ms. Richardson first commented that she appreciated the common planning time incorporated into the new 5th-grade schedule, noting that it allows teachers time to prepare for their students. She then asked how the teachers were feeling about the transition. Dr. Isley responded that principals are working with their teams and the incoming teachers, many of whom are 5th-grade teachers moving from Walker School and are already accustomed to a departmentalized approach. She stated that this approach is likely to be a more seamless transition for them compared to the K-4 teachers who instruct all subject areas. Ms. Richardson then added a question, asking how the school division is preparing 4th graders for the new 5th-grade schedule. Dr. Isley explained that while finalizing the schedule and plan was the priority, they did notify 4th-grade families earlier in the school year that their students would have multiple teachers and begin switching classes in 5th grade. She added that they expect the 5th graders to be successful, just as they have been at Walker, and that the new structure will also help them feel like the oldest kids in the building, which they hope they will be excited about.
- Ms. Torres confirmed whether money had been allocated to purchase larger desks required for the 5th-grade transition, to which Dr. Isley confirmed the preparation for that change.

11.3 Potential Land Transfer (Property Adjacent to Sunrise Elementary): Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, presented a proposal for the Charlottesville City School Board to acquire two small parcels of land, assessed at \$5,300, from a 70-year-old resident at 1324 Long Street. Facilitated by the Legal Aid Justice Center, this transfer would enable the resident to qualify for the City's elderly real estate tax relief program by removing the secondary "slivers" of land that currently render them ineligible. While the parcels are currently zoned CX-5 (Corridor Mixed Use) and the school is CM (Exempt Education), Neighborhood Development Services (NDS) confirmed the land could be merged into a "split-zone" parcel without immediate rezoning or an increase in stormwater fees. However, Ms. Powell advised that the Board should resolve potential boundary and encroachment issues before proceeding. Specifically, she noted that GIS views suggest tight setbacks and a rear-access driveway that "sweeps" near the property lines. To mitigate risk, she recommended a formal title search (estimated at <\$1,000) and a new survey (estimated at <\$3,000) to ensure no future legal entanglements exist before the Board officially accepts the conveyance.

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Dooley asked if the land transfer, which would enable a 70-year-old resident to qualify for tax relief, held any value for the school division or students. Dr. Gurley acknowledged that the school board

attorney needed direction from the Board, but stated that the land's current location did not appear to offer any extra value to Sunrise Elementary. He noted that the acquisition would incur associated costs and was not a planned action for the division. Ms. Dooley expressed empathy for the homeowner but stated she did not think the Board should pursue the transfer, as she was not comfortable expending school funds on something that does not directly benefit student outcomes. She suggested that the Legal Aid Justice Center should contact the city to see if the city would be interested in deeding the parcels to make them city-owned property.

- Ms. Cooper seconded Ms. Dooley's view on the land transfer, noting that the parcels were very small and she was unsure how they could benefit the school's use. She expressed concern about spending money on land surveys and other costs for a piece of property the division "really can't do anything with".
- Ms. Burns concurred with her colleagues regarding the land transfer and asked a procedural question about moving the item to an action item for an immediate vote, seeking to conclude the discussion and avoid taking up more of Ms. Powell's time. Ms. Powell clarified that the item was presented as an information item solely to gauge the "will of the board," as public discussion was required. Ms. Burns then stated that she echoed her colleagues' feedback.
- Mr. Meyer stated that the only potential benefit of acquiring the land would be the possibility of selling it later if someone wanted to combine it with other adjacent properties, but he doubted that would happen soon. He concluded that the transfer "just looks like liability" and that, while he was sympathetic to the landowner, the city would be a more appropriate party to resolve the issue.
- Ms. Bryant concurred with her colleagues and stated that the potential for encroachment from the adjacent parcels could "pose some issues in the future". She recommended that the Board "pass on this opportunity" because the land transfer is not directly tied to student outcomes. While she expressed empathy for the homeowner, she hoped they would be able to find an alternative solution.
- Dr. Gurley concluded the discussion by stating that the division would respond to the homeowner, informing them that the School Board has no interest in acquiring the property.

11.4 Presentation of the 2026-2027 Budget: Dr. Royal Gurley, Division Superintendent, presented the Superintendent's Proposed FY 2027 Budget for informational purposes. This proposed budget was developed with input and support from various CCS stakeholders. It is based on revenue and expenditure changes from FY 2026 to address and support student needs.

The FY 2026 - 2027 Budget Development Update included:

- **Budget Priorities and Strategic Alignment**
 - Staffing, Compensation, and Retention
 - Student Support, Achievement, and Well-Being
 - Facilities, Maintenance, and Capital Improvements
 - Early Childhood Education
- **Revenue and Funding Drivers:** The school division relies on multiple funding streams, with the majority coming from local sources:
 - Revenue Sources: City Appropriation (63.1%), State (19.9%), Fund Balance (7.3%), Federal (5.6%), and Local (4.2%).
 - 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.
- **Expenditure and Staffing Breakdown:**
 - 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.

- Compensation Increases: The FY 2027 budget includes a 5.5% increase for licensed personnel and a 10.5% increase for support professionals, following Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- **Proposed Changes and Savings**

FY2027 Compensation Increases		
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)
	Total Increase in Personnel Cost	\$ 1,947,765

- **Personnel Savings:** The Walker reconfiguration generated \$1,102,669 in savings by eliminating 10.0 FTE positions. Total personnel reductions, including vacancy savings, amount to \$2,669,480.
- **Non-Discretionary Costs:** City maintenance and transportation contracts are projected to increase by \$470,558.

Budget Requests and Repurposed Positions		
Positions	FTE	Cost
CHS Health & Medical Sciences Teacher	.5	55,644
CHS Agricultural Science Teacher	.5	55,644
CHS/Lead Gifted Teacher (Specialist)	.6	55,017
JVE & TOES Bilingual Instructional Assistant	1.0	56,549
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	2.6	\$ 347,186

Proposal FY 27 Budget Summary - ALL Funds

Funds	FY 2025-26 Budget	Proposed FY 2026-27 Budget	Amount Change from 2026 to 2027 Budget	Percentage Change from 2026 to 2027 Budget
General (Operating)	\$ 102,845,637	\$ 107,013,839	\$ 4,168,202	3.22%
Special Revenue	22,455,730	22,617,802	162,072	0.12%
Total Funds	\$ 125,301,367	\$ 129,631,641	\$ 4,330,274	3.34%

- **Budget Calendar**

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Bryant thanked Dr. Gurley and the staff for the clarity they provided on various positions, specifically acknowledging that the explanation regarding the gifted education position was very helpful in addressing questions she had during the last budget work session.
- Mr. Meyer asked for clarification regarding the district’s staffing changes and the mechanics of the city’s funding formula. Ms. Hoover confirmed that the district is seeing a net decrease of 11.4 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, driven primarily by 10 positions saved through the Walker reconfiguration and additional reductions in ESL and instructional assistant roles due to declining enrollment. Ms. Hoover also noted that the "vacancy savings" figure includes a VRS rate change of approximately \$1,054,000.
- Regarding the budget, Mr. Meyer expressed concern that the City’s 40% funding formula is a guideline rather than a mandate and only applies to real estate and personal property taxes. He argued that this structure allows the City to increase other revenue streams without proportionally supporting the schools, effectively "short-changing" the district. Mr. Meyer concluded by emphasizing that the board is presenting a needs-based budget that reflects a reduced headcount and actual student requirements, rather than a budget dictated by a fixed percentage of city tax revenue.
- Ms. Burns asked the board to revisit the slide regarding collective bargaining contracts, expressing concern over the current budget timeline. While she acknowledged the ratified contract for licensed personnel, she emphasized that the board has not yet received or ratified the contract for support staff. Ms. Burns noted it is difficult to conceptualize the budget’s sustainability and scope without that formal document in hand. She expressed hesitation about the upcoming budget approval dates, stating it "doesn't sit well" to finalize numbers before the first step of the contract process is complete.
- Additionally, Ms. Burns echoed the importance of staff advocacy, urging employees to share their stories of financial disparity directly with the City Council. She encouraged staff to attend the joint budget work session on the 9th or the City Council meeting on the 17th to ensure city leaders fully understand the impact of living and working in Charlottesville.
- Ms. Torres addressed Ms. Burns' concerns regarding the timing of the support staff contract, noting that the Board has not yet seen the final document. Dr. Gurley responded that Ms. Lewis shared that the contract is slated for ratification by the support staff via vote on February 16th, which means it would be presented to the School Board at the first March meeting, likely on the 5th or 6th
- Ms. Torres acknowledged the time crunch regarding the support staff's collective bargaining contract, echoing concerns about the budget timeline when the contract has not yet been presented to the School Board for review and ratification. She assured the public that the Board has "stayed true to the ask" by plugging the necessary funding number into the budget all along, confirming their support for the compensation increase, even as they face a time crunch due to the ongoing process.

- Ms. Cooper thanked Dr. Gurley and the staff for the presentation, echoing the sentiments of her colleagues. She acknowledged that the Board has received a massive amount of emails regarding staff compensation and confirmed their desire to support the support staff. Ms. Cooper emphasized that community members should also send their emails to City Council members, as the Council must approve the funding for the budget.
- Ms. Dooley clarified that while the School Board has reviewed a draft of the support staff contract, a final ratified contract has not yet been seen. She expressed frustration that the Board is required to create a final budget and make informed decisions on a difficult timeline without having the finalized contract document in hand. Ms. Dooley also drew attention to the disparity in salary increases for administrative staff, who are not part of bargaining units. She noted that while it may not be feasible in the current budget cycle, the Board needs to stay focused on ensuring full compensation for administrators in subsequent years.
- Ms. Torres reaffirmed the Board's firm support for the full funding request, noting that she and her colleagues have actively communicated the importance of this ask to members of the City Council. However, she expressed perplexity regarding the upcoming presentation on the 9th, questioning the propriety of presenting a budget when the underlying contract has not yet been voted on or ratified. Dr. Gurley clarified that the Charlottesville Education Association (CEA) support staff are currently slated to vote on the contract on February 16th.
- Ms. Gillikin addressed the status of administrative bargaining, noting that administrators do not have collective bargaining because they failed to sign enough cards during their campaign. She emphasized that if they wish to have a bargaining unit, they must initiate a new card campaign. Regarding the contract status, Ms. Gillikin explained that while weather issues caused initial delays, the primary reason the contract remains unratified is a disagreement on one specific article. She stated that the union has been waiting for division staff to resolve this disagreement, noting that while Dr. Gurley had responded to her emails, no resolution had been reached. She emphasized that ratification is strictly union business and, while the union wanted it ratified a month ago, it should not serve as a roadblock to discussing the actual agreements.
- Dr. Gurley responded by clarifying that he had responded to Ms. Gillikin's correspondence immediately and asserted that his team's work on the matter is complete. He characterized the current situation as an impasse combined with a significant timeline issue, noting that the process ideally should have begun over the summer. Despite these challenges, Dr. Gurley expressed a total willingness to do whatever is necessary to reach the finish line. Ms. Torres concluded by stressing the current time crunch and reaffirming the Board's full support of the funding amount. To ensure all deadlines are met, she directed Ms. Thacker to officially notice a work session for the 12th as a contingency measure.

Board Response to Written Reports

12.1 [School Board Member Committee Reports - Written Report](#): Board members shared updates on recent activities in this written report.

12.2 [Chronic Absenteeism - Written Report](#): Rachel Rasnake provided a written report on Chronic Absenteeism. Mr. Meyer reviewed the chronic absenteeism report and congratulated staff for the progress being made. He noted that the division total shows a downward trend, despite some small fluctuations, and he appreciated the progress and stated he looks forward to seeing the number drop further.

12.3 [Outcome of Student Disciplinary Matters - Written Report](#): On Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 5:00 pm, the Charlottesville City School Board met in closed session, as authorized by Section 2.2-3711 (A) (2) of the Code of Virginia, for the purpose of discussing student disciplinary matters. The outcome of the meeting was shared as a written report.

13.1 Comments from Members of the Community: There were none

14.1 Board Member Comments:

- Ms. Bryant expressed appreciation for the community members' comments, particularly staff who shared their experiences to emphasize the importance of the Board continuing to fully support their collective bargaining work and staff compensation, a sentiment she shares with the rest of the Board. She highlighted her positive experience participating in the meal distribution at CMS during the recent snow days, which she noted was great for community engagement and ensuring families received meals. She also thanked the custodians for their hard work in clearing ice and school properties to enable students to return to school, and asked the community to continue communicating with her via email on all issues, including the varying opinions she received on the school closure decision. Finally, Ms. Bryant wished everyone a "Happy Black History Month" and shared that her great uncle, Marvin Townsen, one of the original Charlottesville 12 who integrated the schools, passed away earlier in the week; she encouraged the community to learn about and honor his legacy, which she stated is an important part of the school division's history.
- Mr. Meyer began his comments by acknowledging and appreciating the staff's efforts to collaborate with city staff to open schools following the recent snow, but he also issued a public plea for all neighbors to shovel their sidewalks and bus stops to assist access, noting that the city cannot be expected to do everything. He stated he looks forward to receiving an after-action report from Ms. Powell to find ways to improve collaboration for future snow events, as he noted that the storms occur every couple of years and the community still struggles to clear sidewalks. Next, Mr. Meyer revisited the topic of a student retention policy, urging the Board to consider implementing one before the end of the year to ensure children who are not reading are not advanced, carrying on Mr. Morse's previous plea on the matter. He also advocated for updating the policy on screens and edtech, citing recent emails and stating that while technology is a tool, it may also be negatively impacting students. Finally, Mr. Meyer expressed strong support for the solar Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), but encouraged staff to use the lessons learned from the two new agreements to pursue additional PPA projects to save more money, provide greater financial resources for students, and better support staff. He concluded by thanking Ms. Bryant for mentioning Black History Month and honored Mr. Eugene Williams, a historic icon who passed away this past year, and did significant work for the school system and Black students overall.
- Ms. Burns expressed relief that the recent snow event was over and schools were back open. She highly commended Dr. Gurley for the "phenomenal job" he did feeding children hot meals during the difficult period, noting the progression from having no program to distributing Domino's pizza at local churches, and finally to providing hot meals at the new middle school, supported by excited nutrition workers. She was thankful to serve alongside Dr. Gurley, Ms. Bryant, Ms. Torres, and other community members during the distribution and acknowledged the heavy logistical lift required due to federal guidelines on counting and delivering meals. Regarding the budget, she reiterated her support for the support staff, emphasizing their need for a living wage to reside in the city and care for students, and expressed hope that the contract process would move forward. Ms. Burns also thanked the custodial, maintenance, and city staff, including Parks and Recreation, for their snow-clearing efforts, specifically shouting out Matt from Parks and Rec for converting into a nutrition helper. She concluded by reassuring her colleagues and the community that the Board is hearing the "difficult things" and "heavy asks" in the emails they receive, and that she and Ms. Torres are actively working to build better agendas and work sessions to improve collaboration and address the issues, even if it takes time.
- Ms. Cooper started by echoing her colleagues' comments but gave a specific shout-out to the maintenance team, acknowledging that shoveling sidewalks during snow and ice is a demanding, hard-labor task, especially given the number of schools and sidewalks in the division. She also commended Dr. Gurley for his responsiveness, noting he received numerous text messages, phone calls, and emails during the inclement weather weekend and was responsive to all of them. Ms. Cooper expressed gratitude for Dr. Gurley's commitment to students, families, and the community. Finally, she thanked Board members Ms. Burns, Ms. Bryant, and Ms. Torres, as well as all volunteers, for ensuring

families had access to meals and addressing food insecurity during the inclement weather, appreciating all efforts that helped safely get children back to school.

- Ms. Richardson thanked everyone who presented and expressed excitement over the solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) presentation, having previously seen it earlier in the week. She also wished everyone a happy Black History Month, noting that it is something she will always remember and encouraging celebration and reflection on past achievements and future progress.
- Ms. Dooley joined the "gratitude train" for managing the snowstorm and commended Ms. Simalchik for the communications that went out regarding the storm, acknowledging that while there were likely more closures than desired, being informed was appreciated. She also reiterated her earlier point regarding administrators, emphasizing that staff should be treated well regardless of whether they belong to a bargaining unit, and stated that the Board intends to continue taking care of all its people.
- Ms. Torres offered a shout-out to all colleagues, including principals, counselors, the clerk, deputy clerk, and the Superintendent and staff, expressing gratitude for the immense amount of behind-the-scenes work, time, and collaboration required with city emergency preparedness officials during the snow event. She acknowledged the things the team did and the lessons learned, sharing a personal anecdote about driving around and seeing students climbing over ice or waiting at major intersections, which compelled her to want to jump out of her car to ensure their safety. She emphasized that the recovery was a collective effort, stating, "it really is a we," where the community must take care of one another, referencing the need for neighbors to shovel sidewalks and bus stops to prevent safety hazards like people waiting on piles of ice in the road. Ms. Torres concluded by expressing gratitude for the job everyone did to the best of their abilities.

15.1 Superintendent's Comments: Dr. Gurley began his comments by thanking the community and emphasizing that his job requires a lot of grace, stating that while there are never "right answers," there are always "wrong answers," and that the division will always err on the side of caution to keep students safe. He added that when they know they can operate safely, they will always bring students back, which is what happened during the recent difficult snow days. He declined to take credit for the successful meal distribution, attributing the effort to Mr. Jones, who collaborated with partners and secured the grant, and the "unsung heroes"—the school nutrition workers, some of whom drove in from outside Charlottesville (Gordonsville, Green County) to ensure students were fed. Dr. Gurley also thanked Dr. Johnson and the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team for getting the message out to community partners. He acknowledged the time staff sacrificed with their families during the effort, but noted it was worth it because the greater cause was to ensure everyone who wanted a meal could receive one. Finally, Dr. Gurley wished the Board a happy School Board Appreciation Month, thanking the Board, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and Vice Chair. He concluded by expressing gratitude for his smart and tirelessly working colleagues, including the principals and central office staff who manage numerous responsibilities, affirming that he cannot do the job by himself.

16.1 Work Session Wrap-Up: There was one request from the Board:

- Pull out LMA attendance data for the Chronic Absenteeism written report

17.1 Upcoming Meetings: Ms. Torres read the list of upcoming meetings.

18.1 Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk