MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Thursday, September 3, 2026 (5:30 p.m.)
Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School
[Video Link]

A Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on Thursday, September 3, 2026, at 4:30 p.m., in the Division Annex Exceptional Education Conference Room, 1400 Melbourne Road, Charlottesville, VA.

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) and Maria Lewis (Chief Human Resources Officer)

Call the Closed Session to Order: Lisa Torres, School Board Chair, called the closed session meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

1.1 Closed Meeting: at 4:30 p.m., Ms. Burns made a motion to convene the Closed Session meeting as authorized by Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) (2) of the Code of Virginia, for the discussion of personnel matters and student matters involving a student's scholastic record regarding a request for religious exemption from compulsory attendance. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 5 ayes, 0 nays. Mr. Meyer and Ms. Richardson were not present for this vote.

1.2 Closed Meeting Certification: At 5:18 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. Ms. Richardson 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: None

The board recessed from 5:18 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

1.3 Call to Order: The School Board Chair Lisa Torres called the public meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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 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: 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), Pat Cuomo (Director of Technology), Rachel Rasnake (Director of Student Services), Carolyn Swift (Director of Assessment and Accountability), Amanda Simalchik (Director of Community Relations), Carlton Jones (Director of Nutrition Services), Rodney Jordan (Director of Facilities and Operations), Julia Green (Board Deputy Clerk), and Leslie Thacker (Board Clerk).

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Absent: Maria Lewis (Chief Human Resources Officer) and Dr. T. Denise Mulford (Director of Strategic Initiatives)

5.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda: Mr. Meyer 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.

6.1 Comments from Students: There were none.

6.2 Comments from Members of the Community: There were none.

7.1 Charlottesville High School Student Representative Report:

8.1-6 Adoption of Consent Agenda: Personnel Recommendations, Minutes - August 6, 2026 School Board Meeting, Minutes - August 12, 2026 Joint Work Session with City Council, Business, Financial, Routine Reports, and Religious Exemption from Compulsory Attendance.

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve the Adoption of the Consent 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.

9.0 Items Pulled from Consent Agenda: There were none.

Action Items

10.1 Action - Ed Tech Policy (IIBEAA): At the August 6, 2026 meeting, Pat Cuomo, Director of Technology, updated the Board on current efforts to monitor student screen time. He also introduced a new student technology policy, with a recommendation for approval. The Ed Tech Policy was presented for action.

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bryant, to approve the Ed Tech Policy (IIBEAA) as presented. 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.

10.2 Action - FY 2026-2027 Budget Amendment: Renee Hoover, Chief Financial Officer, presented the FY 2026–27 Budget Amendment for approval. Since the adoption of the FY 2026–27 School Board budget in February 2026, the state budget has been finalized, resulting in an additional $318,847 in state revenue. The amendment also included $822,558 in technical adjustments to the Special Revenue Funds to support salary increases from collective bargaining agreements. Based on the additional revenue, staff proposed an additional 2% increase in administrative compensation, bringing the total administrative salary increase to 5%, for a total amended FY 2026-2027 budget of $129,536,904.

Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Ms. Burns, to amend the FY 2026-2027 budget by $318,847 to reflect additional state revenue, including technical adjustments between the General and Special Revenue Funds and the 50/50 sharing of additional state revenue with the City through the local appropriation, and to authorize an additional 2% salary raise for administrative staff, effective July 1, 2026, bringing the total administrative salary increase to 5%, for a total amended FY 2026-2027 budget of $129,536,904. 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.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Burns addressed the board to comment on the historic precedent of the amendment, clarifying that sharing state revenue 50/50 with the city is not an arrangement that has typically occurred in the past, even during periods when initial budget projections came in lower than expected. She commented that the school board needs to stay on top of this arrangement to ensure it is reviewed annually, while expressing hope that this layout will continue the conversation toward establishing a better funding model for the schools. Additionally, Ms. Burns addressed the board to comment on the proposed funding formula work group, emphasizing the importance of initiating collaboration well before their December meetings to ensure their collective time is truly meaningful, rather than just beginning the project in December. Ms. Hoover responded by confirming that the division had not historically requested budget amendments from the city when past revenue projections fell short. Dr. Gurley further responded to the timeline by detailing that although city staff was currently balancing vacation schedules, the division was actively pulling its administrative teams together to establish a baseline of historical work and coordinate next steps within the next two weeks.
- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to inquire about how the city intends to allocate its 50% share of the state revenue. Upon learning that the city had officially committed at its August 17th meeting to spend that portion on pupil transportation to convert six part-time bus drivers to full-time positions, Mr. Meyer made comments expressing his satisfaction that the systemic lack of bus drivers is finally being actively addressed. Ms. Hoover and other staff provided clarity to his question by detailing that the city had explicitly voted on August 17th to designate their shared funding toward pupil transportation and a potential transportation study, while the school division was simultaneously allocating special revenue funds to support four additional bus aides.

10.3 Action - Budget Development Process (2027-2028 Proposed Budget Development Calendar): Renee Hoover, Chief Financial Officer, presented the 2027-2028 Budget Calendar for the Board's approval. The calendar was presented for first reading on August 6, 2026, and outlined the public meeting schedule for the upcoming fiscal year's budget development process. Revisions included updated dates for Joint City Council and School Board work sessions (Wednesday, December 2, 2026, and Wednesday, February 10, 2027) and location updates for the September 23 Community Budget Engagement Sessions.

Mr. Meyer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve the 2027-2028 Proposed Budget Calendar. 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.

Discussion/Questions:

- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to inquire about whether there was any information that could be shared regarding a new budget process, subcommittee, or alternate method of thinking through the funding framework, referencing the joint meeting previously held with city officials. He later commented that he hoped school board members would perform an internal review of emerging ideas prior to their December meeting so they could establish a realistic set of options rather than being stuck with the status quo, stressing that waiting until December would not leave enough time to adjust the actual budget cycle starting in January. Mr. Meyer additionally addressed the board to comment on utilizing their existing two-member finance committee to help support this development work moving forward. The Board Chair responded initially, explaining that early conversations had been initiated with the city's

mayor to coordinate forward-thinking data models and that any member suggestions should be elevated directly to the superintendent.
- Ms. Torres addressed the board to comment on initiating contact with the city's mayor and staff to begin coordinating data collection and funding models between their respective teams in an effort to stay forward-thinking and prepared. She commented that city staff had proposed bringing these initial data frameworks to both the city council and the school board on December 2nd, and she encouraged her fellow board members to elevate any early feedback or ideas directly to the superintendent. Ms. Torres also commented that she felt city council representatives and staff were clear during their discussions that they would not be structurally ready to implement a brand new funding formula during this immediate upcoming budget cycle anyway. December 2nd remains the target date for reviewing those early data frameworks.
- Dr. Gurley addressed the board to comment on clarifying that while any newly developed funding framework could potentially have elements implemented during the current budget cycle, the primary focus should be on building a highly concrete formula for the subsequent 2028 cycle. He commented that modern trends show school divisions are forcing their budget presentations and cycles to begin much earlier in the year—frequently as early as July and August—meaning that their current structural planning will naturally carry heavier implications for future fiscal years.

10.4 Action - Policy Updates (July 2026 VSBA Policy Update): Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment and Accountability, and the Executive Leadership Team presented the Policy Updates provided by Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) (July 2026 VSBA Policy Updates) for first reading on August 6, 2026. These policies were presented for approval.

Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley, to approve the Policy Updates (July 2026 VSBA Policy Update). 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

11.1 2025–2026 Standards of Learning (SOL) Annual Pass Rates: Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment and Accountability, presented the audited 2025-2026 Standards of Learning (SOL) results. Key highlights included the district meeting its long-term strategic goal of 70% math proficiency—a 15-point surge over five years—supported by three years of continuous growth. CCS math proficiency gains (+6.69 points) are outpacing the state's growth threefold, with significant equity gains: Students with Disabilities closed the historical state gap by 14 points over three years (28% to 42%), while Hispanic students reached 62% proficiency. Reading scores remained stable at 67%, a performance contextualized by increased state test rigor in 2025. The division reported a "transfer effect," where foundational literacy gains are driving increased achievement in other content areas, including History (+9 points) and Science (+2 points). Moving forward, the division will prioritize deep alignment with the Virginia Literacy Act, expand targeted math interventions, and implement literacy bridge support for older students.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Dooley addressed the board to inquire about grade 8 science, noting that assessing three years of content on a single test is uniquely challenging. She subsequently addressed the board to comment on the division's limited locus of control regarding student contact days and teacher contract lengths, emphasizing that if division staff pinpoint "time" as their primary obstacle to overcoming lingering achievement gaps, adjusting the school calendar is a variable the board must remain mindful of moving forward. Director of Assessment and Accountability Carolyn Swift responded to the testing question by confirming that eighth-grade science, fifth-grade science, and eighth-grade history are the specific state assessments that evaluate cumulative multiyear content blocks.

- Dr. Gurley addressed the board to comment on time constraints stemming from highly mobile student populations transferring back and forth between neighboring divisions. He commented on historical division data, highlighting that it clearly proves that the longer black and brown students remain continuously enrolled within Charlottesville City Schools, the better they perform academically.
- Dr. Isley addressed the board to comment on highly encouraging longitudinal data regarding the division's youngest learners, specifically referencing recent spring kindergarten literacy and math growth metrics that outpaced state benchmarks. She commented that these foundational gains prove that evidence-based practices like the Science of Reading are highly successful but simply require consecutive years to sequentially scale up into older, tested grade levels.
- Ms. Richardson addressed the board to comment on the visual breakdown of the data graphs, expressing her enthusiastic appreciation. She commented that the results clearly reflect the immense hard work being executed by teachers and students alike, giving a special celebration to the black student demographics outperforming state averages. Division presenters thanked her for the recognition and praised the staff's dedication.
- Ms. Cooper addressed the board to comment on expanding perspectives beyond traditional classroom limitations by establishing outside-the-box partnerships with local community groups. She commented on parent requests, detailing that many local parents have directly requested tutoring, mentoring, and localized after-school structures because they recognize their children are falling behind but lack the structural capacity to provide sufficient academic support at home. Superintendent Dr. Gurley and Dr. Isley noted that expanding community connections perfectly aligned with their strategic expectations.
- Ms. Torres addressed the board to inquire about strategic "bridge support" systems explicitly designed for older learners, who have not had the systemic benefit of growing up under the newly implemented Science of Reading curriculum. She subsequently addressed the board to comment on administrator professional development pathways, celebrating that building up the data literacy of principals is structurally vital to sustaining long-term academic growth across secondary schools. Chief Accountability Officer Carolyn Swift responded by detailing that targeted reading plans and secondary reading specialists were actively deployed at both the middle and high school levels. Dr. Isley and Dr. Gurley expanded on this by explaining that new monthly professional learning cycles were training principals and coordinators to recognize strong literacy strategies and execute deep data-drives to make immediate instructional shifts in their buildings.
- Ms. Burns addressed the board to inquire about whether secondary school administrators, instructional coaches, and content teachers are currently receiving the same intensive literacy professional learning frameworks as elementary staff. She additionally addressed the board to comment on future accountability updates, suggesting that they should include a localized, school-by-school analysis of community partners to map out which organizations are actively providing academic support during full days out of school, such as summer, winter breaks, and teacher professional learning days. Dr. Isley responded by confirming that content coordinators were embedded in weekly secondary Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to consistently deliver bite-sized literacy frameworks directly to secondary staff. Carolyn Swift added that a full school-by-school performance framework update would be brought directly to the board in October.
- Ms. Bryant addressed the board to inquire about a specific mathematical disparity in the grade 8 data, questioning why Hispanic students achieved a 32-point proficiency surge while black students achieved an 11-point gain. She addressed the board to comment on statistical gaps, stressing that identifying the precise systemic resources or environmental factors driving this gap would better equip community partners to step up and efficiently support local black student achievement. Ms. Swift responded by noting that a critical variable in evaluating subgroup percentage jumps is the exact size of the student population taking the test, as exceptionally small sample numbers can sometimes make short-term percentage shifts look statistically misleading when compared to larger cohorts.
- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to comment on utilizing an altered or extended school calendar as a structural solution to maximizing student contact time while still offering staff meaningful, consolidated breaks. He also addressed the board to comment on future data reporting, requesting that updates filter student achievement by isolating economically disadvantaged designations versus non-low-income

designations within individual racial and ethnic demographics, arguing this cross-analysis is necessary to determine if lingering deficits are truly tied to specific ethnicities or are instead the byproduct of poverty and unaddressed basic needs. Division staff acknowledged the request and agreed that evaluating cross-demographic poverty metrics would better help target external resources.

- Ms. Edwards addressed the board to comment on the presentation's comprehensive inclusion of demographics, expressing her positive perspective. She commented that as a student, it was incredibly valuable and inspiring to visually witness exactly how her peers, scholars with disabilities, and fellow African-American scholars are actively excelling in the classroom. Division staff commended her comments and praised her use of the term "scholars" to describe her classmates.

11.2 [2026-2027 School Board Priorities]: Superintendent Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. presented the Charlottesville School Board's 2026–2027 strategic priorities, which served as the foundation for annual agendas and key deliverables. The 2026-2027 framework focused on three core pillars: Literacy & Academic Equity, Attendance & Targeted Support, and Operations & Governance. Literacy efforts prioritized a 10% reduction in failure rates for Black students and Students with Disabilities (SWD) through targeted interventions and 3E readiness tracking. To address absenteeism, the district aimed to reduce chronic absenteeism below 10% across all schools using a multi-tiered system of support and by analyzing period-specific attendance patterns at CHS. Additionally, the Board prioritized operational stability, including monitoring educator retention and managing workflows related to the upcoming referendum. To ensure transparency and strategic alignment, the Board utilized continuous monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), quarterly progress reports, a parking lot process for off-agenda matters, and monthly agenda alignment sessions.

Discussion/Questions:

- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to comment on the organizational structure of the strategic priorities, expressing appreciation for how the clear framework will keep the division disciplined throughout the year. He also addressed the board to comment on the targeted summer input, congratulating Ms. Bryant for successfully having her input represented across every single priority category.
- Ms. Bryant addressed the board to comment on strategic focus areas, thanking the superintendent and administrative team for meeting over the summer to intentionally incorporate critical focus areas like workforce and teacher retention. She also addressed the board to comment on a strategic feedback model, explaining that evaluating programmatic frameworks and community partners using a standardized structure of "two things to like and one thing to wonder" provides an unbiased, balanced way for board members to navigate challenging policy conversations.
- Ms. Burns addressed the board to comment on synthesized board feedback, praising the administration for establishing clear transparency and accountability for the board, staff, and community. She subsequently addressed the board to inquire about the tardy exploration phase at the high school, wondering if data filters could eventually identify whether specific classrooms exhibit systemic patterns of tardiness that point to environmental variables in that space rather than isolated student issues. She additionally addressed the board to comment on the final operational slide, noting that it serves as an educational tool to clarify for stakeholders that the board is tasked with innovative policy creation and governance rather than direct physical problem-solving.
- Ms. Cooper addressed the board to comment on the second strategic priority focused on eliminating chronic absenteeism through targeted action plans, strongly endorsing the effort. She commented on socioeconomic demands facing families, detailing that parents of older students often face conflicting demands that make managing daily attendance difficult, meaning that having the division step up to build localized bridges of support directly empowers these families while successfully returning vital instructional time to the scholars.
- Dr. Gurley and Ms. Rasnake responded to the board's comments regarding student tardiness and absenteeism patterns. Ms. Rasnake explained that tardiness is nebulous because a student being one minute late has a drastically different instructional impact than a student being twenty minutes late. She detailed that the division is currently in a data-gathering exploration phase to accurately measure how

missed time correlates with direct classroom engagement at the high school level before establishing formal action plans or reporting benchmarks.
- Ms. Torres addressed the board to comment on the structural timing of the monthly agenda alignments, validating that utilizing a standardized parking lot process will effectively assist board members in keeping the primary strategic goals central to their monthly public sessions, while also taking notes on community concerns to elevate to the superintendent.

11.3 Policy Updates (July 2026 VSBA Policy Update #2): Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment and Accountability, and the Executive Leadership Team presented the Policy Updates provided by VSBA. Virginia Code 22.1-253.13(7) required that School Boards review all policies, at a minimum, every five years. In addition, the Board's policy service provider, The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), provided updates for consideration by the Board. Staff reviewed a number of existing policies for revision, deletion, or review. A table summarizing the types of changes in each policy was attached. The Board will be asked for approval of this policy update at the October 1, 2026 meeting.

Discussion/Questions:

- Dr. Gurley addressed the board to comment on Policy BDDH (Public Participation at School Board Meetings), prompting the members to pay exceptionally close attention to the specific policy within the update packet. He commented that the administration had observed a distinct opportunity to introduce a level of formal structure to public comment sessions that the school board's meetings had historically never possessed. He requested that board members begin sending their initial thoughts or "wonderings" directly to staff so they could compile common themes, execute the necessary changes, and present a refined framework for deeper board discussion when the item returned in October.
- Ms. Torres addressed the board to inquire whether any members had immediate questions or comments on the updates. No board members raised further questions or comments on the floor, and the item concluded with Ms. Torres reminding the board that any individual feedback should be channeled directly to Ms. Swift and Dr. Gurley prior to the October meeting.

11.4 Budget Bistro - September 23, 2026: Amanda Simalchik, Director of Community Relations, presented details for the community engagement event scheduled for September 23, 2026, at Charlottesville Middle School. The event was designed around a structured, free communal meal—featuring appetizer, main course, and dessert rounds—where families could use a simulated "$100 menu" to signal where they wanted to prioritize division resources. Staff highlighted that the event would include educational stations run by school representatives, child care, interpreters, and division-provided transportation to ensure wide accessibility.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Torres addressed the board to inquire about how the menu data would be gathered and coded, and how the school board would explicitly use and reflect on that community feedback during the actual budget process. Staff responded by explaining that the choices would be consolidated into a simplified version of the budget, allowing analysts to clearly code and see exactly where community members desired premium resource options versus less expensive alternatives.
- Ms. Richardson addressed the board to comment on the vision of the event, stating that she could see the setup and was excited about the innovation. She commented that she needed a slightly more concrete visual layout of the gymnasium setup to fully picture how the pieces would play out, prompting a lighthearted reminder from staff that the board members' primary physical task would be serving the food.
- Ms. Burns addressed the board to inquire about what targeted engagement strategies were being deployed to reach out to families and English Learners (EL) who have not historically participated in budget surveys. Staff responded by detailing that the family engagement team was actively translating all informational materials into the division's top non-English languages, while simultaneously leveraging community school partners to distribute invitations directly into local neighborhoods.

- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to comment on the concept, praising the executive leadership team for putting it together and noting that the initiative fulfilled community engagement goals that board members had long pushed for. He commented that he looked forward to being stationed at a table or buffet round to hear directly from constituents about what was working or failing within specific strategic areas like literacy, math, and teacher retention.
- Ms. Edwards addressed the board to comment on the community outreach model, expressing support but inquiring about how staff intended to draw in everyday students who were not already school board representatives or formal student leaders. Staff responded by explaining that the family engagement team was working directly with middle school student ambassadors and high school Link Crew leaders, with the expectation that these active peers would serve as the primary ambassadors to bring in their classmates.
- Ms. Burns and Ms. Cooper addressed the board to comment on procuring personalized and decorated aprons for the school board members to wear while serving the public during the buffet portion of the evening. Staff agreed to add the aprons to the official work session wrap-up list.
- Ms. Torres addressed the board to comment on the event design, noting that it was a great spin-off of the budget simulation games previously utilized by the city council, and suggesting that they formally invite city council members to attend the evening as participants. Staff agreed that inviting council members to experience the community feedback firsthand was an excellent idea.

Written Reports

12.1 2026-2027 Advisory Committees to the School Board - Written Report: Dr. Anna Isley, Chief Academic Officer, and staff prepared the 2026-2027 Advisory Committees to the School Board for consideration. According to School Board policy, the School Board reviewed proposed membership lists for the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), School Health Advisory Board (SHAB), Gifted Education Advisory Committee, CTE Advisory Committee, Mentor Teacher Advisory Committee, and Parent Advisory for Title 1, Title II, Title III, and Title IV. The Board planned to approve the membership at the October 1, 2026 meeting. The Superintendent recommended that the School Board review the written report, which contained the advisory committees, and be prepared to act at the October 1, 2026 Board Meeting.

12.2 2026-2027 Ten-Day Enrollment Update - Written Report: Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, submitted the 2026-2027 Ten-Day Enrollment Update for Board information. The Superintendent recommended the Board receive the 10-Day Enrollment update.

12.3 School Board Member Committee Reports - Written Report: The Board submitted written committee reports for review.

Questions/Discussion:

- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to inquire about the potential impact of the division's lower enrollment numbers on the current budget, and whether the data mirrored adjacent county trends despite Charlottesville's recent housing growth.
- Dr. Gurley and Ms. Hoover responded to the budget inquiry by explaining that the division utilizes highly conservative average daily membership (ADM) projections provided by the state when building the budget, meaning the lower initial numbers would not have a material impact on the current fiscal year before the state executes its official settlement in March.
- Ms. Powell responded to the trend inquiry by summarizing recent data from the Weldon Cooper Center, revealing that the division had processed 322 student withdrawals since the previous year (including 49 moving to private schools, 10 moving to homeschool or virtual models, 65 moving out of state, and 23 moving out of the country). She detailed that while localized high-rise developments previously freed up

single-family housing stock and spurred historic division growth, the current cycle is seeing a temporary rate of loss that is outpacing neighboring Albemarle County. Ms. Powell noted that net additional housing units, such as those at South First Street, are projected to enter their "lease-up" phase later in the spring, which is historically when new families relocate into the city.

- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to comment on the further analysis provided by staff, thanking them and noting that the division operates in an environment where it must actively compete for families and resources. He praised the division's improved marketing efforts and stories, but emphasized that the administration must remain highly mindful of these enrollment trends due to their long-term staffing and financial implications.

13.1 <u>Comments from Members of the Community</u>:

- Gareth Gaston addressed the board via a virtual connection to comment on the division's proposed Budget Bistro community event, sharing his feedback.
- Mr. Gaston commended the Budget Bistro model for encouraging public engagement and confirmed his plans to attend. He suggested enhancing the $100 budget simulation by moving beyond a fixed-sum framework, where funding for core subjects is reallocated, and instead including options that illustrate the financial or tax impact of expanding school programs, such as extending the school day by an hour. He noted that this approach would foster discussion on expanding division resources rather than managing existing limitations.

14.1 <u>Board Member Comments</u>:

- Mr. Meyer addressed the board to welcome the student representative and express excitement about her presence. He commented on the upcoming school board referendum, noting that it was two months away, and encouraged fellow members to review the available talking points and materials. He stated that he hoped to see yard signs distributed across the community to promote voting yes for the referendum in November, adding that coordinating with Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) would help wide distribution of these resources to generate funding for the schools.
- Ms. Bryant addressed the board to thank the staff for the reports and highlight the good things happening across the division. She commented on her recent attendance at a community event at Lugo-McGinness Academy, mentioning her enjoyment in seeing the students and participating in activities. She also expressed appreciation for the division's marketing brochures and efforts for the middle school. Ms. Bryant added a final comment reminding everyone that early voting was scheduled to begin on September 18th, pushing the community to participate early.
- Ms. Burns addressed the board to congratulate the superintendent and administrative team on a successful start to the school year, noting that she had received fantastic reviews from parents and observed happy students while visiting schools on the first day. She commented with praise for the staff at Charlottesville Middle School for their collaborative efforts to unite two separate school communities under one building. Ms. Burns subsequently addressed the board regarding a school shooting incident that had occurred in Waynesboro, thanking the superintendent for issuing a timely safety message to the community that provided peace of mind to local parents and staff. She concluded by stating that she looked forward to the upcoming fall school visits to continue celebrating and telling the division's success stories.
- Ms. Cooper addressed the board to echo the positive sentiments of her colleagues regarding the launch of the school year. She made comments focusing on early childhood education, sharing her joy in seeing media posts of the three- and four-year-old learners entering the preschool center with their families. She expressed deep gratitude that the division continues to invest heavily in prioritizing resources for early childhood programs.
- Ms. Richardson addressed the board to provide a community announcement regarding the Community Attention Youth Internship Program for the 2026-2027 school year session. She made comments detailing the specific fall dates spanning September 14th through November 8th, alongside subsequent

winter and spring sessions, highlighting that the workplace readiness, mentoring, and job coaching program offers student participants a rate of $15 an hour.

- Ms. Dooley addressed the board to reflect on the recent public education news, noting that it provides an opportunity to evaluate local practices and make refinements where necessary. She commented on the recent violence in Waynesboro, stating that while gun violence impacts the community outside of school buildings, it is critical to speak with state and federal legislators to address the proliferation of guns. Ms. Dooley noted that the upcoming referendum represents a vital opportunity to directly invest in securing and updating school facilities. She concluded on a positive note by sharing her experience going on a school-wide morning meeting crawl at the preschool center, praising the immense joy and hard work visible throughout the division.

15.1 <u>Superintendent's Comments</u>: Dr. Gurley addressed the board to thank his executive leadership team, stating that they set the entire school division up for success and that he learns from them daily. He commented on the division's preschool center, praising the custodians, instructional assistants, teachers, administrators, nurses, and secretaries who manage the daily operations of the facility. Dr. Gurley concluded his comments with a comparison, sharing that much like his own mother telling each of her children that they were her favorite, he tells every school he visits that they are his favorite, noting that the preschool center holds a distinct place in his heart.

16.1 <u>Work Session Wrap-Up - Carolyn Swift</u>: There were **<u>two</u>** requests from the Board:

- Reviewing the implementation update for the newly adopted EdTech policy in January.
- Procuring personalized aprons for the school board members to wear during the upcoming Budget Bistro community event.

17.1 <u>Upcoming Meetings</u>: Ms. Torres read the list of upcoming meetings.

18.1 <u>Adjourn</u>: The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk