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Chesterfield County School Board Budget Work Session, Wednesday, February 18, 2026

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[00:00:06] Good afternoon. I'd like to call the February 18, 2026 School Board Budget Work Session to order. First, we'll need to enter into closed session, which will be held in the public meeting room's conference room. Madam Clerk, please announce the items for today's closed session.

[00:00:22] It is my understanding that the School Board desires to enter into a closed session in accordance with Section 2.2-3711.A of the Code of Virginia, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and specifically under subsection 1, the discussion and consideration of personnel disciplinary matters.

[00:00:40] Members of the board, you've just heard the items requested to be discussed in closed session. Do I have a motion in that regard? So moved. Is there a second? Second. Madam Clerk, would you please call roll on the motion? Ann Coker? Aye. Jennifer Darby?

[00:00:56] Aye. Dominique Chatters? Aye. Stephen Pronto? Aye. Lisa Hudgens? Aye. We are now in closed session. Do I have a motion to reconvene in open session?

[00:01:18] So moved. Is there a second? Second. The board is now in open session. Madam Clerk, would you please read the resolution certifying the closed session? Now, therefore, be it resolved that the school board hereby certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge, one, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting

to which this certification resolution applies, and two, only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the school board.

[00:01:57] Is there a motion to adopt the resolution? So moved. Is there a second? Second. Madam Clerk, would you please go roll on the motion? Ian Coker? Aye. Jennifer Darby? Aye. Dominique Chatters?

[00:02:13] Aye. Stephen Pronta? Aye. Lisa Hutchinson? Aye. The motion carries. Is there a motion regarding the personnel matter? On case number 2025-26-55-HR, it is recommended that the superintendent's recommendation be upheld.

[00:02:32] Is there a second? Second. Madam Clerk, would you please call roll on the motion? Ann Coker? Aye. Jennifer Darby? Aye. Dominique Chatters? Aye. Stephen Pronto? Aye. Lisa Hudgens?

[00:02:47] Aye. The motion carries. Next, we have our discussion on the FY 2027 financial plan. Mr. Meister. Madam Chair, pursuant to the Virginia Conflicts of Interest Act, I am disclosing that my spouse is employed by the school division in the FY27 budget before us includes a proposed compensation increase, funding of my spouse's department, and other funding that affects all division employees. I recognize that my spouse, like other employees, may be affected by these compensation and funding decisions. However, because these budget provisions are

[00:03:27] generally applicable to all employees and do not uniquely benefit my spouse, I am able to participate in these discussions and vote fairly, objectively, and in a matter consistent with the public interest. Thus, I will participate in tonight's discussion and next week's vote, and I request that this disclosure be reflected in the minutes.

[00:03:51] Thank you, Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, Dr. Murray. One last time. Here is the FY27 proposed financial plan. And I'll get through this relatively quickly. My goal here is to remind the school board and the public of what we've talked about over the course of the last month or so in preparation for your vote next week on this.

[00:04:14] As it stands right now, we have no material, new information to share. The state process continues. So what is presented here is the proposed budget that we presented before for your consideration. So with that, a reminder of where we are in the process.

[00:04:32] We're in the middle of this February piece of the puzzle. And February 24th, the school board is expected to vote on a budget where it becomes an approved budget. And that gets sent to the Board of Supervisors, which kicks off their process, which they have a budget work session currently set up for March 11th, where we'll share this here.

[00:04:50] And they'll have a series of town halls and ultimately approval in early April as part of their process. But before then, we have to get through your approval. So with that, I'll skip through several of these slides and stop here. As a reminder to the board and to the public, the proposed budget that's presented to you here today is just over \$1.1 billion.

[00:05:13] You can see the bulk of that \$1 billion in operating funds, which represents about a 4.8% figure. Again, this is the same numbers that we shared as part of the rollout. I will comment that the final budget that you see come next week is subject to any sort of smaller technical adjustments or any feedback from this board.

[00:05:34] So, for example, I know some of the grant numbers we've seen a little bit of tightening of the window on that. So expect, give or take, \$100,000 different in the grant line, but no material changes other than what the school board may propose here today. So with that, a reminder of the revenue proposed here, about \$48 million of incremental revenue.

[00:05:56] Once again, a reminder that this is all based on Governor Youngkin's December proposal. The current state budget is in discussions. Budget Sunday is coming up in a few days here, so we'll get a better idea of what the General Assembly is thinking.

[00:06:12] but as of today, the best information we have is that budget that was presented in December, which you can see \$33.5 million, give or take, of new money from the state, largely on the back of re-benchmarking, about \$27 million, as well as the 2% state share of a raise for SOQ-funded positions making up the remainder of that state money.

[00:06:33] This also includes \$15 million county transfer, which is consistent with their five-year plan in their long-term goals, as well as some offsets for one-time funds and small increases in local funds as well. You put it all together, it's about \$48 million of new funding that we've been talking to the board and the public about for the last several weeks. Important to pause here and remind the board that we were happy to share a balanced budget this year where you can see \$48 million of new revenue. We are able to fit all of the superintendent's declared needs within that \$48 million. That doesn't mean it meets all of our wants and other things we may want to do.

[00:07:12] We'll talk about that a little bit towards the end, but excited to share a balanced budget with you over the course of the last month. So where did we spend those monies? First and foremost, I must remind you of the footnote at the bottom that give or take \$13 million of additional expense window for the VRS reduction. Definitely good. It helped us contribute to what we are needing to do.

[00:07:36] And you can see here where the rest of that money ultimately was spent. You can see the bulk of it, not surprisingly, went to compensation. And I will highlight, once again, the 5% raise as being the highlight of this budget and this operating plan here today. Of course, for teachers and other STEP employees, that means a 4% COLA and a 1% give or take STEP.

[00:07:59] For the graded range, that's about a 5% increase. And there's a few other miscellaneous compensation adjustments that we have talked about over time, including an adjustment to the transportation scale and increases in things like substitute rates and stipends for other positions. Within the required increase, the star of this show is some of the debt items here around both bus financing and major maintenance that I'll bring back to the board to discuss a little bit more with the CIP.

[00:08:25] New schools that we're opening, some general inflation items make up the bulk of the remaining 16.5 in that bucket. And on student support and others, happy to continue the great work that we've done on tutoring and attendance specialists that had been funded by All In, able to avoid that cliff, keep those in the budget.

[00:08:44] You can see additional funding for special education, technology personnel, mental health support, and a handful of other administrative items, including our continued commitment to the CIS program and an expansion of staff into that area. So with that, there were a number of slides that explain all this in more detail that you don't want to hear me talk about again.

[00:09:05] So I will skip through those and land on this slide. Other needs that we were considered. One of the other items that you'll see next week is a simple page that outlines other needs and other funding that we may consider as we go forward.

[00:09:22] Largely reflective of these pages and the five-year plan, So what that looks like in operations, student support, and compensation, as we've talked about before, there continues to be a need within general maintenance to continue to fill that bucket. Vehicle replacement and technology replacement cycles continue to be high on the priority list within the general operation or technology areas.

[00:09:46] Always need for more staff, whether it's special ed, mental health, administrative support in the buildings, and compensation. Of course, we've got our longstanding goal of \$60,000 starting salary and \$16 an hour minimum wage. Additional funding the board may consider should we get it from the state to contribute towards meeting those goals.

[00:10:07] The page I will stop on and turn it back over to the board for questions is our timeline. A reminder to the board and the public, this process generally works backwards. So we are in the process of approving a financial plan, and I don't have any better information on revenue than I did when we started.

[00:10:24] this plan. We have the governor's budget, which I talked about. The state will have additional information over the coming weeks. Yes, the General Assembly this coming Sunday should give us a little bit of a clue, but we don't know whether Governor Spanberger, et cetera, how many amendments, et cetera, will there be to that. So we will continue to monitor that closely.

[00:10:44] And of course, as I mentioned, the county budget process actually starts on the heels of this approval. What all that means is we're going to hopefully approve a solid budget here on Tuesday, And hopefully I'm coming back with positive amendments sometime in those dark bars in a month or two after these other processes complete for final consideration on what we'll call a revised budget at that time.

[00:11:08] But for now, I turn it over to the school board for any comments, additional questions, or more importantly, any suggestions for changes, conclusions, et cetera, updates for our approval ultimately on Tuesday. Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Meister. Board members, is there any discussion?

[00:11:24] Mr. Pronto. Thank you, Madam Chair. Has there, are you aware of? And I don't know the answer, right? But typically when the General Assembly has gotten together, as in recent past, the education topic comes up, and there's always a feeling of what that's going to look like in regards to the current administration's goal towards education in general, right?

[00:11:53] Whether that's going to be, you know, shining a spotlight on it, which typically means additional funding, versus yeah just put that in the approval section which means we're going to go status quo for the most part i i don't know if there's been any conversation along those lines are we privy to that at all do you want to i'll let mr smith answer that so mr pronta this is a great question i think what's different this year is the general assembly through the outgoing governor's budget put in place three benchmarking funds which is a specific investment in education um i think

[00:12:30] they're looking to make additional investments, but I think they're also looking close at the fact that they've already done that through the outgoing governor's budget. There's conversations with regards to salary increases and what they can do with that. I think that's largely where they're kind of honing in on their expertise, really. Thank you. Okay, next we have our discussion on the FY 2027 capital improvement

plan. Mr. Meister. Thank you, Madam Chair. Others as well I wanted to, once again, bring back to the table our capital improvement plan, a handful

[00:13:09] of things to remind the school board and public on here. What is included in here is what you might first and foremost think of, which is new school construction and renovation, but there's also significant pieces of this that involve major maintenance and other financing sources of things like buses, Chromebooks, et cetera.

[00:13:28] So with that, I will turn to the slide that we spent most of the time talking about on school construction and what's embedded in this particular budget, which is our page here. You can see Bensley Deep Creek and the CTC Hull renovation well on their way to being opened this coming August. The West Area High School sort of immediately on that heels, as well as the Falling Creek Middle School sites. All of those have largely been included in past CIPs or are in part of sort of ongoing work. There are a couple of new and exciting projects that we're happy to announce as part of this budget that we can put a date on, which is Grange Hall Elementary in August

[00:14:07] 29, and the Dale District Elementary School slash Pre-K Center as well in August 2030. There, of course, remains a long list, which you can see off to the right of other items that we've, as a district and you as a board, have said these are important and critical projects that we are still waiting on either funding or land in order to be able to progress those to a certain specified date and time, but they remain on our CIP as important projects, and we recognize the importance of getting those done as soon as practicable. The other major piece of this that I'll comment on

[00:14:44] here is major maintenance funding. We're excited as part of this budget to solve some of our cliff items that we've talked about in the last few years with the numbers that are largely explained on this slide. But what essentially this leads to is essentially a modest increase in ongoing funding, sort of the PAYGO baseline. We're increasing that from \$9 to \$10 million. But using some of that to leverage us into a new major maintenance bond, which will allow us to keep our major maintenance funding at about that \$30 million that we've talked about having spent the last few

[00:15:19] years. As we've talked about before, is that enough? Subject to Dr. Wadaka and his facility conditioned assessment work that he's currently actively working on. I expect our long-term needs will be higher than this, but this, as that work progresses, at least puts us in a spot where we continue to spend at the levels that we have in the past few years. The other exciting piece of this is school bus replacement, where we're transitioning from a program that previously offered largely cash-based purchase of buses to the tune of about 22 a year, which as a reminder, that's a replacement cycle of roughly 29 years. The new proposal in front of you today would

[00:15:58] include the ability to finance a certain portion of those buses and get us on to about 45 a year, which moves us from a 29-year replacement cycle to a 15-year replacement cycle, a much more sort of natural lifespan for a school bus, and we're excited to put that into place.

[00:16:16] Of course, our Chromebook lease continues from last year as the last piece of this particular cip and we will continue to monitor those payments and continue to work closely with county to ensure that we're able to meet our obligations under this plan so with that i will turn back to you madam chair for any thoughts comments or items to consider as we come back to you on tuesday for this particular approval thank you mr meister board members is there any discussion mr pronto Thank you, Madam Chair.

[00:16:47] In regards to the proposed major maintenance plan, slide 19, the FY27 proposed increase is \$1 million. I know that we're doing the assessment across the county. Is there a time frame in regards as to when we'll know what that looks like?

[00:17:07] I don't want to speak for Dr. Wattica, but I believe he was talking over the course of the summer. Is that right? Summertime's good. Was that? Okay. summertime summer june july yeah hopefully that's still right so i probably should have asked this question at the in the last portion but it kind of ties together i want to go back to

[00:17:40] slide nine and just for clarification the order of the future projects is not necessarily the priority listing it's not in any particular order of how we're going to execute it it's just a list, correct? It is just a list. If there's an order to it, the first three were part of the referendum and the other two were not. But outside of that, there is no order. And then the second question is, if we do receive a generous amount from the state, do we already have a list in the

[00:18:19] military called an OML, an order of merit list on what we would do with the extra unforeseen money that they might give us this cycle? I think it's the best way to answer that is it depends. I think a couple million dollars equals a different answer than \$15 million.

[00:18:38] So I don't know if a strict prioritization, what we have done is, if you think about the five-year plan exercise, there's a number of deferred investments in there that we look at. I think first and foremost, we'll look at those and see what of those we may be able to accelerate forward.

[00:18:53] If it's a large sum, I imagine we could look at compensation. If it's a smaller sum, we could look at something like maintenance. I'll defer to Dr. Murray if he has anything to add to that. But I think it's a firm, it depends. Thank you.

[00:19:10] I listen. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Munster. Appreciate it. Next, we have announcements, communications, and school board comments.

[00:19:31] Madam Chair. Ms. Chatters. If I can go first. So I just wanted to first say thank you to Elke for putting this together for me. I did not know that it was going to fall on your lap.

[00:19:48] I truly apologize. for that. But I did want to take the opportunity to acknowledge some great things that are happening in Dale District. So we have the Monarch Market. If you haven't been to the Monarch Market, we have some great entrepreneurs in Meadowbrook doing awesome things, continuously getting recognized.

[00:20:05] And this is just the gold certification for a perfect score from DECA, which is like a national recognition for their ability to present, market, and deliver product that they're selling. So I thought it was awesome to recognize them. And the speech team, I know Madam Chair also has a recognition for her speech team as well to shout out because our speech teams in Chesterfield County are out there kicking butt. It's awesome to see that we've had Meadowbrook High School place at least 10, these 10 members have placed either third, fourth, or second, third, or fourth

[00:20:39] in the speech competition for VHSL. And then we had BIRD win their region 6A speech champion. So i'd love to see these children these teenagers come before us and like present an issue and talk about how they feel about something but i think it's great to recognize what some of our students are doing across the board and i do also have um thank you elki i do we do also have some basketball

happening this weekend or this friday night so um mr paranto some kit kats on the line there uh we do have a game on friday night bird has a game at home friday night girls and boys

[00:21:18] once against cosby i believe so i mean kit kat mr paranto the big one um thank you madam chair that's all i have all right um so the school board will hold a special meeting here at the public meeting room at 6 30 p.m on thursday february 24th 2026 to adopt its fy 2027 financial Plan and FY 2027 Capital Improvement Plan.

[00:21:50] If there are no further business, we need a motion to adjourn. So moved. Madam Clerk, would you please call roll on the motion? Ann Coker. Aye. Jennifer Darby. Aye. Dominique Chatters. Aye.

[00:22:06] Stephen Perante. Aye. Lisa Hudgens. Aye. The motion carries. The February 18, 2026 School Board Budget Work Session is adjourned.



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