



**MINUTES**  
**CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**  
**Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School**  
**Thursday, March 7, 2024 (5:00 PM)**

Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on March 7, 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 4:00 p.m.

**1.2 Closed Meeting:** At 4:00 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) and 2.2-3711 (A) (29), for the purpose of discussing personnel matters and to discuss negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement where public funds are being expended and where negotiations in open session would adversely affect the bargaining position of the Board. Ms. Larson-Torres seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Cooper was not present for this vote.

**1.3 Closed Meeting Certification:** At 4:50 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. Ms. Dooley 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.

**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	Margaret Heaphy, 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. Carolyn Swift
Ms. Renee Hoover	Ms. Leslie Thacker

The following Staff Members were absent: Ms. Beth Cheuk | Ms. Julia Green

**5.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda:** Ms. Dooley made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morse, 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 Students:** There were none.

**6.2 Comments from Members of the Community:**

- Derek Hartline, Jackson-Via Teacher and community member, addressed the Board with concerns around safety at Charlottesville High School (CHS) and suggested exploring alternative solutions to weapon detectors, like focusing security improvements on elementary schools. The speaker also mentioned a positive experience with a resource officer program in the past and inquired about its inclusion in future plans. He also expressed support for a more consistent approach to enforcing the new no-cell-phone policy, believing it could benefit student well-being.
- Laura Mulligan Thomas, retired Orchestra Director from Charlottesville High School, addressed the Board advocating for continued funding of the instrumental music program (band and orchestra) from 5th through 12th grade. She shared that the program has a long history of success, with alumni going on to perform with prestigious groups and artists, that the school board invested in instruments to ensure accessibility regardless of economic background, and that participation in the program is linked to academic and social benefits.
- Joyce Polifka, a parent and piano teacher, shared her experience with the Charlottesville City Schools' music program. Her daughter thrived in the program since elementary school, going on to prestigious performances and leadership roles. Ms. Polifka emphasized the program's accessibility and positive impact on students' social and academic development. She fears that funding cuts due to restructuring would limit opportunities for future students like her younger children.
- Karin Little, parent of a CHS and Buford student, expressed concerns about the school board's Strategic Plan priorities and highlighted the importance of tracking kindergarten readiness, which she believes was missing from the strategic plan due to a limited stakeholder engagement process. Ms. Little questioned the effectiveness of proposed safety measures, suggesting they might be a waste of resources and create a negative school environment. She encouraged the board to focus on areas with greater needs, such as hiring substitutes and providing more mental health support. Finally, Little emphasized the importance of fostering a positive school climate that values students and staff, rather than simply viewing them as potential problems.

**7.1 Student Representative Report:** Margaret Heaphy, Student Representative to the School Board, commended the school board for recent efforts in transparency and student opportunities. She emphasized the value of the new safety surveys and the need for student government collaboration on upcoming senior activities, including a post-school "Senior Sunset" and the traditional graduation events. Highlighting the challenges faced by the senior class, including the pandemic, leadership changes, and the loss of a classmate, Margaret proposes a memorial honoring Aiden Peters as their senior gift and concluded by urging the board to prioritize these activities in order to celebrate the positive aspects of the year and give the seniors a well-deserved send-off.

## Student and Staff Recognitions

**8.1 Social Workers Month:** Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, recognized Charlottesville City Schools Social Workers for the exceptional contributions they make to enhance the well-being of our students, families and community. Ms. Rasnake asked the board and those present to join her in recognizing the exceptional work these professionals do. They tackle a wide range of student challenges, from poverty and bullying to mental health and homelessness. Social workers provide crucial support, finding housing for families, connecting individuals with resources, and even offering mental health services when wait times soar. Their keen eye for behavioral changes allows for preventative measures, benefitting countless families, including the author's own.

**9.1-7 Adoption of Consent Agenda:** The following items were included in the consent agenda; [Personnel Recommendations](#), [Minutes from the December 7, 2023 School Board Meeting](#), [Minutes from the February 1, 2024 School Board Meeting](#), [Minutes from the February 15, 2023 School Board Budget Work Session](#), [Minutes from the February 22, 2024 School Board Meeting \(Budget Approval\)](#), and [Business, Financial, Routine Reports](#). Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, 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. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Larson-Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

## Items for Discussion

**10.1 Lab School Update:** Dr. Kim Wilkens, Director of Education and Outreach, and Dr. Jennifer Chiu, Associate Professor, UVA School of Education and Human Development, presented an update on the UVA Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School. Information presented included:

- Program Goals
- What is our lab school vision?
- Charlottesville Middle School
- How will our lab school operate?
- The UVA Innovation Academy Fellowship Experience
- The UVA Innovation Hub Experience
- Governing Board
- Budget Overview
- Capital Improvements
- Sustainability

Dr. Wilkens and Dr. Chiu provided an update on the progress of the lab school application. They shared that the application, submitted back in November, has successfully passed through multiple review stages. After initial approval by the standing committee in January, the application just underwent a second review this week and received a positive recommendation. This means the application will be presented to the board of education for final approval on March 28th. If the board grants approval, the school will have a 90-day window to finalize all necessary contracts and agreements.

Mr. Meyer asked several clarifying questions regarding the funding structure for the UVA Innovation Hub including associated capital improvements, the structure of the governing board and decision making process. Dr. Wilkens provided clarification that due to VDOE regulations, all funding flows through UVA. CCS will receive a sub-award for their services, and personnel embedded in the middle school will be UVA employees. There will be \$1.5 million allocated for capital improvements as part of the agreement. This funding seems to be specifically earmarked for upgrading the science classrooms in the lab school. The governing board will have three UVA and two CCS members. Dr. Wilkens assured consensus-based decision making. Dr. Wilkens confirmed a "research practice partnership" where CCS educators, students, and interested parents can participate in research and be included on publications.

Mr. Morse asked how the first year's two proposed integrated projects were determined. Dr. Wilkens responded that the lab school plans to have two integrated projects per year, with the first year focusing on skill development and potentially involving some initial set-up for using project tools. These projects may change based on how the year progresses. Year three's projects will likely be influenced by observations from the first two years. Dr. Wilkens

provided an example of a robotics project from January where seventh graders learned about animal adaptations and mimicked them using robots, integrating science and computer science standards. Future projects could involve a variety of engaging activities like robotics or coding.

Mr. Morse questioned the allocation of capital improvement funds. He expressed surprise that \$200,000 would be spent on soundproofing and acoustics, which seems counterintuitive to the project-based learning focus, especially considering it's \$80,000 more than allocated for technology upgrades. Dr. Wilkens acknowledged the initial counterintuitiveness but explained the reasoning after visiting the designated classrooms. The open space can get loud and chaotic during project-based learning, and soundproofing was actually a teacher request. Having experienced the noise firsthand, Dr. Wilkens now agrees with the allocation and shared that funding figures were provided by city staff.

Ms. Dooley raised concerns about staffing the lab school, given current science teacher vacancies at Buford. Dr. Wilkens expressed hope that the \$20,000 incentive for participating in the project and the focus on innovative project-based learning will attract candidates. She mentioned some initial interest but acknowledged the staffing challenge. Mr. Jordan confirmed the current vacancies (one filled by a long-term sub) but shared that a recommended candidate for the science learning facilitator position next year has accepted the position.

**10.2 [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. The Board will be asked to take action on the CTE Plan on March 28, 2024. Information presented included:

- CTE Program Summary
  - Overview
  - CTE Enrollment
  - Industry Credentialing
  - Work-based Learning
  - Goals
  - Budget Priorities & Local Plan
- Overview
  - 16 Career Clusters
  - 30+ Career Pathways
  - 20 Industry Credentials Offered
  - Current enrollment: 1362 students (grades 7-12)
  - Cohort 2023 - 134 Completers
- CTE Enrollment Data
  - Top 5 CTE Programs (by size):
    - Engineering - 283 students
    - Computer Science - 107 students
    - Photography - 78 students
    - Marketing - 73 students
    - CATEC - 72 students
  - Industry Credentialing: Snapshot
    - Workplace Readiness Assessment Examination
    - W!SE Financial Literacy Certification
    - SkillsUSA: Photography Examination
    - OnShape Certified Associate Examination
    - Certified Nurse Aide Examination: Virginia Board of Nursing
    - ASE
    - NCCER
  - Work-Based Learning
    - Top work-based learning experiences:
      - Service Learning
      - Internships

- Externships
- CCCRI: College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index
  - The CCCRI is an unduplicated count of students in the on-time graduation cohort who meet at least one of five criteria:
    - AP / IB / DE Credit
    - CTE completer + credential
    - Completion of a work-based learning experience
    - Completion of service learning
    - Three JROTC courses + credential
- Cohort 2023 and Cohort 2024 Enrollment Data
- Goals for 24-25
  - Plans of Study (Priority 1, Target 3)
    - Alignment from middle, high school, and CATEC
  - Curriculum (Priority 1, Target 2)
    - Career and Technical Student Organizations
  - Work-based learning (Priority 1, Target 8)
  - Increase career awareness and career opportunities for students
- Budget Priorities (CTEMS 17-18)
  - Estimated allocation: \$106,782.19
  - Priorities
    - CATEC
      - Equipment
      - Professional Learning and Development
    - CHS
      - Professional Learning and Development
- Nondiscrimination Clause

Ms. Burns inquired about the lack of a JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps) program at Charlottesville High School. Ms. Fitzgerald explained it wasn't a popular course among students based on annual interest assessments. Staffing qualified instructors also poses a challenge. Ms. Fitzgerald emphasized aligning course offerings with both student interest and labor market needs. While acknowledging her own positive experience with JROTC, Ms. Fitzgerald indicated it wasn't widely popular and hadn't been actively pursued due to low student interest. Ms. Burns expressed a desire to explore options for better understanding career paths available to students, questioning if there might be alternative approaches to sparking student interest in JROTC or similar programs.

**10.3 [2023-2028 Strategic Plan Update / Data Dashboard Update](#):** Dr. T. Denise Johnson, Supervisor of Equity and Inclusion, presented details regarding the Charlottesville City Schools' 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Dashboard. As an integral component of foundational equity work and strategic planning initiative, Charlottesville City Schools commissioned a consulting firm to develop a comprehensive data dashboard. This dashboard along with the components on the dashboard webpage will serve as a repository for both quantitative and qualitative data, and it will incorporate metrics aligned with the inclusive equity excellence framework. Charlottesville City Schools is still working with the vendor to ensure that the dashboard reflects the information we wish to incorporate. The data for the dashboard can be accessed at the following link: Data Dashboard - Template Site (please copy paste into your browser): <https://lookerstudio.google.com/u/0/reporting/fb1e7212-6d98-467e-b109-dbafe6c367ac/page/kSFkD>

The presentation of a new data platform prompted Mr. Meyer to inquire about its ongoing maintenance. Dr. Johnson addressed this concern by introducing Mr. Cuomo, the Director of Technology, as the lead for the platform. While the Technology Department will handle the development and visual aspects of the platform, data population will rely on existing sources. Mr. Cuomo clarified that individuals like Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment & Accountability, will continue to manage the data itself. Updating the platform is also a collaborative effort. The ideal scenario is annual updates, but Mr. Cuomo emphasized their adaptability. They are committed to a "living ecosystem" where data sets will be refreshed as new information becomes available. This ensures the platform offers the most current picture of the data it presents.

**10.4 [Middle School Modernization Project Update](#):** Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, provided an update with images for the Middle School construction project including exterior progress, recent and pending changes and a big picture of the construction plan.

Ms. Powell shared that despite some rainy days causing minor setbacks, the project remains on schedule and within budget. The focus of the current construction phase is the new academic building and gym, targeted for completion by the 2025-2026 school year. To prepare for the interim year when current buildings are inaccessible, planning is underway for temporary use of spaces like fitness rooms to accommodate Fine Arts programs. The presentation also addressed the exciting progress on environmental design. The working groups, incorporating community input, have developed concepts that will likely be unveiled at the upcoming May board meeting. These designs are said to incorporate themes specific to Charlottesville.

**10.5 [School Safety Update](#):** Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, shared feedback from the survey regarding weapons detection, resource officers and cell phone policy; and will provide recommendations for next steps to improve the current safety model. The presentation for this agenda item was updated and re-posted on March 5th/6th following a push at CHS to increase student participation in the survey. Information presented included:

### **Safety Model: Feedback & Recommendations**

- February 1, 2024 School Board Discussion (Three possible ideas to consider for CHS):
  1. Using weapons detectors at sporting events and/or school entrances
  2. Learning more about the Youth Resource Officers that connect the Cambridge (MA) Police Department with Cambridge Public Schools
  3. Reconsidering the student cell phone policy at CHS (how to approach cell phones during lunch or between classes)
- Survey for Public Engagement
  - Ways of Gathering Survey Feedback (opens Monday, February 5)
    - ParentSquare/website
    - Social media
    - Media coverage
    - At public events
    - During Black Knight Time at CHS
    - Conversational feedback gathered through student, family interactions with school and division staff
  - Survey Participation Data
- **Recommendations - Next Steps (Recommendations & Rationale)**
  - **Using weapons detectors at sporting events and/or school entrances**
    - Proceed with purchase of 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)
      - Consistent with police recommendations to area high schools along with the clear bag policy that has already been implemented
      - Consistent with what students & families experience at other sporting and entertainment events
      - Can be managed without significant changes or additions to event staffing
      - Responds to concerns for prevalence of weapons in the community and the fact that attendees at school events are not restricted to members of the school community
      - If there are multiple events being hosted at the CHS gym, auditorium and/or stadium on the same night, gates will be at the event with the largest anticipated attendance or split between events
    - **Learning more about the Youth Resource Officers that connect the Cambridge (MA) Police Department with Cambridge Public Schools**
      - Proceed with learning more about the Youth Resource Officer model in Cambridge
      - Current survey data is clear on this question.

- Consistent with the local data from the 2020-2021 Superintendent’s Committee on School Safety/Security Resources which indicated widespread support to proceed with a new model that would include resource officers:
  - The archived work of the Committee remains available on the CCS website ([charlottesvilleschools.org/safety](http://charlottesvilleschools.org/safety) , Superintendent Committee on School Safety/Security Resources tab, committee’s materials on this page, “Click Here for Minutes, Resources and More” bar at the bottom).
- Determine the optimal model for officer involvement in CCS school safety moving forward
  - Address inefficiencies that make it more difficult for administration to meet legal requirements while managing all other aspects of the building
  - Prioritize systems thinking above the feelings or perspectives of any particular group/individuals
  - Identify and restore essential elements of the prior SRO model that were beneficial to students and families, while also taking lessons learned from the past and present to ensure potential pitfalls are avoided
  - Removing officers from CCS schools did not remove CPD from the safety model
- **Reconsidering the student cell phone policy at CHS (how to approach cell phones during lunch or between classes)**
  - Maintain the current practice of “off and away DURING CLASS”
    - Align policy with the preponderance of actual current practices
    - Refine practices and ensure consistent enforcement
    - Promote a mutual accountability ecosystem
      - Consistent student expectations
      - Admin will continue to support teachers & students in managing the expectations
      - Student agency to regulate in-class & out-of-class expectations
      - Provide additional supports for staff who are struggling with students not responding to Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions
  - Create a standing working group of diverse students, staff, and administration to focus on school climate/culture
    - Monitor school climate using existing data and other sources
    - Include specific initiatives around the impacts of cell phone/screen time and extend this education/outreach to middle and elementary students
    - Spear head activities to continuously improve climate/culture, helping everyone to have a sense of belonging
- **PROPOSED NEXT STEPS**
  - Purchase the recommended detection equipment, schedule training and review policy related to searches
  - Work with CPD to schedule the visit to Cambridge, MA to get additional information regarding that model
  - Update the Cell Phone Policy and form the working group for CHS climate & culture
- **Final Thoughts**
  - These three areas draw out varying (often polar opposite) perspectives
  - from our stakeholders.
  - Keep in mind our shared commitments to safety, community, mental
  - health, and partnership

## **Board Feedback on recommendation 1 (Using weapons detectors at sporting events and/or school entrances):**

Ms. Burns sought additional details concerning the proposed weapons detection system. Her inquiries focused on the designated areas for the system's deployment and its potential use during events held for external groups.

Mr. Meyer inquired whether this decision stemmed from budgetary limitations or feedback received. Ms. Powell clarified that feedback was the primary driver. She explained that acquiring more devices wouldn't be beneficial if there's a lack of staff to handle the resulting data processing workload. She acknowledged that staffing challenges were a factor considered during the recommendation's development.

Ms. Heaphy raised concerns about the student survey used to gather input on the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). She questions whether the survey is the sole method for collecting student voices, particularly considering the potential for bias. Ms. Heaphy highlighted the demographic imbalance in the survey results (69% white respondents) and expresses doubt that it accurately reflects the entire student body's perspective. She implied that some student voices might have been missed altogether by the survey format. Ms. Heaphy sought clarification on whether these limitations are being factored into formulating recommendations based on the survey data.

Ms. Powell responded to Ms. Heaphy's concerns about the student survey by acknowledging a long-standing challenge in Charlottesville City Schools: obtaining truly diverse participation in these surveys. She admitted that regardless of the initiative (strategic plan or others), achieving a balanced demographic spread in survey responses has proven difficult.

Ms. Dooley raised a procedural question, wanting to confirm if the current discussion requires a formal vote by the board. Dr. Gurley assured her that a vote is unnecessary and the action doesn't incur additional spending beyond the already allocated security budget.

Ms. Larson-Torres inquired as to what other safety items might be delayed or bumped if funding is allocated for weapons detectors. Ms. Powell responded that CCS has allocated funds and placed an order for security upgrades, our current installer, Mid-Atlantic, is finishing a project at another location and then committed to CHS next. This prioritization will delay other planned improvements. While additional funding might become available by summer, Mid-Atlantic's busy schedule stretches through that period, creating a bottleneck. To overcome this, CCS is exploring faster implementation options that don't require extensive coordination or rely heavily on integrator availability. There's confirmation that the door project at CHS won't be impacted by the overall delays. Mid-Atlantic is being prioritized to expedite their arrival and begin work on the project as soon as possible.

Ms. Powell provided an explanation of planned door access projects at CHS. The CHS door project tackles security concerns in our large building with numerous side doors. It implements a two-part solution:

- Interior access readers: Installed likely on the inside of doors, these readers will require a fob for entry, restricting access and boosting security.
- Audible alarms: These alarms address two situations:
  - Door propping: An alarm will sound if someone keeps a door open to bypass entry procedures.
  - Exiting without a fob: The alarm will activate if someone leaves through a side door without using their fob.

This combined approach aims to improve security and awareness in a building where constant monitoring of all side doors is a challenge.

Ms. Powell addressed Mr. Burns' question regarding weapons detection gate implementation. Her proposal involves a pilot program during the spring sports season, such as soccer games. This phased approach offers several advantages:

- Timeline: Implementation can occur within the current school year.
- Training: Staff can be trained on operating the gates before the high-volume football season.
- Community: The school community can become accustomed to the new system.



- Pilot Program: Testing at soccer games (potentially requiring only one gate) allows for adjustments before full deployment.
- External Benchmarking: Aligns with the implementation plans of Albemarle High School.

Ms. Burns emphasized the importance of a strong communication plan for the community regarding the implementation of new gates at sporting events in effort to avoid inconveniences for attendees.

Mr. Meyer expressed that he is not in support of the proposed gate implementation at sporting events. He requests a formal vote from the board to make a decision.

Ms. Dooley expressed a desire for more time to process the information before voting and suggested postponing the vote until the next meeting on March 28th. Ms. Powell, responsible for overseeing implementation, acknowledged the need for the board to feel comfortable with the decision.

**Board Feedback on recommendation 2 (Learning more about the Youth Resource Officers that connect the Cambridge (MA) Police Department with Cambridge Public Schools):**

Ms. Powell proposed a two-pronged approach to improve the school safety model. First, she recommended studying the SRO model in Cambridge, a previously unexplored option due to communication hurdles. Second, she urged a reevaluation of SROs in general. Survey data and current inefficiencies suggest a need for change. While some valued the prior SRO presence, Ms. Powell shared that she prioritizes a systematic approach that addresses past issues and ensures efficient collaboration with police, which remains vital for school safety.

Mr. Meyer commended the rationale behind Ms. Powell's proposal for improved school safety. While specifics are lacking, he suggested focusing collaborative efforts with the local police department. This collaboration should prioritize solutions that address both student safety and mental health, potentially using the Cambridge model as a springboard for discussions.

Mr. Meyer and Ms. Dooley shared support for action once an optimal model is identified.

Ms. Richardson expressed a desire to learn more about the process for conducting school safety searches. Specifically, she's interested in two aspects:

- Training: How are staff members trained to conduct these searches?
- Policy: What is the official policy outlining the procedures and guidelines for school safety searches?

Ms. Burns also shared comments of support for collaboration with the local police department. However, she adds a personal anecdote about her son's positive experience with an SRO, highlighting the potential value these officers can bring. Recognizing the potential of the Cambridge model, she emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique needs of the Charlottesville community and its students. She suggests exploring how aspects of the Cambridge model can be adapted to create the best possible solution for Charlottesville.

Ms. Larson-Torres inquired about the specific legal requirements that the current school safety model struggles to meet. Ms. Powell clarified that all legal requirements are being met, but the current approach requires a lot of coordination and phone calls. Previously, having SROs in the building streamlined communication and facilitated tasks like threat assessments and mandatory reporting. While aspects like scheduling meetings for crisis management remain efficient, the current model creates inefficiencies around threat assessments and mandatory reporting follow-through due to the lack of readily available SROs.

Mr. Meyer inquired about potential board member involvement in exploring the re-evaluation of SROs in schools. While not seeking a formal action, he wonders if any board members would be interested in taking a more active leadership role. Dr. Gurley responded that he welcomes further discussion and confirmed his previous interest in learning more about the Cambridge model. He shared cost-effective approaches like Zoom meetings initially and highlighted ongoing efforts with the police chief. Recognizing the importance of diverse perspectives, Dr. Gurley acknowledged Ms. Larson-Torres' point about inclusion. He assures the board of their commitment to listening but

emphasizes the challenge of ensuring all voices are heard, particularly from Black and brown communities. He specifically invites input from Black and brown community members who may oppose the SRO re-evaluation.

Ms. Cooper emphasized the ineffectiveness of current methods for gathering community voices on the SRO issue. Traditional approaches aren't reaching the target audience. She argues for creative solutions ("thinking outside the box") to incentivize participation, particularly from underrepresented groups. Ms. Powell acknowledges the need and suggests collaborating with established community leaders from organizations like City of Promise and the Kindewood Neighborhood Association. By holding meetings within neighborhoods, they hope to improve the inclusivity of the information-gathering process.

Dr. Gurley discussed challenges in presenting information about student perspectives on the SRO issue. He suggested that the board may place greater weight on quantitative data (numbers) compared to qualitative data (opinions and experiences). As a potential solution, he proposes presenting qualitative data through a more representative group.

Dr. T. Denise Johnson, Supervisor of Equity and Inclusion, acknowledged the challenges of gathering comprehensive community input and assured the board that the administration can organize more innovative community engagement meetings. Recognizing the existence of diverse viewpoints, she emphasized the importance of strategically selecting which voices to prioritize during discussions about the SRO issue. This suggests a focus on ensuring certain community perspectives are central to the conversation.

Ms. Powell emphasized the significant challenges and time commitment involved in implementing any decision regarding SROs, regardless of the chosen direction. Re-introducing SROs would require a lengthy process (likely exceeding six months) to develop a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), update policies around searches and officer involvement in discipline, and ensure a minimized culture of surveillance. Ms. Powell suggests learning from other Virginia districts like Arlington and Alexandria, which both initially removed and later reinstated SRO programs with newly developed MOUs. Even if SROs are brought back, determining the optimal number to address operational efficiency and the diverse needs of students and families presents another layer of complexity.

### **Board Feedback on recommendation 3 (Reconsidering the student cell phone policy at CHS (how to approach cell phones during lunch or between classes):**

Ms. Powell shared that Charlottesville High School (CHS) is considering solidifying the current practice of keeping cell phones off and away during class time. This aligns with what most teachers are already doing and addresses concerns about inconsistent enforcement. The proposal goes beyond policy changes. Recognizing the challenges faced by staff, it allocates additional support for those dealing with student phone use issues. To cultivate a more positive school environment, the plan establishes a working group focused on improving school climate and culture. This group will be diverse, comprising students, staff, and administrators. Regularly examining data on school climate, including the impact of cell phones and screen time, is another key aspect of the plan. The proposal extends its reach beyond CHS by suggesting a peer education program. High school students would become responsible technology role models, teaching middle and elementary school students about smartphone use. This initiative fosters a sense of leadership among CHS students while promoting responsible technology use across all grade levels. Overall, this plan strives to create a more positive learning environment for all CHS students by ensuring consistent phone use policies, supporting staff, fostering a positive school climate, and promoting responsible technology use through peer education.

Ms. Heaphy highlighted the confusion among Charlottesville High School (CHS) students regarding the status of Yondr pouches, devices meant to hold cell phones during the school day. She points out that prior announcements indicated these pouches would be in use by September or October, leading to student inquiries. Ms. Heaphy asks directly if the Yondr pouches were ever ordered and seeks clarification about why the community received inaccurate information. This suggests a need to address the discrepancy between previous announcements and the current status of the Yondr pouch program.

Dr. Gurley responded to clarify the confusion surrounding cell phone policies at Charlottesville High School (CHS). He acknowledges miscommunication regarding Yondr pouches, initially intended to hold phones throughout the day. While the initial policy mandated phones to be "off and away" all day, discussions about exploring Yondr pouches for

implementation on a specific date caused some confusion. Dr. Gurley emphasizes that Yondr pouch use was never confirmed. Feedback from students, teachers, and administrators highlighted the positive impact of "off and away" in classrooms but challenges managing phone use in hallways. Based on this input, Dr. Gurley proposes a revised policy that maintains "off and away" in classrooms, establishes designated phone use areas outside of class, and requires board approval after being drafted by the team. This approach aims to address stakeholder concerns and incorporate both survey data and qualitative feedback.

Mr. Morse asked for clarification on the timeline for implementing the proposed cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). He specifically asks if the "off and away" rule, likely referring to keeping phones off and inaccessible during class, would be implemented at the earliest for the next school year.

Ms. Powell clarified the implementation timeline for the proposed cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). The "off and away" rule, which likely refers to keeping phones off and inaccessible during class, is already becoming the norm and could be implemented readily this year. Formalizing this existing practice would address the disconnect between policy and what's actually happening in classrooms. In contrast, enforcing "off and away" for the entire school day would require a more extensive timeline. Ms. Powell suggests this might necessitate tools like Yondr pouches, which would take longer to implement.

Dr. Gurley proposes an expedited approach to implementing the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS), based on the results of a recent survey. If the policy aligns with the survey's recommendations, which likely involve allowing phones in hallways and cafeterias, Dr. Gurley suggests incorporating the changes into the standard spring policy update cycle.

In response to Ms. Richardson's query about upcoming activities, Dr. Johnson details Charlottesville High School's (CHS) plans for a lively school year.

- Student Input: CHS is prioritizing student voices by collaborating with them to plan activities that interest them.
- Monthly Celebrations: Funded by a generous \$10,000 donation, CHS will host monthly celebrations similar to those held during a previous "reset time," offering engaging activities for students.
- School Spirit and Senior Events: Pep rallies and exciting senior activities are also on the horizon, with planning currently underway.
- Student Government Collaboration: CHS is partnering with the student body to develop additional activities.

Ms. Larson-Torres questions the foundation of the proposed cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). She highlights the potential lack of student input by expressing concern about the following:

- Unclear Implementation of Educational Initiatives: Ms. Larson-Torres is unsure if committee-proposed meetings to educate students about cell phone use ever occurred.
- Data Limitations of Survey: She worries that the policy recommendations rely solely on survey data, potentially neglecting the role of student education in informing the policy.
- Importance of Student Education: Regardless of the final policy decision, Ms. Larson-Torres emphasizes the critical need to educate students on responsible phone use.
- Staff Education Considerations: She additionally suggests that staff education on this topic would also be beneficial.

Dr. Otey clarified the status of student education on cell phone use at Charlottesville High School (CHS). She confirmed the original plan to hold cohort meetings at the beginning of each quarter to address this topic. Dr. Otey acknowledged that these meetings have taken place, with one upcoming, but admits there were disruptions due to various challenges at CHS. She explained that more pressing student and teacher concerns caused a temporary pause in these educational initiatives. The positive feedback about the "off and away" policy in classrooms allowed the school to prioritize these other issues.

Ms. Larson-Torres stressed the importance of student education regarding cell phone use, highlighting that planned educational initiatives were not fully implemented. This lack of information may have influenced survey results. She

advocated for a focus on building a healthy school culture around technology, which includes establishing boundaries, safety practices, and developing coping mechanisms for responsible phone use. While acknowledging recent efforts to stabilize school processes, Ms. Larson-Torres suggests maintaining the "off and away" policy in classrooms and proposes exploring options like designated phone zones to address student needs for phone use in certain situations.

Mr. Meyer emphasized the importance of the second bullet point in the cell phone proposal, referring to the creation of a permanent working group and the implementation of student education initiatives. Mr. Meyer underscored the need to prioritize these educational activities and potentially implement them before considering revisions to the current cell phone policy.

Ms. Dooley weighed in on the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS), expressing a strong preference for stability. She disagrees with frequent policy changes, arguing that the recently implemented policy reflects careful consideration and deserves a chance to be effective. Ms. Dooley emphasized the importance of evaluating the current policy's impact before making adjustments. She criticizes a hasty approach to policy changes, disapproving of untested solutions and preferring a data-driven approach based on a thorough assessment of the existing policy.

Mr. Morse inquired about the timeline for implementing changes to the cell phone policy. He wanted to know if the "off and away" rule will be implemented at the earliest for the next school year.

Dr. Gurley acknowledged challenges with enforcing the current policy and recognized inconsistencies and a lack of uniform expectations among staff. He highlighted the ongoing work on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) focusing on school culture and climate, aiming to establish consistent expectations for both students and staff. Dr. Gurley suggested that the MTSS work will address the enforcement gaps in the current "off and away" policy. He acknowledged that chasing students down hallways to enforce the policy is impractical for teachers.

Ms. Powell sought clarification on the proposed path forward for the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). She seemed to understand that the current policy ("off and away") might remain unchanged, with a focus on implementing the second bullet point. This bullet point likely refers to creating a framework for consistent expectations around phone use for students and staff.

Dr. Gurley laid out a revised approach to the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS), shifting the focus from policy changes to enforcement. The current "off and away" policy will remain in effect. However, a key priority will be establishing consistent expectations for all stakeholders. Dr. Johnson will partner with the school administration to develop a plan for enforcing these expectations. Similarly, the domain team will address creating clear expectations for students, teachers, and parents. This approach seems to prioritize strengthening the implementation of the existing policy before considering revisions.

Mr. Morse and Ms. Dooley engage in a nuanced conversation regarding the timeline for revising the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). Mr. Morse inquired about the possibility of revisiting the policy in the coming months, around May or June. He emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent expectations for students and staff. Ms. Dooley, however, expressed a preference for evaluating the effectiveness of the current policy before considering changes. She believes the existing policy has potential but acknowledged the lack of a proper evaluation due to the absence of a strong enforcement structure.

Ms. Burns added a note of caution to the discussion about the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). While she doesn't outright oppose focusing on enforcement (bullet point two), she raised several points for consideration. Ms. Burns acknowledged the results of the student survey, even if the opinions are divided, underlining the importance of listening to student perspectives. She's concerned about the workload that enforcing stricter phone use policies would place on staff, especially the many new CSA members. Ms. Burns suggested that building positive relationships between these new staff members and the students should be a priority before stricter enforcement is implemented.

Ms. Heaphy joined Ms. Burns in raising concerns about the cell phone policy. She expressed appreciation for the student survey and believes the data reflects strong student opinions about the policy, even if those opinions are

varied. Ms. Heaphy acknowledged that students might have different reasons for their votes, such as focusing on learning or simply wanting social media access. However, she shifted the focus to the challenges of enforcing the policy. Unlike Ms. Burns who emphasized relationship building, Ms. Heaphy highlighted staffing limitations and the high student-to-staff ratio as reasons why stricter enforcement might not be feasible. She defended teachers and administration, suggesting they're putting in effort but face practical limitations in effectively monitoring phone use throughout the school day. Ms. Heaphy acknowledged the complexity of the issue and emphasizes the importance of considering all viewpoints in the ongoing discussion.

Mr. Meyer injects a scientific perspective into the conversation about the cell phone policy at Charlottesville High School (CHS). He acknowledged the value of student survey data but argued that it should be considered alongside scientific research. Mr. Meyer emphasized the existence of third-party reviewed studies showing negative impacts of phone use on learning, mental health, and student well-being in general. These scientific findings inform his recommendations and decisions when it comes to the policy. While he recognizes implementation challenges, Mr. Meyer prioritizes student health and education, basing his approach on the data that highlights the potential downsides of phone use.

## **Board Response to Written Reports**

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

**12.1 Comments from Members of the Community:** There were none.

### **13.1 Board Member Comments:**

- Ms. Richardson expressed excitement about the upcoming senior trip at Charlottesville High School (CHS), especially considering the challenging year the students have had. She also acknowledged and praised Matthew Resnik and Talitha Howard for organizing a wonderful Black History Month celebration that she thoroughly enjoyed.
- As her term as student representative on the school board concluded, Ms. Heaphy delivered a heartfelt farewell address. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve and acknowledged the board's efforts to prioritize student voices, especially during this challenging year. Ms. Heaphy doesn't shy away from encouraging her peers to take advantage of these opportunities to participate and have their voices heard. Looking beyond her own experience, Ms. Heaphy highlights her appreciation for the school community's emphasis on student input and valuing representative voices. She goes on to emphasize the importance of taking action to bring about change, urging students to get involved. While stepping down from her formal role, Ms. Heaphy assures everyone she'll remain connected and involved in future meetings. She concludes by enthusiastically endorsing her successor, Kel, expressing confidence in their ability to serve the board effectively.
- Ms. Larson-Torres acknowledged the dedication of both the boys and girls athletic teams at Charlottesville High School and expressed gratitude for their hard work and commitment throughout the season. Ms. Larson-Torres enthusiastically promotes a free event this Saturday at PVCC. Entitled "2024 Life After High School," this conference and resource fair is designed to support students with disabilities and their families as they navigate the transition out of high school. The event offers workshops led by professionals and includes a free lunch. Ms. Larson-Torres highlighted the positive feedback from past attendees and encouraged everyone to take advantage of this valuable opportunity. The event takes place on Saturday, March 16th from 8:30 AM to 1 PM.

**14.1 Superintendent's Comments:** Dr. Gurley wrapped up the meeting on a positive note. He acknowledged the accomplishments of the inaugural season of the all-ability Medford League basketball program. Dr. Gurley also shared appreciation for Ms. Heaphy and her service as a Student Representative to the School Board. Dr. Gurley emphasized the importance of open communication and assured everyone that the central office welcomes feedback, questions, suggestions, or even someone who just needs to vent. They are committed to listening and

implementing changes where possible. Finally, Dr. Gurley announces the central office's return to its original location at 1562 Dairy Road.

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

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

**17.1 Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

A video of the March 7, 2024 meeting can be located at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/164LMDKxmgLJcotXjo2XjapWM4T9JUW0S/view?usp=sharing>

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Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

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Julia Green, School Board Clerk