



MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School
Thursday, March 6, 2025 (5:00 PM)

Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on March 6, 2025, at 4:00 p.m., in the Division Annex Exceptional Education Conference Room, 1400 Melbourne Road, Charlottesville, VA.

PRESENT: Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Richardson

ABSENT: Ms. Torres

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Superintendent, Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT: None

1.1 Call to Order: Emily Dooley, School Board Chair, called the closed session meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

1.2 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) (1) of the Code of Virginia, I move that the Charlottesville City School Board convene into Closed Session for the discussion of personnel matters. Mr. Morse seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Richardson voting aye. 5 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Cooper was not present for this vote.

1.3 Closed Meeting Certification: At 4:46 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. Mr. Meyer seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Richardson voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays.

There was no action.

The board recessed from 4:46 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

2.1 Moment of Silence: Ms. Emily Dooley, 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:

The following Board Members were present:

Ms. Amanda Burns
Ms. Emily Dooley
Mr. Chris Meyer

Ms. Shymora Cooper
Mr. Dom Morse
Ms. Nicole Richardson

Ms. Lisa Torres

Harper Ullrich,
Student Representative

The following Board Members were absent: None

The following Staff Members were present:	Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr.	Dr. Katina Otey
	Mr. Pat Cuomo	Ms. Kim Powell
	Ms. T. Denise Johnson	Ms. Maria Lewis
	Ms. Rachel Rasnake	Ms. Renee Hoover
	Ms. Beth Cheuk	Ms. Carolyn Swift
	Ms. Julia Green	Ms. Leslie Thacker

The following Staff Members were absent: None

5.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda: Ms. Torres made a motion, seconded by Ms. Richardson, to approve the proposed agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, 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:

- Jennifer Horne, CHS teacher, thanked the Board for the cell phone policy, advocated for the removal of other devices, highlighted teachers' active problem-solving and innovation, and criticized the lack of teacher input in policy decisions.
- Veronica Katz, a Burnley-Moran parent, expressed concerns regarding the rezoning process, specifically advocating for increased transparency and genuine engagement with affected communities, particularly those at Summit. She highlighted the potential disenfranchisement of these families and cited examples of perceived "performative engagement," such as a poorly communicated bus service. She requested detailed data on community outreach, including participation numbers, and a clear explanation of how survey results were utilized. Emphasizing the delayed implementation of rezoning until 2029-30, she urged the school system to use the available time to demonstrate how community feedback is being incorporated into the decision-making process and ensure that the best interests of all students are prioritized.
- Mandy Burbage, representing Piedmont Housing Alliance and Kindewood residents, attended the meeting and facilitated resident participation by broadcasting it via Zoom. Acknowledging the limitations posed by Ramadan, she read a letter from residents Maryam and Abdul Bayan, who voiced strong support for the proposed school rezoning plan to bus children to Burnley Moran Elementary. The Bayans cited safety concerns related to current transportation challenges and a desire for their children to experience cultural diversity as primary reasons for their support. Burbage also noted that a significant number of survey responses from Kindewood residents regarding the rezoning had been collected and submitted, emphasizing that the community was actively participating in the input process.
- John Jertson, a Locust Grove resident, expressed his inability to attend the meeting in person due to childcare responsibilities. He voiced his strong desire for his child to attend Burnley-Moran Elementary, which is located within a half-mile of his home, and to be able to walk there. He highlighted the existing community benefit of children walking to school in Locust Grove, emphasizing its positive impact on traffic and community cohesion. While acknowledging the difficulty of the rezoning decision, he requested that the committee consider allowing children who live within walking distance to continue attending Burnley-Moran and maintain the practice of walking to school.

7.1 Charlottesville High School Student Representative Report: Ms. Burns introduced Harper Ullrich, a junior from Charlottesville High School, as the new student representative, expressing enthusiasm for her term and acknowledging her work on strategies to amplify student voices.

- Student Representative Harper Ullrich began by expressing gratitude for the appointment and outlined her commitment to advocating for students. She reported on the pause of social-emotional learning during BKT based on student and staff feedback and noted ongoing efforts to develop a revised approach. Ullrich highlighted concerns regarding art supply funding, urging the board to address equity issues. She also addressed student frustrations with tardiness and attendance policies, advocating for a shift in focus to classroom tardiness and improved accuracy in attendance records. Further, she detailed a meeting with nutrition teams and plans to form a student committee for menu input. Ullrich acknowledged student concerns about grading policies and the late work policy, committing to further investigation. She positively noted the impact of the cell phone policy on school culture. Finally, she announced the creation of a student feedback form to enhance communication and gather input, to be distributed during BKT along with school-wide flyers.

Student and Staff Recognition

8.1 Social Workers Month: Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, requested the board join in celebrating the school's social workers during Social Workers Month. Highlighting their invaluable services to students and families, both in schools and the community, she announced a team's attendance at the "Reimagining Social Work: Advancing Unity, Expertise, and Innovation" conference in Washington D.C. Ms. Rasnake emphasized the social workers' daily provision of innovative, best-practice interventions and acknowledged their dedication during National School Social Work Week.

Special Recognition

9.1 2025 Virginia School Boards Association Business Honor Roll: Dr. Stacey Heltz, Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center (CATEC) Director, presented the 2025 VSBA Business Honor Roll nominees: Carter Myers Automotive (CMA), Gaston & Wyatt, and Our Lady of Peace. These businesses were recognized for their support of student work-based learning, participation in Advisory Boards, and hiring events, contributing to the goal of providing quality public education. VSBA will publish the Honor Roll and send recognition to the selected businesses.

Ms. Torres made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve the resolution and nomination of Carter Myers Automotive (CMA) for the 2025 VSBA Business Honor Roll. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Mr. Meyer, to approve the resolution and nomination of Gaston & Wyatt for the 2025 VSBA Business Honor Roll. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morse, to approve the resolution and nomination of Our Lady of Peace for the 2025 VSBA Business Honor Roll. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

10.1-6 Adoption of Consent Agenda: The following items were included in the consent agenda; **Personnel Recommendations**, [Minutes - January 30, 2025 School Board Budget Work Session](#), [Minutes - February 6, 2025 School Board Meeting](#), [Minutes - February 27, 2025 Special School Board Budget Meeting](#), and [Business, Financial, Routine Reports](#). Ms. Cooper made a motion, seconded by Ms. Torres, to approve the adoption of the proposed consent agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Items for Discussion

11.1 2025-2026 Career and Technical Education (CTE) Local Plan: Dr. Stacey Heltz, Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center (CATEC) Director, presented the 2025-2026 Career and Technical Education (CTE) Local Plan for Board information. The Board will be asked to take action on the CTE Plan on March 27, 2025.

Information presented included:

- 3E Readiness Framework
 - Updates from the originally-approved Employment Framework
 - Focus on student readiness for post-secondary opportunities
- CTE Program Summary
 - Overview
 - Comprehensive overview of CTE offerings
 - CTE Enrollment
 - Total number of CTE students: Specific total not provided
 - Industry Credentialing
 - Emphasizes the importance of credentials for student employability
 - Work-based Learning
 - Focus on practical experiences to enhance skills
 - Goals
 - Setting strategic goals for program enhancement
 - Budget Priorities & Local Plan
 - Outlines financial allocations for the upcoming year
- Industry Credentialing: Snapshot
 - Total Credentials Earned: 719
 - Students with more than one credential: 613
 - CTE Completers: 331
 - Specific certifications included:
 - Workplace Readiness Assessment Examination
 - WISE Financial Literacy Certification
 - OnShape Certified Associate Examination
 - Certified Nurse Aide Examination (Virginia Board of Nursing)
 - ASE (Automotive Service Excellence)
 - NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research)
 - State Licensures and Industry Certifications provided
- Work-based Learning Changes
 - Identified misalignment with graduation requirements and 3E Readiness standards
 - Out of 12 historical High-Quality Work-Based Learning (HBL) experiences:
 - Only 4 will count towards meeting 3E Readiness requirements:
 - Registered Apprenticeships
 - Internships
 - Clinical Experiences
 - School-Based Enterprises & Entrepreneurship
 - Stricter requirements for accepted experiences
- Budget Priorities (CTEMS 17-18)
 - Estimated allocation: \$109,717.71
 - Budget Priorities detailed:
 - Equipment:
 - Focus on modernization and ensuring industry-standard practices
 - Professional Learning and Development:
 - Targeting teachers, counselors, and administrators

- Career Exploration:
 - Programs to enhance student engagement with various career paths
 - Business & Industry Partnerships:
 - Establishing collaborations to support student learning and job placements
 - CTE Enrollment Data
 - Enrollment in CCS High School CTE Programs:
 - Engineering: 182 students
 - Computer Science: 100 students
 - Photography: 90 students
 - Marketing: 126 students
 - CATEC (Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center): 72 students
 - Goals for 2025-2026
 - Program of Studies (Priority 1, Target 2):
 - Expanding opportunities for all students in CTE
 - Curriculum (Priority 1, Target 2):
 - Integration of Career and Technical Student Organizations into the curriculum
 - Work-based Learning (Priority 1, Target 8):
 - Increase in career awareness and expanded opportunities for student engagement
 - Professional Learning (Priority 3, Targets 2 & 6):
 - Development of professional skills for educators to enhance student learning outcomes
 - Nondiscrimination Clause

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Torres inquired whether the new regulations would necessitate changes to the CTE program offerings.
- Dr. Heltz responded that they intend to maintain current offerings. She acknowledged the complexity of aligning graduation requirements with the new work-based learning framework and highlighted the need for continued collaboration with business and industry partners. She noted an exception for CNA students regarding clinical hours and discussed the challenges of securing paid internships. Dr. Heltz also suggested exploring school-based enterprises as a potential avenue for expanding work-based learning opportunities.

11.2 [School Attendance Process Update](#): Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, presented the process by which Charlottesville schools manage student absences. The report included state reporting requirements in addition to local regulations.

Information presented included:

- Year-over-Year Attendance Comparison:

School	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023	2024
Burnley Moran	9.68	6.58	11.14	6.19	12.17	9.58
Greenbrier	5.78	4.57	5.98	4.92	9.42	7.94
Jackson Via	7.19	9.5	8.57	17.89	16.89	26.35
Johnson	9.54	4.78	4.17	11.51	17.54	23.47
Summit	13.84	7.19	8.75	26.34	30.22	21.46

Trailblazer	5.3	3.82	3.24	5.45	15.36	14.14
Walker	5.75	5.57	9.75	18.33	25.33	21.18
Buford	9.18	10.6	11.41	24.16	35.92	24.82
CHS	6.93	6.67	7.78	25.49	18.67	39.21

- Attendance Process Update:
 - Presented by Rachel Rasnake on March 6, 2025.
 - Highlights that all attendance matters and missed instruction are cumulative.
- Chronic Absenteeism and Accreditation:
 - Chronic absenteeism has been reported since 2010 as part of accreditation.
 - Previous model benchmarked chronic absenteeism at less than 15%.
 - New accreditation model to include chronic absenteeism within the readiness category.
- Required Flexible Instruction:
 - Students may need to attend after-school or Saturday programs to make up missed instruction.
 - Data points that determine this requirement:
 - Rate of absenteeism
 - Root causes of absenteeism
 - Academic achievement levels
- Family Support and Engagement:
 - Availability of school resources for communication and intervention during attendance problems.
- Regulation JED-R: Interventions:
 - Unexcused absences:
 - 5 unexcused: Attendance conference
 - 7 unexcused: Referral to student success team for attendance plan
 - Continued unexcused: Multi-disciplinary team referral
 - Chronic absenteeism:
 - Referral to student success team.
- Regulation JED-R: Formal Notification:
 - Automated processes for notifying families using third-party vendors.
 - Letters Sent:
 - 3, 5 unexcused absences, and continued absences.
 - 5, 10 excused absences.
 - 10% or more chronic absenteeism.
 - Phone/Message Notifications:
 - Daily contacts when a student is absent without prior notification.
- Regulation JED-R: Excused vs. Unexcused Absences:
 - All absences affect learning time.
 - Excused absences:
 - Not considered truant; parents can excuse up to 10 school days.
 - Extended absences may be excused by doctors (3+ days).
 - Other excused absences include religious observances, funerals, and civic events.
 - Unexcused absences:
 - Considered truant; requires state reporting and can lead to court referrals.
- Policy JED: Attendance Standards:
 - School attendance is crucial for academic achievement and personal success.
 - Schools expect families' active involvement in ensuring student attendance from preschool through grade twelve.
- Policy JED: Responsibilities:

- Emphasizes that student attendance is a collective responsibility.
- Parents and guardians are accountable for their child's regular and punctual attendance as required by law.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Dooley inquired about the specific number of absences that qualify a student as chronically absent. Mr. Rasnake clarified that the threshold for chronic absenteeism is dynamic, calculated as 10% of total school days. Therefore, the absolute number of absences defining chronic absenteeism increases throughout the school year, ranging from approximately two days in the initial month to roughly 18 days by the school year's conclusion.
- Ms. Ullrich raised concerns about student motivation concerning attendance. She pointed out that while families and teachers are invested, some students seem indifferent. She suggested a need to find ways to effectively communicate and reinforce the value of classroom time to these students.
- Mr. Meyer expressed concern regarding the high rate of chronic absenteeism at Charlottesville High School, citing the reported 32.68% figure through February. He questioned the substantial staff time dedicated to attendance plans and meetings, particularly given that a large proportion of absences are excused. Ms. Rasnake clarified that attendance plans are primarily for unexcused absences, and staff focus on interventions for students facing significant barriers. She acknowledged the substantial time commitment involved in family and student communication. Dr. Gurley emphasized that both excused and unexcused absences contribute to chronic absenteeism, highlighting the challenge of controlling absences related to family vacations and leisure activities. Meyer then stated that he viewed this as primarily a parental responsibility, noting a perceived decline in parental oversight since 2017-2018, with potential contributing factors including the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ms. Richardson inquired about the impact of school delays on attendance, specifically asking if data is tracked for days with two-hour delays. Ms. Rasnake confirmed that delay days, especially when neighboring districts are closed, result in significantly higher absence rates. She also mentioned instances of high absence rates due to student-led civic engagement activities, such as a day in February where over 700 students were absent to highlight the impact of immigration. Ms. Richardson then shared her personal experience, stating that two-hour delays are disruptive for her family.
- Ms. Cooper inquired about the extent of family outreach regarding student attendance and tardiness, specifically asking if it went beyond letters to include direct engagement like home visits and collaborative planning. She also requested data on the number of CHS families placed on attendance plans. Ms. Rasnake acknowledged resource limitations, explaining that a tiered intervention system is used, with direct engagement prioritized for students facing significant barriers. She admitted that comprehensive door-to-door outreach for 30% of the high school is not feasible. Ms. Cooper then raised concerns about the accuracy of attendance records, asking if late arrivals are consistently recorded as tardies rather than absences. Ms. Rasnake confirmed that attendance data is subject to change due to ongoing adjustments and VDOE guidance and that a current initiative at CHS involves a detailed review of individual student records to correct inaccuracies. She noted that parental communication has been crucial in identifying data gaps and that correcting the attendance records is a very labor-intensive process.
- Ms. Torres inquired about the involvement of families in attendance conferences, confirming that they are included. She then asked about the response rate to these meetings, with Ms. Rasnake explaining that it varies depending on the school and the underlying issues. Ms. Torres expressed concern that parents might not fully understand the impact of chronic absenteeism on their child's education and the school's performance, suggesting a need for increased parent education. She also raised the possibility of broader societal factors, such as political climate, contributing to student absences. Ms. Torres emphasized the importance of supporting the staff involved in outreach and barrier identification and pledged the board's support.

- Dr. Gurley added that the reported attendance data is subject to ongoing refinement, as recent reviews have identified and corrected errors in attendance records. He emphasized that the data will be updated in future reports and that the process is leading to improvements in their attendance tracking practices.
- Ms. Burns asked for clarification on the proper channel for parents to address potential inaccuracies in their child's attendance records, particularly when using platforms like PowerSchool and ParentSquare. Ms. Rasnake explained that Charlottesville High School (CHS) handles period attendance, making it unique in displaying detailed attendance data. She identified Ms. Gore at CHS as the primary contact for attendance corrections but also suggested that parents could reach out to their child's school counselor or to Ms. Rasnake herself, who would then direct the inquiry to the appropriate personnel. For schools other than CHS, where daily attendance is recorded, the person responsible for checking students in is the appropriate contact.
- Ms. Cooper inquired about the consistency of attendance tracking across all schools within the district. Ms. Rasnake confirmed that the same attendance codes and expectations are applied district-wide. However, she noted that Charlottesville High School (CHS) utilizes additional codes due to its period-based attendance and diverse activities, such as athletics. She emphasized that the fundamental distinction between excused and unexcused absences remains consistent across all elementary schools. Ms. Rasnake encouraged Ms. Cooper and other board members to report any instances where they observe or hear about inconsistencies in attendance tracking, highlighting the ongoing effort to refine and standardize practices.
- Ms. Dooley clarified that attendance data for Lugo-McGinness students is included within the Charlottesville High School (CHS) figures. She also confirmed that disciplinary absences, such as suspensions, contribute to chronic absenteeism. She then expressed her appreciation for the report and made a direct appeal to parents. She emphasized the importance of regular school attendance, urging parents to avoid unnecessary absences while acknowledging that unavoidable absences due to illness will occur. She stressed that optional absences are too high and will negatively impact school accreditation and community perception. She concluded by asking for parental support in ensuring consistent student attendance.
- Mr. Morse inquired about the connection between chronic absenteeism and student promotion to the next grade. Ms. Rasnake explained that chronic absenteeism does not directly impact grade promotion. She noted that retention is a significant indicator of potential dropout rates, and thus, they avoid using absenteeism as a primary reason for retaining students. However, she also stated that they are examining how to appropriately award credits, emphasizing that credit should be based on mastery of content.
- Mr. Meyer questioned the allocation of social work staff, asking if resources are directed to schools with the greatest attendance challenges. Ms. Rasnake confirmed that they have three social workers primarily focused on attendance, with all social workers and social-emotional support counselors playing a role. She explained that an additional social worker was allocated to the two elementary schools with the highest chronic absenteeism and mental health needs and that social workers are also assigned to Buford/Walker and CHS.
- Mr. Meyer then asked about the measurement of these social workers' effectiveness in reducing absenteeism. Ms. Rasnake clarified that they are "tier three interventionists" who set individualized student goals. She provided an example of a social worker focusing on English Language Learner attendance. She emphasized that addressing deeply ingrained attendance issues and family systems requires significant time and effort. Success is measured by incremental progress, such as increased family communication, reduced absences, and improved punctuality. She highlighted that for many students, these social workers provide crucial connections, and their effectiveness is evaluated by the collective achievement of the goals set by the student, family, and provider.

11.3 Rezoning Update: Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer; Beth Cheuk, Supervisor of Community Relations, and Karen Jackson, Woolpert K-12 Analytics Project Manager; facilitated board discussion on rezoning aimed at balancing utilization of schools, and addressed questions.

Information presented included:

- Introduction
 - Overview of the purpose of the meeting
 - Importance of community engagement in the rezoning process
- Current Situation
 - 83% of families not impacted by the changes may not provide feedback
 - Summit Elementary is projected to be 141% utilized by the 2030-31 school year
 - The existing elementary capacity at CCS can accommodate students if distributed evenly
- Reasons for Rezoning
 - Goal: Rebalance school utilization among six elementary schools
 - Historical population shifts leading to inequitable utilization
 - Anticipated residential developments in the southern portion of the Division
 - Need to address the underutilization of some schools (below 60%) while others are over 80% utilized
- Comparison to Division-wide Averages
 - Walkable student percentages and utilization rates for each school
 - Current and recommended boundaries comparison
 - Low socioeconomic status (SES), English Learners (EL), and Special Education (SPED) percentages
- Upcoming Changes
 - Transition of PreK out of elementary schools by 2026-27
 - Walker Upper Elementary to become a PreK center
 - Buford Middle School to be renamed Charlottesville Middle School and serve grades 6-8
- Recommendations
 - Students in grades 1 and above to finish at current schools
 - Priority exemptions for incoming kindergarten students to remain at their starting school
 - Transportation considerations for families choosing cohort phasing
- Alternative Plan in Response to Feedback
 - Overview of the Alternative Plan
 - Developed in response to community feedback received during public hearings and surveys
 - Aims to address concerns regarding student movement and school capacity
 - Key Features of the Alternative Plan
 - Student Movement
 - 239 students (13%) moved under the alternative plan
 - 701 students (38%) identified as walkable under the new boundaries
 - Retention of Walk Zones
 - Burnley-Moran Elementary School (BME) retains its walk zone, ensuring accessibility for local families
 - Community Feedback Considerations
 - Acknowledgment of concerns regarding the practicality of transportation and reliability
 - Emphasis on maintaining neighborhood school attendance
- Public Feedback and Hearing Results
 - Summary of community feedback from public hearings and surveys
 - Concerns regarding transportation reliability and proximity to neighborhood schools
 - Mixed feelings on the timeline for implementing changes
 - Support for spreading diversity across schools
- Key Considerations for Rezoning
 - Maximize walkability and bus efficiency
 - Maintain or improve diversity and demographic balance
 - Longevity of the proposed changes (minimum of 5 years)
 - Acknowledge limitations in controlling housing developments and student densities

- Committee Involvement
 - Role of the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee and Staff Work Group for Rezoning
 - Objective to consider the needs of all CCS students
- Next Steps
 - Continued community engagement and feedback collection
 - Final recommendations to be presented to the Board after survey closure

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Burns clarified the composition of the committee, confirming the inclusion of parents, community members, teachers, staff, board members, and a city representative from Neighborhood Development Services (NDS). Ms. Jackson affirmed the diverse membership, highlighting the NDS representative's valuable contributions regarding local development information.
- Ms. Richardson inquired about the target percentage for elementary school utilization. Ms. Jackson responded that the target is around 85%, which allows flexibility for schools to accommodate fluctuations in class sizes. She clarified that the utilization target differs for middle and high schools due to scheduling differences.
- Dr. Gurley raised a concern about the alternative plan, noting that it divides the Locust Grove community, which the rezoning aimed to avoid. He emphasized that prioritizing walkability (the walk zone of 0.75 miles) can lead to dividing neighborhoods, meaning neighbors might attend different schools, which already occurs in Charlottesville.
- Ms. Jackson added that the alternative plan forces a trade-off between walkability and splitting a neighborhood, neither of which was prioritized. She also mentioned that the section of students moving to Trailblazer is a smaller group, and it's generally better practice in rezoning to move a larger group of students together to avoid isolation in their new schools.
- Ms. Cheuk clarified that the area moving west into Trailblazer is specifically the Dice Street neighborhood west of Ridge. The Dice Street neighborhood east of Ridge and Kindewood itself would remain rezoned for Burnley-Moran. She noted the circle on the map was large and not representative of the exact change.
- Ms. Dooley provided context, stating that the discussion was a work session for board members to ask questions and provide feedback and guidance to Dr. Gurley and his team as they move towards a formal recommendation and subsequent vote.
- Ms. Torres acknowledged the concerns of the community and emphasized that their feedback was heard. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have a work session and to participate in a walk to gather more input. Ms. Torres stressed the importance of considering the entire School Division's needs.
- Ms. Torres addressed concerns about the pace of the process, and Ms. Cheuk detailed the extensive communications that had been distributed, including information in the strategic plan, parent calendars, ParentSquare messages, newsletters, press releases, and community partnerships, specifically mentioning Ms. Houchens' work with Piedmont Housing. Ms. Powell added that the school website has been a consistent source of information.
- Ms. Torres reiterated that the board was never committed to a single plan and that community feedback was a key part of the process. She highlighted that the rezoning effort allowed for a division-wide look at supporting all students and expressed her commitment to ensuring every student is educated to their fullest potential.
- Ms. Richardson expressed concern that the proposed rezoning plan doesn't align with the goal of keeping communities together, particularly regarding walkability. She noted that, as a committee member, she discussed the importance of walkability for the Locust Grove community to Trailblazer Elementary, similar to how Locust Grove parents want to walk their children to school. She suggested revisiting the options.

- Dr. Gurley clarified that moving Rose Hill to Trailblazer in the proposal wouldn't create a walk zone for Rose Hill. He stated that the current model essentially maintains the existing situation where Rose Hill students go to Greenbrier.
- Ms. Powell and Ms. Cheuk provided information about a previous rezoning decision that impacted walkability at Trailblazer. Ms. Powell explained that the West Haven neighborhood, which is highly walkable to Trailblazer (formerly Venable), was previously zoned to Burnley-Moran. This was likely an intentional decision to keep those students out of Venable. The action was taken pre-pandemic, but finalized around 2022, to rezone West Haven to Trailblazer
- Ms. Cooper asked if the survey feedback from Kindewood residents was captured in the presentation.
- Ms. Cheuk replied that the data, specifically that 98 out of 125 Kindewood residents completed the survey, came from Ms. Houchens recently and was not included in the slides. However, the letter read at the meeting represented that community's information. Ms. Cheuk acknowledged the need to incorporate this data into Ms. Jackson's ongoing assessment of the preliminary feedback.
- Ms. Cooper emphasized the importance of capturing those voices to demonstrate community outreach and conversations.
- Ms. Burns asked about the current bus situation, specifically the number of buses and drivers, and whether the January recommendation would negatively impact transportation.
- Ms. Powell responded that there is no surplus of drivers, but the buses follow the students. She assured the board that Renee Devall, who handles bus routing, has been involved in the process, and the boundary shifts, including the most recent alternative, have been reviewed to ensure they don't create issues that would require adding more buses. She confirmed that the number of buses and drivers is not a differentiating factor between the rezoning options.
- Ms. Burns acknowledged the voices heard at the previous input session but wanted to bring attention to those who couldn't attend due to lack of means or mobility. She expressed frustration that parents in the community she works in can't attend meetings because they work multiple jobs and don't have transportation. She contrasted this with people who have the ability to choose where they live to walk their children to school.
- Ms. Burns criticized the city's planning process, stating that it doesn't adequately consider the impact of development on schools, capacity, and socioeconomic balance. She expressed hope that the current city council and city manager are open to changing this.
- Ms. Burns voiced her frustration with the introduction of an alternative plan after a recommendation had been made, stating that it felt like other communities were being moved while one community was staying put because they were the loudest and had the means and mobility to advocate. She said this "does not feel good" to her.
- Mr. Morse inquired whether the rezoning process would influence future discussions about building usage, renovations, or new construction. Dr. Gurley responded that these rezoning conversations are connected to broader Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) discussions. He emphasized the need for long-range thinking regarding building capacity and addressing aging facilities, noting that the division has buildings that are 100 years old and not designed for modern education.
- Mr. Morse expressed concern that the rezoning plan might remove the option of walkability for future residents in Kindewood. He predicted that after approving a plan, the school system might later advocate for funding by highlighting the need for neighborhood schools, except for Kindewood. He worried about the public perception of this, fearing it could be seen as another instance where a majority population of color is "almost there" but not fully included, remaining on the boundary.
- Mr. Morse also suggested that the school system should have a "wish list" for building improvements, considering whether to acquire different lots if existing schools like Summit are not suitable for expansion. He emphasized that he's trying to prevent future problems.
- Dr. Gurley acknowledged Mr. Morse's concerns, stating that they are also concerns in the rezoning process. He pointed out the difficult reality that, due to utilization issues, a marginalized group will inevitably have to move. He referenced a previous discussion about the fact that the option isn't to do nothing.

- Dr. Gurley agreed that the situation is a result of past decisions about housing development that didn't include schools. He reiterated that someone will have to move who shouldn't have to, and that both groups affected are marginalized and can walk, due to the high density in those locations.
- Dr. Gurley acknowledged that someone will be unhappy with any decision and that his recommendation will likely be unpopular.
- Mr. Meyer recalled a previous meeting in December where the Board reviewed options and generally agreed on a modified version of option two, which was similar to what they received in January. He was pleased with this because he felt it reflected the feedback given by the board.
- Mr. Meyer sought clarification on the alternative plan, asking if the main reason for not pursuing it was that it would split Locust Grove.
- Dr. Gurley confirmed that splitting Locust Grove was a key reason. He elaborated that the alternative plan also presents other issues, such as the fact that Rose Hill is already split. He argued that the current recommendation doesn't create a big shift for Rose Hill, as they already attend Greenbrier.
- Dr. Gurley acknowledged that while the alternative plan might achieve the goal of increasing walkability for some, it would still divide the Locust Grove community, with neighbors living across the street or next door attending different schools. He also pointed out that communities are already split in other areas.
- Dr. Gurley suggested that they could survey the Locust Grove community to gauge their preference on staying or going to Greenbrier. He predicted that those in the walk zone would want to stay, while those outside might want the entire community to move together, which he stated is not achievable.
- Ms. Cooper asked if a similar option to what was offered to Kindewood could be provided to Locust Grove, allowing residents to continue walking to their current school if they live within the walk zone.
- Dr. Gurley explained that they had "phased" the changes in Kindewood to avoid adversely impacting current residents, offering what he called "legacy stairs" to allow current residents to maintain their choice in the future without negatively impacting Summit Elementary.
- He stated that this approach wouldn't be feasible for Locust Grove due to the larger number of students involved and the need to balance utilization and socioeconomic status.
- Dr. Gurley acknowledged that the alternative plan, while presented in response to feedback, still has drawbacks. He used the example of neighbors at "415" and "417" going to different schools to illustrate the difficulty of drawing boundaries, noting that such divisions are often a reality for marginalized communities.
- Mr. Meyer acknowledged the potential for a "whack-a-mole" situation where moving one neighborhood leads to concerns from another. He stated his preference for the original January recommendation. Mr. Meyer also expressed a desire to finalize the decision soon.
- Mr. Meyer sought clarification on the timeline for a vote. Dr. Gurley explained that a vote could not occur at the current meeting because it was not properly noticed as a meeting where a recommendation would be made. He emphasized the importance of following protocol to avoid any questions about the process.
- Mr. Meyer acknowledged the need to provide feedback to Dr. Gurley to facilitate a recommendation that could be voted on.
- Mr. Meyer sought clarification on how to proceed, given the existence of two options. Dr. Gurley stated that he added the alternative plan to address walkability concerns raised during the walk. He suggested that the board provide feedback on the alternative plan, and in the meantime, the Locust Grove community could be surveyed.
- Dr. Gurley clarified that his actions were not solely in response to vocal individuals but also an attempt to address the concept of walkability, defining it by the school's standard of a 0.75-mile walk zone. He explained that the alternative plan aims to achieve walkability without significantly altering his previous recommendation, primarily by keeping the Rose Hill and Dice Street areas at their current assigned schools.
- Ms. Burns sought clarification on Rose Hill's current and past school assignments. It was confirmed that Rose Hill is currently assigned to Greenbrier.
- Ms. Torres asked committee members if Rose Hill had expressed a desire to be rezoned to Trailblazer.
- Ms. Dooley suggested referring to the survey results for definitive information.

- Ms. Cheuk added that the most consistent feedback across all communities was a desire to remain at the current school. However, she noted that the Rose Hill neighborhood understood the logic of being assigned to Trailblazer. She speculated that Rose Hill might be ambivalent about staying at Greenbrier or being rezoned to Trailblazer.
- Dr. Gurley reiterated that Rose Hill was assigned to Greenbrier when he arrived in the district.
- Ms. Ullrich, the Student Representative, emphasized the lasting impact of elementary schools and the importance of classrooms having the resources to support students in becoming the best learners. She stressed that this should be a key consideration in the rezoning process.
- Ms. Ullrich also raised a question about equity, asking how the board is being mindful and balancing the needs of the community, particularly marginalized communities, with the needs of communities that have the privilege of being more expressive.
- Ms. Cooper asked if buses were currently doing double runs.
- Ms. Powell replied that she didn't believe so, but would need to check. She stated that buses are generally running on time, but the transportation department is strained by driver call-outs.
- Ms. Cooper then asked if bus delays or the need to find substitute drivers affected attendance.
- Ms. Rasnake responded that students are not penalized if the bus is late. She added that if a student misses the bus due to a significant delay caused by the school system, there are ways to excuse the absence.
- Ms. Dooley asked for clarification on whether it's feasible to pull the entire Locust Grove neighborhood back into Burnley-Moran, considering utilization and demographic balance.
- Ms. Jackson confirmed that it's not feasible, as Burnley-Moran couldn't handle the growth needed to alleviate Summit Elementary's overcrowding.
- Ms. Dooley then connected this to transportation, asking if the 0.75-mile walk zone is strictly adhered to because they wouldn't run a bus north of the 250 bypass to go back to Burnley-Moran.
- Ms. Powell affirmed that transportation efficiency is a guiding principle. Taking buses over the 250 bypass is inefficient, and there are parts of the city that school buses can't navigate.
- Ms. Dooley noted the connection between the rezoning and recent City Council decisions to approve housing in the southern part of the district, specifically near Summit, which reinforces the need for rezoning. She agreed with Mr. Meyer's point about needing to provide direction on the rezoning options.
- Ms. Burns asked what the process would be if an alternative plan were to be considered.
- Ms. Cheuk recommended that if an alternative plan or two finalist plans are presented, Ms. Jackson would need to develop a different survey, and the school division would communicate with the community to gather feedback.
- Ms. Dooley stated that the board is facing competing interests between walkability and keeping neighborhoods together. She recalled that in December, the board prioritized maintaining or improving diversity and demographic balance. She clarified that the current discussion is focused on the tension between walkability and keeping neighborhoods together.
- Ms. Cheuk emphasized that the core issue is the balance between keeping neighborhoods together and walkability. She noted that both plans align with the board's directive to diversify all schools and achieve even utilization.
- Ms. Powell added that Kindewood has consistently expressed a strong desire to remain as one neighborhood throughout the rezoning process.
- Ms. Jackson noted that other neighborhoods have also expressed a desire not to be split, citing feedback from the neighborhood east of Summit and Belmont.
- Mr. Meyer recommended moving forward with the original January recommendation, citing concerns about fairness and process.
- Mr. Morse, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres all indicated that they were also leaning towards the January recommendation.
- Ms. Dooley expressed reservations about the "squiggly line" through Locust Grove but acknowledged that she was also leaning towards the January recommendation at that moment.
- Dr. Gurley clarified that a rezoning recommendation would be brought back for a first reading at the April board meeting (March 27, 2025).

- Ms. Cheuk stated that she would follow up with the neighborhoods that were alerted about the discussion to inform them that the board is interested in pursuing the original January recommendation.

Board Response to Written Reports

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

12.2 [Chronic Absenteeism Report](#): Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, prepared the Chronic Absenteeism written report for board information.

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

- Zyahna Bryant, a Charlottesville resident, raised concerns about the ongoing school rezoning process, focusing on historical and systemic issues. She highlighted the Rose Hill neighborhood's long-standing desire for access to Trailblazer Elementary, emphasizing that current school boundaries and diversity discussions are often impacted by historical racism, gerrymandering, and redlining. Bryant pointed to the infrastructure of roads like Preston Avenue and Route 250 as physical manifestations of these divisions. She noted the lack of transparency in the rezoning process, particularly given the presence of board members who were involved in previous, similarly criticized rezoning efforts. Additionally, she criticized the timing of meetings at 5:00 PM, which she argued excludes many working-class parents and community members, and suggested exploring alternative times or formats to improve accessibility.
- Shannon Gillikin, CEA President and Rezoning Committee Member, expressed frustration with the new rezoning proposal that emerged shortly before the meeting, criticizing it for contradicting the rezoning committee's previous recommendations. She argued that the new proposal perpetuated historical, racially motivated districting by keeping the Rose Hill neighborhood at Greenbrier Elementary, a situation she described as "gerrymandered racist districting." Ms. Gillikin also criticized the proposal's plan to move the Dice Street neighborhood, another historically Black area, and to bus the Kindewood neighborhood to Burnley-Moran Elementary.
- Jeff Fuller, a Burnley-Moran parent, expressed concerns about the potential influx of students from the Kindewood development, clarifying that the 450-student figure represents the total from all three phases of the development, not a single phase. He emphasized the value of walkable neighborhoods and the strong community fostered by walking to school, stating he wished everyone in the city could have that experience. Fuller acknowledged the necessity of socioeconomic mixing and integration, particularly in middle and high school, but cautioned against overwhelming any single school. He supported refining the rezoning plans and appreciated the school board's willingness to take extra time for careful consideration. Fuller also highlighted the need for the city council to address the growing student population by building more schools.
- Samman Akbarzada spoke about the challenges faced by immigrant families, particularly those who are non-English speaking and in survival mode. She highlighted the difficulties of attending 5:00 PM meetings, especially for those working multiple jobs and lacking transportation, and shared a personal experience of breaking her fast with an apple due to the timing. Akbarzada emphasized the pressure on first-generation immigrants to represent their communities and the issue of absent students, arguing that parents do not intentionally neglect their children's education but are often overwhelmed by survival needs. She shared the story of a woman with health issues and a son who wanted to work to support her, questioning how to address his school absence in such circumstances. Akbarzada urged the board to consider the experiences of marginalized communities and provide them with opportunities to be heard.
- Jacob Beckham, CHS Teacher, offered several suggestions to address the school system's challenges, urging the board to "think bigger." He proposed exploring collaborations with Albemarle County, noting the presence of county schools within Charlottesville city limits. Beckham also suggested repurposing unused spaces like the old Kmart, consolidating all elementary students into a single school in the current building, and exploring public charter school options. He advocated for centralized school bus

stations at elementary schools to ease transportation for high school students. Regarding attendance, Beckham argued that the reported 33% absence rate is an underestimation due to how attendance is recorded. He pointed out that students can be marked present despite missing multiple periods. He also highlighted the issue of students working to support their families. Finally, Beckham suggested shortening the high school day, citing a surplus of instructional hours, which he believes would still allow students to complete their graduation requirements.

- Dashad Cooper addressed the issue of Prospect being split between Jackson-Via and Johnson elementary schools. He highlighted the recent increase in English Language Learner (ELL) students in Prospect and emphasized the importance of community and family unity. Cooper argued that families should have the choice of which school their children attend, rather than being divided, to ensure children can attend school with their friends. He also spoke on behalf of other affected communities, urging the board to listen to and respect community opinions and work collaboratively to improve choices, rather than dismissing them. Cooper stressed the importance of demonstrating that the board is truly listening to the community.
- Corey Eicher, a CCS parent, and Locust Grove resident, raised several points regarding the rezoning process. He questioned whether the board was adequately considering capital improvements to increase school capacity as a solution to rezoning challenges, aiming to preserve neighborhood balance, walkability, and socioeconomic diversity. Eicher also criticized the lack of data supporting rezoning decisions, particularly regarding bus transportation and community impact, despite these being stated goals. He requested access to the newly presented alternative rezoning zones and the population surface data used for analysis, emphasizing the need for transparency and community access to this information.
- Ben Henderson, a Locust Grove resident, first addressed the issue of absenteeism, questioning whether it was unique to Charlottesville or a broader trend. He suggested exploring state-level solutions and potential changes to accountability metrics. Henderson praised the board's efforts in navigating complex rezoning issues and urged for a more cooperative dialogue, moving away from divisive language like "us versus them" or "black and white." He shared his own background as a Mexican-American who grew up in poverty and worked in community development, emphasizing the real-world consequences of how communities are defined and mapped. Henderson cautioned against relying solely on official neighborhood boundaries, arguing that community is organic and not simply defined by lines on a map. He used Route 250 as an example, stating that while it may appear as a barrier, topography and other factors can be more significant in shaping a community's experience. Henderson encouraged the board to consider the lived experiences of residents when making planning decisions.
- Conor Welch expressed appreciation for the board's engagement with the community, particularly the walk to school event. He addressed the board's apparent frustration with the new alternative rezoning plan, arguing that it's a necessary part of an iterative process and progress. Welch emphasized that first draft recommendations are rarely perfect and are improved through community feedback. He clarified that the alternative plan is not a direct reflection of the walk zone, as some within the walk zone are excluded. He acknowledged the frustration over the initial plan's division of the walk zone and viewed the alternative as an improvement, though not a final solution. Welch advocated for continued work towards equitable distribution and opposed reinforcing past "racist things" and "bad decisions," seeing them as further reasons to continue the iterative process.
- Raylaja Waller, from the Kindlewood community, expressed concern that the alternative rezoning plan appeared to cater to the "louder" Locust Grove community, despite claims that this was not the case. She emphasized the historical and ongoing pattern of marginalized communities being split, citing examples like Paige, Piola, and Anderson Streets, as well as North Berkshire Road being divided between the city and county. Waller questioned why Locust Grove should be exempt from the splits endured by other communities. She criticized a board member's desire for an immediate vote, arguing it was premature given acknowledged omissions in the presented information, particularly data from Ms. How. Waller stressed the need for a thorough review of all relevant data before any vote. She also corroborated Dr. Gurley's point that rezoning issues are not unique to Charlottesville, providing examples from Albemarle and Chesterfield Counties.

- Taylor Brown, from St. Clair Avenue, expressed support for the alternative rezoning plan, noting that his own proposed modification to maintain the Burnley-Moran Elementary (BME) walk zone was essentially the same. He acknowledged Dr. Gurley's point about the 0.75-mile walk zone, but pointed out that some houses were still excluded in the alternate plan. Brown suggested ensuring the plan accurately reflects the 0.75-mile radius. He recognized the inevitability of drawing lines and emphasized the community benefit of including those houses in the BME zone. Brown concluded by thanking the board for considering community feedback and presenting the alternative plan.

14.1 Board Member Comments:

- Harper Ullrich, Student Representative, shared that in rezoning discussions, particularly concerning elementary schools, the focus should be on equity, supporting marginalized groups, and rectifying historical redlining and gerrymandering, rather than prioritizing the concerns of privileged individuals.
- Mr. Meyer thanked Ms. Horne for her comments and expressed hope that they were heard, citing the cell phone policy as an example of the board's responsiveness. He acknowledged the nuance around screen time and expressed interest in future conversations, particularly with teacher leadership. Mr. Meyer acknowledged the extensive conversations around rezoning and appreciated the public feedback. He emphasized the need for efficient decision-making, highlighting the rigorous process that began in September, including data collection and feedback sessions. While acknowledging room for improvement, he urged against delaying the rezoning decision.
- Ms. Burns shared that Penelope Ginger Craig Headway is the new student representative to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Ms. Craig Headway is passionate about the environment, local and global issues, and is involved in the YMCA Youth and government program and leads the CHS film club. Ms. Burns also reminded everyone that registration for Parks and Rec summer day camp and the ultimate adventure camp for kids ages 6 to 12 is open. Camp programs include trips to the pool, field trips, and provide breakfast and lunch, with financial assistance available. Ms. Burns thanked Dr. Gurley, his team, the committee, and everyone who participated in the rezoning discussions. She expressed her support for affordable housing in Charlottesville and urged city leaders to consider the impact of growth on schools. She advocated for School Division representation in the Planning Commission to ensure future development aligns with school capacity, equity, and long-term sustainability. Ms. Burns emphasized the importance of community engagement in supporting schools and encouraged everyone to stay involved by volunteering, attending school events, and supporting the School Division.
- Ms. Cooper thanked everyone and emphasized that all voices matter in the decision-making process. She encouraged community members to reach out to school board members with questions or concerns. Ms. Cooper expressed interest in seeing additional data on students with attendance issues, including the number of students with Student Success Plans, the challenges and barriers faced by their families, and how these families are connected to resources. She shared her personal experience with a child facing mental health issues and stressed the importance of providing proper resources for families so that children can thrive. Ms. Cooper hoped that Student Success sessions would intentionally support families.
- Ms. Torres announced that the Piedmont Regional Education Program (PREP) is holding a Life After High School Conference on Saturday, March 22nd at PVCC, with 25 local agencies available to help prepare students and families for the transition after high school. The event is for those with students aged 4-21. Ms. Torres also announced that preschool registration is open for another week or two.
- Ms. Dooley expressed sadness at Dr. Korab leaving Burnley Moran, but excitement for her work in building out the division-wide preschool program. She believes Dr. Korab will be an excellent first point of contact for many in the community. Ms. Dooley also thanked Dr. Gurley and his team for a successful budget presentation to the city council.

15.1 Superintendent's Comments: Dr. Gurley expressed gratitude to staff and board members for their ongoing work in Charlottesville City Schools. He addressed concerns regarding the Prospect community, clarifying that its reunification is not permanently dismissed, but was excluded from the current zoning recommendation due to

potential resource imbalances at a single school. He committed to revisiting Prospect's structure during future rezoning discussions, which will occur every five years.

Dr. Gurley also acknowledged concerns about attendance. He stated that detailed monthly reports on attendance plans will be provided by Ms. Rasnake, with further information to be included in a board brief.

He emphasized the high quality of all Charlottesville schools and encouraged community engagement. He urged the community to focus on the opportunities available at each school rather than fostering a sense of competition between them, reinforcing his belief that Charlottesville is an excellent place for education.

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

- Provide a copy of the application for K-5 after rezoning

17.1 Upcoming Meetings: Ms. Dooley read the upcoming meetings.


18.1 Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

A video of the March 6, 2025 meeting can be located at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TYn1VTISLXgxEx3Rax1UdCXhDhiDAyz0/view?usp=drive_link



Emily Dooley, School Board Chair



Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk