



MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School
Thursday, March 28, 2024 (5:00 PM)

Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on March 28, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., in the Division Annex/SPED Conference Room.

PRESENT: Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson and Ms. Larson-Torres
ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Superintendent, and Maria Lewis, Director of Human Resources

1.1 Call to Order: Ms. Larson-Torres, School Board Chair, called the closed session meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Remote Participation in Closed Session: at 4:01 p.m. Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley to approve Amanda Burns' remote participation for the March 28, 2024 closed session meeting from her personal vehicle due to a personal work conflict. Ms. Larson-Torres seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres voting aye. 5 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Cooper and Mr. Meyer were not present for this vote.

1.2 Closed Meeting: At 4:02 p.m. Mr. Morse offered a motion to go into Closed Session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Sections 2.2-3711 (A) (1) , for the purpose of discussing personnel matters. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres voting aye. 5 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Cooper and Mr. Meyer were not present for this vote.

1.3 Closed Meeting Certification: At 4:36 p.m. Mr. Morse 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, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

There was no action.

The Board recessed from 4:50 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

1.4 Remote Participation by a School Board Member (Amanda Burns): Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morse, to approve Amanda Burns' remote participation for the March 28, 2024 meeting from her personal vehicle due to a personal work conflict. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

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

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

4.1 Roll Call of Board Members:

The following Board Members were present: Ms. Amanda Burns Ms. Shymora Cooper
Ms. Emily Dooley Mr. Dom Morse
Mr. Chris Meyer Ms. Nicole Richardson
Ms. Lisa Larson-Torres

The following Board Members were absent: Rayquel Allen, Student Representative

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

The following Staff Members were absent: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. Dr. Katina Otey

5.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda: Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, 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. Larson-Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

6.1 Comments from Members of the Community:

- Derek Hartline, Jackson-Via Teacher, addressed the board with two main concerns. Firstly, he questions the proposed \$40,000 expenditure on weapon detection systems. He expressed concerns about the impact on other safety budgets, the placement of the detectors, and their overall effectiveness. Secondly, Mr. Hartline highlighted a potential inconsistency with the "phones off and away" policy. He points out flyers displayed in the common area that contain QR codes, requiring students to use their phones for further information.
- Stephanie Martens, a graduate student at UVA, spoke in favor of a resolution urging parents to store guns safely. She argued that this would protect children by reducing accidental shootings, suicides, and other gun violence. Martens pointed out that millions of children have access to unsecured firearms and that school counselors already enquire about gun access during suicide assessments. By encouraging safe storage, the resolution would help prevent tragedies before they happen.
- Jenny Arcidicono echoed Stephanie Martens's concerns about gun violence and emphasizes the importance of safe gun storage. Arcidicono highlighted a statistic that underscores this point: three-quarters of school shooters get their guns from home, friends, or relatives. This statistic reinforces the connection between unsecured guns at home and school shootings.

6.2 Comments from Students: There were none.

7.1 Student Representative Report: There were none.

Special Recognition

8.1 Recognition of the Charlottesville High School Basketball Teams: Beth Cheuk, Supervisor of Community Relations, introduced Andy Jones, Student Activities Director, who recognized the Charlottesville High School Boys and Girls Basketball Teams for their stellar season. Both teams achieved impressive records and championships, with the girls finishing at 27-1 and the boys at 23-5. Jones highlighted their hard work, dedication, and perseverance throughout the season. He especially commended Coach Mitch Minor, who is retiring after an incredible 31-year career with 470 wins, for his positive influence on countless students, teachers, and community members. The recognition concluded with

acknowledging each player and coach by name, thanking the entire Charlottesville High School community for their unwavering support, and celebrating the transformative power of sports and inspiration these teams brought to everyone.

8.2 [Recognition of the VSBA Student Art Contest Winners](#): Beth Cheuk, Supervisor of Community Relations, introduced Aaron Eichorst, Director of Fine Arts, who recognized Walker Upper Elementary student Lucy Benedict for receiving 2nd place in the Elementary School category, Buford Middle School student Ruby Hoier for receiving 3rd place in the Middle School category, and Charlottesville High School Student Jinho Park for receiving 2nd place in the High School category. All three winning pieces will be part of the upcoming 2024-2025 school year art exhibit at the central office. The coordinator for Fine and Performing Arts, Aaron Nikor, congratulated the students and highlighted that Charlottesville City Schools received the most awards in the competition this year.

Ms. Cheuk shared remarks celebrating students such as Elaina Pierce for her track state championship in the 1600M (she also placed 2nd in the 1000M) and her Adidas Indoor Nationals 2nd and 3rd place finish in the mile and 800M, respectively. Ms. Cheuk also thanked Andy Jones and others for their support of CHS's new Medford League basketball team and congratulated the players for reaching the league semis in their first season. Finally, she spoke to the issue of gun safety messaging, stating that the division has included gun safety messages in the back-to-school safety flier in recent years, but she also welcomed a conversation about additional messages.

8.3 [Ms. Lorraine Williams: Recognizing her Legacy](#): Beth Cheuk, Supervisor of Community Relations, recognized Ms. Lorraine Williams for her service as a teacher to our schools, and for her role in advancing civil rights within Charlottesville City Schools and the larger community. Ms. Cheuk honored Mrs. Williams who was a pillar of the Charlottesville community and a champion for educational equality. A teacher and wife of the NAACP president Eugene Williams, Ms. Williams played a pivotal role in desegregating Charlottesville schools. Alongside her husband, she bravely fought for their daughters' right to attend a white-only school. This landmark victory not only integrated Charlottesville schools, but also had a wider impact across the state and nation. The Board and those present recognize Mrs. Williams' lifelong dedication to education and her courage in risking her own career for the betterment of all students. A moment of silence was observed.

9.1 [Disclosure of a personal interest in a transaction under Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3112\(B\)\(1\) and 2.2-3115\(H\)](#): Ms. Dooley read the disclosure of personal interest.

10.1 - 10.6 [Adoption of Consent Agenda](#): The following items were included in the consent agenda; [Personnel Recommendations](#), [Minutes - January 4, 2024 School Board Meeting](#), [Minutes - January 10, 2024 City Council/School Board Budget Work Session](#), [Minutes - January 18, 2024 School Board Budget Work Session](#), [Minutes - February 7, 2024 School Board/City Council Budget Work Session](#). Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dooley, to approve the proposed consent agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Action Items

11.1 [2024-2025 Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Local Plan](#): Megan Fitzgerald, CTE Specialist, presented the 2024-2025 Career and Technical Education (CTE) Local Plan for Board information on March 7, 2024. The item was presented for action. Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve the proposed CTE local plan. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

11.2 [Weapons Detection System: Sporting Events](#): Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, presented information on March 7, 2024 regarding the purchase of a Ceia Opengate detection system to be used primarily for athletic competitions (cost of \$40,000 for 2 gates can be funded from existing budget for safety/security equipment). The item was presented for action. Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Mr Morse, to approve the weapons detection system. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Ms. Richardson expressed confusion about the status of metal detectors for the schools. She recalled being told previously that the detectors were already purchased, but wants clarification on that point. Ms. Powell assured the board that staff followed established protocols. This included collaborating with the local police department and conducting thorough research on the most suitable technology. They prioritized scalability, ensuring the chosen system wouldn't become obsolete or overly expensive to maintain in the long run. While a specific vendor has been identified, a final purchase hasn't been made. Ms. Powell explained they're currently negotiating to determine the delivery timeframe, which is typically around six weeks from the order date.

Ms. Dooley raised concerns about potential misuse of metal detectors. She requested a detailed flowchart or checklist outlining their usage. This would clearly define situations where they'd be implemented, such as public events exceeding a specific attendance threshold. Her aim is to prevent a "slippery slope" where detectors become normalized and overused, creating an unwelcome security state. Furthermore, she inquires about including clear instructions (point "f" on the flowchart) for staff operating the detectors, ensuring everyone understands proper protocol. Ms. Powell agreed to Ms. Dooley's request for a clear public explanation of metal detector usage.

Ms. Cooper joins Ms. Dooley in expressing concerns about the potential lack of clear guidelines for metal detector usage. She reiterates the need for well-defined procedures and a transparent decision-making process. Specifically, she emphasizes two points:

- **Event Selection Criteria:** Ms. Cooper questioned if there will be a fair and objective system for determining which events require metal detectors. She wants to avoid situations where detector usage appears selective or arbitrary.
- **Action Plans for Detected Items:** Similar to Ms. Dooley's request for point "f" on the flowchart, Ms. Cooper emphasized the importance of clear procedures for staff to follow if the detectors identify any metal objects.

Ms. Burns emphasized two key points regarding the metal detectors:

- **Limited Use:** These are not meant to be a permanent fixture at school entrances. They are intended for specific events, likely athletic events and public gatherings chosen by the board, and would not be used routinely (Monday-Friday).
- **Complementary Approach:** Implementing metal detectors shouldn't detract from existing efforts to build relationships and utilize other security resources within the school and with community partners. These detectors would be an additional tool in specific situations.

Mr. Meyer echoed prior concerns about creating a clear protocol for the use of weapons detection and aligned with Ms. Burns in emphasizing that these detectors should not have become a routine presence at school entrances. Mr. Meyer views the detectors as complementary to existing security measures, not a replacement. He expressed comfort with their use for specific events where there was less control over who entered the school grounds. Underlying these points was Mr. Meyer's belief that maintaining positive relationships and information sharing within the school community remained a core security strategy. He viewed metal detectors as a supplementary tool for particular situations.

Ms. Larson-Torres emphasized the importance of addressing school security vulnerabilities. She reiterated her primary concern: securing the doors at Charlottesville High School (and presumably other schools) as a top priority.

Ms. Larson-Torres also inquired about the status of previously approved upgrades to radio communication systems and other security measures. Ms. Powell responded positively, confirming that the vendor would begin work on security system upgrades at the high school the following week.

Items for Discussion

12.1 [2024-2025 Special Education Annual Plan - Title VI-B:](#) Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, presented the proposed budget for the Federal Flow Through Funding for Special Education for 2024-2025 for both school-aged and preschool for Board consideration. The Board will be asked to take action on this item at the May 2, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Burns shared her concern around a missing adaptive tricycle from Jackson-Via Elementary. This specialized equipment is vital for students' physical activity and enjoyment. She expressed concern about the students' lack of access and wanted to know if there were ways for the community to help recover it.

Ms. Rasnake acknowledged the situation's seriousness. She emphasized the tricycle's importance for students' leisure and development in the LEAP program. They planned to collaborate with the family and would even consider investing themselves to ensure continued access to such essential equipment.

Ms. Richardson inquired about identifying children outside the school system who might need them. Ms. Rasnake outlined a comprehensive strategy to reach these students. They collaborate with early intervention programs to ensure a smooth transition for young children. Additionally, they proactively contact private schools in the area, letting them know that Charlottesville City Schools offers evaluation and support services to all students in need, regardless of their school district. An active referral process is in place, particularly with collaborating private schools that have similar support programs. Ms. Rasnake further explained how they leverage community outreach through school calendars, partnerships with pediatricians, and UVA's hospital program to encourage referrals. Finally, she acknowledged the power of positive word-of-mouth experiences from parents as a significant source of new referrals.

Ms. Rasnake addressed the recent closure of the Park Street MAACA Center, a Head Start program serving a significant number of Charlottesville City schoolchildren. The closure, a result of funding changes, primarily impacts Charlottesville City students enrolled there. While acknowledging the potential disruption and emotional challenges for transitioning families, Ms. Rasnake assured the board that Charlottesville City Schools is actively working with these families. Their goal is to ensure a smooth continuation of preschool services for the affected children within the city school system. Ms. Rasnake concluded by commending the team's efforts to absorb these additional students.

Ms. Larson-Torres expressed gratitude for Charlottesville City Schools' ability to absorb students displaced by the Park Street MAACA Center closure. She pointed out a potential disparity in surrounding school districts. Unlike Charlottesville, these districts might lack the capacity to offer pre-Kindergarten programs within their own schools. This creates uncertainty for students who may not find alternative preschool services, leaving their education in question. Ms. Larson-Torres reiterated her appreciation for Charlottesville City Schools' ability to serve as a safety net for these students, ensuring a smooth continuation of their education.

Ms. Cooper raised a concern for working parents of children with disabilities. The current program hours (7:30am to 2:30pm) clash with typical work schedules, creating a childcare hurdle. Ms. Rasnake acknowledged the challenge and admitted there's no current solution, but after-care programs specifically for preschoolers are under discussion. They recognize the complexity of accommodating different childcare standards for preschoolers compared to older children. Ms. Rasnake highlighted some existing options that might provide some relief: an extended three-year-old program, "mixed delivery slots" at specific schools offering more flexible hours, and the possibility of childcare subsidy grants to reduce costs. She also mentioned Barrett Elementary, which operates with extended hours similar to a traditional childcare center. Ms. Rasnake concluded by expressing empathy for the situation and assured Ms. Cooper of their ongoing efforts to find better support for working families with preschoolers.

Mr. Meyer expressed appreciation for the speech pathology services his daughter received through the Piedmont Regional Education Program (PREP). He then shifted the conversation to inquire about a large district potentially leaving the program.

Ms. Rasnake clarified that the potential withdrawal is specifically from the Ivy Creek program, a public separate school offered under the PREP umbrella. School districts pay per student slot at Ivy Creek, and Charlottesville City Schools currently funds 19 such slots, though not all are currently filled.

Ms. Dooley, a board member, confirmed that another district was considering leaving the program. Their school board recently passed its budget, leaving the final decision on Ivy Creek's funding uncertain. While the potential impact is unknown, Ms. Dooley acknowledged it could be negative for Charlottesville and other participating districts. Ms. Larson-Torres added to the uncertainty, stating the situation is still "to be determined."

Ms. Burns's inquiries covered three staffing areas. Regarding the vacant Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) position, Ms. Rasnake acknowledged the difficulty in recruiting someone fully certified with supervisory capabilities. They are exploring alternative supervision options and considering highly experienced candidates who might not be fully certified.

Ms. Burns then inquired about the decision to hire Occupational and Physical Therapists directly. Ms. Rasnake explained the cost-effectiveness of this approach, particularly when compared to contracting with PREP for multiple full-time positions. This strategy also ensured continuity of care for students who were already receiving services from therapists previously employed by PREP.

Finally, Ms. Burns expressed interest in an in-house Assistive Technology (AT) specialist to benefit all students. Ms. Rasnake clarified their existing efforts in managing various AT needs. While PREP offers specialized support for students with complex communication needs, Charlottesville City Schools leverages in-house solutions for many other AT requirements. They also benefit from PREP by sending staff to professional development conferences and providing opportunities to learn from students who successfully use AT in higher education and workplaces.

Board Response to Written Reports

13.1 School Board Member Committee Reports: Board members shared updates on recent activities in this written report.

14.1 Comments from Members of the Community:

- Peter Davis, a teacher at Charlottesville High School, expressed appreciation for the school board's recent decisions. He thanked them for approving the CTE local plan and the special education plan. He highlighted his experience as a special ed teacher and his current role teaching a Garden to Market class with exceptional students. He also mentioned his involvement with the Medford League and hosting an event at the school farm. Overall, his comments aimed to acknowledge the school board's support and positive happenings within the school.
- Ms. Cheuk recognized Peter Davis's efforts beyond the event he recently hosted highlighting the Urban Farming class and praised it for its positive impact. She mentioned that Adam Ortiz, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Director of the EPA, was very impressed by the program, the students, and especially Peter Davis, the teacher behind it all.

15.1 Board Member Comments:

- Mr. Meyer commended the board for their thoughtful discussion on weapon detectors and expressed his satisfaction with the outcome. He stressed the importance of existing safety programs alongside the new detectors. Shifting gears, he voiced concerns about the pending budget and the sales tax referendum. Finally, Mr. Meyer proposed revisiting the idea of installing solar panels on school buildings to address rising energy costs and promote environmental initiatives. He expressed his hope to collaborate with Ms. Powell and city staff to move this project forward.
- Miss Burns expressed appreciation for the opportunity to visit the schoolyard garden with Ms. Dooley. She complimented Mr. Davis and his students, particularly enjoying learning about the baby chicks. Miss Burns concluded by thanking Mr. Davis and praising the educators who inspire students in these creative projects.
- Mr. Morse spoke to bring awareness that there is a spring career fair at CHS on April 10.
- Ms. Dooley complimented Ms. Powell for managing the logistics of field trips with enough drivers for the buses. She concludes by wishing everyone a happy and restful spring break.
- Ms. Richardson expressed appreciation for the presentations, especially those recognizing the CHS basketball teams and art winners. She also highlighted her interest in learning more about Charlottesville's history, particularly the city's journey through segregation. Finally, she mentioned her anticipation for the presentation on access control upgrades at the next meeting.
- Ms. Larson-Torres thanked Ms. Powell for running the meeting and wished everyone a relaxing spring break.

16.1 Superintendent's Comments: There were none.

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

- Provide flow chart and/or checklist when and where weapon detectors will be used (and what events) - clear guidelines and action plan when they will be used; as well as updates on door security and communication tools (radios/walkies)

18.1 Upcoming Meetings: Ms. Larson-Torres read the upcoming meetings.

19.1 Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

A video of the March 28, 2024 meeting can be located at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12zUvWJy5XNHjw-nGl6Mqniksdzhkol6u/view?usp=drive_link

Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

Julia Green, School Board Clerk