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Albemarle County School Board Regular Meeting, Thursday, September 10, 2026

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[00:00:03] - Good evening. Thank you, Clerk Thompson. It is my pleasure to bring this September 10th, 2026 business meeting to order. We are going to start with a roll call. But before I start, I do have just a note.

[00:00:22] Dr. Akhoff is not here. She notified the board on Saturday that she would be out of town for a family emergency this week. She will be reviewing the video from tonight's interviews and the applications and will be prepared participate in the board discussion next week Julie right at Rivanna district Ellen Osborn Scottsville district Rebecca Berlin Whitehall district Jim Dillenbeck Rio district Bob Beard Samuel Miller district Jason Grant chief communications officer Chandra Hayes acting superintendent Josiah Black chief

[00:00:57] legal officer Christine Thompson clerk the board thank you so much and thank you to our officers who are here tonight who protect us during our meetings and in our community each and every day. The next item is the election of a vice chair to serve for the remainder of the 2026 calendar year. The chair will now accept nominations for the vice chair.

[00:01:21] Chair, I nominate Ellen Osborne to be vice chair. Ellen is the mom of two ACPS grads who are, as she says, grown and flown, with great thanks to ACPS. She's also the executive director of literacy volunteers of Charlottesville Albemarle, and I've served with her since 2020 and have always found to be

thoughtful and student-focused. Thank you. Ms. Osborne has been nominated. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, nominations are closed. The clerk will now call for a roll call vote on

[00:01:56] the election of Ms. Osborne as vice chair for the remainder of the 2026 calendar year. Dr. Acuff is absent. Mr. Beard? Yes. Mr. Dillenbeck? Yes. Ms. Lee? Yes. Ms. Osborne? Yes. Chair Berlin? Yes.

[00:02:16] So moved. Thank you so much, Ms. Osborne, for, well, thank you, Ms. Lee, for nominating her and Ms. Osborne for agreeing to serve. Thank you. Look forward to it. We will now stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge.

[00:02:47] The next item on our agenda is a moment of silence. Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to remember Weston Wade Herndon, A former Crozet Elementary student who passed away on August 25th after a courageous battle with cancer.

[00:03:12] Weston was known for his joyful spirit, his wonderful sense of humor, and the ability to be a friend to everyone. He deeply loved his parents, Matthew and Danielle, and took great pride in being a big brother to Walker, Whitman, Warren, and Waylon.

[00:03:30] We extend our heartfelt condolences to Weston's family, friends and teachers and all whose lives were touched by him. His courage and bright spirit will not be forgotten. Please join us in a moment of silence in Weston's memory.

[00:03:47] Thank you so much.

[00:04:02] September is a Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and at our next meeting we will have a proclamation. We know that there are many children battling this terrible disease and who are courageously up for the battle.

[00:04:18] So please keep all of them in your thoughts. Approval of agenda, item 2.0. Do I have a motion for the approval of tonight's agenda? I move we approve tonight's agenda. Moved by Ms. Lee. Second.

[00:04:34] Second by Mr. Dilladick. Mr. Dillenbeck, all those in favor? Aye. Any opposed? Tonight's agenda is formally approved. 3.0 is the approval of our consent agenda. Do I have a motion for the approval of tonight's consent agenda?

[00:04:55] move we approve tonight's consent agenda. Thank you. Second. Moved by Ms. Lee, seconded by Mr. Dillenbeck. All those in favor of tonight's consent agenda? Aye. Any opposed? The next item on our agenda is school division business. Because of the interviews tonight, we will just be having one item on tonight's school business, school division business, and that is an update on the sales tax referendum for school construction. Ms. Rosalind Schmidt, our chief financial officer,

[00:05:27] we'll be doing an overview. Good evening members of the school board. I'm Roslyn Schmidt, chief operating officer. So finance is part of it but I get a lot. No it's okay. Tonight I'm providing a

[00:06:00] brief overview of the referendum that will be before voters in our community this fall. Recently legislation was passed authorizing localities to adopt an additional one cent sales tax for the purpose of funding school construction. Previously only nine localities were allowed, were legally allowed to do this but this change gives the option to more localities throughout the commonwealth more recently the board of supervisors adopted a resolution petitioning the circuit court to order the referendum in albemarle county this upcoming november election we are one of many localities

[00:06:37] in the region who are putting the question to voters with that background i have a couple of slides using language from the bos presentation to review before speaking to what exactly this means for our community the question is around whether voters authorize an additional tax for school construction it expires after 20 years and allows placement on the November 3rd ballot here are here the details on the tax itself is a 1% local sales and use tax with food and personal hygiene products exempted preliminary estimates indicate that it would generate 20 million

[00:07:13] dollars annually and if approved it could begin as early as May 1st 2027 and would expire after 20 years. It would be a dedicated revenue stream restricted to school capital projects and it cannot be used for operational purposes. Specific projects would be considered by the Board of Supervisors in future budget discussions. The current funding context is that most CIP needs are currently funded through local tax revenues and bond issuances. This dedicated tax would diversify revenues and support school capital projects. It would provide the

[00:07:52] county with an additional tool to address aging facilities and long-term investment needs. The remaining slides are from our communication materials and answer some key questions. What the question does, what it would cost, and what it could pay for. It does not tell you how to vote. We cannot do that. This is for we are providing factual information. Our goal is to ensure voters are informed. This slide is what the actual question will be on the ballot.

[00:08:22] And here's what that question does. If approved, it would raise Albemarle's sales tax rate by one cent more per dollar spent. It is earmarked solely on school construction and major renovation. It has an expiration date of 2046. Another vote would be required to extend it. And lastly, a yes vote does not raise the tax itself. It gives the BOS the authority to adopt an ordinance to levy it.

[00:08:51] This is what it would cost. It's an extra penny per dollar on taxable purchases. Everyone, whether a resident, visitor, or non-resident, would pay. Again, groceries and personal hygiene items are exempt. And so here are some just tangible examples of the cost. On a cup of coffee, on a meal, a pair of shoes, refrigerator, and again, not on groceries.

[00:09:17] It's on the ballot because right now there's a gap between our needs and the money. Our buildings are aging, and we are using temporary facilities at several sites because they are overcapacity.

[00:09:37] Out of the list of identified projects, only one is currently funded. Current county revenues cannot fully support the total list of school capital projects along with other county capital needs. School projects compete with public safeties, parks, and other county infrastructure for a limited borrowing capacity.

[00:09:58] So what would it go towards? Again, state law restricts the monies to construction, major renovation, and the debt service on school construction projects. It could help with capacity by building new schools, a preschool center, elementary, middle, comprehensive high school.

[00:10:15] It could renovate existing schools, including major systems replacements, improvements to building envelopes, and instructional space improvements. It could improve access by upgrading or adding elevators, and it could make safety improvements to our facilities.

[00:10:33] The last example is it could expand existing schools and or site improvements at existing campuses. The board has identified a list of capital priorities and needs. We have built out a website that identifies those projects and the data and the planning work that supports them.

[00:10:53] The list on the right is just a summary of those key priorities that the board adopted last October. The purpose, again, is to get an idea of the types of projects such a revenue could support. It's important to note, though, that the referendum approves a revenue source, not a construction program.

[00:11:10] This is different than the bond referendum in 2016. If voters approve the tax and the BOS levies it, each individual project would still move through the annual budget development process in a public manner. And while the school board can recommend projects, it's ultimately up to the Board of Supervisors to approve the projects.

[00:11:28] So, in conclusion, here's what happens next. First, and most importantly, the community needs to vote. Early voting begins September 18th, and Election Day is on November 3rd. And then the remaining steps are contingent on whether it passes by a simple majority.

[00:11:45] so if it passes then the board of supervisors would consider an ordinance if that's approved then collection would begin and we could get some projects funded to answer any questions one project that you mentioned that's already sort of funding is already complete is the northern feeder elementary school yes we are currently underway of the design for the northern theater pattern elementary school which is planned to be constructed in the north point development

[00:12:21] Any questions? I mean, just a huge thank you to our partners at the Board of Supervisors for putting this into motion.

[00:12:36] And a huge thank you to you and the team for pulling this information together on this important matter. Thanks. Thank you. Thank you. So the next item on our agenda is the school board at large candidate interviews.

[00:12:56] I'm just going to do a quick introduction to get us started. I'm super excited that the board received 23 applications for the vacant at-large seat. I'm not a historian, so I don't know if this is true, looking kind of to my right and to my left, but I believe this is the most we have ever received.

[00:13:15] So a huge thank you to the community at-large for getting the word out for us and for those people who put their name in. Following several withdrawals and the eligibility review, 15 candidates remain under construction.

[00:13:33] We had some, oh my gosh, under construction. You guys, like I have constructing schools on my mind. Like we need new schools. Wow, under consideration. It just started full transparency. People pulled for a number of reasons.

[00:13:50] Some due to I think what they saw in social media kind of happening to a number of the school board members. some pulled because they saw the amazing slate of candidates we had. So they said they were going to pull their name to allow others.

[00:14:10] So we have 15 candidates remaining. So I'm just going to read through the process to make sure we're all clear. This was shared publicly through our communications team and was also shared with each of the applicants.

[00:14:28] To establish the interview order, Each candidate has been assigned a number and our clerk, Christine Thompson, assisted by Chief Legal Officer Josiah Black, will draw the numbered balls. We have moved from a bowl with pieces of paper to an actual kind of bingo-like device that we're going to be using.

[00:14:49] Candidates will be interviewed in the order in which their numbers are drawn. Before we begin the lottery, I would like to review the interview process and a few logistical details for the candidates and the audience. Each candidate will have a total of 12 minutes. The clock will begin when I recognize the candidate and the candidate begins speaking.

[00:15:08] Candidates will begin with an opening statement of no more than two minutes. As part of the statement, candidates have been asked to explain why they are interested in serving on the ACPS school board and whether they currently intend to run for the permitted at-large seat in November 2027.

[00:15:24] The opening statement is included in the total 12-minute interview time. Following the opening statement, candidates will respond to three interview questions provided in advance. A copy of the questions is available at the podium, and candidates may also bring a printed copy of the questions and their brief written notes for reference.

[00:15:42] The timer will be visible to each candidate. When the 12 minutes have elapsed, I will thank the candidate and conclude the interview so we remain on schedule. We will interview the first eight candidates, followed by a 15-minute break. We will then return to interview the remaining seven candidates.

[00:15:59] Once the order has been established, I will ask the first four candidates to move to the reserved seats in the front of the auditorium. As each interview concludes, I will ask the next candidate forward so that we can move promptly from one interview to the next. We ask all candidates to remain in the auditorium throughout the interview process.

[00:16:16] We also ask the audience to remain quiet during the interviews and to refrain from applause or other reactions so that every candidate receives the same respectful setting. A public hearing will be held on Thursday, September 7th at 6.30 in this auditorium to receive public comment regarding the candidates.

[00:16:35] Information about signing up to speak will be available on the school board webpage. The school board expects to select and announce the individual appointed to fill the vacant at-large seat at its meeting on Thursday, September 24th. And that individual will begin serving at the October 8th meeting.

[00:16:52] Mr. Black and Ms. Thompson, you may proceed with the lottery. - Chair Breland, I had several that have not checked in, so if your name is called, if you would just let me know you're here. If you're not here, we'll deal with that later.

[00:17:12] - Are you ready, Mr. Black? - Yes, Ms. Thompson, I would suggest we select all of the numbers so that if someone shows up by the time of their slot, we'll interview them. So the first interviewee will be William Woodrow.

[00:17:40] Second will be Lindsey Steele. Third is Leslie Pryor.

[00:18:01] Number three withdrew. Number five. Fourth will be Heidi Gilman Bennett. Number seven. Fifth will be Steve Colazar.

[00:18:19] Sixth will be Mike McDermott. Number six. Seventh will be Lucas Johnson. Eighth will be Joellen Pisarczyk.

[00:18:46] Number one. Ninth will be Jimmy Ballou. We don't have an 18th. Number 11. Tenth will be Daisy Rojas.

[00:19:03] Number 12. Eleventh will be just, did you say 12? Justin Shipley. Wasn't that number two?

[00:19:19] Nope. Nope. I have Lindsay Steele as number two. Apologies. That's right. So 11th will be Justin Shiflett. Four. 12th will be Mandy Crombie.

[00:19:42] 13th will be David Totman. 14th. 14th will be David Storm. 15th will be Kurt Burkhardt.

[00:20:07] Mr. Black, do you want me to read the final order or do you want to do it? I'd be happy to do it, Chair Berlin. Okay. Thank you. So here's the list of interviewees in order.

[00:20:18] William Woodrow, Lindsey Steele, Leslie Pryor, Heidi Gilman Bennett, Steve Colazar, Mike McDermott, Lucas Johnson, Joellen Pisarczyk, Jimmy Ballou, Daisy Rojas, Justin Shiflett, Mandy Crombie, David Totman, David Storm, and Kurt Burkhardt.

[00:20:55] Burkhardt. Thank you, Ms. Thompson and Mr. Black. And apologies for all of these very intricate details, but when we, even with 15, but definitely when we had 23, we want to make sure that everyone has their time to speak and that we also not keep everyone till one in the morning. So

[00:21:27] appreciate everyone dealing with my complicated implementation. And the other thing I would just say is we had a number of emails come to us throughout the process just asking for transparency so that is one of the things we wanted to make sure applications everyone could see the applications all interviews knew what they would be asked all interviews were public so a huge thank you to to miss

[00:21:56] Thompson for her support of this process so the first four and thank you guys for already sitting, will be William Woodrow, Lindsay Steele, Leslie Pryor, and Heidi Gilman Bennett.

[00:22:18] Mr. Woodrow, if you would like to approach. And just a reminder, so I will-- as soon as they begin speaking, the clock will start. They'll do their two-minute overview, and then just give when you're-- I'll look for your cues, but just look at me when you're done, and I will quickly ask the questions.

[00:22:40] Thanks. Good evening Chair Berlin and members of the board. My name is Will Woodrow. Our young family moved here almost 15 years ago. Now in two years my third child will graduate from Western Albemarle and head to college like his siblings. I'm seeking this appointment because I appreciate the excellent education that my children have received and I want to see Albemarle County continue to be one of the best places to receive an education in the state. We're not without our problems. We haven't been trending upward in every metric.

[00:23:13] But I believe we're currently on the right track, and the future is bright. My educational background is in business, public policy, and law. I believe this mixture would provide the board with a useful perspective. In business, I learned to respect the balance sheet.

[00:23:31] Use resources wisely, or you'll not succeed. In public policy, I learned to ask whether an idea will work in practice, not just theory. And my time in law has taught me to examine competing arguments and to reach reasoned decisions that can be explained and defended.

[00:23:47] For more than a decade, I've built and managed law practices here in Charlottesville. I've learned to take responsibility for more than just my arguments. I'm not a professional educator, and I have immense respect for the experience and the judgment of the teachers, the principals, and the staff who do that work every day.

[00:24:05] What I would bring is experience in governance, analysis, and responsible management. My North Star as a board member would be to demand high expectations from the superintendent and the staff and to support excellent teachers. I also feel deeply that outcomes improve when parents and teachers work together.

[00:24:24] When a good parent partners with a teacher on their child's education and a good teacher partners with a parent on the child's character and development, the outcomes can be amazing. I would support policies that strengthen these collaborative relationships. But I don't seek this position thinking that I have all of the answers.

[00:24:43] I would approach board service with an open mind and a willingness to listen. As of right now, I'm undecided as to whether I would seek re-election once the current term ends. Thank you for your consideration. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff?

[00:25:03] Well, it's fairly axiomatic that the most important responsibility of the school board is to govern the division well. This is accomplished through setting sound policies in place, allocating budget resources wisely, and vetting and selecting a competent superintendent. The superintendent implements policies by directing the staff.

[00:25:22] It's not the board's responsibility to involve itself in the day-to-day operations of the school. It's like getting a haircut. You tell a barber what you want him to do, but you don't start telling him where and how to cut, or it's not gonna turn out the way that you want. It's the board's responsibility, though, to measure results and to hold the superintendent accountable.

[00:25:41] The board should ask what a proposal is intended to accomplish, and what evidence will show whether it worked. Bellwether's theory of change recommendation illustrates this. connect each initiative to an expected student result, identify who is responsible, and monitor progress.

[00:25:58] A concrete example there is ninth grade Algebra I. The board can make improvements a priority, approve resources, monitor results. The superintendent and staff decide how students receive additional support and how the instruction is organized.

[00:26:13] Bellwether recommended using eighth grade data to identify students who might need additional support before Algebra I. It also discussed tutoring, additional instruction time, and collaboration among Algebra 1 teachers. Board-level questions could be, has the division acted on those recommendations?

[00:26:30] How many students are receiving support? Are their Algebra 1 results improving? That's the board's job. Staff decides what diagnostic to use, how tutoring works, and how teachers should organize instruction. An important point to make is that the board should hear directly from staff before adopting policies that staff will have to implement.

[00:26:51] Respecting the administrative boundary doesn't mean governing without understanding the condition of the schools. Like I said, I'm not a professional educator, and if I thought that's what this job required, I wouldn't be qualified. But I can call a spade a spade, results speak, and we need to expect high results.

[00:27:10] This is where I believe my professional experience will be useful. A good lawyer has to absorb complicated records, identify relevant facts, and find the critical questions. That means weighing the evidence completely and honestly. So I see the relationship between the board, superintendent the staff as a partnership was clearly defined responsibilities thank you school board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students families employees and community members how would you approach an issue where this community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone well i think this question gets to some of the toughest

[00:27:47] challenges that a school board can face a community is like a family and families can disagree A school board's job is to manage disagreement while attempting to preserve relationship. And by relationship, I mean a community where everyone feels heard, respected, and included.

[00:28:05] That begins with listening seriously to people on different sides. Don't assume that the loudest group represents the entire community. The board needs to make an effort to hear from people who might not attend meetings or organize campaigns. The board needs to identify the actual issue.

[00:28:22] Sometimes the disagreement is not about the objective, but the method. may share the same goals such as safety or academic improvement while strongly disagreeing about how to achieve it. And the board needs to distill the issue and just deal with what's in front of it. Oftentimes the emotion and the rhetoric go beyond the facts and the law pertaining to the issue on the table. The board should ask staff for realistic options and the likely consequences of each one. Then it should identify the decision criteria before choosing among the options. What should drive the decision? Is it lawful? Is it supported by the evidence? Is it

[00:29:02] workable? Does it treat similar situations consistently? What will it cost? How will the board know whether it succeeded? And after listening, the board has to make a decision, recognizing that it won't satisfy everyone. The people who disagree should still be able to see that the board understood their position and considered it honestly. Explain the principal reason for the decision. The board doesn't need to answer every argument individually, but the community should know what drove the result. And then the board needs to be willing to reassess how

[00:29:37] the decision is working in practice. If the policy is producing unintended consequences or failing to achieve its purpose, the board should be willing to revisit it. I think this community shares a lot more in common than it doesn't. That's important to remember and to focus on. Everybody wants students to excel. They want students to be safe and to be treated with kindness and with dignity. They want have confidence in their schools. They want resources to be used wisely. These shared principles might not produce an obvious answer, but they should ground the board's approach to tough decisions. A school board member represents

[00:30:16] constituents, but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of the students and schools across the county? Well, as an at-large member, I would represent the entire county, so I would begin with recognizing that every school and every student is part of my constituency. My family's experience doesn't represent everyone's. Albemarle is a wide and varied county. Schools face different pressures and challenges. Some schools are overcrowded. Some have faculty needs, facility needs, program needs, or transportation difficulties. An active board member should be engaged with the

[00:30:55] community, visit schools, speak with staff, speak with parents, take concerns seriously. If a third grader is being left behind in reading, they're probably not the only one. If a teacher doesn't feel fully equipped with the training or the resources they need, that may not be an anomaly.

[00:31:12] Of course an individual report is a reason to ask questions, not automatic proof of a school-wide or division-wide problem. Look for other reports or data confirming or discounting. Take the concerns seriously, investigate, examine the broader record. The board's responsibility is ultimately to the county as a whole. Fairness doesn't necessarily mean giving every school the same resources.

[00:31:37] There are never enough resources and often the board has to triage to achieve the best results. This doesn't mean numbers always prevail. Some students require more resources because their needs are greater. Some obligations aren't negotiable. So when there's a problem and a proposed solution, the board has to ask who benefits? Who bears the burdens? What effects might this have elsewhere? A decision involving one school can affect attendance boundaries, transportation, feeder patterns, and future capital spending. Baker Butler is a good example. It's

[00:32:14] overcrowded. 2627 is projected to have 659 students with a program capacity of 510. But addressing that concern involves Hollymead, boundary decisions, and the planned North Point Elementary School, not just Baker Butler alone. Hollymead is also a capacity, so that's not a long-term solution. And the North Point School isn't scheduled to open for another few years.

[00:32:39] so there's an immediate problem and a long-term planning problem the point is problems can't be addressed in isolation and i think this may be the most important job of the at-large member to remain focused on the connections across the county so the process doesn't devolve into a competition among schools that's all i have if you have questions i'm happy to answer thank you so much i appreciate it thank you lindsay steele hello good evening i'm lindsay steele i moved to

[00:33:18] Charlottesville 21 years ago. If you told me then that I'd still be here with six children, four of them in ACPS, I would have laughed at you. I was planning on moving back to Paris, but here I am. I love being a part of the community here. I'm here because of something I've watched for years. Families in this county care enormously about their schools.

[00:33:47] What wears them down isn't disagreement about the decisions. It's not being able to tell how a decision got made or where their input went. That's the problem I've spent my career on.

[00:34:02] I know these buildings, not just recently. I've been involved in many schools over the last 20 years, PTO at Ivy Elementary, Henley Middle School, most recently Western Albemarle High School. I've done all the jobs, president, fundraising, making graphics for the annual fund.

[00:34:25] Multiple seasons with Girls on the Run, First as Area Director for Greater Charlottesville, and most recently, I'm on their board now. And I still go into schools on my own time because I like being there. I've also done board work, non-profit boards, chaired committees, I've served as vice chair.

[00:34:46] I know what a board's job is and what it isn't. And yes, I intend to run for this seat in November 2027. I'm not asking for a placeholder year. For enrolled kids, two still to come, I'll live with what this board decides for the next 15 years, and so will they.

[00:35:08] Thank you. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? I

believe that the most important responsibility is oversight. This board hires and evaluates the superintendent and sets the direction.

[00:35:28] Everyone else in the division reports through the superintendent, not to us. I don't run a school, and I don't manage anybody, at least nobody that's not a child right now. My job is to set the standard, ask good questions, and tell people the truth about how we're doing.

[00:35:47] But that's the mechanics. What the job is for is different. I'm a parent in the middle of this, not looking back on it. For kids in these schools right now, board decisions are not abstract to me.

[00:36:03] A calendar change, a bus route, a staffing cut. I feel those in my house the same week that you vote on them. I'll tell you something that I don't say out loud much. I still get a tremendous lift walking into any school in the county.

[00:36:20] And I got to do that a lot as the area director for Girls on the Run. There is more good energy in an ACPS hallway any time of day than almost anywhere else in this county. So the responsibility is to stay close enough to that to remember what the decisions are for, not to run the schools.

[00:36:41] to know them i'd be a fresh face on this board and i think that's worth something right now not because experience doesn't matter but because somebody should be at that table who is in it with these families today school board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students families employees and community members how would you approach approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone i'd start from something i believe most people in a fight like that aren't, sorry, most people in a fight like that aren't being unreasonable.

[00:37:21] They're protecting something real to them. A parent protecting their kid's stability, a teacher protecting their ability to do the job well. So the first thing I do is find out what people actually think. Not what the loudest 10 emails say.

[00:37:38] Those are the folks with time to write at nine at night. They deserve a hearing, but they are not the whole community. The parent working two jobs, the teacher who will never speak at a public meeting, those are the people I'd go find, and I know how to do that.

[00:37:58] Second, I'd be honest early about what's actually still on the table. A lot of the anger comes from people thinking a decision is open when it isn't. If a budget number or state requirement already narrowed it, say so at the start.

[00:38:14] Then decide. This is the part people avoid. Some things cannot make everybody happy, and dragging it out to keep the peace usually costs kids something. So I vote, I say out loud what I weighed and what I gave up. I'd rather someone disagree with a decision they understand than accept one that they don't.

[00:38:32] Then I'd go back to the people who lost. Not to re-argue it, because how you treat people after a decision is what determines whether they ever come back. Families don't disengage because they stopped caring. They disengage because they couldn't tell where their input went.

[00:38:49] A school board member represents constituents but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. how would you balance the interest of the community you represent with the needs of students and schools across the county at large is a little different I wouldn't have a district every family in this county would be mine in every school that doesn't mean I show up without a point of view clearly I

live in Crozet my kids are in the Western feeder pattern growth crowding drive times I know those pressures because I live them every day but here's the test

[00:39:25] I'd hold myself to if I can't say out loud what a decision looks like from a part of this county I don't live in, then I haven't done the work yet. And honestly, I feel as closely tied to a school on the eastern side of this county as I do to my own western feeder schools. I talk with those parents and those teachers. I know what they're asking for. And that's a habit, not a theory. Years with Girls on the Run put me in schools all over this division and well beyond it. And not just in the building, with principals, front office staff, volunteers,

[00:40:00] teachers, with everyone that shows up for after-school practice, and with the kids. A program that runs beautifully at one school struggles at another, and I've seen that firsthand. And it's almost never about the people.

[00:40:16] It's about what that school actually has, the support. So, on any decision I'd ask, who does this help? Who does it cost? And did anybody ask the schools that will feel it most, especially the small ones, and the ones without a big parent network to advocate for them.

[00:40:37] When my neighbor's interests in a school across the county genuinely conflict, the kids are the tiebreaker. That is not always comfortable. It's the only standard that holds up. And if I'm appointed, I intend to be in schools I have no personal reason to visit.

[00:40:54] That's the part I'm most looking forward to. Thank you. Thank you so much, Ms. Steele. Our next speaker is Leslie Pryor. Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the school board, Superintendent Hayes, Mr. Black, Madam Clerk.

[00:41:29] I'm interested in serving the Elmore County School Board because I feel as if I have some unfinished business. I was appointed to the school board for 11 months in '24 and served throughout the 25 year. I served in the Ryo district. I learned many lessons during my time on the school board and in my attempt to campaign for the four year seat.

[00:41:49] I was privileged to have served alongside four of the current board members, Dr. Berlin Chair, Dr. Kate Acuff, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Osborne. I will also note that during my time on the board, we were joined by Mr. Graham Page and Mrs. Spillman, and I do thank you all for your service.

[00:42:06] I'm a strong candidate because of my prior experience on the board and with four current members who unanimously appointed me less than two years ago. I feel that my professional and personal experiences bring a multitude of diversity to the board.

[00:42:22] I possess passion, commitment, competency, and a desire to see all the best and all the children in Albemarle County. Born and raised here in Charlottesville, Virginia, I understand the challenges within the community. I serve on the board, on the Albemarle Foundation for Education Board, on the Executive Committee for the local NAACP.

[00:42:43] I'm employed by the city of Charlottesville. I've worked for Albemarle County, the University of Virginia and the Commonwealth of Virginia. In seeking to return to the school board, I seek to work with all board members, the superintendent and her cabinet, the staff, and the community to improve the brokenness and regain the trust of the children, families, and staff.

[00:43:05] I seek to improve the school system by ensuring all students are afforded quality education to help work to increase the number of black teachers and administrators. I would like to see the board reflective of diversity within the community. I intend to run for the four-year term at-large seat for the Elmar County.

[00:43:22] And looking over my life, I've come to embrace saying by the Honorable Nelson Mandela. I never lose. I either win or learn. I will add that growth is part of losing, winning, and learning. Thank you. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? Thank you. In Virginia, school boards adhere to the code of Virginia title 22.1 education 22.1-79 powers and duties. See that the school laws are properly explained, enforced, and observed.

[00:44:02] In my having nearly 30 years of corrections and probation and parole, I became quite familiar with Code of Virginia Title 16, 1-17, the courts, and Titles 18.2, crimes. And answering what I see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, my response is to recruit, hire, evaluate the superintendent, and to ensure that the superintendent understands the Code of Virginia Title 22.1 education.

[00:44:27] A school board provides community-based governance and sets general policies, while the superintendent and division staff manage daily operations and carry out those policies. How is the responsibility of the school board different from the role of the superintendent and the school division staff?

[00:44:44] The school board has some major responsibilities. For me, primarily hiring and evaluation, which means recruiting, hiring, and evaluating the superintendent. Financial oversight, reviewing and approving the annual budget, monitoring the spending, and ensuring that we're good stewards by being responsible for the taxpayer funds.

[00:45:06] Governance and vision are my third. Setting long-term goals, academic priorities, and community values. The fourth would be policymaking. Approving the official rules and policies that guide how the school division should operate.

[00:45:23] The role of the superintendent and division staff. Primarily, the day-to-day operations as they manage the schools, the transportations, facilities, and daily programs. The administration, which implements the policies and the goals established by the school board.

[00:45:39] Personnel management, which hires, supervises, and evaluates teachers, principals, and central office staff. Then there's educational leadership, which provides professional expertise, recommends operational decisions, and advises the board on educational needs. Thank you. School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members.

[00:46:01] How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? - Thank you. I think we can probably all agree that there are strongly held conflicting views in society today. We see it from students, families, employees, and community members.

[00:46:17] As a certified mediator from the Social Justice Mediation Institute at the University of Virginia, my approach would be to establish a fair, transparent and respectful process. Once people are allowed to feel heard and can come to understand why a decision is made, they are more likely to accept the outcome

even if they disagree with it. I believe that everyone's voice is important. It is important to openly acknowledge the conflict. People know when they're being BS, excuse me. We must find the responsible path forward, not always easy and will not satisfy everyone. Procedural justice. People care

[00:46:56] about fairness of a process as they do about the final result. The process must involve gathering information and listening. Structured workshops, written surveys, and less of the open chaotic group screaming sessions where only the loudest seemed to be rewarded. It is important to understand interest in positions but it's also important to illustrate some possible pathways and the trade-offs of who benefits who bears the burden and what does it cost those are also important in the process we must be one must be decisive provide a clear

[00:47:35] rationale of the decision and explain why the final decision of path was chosen over the preferred option of others allow for adaptability mean run One trial appears with data and less emotions and use that to bring about the next steps.

[00:47:52] And finally, inform all that decision will be reevaluated within a specific date to measure and readjust. Thank you. A school board member represents constituents, but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of students and schools across the county?

[00:48:13] And having previously served on the school board for 11 months, I can share that it was challenging as a novice when appointed to the Rio district with five schools. And thinking of the Karen at-Large school board vacancy which represents all public schools, it will require a balancing act. The county has 26 public schools and approximately 14,000 students. First and foremost, self-care is a priority. And speaking of a balancing act, I look at weighing the community and taxpayers needs against the student outcomes yet maintaining proper of governance, and I believe that is critical.

[00:48:52] One should trust the superintendent as the school board's member's role is governance and not management. I'm a policy and procedure person, so my focus will be on high-level policy, budget, approval, and accountability, and less on micromanaging individual issues and/or agendas.

[00:49:12] As a native of Charlottesville and Illinois community, I am committed to ensuring the community is supported, encouraged, and welcomed in law. welcoming of all, but I'm realistic. As a community, we're only as good as our education system and those whom we educate. Students are a priority and should come first. The community may not always agree with initiatives, but it is my focus that that of outcomes and the impact on student learning, safety, well-being, improvement and achievement gaps, teacher retention and pay increases,

[00:49:47] facility conditions, educational equity, transparent and proactive communication, and building strong collaborative relationships with board members. There are challenges which seem to halt the progression that could take place in our schools. Life has shown me that there are unwritten protocols, corporate practices, historical precedence, racial prejudice, and unspoken policies. For me, I wonder if that's a reason that routinely we don't see enough individuals who look like me coming before the school board or seeking to be on the

[00:50:26] school board I keep asking myself and I know the grammar may not be proper why come more people who look like me are not getting involved we must do better and be better thank you for this opportunity and good luck to all the

[00:50:43] candidates. Thank you Ms. Bryant. Our next speaker is Ms. Heidi Gilman Bennett. Good evening. I am Heidi Gilman Bennett. I would be honored to serve our community as the at-large school board representative. In my home office hangs a quote from civil rights leader Septima Clark. I have great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos

[00:51:29] gift. I'm seeking this appointment because right now is our opportunity to not only stabilize, to remain strong, but to also shift, to reform outdated and broken systems in our public school division so that every student truly can thrive. Why would I be a strong member of your team? I have the trust of a wide range of community members and I'm known as a voice of transparency. I am a

[00:52:02] parent of a current ACPS student and a recent graduate. I bring a professional background specifically in serving k-12 public school systems. As a consultant, my expertise has been sought out by for-profit and nonprofit organizations because I like diving into the most thorny issues where mission and sustainability clash. When things are broken, falling apart, what I'm really good at is helping education leaders manage change responsibly.

[00:52:42] Locally, as a chair of Family Council, I've been to every school and program in the county and I deeply understand the issues that ACPS is facing. I've even attended or viewed every school board meeting for over four years and I've joined many meetings of your long-range planning and special educational advisory committees. I have collaborated with many of you on the foundation and you know I work hard. I also have strong relationships with county supervisors and state legislators, but zero desire to do anything but the school board. Overall, I would

[00:53:19] be ready to serve on day one. Finally, if selected, I will run for the seat in the next election. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? Most important is to hire, support, and evaluate the superintendent. Over this next year, the school board will oversee a national search, the first for our county in over 30 years.

[00:53:49] I can help attract someone strong, review candidates, and ensure that a process is set up to authentically engage our teachers, education support professionals, staff, students, families, and community. The day-to-day operations are in the capable hands of Dr. Hayes, acting superintendent, Ensuring that she has the resources needed to carry out those responsibilities is critical.

[00:54:16] For example, two priorities are on my mind right now. Does Dr. Hayes have the resources needed for safety of everyone in our schools, both physical and emotional well-being? And two, we can't lose sight of achievement in reading and math.

[00:54:33] We need quarterly reports, stronger metrics for success, and to ensure especially that principals, especially those in the Title I schools, have the resources and support they need to do their work. As an at-large member, I would help strengthen school board governance.

[00:54:49] That means process. We can all follow rules and expectations for how school board members do business, but those really should be written down. Governance is also policy. ACPS could benefit from a real policy committee and a transparent process for input so that our policies align to federal and state law and are fine-tuned for this community.

[00:55:14] Governance, to me, is also fiscal oversight. Resources, of course, are not unlimited. I have serious business expertise, including reviewing budgets and financial statements. I would ask very hard

questions and allocate funding to align to the goals.

[00:55:32] Governance is often nitty-gritty, not glamorous work to get the details right, of process, policy, and budgets. I understand governance and also clearly understand that the day-to-day operations are managed by the superintendent.

[00:55:49] - School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members. How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? - Well, there are definitely some strongly held views in our community right now.

[00:56:07] There is a lot of fear and anger, as well as long-held frustration. And as you know, I'm not one to shy away from hard conversations. Given my recent leadership at Family Council, I know where the conflicting views exist.

[00:56:23] I've even shifted some of my own personal views by listening deeply to those with whom I thought I disagreed. And I've learned there's much that our community does agree on. For example, safety, rigorous academics, high expectations, sensible limits on technology, and supporting our amazing classroom teachers.

[00:56:45] On an issue where a community is deeply divided, I would do three things. First, listen actively to everyone. And we need to find ways to hear the voices of those furthest from advantage. I'll come back to this.

[00:57:00] Like via the new Achievement Gap Committee. Second, to make a decision, I would focus on mission and that's about students. I want to know the data, comparable division policies, research and outcomes.

[00:57:16] I do that work myself now on every topic that comes up as an ACPS priority. I write about it and I would continue to do that work because I believe in asking really well-informed questions for strong oversight.

[00:57:32] And then number three on an issue where the community is divided. make the hard decision as a member of your team. I can communicate clearly with compassion and also remain professional. Backing up, I grew up as the child of a single mom who spoke limited English.

[00:57:52] Money was often scarce. I rarely talk about this. I went to Stanford on big scholarships and I taught reading to kids diagnosed with dyslexia. These experiences shaped my commitment to families without wealth, to English learners, immigrant families, to literacy, to special education, and kids with disabilities. This summer, I joined the Southern Pilgrimage Civil Rights Fellowship to examine hard questions about race. I do not have all of the answers, but I am deeply committed to

[00:58:29] doing the work. I believe we can create a more just system. And of course, as you all know, fighting the bad things after they've happened isn't a long-term strategy for achieving justice. I'd like to continue your work to remove barriers, establish systems, and allocate resources that a child's neighborhood, wealth, race, ethnicity, etc. do not limit the quality of their education. A school board member represents constituents but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. How would you balance the interests of the community you

[00:59:07] represent with the needs of students in schools across Albemarle County? For the at-large seat, the constituents include all county taxpayers and voters, but ultimately ACPS is in the business of student success. Educating children is a very human endeavor that depends on human relationships. Doing anything well in a school requires trust and respect for educators and staff. Rebuilding that trust between our frontline professionals and the top-level decision-makers is a huge priority for me. Doing the right thing for students also means working on

[00:59:46] their priorities. Students, including from Student Senate and School Board Reps, have spoken bravely about serious issues like harassment and we adults must take action. Focusing on students also requires establishing clear processes by which family and caregiver concerns can be addressed. In my experience, families want to be supportive partners, but ACPS is too often missing the boat. I'd like the school board to consider investing in an ombuds position so that stakeholders know how to get serious concerns addressed, like disability

[01:00:24] services or sexual misconduct. These are critical for our students and also for managing school division liability. Doing all of this requires money. The at-large member must be persuasive to the public and to the supervisors who approve the total budget amount for both capital and operating expenditures. I have an MBA from UC Berkeley. I know how to give a winning pitch for funding. As a school member, I would continue to advocate strongly for capital improvements to our aging and overcrowded school buildings. That starts with solid data and a strong

[01:01:03] strategic plan, which the school board oversees. Now, before I end, a moment between you and me and everyone watching now and in the future. In public comments, in written advocacy, I have personally shined a light on what some long-time ACPS leaders wanted to keep hidden. And as seated school board members, you have occasionally been on the perhaps uncomfortable receiving end of my fierce commitment to justice. You have seen me in action as a community

[01:01:38] organizer trying to defeat things that were not working. Please remember that my efforts have always been closely aligned to the ACPS mission and goals. Right now, I believe our community needs me to turn my professional efforts towards building a better school system. My personal strength is actually as a builder. I am humbly asking to officially work with you with the superintendent, the attorneys, the amazing clerk. Why have I spent seven years volunteering to help ACPS?

[01:02:14] It's because I love our schools and I believe in this community. I think our schools are good to very good, but as a system, we could be much stronger. And I will continue to work with you to achieve that. I would be honored to become the at-large school board member.

[01:02:31] Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Gilman Bennett. The next four speakers we have will be Steve Colazar, Mike McDermott, Lucas Johnson, and Joellen Pasarek.

[01:02:52] If you would just, if the four of you would please come forward, and Mr. Colazar, you may approach the mic. And then after those four, we will be taking a break. Good evening. I'm applying for this position because I really love school board work.

[01:03:24] I think of my 24 years experience on this board as well prepared me to serve another year as this board faces a number of very serious challenges. But as you know, there's been a lot of controversy that has to be and trust has to be restored but you also have the process of selecting a superintendent

deciding on a process to select that superintendent and you also need to review your policy uh to how we evaluate both the board

[01:04:00] and the superintendent. I feel like that process has broken down over time and that's led to some of the problems that we have in the system. I really want to be part of that solution and again I've been on this board for 12 years. I've hired two superintendents. I've helped write a board superintendent policy and therefore feel that I'm very qualified for that. As somebody who's been on this board before i can feel like i'll be ready from day one to active i came to your last meeting

[01:04:39] and i had the the thrill of dealing with some of the issues that i was dealing for when i was on the board talking about uh culturally responsive teaching as a major strategy for closing the achievement gap and but in that report i didn't see where is the evaluation of how this project which we've invested so much energy and effort has, how has that affected student achievement?

[01:05:04] Do our teachers who are certified do better with student achievement than the ones who aren't? We need to evaluate and make sure that program is accomplishing what we intended to do. And also the whole issue of attendance. I was very proud when I was the board that we got our on-time graduation rate up to 98 percent. At Monticello one year we hit 100 percent on-time graduation and I would like to see us concentrating again on that and that's all about the attendance and how do we make sure that ninth graders get

[01:05:41] connected to school so if they want if they're getting connected if they have friends they're gonna want to be there they won't be in attendance and they'll graduate on time what do you say excuse me I'm not intending to run again for the position what do you see is the most important responsibility of a school board member and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff okay the most important role of the school board member is to work with the school board as a team and the role of the school board is to provide the vision the mission

[01:06:19] the purpose for the school division what we're trying to accomplish and this needs to be something that's not written down on a website but something that everybody in the school division your custodians, your janitors, your students, your parents, your cafeteria workers, your teachers, your administrators. Everybody knows what the vision is and everybody is on board and making decisions and acting to fulfill that vision. Okay, with the superintendent, it's critical that the

[01:06:57] board work in partnership with superintendent. You can't have a superintendent with different goals from the school division. Obviously, the role of the superintendent is to administer, to make the school division work, to carry out the mission and vision that the board has proposed, has put forward, but he's also to give back honest feedback. One time we had a priority. We wanted to start foreign language in the elementary schools, and the superintendent came back and said, "With all this else that's going on, we'd like to change

[01:07:31] that goal because we can't do it now and the board changed the goal changed the vision as an individual school board member i have no power over any employee but it's my job to be in the schools to listen to employees and to feel how they're going go on to the next one school board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from the students the families the employees and the community members how would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and and no solution will satisfy everyone?

[01:08:06] - Well, the key role is to listen and to make sure that people feel heard and that their opinions are heard and considered. As long as the board succeeds in doing that, most times that will solve that problem.

[01:08:25] And also, I believe very much in avoiding the tyranny of the war. So often we have, we'll do A or B, and often the perfect solution, a better solution is to take some of the good parts of A and some of the good parts of B and craft a new solution.

[01:08:43] A school board member represents constituents but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of the students in the schools across the county? Well, it's the job of the school board to run the schools.

[01:09:02] That's our job. That's our primary job. So running the schools, doing what's right for schools, doing what's right for kids, that is our priority. That's our number one priority. I believe that most, I like to say that education is the most important thing that we do in this county.

[01:09:24] And I believe that most of the residents of this county believe that, if not all. And the point is, as long as they're agreeing with that, my job as constituent services is two things.

[01:09:39] One thing is, if somebody's having a particular problem in a particular school, it's not my problem to solve it. My problem is to say, have you tried this approach? Have you looked at this resource? Have you done this? And to give them some guidance to where they can go to get the help they need to solve their particular problem for their particular student.

[01:10:09] You know, when there's philosophical differences about where the schools should be going on a big policy decision, again, that's something that the school board should be listening to people to, taking what people have to say into consideration, but ultimately the job of the school board is to run the school system, and that takes precedent.

[01:10:34] And that's why, unfortunately, this is an appointed position, but the reason why we have elections is that those kind of decisions can be made, you know, and I faced the voters six times and I always ran on that we had a good school system that we had to know we had to move and we had to get better and voters always seemed to like that and they thought that we were doing the right job so I always got reelected.

[01:10:58] One other thing I want to say is that one thing that I'll bring to this position is that I love school board work. I love being with people I love talking with educators I'll bring some joy and you've had a lot of hard times and a lot of anger and you could use some joy thank you for your consideration thank

[01:11:23] you uh mr kolasar uh next is mike mcdermott beating members of the board and chair berlin my name is mike mcdermott i'm myself and my wife we moved to albemarle county about four years ago from omaha nebraska we kind of forgot what trees look like so we decided to come back

[01:12:00] and and find out what we're very happy to be here i'm going to probably be a little different from some of the other folks you've heard in the past i don't have a lot of the deep background uh and and i think that's a value added i don't have the prejudices or the maybe the the deep the deep roots it's some of the folks you're probably going to hear from tonight have what i do bring is a large program management experience in the military i bring neutrality and i think i bring objectivity so for those matters to come before the board i

[01:12:35] can guarantee you will be provided with with those characteristics i believe that program management initiatives ought to be of value to the students i believe that and the taxpayers and the teachers and they ought to be very transparent i spent 26 years in the navy in various operational aviation and shipboard assignments, working with Marines and sailors.

[01:13:02] It was a great experience. If you want a diverse community, that was a very diverse community, particularly when you work with Marines. After retirement, I spent 20 years as a program manager for software development team in Omaha, and that is also a very diverse group of folks. If you want to kind of get them moving in the same direction, they're very different. They think differently, and that's good because people ought to think differently we ought to get different opinions as a as a as a retired naval officer i have the opportunity to sit on various service academy

[01:13:39] guidance boards uh kind of guidance officers boards um i do interviews for congressmen and senators for all service academies and i say this because most of the students who come before us are students from public schools and I will tell you that the teachers and the school boards of those students are doing a great job because those kids are scary smart. They come before us, the interviews are always inspiring, the applicants are motivated, they're looking for the success of our country, they're attuned to current problems and most of all they just

[01:14:19] want to get things done. So they're very attuned. Not having background, as I mentioned, in some of the foregoing issues with the board, I decided to do a deep dive into the website and I pulled up the strategic plan. And I thought this would be a great place to start because everybody has a strategic plan. So I started walking through this strategic plan. The learning for all pieces,

[01:14:47] It was very aspirational. It's very wide-ranging. It's very complex, and I think a lot of work went into developing it. I was looking for linkage between the goals of the strategic plan and the budget, and how a specific move within the strategic plan, either a strategy or a policy, how that moved the needle for particular students in terms of performance.

[01:15:15] I couldn't find that. I didn't see that. I didn't find any good project management material the upcoming year. I'm sorry. I believe a good project management project for the board would be a rewrite of the strategic plan and linking that strategic plan with the new goals that have been put out by the state for educational assessment.

[01:15:46] I did notice that, financially speaking, the cost per student over the last five years, which was the range for the board, or for the strategic plan, went from \$16,000 per student to \$22,500 per student.

[01:16:08] I didn't see a corresponding jump in performance by students within the school. And I think there ought to be a direct tie for everything that the board does to some type of student performance, whether it be social, athletic, or academic.

[01:16:23] I didn't see that. And finally, if I provide value added to the county and to the students, I would intend to run for election. Thank you so much.

[01:16:40] What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? I think the most important responsibility is to develop an annual budget that represents the views and the needs of the students and their families.

[01:17:01] It's got to be the number one priority that we have. It's got to be directly linked to statistically improved student performance, which I think we've talked about, but I think that's missing right now. I also think it ought to be linked to performance to support our teachers, and it needs to be transparent and accountable to the members of the county.

[01:17:25] I think the second most important thing is to hire and assess and hold the superintendent accountable in execution of assigned budgets and policies. It's his job, obviously his or her job, to execute those policies, but it's the board's job to make them and make sure the assessment is complete and that they're doing their job.

[01:17:45] Finally, I think the board's responsible to establish and assess policies that reflect a continuum of improvement for all students in accordance with the strategic plan. The best analogy, I guess, would be the superintendent or the board is like the board of directors on a corporation.

[01:18:04] The superintendent actually implements the policies of the board. He's the chief executive. He's essentially the CEO of the county for schools. His roles include leading instructional operations, recommending budgets, personal inspection, personal actions to the board, enforcing school laws and board policies, and reporting to the board for meetings.

[01:18:32] School division staff provides school systems principally for the teachers but curriculum and professional development, special education, and student support, transportation, nutrition, technology, all the tools and the hardware that need to be done for educating our students.

[01:18:54] School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members. How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? Thank you. I think starting out by saying no solution completely solves every problem and no diverse groups on either side of an issue will be completely satisfied with a solution that's developed.

[01:19:21] I think critical to finding common ground is understanding the basis of the issue from both sides. Is it based on fact? Is it based on emotion? Is it based on tradition? What's driving the particular issue? Once that's established, I think we can move toward a solution that can be made equitable for both sides and finding common ground. My responsibility as a board member would be to make a transparent principal decision explaining the criteria used the trade-offs between the specific

[01:19:53] solutions and link the decision to a solution that best serves the students and county. Thank you. A school board member represents constituents but also has a responsibility to the entire division.

[01:20:08] How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of students in schools across albemarle county the at-large member represents the needs of an entire district and the key is listening listening to all sides of an issue and vetting the issues with the entire board leading discussions looking for solutions looking for alternatives decisions need to be based on data and facts and clearly communicated with the stakeholders the ultimate goal being what is the best solution for our students there could be times when the need of

[01:20:43] one manager magisterial district outweighs the others uh those needs need to be taken into into account and priority given to what essentially is the best for the students overall in the county thank you thank you so much appreciate it thank you very much mr mcdermott uh next up is lucas

[01:21:04] johnson may begin whenever you're ready perfect well i just want to begin by thanking all of you for the time today if it feels long for us i can only imagine how long it feels for all of you so again, thank you for this. I want to start off by saying that I'm seeking this appointment to

[01:21:36] represent and speak for the youth that this school district obviously serves. As someone who graduated eight years ago from Monticello High School, I have lived with the responsibilities and expectations that the school board and administration have put on students, and I know how important it is for individuals to have the opportunity to be reflected in bodies like this that make decisions. I went to school in a time when there were threats to our schools,

[01:22:14] where there was social media, where again there was even the potential for us to have incredibly distrustful and mean-spirited public discourse on everyday topics. I did not go to school in a time when there was generative artificial intelligence, when there was TikTok, when there was a pandemic.

[01:22:39] I'm only eight years removed from my experience in these schools, and yet I truly don't even feel as if I can speak to the experience of students today and those who came behind me. Because of that I understand how much weight we give to each of these issues so all these issues but yet the board in its current composition does not reflect students who have gone through this school district even in recent years. 2026 was a

[01:23:17] monumental year in that it was the first year in which all graduating members of the class were born after the release of the iPhone and considering Having that in mind, I think it is imperative that we look at this as an issue of representation.

[01:23:41] I consider myself too far removed to even be able to adequately speak for what students today are experiencing. But I also know that there is an exceptional value to having an entity like this stand with students.

[01:23:58] When I was a high school student, I served in the County Students Advisory Council. And as a result of my time there, I was able to work with the school board in passing \$160,000 for mental health counselors in each of our high schools, something that we desperately needed at the time.

[01:24:16] And I think we will probably need for quite a few years in the future. But also the work that we did on the County Students Advisory Council led to us being able to position legislation with Senator Cray Deeds.

[01:24:32] It passed unanimously through both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Northam when I was a senior in high school before I could even vote. And the legislation that we got passed requiring mental health education and public schools made Virginia only the second state in the country alongside New York at the time to require it and now 20 states around the country require it.

[01:24:57] I've gone around the country since working with youth advocates, speaking with them, encouraging them to get involved and try to make change in their communities and it was because I had experienced a school board that listened to and saw the value in students and in their ideas but I also know how difficult it is for people who are not adults or not near adulthood and approaching entities like this to do that and so as a result what I would say is that while I intend to run for the school board district the school board seat I will be helping recruit and

[01:25:35] encourage people younger than me who can speak to their experiences in our schools much better than I can to run in my place because again I believe it is imperative that we have individuals who can't speak for this fully and then lastly what I would say is that I think it is imperative that we recognize also that as adults you all have excellent perspectives on what your children and grandchildren experience and go through in schools I would go as far as to say it may not be coming from the perspective of all of you as students in

[01:26:13] those schools. I think it is essential that we do have people who can remember those periods as recently as I have and can always utilize that for the benefit of their work on the board in determining these decisions, which I am certain will be exceptionally hard to make at numerous points. Thank you. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent in school division staff? While I understand those who consider a school board to be an

[01:26:49] administrator of the schools, I view it instead as the constituents voice to the administration of the schools. You all represent districts within the county. That's wonderful, in part because it allows you to have a section of Albemarle that you can speak to and focus on, which is essential. The at-large seat exists for the representation of the entirety of the county. I think that is exceptionally valuable to have someone who can again speak to the student experience much more recently in that role so that we can have an individual who can look at the broader picture and see how each of the decisions

[01:27:29] that are being made by the board are affecting students specifically. Again I think that all of you have the ability to be completely impartial in your decisions. But I would also venture to say that as humans, we all will think about how these decisions affect those we are related to and love. And in my case, not having any skin in the game, it is a very fortunate thing to be able to look impartially and objectively at a lot of these decisions and ask myself, do I think that this would benefit all students in Albemarle County?

[01:28:09] School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families employees and community members how would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone I would do so by asking the question what is the best outcome that we can achieve for our students again I've heard a lot of my peer candidates demonstrate that they really do care about the totality of the districts and the administration of it and that is essential completely I also believe that is why we have

[01:28:44] officials whose sole job again is to do that for Albemarle County. I believe that the board again serves as the opportunity for constituents to voice their concerns and to have their concerns be acted on in regarding the administration of our schools and as a result I think again a voice that is oftentimes left out not by this board in particular but by many school boards is that of their students I think it is essential that again individuals who can say that they have gone through this experience of late who can say how these policies have

[01:29:22] affected them and can also relate to the environment in which students currently find themselves in is fundamental to making decisions that will effectively achieve the outcomes that you are seeking to make not just from an adult's perspective ones that you think youth should utilize in pursuit of their success. Thank you. A school board member represents constituents, but also has a responsibility to the entire division. How would you balance the interests of the community you

[01:29:56] represent with the needs of students and schools across the county? Again, I think it really does come down to the fact that there should be a thorough perspective at a countywide level on what the student experience and the student outcomes of success are for Albemarle. As I've stated, I think all of you are exceptional civic leaders in that you are representing your respective managerial districts and helping ensure that all schools within the county are having their voices

[01:30:31] heard in this entity. That being said, I think it is again essential that the broader student voice, irrespective of the school or what feeder pattern they're in, has the ability to state as forcefully as they can that this is something that they can also have a role in making a decision on and again it is something that will take a long time and more than one individual in doing and i believe that everyone here also considers the value of students to be paramount in every decision they

[01:31:06] make i just think that there should be someone on the board as well who can state from the perspective of having been there as recently as I have, what value, what impact, what role these decisions will have on their success today, tomorrow, and in the future. Thank you very much. Thank you. Our next

[01:31:34] speaker is Joellen Pasarek. Good evening and thank you. As a long-time educator, human resource, and organizational development professional, I bring a unique perspective. Diverse voices and leadership are valuable. Supporting talented educators is vital. Partnership with parents and the community is paramount. My background is unique in that it combines a degree in child development

[01:32:11] and teaching with organizational development and human resource management. My father was a school administrator, my mother a reading specialist. I taught migrant education and kindergarten for seven years and previously studied at Michigan State University and the International School of Brussels. I've served as a substitute teacher and school volunteer. I understand the profound demands on educators and the needs of students, parents, and the community. I earned a master's degree in labor and industrial relations and spent years working in recruiting, assessment,

[01:32:49] training, and organizational development for two major corporations. My roles centered on defining policy, enforcing accountability, aspects of legal compliance, and helping leadership teams examine and steer organizational culture.

[01:33:09] I believe that in partnership, we have an opportunity to address significant cultural challenges, as well as retain transformative leadership with the ultimate superintendent selection. Every organization is defined by its culture.

[01:33:27] The school board plays a major role in that process and acts as its representatives. I have experience to support these efforts. Tonight, I'm going to address several elements of the organizational culture in my responses. Achievement, trust, accountability, shared values, and student safety.

[01:33:47] Thank you so much. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? Well, the board has oversight, authority provided by statute, and fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers and the community.

[01:34:07] The Board defines the mission, values, and policies, hires, fires, disciplines the Superintendent, and has discretion over the contracts and severance agreements. The Superintendent manages the operational aspects of the district, like a CEO, and delegates to staff.

[01:34:23] Most critical to me is the Board's role in defining the culture at ACPS and as the public face of that culture. School Board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members.

[01:34:41] How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? Well, I would first ask what is the root cause because deep division is often created when stakeholders perceive that their interests are not being heard or addressed or that there's unfair treatment or access to resources.

[01:35:01] But the best answer lies in prevention. The organization's culture provides the means to reduce division. Every culture is defined by at least four universal core values. Core principles, the primary mission, visionary leadership, communication, and shared values.

[01:35:21] Core principles are like the DNA of the organization. Division is minimized by adhering to them and aligning communications with them. Visionary leadership can communicate to unite. It includes the board partnered with a superintendent.

[01:35:39] In challenging times and crisis periods, they may call for a search to include skills like turnaround experience, communication, high emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and so forth.

[01:35:55] But communication is critical, and it is a refrain that repeats and reinforces the core principles. Poor communication derails us. One primary tenet of communication theory comes with a warning: absence of information allows negative assumptions to flourish.

[01:36:16] Studies at Stanford show that a lack of information also triggers uncertainty, anxiety, and causes perceived empathy to drop. In summary, I think division is less likely to fester when core principles are in place and communication channels are open and authentic.

[01:36:36] A school board member represents constituents, but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. would you balance the interests of the community right you represent with the needs of students and schools across Albemarle County? Balancing interest is a challenge that can also be mitigated by shared values. Most of the time you can count on people to act in their own best interest, but folks will also act for the greater good based on shared values. Every organization needs four universal shared values to prosper and they are achievement, trust, accountability, and

[01:37:11] safety. It doesn't matter if you're running a hot dog stand, a manufacturing company, or a school district. Those are the universal values that need to be secured by your practices, your policies, and your communication. I'd like to touch on achievement. Learners at ACPS share high aspirations, spirit, and work ethic. Every child deserves the opportunity to find a reward, be it through academics, athletics, musical, technical, artistic or vocational, whatever it may be. The bellwether report told us that achievement requires rigorous

[01:37:50] expectations, so they need to be carried out in everything we do. Encouraging achievement doesn't mean lowering expectations on a grading curve or a test requirement. Teachers will tell you that our job is to help kids grasp the correlation between hard work and achievement of their goals it might be learning to read at the end of third grade or it may mean becoming valedictorian our job is to meet them where they are and and reward genuine achievement in every way we can i share your concern over the

[01:38:26] achievement gap especially for boys and there's a lot to discuss there i wish we had more time but i did want to mention a may 2026 report from stanford harvard and dartmouth jointly reversing learning loss and there are a number of new models of innovation in many states across the country but there may be principles there that would help us at ACPS next I want to talk about trust as a shared value someone once said trust is not a line item on a budget but the cost of not having it is

[01:39:03] immense and I think we see that across many organizations when trust is lost transparency builds trust opacity can permeate an organization in unintended ways no board can oversee the unknown but our obligation is to ask understand and address one area i believe i would want to address and understand as a board member is how non-disclosure and separation agreements are being used what is their frequency the financial financial obligations attached and and do they ever impede appropriate reporting

[01:39:42] and accountability. The board is accountable to voters, taxpayers, the communities they serve, and then for compliance with legal mandates. Recent Supreme Court rulings may require key provisions, policy revisions.

[01:40:00] Notably though, Virginia Code says that a parent has a fundamental right to make decisions concerning the upbringing, education, and care of their children, and that's a vital mandate. Partnership helps balance competing interests. Teachers understand the great responsibility that comes when parents entrust their precious children to us.

[01:40:20] As the teacher from Waynesboro, who lifted each child in her third grade class out of the library window a week ago today, safety is non-negotiable. When safety is a core value, protection of reputation or anything else cannot get in the way.

[01:40:39] There are several safety proposals that I would want to evaluate as a board member. And among them, making sure that we have tight compliance with your new professional boundaries policy, immediate notifications for alleged employee criminal activity, restore school resource officers in every building, and evaluate books in the same way that we already do the internet, movies, and video games.

[01:41:09] One last thing. I know you do an annual review of the code of conduct. And I would like to suggest creating codes of conduct across the organization that have consequences and that enforce the core principles and confirm that we mean what we say.

[01:41:33] One last thing as a recruiter, I look around the room tonight and I see a tremendous cadre of very qualified individuals. And I applaud that and I wish you luck making your decision. I thank you very much for your time. Thank you very much.

[01:41:52] We are scheduled for a break, and my suggestion is to take one unless -- okay. I just wanted to look right and left. Just looking at the official -- well, let's say we will be back at 7:30, and the next four people up at that point are Jimmy Ballou, Daisy Roja, Justin Shiflett, and Mandy Crombie.

[01:42:14] I will see you again at 7:30.

[01:42:41] I'd like to call this board meeting back to order so we can get on with our interviews. The next four speakers will be Jimmy Ballou. You can approach the mic. Daisy Roja, Justin Schiflett, and Mandy Crombie.

[01:43:04] Whenever you're ready. Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the board, Superintendent Hayes. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm seeking the appointment because I believe Albemarle County Public Schools needs voices on the school board that come from different backgrounds, different experiences, and different perspectives.

[01:43:28] I'll be the first to tell you, I'm probably not the normal fit for a school board appointment. I don't have a long list of degrees, just one, or years of working inside of the education system. But I believe that also can be a strength. I bring the perspective of a parent, a business owner, and someone who has experienced firsthand what can happen when a child is struggling and adults around them fail to recognize it.

[01:43:51] In December of 1987, while in preschool at Red Hill Elementary, I lost my parents. I was a child. Afterwards, I struggled in school. Looking back today, I can see there were so many things that were missed. There were so many people in the school system who should have seen that I was struggling, who should have recognized that something was wrong, and who could have stepped in.

[01:44:15] But too much was missed. That experience has stayed with me for years. Now as a parent with children in Albemarle County Public Schools, I have seen some of those same problems from the other side. I have seen how easy it can be for a child to struggle, for a parent to raise concerns, and for the system to move too slowly or fail to recognize what is happening until after the problem has become much larger. This is one of the biggest reasons I am standing here today.

[01:44:42] It is time for a change. I'm not applying because I believe I have every answer. I don't. I'm applying because I will ask questions. I will listen, and I will never forget behind every policy, every report, and every number is a child. I also believe I represent a group of people who we don't hear from enough, what I would call the silent majority. Those are the parents and community members who may never attend a school board meeting, they may never speak at a microphone, and they may never send a long email, but who care deeply about our schools and expect leadership to use cariness, compassion, and most of all, common sense. Those are the qualities I would

[01:45:20] bring to this board. Caring enough to listen when a parent says something isn't right, Compassion for the student who may be struggling in ways that cannot immediately be seen. And common sense to recognize when something isn't working and have the courage to change it. If appointed, I will not be afraid to ask the difficult questions, but I will also come prepared to listen, to work with people I may disagree with, and find solutions.

[01:45:44] It should never be about personalities or politics. It should be about our children. for, and as far as November of 27, I do intend to run. I do not intend to run for the at-large seat. I'm not seeking this appointment simply to fill the seat for a short period of time.

[01:46:02] I am prepared to make the long-term commitment, earn the trust of the community, and let the voters decide whether I should continue serving. I may not be the traditional candidate, but sometimes a different perspective is exactly what is needed. I know what it feels like to be the child whose struggles were missed. I know what it feels like to be the parent fighting to make sure their child's needs are seen and I want to use those experiences to help make Albemarle County Public Schools better for every child and every family.

[01:46:28] Thank you. What do you see is the most important responsibility of a school board member and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? I believe the most important responsibility of a school board member is oversight and accountability. Making sure the school division is doing what is supposed to do for students and teachers and parents in our community. A school board member is not there to run the day-to-day operations. We should not be telling a principal how to manage a classroom or telling staff members how to perform their individual jobs. That is the responsibility of the superintendent and the professional staff. The superintendent is responsible for

[01:47:08] managing the school division and carrying out the directions and policies that have been established by the board. The school board's job is different. We We would set the expectations, we would establish the policy, we approve the budget, we hire and evaluate superintendents, and most importantly, we hold the superintendent accountable for the performance of the schools.

[01:47:29] I think sometimes there can be a tendency for a school board simply to accept what is being told by the administration. I don't believe that is enough. Oversight means asking questions, including difficult questions. It means looking beyond a report, a presentation, and asking, is this actually working for our students?

[01:47:47] And when parents, teachers, students, or community members raise legitimate concern, board members have a responsibility to listen. That doesn't mean interfering with every individual situation or trying to become the superintendent ourselves. It means recognizing the patterns, making sure policies are being followed, and holding leadership accountable when they are not.

[01:48:06] I run a business. I understand the difference between governance and management. I don't have to perform every employee's job to know whether the organization is meeting the standards that we have established. I believe a strong school board should support a superintendent and staff when they are doing things right.

[01:48:25] But support should never mean rubber stamping decisions and being afraid to ask questions. At the end of the day, the superintendent manages the school division, the school board responds to the public and holds the system accountable. And I believe we can do that with caringness, compassion, common sense, and constant focus on what is best for our children.

[01:48:47] - Thank you. members often hear strongly held in conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members. How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? When a community is deeply divided, I believe the first responsibility of a school board member is to listen. Really, just to listen to all sides, including the people who you disagree with. We live in a time when it is very easy to pick sides. Surround yourself with people you agree with and stop listening to everyone else. I don't believe that is how school boards should operate. I also understand sometimes there simply isn't a decision that will

[01:49:26] make everyone happy. In those situations, I would ask some basic questions. What are the facts? What does the law require? What does their policy say? And most importantly, what is best for the students? I will listen to the parents, the students, the teachers, the staff members, and community members. I would ask questions and make sure I understood the consequences of the decision before casting my vote but listening to everyone does not mean agreeing with everyone at some point a school

board member has to make a decision and that is where common sense compassion and courage come in i'm not going to make every decision every decision based on which group is the loudest or

[01:50:03] which position is most popular at the time sometimes the silent majority deserves to be heard i would make the decision that i honestly believe is right and explain why i made it and be willing to stand behind it and if someone disagrees with my vote i will still listen to them the next day i won't treat someone as an enemy just because we disagree i run a business and i've learned that leadership sometimes means making decisions and not everyone will like but people shouldn't always people should always know that they are heard the process was fair and that is the decision was not predetermined we we aren't always going to agree but we can disagree respectfully listen

[01:50:43] to each other and still work together at the end of the day my question will always be the same what decision gives their children the best opportunity to be safe supported and successful that's where my focus will be a school board member represents constituents but also as a responsibility to the entire division how would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of students and schools across the county i believe the school board member has two responsibilities that have to work together listen to the people you represent but But never forget that every student in Albemarle County is ultimately your responsibility.

[01:51:20] The community deserves a representative who is accessible, who answers questions, and who listens when parents, teachers, and staff bring forward concerns. But once you sit on the board, your responsibility becomes much bigger than one neighborhood, bigger than one school, bigger than one group of people.

[01:51:36] Every child in Albemarle County deserves the same opportunity to be safe, supported, and successful. That means when I make a decision, I simply can't say what's best for the people who contact me. I have to ask what's best for the entire school division. There will be difficult decisions involving budget, staffing, facilities, transportation, educational programs.

[01:51:57] There may be times when some schools want something, some things that other schools need. Those decisions have to be based on facts, fairness, and need, not which community has the loudest voice. I also believe that is where, again, the cariness, compassion, and most of all, common sense matters.

[01:52:15] Caringness means listening to the people you represent. Compassion means understanding that another community may be facing challenges yours isn't. And common sense means recognizing that we are one school division and our success cannot be measured by how well just a few schools do.

[01:52:31] I would advocate strongly for the concerns brought to me, but I would also be willing to make decisions that benefit the entire division. even when the decision may not be the most popular one in the room because whenever a child attends a school whether a child attends a school in Crozet, Scottsville or anywhere else in the county their future matters equally. To me that's what representation means giving your community a voice or remembering that you respond you are responsible to every child in Albemarle County.

[01:52:59] Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to be here today. Again I know I may not be the traditional choice for this position, and I'm okay with that. Sometimes a different perspective is exactly what is needed. As a parent, a business owner, and a member of this community, I've experienced their school system as a student who struggled, and now I've experienced it as a parent trying to make sure my

own children have what they need to succeed. Those experiences have shaped me into who I am, and that is why I'm standing here today. If appointed, I promise three things. I will listen, I will ask questions, and I will never be afraid to speak up when

[01:53:35] something doesn't seem right. I won't come into this position believing I have all the answers. I will come into this position with caringness, compassion and common sense and a willingness to work with everyone at the table. At the end of the day, this isn't about politics, personalities, people. It's about our children. Every decision we make should begin and end with one simple question. Are we doing what is best for the students of Albemarle County? If giving this opportunity to serve to serve, that will always be my priority. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Balooov. Our next interview will be Daisy Rojas.

[01:54:14] Good evening. It's Daisy Rojas. Sorry. My apologies. That's okay. So first I just wanted to say why I'm interested in being here. I've probably spoken with most of you one-on-one. I've been here many times and I've written many times and I'm actually going to go back seven years and read a speech, that I presented at that time. My concerns began more than seven years ago when the situation was

[01:54:51] far more complex than it appeared on the surface, yet believing in a solution that was less complicated to solve than to deal with the far-reaching negative and destructive outcomes of our current situation. Understanding that Albemarle County is extremely fiscally conservative aids in our understanding that a business model has been employed in decisions made in the recent past budgetary cycles with the goal of reducing overall costs. From a financial perspective, the most costly expense in any organization are labor costs. Many organizations attempt to overcome this burden by reducing staff and increasing productive hours for the remaining

[01:55:27] employees, i.e. teachers. While seemingly an obvious solution when an organization is under pressure to increase results and simultaneously minimize expense, this is no way to manage education since children's health and emotional well-being are vital to their performance outputs cannot be measured in simple quantitative equations additionally from a human relations perspective employees may reach a breaking point whereby rebellion and apathy set in and productivity is inhibited by lack of initiative or interest in one's purpose within the organization

[01:56:02] i brought this to your attention october of 2019 and this was published between myself and Tanisha Hudson. Some of you may know who that is. And so for seven years and more, I've been interested in working with the board in various ways.

[01:56:22] I've held positions on different committees, the special education, family council, gifted education council. And I was chair of the Long Range Planning Committee when John O. Alcaro was chair of the board as his appointee.

[01:56:38] So I've been around for a while. I also started PTO back up at Dewitt. I started with Amanda Alger, the Families Helping Families, which is now the Albemarle County Foundation, so school foundation. So I've had a lot of work that I've done behind the scenes here.

[01:56:57] No one voted for me. I didn't get any donations. I just did it. I also had four kids that went through Albemarle County schools. The last one graduated a year early. She is now on full scholarship to Wheeling University. And I was a graduate of Albemarle High School.

[01:57:13] My father was a graduate of Albemarle High School. My grandfather was professor emeritus at the Curry School of Education. I have a couple of his publications here, which I reference when I need to

write articles for publication in academic journals on the subject of education.

[01:57:30] I may have mentioned I have a master's in education administration as well. So, yes, I'm a professional, and yet I've never been paid to do this work because my children did come first, and instead of running for a board position, I continued to parent my kids for 25 consecutive years until they were all graduated out of the system. That doesn't mean that I didn't have something to say or do during that period of time when I was primarily a parent but continuing to advocate for all children in Elmore County schools and beyond. I mean, I'm published internationally on this topic. So you can look me up on academia.edu if you

[01:58:09] really need to. I'm sure some of you have, and that's really the reason that I'm here. So we want to talk about what your questions are. I'm here to answer them. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? So the school board's job is to really represent the mission. And frankly, I think that the mission generally is to educate our citizenry. Now, how does that manifest within our own community? And as an individual board member, you're

[01:58:46] representing your constituency. And that's very different than what our superintendent's job is. They do the work of administrating that mission and managing all of the staff and personnel underneath within the school division. But as a school board member, we need to maintain that mission. And so making sure that our superintendent is operating in line with that mission, evaluating the superintendent's activities, looking at the goals and accomplishments, and is it continuing to align with what our mission is. So I do think that those are very different roles. It's not our job on

[01:59:23] the school board to micromanage, but it is our job to have oversight and to pay attention, and most importantly to listen to our constituents and stakeholders. our teachers, our families, our business owners, everyone who votes in the community, each other, and our superintendent. So that's where I would say our differences lie. Thank you so much. School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members. How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? So I think if you have a really

[02:00:00] involved community, there's always going to be a situation where somebody's not satisfied. It's not our job to make everybody happy all the time. Learn that as a mom, at least there. There's lots of other places you can learn that too. But it is really important to listen to everybody. My own opinion isn't as important as hearing what everyone else thinks and maybe some solutions. We don't know what we don't know. And this community is full of professionals, experts people with knowledge experience on the ground we need to listen to our community we need to listen to our people in the trenches inside the schools

[02:00:35] parents everyone who has something to say and we also need to go to people and say I'm willing to listen when everything was happening with you know the news that came out with the two teachers at Woodbrook and Hollymead I offered my home to people to come and just be together they didn't have to talk, they could come and listen, they could share their experiences, and it was quite interesting how many people came forward. I didn't physically see everyone. Some people called, some people texted, some people met with me privately, but just being available to listen was so powerful.

[02:01:11] I learned so much from so many people and from so many different perspectives. I brought some of those to you so that you could hear what I was hearing, but there was no way that I could share with you everything that I got from those experiences. I've done listening sessions many times. I've been a mediator before. I was chair for the economic workgroup. I worked with the dialogue on race two times. I've done a lot of work in anthropology where it's my job to listen to people and hearing what people have to say. Data is really important but so is people's experiences and that

[02:01:47] doesn't often reflect in the data and I know you all get reports but I sometimes have to look at those reports and ask the questions that sort of need to be asked because they can be hidden in statistics statistics are just like any other language you can couch things in different ways that will hide information from you so you've got to be willing to ask the hard questions if you don't see something say something if you don't hear something ask so that's that's the main thing that I think is important for school board members to remember when they're dealing with constituents that have conflicting perspectives ask the questions listen to what they have to say don't expect to satisfy everyone but

[02:02:23] remember the mission always refer back to your mission so a school board member represents constituents but also has a responsibility to the entire school division how would you balance the interests of the community represent with the needs of students and schools across the county first I didn't say but I am running and whether it is the at-large position or when the riot seat comes up. If I didn't get that one, I would like to be on the board now that I have that availability in my schedule. I do think balancing interests are important. We need to definitely consider maintaining the purpose of

[02:03:02] public education as a center of our community and maintaining a well-educated citizenry. It's not just for kids. I think that's something that people forget, is that our education system is for our entire community. We use the buildings for many different things. We have gatherings. We have adult education. We have, you know, K-TEC.

[02:03:21] There's so many different ways that our schools serve our community, and we need to remember that, that every person within our county boundary should have a stake in what's happening in our public schools. Not to mention, we all pay our taxes, so, you know, it's important to everybody.

[02:03:39] And so I think the needs of our students, it's important for us to continue to listen. As I said, relationship building, bringing in the students to the conversation as well. We do a lot of work on their behalf. I think one of the previous candidates mentioned how important it is to hear from the students.

[02:03:59] I did listen to one of the board meetings. Previously, we were talking about how to manage social media. It's really hard to do if you're not talking with the students because they are the experts in that area. So finding a way to make sure that we're getting our ears to the ground.

[02:04:15] Making sure that we're working in tandem with our other community boards. The Board of Supervisors is really important. That hasn't been happening for a very long time. I do have a good relationship with several members of the Board of Supervisors and have for a long time. I know what it's like to balance lots of different issues.

[02:04:32] The school is the crux of our community, whether we like it or not. We are paying salaries. We are bringing people into our community to work, to live, to play, and yet we're not paying enough for them to actually live here, to be able to have their children here in the same schools where they're working.

[02:04:49] That's not fair. Our county is just under Beverly Hills and wealth per capita. How are we not able to provide a living wage to our teachers? I mean, there's some budget questions I would be asking, really, really hard budget questions.

[02:05:05] And so I think, you know, working together with our other boards and our constituents is essential in terms of turning the school around. I know you guys have a hard job, whether it's me or someone else, but, you know, this is something that we can do. If there's a lot of community engagement right now, leverage that.

[02:05:23] Use every expert that's willing. It seems like there's 15 of us tonight. So, you know, only one of us might be up there, but the rest of us can sure as heck do something to help you all. So that's what I have for you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

[02:05:38] Thank you, John. Our next speaker is Justin Shiflett. Justin Shiflett here. I'm going to make one more time because I would hate to skip someone. Justin Shiflett. Clerk, would you just make a note and maybe just reach out to make sure? Our next speaker is Mandy Crombie.

[02:06:17] Good evening. We called upon this community for help, hoping a few dedicated applicants would step forward.

[02:06:33] It's easy to find the good news. Having to choose between such diverse, high-caliber candidates is a difficult puzzle, but it's the best possible problem a community could ever have. Here today we have lawyers, military officers, CEOs, former board members, published authors, and even one speech pathologist.

[02:06:56] Why am I seeking this position and why should you put your trust in me, Mandy Crombie? I'm here to ask for the job because of my foundation of civic-mindedness and my absolute certainty that I'll be a positive solutions-based member of Albemarle County's school board. Now, why should you pick me? This answer may best be explained by sharing how I ended up in my current career in the mental health field. Soon after our move from Austin, Texas in 2022 it was obvious that too many in our community had a lack of access to basic resources. How could

[02:07:35] a city with over 500 non-profits be left with such glaring needs? By the next week I knew I would finish my current SLP contract and apply my skill set of relationship building to a broader community with a new career as a qualified mental health professional at Region 10. I specialize in supporting vulnerable populations and designing solutions to connect individuals with critical mental health and substance abuse resources. I share this story to demonstrate that you should

[02:08:11] pick me because the greatest asset I can bring to this role is hope, specifically the achievable hope that through listening and partnership, we can rebuild the rightful trust in our schools. Any decision to run for the position in 2027 would be deferred until I can gauge the community's response to my service during the first year of filling the vacancy.

[02:08:40] What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member, and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? The heart of the school board's role lies in its accountability to the populace.

[02:08:55] A successful board establishes accessible two-way communication with not only the staff, parents, and the community, but also students of diverse backgrounds. This is achieved by actively

gathering data through valid inquiry and synthesizing feedback to create positive downstream changes that solve identified problems as heard from those directly involved in the day-to-day business of educating our students.

[02:09:26] The board must then wisely be reflective on realistic improvement points where effort can best be applied to elevate outcomes. The board holds the responsibility to hire the superintendent, who acts as the CEO of the district.

[02:09:43] The superintendent not only hires a team of staff, but must also provide an appropriate environment for educators to gain the fulfillment they seek from their job by ensuring all staff have the equipment and training to foster a positive work environment, which often leads to a strong feeling of professional purpose and improved teacher retention.

[02:10:08] The teachers and staff are highly trained experts who know their students best. They have the awesome responsibility of using creativity and innovation to capture the attention of a diverse student body, inspiring each student to learn to the best of their unique abilities, to be autonomous in their education.

[02:10:31] School board members often hear strongly held on conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members. How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? Time and effort spent in utilizing unifying language, focusing on constructive dialogue, and leading with curiosity towards another's perspective will result in earned trust, and the community will notice the good faith in the collective well-being.

[02:11:02] I know my time is likely running short, but I'd like to be sure to share that to transform this philosophy into action, I will advocate for expanding beyond rigid public comment periods towards active collaborative dialogue by looking to implement roundtable discussions and community listening circles.

[02:11:24] We also could vary meeting locations to reduce further the current barriers in civic engagement. Furthermore, I'm committed to improving our students' motivation toward learning by continuing to push directly into our high schools to work alongside students while regularly meeting with teachers to find practical ways to alleviate classroom stress.

[02:11:49] Leading with true active engagement and genuine curiosity as to how someone may have arrived at their conclusion directs a community towards a relational understanding of results. When the administration is quick to hear and slow to speak, true trust in the process results.

[02:12:12] A school board that seeks input rather than feedback, increases engagement, improves autonomy, and publicly advocates for district staff will earn the trust and belief from the community that the greater good has been actively heard.

[02:12:28] When Falls Church City Public Schools was deeply fractured over how to implement AI in the classroom, The school board openly admitted that no perfect answer existed to satisfy both the parents demanding workforce preparation and the teachers fearing the loss of human connection.

[02:12:48] They embraced a relational approach by shifting their focus from a top-down policy to rebuilding trust and community relationships. Over the course of a year, they engaged in deep listening work sessions that actively mapped the conflicting values within the community.

[02:13:07] By prioritizing a transparent, inclusive process over a rigid final product, the board transformed a hostile ideological battleground into a shared collaborative experiment where everybody felt heard, represented, and safely respected.

[02:13:30] Let's let Albemarle County be the next great example of this relational approach. A school board member represents constituents, but also is a responsibility to the entire division. How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of students and schools across the county?

[02:13:49] Given the pool of applicants here today, the board has an easy task of finding a new member that will balance the interests of the community with the needs of the students. This board has been recently thrown into the scrutiny of the national spotlight. I promise to continue the amazing work this board has shown towards making gradual and much-needed changes to the grading policy to advocate for the needs of our teachers.

[02:14:15] I'm thankful to the board for actively problem-solving the incredible population growth seen in our area and to equip schools with resources necessary to handle the increasingly diverse needs of our student body. I admire this board's focus on providing much-needed mental health support, such as the Help Me anonymous tip line, and adding school resource officers to improve school safety and security.

[02:14:44] This board has worked tirelessly to review policies to work towards closing the achievement gap and staying ahead of changing societal landscape, where college matriculation is no longer the gold standard. Thanks to this board ACPS leads the way in a diversity of paths to result in high school graduates who are well equipped to enter the workforce directly. I'd be honored to join this board to continue to work towards successful community-minded solutions to the ever-changing educational needs of our students. So why does this scientist turned speech pathologist turned mental

[02:15:23] health professional stand in front of the board to ask for this job today? because true to Horace Mann's vision and in the words of Henrik Ibsen, a community is like a ship. Everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm. Thank you. Thank you very much. Our last two speakers tonight are David Tatman and

[02:15:48] David Storm. I believe he's pulled his name. Give me one second. Of course. Apologies

[02:16:43] for the delay. No problem. You may begin. Good evening. My name is David Tatman. Since grade school in Alexander, Virginia, I've strongly believed in a citizen's responsibility for public service. To that end, I served in a wide variety of positions in the federal government for 40 years, including six years in senior academic leadership roles at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, during which time I was directly involved in leading a total turnaround of student outcomes, from institutionally wide failing performances to genuinely outstanding graduation results.

[02:17:20] Those are public records. You can check them. I served on the long-term process improvement, vision, and planning team, and then I helped lead those plans to success over a decade. As regards educational budgeting, I later managed a national-level international military education and training budget of several millions of dollars annually as a portion of my overall military assistance budget when I served as the U.S. senior defense official in our embassy in Mongolia.

[02:17:51] Will I run for the at-large seat in November next year? I don't know. I'm retired, and I don't need another job. I firmly believe my educational and governmental leadership experience can assist the school board's mission, but I have no idea if you collectively will actually welcome my participation.

[02:18:12] If selected and in my service benefits the division, I may consider a run for the at-large seat next fall because I know for a fact that making major improvements to a large academic organization is a complex and extended process not a brief tick-tock show but I've made no decision one way or the other at this time thank you so much what do you see is the most important responsibility of a school board member and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent in school division staff when I reported for duty at the Defense Language

[02:18:50] Institute, initially as that institute's provost operations officer, the first thing I saw when I walked into the provost's office was a black and white sign on the wall over his desk, and it said the main thing is keeping the main thing the main thing, students. Ultimately, delivering successful student outcomes is the entire reason why our school system exists. That's why we have one, right um and ensuring that we do so legally and efficiently is the most important responsibility

[02:19:24] for all school board members but my full answer to those two questions is more specific virginia code 22.1-79 specifies six core duties for school boards in virginia four of those duties are specifically focused on operating the schools of a division in accordance with the law core duty

[02:19:45] Number two states of Virginia school boards are to quote secure by visitation or otherwise as full information as possible about the conduct of public schools in the school division and take care that they are conducted according to law and with the utmost efficiency end quote. A simple phrase for such responsibility is legal oversight. The superintendent and the school division staff are tasked to mean to deliver the mandated education conduct related school support activities and maintain the school facilities.

[02:20:17] The school board's job collectively, and under Virginia Code 22.1-71, it is legally a collective and not individual responsibility, is to ensure that the superintendent and school division staff are accomplishing their assigned tasks as applicable under law, without waste of taxpayers' money, as the law says, with utmost efficiency.

[02:20:40] Superintendents and school staffs are to do the work, school boards are to make sure those employees are doing the work efficiently in accordance with all applicable laws. and those are two very different legal roles and obligations. - Thank you very much. School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members.

[02:21:01] How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy everyone? - To quote from the nearly 2,000 year old Chinese text, The Book of Han, the bottom line here is to seek truth from facts. School boards have a legal obligation to separate feelings from facts in their actions.

[02:21:22] All applicable laws, federal law, including Supreme Court case law decisions and Virginia statutory codes and applicable lower court decisions, as well as all formal contractual obligations in force are facts.

[02:21:37] Right. They're facts. I think and we believe those those are markers of feelings. Now, while feelings and emotions of all concerned parties are certainly pertinent and must be heard and listened to actively, not just, okay, all right, do I have to, right?

[02:21:57] Feelings are not legally binding. Under Virginia Code 22179, the number one priority of a school board is to see that the school laws are properly explained, enforced, and observed. Furthermore,

as I mentioned previously, Virginia Code 22179 states that the school board is a body corporate vested with all powers and duties in its corporate capacity and individual members have no separate authority or duties except as assigned by the board as a whole.

[02:22:26] So the clear implication is that although individual school board members may have their own personal feelings about a contentious matter, school boards in Virginia have a formal legal obligation as a collective group to enforce and observe pertinent school laws.

[02:22:45] And that must be the guiding star for all of their activities. Furthermore, that obligation must be properly and openly explained to all concerned parties by the school board. That explained is also part of the state law in that regard. Above all, adherence to and enforcement of the law, in other words, the actual facts of the matter and not necessarily the feelings regarding any conflicting views, is the legal obligation of the school board collectively, regardless of whether that solution satisfies anybody in the community or even individual school board members.

[02:23:23] In short, listen to everybody, but act on the laws. Thank you. A school board member represents constituents, but also has a responsibility to the entire school division. How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of students and schools across Albemarle County?

[02:23:40] I'm so glad you asked. I'm applying for the sole at-large school board seat. I'm a taxpayer, I'm a homeowner, and I'm a resident here in Albemarle County. Some of those are requirements for this. To that end, the constituents I'd represent, others have mentioned, are all the taxpayers and the student parents and the students of the ACPS and, yes, also the interests of the school staff as well.

[02:24:03] I mean, that's, it's, it's a big tent. Inside the school board, however, I see the at-large school member focusing especially on matters which run across the magisterial districts. As I see it, the four biggest countywide educational issues our school division faces today are these.

[02:24:23] one, chronic poor attendance, two, mandated implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act, particularly focusing on formal reading intervention in grades four through eight, three, successful transition from legacy KTEC sharing with the city of Charlottesville to ACPS directed and delivered career and technical education, and finally improving overall second language acquisition, English learner outcomes. All four of these are long-term issues, all involve some degree of competing internal demands for resource allocations and all four issues are

[02:24:58] very much interlinked collectively improvements in these lines of effort will go far in addressing the full scope of issues highlighted in the bellwether report and more recent sol assessments of student competencies our chronically poor absence on average 14 or one in seven of our students are chronically absent or truant is concentrated in several school districts and grade levels, as was reported to this board at the very last public board school meeting.

[02:25:29] We cannot teach students who are not in our classrooms. School attendance is a legal matter and thoroughly covered under Virginia code. My initial research indicates that the division may not be fully using all of the tools available to us legally to address this matter.

[02:25:50] we can do better. And fixing attendance issues is a critical first step in addressing overall student competency concerns. Next, the Virginia Literacy Act requires that, quote, each local school board to provide reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through a grade eight who

demonstrate substantial deficiencies based on their performance on the standards of learning reading assessment or a literary screener provided or approved by the department.

[02:26:18] Such reading intervention services shall consist of evidence-based literacy instruction, aligned with science-based reading research, and be documented for each student in an individual written student reading plan. Well, starting last year, we were to have implemented individual student reading plans for students in grades four through eight who require intervention support.

[02:26:41] That's a lot of new work that got dumped on our teachers, a lot of new work. We need to ensure that our schools are complying with this law, because it is a law. But we also need to determine if and to what extent doing so is negatively impacting the rest of our mandated instruction.

[02:27:02] And if it is, we need to, and if we need more resources to accomplish these new Commonwealth requirements, we need to be raising this issue to state level as a school board, because these are mandated requirements. And if you get mandates without resources, there's a disconnect there. Next, our society is facing historic changes driven by the pervasively growing impacts of artificial intelligence.

[02:27:26] All education is basically a combination of skills instruction and content delivery. AI is already significantly impacting content delivery, and every teacher out there knows it, right?

[02:27:43] You got to use an AI to screen the inputs from the students to make sure they weren't AI-written, right? But that will inevitably shift schooling focus more heavily towards human skills competencies, right?

[02:28:01] As to paraphrase a recent commercial, AI may be able to turn your lights on and off, but it can't fix your leaking plumbing. Career and technical education is primarily focused on skills instruction versus content delivery, and its importance is only going to grow in the years ahead as AI becomes increasingly pervasive.

[02:28:21] we need to be getting cte instruction right fourth of finally a fourth area of at-large concern needs to be our second language acquisition students and all four of those are mixed together all right it's a tangled web and you've got to undo all of them and i would like the job thank

[02:28:44] you thank you very much our last speaker tonight is david storm good evening thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am seeking the appointment to the at-large seat because I believe I am best positioned to help the school board with its looming

[02:29:17] short-term priorities, hiring the best superintendent possible, as well as helping the board work through the additional serious challenges it currently faces. I'm a strong candidate for the position because I bring a deep wellspring of experience serving the school Division specifically, and Albemarle County generally. I have children in the division at multiple levels and in multiple schools, and I bring skills that complement what the board has to do. As an attorney and former higher education

[02:29:52] administrator, I have experience guiding people and organizations through trying times. I was the lead athletic administrator for American University in Washington DC on September 11th and its aftermath. I was a supervisor there and a sport administrator during the terror of the DC sniper when we needed to figure out how to conduct outdoor competitions under a cloud of uncertainty. I served on multiple hiring committees there for leadership roles including the athletic

[02:30:27] director, the academic sport director, sport coaches, including individuals I then had to supervise. My three children attend three different schools in the division. One in elementary school, one in middle school, one at the charter high school who also plays a sport for their base school. I'm invested in their success and the successes of all the students across the division. Their enrollment helps give me insight into what's working and what isn't in multiple levels of the division. My work on long-range planning over the last

[02:31:05] eight plus years has me familiar with the facility needs of the schools across the county. My work on community advisory committees gave me insight into development and growth patterns across the county. My board appointment to the Economic Development Authority helps me see what a robust and thriving school division can do for everyone in Elmore County. Lastly, my volunteer work across scouting, youth sport organizations, and my church centers the safety of children in our community. I am uniquely qualified to meet this moment for the school board

[02:31:43] It is not my intention to seek the at-large position in 2027. The community needs to be able to look at that seat individually and as a clean slate moving forward. It was not my intention to apply for this position, but I was asked by multiple members of our community to come forward today.

[02:32:06] So while the intent is not there, that may change. change. What do you see as the most important responsibility of a school board member and how is that responsibility different from the role of the superintendent and school division staff? When thinking about this question I turned to see what the board thought its role was. I considered what it thinks is its role and responsibilities. Certainly being a member of a team you have to be able to work together and that team has to set

[02:32:41] one goal, one vision, one mission and to express it clearly and distinctly to the superintendent, to the staff, and the community. Establishing this vision, mission, set of goals, and the strategic plans means nothing without communicating the same. Once you've set that vision, then you supervise the operations of the division. That combination of responsibilities covers everything else that you do. In setting the budget, you demonstrate your support the vision in hiring a new superintendent you bring someone on board who agrees with the vision

[02:33:21] in supervising the division and approving the curriculum you keep it consistent with the vision but supervision at the division level cannot mean managing the day-to-day with over 14 000 students nearly 300 3 000 employees the school board has to trust the top level hires it makes that those individuals will implement the strategic plan in alignment with the vision and goals then regularly evaluate those hires on agreed-upon criteria. Take a look at the role qualifications and assessment document the board has. You may know it

[02:33:58] is document BBA. The first 13 are straightforward, simple statements, direct statements. Then take a look at the next six. They're very specific in what you have to do. Some are tied very directly to state law, but they don't seem to have been considered in the context of others. That document should be setting out the role and the responsibilities and right now it seems to have become a catch-all for too many things that the board thinks it has to do

[02:34:33] and in some cases has to do, but it does need to be addressed. The superintendent and the division staff have to set out, carry out the vision and the strategic plan. They are the professionals. They should have the expertise and knowledge to deliver an outstanding education for the students and the fulfilling employment of the staff on behalf of the school board while meeting the various legal

requirements. They use things like the bellwether audit, HMMH, SAVAS. They get data from the long-range planning committee, from the Weldon Cooper Center,

[02:35:10] from the state and elsewhere. They get the data they need to make the informed decisions to comport with the vision and the strategic plan. Circling back to my work as a senior level higher education administrator. We hired good coaches, gave them the resources they needed, and supported their efforts. We then evaluated them regularly based on jointly established criteria. That is what the superintendent and school division should do with our teachers and staff, and that is what the board should do with the superintendent and division leaders. Feedback is a gift. One should want it, one should take it to heart, and

[02:35:49] be prepared to act on it. School board members often hear strongly held and conflicting views from students, families, employees, and community members. How would you approach an issue where the community is deeply divided and no solution will satisfy anyone? I believe that everyone who comes before this board, whether in person or in writing, whether formally or informally, is coming with the best interests of the students in mind. Starting from that place would allow me to listen carefully. Everyone brings something of value to the

[02:36:24] discussion, and it takes careful learning, careful listening, and discerning to find that value. To reach a decision that impacts so many, you have to do the work. Do the research. Listen. Read. Ask experts. Be open to learning that you don't know what you don't know, so you can fill the gaps. Once you've acquired the information, you make the best decision you can. In reaching a decision, you should be able to explain your rationale you won't satisfy everyone no decision will ever satisfy everyone

[02:37:02] but by doing these things i hope everyone can respect it a school board member i'm sorry i apologize i just i needed to i apologize if i do the best i can in reaching a decision i'll be able to sleep well at night i know that my preferred outcome will not always prevail but i will not take it personally having worked with nearly all of you through multiple cip processes. My priorities haven't always carried the day, and I'm okay with that. I can work with you because I take the approach that you're making decisions in what you see as the best

[02:37:41] interests of the students in our community. I will give grace to everyone who has invested in our children and want to participate in the process. I hope to receive grace in return. A school board member represents constituents, but also has the responsibility to the entire school division. How would you balance the interests of the community you represent with the needs of the students and schools across the county. I'm going to sound a little bit like a broken record, right? The individual holding the at-large seat represents students, families, staff across the entire county. This is the one seat whose primary responsibility is the entire county. It's an awesome

[02:38:20] responsibility. It's an awesome undertaking. In addition to knowing best the schools in my area and those that my children attend, I am regularly across the county either inside our schools are at them for various things for scouting events for sporting events or for community or committee meetings my volunteer service for scouting america has me traveling across the county and meeting with families in those communities and in those schools for sporting events we've been on soccer fields on baseball fields on football fields and on tennis courts we've been in gymnasiums in elementary schools and middle schools and high

[02:39:00] schools, we get a glimpse of their condition and what is going on in those schools just from those short visits. For my work with long-range planning, I've been across the county and considered the

needs of all the schools from pre-k through 12th grade to the ACE academies and to trailhead learning community. From my work on the EDA, we've had guests talk about the school-to-work pipeline and what career education looks like and how it prepares our Morrill County students for the 21st century jobs that we know are coming and to the county and those that are

[02:39:36] already here. From all these things I've learned a lot but I have a lot still to learn. I would want to work with each of you to hold listening sessions and tours of the schools in your districts to hear from you and the communities you serve about the needs and triumphs of the students and staff across the county. I am here today because the board has important work ahead. I bring both the experience to lead through difficult circumstances and the knowledge of this community to understand what is at stake. Thank you for your time this evening and

[02:40:12] thank you for your continued service to our community. Thank you so much. That concludes our interviews tonight and I have to say I am deeply humbled by everyone that came forward and put their name in originally and chose to move forward with the interview process um uh it was um as you know board work is hard work um and the mission and vision of the school system is so important to each and every one of us and i

[02:40:49] so appreciate your time and each of your time and effort um and everyone who is here in the audience as well as watching virtually um for your commitment to uh civil engagement in this process Just a reminder, we will have a public hearing next Thursday, the 17th at 6.30 in this auditorium to receive public comment regarding the candidates.

[02:41:18] You may sign up to speak online, and that information is on the school board web page, or you can reach out to our clerk. And then we expect to select and announce the individual appointed at our Thursday, September 24th meeting.

[02:41:36] is there any other business by board members or the superintendent do i have any motions before the board yes i move that the school board of albemarle county virginia go into a closed meeting as authorized by the virginia freedom of information act section 2.2-3711a of the code of virginia under subsection 1 which authorizes the discussion consideration or interviews of prospective candidates for employment in the assignment appointment promotion performance

[02:42:14] demotion salaries disciplining or resignation of specific public officers appointees or employees of any public body the purpose of this item is to review and discuss the candidates to be the at-large representative on the school board until the election in november of 2027.

[02:42:38] moved by Ms. Osborne second by Ms. Lee all those in favor of moving into closed session we will now move immediately to closed session as I mentioned we are having a public hearing so this is just a discussion there will be no announcements after this everyone is welcome to wait but there this is just a time for um the board members to um to to to think together collaboratively. We will also then as I said have a public hearing and we'll probably have a closed session after that and then we will make a selection on

[02:43:15] the 24th. So I don't have an estimate when we will come back for closed session from closed session. But we will have no announcements again. I just wanted to be clear there will be no announcements coming out after closed session. This is just a time. We will come back here to certify but

that's all will be doing a certificate certifying the meeting so with that we will move to closed session and i will check with um clerk uh that will clerk go ahead i said it again clerk thompson um on the

[02:43:46] room because i do not know that chair berlin i have a motion i'll call us back to order first yes i would like to call us back to order for our business meeting chair berlin i have a motion i move that the board certify by recorded vote that the best of each board member's knowledge Only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements

[02:44:22] of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting. Second. Moved by Ms. Osborne, seconded by Ms. Lee. All those in favor? Aye. Any opposed?

[02:44:39] Do we have any other business before the board? Seeing no other business before the board, I will call us. I will adjourn us at 9:35. Thank you.



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