MINUTES
Charlottesville City School Board/City Council Joint Work Session
August 12, 2026 (5:00 p.m.)
CitySpace Large Conference Room
100 Fifth St NE, Charlottesville, VA
Video Link

1.1 Call to Order: School Board Chair Lisa Torres and Mayor Juandiego Wade called the Joint Work Session to order at 5:06 p.m. following a 5:00 p.m. call to order and action by City Council.

2.1 Roll Call: Roll call was conducted to confirm attendance.

Board Members Present: Zyahna Bryant, Amanda Burns (Vice-Chair), Shymora Cooper, Emily Dooley, Chris Meyer, Nicole Richardson, and Lisa Torres (Chair)

Board Members Absent: None

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. (Superintendent), Dr. Anna Isley (Chief Academic Officer), Kim Powell (Chief Operations Officer), Renee Hoover (Chief Financial Officer), Amanda Simalchik (Director of Community Relations), Dr. Lamont Trotter (Director of Organizational Supports), Julia Green (Board Deputy Clerk) and Leslie Thacker (Board Clerk).

City Council Members Present: Juandiego Wade (Mayor), Natalie Orschrin (Vice-Mayor), Jen Fleisher, Michael Payne, and Lloyd Snook

City Staff Members Present: Sam Sanders (City Manager), James Freas (Deputy City Manager), Samuel Roman (Assistant City Manager), Krissy Hammill (Director of Budget and Grants Management), Kyna Thomas (Council Clerk), James Maddux (City Attorney), Michael Goddard (Deputy Director of Public Works), Steve King (Assistant to the City Manager), and Remy Trail (Multimedia Coordinator).

3.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda: Ms. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley, to approve the proposed agenda. The motion carried with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Items for Discussion

4.1 FY 2026-2027 Budget Amendment: Renee Hoover, Chief Financial Officer, presented the FY 2026–27 Budget Amendment to the Board and Council. The amendment accounts for updates since the February 2026 budget adoption, including an additional $318,847 in state revenue. CCS is requesting that the City Council release $1,840,576 from the School Operations Contingency, which represents the $2,000,000 contingency allocation less the City's 50% share of the additional state revenue.

Presentation Summary (FY 2026-2027 Budget Amendment):

- **State Revenue Increase**: State revenue increased by $318,847 due to updated projections for Sales Tax and Lottery Proceeds, following the General Assembly's adoption of the state budget and the VDOE's final calculations.

- **Contingency Release**: The School Division requested that the City Council release $1,840,576 from the School Operations Contingency. This amount is derived from the $2,000,000 base contingency set aside by the City during its April 9 budget adoption, reduced by the City's 50% share ($159,424) of the additional state revenue.
- **Expenditure Priorities**:
  - **Transportation**: Funds support the conversion of 6 part-time bus driver positions to full-time to improve recruitment and retention.
  - **Collective Bargaining**: The amendment includes an $822,558 transfer from the General Fund to Special Revenue Funds to finalize budgets and account for personnel costs associated with collective bargaining agreements.
  - **Administrative Compensation**: The proposal includes an additional 2% salary increase for administrative staff, retroactive to July 1, 2026.
- **Next Steps**:
  - **City Council**: Scheduled to take action on the appropriation on August 17, 2026.
  - **School Board**: Scheduled to take action on the budget amendment on September 3, 2026.

Discussion/Questions:

FY 2026-2027 Budget Amendment Discussion Summary

- Ms. Torres expressed strong personal frustration regarding changes made to the city's appropriations ordinance. She stated that placing $2 million of the school board's request into an operating contingency fund felt insulting, as it potentially reflected a lack of trust in the board's fiscal responsibility. She emphasized that the school board was never informed or consulted about this shift before its introduction. Furthermore, she questioned why the school board was being asked to appear before the City Council on the 17th to request funds that had already been structurally prioritized for their budget.
- Mr. Sanders and Ms. Hammill clarified that the upcoming August 17 meeting should not be interpreted as the school board coming to council to 'beg' for money. Structurally, it is simply a legal technicality to formally update the budget's annual ordinance and reallocate the $1.8 million out of the contingency account now that the state's exact revenue numbers are finalized. Mr. Sanders characterized the action as completing the final procedural step of the budget cycle that both bodies already agreed to.
- Ms. Torres asked for explicit clarification on whether the school board was structurally required to attend the Monday meeting to secure the appropriation. Mr. Sanders responded that unless an individual council member brings up unexpected new questions, the extensive dialogue from the joint work session should be entirely sufficient to pass the item. He expected the re-allocation to go through as a standard agenda item without needing a separate formal presentation from the school board.
- Various members noted that while the August 17 action closes the loop on this specific contingency hold, it underscores a deeper underlying problem with the local school funding formula. Mr. Sanders and several board members noted that the formula has been widely bypassed for years, leading both staff and elected officials to agree that a joint meeting will be set for December 2026 to begin explicitly re-negotiating the overarching funding metrics.
- Mr. Payne provided context on the city's structural constraints, noting that unlike most other localities, the city is required by ordinance to adopt its budget very early, creating unique challenges when the state budget is delayed. He highlighted that the city is operating under tight fiscal limits following multiple consecutive real estate tax and meals tax increases. Payne also called for a formal re-examination of the sustainable school funding agreement to ensure both bodies get back on the same page.
- Ms. Burns shared deep disappointment over poor communication and the policy decision to split additional state revenues 50/50. She emphasized that the school board makes necessary internal adjustments when funding falls short rather than continually asking for city funds. She noted that the school's funds are heavily leveraged to honor collective bargaining agreements for unionized support staff rather than frivolous items.

- Ms. Fleisher observed that as the newest member of the council, witnessing a $4 million shift in a budget request during the cycle was uniquely unsettling compared to other departments. She agreed that moving forward, the shared decision-making process requires greater transparency.
- Ms. Dooley stated that splitting the state revenue delta negatively impacts the school board's ability to plan conservatively. She maintained that the reduction from initial higher budget figures was the result of collaborative concessions and feedback rather than standard overbudgeting.
- Mr. Wade emphasized that local budget pressures are heavily exacerbated by the state failing to meet its school funding obligations. He commended both bodies for having a direct, difficult conversation and proposed forming a joint committee of staff and elected officials to officially review and adjust the school funding formula moving forward.
- Mr. Sanders and various board members agreed that a joint meeting in December 2026 will be scheduled to review budget projections early and formally address the outdated funding formula.

4.2 Discussion on the Local 1% Sales Tax Option for School Construction: The Charlottesville City School Board and City Council discussed the potential for a dedicated 1% local sales tax under Va. Code § 58.1-605.1. This mechanism, restricted to capital projects like new construction or major renovations, provides a sustainable funding source for long-term school infrastructure needs without relying solely on property taxes. Enacting the tax would require a voter-approved referendum initiated by the governing body.

Presentation Summary (School Facility Needs):

- **Capital Maintenance vs. Improvements**: The presentation defined "capital maintenance" as preserving asset condition and prolonging useful life, whereas "capital improvements" involve adapting buildings for new uses, academic standards, security, and environmental requirements.
- **50-Year Overview of Major Improvements**:
  - 1971-74: Construction of CHS ($6.9M).
  - 2013-14: Buford and CHS science space upgrades ($3.3M).
  - 2018-26: Priority Improvement Projects ($1M-$1.25M).
  - 2023-26: CMS expansion/renovation ($91.8M).
- **CCS School Modernizations**: The Facilities Improvement Planning Committee (FIPC) initiated projects in 2016, prioritizing older elementary schools. Projects have faced approximately 40% cumulative construction inflation since 2018. Completed projects include Summit (Classrooms, 2018-19), Jackson-Via (Classrooms/Flooring, 2018-19), Sunrise (Media Center, 2021), Tall Oaks (Roof Terrace, 2024), Greenbrier (Media Center, 2023), CHS (Restrooms, 2025), and Trailblazer (Intervention Spaces, 2026).
- **Other Notable Projects**: security vestibule installations (all schools except Greenbrier & Summit, with Summit planned for 2027), solar initiatives (CATEC, CHS, and future CMS), and athletic upgrades, including turf fields, stadium renovations, baseball/softball improvements, and the Curtis Elder Track & Field Complex.
- **Road to Reconfiguration**: Highlights include the 2019 Board commitment to reconfiguration, the 2022 CMS allocation ($68.8M), the 2023 SCAP grant ($17.6M) plus city funds, CMS Phase 1 completion (August 2025), and the recent recommendation of "Option C" for the Cville Early Learning Center (CELC) at an estimated $51.4M, with renovation/construction planned for 2027-2029. CMS Phase 2 (renovation of old Buford) was completed in August 2026.
- **Current State of Facilities**: The division manages a portfolio from the 1930s-1960s. While CMS is a "linchpin" for reconfiguration, the "aging but sound" narrative is being challenged. Staff perspectives from Greenbrier, CHS, and Jackson-Via highlighted working conditions.
- **Student Demographics & Readiness**: Serving 4,376 students, with 52.4% economically disadvantaged and 700+ English learners. The division is aligning facilities with the VDOE's "3E Readiness Framework" (Enrollment, Employment, Enlistment) to ensure students are prepared for sustainable postsecondary pathways.
- **CHS Scheduling & Capacity Constraints**: Currently, 20 sections must rotate due to classroom shortages, which limits the ability to offer diverse pathways.

- **Opportunity Gaps**: Due to these space constraints, CHS cannot currently offer programs such as Biotech Foundations, Biomedical Innovations, Real Estate, ROTC, Geospatial Technology, Horticulture/Agriculture pathways, Dance, Early Childhood Education, Welding, Hospitality/Tourism, Pharmacy Tech, and HVAC/Plumbing.

Discussion/Questions:

- Mr. Meyer presented foundational accounting and structural timelines regarding school infrastructure, noting that while the division excels at basic capital maintenance, facility updates have historically been prioritized for elementary schools. He highlighted that the older structures are not actually the ones with the greatest instructional deficits; rather, the facilities designed in the 1960s and 1970s are completely out of alignment with current learning expectations.
- Dr. Gurley detailed systemic programmatic barriers imposed by current space constraints at Charlottesville High School (CHS), noting that at least five full-time teachers lack permanent classrooms and must instruct from rotating carts across 20 class periods daily. He argued that a severe opportunity gap exists between the city and neighboring counties, sharing that comprehensive vocational and technical courses—such as biotech, ROTC, and HVAC—cannot even be considered or introduced locally because the specialized physical spaces do not exist.
- Ms. Burns highlighted severe infrastructure problems at specific properties, explicitly naming Greenbrier Elementary and Jackson-Via Elementary. She detailed how a lack of dedicated cafeteria spaces forces staff to transport cold food items daily from CHS and severely strains teacher instructional time, a problem heavily exacerbated by moving fifth-grade classes back into neighborhood schools.
- Mr. Snook observed that to secure public support for the upcoming 1% sales tax referendum, the community must feel structurally included in deciding how the resulting funds are prioritized. He recommended launching an aggressive public engagement campaign—including design charrettes, neighborhood surveys, and a community kickoff event on September 12—to build public enthusiasm.
- Ms. Torres explained that because the referendum became an active ballot option at the absolute last minute, the division lacked the required time to coordinate traditional community dreaming sessions before the vote. She emphasized that the board must focus strictly on direct voter information regarding core updates—such as safety, security, and making graduates life-ready—before designing a final project list.
- Mr. Payne cautioned that the local sales tax referendum will not magically solve every single overarching facility deficit over the next 20 years. He noted that the newly established Early Learning Center still faces a significant, unaddressed funding gap that must be tackled first. He formally requested that the school board immediately submit specific state-level funding reforms to be bundled into the city's upcoming general assembly legislative packet.
- Mr. Sanders confirmed that city staff cannot afford to wait until after the November election to plan. He reported that staff members are already proactively running fiscal capacity scenarios over a 30-year projections window to evaluate construction capacity if the referendum passes.
- City Council members formally clarified that they are 100% aligned with the school board that the entirety of the proposed 1% sales tax referendum will be legally isolated and designated exclusively for local school facility projects.

5.1 <u>Comment from Members of the Community</u>: There were none.

6.1 <u>Adjourn</u>: At 7:38 p.m., Ms. Cooper made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk