



MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Thursday, May 7, 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, March 31, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Division Annex Exceptional Education Conference Room, 1400 Melbourne Road, Charlottesville, VA.

Board Members Present (Closed Session): Ms. Zyahna Bryant, Ms. Amanda Burns, Ms. Shymora Cooper, Ms. Emily Dooley, Mr. Chris Meyer, Ms. Nicole Richardson, and Ms. Lisa Torres

Board Members Absent (Closed Session): None

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present (Closed Session): Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. (Superintendent), Maria Lewis (Director of Human Resources), and Kim Powell (Chief Operations Officer)

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Absent (Closed Session): None

Others Present (Closed Session): Peter J. Caramanis, Attorney at Law, Royer Caramanis PLC

Call the Closed Session to Order: Lisa Torres, School Board Chair, called the closed session meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

1.1 Closed Meeting: at 5:00 p.m., Ms. Burns made a motion to go into a Closed Session as authorized by Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) (3) (8) of the Code of Virginia, for the discussion of personnel matters; discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the School Board; and consultation with legal counsel retained by the School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel related to an offer to purchase School Board property. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, and 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.

1.2 Closed Meeting Certification: At 6:05 p.m., Ms. Burns made 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. Mr. Meyer seconded the motion, and 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.

Action: Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Mr. Meyer, to authorize Ms. Torres (Board Chair) to sign the temporary easement legal agreement as presented. 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.

The board recessed from 6:05 p.m. until 6:10 p.m.

1.3 Call to Order: The School Board Chair Lisa Torres called the public meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

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

3.1 Pledge of Allegiance: 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.

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)

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), 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. Beth Cheuk (Community Relations Supervisor), Ms. Julia Green (Board Deputy Clerk), and Ms. Leslie Thacker (Board Clerk).

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Absent: Ms. Renee Hoover (Director of Finance)

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

Student and Staff Recognitions

6.1 Honoring the 2025–2026 and 2026-2027 Student Representatives to the School Board and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board: Dr. Anna Isley and Dr. Justin Malone recognized the 2025–2026 Student Representatives (Penelope Craghead-Way, Solomon Schwartzman, and Jayla Turner) and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board representative Harper Ullrich for their service. The 2026–2027 Student Representatives (Caja Edwards, Zaki Farhat, and Callie Sun) and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board representatives (Leo Ripple and Solomon Schwartzman) were also introduced, along with two students selected for Parks & Recreation shadowing opportunities (Kelly Rivera-Flores and George Aten).

6.2 2026 Golden Apple Award Winners: Dr. Anna Isley, Chief Academic Officer, recognized the 2026 Golden Apple Award winners, with thanks extended to sponsors Mr. Richard Nunley and Better Living Building Supply and Cabinetry. The following educators were recognized and received a \$500 classroom grant: Bruce Van Dyke (CATEC), Justin Newberry (CHS), Orawan Townsley (Charlottesville Middle School), Amy Jones (Greenbrier Elementary), Audrey Athay-Barnes (Hospital Education), Colleen Bourgal (Jackson-Via Elementary), Nick Liles (Lugo-McGinness Academy), Katherine Plunkett (Summit Elementary), Catherine Meaney (Sunrise Elementary), Kristi Hartwell (Tall Oaks Elementary), Alison Mutarelli (Trailblazer Elementary), and Coby Whitaker (Walker Upper Elementary). The winners were previously honored at a community celebration on April 29.

6.3 Staff Appreciations: Dr. Anna Isley, Chief Academic Officer, and Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, presented recognitions for Teacher Appreciation Week, National School Principals' Day, School Lunch Hero Day, Administrative Professionals Day, Occupational Therapy Month, and School Nurse Appreciation Day.

Special Recognition

7.1 Recognition of the 2026 Virginia School Boards Association Business Honor Roll Recipients: On April 10, 2026, the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) recognized three Charlottesville City School Board nominees for the 2026 Business Honor Roll, celebrating their vital support and dedication to student success. The recipients were:

- Flow Automotive (Jason Keranen and George Alphin)
- Trend Salon (Tara Kennedy and Maria Munoz Alonso)

- Black Bear Composting (Eric Walter)

Commendation certificates signed by VSBA President Jenny Nichols and Executive Director Gina Patterson were presented during the meeting.

8.1 Comments from Students: There were none.

8.2 Comments from Members of the Community:

- Tanesha Hudson (community member) addressed the board regarding a medical emergency that occurred at Charlottesville High School on April 15, 2024. She identified significant "holes" in the district's emergency preparedness and expressed concern that, despite having nursing and mental health staff on-site, they were not present during the actual emergency. Hudson stated that two 911 calls were canceled simultaneously and that dispatch failed to send an ambulance even though a student reported difficulty breathing. She noted that an individual in charge of facilities, who was an EMT for 27 years, was more qualified to handle the scene than anyone else present. Hudson criticized the administration's investigation as taking too long and having its own "holes," suggesting that the incident might have been suppressed to "manipulate data" and avoid reporting it to the state. She characterized the situation as "disgusting treatment" and a "disrespect" to the student's family members, who are school district employees. Consequently, she demanded the removal of a suspension from the student's record, asserting that while he admitted to having a vape, he was not caught with it, and the school must be held accountable for the mishandled emergency. Hudson concluded by recommending the installation of vape detectors everywhere and called for improved yearly staff training that covers emergency medical health and general welfare.

9.1 Charlottesville High School Student Representative Report: In her final student representative report, Ginger Craghead-Way thanked the board for the opportunity to represent her peers, noting that the role allowed her to connect with many students and gain an appreciation for the work involved in her education. She stated that she looked forward to the future contributions of the next year's representatives.

Regarding student life at Charlottesville High School, she highlighted several recent events, including significant successes in various sports programs and a theater production of the musical *9 to 5*. She also reported on the celebration of "decision day" for the class of 2026, where students commemorated their post-high school plans.

As the school year approached its conclusion, she noted that students were nearly halfway through their end-of-year testing. On behalf of the student body, she concluded her report by extending a thank you to the teachers, staff, and administration for their support throughout the year.

10.1-8 Adoption of Consent Agenda: The following items were included in the consent agenda: [Personnel Recommendations](#), [Minutes - February 19, 2026 School Board Meeting](#), [Minutes - March 5, 2026 School Board Meeting](#), [Business, Financial, Routine Reports](#), [2026-2027 Student Annual Fee Schedule](#), [Authorization for Dr. Anna Isley \(Chief Academic Officer\) to Sign in the Absence of the Superintendent through January 31, 2027 \(for VDOE Single Sign-on for Web Systems\)](#), and [2026-2027 Student Representatives to the School Board](#).

Mr. Meyer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley, to approve the adoption of the proposed 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. The motion carried

11.0 Items Pulled From Consent Agenda: None

Action Items

12.1 [2026-2027 Special Education Annual Plan - Title VI-B](#): Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, presented the proposed budget for the 2026-2027 Federal Flow-Through Funding for Special Education (school-aged and preschool) to the Board for consideration on March 31, 2026. The Section 611 budget was subsequently revised to reallocate \$100,000 from Employee Benefits (Object Code 2000) to Personnel Services (Object Code 1000) to more accurately reflect projected staffing costs. The total grant request of \$1,302,195 was maintained, and the Board was asked for action.

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Richardson, to approve the 2026-2027 Special Education Annual Plan - Title VI-B. 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

13.1 [Updated Collective Bargaining Resolution](#): Maria Lewis, Director of Human Resources, presented the Updated Collective Bargaining Resolution for Board review, with action expected on June 4, 2026. A key revision established a negotiation deadline of October 31 for matters effective in advance of the fiscal year's budget to ensure timely Board action. During the discussion, Mr. Meyer inquired about Charlottesville Education Association (CEA) feedback, which Ms. Lewis confirmed had been addressed. The resolution will return for formal approval on June 4, 2026.

13.2 [2026-2027 Federal Programs Applications](#): Stacy Reedal (Title I), Dr. Adam Hastings (Title II), Dr. Jeannie Pfautz (Title III), and Patrick Farrell (Title IV) presented the 2026-2027 Federal Programs applications to the Board. The presentation provided an overview of approximately \$2 million in anticipated annual funding across four specific titles, which feature a spending window extending through September 2028. The programs included Title I, addressing basic programs for at-risk students in reading and math; Title II, focusing on teacher recruitment, training, and retention; Title III, dedicated to language instruction for English learners; and Title IV, providing student support and academic enrichment. The applications will be presented for final approval on June 4, 2026.

Questions/Discussion:

- Mr. Meyer asked for an explanation of how federal funds are channeled to private schools.
- Ms. Reedal explained that under the Equitable Services Act, funds follow eligible students who reside in a Title I district even if they attend a private school. She identified Charlottesville Day School and Community Christian Academy as local recipients.
- Ms. Richardson requested more details on "something new" being done within HR under Title II.
- Dr. Hastings clarified that Title II funds are being used to support staff in obtaining recognized industry certifications from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Human Resources Research Institute (HRCI) to ensure the department remains current with modern industry standards.
- Miss Richardson also inquired about the division's efforts toward recruiting and retaining Black professionals.
- Dr. Hastings noted that a new recruitment person now handles this as a primary duty and offered to bring a more detailed, accurate representation of those efforts back to the board at a future meeting.
- Ms. Bryant asked if there would be a service gap or unmet need if the division does not receive IY funding as anticipated.
- Dr. Pfautz explained that IY funding is very specific to students in the country for three years or less. Because the number of new immigrant students has decreased, there are fewer students to serve with those specific funds, and the general Title III funds remain available to support the broader English language program and multilingual families.

13.3 [Adoption of AP African American Studies Textbook](#): Dr. Alicen Brown, Coordinator of Social Sciences and History, and Jason Bennett, CHS Assistant Principal, presented an update regarding the AP African American Studies

course; following the January 2026 Board approval, a specialized committee used a quantified VDOE rubric to evaluate three textbooks based on criteria such as alignment with standards, integration of skills, and lack of bias. The committee recommended the adoption of *Freedom on My Mind* (Butler et al., 2025), which achieved a perfect score of 108 and was the only text rated "Adequate" in every category by all members. Because this resource was already widely utilized across Virginia and provided essential primary source documents and AP practice materials for the two anticipated sections at CHS, the division planned to move through community review that month to secure the purchase for the 2026–2027 school year at a total implementation cost of \$7,638.91.

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Richardson inquired about why the textbook *African American Journey* was not selected.
- Dr. Brown explained it scored lower across several criteria, specifically noting its organization was not intuitive relative to the AP course, and its printing quality was lower than the other options.
- Ms. Burns noted the importance of offering these courses to African American students and inquired about the prerequisites and current enrollment.
- Dr. Brown clarified that there are no prerequisites for the elective course, though it is recommended to be taken in tandem with VA/US history for better exam results. Mr. Bennett stated that 44 students have already enrolled for the upcoming year.
- Ms. Bryant expressed excitement over the foundational scholars included in the textbook, such as Deborah Gray White, and inquired about potential partnerships with institutions like the Woodson Institute.
- Dr. Brown noted that while this is a pilot year, the division frequently brings in outside scholars to provide diverse perspectives in social studies and will continue to look for such opportunities.
- Ms. Meyer and Student Representative Ginger Craghead-Way noted their appreciation for the robust evaluation process and the hard work put into the selection.

13.4 [Policy Updates \(February 2026 VSBA Policy and Local Policy Updates\)](#): Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment and Accountability, presented various policy updates for the board's first reading, noting that Virginia Code requires a review of all policies at least every five years. The updates included both local revisions and recommendations from the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) based on changes to state and federal laws. Swift noted that specific policies, such as those regarding promotion and retention, student health services, and tobacco and vapor products, would be discussed in greater detail at a later work session.

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Dooley inquired about the fundraising policy, noting that it currently lacks references to crowdsourcing platforms like GoFundMe or DonorsChoose. Staff agreed that language addressing these platforms should be added.
- Ms. Cooper and Ms. Burns expressed a desire to have a more robust discussion about the promotion and retention policy during the upcoming work session.
- Ms. Burns inquired about the specifics of the vape policy, particularly regarding what happens when a student brings a vape to school or experiences an adverse medical reaction.
- Ms. Bryant stated that while there are legal concerns regarding teachers using crowdsourcing, the underlying issue is that staff often lack the necessary resources. She hoped the board would continue discussing how to provide those resources better.
- Mr. Meyer inquired about the process for drafting policies and asked if it was possible to include footnotes or citations when making specific assertions within a policy document.
- Mr. Meyer stated that the current technology policy is not where he would like it to be, specifically regarding concerns over screen time and "ed tech". The board chair suggested he email his specific concerns to the staff for inclusion in future discussions.

- Ms. Torres inquired about where accountability and data follow-up fit into the distinction between board policy and staff regulation to ensure stated goals are being met. Superintendent Gurley responded that staff provide regular data points to the board, which serves as the primary accountability mechanism.

Response to Written Reports

14.1 [2026-2027 School Board Meeting Schedule](#): Leslie Thacker, Clerk, prepared the proposed 2026-2027 School Board Meeting Calendar for Board consideration upon first reading. This meeting schedule will be presented for approval on the June 4, 2026, Consent Agenda.

- Ms. Dooley inquired about when the board would revisit the recent shift in meeting times. Ms. Torres noted the 6:00 p.m. start time had been a trial and suggested discussing it further at an upcoming work session.
- Ms. Bryant questioned what criteria would be used to evaluate the trial, such as tracking attendance or speaker sign-ups.
- Mr. Meyer expressed opposition to proposed adjustments to the meeting schedule for religious holidays, arguing that modifications should not be made for any specific religion.

14.2 [School Board Member Committee Reports and School Board Visits to Schools - April 13-17, 2026](#): The School Board Committee Updates and school visit protocols maintained transparent and efficient documentation of each Board Member's external work and engagement activities between formal meetings, ensuring the public remained informed of ongoing initiatives through streamlined reporting. According to the School Board Protocols, a formal process was established for school visits where members set aside specific days to shadow teachers and observe buildings, a practice distinct from general event attendance. For the visit week of April 13–17, 2026, each Board Member was scheduled to visit three schools and provide a brief follow-up report on their experiences. Preparation for these visits began on March 10, 2026, when the school board clerk initiated the sign-up process via an email titled "Spring 2026 School Board Member School Visits: April 13-17, 2026," which directed members to a shared document for school selection and special requests.

14.3 [Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Update](#): Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, and staff prepared the Social Emotional Learning and Mental Wellness Update to provide the Board with information regarding the implementation and utilization of social emotional programming.

- Mr. Meyer highlighted data from the social emotional learning report showing 13 referrals were made to a multi-disciplinary team for court intervention regarding unexcused absences.
- Ms. Rasnake responded that utilizing this team is a new, collaborative process involving court services to identify necessary student supports.

14.4 [Chronic Absenteeism](#): Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, and staff prepared the Chronic Absenteeism Report to provide the Board with information regarding student attendance trends and the utilization of support strategies.

- Mr. Meyer noted positive trends in chronic absenteeism across the division, while pointing out that Charlottesville High School still has a long way to go, with a quarter of its students deemed chronically absent.

15.1 [Comments from Members of the Community](#):

- Tanesha Hudson (community member) recommended that vape detectors be installed throughout all school buildings. She asserted that if staff are qualified to cancel emergency calls, they should be sufficiently trained to recognize serious conditions like "popcorn lung" and demanded that training for the general welfare and emergency medical health of individuals be mandated as part of the yearly requirements for teachers and staff. Hudson characterized the handling of the April 15th incident as a

"pure case of negligence" and a "straight disrespect" to the family members of the students who are employed by the school district. She reiterated her demand for the removal of the suspension from the student's record, arguing that the school is as accountable for canceling the emergency call as the student is for his actions. Hudson concluded by noting that the full extent of the student's future health issues remains unknown and emphasized the danger of canceling a 911 call when the contents of the vape had not been confirmed.

16.1 Board Member Comments:

- Mr. Meyer expressed gratitude to the parents and city staff working to resolve traffic issues at Summit Elementary. He noted that the city is currently sending staff daily to assist with arrival and departure.
- Ms. Bryant congratulated the newly appointed student representatives and stated she was highly impressed by the rigor of their interviews. She also shared her experience attending a recent retirement celebration, specifically highlighting the impact her former teacher, Mr. Mace, had on her education.
- Ms. Burns recognized all teachers for their hard work and care for students. She thanked Dr. Gurley and his team for an exceptional school year and for their collaborative relationship with the board. She provided a heartfelt farewell to student representative Ginger Craghead-Way, praising her cohort for their service.
- Ms. Cooper commended the division for providing varied paths for students, such as the workforce opportunities celebrated at the Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center (CATEC) signing ceremony. She also expressed appreciation for building administrators, specifically noting the "caregiver" role they take on in elementary schools.
- Ms. Richardson suggested revisiting parent engagement sessions regarding vapes and their effects, as the issue is becoming more prevalent. She thanked the administration and noted her interest in upcoming information regarding SRO (School Resource Officer) interviews.
- Ms. Dooley stated that this time of year is a "payoff" for the board's work and looked forward to the upcoming graduation celebrations. She thanked Dr. Gurley and his team, noting she might still be in education if she had the opportunity to work with them earlier in her career.
- Ms. Torres reflected on the high volume of "gratitude in springtime" events, noting that witnessing student joy—such as at the Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center (CATEC) signing or scholarship breakfasts—fills her "bucket". She explicitly thanked behind-the-scenes staff, including bus drivers, nutrition workers, and administrative professionals.

17.1 Superintendent's Comments: Dr. Gurley's remarks focused on the core themes of community, student accountability, and the division's commitment to maintaining high academic standards. He defined "community" as a collective group that, despite diverse perspectives, remained united by a shared desire for student safety and success. Dr. Gurley acknowledged that while the division navigated several challenging topics throughout the school year, student achievement remained the primary focus of all public discourse. Highlighting the division's positive trajectory, he noted that recent data reflected meaningful change. He affirmed that Charlottesville City Schools was committed to setting high expectations for every student rather than "lowering the bar." Additionally, he extended broad gratitude to the entire staff—including maintenance, transportation, nutrition, teaching, and administrative personnel—for their contributions. Looking ahead, he noted that while the academic year was concluding for students, the summer months represented a period of intensive preparation for the central office. Dr. Gurley concluded by emphasizing that "what we face, we can change."

18.1 Work Session Wrap-Up: There were no requests from the Board.

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

20.1 Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk