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Manassas City School Board Meeting - April 8, 2025

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[00:00:14] Pledge allegiance. Mrs. Garza, would you please call the roll?

[00:00:35] Yes, ma'am. Chair Seberg. Here. Vice Chair Spall. Here. Mrs. Stevens. Here. Mrs. Brescia. Here. Ms. Miles. Here. Ms. Brown. Present. Dr. Jones. Here. Thank you.

[00:00:51] Madam Chair, we have a quorum. Thank you, Mrs. Garza. Dr. Newman, do we have any additions or deletions to the agenda this evening? No, ma'am. Thank you. Can I get a motion? Chair, I move that the school board of the city of Manassas approve the public meeting agenda as presented. Second. I have a motion by Mrs. Stevens, seconded by Mrs. Brescia that the school board, the city of Manassas, approve the public meeting agenda as presented. Is there any discussion? All in favor? Any opposed? Motion carries 7-0. Okay, next up is our superintendent's

[00:01:28] announcements and spotlights and I'll go to Mrs. Radford for that. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Seberg. Good evening to everyone else that is here tonight. We are excited to stand before you On behalf of the superintendent for spotlights and announcements, we will begin with some sports achievement from the Mets Middle School wrestling team.

[00:01:52] We have Mr. Tim Tibbs here, and he will share something about their recent achievements. I'm sorry. Ms. Enola Douglas, the athletics director from the school, will assist with the presentation tonight.

[00:02:14] All right. Good evening. My name is Enola Douglas. I'm the athletic director at Mets Middle School. i am here to recognize if you have a wrestler so every year after a wrestling season we have

wrestling regionals which is against it's our district um it was held at brentsville high school and we had some champions so we'd like to introduce them first of all our coach head coach

[00:02:44] tim tibbs there and then uh one of the assistant coaches cruz martinez is here as well and come on up. And then our third coach who isn't here is Virante Jones. So we had a first place winner in his weight class in our entire district. That would be Gary, or we call him Anthony Mayer.

[00:03:16] And I believe that's weight class 265 for him. Another first place winner is Julius Quinn. Second in his weight class was Darian Escobar. Third place in his weight class was Oliver Young.

[00:03:51] And then finally, fourth place in his weight class was Luis Martinez.

[00:04:58] Congratulations to all of you. Hopefully Ms. Douglas didn't go too far. Next we have Mets Middle School Fine Arts Recognition.

[00:05:21] My name is Anola Douglas. I'm the choir director at Mets Middle School. So I wanted to share some of our achievements this year. First, I do have some students that are here, so if I call your name, come on up.

[00:05:39] We have our all-district chorus each year. These students had to audition to be a part of this. It was a fantastic event. We had 15 auditions, 11 of them made it, so that's pretty awesome. First is Zebdi Quintanilla, Camilla Aritia Saravia, Kimberly Arana Rodriguez,

[00:06:19] Kim Soto, who I know is here, Kanija Bennett, Edith Perez, who I know is here as well, Astrea Sence, Zoe Rodriguez, Adarshi Bondari,

[00:07:00] and finally, Adrian Villa-Illanes. And we are also celebrating our district assessment. Every year we have that. That's basically our SOL for music. I took all three of my choirs, my tenor bass, my beginning treble, and my advanced treble.

[00:07:20] All of the groups got all ones, which we call superiors, from all of the judges.

[00:07:25] So, okay.

[00:08:20] We have one of our other wrestlers that's here, Darian Escobar, any of the other wrestlers still here? We can take another picture. It's fine. Yeah, come on up.

[00:08:53] Okay, now this is an exciting presentation.

[00:09:13] We have the Osborne High School Robotics team with us tonight. And I know they have a special treat for us. And so I'm going to call Leonard Newman to the front, and he's going to share some information about some of their recent achievements.

[00:09:30] And they're going to share a project that they have with us, or a robot, I believe, right? Okay, come on. remember we still had fine arts recognition mr. Stevens bill Stevens is here from Mets middle school so we're gonna have him come forward all right I

[00:10:07] have my partner in crime I have a Jess Leggett we have two little celebrations that are continuing with Mets middle school we're both band directors so we had our all district honor band take place with Manassas City Manassas Park and Prince William County and we have the pleasure of two students making the group. One student made top mallet player for the entire region, and one also made first trumpet.

[00:10:34] So we're excited to introduce them. Can I have Jack on trumpet, Jack Young? And also, can we have Matthew Wilms on mallets, please? Now, I'm not going to lie. I got the honor and privilege to work with the choir, and Miss Douglas did an amazing... I got to play with them. That was fun.

[00:11:08] And the band had success, too. We went to assessment. We did get an excellent on stage, but we also earned a superior, earning an overall excellence. So we want to recognize our advanced band for doing that. Real quick, I'm Ms. Leggett, one of the other band directors at Mets.

[00:11:29] I just wanted to share that there are amazing, amazing things happening in the music department, in band, orchestra, and choir, and we invite you all. There's still plenty to go. There's all city band. There's all city orchestra. There's all of our spring concerts. So please come into the Mets Auditorium and see all the great things that are happening in the building.

[00:11:46] Thanks.

[00:12:17] Congratulations.

[00:12:29] And now METS Orchestra. The METS Orchestra, okay, yeah, okay. - All right, good evening everybody. My name is Gabe Stackauer. I am the director of orchestras over at METS and also at Baldwin Intermediate.

[00:12:48] Unfortunately, tonight I do not have any individual students to recognize, but I do want to recognize the advanced orchestra, who also performed at our district-wide assessment. We received an overall rating of excellent, including a superior rating in the sight reading category.

[00:13:03] So let's hear it for them, please. And I'd also like to recognize all the students who are in this program still, fighting through it every single day. They're always getting better, creating new problem-solving skills, being creative and working together.

[00:13:22] And I really just applaud them, and I love seeing them every single day. Thank you all so much. Thank you.

[00:13:59] Champion Anthony Mayer at heavyweight. This is their regional champion, Anthony Mayer. And I believe he said heavyweight, right?

[00:14:23] Okay. Congratulations.

[00:14:42] Born robotics team, Mr. Leonard Newman.

[00:15:03] Good evening, Dr. Neumann, Chair Seberg. Thank you for inviting us here today. And I have a couple of thank yous, but while I'm doing those thank yous, I want to invite our student leads and the robot to come on up to the front.

[00:15:22] While they're coming up, a couple of thank yous to Dr. Neumann, Dr. Chapman, Ms. Ingalls Whitaker, the administration over at Osborne, Mr. Ellenberger and Ms. Wampler, the athletics assistant, associate assistant there. I've spoken with a lot of coaches from around our area, and they do not get nearly the support that we get from our administration and our athletics director and activities director.

[00:15:49] There's the robot. Also, our mentors, our adult mentors, Dr. Chowdhury, Mr. Frederick, Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Bambara, have been there with us, if not at every meeting, at most of the meetings.

[00:16:07] Mr. Gonzalez-Pinnis has been driving our trailer to and from competition, especially as we get closer to competition. and they put up with us staying late and we do our best to clean up after ourselves, but they come in and they do the last little bit so that we can get ready for the next school day and the bus drivers that take us to and from our competitions and also to our parents and the families.

[00:16:37] On Saturdays, we ask our parents to provide lunch for the kids so that they can eat. They also have been coming in full force to our competitions this year to support the kids. We also have several sponsors this year that if we didn't have them, we wouldn't be where we are today. Manassas City Public Schools, Aurora Flight Sciences, Lockheed Martin, Thundercat Technology, Pat and Ken Bambara, the Starbird Family.

[00:17:02] Also, we did several fundraisers at restaurants, Raising Cane's, Panera Bread, Foster's Grill, and Texas Roadhouse. And speaking of Texas Roadhouse, if anyone would like to come out Thursday, we have another fundraiser night at Texas Roadhouse. So in front of me here are some of our student leads.

[00:17:19] MJ Yassa is our project manager. She's the student that runs everything for us. Reese Bambara is the mechanical lead. Demas Gonzalez-Ramos is our electrical lead.

[00:17:44] Eric Hurtado-Hinosa is not here, but Sofia Banez is here. They are our co-software leads. Theo Wehner is our scouting lead. And all of that deals with the robot itself, but there's also a business team.

[00:18:05] And they're the ones that help us with getting our fundraising and getting the word out there about our team. and Megan Pope is in charge of the business side. So in the preseason, which basically is started now and really is at the beginning of the school year, we focused a lot on recruitment, learning, refining skills to prepare for this upcoming season, and all of this is student-led.

[00:18:30] The students are in charge of teaching the new students the processes that we use and to get them ready for that year's competition. The kickoff was on Saturday, January 4th, and this year's game was entitled Reefscape, where they were trying to score coral, which is a PVC pipe piece.

[00:18:49] You can see it inside the robot. On a reef, which is a bunch of poles in the middle of the field. They could also score algae, which are these large green balls in a barge. So it's almost like shooting a basketball into a net. And at the end could hang on a cage hanging from that barge.

[00:19:07] We have an eight-week build season to design, prototype, manufacture, program, test our robots. And if you remember this year, the first week was Snow Week. We had snow days every single day. So they were working online, and we have to thank our friends over at Osmond Park, the Metal Jackets.

[00:19:25] They invited us over on the weekend so that we could meet in person because you can only do so much online. So we went over there and had some fellowship with them. And then for those that have never seen our events, the field is about the size of a basketball court.

[00:19:43] There are three robots for each alliance, so a total of six robots on the field. Teams compete in 12 qualification matches. Three randomly selected robots are in each alliance, and you're trying to score as many points and earn ranking points by completing specific tasks.

[00:20:00] After the qualification rounds, there's a double elimination tournament where the top teams form their own three-team alliance. So this is the robot that we used this year. It's called FLIC, F-L-I-C, which stands for Forklift Certified, because it does act like a forklift.

[00:20:19] And it starts off at about three and a half feet tall, which is the maximum that you can start off with. And it will actually grow to about six feet tall using a special elevator design. And this is the first time that the team has ever tried to do this design.

[00:20:36] It took a little bit longer than we thought to get it going, but once it got going, we haven't had any problems since, and you'll see how they were recognized for that coming up here in a moment. We compete in the first Chesapeake district, which is 111 teams from the state of Maryland, D.C., and the entire Commonwealth of Virginia.

[00:20:56] So it's a large area. We compete in two competitions and then hope to qualify for the district championship. Our first competition was on March 1st and 2nd at Deep Run High School in Glen Allen, Virginia. The team finished the qualification round in 7th place out of 34 teams with a 7-5 record.

[00:21:17] They were the captain of Alliance No. 5. There are eight alliances that compete in the elimination tournament. And the team won the Quality Award. The Quality Award celebrates machine robustness in concept and fabrication. Building the robot is only part of their success, and the judges recognized them as a quality example to others.

[00:21:37] The judges specifically said this, this team used calculated efforts to outshine the competition. Every bolt, wire, and piece of code reflects their dedication to building a robust robot. The team uses the effect to bounce back against other robots, and that was what won the team the quality award at the Glen Allen competition.

[00:22:01] Our second competition was March 15th and 16th at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland. We finished with a record of 7 and 5, but then when you look at some of the statistical categories, our team was actually ranked in the top three in several different statistical categories, and we were the first pick of Alliance number four.

[00:22:28] We waited around for week four to see if we would qualify for the district championship, and we qualified for the first Chesapeake district championship, which was just held April 4th through 6th at the Showplace Arena in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. They invited the top 54 teams to this competition.

[00:22:50] And I just realized I was supposed to invite the rest of the team up, so if the rest of the team wants to go ahead and come on up. So like I said, we qualified for the district championship and finished the qualification round with a record of 6-6.

[00:23:20] The big thing that happened was towards the end of day two, along with some of our alliance partners, we ended up getting the high score of the event, which I think was 245. And then the next day, of course, the team had to get one more point to get 246.

[00:23:36] But still, for a while, we had the record. And this is the fourth year in a row that the team has qualified for the district championship. We're the only team in the Prince William area. There are four teams here, Osmond Park Battlefield and then a joint Prince William team. We're the only ones that have made it the last four years.

[00:23:54] And this is just a small part of our team. We have about 40 students that have touched this robot in some way during the course of the build season.

[00:24:11] And we have about 24 to 26 that are actively attending competitions and are always at our meetings. So thank you for inviting us. And if you want to find out more about the team, just let us know.

We have a couple of STEM nights coming up.

[00:24:26] So if you see that there's a Stemine going on in Manassas City, we're probably going to be there. So come up and ask the kids questions about their design. They completely design and fabricate this. We buy the motors, but all the metal they cut, they CAD, they do everything to build this robot.

[00:24:44] And this is my third year with the team. We have had maybe one or two major issues with this robot, which is really good. Normally, we're running into issues all the time with the robot. This robot has not broken once.

[00:24:59] So that's all I can. Make sure I get the robot, too. I know.

[00:25:16] Next time. Yeah. Okay. So short, right? Yeah. I can see you. Everybody has to find a window. Yes. Okay. Okay.

[00:25:33] I think we might be good. Gotta get the robot. Here we go. One, two, three. I think everybody faces. One, two, three. Perfect.

[00:25:50] Congratulations. thank you all for being here thank you there's Seberg that concludes our

[00:26:28] spotlights for tonight thank you I guess we're gonna have some technical

[00:28:18] difficulties with the PowerPoint so we'll just leave that particular slide up and go without the PowerPoint that's okay good evening chair Seberg vice chair Spall school board members dr. Newman and community members my name is Brian Masiak and I serve as director of special education for Monassah City Public Schools. We stand before you this evening to share information about autism and our autistic community during Autism Acceptance Month. When I started here in 1991, autism had just become

[00:28:58] recognized by the Individuals with Disability Act, IDEA, in 1990. At this time, autism was considered to be a low incidence disability. Currently, autism is the second highest identified disability category we serve in Monassau City Public Schools.

[00:29:19] Of course, this does not include all of our autistic individuals within our community, as many do not require specially designed instruction or special education services. We value the unique contributions made to our school community by our autistic students and our adults with autism.

[00:29:42] Let's take a look at a few slides that provide us some information on the autism spectrum. For many years, autism was viewed in a linear fashion running from severe to mild.

[00:30:01] This is not the case as autism is not a line. Autism is a spectrum in which every autistic person presents with a unique profile.

[00:30:18] These differences cannot be defined in a linear fashion or on a line. Autism affects how a person thinks and interacts with the world around them.

[00:30:34] Thinking about the world in different ways only contributes to a more positive and accepting environment for all individuals. Communication and socialization may be different.

[00:30:51] Acceptance of different communication styles allows for full participation and representation in all of our social environments. may include a preference for routines, schedules, and keeping things the same. Routines can provide a sense of control, reducing anxiety and stress, while improving focus, attention, and engagement.

[00:31:26] Autism may include differences in sensory experiences. When looking at our sensory environments, we can, number one, be aware. Is there anything that we can change? Number two, be creative. Are there alternative positive sensory experiences that could be used? And three, be prepared. Tell people ahead of time about the sensory stimuli that will be present. Autistic people may have a strong preference for engaging in their areas of interest. It could be things

[00:32:05] like the weather, history, the environment, or animals, to name a few. Some autistic people become experts in their areas of interest. An example would be Satoshi Tahiri, who's a video game designer, creator of Pokemon, and co-founder and president of Game Freak. And a lot of our students want to be game designers, so there you go. So what does autism acceptance look like? This slide

[00:32:43] highlights the meaning of acceptance. It is inclusion, it's understanding, it's celebration, and its advocacy. Some ways we can include, we can invite the person to share their interest and skills in their own ways. We can make sure our environments are comfortable for everyone's needs.

[00:33:05] We can focus on the strengths a person brings to a situation. We can support the person in communicating in their preferred way. And we can normalize stimming, such as rocking, since it can help an autistic person focus and feel calm. Ways we can understand. We We can learn from autistic people what their strengths, needs, interests, and preferences are.

[00:33:37] We can try to see the world from the other person's point of view. We can read about autism from autistic authors. And we can spend time with autistic people doing activities we both enjoy. Ways in which we can celebrate.

[00:33:55] We can recognize the expertise of autistic children and adults. We can highlight the accomplishments and contributions of autistic people. We can reinforce the strengths of autistic individuals, and we can appreciate different thinking styles of autistic people.

[00:34:16] Ways in which we can advocate, we can support the rights of individuals with autism to make choices. We can insist that autistic voices are included in decisions about autistic people's lives.

[00:34:31] We can uphold the rights of autistic people to meaningfully participate in activities, including school, work, leisure, and health care. And we consistently support the use of accommodations an individual requires.

[00:34:51] I believe this quote from Dr. Stephen Shore sums up what autism acceptance is all about. If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism. This quote highlights the vast spectrum of autism and the unique experiences of each individual, emphasizing that each autistic person is different and should be treated as such.

[00:35:18] Next, I would like to read the Manassas City Public Schools Autism Acceptance Month proclamation.

[00:35:25] It reads,

[00:36:14] many members of the autistic community prefer identity-first language, autistic person, over person-first language, person with autism, whereas autistic individuals are neither high nor low functioning but have differing ways of processing and interacting with their environments and the people in it, whereas many autistic individuals do not see autism as an illness to be cured but as a neurotype to be appreciated and accepted whereas just like all people there

[00:36:51] are no two autistic people who are exactly alike in their strengths needs and preferences whereas autistic voices must be included in any decisions and discussions related to their lives and experiences whereas the infinity symbol best represents and celebrates the talents skills and achievements by autistic people that make Manassas City Public Schools a stronger more vibrant school division now therefore be it

[00:37:25] resolved that the school board of the City of Manassas recognizes April 2025 as autism acceptance month in Manassas City Public Schools celebrates the achievements of our autistic students and honors the efforts of their families to ensure autistic voices are heard and respected this month and every month throughout the year signed by the school board chair Suzanne Seberg attested to by the clerk of the board Alba Garza finally we have a rainbow infinity pin

[00:38:03] and we'd like to present to each board member to wear in honor of, that's all we have tonight.

[00:38:42] - Thank you, Mr. Maciac. Moving along in our agenda, we have board committee reports and I'll go to Dr. Zella-Jones for an academics committee report summary.

[00:39:04] - The academic committee met on April 2nd. We had two agenda items. The first being the student code of conduct specific to the dress code. Students from Metz Middle School met with us to discuss their thoughts concerning the dress code and possible divisions for the policy.

[00:39:19] We wanna thank those students who took the time to come speak to us in person. The second item was the process for the math resource adoption and Mr. Goodfellow and Dr. Stevenson presented that to us. So the academic committee looks forward to bringing those back to you at a later date.

[00:39:37] Thank you. - Thank you, Dr. Jones. Next up is comments. And we ask for public comments at this time. We welcome citizens who wish to speak about services, policies, and affairs of the City of Manassas Public Schools.

[00:39:55] Because we have an agenda we need to complete, we ask that comments be limited to three minutes. We appreciate the time you have taken to be here. We treat citizens' comments as a public hearing, and we do not engage in conversation with speakers.

[00:40:11] The lack of an immediate response to your comments should not be taken as a lack of interest or concern. Please be respectful when presenting your comments And up first, I have Anna DeMaria. I am Anna DeMaria.

[00:40:33] I am the very proud president of the Masses Education Association. And I'm here to speak about an issue that impacts every educator, every student, and every family in our community. The fundamental right of collective bargaining for school employees. At its core, collective bargaining is not just a labor tool.

[00:40:53] It is a partnership for progress. It is about giving educators a voice in the decisions that shape our classrooms, our schools, and our students' futures. It's about recognizing that the people who work most closely with students each day should have a say in how schools operate and improve.

[00:41:12] This isn't just about contracts or negotiations. It's about dignity, fairness, and respect for the people who dedicate their lives to shaping our future. Collective bargaining empowers educators with a voice and decisions that affect their classrooms, their students, and their own livelihoods.

[00:41:30] And when our educators are empowered, our students thrive. For too long, critical decisions about education have been made without the input of those who are on the front lines. Teachers, counselors, specialists, and support staff. Collective bargaining changes that.

[00:41:48] It brings educators to the table as equal partners in shaping policies that impact everything from class sizes and instructional time to school safety, student support services, and professional development. When educators have a voice, schools run better.

[00:42:04] We see more thoughtful policies, better communication, and smarter resource allocation. We see improved morale, stronger collaboration, and more consistent implementation of school initiatives. We see solutions rooted in the real needs of students and educators, not guesswork or top-down mandates.

[00:42:24] Collective bargaining also helps ensure that school staff have the tools, time, and support they need to meet the diverse needs of every learner. It creates space for dialogue, for innovation, and for accountability. Because when all voices are heard, all perspectives are valued, and all stakeholders are engaged, our schools become more effective and equitable.

[00:42:47] This is not about conflict, it is about cooperation. Not about demands, but about dialogue. Collective bargaining is how we build trust. It's how we build better schools. And most importantly, it's about how we build the future that our students deserve.

[00:43:05] Voting no on tonight's resolution does not mean that collective bargaining is going to start happening in Manassas City. It simply is telling us, your employees, that you are willing to listen to us. And I'm really confused why this board, consisting of so many educators, would want to crush that conversation before it even starts.

[00:43:23] So please vote no. Thank you, Ms. Demaria. Ms. Shaniqua Williams. Good evening.

[00:43:44] Good evening. I'm Shaniqua Williams, and I live in the Brentsville District. Let's stop pretending. Earlier this year, the Manassas Education Association signaled it was ready to begin its collective bargaining campaign, and since then, the response from this board and district leadership has been calculated, intentional, and frankly, disgraceful.

[00:44:06] Instead of engaging with the educators, very people you claim to support. You launched a campaign of misinformation. You've spoken behind closed doors, whispered to other leaders, and pushed false narratives to staff and the broader community. You've painted that collective bargaining is a threat, a drain on resources, a danger to programs like sports and fine arts, without citing a single credible source. Why?

[00:44:32] Because the truth isn't on your side, but fear is easy to sell. So let's be clear. The idea that collective bargaining with gut programs didn't come from us. It came from you. It's fictional and it's manipulative. As the chair of the collective bargaining committee, I've been hearing the deep and widely felt issues of our staff. While you've been busy pushing your narrative, you've made no effort, none, to ask the educators what we are experiencing and what keeps us up at night. Instead, you've crafted your own storyline, you've built a

[00:45:07] PowerPoint, you made a resolution, and now you're planning on putting on a performance with your pre-written questions and well-rehearsed answers. And that's not leadership. It's theater and it's performative politics. You've chosen image over integrity. You've chosen optics over honesty, and the

community sees it. And here's what real leadership looks like. It looks like sitting at the table, even when it's uncomfortable. It looks like listening, especially when the truth is inconvenient. It looks like showing up, not with assumptions, but with questions. Other school

[00:45:46] divisions across Virginia, some smaller than ours, have stepped up. They're negotiating. They're doing the hard and necessary work. Meanwhile, our board is hiding behind talking points and deflection, except you say you care about educators, but you won't look us in the eye and ask us what is on our mind and what we would like to negotiate with. This wall that you've built with your silence your resolution your PowerPoint slides it tells us everything we need to know you're not interested in a conversation you're not interested in compromise you're interested in control and control only but here's the truth

[00:46:25] we're not going away and we're not gonna back down because we're not afraid of the facts we want the conversation because unlike you we know what our students and our educators deserve thank you thank you miss Williams mr. Keller Good evening. My name is David Keller and I teach at Osborne High School. I'm a proud member of the Manassas Education Association and I urge you to let us begin the collective bargaining process. Before I continue though I do have to

[00:47:04] ask why are the arts always the first to face cuts budgets when it's either real or imagined. I studied music education at Liberty University where we were taught that the arts will always be targeted first. I'm seeing that firsthand right now. I was taught to defend it and even though I work in special education right now I'm gonna keep defending the arts for that. I just want to say that there is some real fear mongering going on where these budgets are going to come from and at the moment it says more about your priorities than it does about us because all we want is just some basic stability now about collective bargaining i've heard the claim that we already have a voice with you guys but i don't truly believe that because i have no faith in who comes after you

[00:47:41] we need this now because while some of this board truly supports this in two years we could have someone with an elon musk doge mindset who's going to come in here and slash budgets like it's a game but my job is not a game and my students are not a game. I'm tired of being called selfish when I want basic things, paid paternal leave, fair retirement, and job protections. I teach special education where my budget is basically mostly federally funded at a school that has, if not the highest concentration of ESOL students in the entire state of Virginia. Monasticity Public Schools is DEI and culturally responsive and equitable practices. It's not a phrase to us,

[00:48:20] It's what we do here. The final mission President Trump and Secretary McMahon are looking to go on is looking to attack our jobs and our way of life. My job and our students here. I also want to make clear that MEA is not just here to defend teachers' rights and workplaces.

[00:48:36] We support all MCPS employees. That includes paraprofessionals on, as we're going to risk up and lift up autism, those paraprofessionals working with some students. We also have security staff that are protecting our students, maintaining hallway order, getting cussed out, and while we're searching for things, trying to create some order in our schools.

[00:48:53] We also have bus drivers that are having to stop fights on the side of the road by themselves at times. We have librarians, maintenance, counselors, and I've talked to a lot of them. And security guards at times can just be told, hey, you're at another school now, with no word to themself.

[00:49:08] Every one of these employees deserves to have their voice because collective bargaining will not just benefit teachers but every single MCPS employee. So distinguished members of the board, let's move forward together. Because when we're looking at the Supreme Court, which on April 4th was allowed to stop some educational grant funds from going, I don't know what my job's going to be like if these things keep going.

[00:49:32] Because while some of you support us now, there's no guarantee the next board will. Prove that we have our voice because you don't. Because your job is to amplify ours, not speak for us. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Keller.

[00:49:53] Tammy DeHaven. I'm Tammy DeHaven. I live in the city, and I teach at multiple schools. Tonight, we are about to hear how much collective bargaining will allegedly cost MCPS, and why is it supposedly not good for our division? You'll hear astronomical numbers presented to justify opposition to collective bargaining.

[00:50:12] What you won't hear is that these numbers are not justifiable. Larger districts have successfully implemented collective bargaining without breaking their budgets and haven't even come close to a million dollars or six central office staff. You also won't hear the union's demands because, frankly, we haven't made any.

[00:50:31] We're simply asking for a seat at the table. But you automatically went to no. What you won't hear are the real numbers, those that pinpoint the true costs of retention and attrition, and how these issues could be addressed more efficiently to protect our budget. You'll hear that collective bargaining will cost the Division \$1 million for six additional central office staff and their salaries and benefits.

[00:50:52] But let me ask, why can't we absorb those responsibilities into existing roles? After all, our contracts already include the phrase, other duties as assigned, right? This is a perfect example of how collective bargaining could streamline instead of expand bureaucracy. You'll hear about legal fees, but I have to ask, why are you already gearing up for a legal battle? What are you so afraid of? What could your staff possibly ask for that we don't already deserve or have? Finally, you will hear about committees and all the ways employees are

[00:51:29] heard here, but what you won't hear is how people are often handpicked and how repeated concerns are routinely ignored. An invitation to receive feedback is not the same as being required to accept and apply it. That's the difference between meet and confer and collective bargaining. Promises made through meet and confer are temporary, but a written contract is binding.

[00:51:48] And this isn't just about compensation. No amount of money can compensate for the emotional labor that goes into a single day of educating our children. As one of my favorite educators, Janine Teague, so eloquently stated, we don't get paid to care, but we do it anyway.

[00:52:06] Richmond, Arlington, Montgomery County, Falls Church, Fairfax, and Prince William already have contracts through collective bargaining. We're surrounded. Currently bargaining are Albemarle, Alexandria, Loudoun. Harrisonburg has an election this month.

[00:52:22] Card campaigns are happening in Henrico, Roanoke City, Stafford, Newport News, Chesterfield, Petersburg, and Williamsburg-James City. No decisions about us without us. Thank you, Ms. DeHaven.

[00:52:41] Margaret Connors. My name is Margaret Connors, and I'm a member of the MEA and a teacher at Osborne High School. I am a public servant. I take great pride in serving my community. I'm here to speak for those who cannot and for those who have been overlooked. Meet and confer is not enough.

[00:52:56] I am horrified by this body's decision to vote on a resolution regarding collective bargaining before a conversation between the MEA and the school board has even begun. Most of you don't know me. I've been in Manassas City for 10 years. Before that, I grew up in Montana, a state that has a long history of unions supporting its blue-collar workers.

[00:53:14] Because the people who had money and power were taking advantage of the workers who made it possible for them to take in so much wealth and prosperity. These workers just wanted to be able to live long and happy lives with their loved ones. Both of my great-grandfathers on my father's side died of the miner's consumption, also known as black lung, due to the working conditions.

[00:53:32] Now, I realize it's been over 100 years since then. And in the 21st century, unions play a very different role. But the role that they haven't changed is ensuring fair working conditions for the workers that they represent. This union and collective bargaining strengthens our schools, uplifts our students, and empowers the dedicated professionals who make learning possible every day.

[00:53:52] It's not just about contracts or compensation, it's about building schools where every child has the opportunity to thrive and where every educator from teachers and counselors to bus drivers and custodians are respected, supported, and heard. This is about more than working conditions, it's about learning conditions.

[00:54:09] Every school employee, not just teachers, plays a vital role. Support professionals are the backbone of our schools and never get the recognition or full consideration they deserve. Collective bargaining gives them a seat at the table and a voice in shaping the environments of our students that grow in. It's also a powerful driver of equity.

[00:54:26] Unions amplify voices that are too often left out, especially women and people of color. They support upward mobility, help retain dedicated educators, and bring stability to our schools. When educators feel heard and valued, they stay, and our students benefit. I know the research on collective bargaining is mixed, but I also know that the conversation regarding collective bargaining has barely started in Manassas City.

[00:54:48] For this board to take fears and political rhetoric from a noisy few and use them as rationale to quash our union's efforts in this regard is a bad move for public relations and it makes this board look as though they do not value all the members of the educational community. As one professional to another I ask that each one of you consider the lens you are casting on Manassas City Public Schools. By my count there are ten counties that permit collective bargaining including Fairfax County, Prince William County, and Falls Church all of which are coincidentally divisions we regularly lose our staff to.

[00:55:20] I know firsthand, I know firsthand that we don't have a lot of youth rushing to fill our shoes. This is a societal moment in which it is very hard to find good educators who take the time, make sacrifices, and just generally ensure magic happens on a finite budget, reduced energy, and limited time. Don't make Manassas City look like it doesn't value its educators without at least engaging in the conversation first. Thank you, Ms. Connors. Jenny Higginbotham.

[00:55:58] My name is Jenny Higemotham, and I'm the vice president of MEA and an employee with over 20 years with MCPS. I stand before you tonight shocked by the proposed resolution to ban collective bargaining for Manassas City Public Schools.

[00:56:17] I have seen the PowerPoint by Mr. Confeller. I've heard and read comments from current and former school board members, and I'm astounded by the fear-mongering and scare tactics being used to inform the public that if MCPS were to enter into collective bargaining, it would cost the district \$1 million and that it would take away programs for students.

[00:56:37] This is not true. Some central office personnel and board members have alluded that the only reason that the Manassas Education Association wants collective bargaining is to chase paper, meaning to raise salaries. That is not what this is about.

[00:56:53] I have tried to understand why you want to ban collective bargaining. All the other localities around us either have or are in the process of having collective bargaining agreements. Statewide collective bargaining is happening. When some of the board members sitting here tonight were looking for endorsements from the very union they spoke about, how they agreed that educators should have the right to bargain, but here we are tonight witnessing once again the division not wanting to listen to the very people who work in the buildings.

[00:57:32] I am extremely saddened to think that the school division I love in the community in which I live would put out to the public that I, as a union member, would want to do anything to take programs away from students. What I want is a chance to have a say in my working conditions, my professional development, my future, and the betterment of conditions for all employees of Manassas City Public Schools.

[00:58:01] If you want staff to stay and to feel valued, I urge you to vote no to banning collective bargaining for Manassas City Public Schools. Thank you, Ms. Higginbotham. I will call on Nate Fritzen now. Nate Fritzen.

[00:58:30] How's it going, guys? Good to see you all again. About two weeks ago, I presented myself as the student representative back in 2012. That was a little bit disingenuous of me, because the truth of what I really am is I'm a part-time cook at Pizza Hut.

[00:58:47] Guys, I know time is tough. I can't afford an apartment. I can't afford my own food. I can't be able to take care of myself. I know it's hard out there. But the thing that really allows me to keep on going is my ability to talk to my boss one-on-one. If there's an issue and if there's a problem, if I have concerns about food safety or customer service or product quality at Pizza Hut, I'm able to tell my boss directly, one-on-one and face-to-face, that we have problems, that we have concerns, and these need to be dressed as the leaders in our business and in our restaurant.

[00:59:23] And those are the kind of things that I value, not only in my business, but in my community as well. I was a little surprised to hear about how much anger there's been. And it shouldn't be directed at you guys, the public servants, the elected leaders of our community who sit here and take the beating on behalf of us, the people, the community. Thank you. I do have some ideas. Let us do some sort of activity like what we're doing now, one where you guys can respond, One where teachers can be sitting in a room together, along with you, the school board, and come together with some creative solutions.

[01:00:02] I want to hear that back and forth, because that's truly what makes this country great, is that we push power and choice down to the lowest levels, that we don't disenable those at the lowest levels, whether it be the schools or whether it be at the restaurants, taking that away from the people and giving that to management exclusively.

[01:00:22] Ladies and gentlemen, please pass this resolution. That is what this country stands for, the ability for people like myself to go up to my boss, to talk about the issues that are important to me that I believe will affect us as a business.

[01:00:42] Do a mass meeting, have one-on-ones, break it down by departments, go into the schools, do what we elected you guys to do, because that's what power we have enabled you guys to have. We want you to be our representatives. We want you to be the speakers. It is incredibly difficult for us, especially me, who usually works the night shift and has to sweep the floors and clean the toilets.

[01:01:05] I need people like you guys to be the ones who make these decisions and who can speak for the teachers. Thank you for your time. - Thank you, Mr. Fritzen. I think there might have been some confusion about what the resolution is, so just know you should probably read it.

[01:01:28] Jordan Herbert. - Hello, my name is Jordan Herbert. I've been a teacher here for Monassus City Public Schools for 10 years. I came from Pennsylvania, which has a very strong union for teachers.

[01:01:48] When collective bargaining is restricted, the consequences are serious and far-reaching. Research shows that weakening of teacher unions and their collective bargaining power has been correlated with decreased student achievement. School districts without a strong union have a hard time attracting and retaining talented educators.

[01:02:08] When teachers are unsupported and unheard, students suffer as well. Restrictions on collective bargaining result in higher pupil-to-staff ratios and increased teacher turnover. Without collective bargaining, educators are unable to gain better working conditions.

[01:02:26] Without fair policies, those directly in the classrooms and schools are harmed, teachers and the students who rely on them. The benefits of collective bargaining go far beyond salary increases. Ensure schools have essential support staff, counselors, ESOL, specialists, nurses, librarians, so many more who are crucial for creating well-rounded, enriching educational environments.

[01:02:52] Collective bargaining can help ensure that these vital positions are staffed and improve the overall educational experience. Perhaps most importantly, collective bargaining helps prevent teacher burnout, which is one of the leading reasons teachers leave the profession prematurely.

[01:03:08] Almost 44% of teachers leave within their first five years. Many because they felt unsupported and their needs for a successful learning environment went ignored. By ensuring teachers have the support, resources, and respect they need, collective bargaining plays a crucial role in retaining passionate educators who can continue to make a positive difference in students' lives.

[01:03:32] In districts with strong unions, there is better retention of high-quality educators and a more effective process for removing low-performing teachers. This creates a stronger, more effective education system, one that directly benefits students.

[01:03:47] In Virginia, there are already multiple school districts with collective bargaining agreements in place, or aiming for it. Arlington, Prince William County, Fairfax County, Fall Church City, Richmond,

Alexandria, and just this month, Charlottesville City.

[01:04:02] Let's add Manassas City to that growing list. Collective bargaining is not just about negotiating wages. It is about ensuring that our schools remain places of opportunity, growth, and success for everyone. By advocating for better working conditions, better resources, better support, and increasing educators' voices, collective bargaining strengthens our entire educational system.

[01:04:26] Therefore, collective bargaining benefits students, families, and communities as a whole. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Herbert. Lisa Chua. Lisa Chua.

[01:04:46] And on deck is Roque Martinez.

[01:05:00] Greetings to the board and to all who are gathered here. My name is Lisa Chua, and I reside in Manassas City. and I've been employed as a school bus driver here since 2006. My three children are all graduates of OHS, so the success of the students that attend MCPS is important to me, and it can't happen without good teachers.

[01:05:22] Tonight, the board will vote whether or not to allow collective bargaining rights for staff in MCPS through representation of the Manassas Education Association. I was once a member of MEA, and while there, we worked and secured more affordable health insurance premiums for part-time classified staff who were paying 70% more than full-time classified staff.

[01:05:45] However, I had to leave MEA due to some political differences several years ago. That said, I do empathize with the felt need for collective bargaining rights, especially since some surrounding school divisions now have them.

[01:06:01] It will be difficult to recruit and retain the best teachers and support staff to MCPS if their contracts and total compensation are not on par with those divisions. However, as a bus driver in the last several years, we managed to obtain pay raises, reinstate retirement, and adjust our contracts to reflect the five bell tier without collective bargaining or the MEA.

[01:06:26] This happened prior to all the school divisions around us winning collective bargaining rights. Instead, we operated in good faith that all parties were serious and committed to uncover and address the disparities wages retirement plans and contract insufficiencies between MCPS and the surrounding divisions and the reality that it represented for recruitment and retention I'm not going to pretend to know the complexities of teachers daily contract commitments so I can only imagine that's far over and above what we managed to achieve so I just encourage all parties involved with this

[01:07:05] vote to work in good faith to understand the reality at hand and see that our teachers receive what they need to undertake their noble work to ensure that our students receive a first-rate education that prepares them for life. Thank you. Thank you Mrs. Chua. Roque Martinez. And after Ms. Martinez will be

[01:07:29] Sarah Cook. Roque Martinez. If Martinez comes back we'll insert her. Sarah Cook.

[01:07:51] Good evening Chair Seberg, Vice Chair Spall, members of the board, Dr. Newman, Ms. Garza my union brothers and sisters and all else in attendance it is no surprise why many of us are gathered here tonight in 2020 Virginia lifted its ban on collective bargaining for public employees allowing school divisions to choose to adopt resolutions enabling collective bargaining with employee groups since then many surrounding divisions have allowed their educators

[01:08:26] and support staff a seat at the table no school division yet in Virginia has made any attempt to ban collective bargaining for their employees until tonight. Tonight you will hear a presentation from our deputy superintendent, one of the highest paid employees in Manassas City Public Schools. He will explain to you all the reasons why Manassas City teachers and support staff, many of whom do not make a livable wage, do not need a say in our wages, health and safety, and working conditions. All the reasons why we don't need a seat at the table. All the ways he claims we already have one. My question is this, if we already had one

[01:09:02] and felt our voices and concerns were heard, would we be so active and headstrong in this resolve? Our collective bargaining campaign began two short months ago. The only work done thus far is beginning the campaign, educating ourselves on processes, and informing our members.

[01:09:19] No demands have been made, and certainly neither our school board nor our central office have come to us to understand or collaborate on anything. The Virginia School Board Association released a flowchart for collective bargaining. The flowchart details the steps for local teachers, unions, and school boards to progress through the steps of and ultimately engage in bargaining.

[01:09:37] At the highest part of the flowchart, if you can imagine a flowchart, at the very beginning, there is one arrow that leads to an immediate and abrupt end, one that leads to no meaningful collaboration. A school board votes against collective bargaining. Unfortunately, that's where we find ourselves tonight.

[01:09:53] Throughout history, labor movements have faced significant opposition from employers and government entities, including tactics like anti-union legislation, intimidation, and the suppression of organization efforts. In our current presidential administration, we see the silencing of all who would speak up or against.

[01:10:10] What we are seeing here tonight is nothing new. It is a microcosm of something much larger, much older, and much more insidious. Misinformation is being spread. Fear tactics are being used. And the well-being of our children, our students, is being weaponized to make points that are neither true nor backed by research.

[01:10:31] Who wins in this case? No one wants what is best for students more than those who work directly with them each and every day. It is why we chose this profession. We're not politicians. A collaborative approach between educators, support staff, and our governance team is what will best serve our students and their families.

[01:10:51] Their current and future success is our success. Their well-being is ours. We want what is right and good for all, and we hope you do too. Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

[01:11:14] Josh Folo? Ful, how do you spell your last name? F-O-L-B. Okay.

[01:11:30] Good evening, members of the board. My name is Josh Fold, and while I'm a member of the Arlington Education Association's bargaining team, I'm here in my own capacity as an amateur expert on the budget of Arlington Public Schools.

[01:11:46] Ask me anything about the APS budget going back 15 years, and I can get you the right answer extremely quickly. So when my good friend and union colleague, Jenny Higginbotham, told me that the

cost estimate of \$1 million was being used to justify blocking its implementation, I knew I had to use my knowledge to come offer some evidence to the contrary.

[01:12:07] Tonight I offer in front of each of you page 332 of our FY25 budget proposal. Arlington has roughly 7,000 employees, 26,000 students across 40 plus facilities.

[01:12:22] Our budget last year, in excess of \$800 million, is in its first full year of a ratified and legal collective bargaining agreements with all but with those who are known as confidential and temporary employees.

[01:12:38] In short, most full-time employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement. In FY24, Arlington spent less than \$400,000 as they ramped up staffing in labor relations. In FY25, we are in track to spend roughly the same, and in FY26, on the page in front of you, the exact number: \$385,656.

[01:13:03] Maybe you don't believe me that a district almost four times your size will spend one-third of what you will be told tonight. Please don't believe me. After tonight's meeting, call Andy Hawkins, your former head of finance, and ask him yourself.

[01:13:25] I get that collective bargaining can be overwhelming to those who don't understand its purpose. A CBA gives employees a real seat at the table to make the rules under which they will work, something that most everyone would want. It doesn't lead to astronomical costs unless this board agrees to them as well.

[01:13:46] What a CBA does lead to is employees who feel safe, seen, and supported. And when employees who feel that way, they stay in their jobs, which is good for the district and ultimately the children of Manassas City Public Schools.

[01:14:05] Thank you, Mr. Fold. Belinda Fold. Hello, my name is Belinda Fold, and I am fortunate enough to teach for Arlington Public Schools.

[01:14:24] I like working for a district with collective bargaining because they have consistent pay increases, adequate planning time, and fair leave policies. Collective bargaining makes me feel safe, seen, and supported. Research shows that schools with collective bargaining have lower teacher turnover, reduced number of teacher transfers, and a better distribution of first-year teachers.

[01:14:48] Educator turnover reduces student achievement and is costly for school districts. You have stated that collective bargaining is too expensive, but so is the alternative. The cost of hiring and training new staff and the resulting decrease of student achievement must also be accounted for.

[01:15:08] I hope you consider the cost of hiring and training new staff and the resulting decrease of student achievement when you are considering banning collective bargaining. Educators, if they don't, there's a nearby county that is hiring. And I have the job postings.

[01:15:30] We would love to have you, if you are determined not to be valued by this board. Thank you, Mrs. Fold. Christina Boringer.

[01:15:48] Thank you. You got that right. Good evening, Chair Seberg, members of the Manassas School Board and Superintendent Newman. My name is Christina Boringer, and I'm a proud member of the Education Association of Alexandria for over 20 years. I stand before you in solidarity with my MAA union siblings.

[01:16:07] I'm a National Board-certified first-grade teacher in Alexandria City Public Schools. I also have the distinct honor to serve on the Board of Directors for the National Education Association, representing members across Virginia, and especially these members of the Manassas Education Association.

[01:16:22] The many speakers before me have shared a myriad of benefits of collective bargaining. For me, collective bargaining is essential so that all those who work directly with our students across the Commonwealth, teachers, instructional assistants, bus drivers, office staff, cafeteria workers, just to name a few in the district, have a seat at the table to help create the learning environment that all our children deserve.

[01:16:44] MEA members deserve to be safe, seen, and supported by their school division. There's Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Alexandria, Richmond, Albemarle, Loudoun, and Prince William, just to name a few, who are doing this. I urge you to vote no on this collective bargaining resolution before you tonight.

[01:17:02] Show them that you see them, that they are safe, and that you support them. Chair Seberg, I make a motion that the school board of the city of Manassas move to recess for 10 minutes.

[01:17:19] Do I have a second? Just for Beth. Do I have a second? Second I have a motion by Miss Miles to recess for 10 minutes seconded by Mrs. Stevens any discussion all in favor aye we will recess for 10 minutes 7:27

[01:17:36] we will return I'll call on Chauncey Houston Chauncey Houston and sir could

[01:18:11] you tell us your address you didn't fill it out Fairfax County good evening chair members of the board and community members I am Chauncey Houston, and I come before you tonight with deep disappointment and disbelief regarding this resolution to deny collective bargaining rights to the educators and staff of Manassas City

[01:18:50] Public Schools. Just last year in Fairfax County, we made history. After 47 years without it, we won our first collective bargaining agreement, representing over 27,500 educators and support professionals. That victory wasn't just a contract. It was a commitment to justice, dignity, and partnership. You say this resolution is in the public interest, but I ask you, whose interest exactly are you protected when you choose to silence the voices of those doing the work every single day? Educators are the backbone of our schools. Denying them the right to bargain

[01:19:30] collectively is not a sign of collaboration. It is a rejection of trust, respect, and professional dignity. You claim to want a positive workplace environment and open doors to management, yet you slammed the door shut on the one mechanism proven to empower workers to speak with one unified protected voice, collective bargaining. Meet and confer is not a substitute for collective bargaining.

[01:19:57] It's a one-way conversation where management holds all the power. Educators don't need a seat at the kiddie table. We deserve a seat at the table where decisions are made. I stand in disbelief that in 2025, after a pandemic that pushed educators to the brink, after witnessing teacher shortages across the Commonwealth, and after years of calls for fair compensation, working conditions, and professional respect, this board has chosen to deny what over 25 school divisions in Virginia

[01:20:31] have already recognized. Collective bargaining is a path forward, not a threat. This decision sends a clear message to your employees. We will listen to you, but only on our terms. That is not

partnership, that is paternalism.

[01:20:49] I urge you, reconsider. Don't file this away as a procedural matter. Understand the human cost of this choice. Understand what it means to deny your own employees the basic right to advocate for themselves with legal protections.

[01:21:06] You have the right to do what's right. Don't be remembered as the board that chose silence over solidarity. Be remembered as the board that believed in shared power, mutual respect, and doing what's right, even when it's hard.

[01:21:23] Do not let this be your legacy. Let your legacy be one of justice, vision, and partnership. Thank you. - Thank you, Mr. Houston, Zamara Vasquez.

[01:21:41] - Zamara Vasquez. - Good evening, honorable school board members, superintendent and staff.

[01:22:02] My name is Yomara Vasquez Luna, and I live in La Brea Avenue. Many of you, I have put your sign when you went on campaign, supporting you campaign, because I think at that time you would do what is right.

[01:22:19] So today, I'm here to call you to do what is right. Tonight, to speak on behalf of the teacher, in solidarity with them, because they have the right to be represented by a union.

[01:22:37] Our teacher are the backbones of our school system. Every day, they show up early, early mornings until late nights. weekends, they commit to shaping the future to our children, even my daughter include.

[01:22:56] They are more than educators, as you know. They are mentors, counselors, role mothers, and sometimes even lifeline for students in need. If anyone deserves a voice at the table, it's their teachers.

[01:23:15] Allowing teachers to organize and be represented by a union is not just about wages, and you hear a lot already. It's not about benefits, it's about respect that you all as board members deserve.

[01:23:32] So, like I say, it's about respect, it's about giving them a platform to advocate for resources they need to do their job well to create a safer classroom and to be treated fairly and professionally.

[01:23:52] Collective bargaining gives teachers a say in decision that affect their students in their classroom. Not this board. And ensure transparency, accountability, and collaboration between educators and administration.

[01:24:11] And it's been proven. A school system with a stronger teacher union often see higher student performance and lower teacher turnover. We should be working together with the teachers.

[01:24:27] I invite you, before any decision, to work with them. And no against them. They're not your enemies. Honoring their rights to organize is a step toward a stronger, more united school community.

[01:24:45] So tonight I ask you, all of you, to support the right to our teacher to organize. Let them form a union. Let their boys be here. Let's build a school system with respect and partnership that our foundation. Thank you.

[01:25:00] Thank you, Ms. Vazquez. Ben Walters. Ben Walters. Is there a Ben Walters? Are you signed up?

[01:25:23] We'll be here until we're done. Next up, then I have Sonia Ruth Vazquez-Luna. Hola, como están?

[01:25:42] Mi nombre es Sonia Vazquez-Luna. And I would like our clerk and Madam Chair, if you will reflect a minute, to say that I am here as a mom of thing one and thing two. And that's how I always express, because I don't have to say their names. They both attend the Manassas Public School and they have been raised through the Manassas City School.

[01:26:02] But anyway, good evening. I'm here in support and solidarity of my brothers and sisters. I really was thinking to have, make dinner tonight, but I'm here. So we have, it says, be a final result, the school board of the city of Manassas, personal to the code 41572.

[01:26:24] The collective bargaining is not authorized by the school board. I think everybody has talked about how important it is, how it makes a difference, how it's a seat at the table. I do believe if you don't have a seat at the table, you're in the menu. So, teachers.

[01:26:41] So, I really thought that I will hear, you know, maybe from other groups before, you know, before tonight. But here we are. I'm a second vice president to the Nova Labor. the Nova Labor Council. Over the weekend we were meeting with the faith community and with other unions here in in the Northern Virginia. All I can tell you is that you know because of the time how how this was put together and presented you know they didn't have time to show up and to be here and speak about you

[01:27:18] know how the union is different. You will see the PowerPoint that shows that almost 30 percent of increases have been given to to the school and I will say if the school is so good why one of our schools had like 20 people that they left on the last school year if they if the wages are so good why we have to you know figure out all the ways to increase the wages so all I can tell you as a mom I can talk about how you know the band has achieved

[01:27:51] excellency i can talk about how many kids have done you you heard them i was praising them i in every school board meeting we praise them it's them it's you you set the policy don't be afraid of them they want what's best for the uh for the uh kids the kids my kids our kids the city future a seat at the table doesn't mean anything doesn't mean an increase on the cost a seat at the table is meeting having a voice saying what are their priorities they don't even you know the president is the president today i can tell you i have elections this month i might don't have a job

[01:28:31] i might have a job if i win my election in my union because that's how it works so she is here to serve and the 50 plus one makes the decision of what she's going to do and what the board is going to do so collective bargaining is it's not something you should be afraid of and i will say Thank you very much. You know the rules.

[01:28:51] This last minute thing make it look even worse. Is there anybody else that wishes to speak? Is there anyone else that wishes to speak during public comment? Anyone at all?

[01:29:16] One moment.

[01:30:05] Good evening, Manassas. It continues to astonish me to see people with power claim to be so official with the platform they are privileged to stand on and power that they wield. Yet for the past year, I've seen too many important people with power fail to meet the simplest of moments. I don't see leadership. I see a parody. To see adults on a school board responsible for the entire local education infrastructure say what schools need with words that leave every stakeholder starving for more. I've heard school board members explicitly

[01:30:43] display their ignorance about ESOL and WIDA tests. Kind of important in our division, a former school board member proposed positive affirmations as done by a millionaire podcaster as a solution to concerning academic learning gaps. There's a lesson to be learned by this school board. The most concerning of learning gaps is not in test scores, although that is a concern that we need to deal with and manage. The most concerning of learning gaps is honestly what the school board understands

[01:31:17] as essential in this division to teachers, to support staff. Every division, every district, they need to embrace, say, from teachers. They need to embrace, say, from support staff. They need to embrace collective bargaining. It's not just about our work being valued financially in a 2025 economy. Collective bargaining is about fixing roadblocks that need fixing instead of keeping the roadblocks there and forcing detours on all of these people who I'm privileged to call my colleagues. The lack of translators who are needed to support every family and their right

[01:31:54] to be appropriately informed of their child's progress. The frequent moving around of staff between positions and even schools, planning time being compromised and left unprotected. This is meant with the utmost conviction. If negotiating with teachers is a threat to your comfort, this school board is not a place for you. If being exposed to what we need in order to do our jobs to the best of our ability is too much, this school board is not a place for you. If you are opposed to the say of teachers and staff who are dedicated to the families of this community day in and day out more than the say of your own interests, this school board and this school

[01:32:32] division are not places for you. A vote against collective bargaining is a vote against not just teachers and staff but Manassas City families. The say allows us impact, the say you allow us impacts the lengths to which we are able to service families. It is choice between maintaining a car and choice, sorry, maintaining a car and each of its moving parts to go the furthest of distances and taking a car that you'd be eager to sell for parts. Your solidarity with meeting this moment will be acknowledged. Your support celebrated your allyship respected. Here's

[01:33:09] positive affirmation, not from a podcast. Thank you, Mr. Alba. I will support collective bargaining because I care about families, and every employee that services them, this is my test, and I'll pass it. Brittany Thomas. Brittany Thomas.

[01:33:27] Good evening, board. My name is Brittany Thomas, and I am a teacher in Fairfax County Education System. I'm also a member, an at-large board member of Fairfax Education Association.

[01:33:44] And today, I'd stand before you to please just think about this vote, because this benefits not only the staff members, whether it's bus drivers, teachers, custodial workers, but your students. They should be at the forefront of every decision you make.

[01:34:01] We as teachers try to do everything in our power. We as educators, we as IA professionals, we as bus drivers, We, as any person in your system, work hard to ensure your students are taken care of every day.

[01:34:19] We want to make sure that every child is safe, every child has their protections, every child has their education. But unless you take care of your workers, you can't take care of students. Those two things align. They're parallels.

[01:34:35] And I urge you today to please, please, please, please allow collective bargaining. Because supporting your workers means supporting your students. Another thing, I know fiscal matters are an

issue sometimes.

[01:34:50] They may be. However, you have teachers out here who have to decide whether they want to pay their bills or whether they want to feed their families. Whether they want to put gas in their gas tanks or whether they want to pay their light bill. Those things are necessary in order to better the community.

[01:35:11] Those small amounts are necessary in order to keep your students happy, safe, secure, and educated. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Thomas.

[01:35:28] Catherine Hinkle-Higginbottom. Thank you for having me, school board members. And I am a special education teacher at a local elementary school.

[01:35:50] I am here today to talk about why schools need collective bargaining rights and the positive impact it will have on our educators, staff, and students. Granting collective bargaining rights ensures that every staff member, whether a teacher, nurse, counselor, or custodian, has access to important benefits such as health care, parental leave, standardized work hours, and paid time off.

[01:36:17] It also means clear job descriptions and protections from being overloaded with tasks. More importantly, collective bargaining creates a fair and transparent grievance process, ensuring that conflicts are resolved respectfully and that employees are heard.

[01:36:37] Teachers get, if these are in place, uninterrupted planning time, proper classroom technology, and guaranteed breaks. Our nurses and counselors benefit from smaller student-to-staff ratios, while food service and custodial workers are guaranteed fair scheduling, proper training, and pay for extra duties.

[01:37:01] When we come together, we're not just fighting for better pay or benefits. We're creating a school environment where everyone is valued, respected, and given the tools they need to succeed. This isn't just about improving the lives of educators and staff.

[01:37:21] It's about improving the quality of education and the learning environment for every student. But we can't do this alone. To make these changes, we need the right to negotiate as a united force.

[01:37:37] We need collective bargaining rights to secure these protections for everyone in our schools. Let's stand together and fight for the rights that will ensure our schools are places of fairness, opportunity, and growth for staff and students alike.

[01:37:56] Thank you. Thank you. Matthew Wallace. Break your microphone before I start speaking. My apologies.

[01:38:16] Hello, Madam Chair, esteemed school board members. My name is Matthew Wallace, and I am an elementary school teacher in Fairfax County. I am also a Manassas City resident and the proud parent of a round raccoon.

[01:38:34] And I was a member of the collective bargaining team that helped FCPS employees and management negotiate and collaborate towards our first ever collective bargaining agreement. And I want to emphasize the word collaborate. That's what that was.

[01:38:50] It was a collaboration between two people who at the end of the process realized that they will always have more in common than they do different. When management and employees sat down, we were able to work it out and find a path forward that was beneficial for everyone. That is the essence of what collective bargaining is and what it should be. It lets us identify our common interests and pursue the

pathway to those goals. When I think back to all the wonderful staff that my daughter, who's now in fourth grade, had the chance to be

[01:39:23] around at Round Elementary School, by the way, fantastic, fantastic school. It had a profound impact on her development and who she is. She is a better person because she got to be in the classrooms of those teachers, because she got to meet what is the best cafeteria chef I've ever seen in a school, because she got to have the bus drivers that she met, because she got to have the IAs that she worked with there. All of those people contributed to her

[01:39:58] well-being and made her a better person and i couldn't be more proud of them they deserve the chance at collaboration just like i had this past fall they deserve the chance to sit down and say these are our challenges how can we work together towards a common goal how can we work together to figure out this way forward please as a resident and as a voter do not pass this resolution this resolution is abhorrent to my eye and I would urge you please vote it down thank

[01:40:32] you the end of my signups is there anybody else that wishes to speak public

[01:40:44] comment if anybody else wishes to speak please come sign up with mrs. Garza good

[01:41:21] evening board first off I just want to remind everybody before I start my speech that as a current parent former teacher our board and our leadership have failed us and nobody is disputing you but what I want to urge you to keep in the back of your mind before I speak is that this current board that was freshly elected is three months strong. In three months I have watched them say stuff in front of us that would have never happened. It would have been closed doors meeting. I have seen both sides of the aisle since we've decided to make our school board political instead of for the kids it's supposed to be a non-partisan

[01:41:57] board. Let them have a chance. They're three months strong together. If they can make these small accomplishments in three months imagine what they can do in four years. So I just want to be clear that I don't want to appreciate the politics in the schools, and I've always said that, but school boards in Virginia don't have taxing authority. We receive our funding from local government, the state, and the federal government. That means we are dependent on entities like city councils, the General Assembly of Richmond, and Congress in Washington for every dollar we spend.

[01:42:31] If you are a teacher who lives in the city, as you know, when our city taxes gets raised the same year you get a pay raise from your school board, sometimes you lose money because they don't equal out, which means our students lose money. We lose resources. If we go into a recession, the school board gets less money. If the city of Manassas doesn't have enough funds to cover 51%. When the board, when this was brought up, the board is looking into how much it would cost. And I know we've talked about different funding and different things. I'm not all quite sure what collective bargaining means, and I'm not going to stand here and pretend to be a professional. I reached out to

[01:43:06] certain people on the MEA. I got one response. I tried to set up a meeting. Everybody's a little busy right now, so I'm hoping to get that in the future to learn more. However, I believe strongly that our school board and our teachers can work together without collective bargaining. Give each other a chance. One thing that Manassas City teachers, including myself, struggle with is telling the board what really happens and what's really wrong because we are scared of retaliation.

[01:43:34] My first year as a teacher for Manassas City Public School, I called a certain principal's name Ara. He no longer works with us. I got reprimanded in the office for speaking as a parent at a school board meeting. I was wearing my community member hat. I was not an employee of Manassas City Public Schools during those hours. However, I was reprimanded. This is the fear your teachers have. If you want them to come to you without the need to fill the collective bargaining, hear them. Set up town halls. But both of you, all of our staff and all of our school board, need to work together for the betterment of our students. All of you know I'm currently struggling fighting for rights for my daughter. I asked for math manipulatives in December. Had to set up

[01:44:14] another meeting in April. I was able to get them the very next school day, but it took me a whole another meeting and more emails, which it shouldn't be. Work together, guys. We can do this. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Forkel. Lynn Forkel-Green. Good evening, everyone. I'm going to say my comments first, and then I'm going to make a few mentions from Ben Walters, who had to leave. He said he also sent an email, so I just want to make sure that that's publicly known. And I know that you received emails from people who are not here tonight, so even though you might not be in here,

[01:44:52] people here might not know there are other opinions that have been shared with you via email and phone calls and such. I have served as a council member for those who do not know. Currently I am speaking just as an average citizen but it's not really from an average viewpoint that I speak to you having served in a seat as a taxing authority. The very words that people are saying where they need to have a livable wage which I think you do and I think we are all fight I am fighting for

[01:45:28] everybody in Manassas City not just the teachers but every single person in Manassas City I fight for fair taxes so everybody can afford their bills all of our bills are going up with our taxes our tax rate our utility rates and all of that is combined on our taxpayers whether those taxpayers currently have kids enrolled in the school system or not we foot the bill for that and so collective bargaining does add another layer of cost to this conversation. I think what's being lost is I am happy to have the discussion about what you're mad about at your place of employment.

[01:46:03] But while I sat on council, you told me how fantastic your schools were. You told me they were great. So I'm struggling right now to hear all of the anger that is coming out. And I'm sorry, But I'm a little bit taken back by it.

[01:46:19] I thought our schools were doing great. When we had an election and everybody that you backed but one person was elected, I thought you would be happy. They've only been here for 90 days. They're just now getting started. They haven't literally, literally even gotten to figure out how they're going to work together.

[01:46:38] So the fact that they're saying, listen, we have a situation where we are not in a place as a board to collectively bargain with you is not inappropriate. In fact, it's most appropriate. We are a small community. We do have the ability to meet and confer, and that's what Mr. Walters wanted to say, and I believe that's what he said to you.

[01:47:01] He wanted to express his support for the resolution, and he is worried about the serious financial ramifications. He has young children. He is a parent who moved to the city to raise his family here, and his concerns about the schools are holistic so I hope that you will take into consideration there are many parents that can't be here tonight they are stakeholders our taxpayers are stakeholders we have

first responders who are stakeholders our entire community is a stakeholder in this conversation and I appreciate your hard decision tonight I'm against collective bargaining thank

[01:47:36] you thank you miss Forkill Green Diana Richardson good evening you have to know this is not where i would like to be this is not my joy um i speak today as the apple award winning teacher who enjoys that parking spot at round more importantly i speak as a parent of a sixth grader at mayfield and a ninth grader at the high school and right now in about 35 more days

[01:48:15] a former employee as you have approved my resignation tonight um i do that after 19 years of service to manassas city having first moved to manassas park chose to live in manassas city and i'm choosing to take my educational opportunities and what i bring to the table to prince william as of august 1st oh by the way my my summer gets to go until august 7th so even better for me um with prince william i am going to well not me personally because that ship has

[01:48:52] sailed but they have no six weeks paid maternity i had none i i had a c-section i had many complications i had none they have three days paid bereavement that is not taken from anyone's leave I lost my mother and my sister in the same school year and barely got an acknowledgement from anyone.

[01:49:18] They have increased compensation for their club leaders because we do it because we love it. And we want our kids to have that kind of time and that commitment. They're having heightened - are you ready for this? Because I'm a person who's moved schools - heightened support for staff transitioning to teach different grade levels.

[01:49:40] I have taught every grade level except fifth, which is, by the way, the position I took next year. They have increased flexibility for staff through converting two days of sick leave to personal leave for a total of five personal days. Because guess what we don't have the opportunity to do?

[01:49:58] We don't have the opportunity to go anywhere with any kind of reduced rates because we work at those dates that we could have a cheaper vacation, much like many of you. All of that was achieved through collective bargaining.

[01:50:15] In addition, the fact that they have longevity steps to 40 years has gotten my vote. By the way, my hours are shorter, and my money is more, and they're still hiring in case anybody else is interested, because our cost savings for all of us could fund what you're concerned about paying for collective bargaining.

[01:50:36] Thank you, Mrs. Richardson. Kyle McCullough? Hello.

[01:50:57] First, I'd like to thank you, all of you on the board, for the time and service that you give to the people of Manassas in representing us with the schools. I can just kind of try to imagine what it would be like if we, the people of Manassas, had to do that directly without being able to elect a smaller board, a smaller group, to interpose for us and represent us with the schools.

[01:51:30] And it seems to me that the people who are opposed to collective bargaining are asking the teachers to do that. Mr. Google tells me that it's about 460 of them, 460 teachers in school. It's going to be close to that.

[01:51:47] Somebody is going to correct me, I'm sure. But they can't all one-on-one talk to you and bargain with you and work out deals with you and work out policies with you. If each of them got about 20 minutes, that would be 153 of your hours every year talking one-on-one with those teachers.

[01:52:12] So they need to have a small group that they can elect to talk to you the same way that we need to have a small group that we have elected to talk to them. that's the way all large organizations have to communicate with each other because it can't be 10,000 people here talking to 400 people here and coming up to an agreement they have to each send smaller groups to talk to each other to make it manageable that's what collective bargaining is

[01:52:49] that's what representative democracy is that's the way it works we can't do it one-on-one it's just too many. Thank you for giving me three minutes. I know that that's about all you have to give each individual person here, because if we each had enough time, really, to talk to you about policies, can you imagine? That would take a long time. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. McCullough.

[01:53:22] Mighty Whitesell. Good evening, members of the board and Dr. Neiman. My name is Mighty Whitesell. I'm a resident with Monassau City and a mother of two students currently enrolled in our public schools. I'm here to express my support for continuing to work with our teachers and staff. Direct discussions with teachers can be done without a need for collective bargaining. The cost to pass collective bargaining for a small district means that over a million dollars has to be allocated for lawyers

[01:53:59] and admin fees. That's roughly the same amount of money that we need to continue that we need to continue providing food at no cost for every student in our city. Given that the endorsement and campaigning done by the MEA leadership during this past election to seat board members currently sitting here makes me believe that there has to be a good relationship between both parties. Spending over a million dollars per year for lawyers

[01:54:31] seems to indicate that the MEA doesn't trust this board and cannot believe that you guys can support the needs and priorities. I asked the MEA to give this board a chance to work with you directly. Let's use the funds on key items such as additional teachers, resources for special education students, better health insurance for their teachers, better pay for lower-scale teachers, and better working conditions for everyone. Thank you. Thank You Mrs. Whitesell. Valeria Lozano

[01:55:10] Vasquez. Hello board. My name is Valeria Lozano of Basquez I am here today as a student of OHS and I believe that we as students deserve the best education we deserve teachers who want to be for us and want the best for us we will not be able to have those resources if you know back your employees make them feel supported and have a conversation with them I think you should genuinely listen to them and discuss with them work with

[01:55:39] them to better the future of our city our students thank you is there anyone else that wishes to speak during public comments anyone at all okay I will move forward with the agenda tonight can I get a motion for the consent agenda chair I move that the school board of the city of Manassas sorry about that approve the consent agenda as presented second I have a motion by mrs. Stevens second by mrs.

[01:56:16] Brescia that the school board the city Manassas approved the consent agenda as presented is there any discussion there is can we hear can you all hear this We don't usually talk very much about consent agenda but I would like to express my thanks to the Perkins grant team whose work represented tonight and is in the consent consent agenda I had the pleasure of attending the CTE Advisory Committee debrief on the overview of the highlights of the grant including their focus for the 25-26 school year and all the body of

[01:56:55] work is again in the consent agenda I will share that the grant includes personnel training technology applications and lots of work with local businesses I appreciate Miss Taylor and her team and their tireless efforts to keep our city schools in the forefront of the minds of local industry experts and while keeping her processes transparent and forward-thinking so thank you is there any other discussion all in favor aye any opposed motion Kerry 7-0, which brings us to our discussion agenda.

[01:57:32] Mr. Craig Gofeller, Deputy Superintendent, and Dr. Ed Stevenson, Director of Instruction, will provide an overview of the process for adopting new primary curriculum resources in mathematics. Dr. Stevenson. - Thank you. Good evening, Chair Seberg, Vice Chair Spall, members of the school board, and Dr. Newman.

[01:57:51] Tonight, I am pleased to provide a brief overview of the math resource adoption process momentarily.

[01:58:15] Just a little bit of background, the Virginia Board of Education developed and recently approved new math standards on a tighter timetable than they have in the past. Typically when standards are approved, a transition or crosswalk year is scheduled and then the new standards are implemented the following year.

[01:58:36] This allows time for school divisions to adapt local curriculum support documents and adopt new primary core resources simultaneously. However, the most recent set of math standards was scheduled for implementation in the school year immediately following their approval.

[01:58:55] This required us to make alternative plans that involved updating local curriculum resources for 2425 to align with the new standards ahead of adopting a new math primary resource the following year at the end of the current contract period.

[01:59:16] The VDOE's timeline for reviewing and submitting resources to the Board of Education for approval also fits with a 2025-26 core mathematics resource adoption. In the fall, a limited number of resources reviewed by the Virginia Department of Education were approved by the Virginia Board of Education.

[01:59:38] Recently, a second round of approvals occurred, which resulted in a much larger number of resources for our school division to review as part of the adoption process and we now have between 7 and 12 approved resources at every level from kindergarten through high school up to algebra 2. Now the state has released their evaluation of the alignment of these resources with the standards of learning to help inform the district level adoption process. I do want to note that the state has not released a list of resources for math levels above

[02:00:13] algebra 2 we will do our own local evaluation of resources at these levels as part of the overall adoption process this slide summarizes the first half of our resource adoption timeline we will be forming a committee of appropriate classroom and support teachers math specialists and school and district leaders in May we will be soliciting access to sample materials this summer ahead of utilizing our committee to narrow the number of resources under consideration by the end of November. The narrower list of resources will be made available to the public in December and January as the committee continues its

[02:00:52] evaluation of the remaining programs. By February we will have a recommendation from the Resource Adoption Committee. This will be based on their evaluation of resources, teacher feedback,

vendor information, and public input. In March the recommendation of the committee will be presented to the academic committee ahead of a presentation to the full school board in April.

[02:01:19] In May, the approval of a new primary math resource will be on the school board's agenda for action. This gives us time to ensure the purchasing of the new resource occurs in July ahead of the next school year. We anticipate that the total cost of this resource adoption will be approximately \$2 million.

[02:01:37] The professional learning and instruction departments are working together throughout this process to ensure the teachers receive the training and the support they need to effectively utilize the new standards and the new primary resource as we adopt.

[02:01:55] So that's all I have on this item and we'll be happy to answer any questions you have. - Any questions for Dr. Stephenson? Mrs. Stephens. - Thank you, Dr. Stephenson. Just a quick question. So the resource adoption, they'll be in place and being used 26-27 school year.

[02:02:12] - No, 25-26. - 25-26 school year. When will teachers have an opportunity to interact with the new resources and receive training? - So the training piece is actually already underway.

[02:02:27] We've identified the areas and the new standards that we need to be providing more resource training and support around, specifically in the area of math fluency. And those efforts are ongoing and are going to continue.

[02:02:43] And then once we adopt the resource, we will then be looking to align what we've done training-wise with the use of the new resource. - Okay, 'cause the reason I ask, when we adopted new language arts curriculum resources, it was, and there's no better term I can use for it other than a boxed curriculum, our teachers required training in that.

[02:03:06] And I'm just curious as to whether they will need training in that specific, whatever specific resource we choose. - There will be, whenever you adopt a new resource, there is a certain level of training that comes with the resource and we anticipate that we will review that training and we will roll it out appropriately.

[02:03:26] But I do want to stress that the situation with the Virginia Literacy Act was a very unique one in terms of what was required and what was attached in terms of requirements to that particular rollout. This is what is a more standard resource adoption in terms of the overall timeline.

[02:03:46] The overall timeline for resource adoption typically starts now and then ends the following spring to give enough time for the full review and to really get a robust amount of feedback and input.

[02:04:03] And the resource adoption committee, can you share who the members, not specifically names but the roles of the members? So yeah, we haven't recruited any of the members yet. But when we do resource adoption, we try to get representation from all of the schools.

[02:04:20] We try to get representation from all of the curriculum areas that we're looking at adopting and we try to make sure that the group of people we have reviewing the resources have a depth of knowledge and experience in teaching those areas so that we get good feedback.

[02:04:38] Okay. Thank you. Ms. Miles? I've already kind of watched the adoption thing, so this is like a second time seeing it. questions I've asked you already but I wanted to make sure people are aware of it will ESOL teachers and special education teachers be included on the committee because I know you didn't specifically say that yes okay and will those who are chosen for the committee be given a stipend for

their participation and feedback outside of contract hours yeah the time spent outside of contract hours for this work is paid at an hourly rate so okay thank

[02:05:11] you anyone else miss Brescia thank you how do we advertise the public review process how do we let people know that they can participate we utilize our all of our available division communication tools website social media tax email and we usually have the sample materials available at a location the last time we did this it was at our district offices and people can contact us make an appointment to review physical resources in the case of these many of these resources there should also be an ability to provide we're certainly going

[02:05:51] ask for an ability to provide digital sample accounts to be able to look at the resources as well from home if possible. And again on the cost, you said it would be about two million dollars. Where in the budget does that usually go?

[02:06:06] That textbooks and resources are funded out of the standard operating budget. Gotcha. So would we have to amend fiscal year 26? Oh no, because the the purchase happens in July which is not the coming fiscal year but the following. I'll I'll follow up with a question.

[02:06:27] Did you have a question? I just wanted to say that, reiterate that the VDOE timeline is tight. And so I appreciate your, you know, transparency and the communication about how you plan to address the needs with not a lot of help from the state.

[02:06:43] Thank you. And my follow-up question was about the formation of the Adoption Committee. How is that solicited? So we'll be doing this very soon. We'll be sending out a communication to basically anyone in the division that either teaches or is involved in supporting in an extensive way math instruction. So it's very open. We want to make the opportunity available to anyone with the appropriate expertise who wants to be engaged and involved in it. So we hope to get a good response.

[02:07:16] Oh, Ms. Miles? I forgot to ask this. What is the current math resource that we use in elementary schools? For elementary, it's called Orgo. We've had it for the last six years. And so is it on one of the resources that? Actually, it's not.

[02:07:32] They did not submit, so they are not on the approved list. But I will say that there are other resources that align with the standards that we'll be looking at that we can certainly compare to what we're doing now with the current resource in terms of pace and how it's set up.

[02:07:53] Is there any way for the teachers to access this, and maybe you have said this before, where they can look at the different ones that you're reviewing just so they can kind of get a feel for what they like as well? - Yes, that's part of the plan. When we did the literacy resource adoption, we did have a short stretch 'cause it was a shortened timetable where we made the samples of the resource available to at every grade level any teacher who wanted to take a look at them.

[02:08:23] So during the public review period, we should be able to do that. Thank you so much for your time. - Thank you, Dr. Stevenson.

[02:08:48] Next up on our action agenda, we have a resolution regarding employee management relations and collective bargaining. And I'll ask Mr. Gefeller to come to the podium.

[02:09:09] - Good evening, Chair Seberg, Vice Chair Spall, members of the board and Dr. Newman. Tonight, I wanna give an overview of collective bargaining, share about the ways that we work

collaboratively with staff to make decisions in Manassas City Schools.

[02:09:24] As you know, decisions in MCPS are made in alignment with the vision, mission, goals, and pillars of our strategic plan. The slide reminds us of the objectives of strategic priorities for each of the four pillars that are so crucial in helping us promote student academic success.

[02:09:41] The pillars are dependent upon one another. The common thread within each priority is quality staff to implement them in a coherent way. Tonight's discussion about collaborative partnerships in place with staff falls most directly under quality workforce.

[02:09:57] But the majority of these partnerships are in direct support of the strategic priorities in the inclusive and collaborative learning environment pillar. I wanna provide some history of collective bargaining in Virginia.

[02:10:12] In May, 2021, the Commonwealth of Virginia passed legislation that granted local governments and school boards the ability to authorize collective bargaining with their workforces. The legislation allows school boards to recognize a union as the exclusive bargaining agent, and if authorized, the school board would bargain exclusively with that representative.

[02:10:34] The decision-making authority as to whether or not to authorize collective bargaining lies with the school board. It is important to note that there is no funding attached to the legislation. The state legislature recently passed HB 2764, which was identical to SB 917, that among other things would create a public employee relations board, which would determine appropriate bargaining units and provide for certification and decertification elections for exclusive bargaining representatives.

[02:11:07] It had a delayed effective date of July 1st of 2026. On March 24th, 2025, Governor Yunkin vetoed that bill and the House sustained the veto on April 2nd, 2025. If passed, this legislation would have changed the landscape of collective bargaining in Virginia.

[02:11:26] If it had passed, based on feedback from our attorney, school boards that are in the process of developing a collective bargaining agreement without a grandfathered agreement prior to July 1st of 2026 may have been required to start over based on the new legislation.

[02:11:48] Before we go further in the presentation, it is important to define the meaning of collective bargaining, a collective bargaining agreement, and a bargaining agent. Collective bargaining is a legally assumed mutual obligation of an employer authorized to engage in collective bargaining by its management representatives and the bargaining agent of employees in an appropriate bargaining unit to meet and negotiate in good faith regarding certain terms and conditions of employment.

[02:12:17] To simplify it, collective bargaining is a process that the school board and representatives of staff would come together to develop a contract. A collective bargaining agreement, or a CBA, is the written legal contract between an employer with the authority to engage in collective bargaining and a bargaining agent representing employees and resulting from a collective bargaining.

[02:12:39] A CBA is a legally binding contract between the localities governing body, school board in our case, and the exclusive bargaining agent representing employees. CBAs typically range from three to five years in terms, and they are the product of a collective bargaining process between exclusive bargaining agent and the locality's governing body, in our case, the school board.

[02:13:06] A bargaining agent is an employee association or a labor union recognized by an employer with the authority to engage in collective bargaining. The bargaining agent is the only organization authorized to bargain collectively on behalf of all employees in a particular unit regarding certain terms and conditions of employment.

[02:13:30] How does it work? I wanna provide a high-level overview of how collective bargaining works. First, as I mentioned earlier, the legislation grants the sole authority to each school board to either authorize collective bargaining or not.

[02:13:49] The legislation is very clear that in Virginia localities, in our case, the school board, has the right to decide its own course of action that best fits its workforce culture, personnel, administration, mission, and the needs of its constituents.

[02:14:04] If collective bargaining is implemented, it would begin a process of determining bargaining units and a process for bargaining units to determine who they want to be their exclusive bargaining agent. A bargaining unit is a group of employees who share common interests and are deemed appropriate to engage in the process as a single entity.

[02:14:25] After the bargaining unit selects their exclusive bargaining agent, negotiations for collective bargaining agreement would begin. If the school board passes a resolution that does not authorize collective bargaining, then employees are not allowed to collectively bargain.

[02:14:44] Once a school division has an approved collective bargaining agreement, it would need to be enforced, monitored, and include a grievance process that would be supported by division staff. I also wanna point out that the legislation is clear that any resolution authorizing collective bargaining cannot restrict the school board's ability to establish a budget or appropriate funds.

[02:15:16] So who pays for collective bargaining? A common question that is asked is who pays for collective bargaining? As I previously mentioned, since the legislation did not have any funding attached, any costs associated with collective bargaining would come from the school division's operating funds.

[02:15:33] In addition, if the school board authorizes collective bargaining, the cost will depend on what specifically is going to be open for negotiation. Regardless of what is open for negotiation, there will be certain minimum costs associated with collective bargaining.

[02:15:49] In our discussions and research of other jurisdictions, there seems to be a lot of variation in staffing depending on existing school division staff levels. Common costs associated with collective bargaining are attorney's fees, administration of the contract, third party arbitration or mediation, and a hiring of staff, which I will discuss further in the next slide.

[02:16:11] The cost can also be impacted by the size of the bargaining units and changes to the school board policies and procedures. These are all unknowns, but can have an impact on the overall cost of collective bargaining.

[02:16:32] As I just mentioned, the cost associated with collective bargaining can be impacted by several variables. I wanna discuss specifically things related to potential costs in Manassas City Public Schools, but before I discuss specific positions being recommended, I wanna mention that collective bargaining, as you know, would be new to Manassas City Public Schools.

[02:16:53] MCPS does not have experience with collective bargaining. Currently, MCPS has eight full-time equivalents human resources and 11 full-time equivalents in finance none of the staff currently working in human resources or finance has direct experience with collective bargaining the process or managing a collective bargaining agreement we also do not have the infrastructure in place to assume responsibility of the collective bargaining process without with our current staffing this would be a first for all of us furthermore our recommendations for additional staff comes

[02:17:31] from research and discussions from other jurisdictions. We have had honest conversations with other school divisions to hear their lessons learned and about their process. We talked about collective bargaining staffing with our legal counsel who does who does have direct experience with collective bargaining and confirmed our estimate of the positions being recommended. The first position is the chief negotiating officer. This staff person leads. This staff person leads and coordinates all aspects of collective bargaining negotiation

[02:18:09] including contracts, preparation, strategy development, and preparation of proposals. This person would represent the school board at the bargaining table advocating for its interests and negotiating with the union representatives. The next position is a chief legal officer.

[02:18:26] This person would be an attorney that would provide legal advice and counsel to the executive cabinet and school board on all labor related matters. A labor relations coordinator. This is a person who would assist in negotiating and administering collective bargaining agreements, the CBAs, ensuring compliance with the labor laws and resolving employee management disputes, often working with associations to represent workers' interests. A labor specialist. The staff member would support the work of the labor relations coordinator. In addition, this person

[02:19:04] would serve as a liaison between staff, the bargaining units, the exclusive bargaining agent, and the school board. They also would help to resolve any conflicts or disputes that would arise. A budget analyst and payroll specialist would be the same person. A budget analyst would be involved in the collective bargaining who analyzes the financial implications of a proposed agreement, ensuring proposals are affordable and aligned with the community needs, while also considering the long-term impacts and potential impacts on different employee groups.

[02:19:37] A payroll specialist for collective bargaining would ensure accurate and timely payroll processing for employees adhering to the terms of a collective bargaining agreement and relevant labor laws. They also would manage the associated related contributions and handle payroll-related inquiries from employees and management.

[02:19:57] An administrative assistant would support all of these positions related to collective bargaining And as we do with our normal budgeting process, the salaries and benefits were estimated at the midpoint of the salary scales. I want to shift to the presentation to discuss legal costs.

[02:20:17] We asked our division counsel to estimate legal costs. We also talked with our other school divisions to get a sense of their legal expenses. Our division counsel, who does have expertise and experience with collective bargaining, broke the costs into four stages.

[02:20:33] The first stage is drafting and adopting a collective bargaining resolution. Stage two is providing legal advice during the preparation for an election of the bargaining units to select an exclusive bargaining agent. Stage three provides legal advice during the election process.

[02:20:54] The biggest cost in terms of legal expenses would be during stage four or the negotiation, which are associated with the approval of a collective bargaining agreement. Our attorney estimated a starting point of six months' worth of expenses for negotiations, and you can see the cost and the amount of hours for each stage.

[02:21:23] Based on our conversations with jurisdictions, we anticipate negotiations would take two to four years. Two years, which is in line with the neighboring jurisdictions, would cost between \$256,100 to \$503,475.

[02:21:41] Four years, which has also been reported in our region, would cost between \$505,700 and \$993,075. In Manassas City, we believe in the importance of gathering continual feedback to reflect on current practices and make revisions to future plans.

[02:22:08] This feedback loop has played a critical role in moving forward with several strategic priorities over the past several years. Manassas City Public Schools Governing Body values its employees and has sought their feedback in many different ways and in the upcoming slides I will share how that feedback has influenced decision making in Manassas City Schools.

[02:22:36] There are many different division-wide committees that provide input and guidance on a variety of topics. These committees have representatives from schools and central office that provide different perspectives, all of which are necessary to have a holistic picture about the work and what next steps are needed.

[02:22:52] Every one of these committees has teacher voices. Groups such as the Superintendent's Advisory Council and Strategic Plan Committee enable staff members to have a voice in the direction of the district. They help to ensure priorities are aligned and messaging to staff is consistent.

[02:23:12] The Superintendent's Advisory Council also gathers feedback from staff on key topics and reports back to the groups so decisions can be made. Some examples of changes that were made based on their feedback was specific time allocations and communicating professional learning days to ensure that there was adequate protected work time.

[02:23:33] Recruitment materials were adjusted to be more personalized to Manassas City Public Schools and we held a special dinner this year to recognize all award nominees instead of just the winners. In the development of the MCPS budget, input is gathered from each school and department about their needs. During the budget approval process a public hearing is held during which staff and community members have the ability to provide input during the 26 the fy26 budget process the average salary increase over five years for all employees was presented

[02:24:10] including a five and a half percent increase for fy26 on this slide that chart has been adapted to show the average salary increase for teachers and teachers were provided an extra one percent increase in the middle of fy24 due to the targeted funding from the city mcps has provided consistent salary increases that total an average of 29.59 percent for teachers over the five-year period. In addition, staff bonuses were paid in FY22 and FY23, and adjustments were made in FY24

[02:24:46] to individual teacher salaries to ensure that staff were receiving one-for-one credit for years of experience. Adjustments were also made to the early steps of the teacher scales in FY25 in an attempt to make them closer to Princeton County Public Schools and a longevity step is being added for FY 26 for our most veteran teachers. However, while these are great accomplishments, it is still important to

note that many of these increases were done to help us catch up with other districts in the region. We recognize there is still work to do to remain competitive with our

[02:25:24] neighbors in terms of compensation for all employees. MCPS was also the first school division in the region to pay teachers to cover classes when a substitute could not provide coverage. Once a neighboring district adopted the same practice, MCPS increased our hourly rate. In addition, MCPS compensates teachers for required professional learning over the summer, a practice that is not always standard in other school divisions. We do this to recognize that our staff go above and beyond the responsibilities of their contract in the

[02:26:00] best interest of our students. MCPS also sponsored a reading and math cohort through George Mason University and UVA. MCPS pays the tuition for these programs directly and since its inception for these initiatives MCF MCPS has paid \$191,810 to George Mason and \$115,081 to UVA for teachers to get their

[02:26:27] master's degrees. MCPS operates a variety of standing and need specific committees and feedback opportunities to inform instructional decisions.

[02:26:46] Teachers play a vital role as members of these groups by providing key insights on student learning needs in the context of division strategic priorities. Most of them have majority teacher membership. For example, 15 out of 19 members of the committee that recommended the most recent adopted literacy resource were teachers.

[02:27:06] These groups and feedback processes have a direct impact on textbook adoption recommendations, curriculum resources development, and content-based coaching and support that is provided to schools and classrooms for instructional pacing, planning, delivery, and assessment.

[02:27:25] We utilize guiding coalitions as a way to provide, staff to provide feedback when we are planning for the implementation of a new priority. At the table driving decisions were 136 teachers out of 215 members of our guiding coalition, which is 63%.

[02:27:43] We do this because we value staff feedback and make it a priority for the implementation to be successful. These group of educators, which includes representatives from schools and central office, are broken up into subcommittees that focus on training, implementation supports, monitoring, and communication.

[02:28:03] The Virginia Literacy Act went into effect across the state this year. MCPS was set up for success in regards to implementing the various components to improve early literacy outcomes for Virginia learners due to the work of many educators, including members of the Virginia Literacy Guiding Coalition.

[02:28:20] This coalition contains a variety of educators, including 21 teachers that served on different subcommittees. This group of educators led the way in preparing for the use of the new reading program, establishing timelines to support the training expectations of the Virginia Literacy Act, developed regular communication updates that were sent out to the division, identified interventions that will be provided to support students' needs, and determine ways to monitor progress as we move forward with implementation.

[02:28:51] It was this group of educators that recognized the need for staff to have time to complete the various trainings that were included with the Virginia Literacy Act. They led the change in proposing revisions to the 24-25 school year, which was supported by the school board.

[02:29:11] That included seven early release days that would give them more work time, in addition to the 11 full day professional days that were already in the calendar. to complete trainings during the workday. We are one of the only school divisions in the area that were able to give teachers this extra work time, which put their hours of additional protected work time to over 40 hours this school year.

[02:29:36] During the 21-22 school year, we formed a guiding coalition that we introduced the cycle that works, which focused on student academic success. The coalition was made up of 52 teachers, more than half of those members were classroom teachers.

[02:29:53] Members of the Guiding Coalition received training prior to the rest of the division and were able to provide feedback on the training prior to taking place. One key piece of feedback that we received was the need for an intentional rollout if we wanted the initiative to become an embedded practice.

[02:30:10] Staff emphasized the importance of a two-year rollout period with adequate support, resources, and time for staff. They strongly felt that a slow and intentional approach would ensure that it become a standard practice to guarantee high levels of student learning.

[02:30:25] Based on their feedback, we planned a two-year implementation and made adjustments along the way based on feedback that we received from implementation surveys and through CLT meetings. Another adjustment that was made during implementation based on feedback we received through the guiding coalition was to adjust three meetings per week to two meetings with an additional two meetings every other week to analyze student achievement data.

[02:30:51] In August 2024, the Behavior Solutions Guiding Coalition was established. This coalition is made up of 26 members and includes teachers, social workers, counselors, special education teachers from across MCPS. All nine schools and central office are represented.

[02:31:11] Members have diverse perspectives and backgrounds. The purpose of the Behavior Solutions Guiding Coalition is to create a proactive system for developing positive academic and social behaviors to guarantee equitable access to education through alignment and consistency across all MCPS schools.

[02:31:30] After spending time to develop a common understanding of the work and the why this work is important, the Behavior Solutions Guiding Coalition is now working to set division-wide expectations for Tier 1 and develop resources, professional learning, communications, and benchmarks for success.

[02:31:50] School teams, with the support of the Behavior Solutions Guiding Coalition, will develop school plans based on Tier 1 division-wide expectations with school-wide implementation of Tier 1 beginning in August of 2025. The Behavior Solutions Guiding Coalition is working in a phased approach.

[02:32:08] All tiers are expected to be implemented by August of 2026. School continuous improvement plans are collaboratively developed by leadership and continuous improvement teams at each school.

[02:32:28] Teachers provide insight into the appropriate goals and objectives for the school based on data analysis, as well as on the appropriate strategies and action steps to accomplish the identified goals and objectives. During the year, continuous improvement teams conduct formative reviews of their plans to assess the implementation of strategies and progress toward meeting goals.

[02:32:49] Teacher perspective are critical to this work. To provide a couple of examples, Osborne High School uses their instructional counsel for this work. Teacher leaders were assigned to different focus groups, content areas, attendance, graduation. These groups develop the goals, strategies, and action plans in their respective areas.

[02:33:12] Throughout the year, this group meets and reflects on the progress using available data. Hayden Elementary School has a leadership structure with four standing committees, one of which is an instructional leadership committee. The whole leadership group meets monthly.

[02:33:29] The instructional committee is a group responsible for reviewing data and developing goals and strategies. The goal includes IAs, teachers, classroom teachers, special education teachers, ESOL teachers, and administration. This group reviews data throughout the year and reviews it with a larger leadership group.

[02:33:49] The team members are responsible for sharing with their grade level teams and gathering their feedback. They focus on vertical data across grade levels and user data analysis to inform the formative reviews of the continuous improvement plan throughout the year.

[02:34:04] Our other schools have similar processes and I can give you similar examples. The principals and assistant principal selection process. When there are principal and assistant principal vacancies at the school, teachers are surveyed for their perspectives on what leadership qualities they are seeking in their new principal or assistant principal.

[02:34:25] Teachers participate on a staff panel and this includes all of our teachers and support staff that conduct the interviews with each of the candidates. As I mentioned in the previous slide, we adjusted the implementation timeline for a cycle that works based on feedback.

[02:34:47] We also provided ongoing professional learning through CLTs as we made our way through implementing the different components of the cycle. One example of this responsive professional learning was the fact that we adjusted the timeline for training on common formative assessments and data-driven conversations at the same time, as teachers felt as though these two components went together and they would rather have the training at the same time so that they could leverage common assessments to effectively analyze data.

[02:35:16] This process led to an intentional decision making when planning instruction and was a valuable tool in supporting our staff. The Cooperative Learning Coaching Cohort is made up of administrators, instructional facilitators, teachers, and district leaders.

[02:35:34] This cohort was developed in response to the high level of interest in implementing Kagan cooperative learning structures throughout the division. The infrastructure of support was created to ensure teachers received ongoing coaching as they implemented the structure to maximize the impact of cooperative learning on student engagement.

[02:35:53] We are actually growing the coaching cohort by adding 35 more teachers to the cohort next year. They will complete training in June and be certified as coaches by mid-September. We want to support our teachers and provide professional learning from within MCPS, which is why we have trained teachers to coach their peers.

[02:36:13] This is the first year of implementing the new reading program, Benchmark. We receive feedback from teachers that they would like to see lessons in action, so we arrange to bring in a consultant from Benchmark Advance to model a lesson in multiple grade levels in all seven schools, K-6.

[02:36:31] There have been additional resources created throughout the year in response to the needs identified while learning this program. The success of our teachers means the success of our students, which is why we have prioritized being responsive to the feedback in year one of the implementation of the new curriculum resource.

[02:36:54] We believe in collaboration at all levels to ensure there is a continual feedback loop. Collaborative Learning Team CLTs meet regularly with administrators, reading and math support teachers, and instructional facilitators. Feedback from these meetings is shared at the division level, which is then shared with directors and members of the cabinet and executive cabinet.

[02:37:17] This is a positive nature of the structure here in Manassas City Schools, where we have members of the division level teams, such as instructional facilitators and reading and math support teachers, working with teams at schools so they can gather input as they are working through the instructional planning process to provide that feedback with division leaders immediately.

[02:37:35] We have been able to make adjustments quickly when needed. For example, we were able to adjust the pacing for the units within Benchmark during the second semester to better reflect the time it was taking to work through the units. MCPS makes these adjustments because we value the feedback from our staff.

[02:37:56] Moving forward into next school year, we will develop a regulation outlining a meet and confer process to widen the scope of conversations, feedback, and input on priorities and concerns. We have not had a formalized process like this in Manassas City Public Schools.

[02:38:11] This will be a change that will include more voices in the process so that different perspectives can be heard. There will be more opportunity to include staff feedback. Meet and Confer is a collaborative process where employers and employees come together to discuss working conditions, solicit input, and explore potential solutions.

[02:38:31] There will be four meetings that will occur next year. The meetings will be work sessions to discuss priorities and issues. It will be a structured and formalized process, and it will include a representative from each school's leadership team and a representative from each association present in MCPS.

[02:38:47] The representative will be a part of the association's leadership team unless the association does not have a formalized leadership structure, and in that case, a representative from the association will be included. There will also be a support staff representative and representation from central office departments as needed.

[02:39:07] In addition, membership will include classroom teachers, ESOL teachers, special education teachers, and gifted and talented teachers. The process will consist of a kickoff, kickoff meeting to set guidelines and for representatives to submit specific priorities, concerns, or issues to be discussed for the year. These will be the members most important issues. The second work session is when there will be discussion around specific concerns and priorities submitted during the kickoff meeting. Department

representatives are invited to the discussion if concerns pertain to their area of responsibility. The third work session will provide

[02:39:44] feedback to the meet and confer committee regarding specific priorities and concerns additional discussion is had regarding the suggested responses and potential resolutions at the final work session the final responses are shared with the committee written and approved responses and resolutions will be shared by the superintendent with all Manassas City Public Schools staff and the school board will receive a formal report after each meeting and work session and I'm happy to answer any questions questions from the board this

[02:40:20] is president thank you yes I do have questions but just a few I promise So back on slide three, you were talking about the legislative history of collective bargaining in Virginia, and you mentioned that there was a House bill and an identical Senate bill that was passed but ultimately vetoed, which would have changed the landscape completely, which means that if we had started down this path, we would have to change direction potentially after all of this investment.

[02:40:56] I also wanted to ask additionally to that, was there any funding included in those Senate bills and house bills? There was not. There was not. Ms. Brown, did you have a question for Mr. Gofeller?

[02:41:18] Yes, I want to follow up on Ms. Precious question to Mr. Gofeller. Since it's legislation without funding, who might cover that funding? Where should I send citizens to talk to about that legislation funding?

[02:41:37] So that would be, if you're getting funding attached to legislation, that would be the senators or delegates. But the money from that would have to come from the Manassas City Public Schools operating budget. Okay.

[02:41:54] Thank you. Ms. Frazier, did you want to continue? Yes. So on slide seven, I just wanted to confirm you developed this staffing plan in consultation with other divisions, including their lessons learned, and that this staffing plan was also run by our experienced collective bargaining attorneys that is correct that is correct in general do we want to do things halfway we do not know we want to do things we want to be successful we want to be successful if we're going to do them I will say just from my own personal perspective I have seen other staffing plans to me this is conservative I have seen other legal departments

[02:42:33] usually there are two attorneys this one only includes one usually there's a legal assistant paired with those two attorneys this staffing plan only has one I have seen other divisions who have included paid union staff and the staffing plan does not include those positions so just wanted to throw that out there and I wanted to confirm finally with our legal the estimated legal bills when you asked our attorney for the estimate you asked for the estimate that the division would pay correct that is correct and you don't estimate attorney bills you just ask the attorney I asked the attorney and the attorney gave us those numbers those numbers came directly from the attorney

[02:43:10] thank you that's it down to my right miss miles did you have a question for mr. Kefeller yes I have a couple questions about the meet and confer when would be the first proposed meeting we would aim to have that first meeting in September by the end of September and how would teachers and staff be able to share the concerns that they're not on that committee so they would they would share them either with their association representative or they would share them with their building representative and they

would bring them to the meeting the first meeting in September and who it would be placed as overseers to run each meeting? So we would look to have a neutral third party to be the person that would that would

[02:43:49] facilitate those meetings to start. Okay and the third party is you mean someone who's not on staff currently? Correct. Okay. Okay I have a couple other questions and these are just just to kind of give an idea of the cost. So let me understand correctly in order to have collective bargaining we would have to add six new positions correct? That is what we'd recommend yes. Okay and that's an estimated cost of a little over a million dollars correct okay and these positions would be permanent as long as collective bargaining is here I mean that would be the intent yes okay okay and so I'm gonna ask a couple other

[02:44:28] questions how many certified teachers do we have we have certified teachers we have 640 and how many staff members who are not certified teachers do we have 535 okay okay great and then another question so how much would it be to give our teachers only cost of living raise this year in lieu of collective bargaining so if we were to give a cost of living a 3% cost of living adjustment dr. Casada estimates that for FY 26 would be three million six hundred fifty one thousand and eighty three dollars salary and benefits okay great and then

[02:45:05] as far as the 5.5 increase that we are already have proposed on the 26 budget how much would that be the five point five percent which is it is included in the FY 26 budget is six million eight hundred and thirty five thousand two hundred forty one dollars okay so I'm assuming that would be something that we would have to look at if collective bargaining was we would have to take away those benefits as far as salary benefits that we're trying to give our teachers okay I think that was I think that was all the questions I had thank

[02:45:41] you I have a couple of questions and just for FYI purposes I did not submit my questions ahead of time to anyone and I just created my questions so is it possible for for us to find or have you found any comparable expenses from the ones that were given to us from other districts did you see any other

[02:46:19] districts that it's that spent over a million dollars with collective bargaining yes there was one district who spent over three million dollars and collective bargaining if we were to go into collective bargaining today is it likely that our teachers will get those benefits say in six months or is it more likely that they will get the benefits from collective bargaining in a year a months two years three years what is the timeline in looking at other jurisdictions and in reading the news you'll see that it looks like there's

[02:46:54] anywhere from two to four years it's pretty typical two to four years how likely is it that the attorneys that were consulted grossly overestimated the cost of collective bargaining so I think that we have confidence in our attorneys or we wouldn't have them as our attorneys and that's why they gave them a range and so we have to we pay them money to give us advice and so the advice that they provided us is what I presented to you all okay I have just a couple more questions if you can bear with me sure so say we enter into

[02:47:32] collective bargaining is there a way out or once we enter into collective bargaining is that in perpetuity so you would you would enter into collective bargaining and you would develop a collective bargaining agreement and the typical terms of that are three to five years and so before that term is up you would enter into negotiations to see if you're going to continue you'd have to develop a new collective bargaining agreement once the initial one was expired okay and I have two more questions so thank you for your patience

[02:48:07] If we, when looking at the cost of living that Ms. Miles, board member Miles mentioned the \$3 million, how likely is it for a current city council to support us in that?

[02:48:25] I can't speak for the city council, but... Based on your experience with... Based on my experience, a priority of the school board has been to provide salary increases comparable with our neighboring jurisdictions. So if we were to lower it from 5.5% in FY26 down to a 3%, I do not believe there would be support on the city council to do that.

[02:48:48] And if we go into collective bargaining, and it does cost the amount that is projected to cost, how likely is it that we will get support from city council to cover those expenses or from city council to levy taxes so that we are able to cover those expenses because we certainly don't have the money.

[02:49:07] Right. So again, I can't speak for the city council, but I can, based on conversations that we've had, they have given us a 3% increase in revenue each year, and that has been pretty consistent over the last several years. So I don't expect that it would increase to cover that cost.

[02:49:27] Thank you so much. Mrs. Paul. I just have one quick question. When you say that we pay money to legal to give us advice, is that a staff legal situation? that is not there on a retainer with us and so they are as many school divisions as many small school divisions do we have services that when we call them and then they bill us for them when we reach out to them thank you any other questions for mr kefeller smiles i guess my speaker is still on um i have not necessarily a question but i was based on what you gave me the details of how many

[02:50:04] certified teachers we have i've been encouraging the board to give bonuses to our most needed positions to track new teachers. And I did some math. If we were to give a bonus in lieu of collective bargaining to our teachers, \$2,000 for our certified teachers, that would be a million dollars, a little over a million. And then if we were to give, let's say, \$1,500 to our staff members that are not certified, that would be \$800,000. And that would be just like a one-year thing. And you're saying these six positions are something that we have to keep renewing every

[02:50:36] year. So I just think that's something that we should ponder. Anybody else? All right if there are no further questions for Mr. Gefiller can I get a motion? Chair, I move that the school board of the city of Manassas approve resolution R2025-03 regarding employee management relations and collective bargaining. Before we approve, I'm so sorry, I have a few comments to make. I wasn't sure that we're going to have discussion. Okay. Is there a second? Second. I have a motion by

[02:51:13] mrs breja seconded by mrs spall that the school board of the city of manassas approved resolution r-2025-03 regarding employee management relations and collective bargaining is there any discussion miss miles i haven't spoken much this evening um a strong and intelligent person recently asked me in relation to tonight's resolution why do you have a resolution when you don't have all the information my nay vote is going to indicate my desire to have all the information and willingness

[02:51:52] to speak to and listen to what it please don't do that thank you to speak to speak to and listen to what our educators have to say prior to making any decisions for or against public collective bargaining thank you to everyone who came forward to speak tonight both for and against the resolution presented this evening i support teacher unions and teacher associations i support strong healthy relationships between educators and boards my concern is that the relationship we've worked to cultivate between the two will be irreparably damaged this evening i know firsthand the

[02:52:29] challenges in teaching in a post-covid 21st century world some of you may not know but i am a special education teacher in another school division eighth grade self-contained i want to support you i want the tools and the resources to help you mold and guide our students into being successful well-rounded adults i see and feel your commitment in every word you've said and written both for and against.

[02:52:56] However, the burdens associated with collective bargaining in Virginia cannot and should not be shouldered by school boards alone. School boards require support in terms of legislation, funding, and resources at local, state, and federal levels for collective bargaining to be successful.

[02:53:16] Without support at all levels, the foundation for successful relationships through collective bargaining cannot be established. if you want to see collective bargaining and you want to see it be successful you cannot just speak at school board meetings you need to speak to your local state and federal legislators they are the ones who hold the purse strings until you are willing to say the things you've said tonight to them we don't move forward thank you miss miles are you ready i'm ready okay

[02:53:53] So I want to start off by saying Manassas City Public Schools has much to offer, but Manassas City Public Schools cannot afford collective bargaining. Our pocketbooks cannot afford collective bargaining. We owe it to those who elected us to be fiscally responsible, and it is not fiscally responsible to spend over a million dollars each year to fund collective bargaining when we currently have a gap in pay for our teachers, have critical needs like providing free meals for our students and parental leave for our teachers.

[02:54:20] I think we need to give our capable school board and governance team an opportunity to address concerns. We have tendered school board members, a current administrator, a former MCPS principal, two current teachers, I'm also a teacher in PWCS, parents of Manassas City Schools, and we are equipped to tackle any issues that arise in our school system. And if we are were to agree to collective bargaining we would be hiring people to do the job we as a governance team should be able to do and are capable of doing so a little background about me I was an officer and representative on the Manassas Park

[02:55:00] Education Association for many years five plus years when we talked about collective bargaining I will say this we chose chose alternative ways to connect with the superintendent with monthly meetings and we saw a change that change was an instant but we saw a change. I do not believe we have exhausted our collective bargaining alternatives. I believe there are other ways to connect and give the staff a voice and better seat at the table. I think that there are many other ways we can ensure staff is heard and action steps are taken to provide the things they ask for. And I'm gonna leave you all with this to think

[02:55:34] about. Everyone has a pocketbook but not everyone's pocketbook is the same. We all know what each of us individually can afford or not afford. What we splurge on may be different from what others splurge on comparing ourselves to PWCS and Fairfax County's pocketbook in Arlington is like a single mom of three which I am myself trying to keep up with a single man with no kids it's just not the same collective bargaining will not only change the scope of the school board and how we run our governance team but will not guarantee any real change

[02:56:11] will happen thank you thank you mr. miles dr. Jones yes I'm going to be brief. I do not believe that collecting bargaining is for us now. That's not to say there will never be a time for that, but at this point in time I do not believe it's there. There are too many variables and too many things unknown in this current culture that we have in education, but I know for myself and I believe for my other board

members that we are more than willing to talk to you, to listen to you, and to make changes when it's possible, but some things are non-negotiable and some things there can be changes but I being on the school

[02:56:50] board I am not clear even what you want so I think you need to talk to the school board tell them what your needs are I worked in the school system for 40 years I never found it difficult to talk to the superintendent no matter who the superintendent was I didn't find it difficult to talk to people in central office or to a principal or assistant principal so talk to us tell us what your desires are what you think we need and we can work together we do not need collective bargaining to work and to make Manassas City Schools all that it

[02:57:22] can be thank you Dr. Jones Miss Brown thank you I want to begin by acknowledging and deeply appreciating the vital role that all of you all of our employees play in the success of our school division I am one of the few members currently serving on this board who is a union member and who has paid

[02:57:56] dues since 1997. As a member I've benefited from representation and support. When I started as a teacher it was my union who provided me my first \$200 to support the needs in my classroom. That year with that money I was able to buy paper, pencils, and believe it or not chalk from a chalkboard.

[02:58:19] When I was being underpaid in a previous district for simply being a woman of color, it was the union who fought and secured the equity adjustment for a fair and just wage, but not just for me, but for people who look like me.

[02:58:37] When I decided to run for this very seat, it was a union who first congratulated me and supported me. And as a school board member, having said all of that, on and off the record, I have fully supported the principles of collective bargaining.

[02:58:55] It is a process that I believe is rooted in mutual respect and a shared responsibility. So I believe it does have the potential to strengthen our communication and collaboration. Having said all of that, I will vote no today because I want you to hear me and I want you to know that we, not just me, but that we are willing to listen to you.

[02:59:20] But I want to make it clear that none of us on this board, including myself, have the privilege to make decisions just through our own lens or our own experience. We all must weigh the responsibility to support students, families, staff, and also answer to taxpayers.

[02:59:40] We need to be fiscally responsible and we need to be good stewards of our resources. so I do not want my vote of no to be interpreted as a yes to spend in the project of 1.3 million yearly to that expense I will say no but to the resolution tonight I will be saying no Miss Brescia thank you I do plan to vote to pass this resolution which would disallow collective bargaining in the NASA City Public Schools and I want to say that I take the feedback we've received through this process and at this exact meeting extremely seriously we

[03:00:19] must always strive as a governance team to do better by our students and our staff student achievement is the name of the game our quality workforce is a major and important pillar of our strategic plan I look forward to what comes out of the meet and confer process and strongly support adding this to our existing arsenal of feedback mechanisms so that we can be a better board and a better school system going forward as for why I'm voting this way well there are a lot of reasons but really there's only one that matters and that's what is best for kids I don't think it is good for kids or for educators to operate

[03:00:56] under a collective bargaining law that has the same funding formula as West Virginia's there are only three states in the Union that permit collective bargaining but do not allow their local school boards to levy taxes as West Virginia and Maryland are the only three I do not think that's fair to our kids fair to our educators I also don't think and with those constraints being as they are I do not think it is good for kids to emulate Arlington County who recently said that they were cutting back summer school coincidentally and didn't say this is why but coincidentally this occurred at the same year that they ratified their collective bargaining agreement they are sending

[03:01:36] kids home with laptops Charlottesville City cut back their bus service this year what a coincidence Fairfax County is discussing cutting crossing guards and maybe even their middle school after-school activities. Albemarle County has cut their foreign language offerings, their furniture fund, and their field trip fund. This is not good for kids. Falls Church City hit impasse in the very first year of collective bargaining, requiring federal mediation. Loudoun County spent 3.3 million dollars and added 13 new positions exclusively to support

[03:02:15] collective bargaining. Harrisonburg City and Petersburg City, both of them have had to revise their collective bargaining resolutions multiple times ballooning those legal expenses that's the phase one expense by the way is the collective bargaining resolution not the two to four-year negotiation and you know Richmond City we've heard some discussion of Richmond City I have no desire to emulate Richmond City student achievement there are I just discussed here seven out of twelve jurisdiction school board jurisdictions in this

[03:02:53] Commonwealth who have meaningfully pursued collective bargaining which by the way there are 131 school divisions in the Commonwealth so we are talking about a small minority of jurisdictions who have approved it and even and the greater share of those small of that small number is showing the stress of this funding formula sent to us by our representatives in Richmond so I think I'm I think we need to make the decision that's best for kids I want to continue our bus service I am proud of our middle school after school activities

[03:03:31] I want to expand our summer school these are things I want to do we cannot do this with the current restrictions placed on collective bargaining laws in Virginia thank you Mrs. Spall good evening I want to tell everyone here that I do support unions particularly particularly when they are protecting the rights of workers who are oppressed by greedy corporations however MCPS is not a corporate fat cat trying to protect our profits as your elected board member I want to hear from and support teachers and their rights I want to elevate teacher pay to be more in line with the peers in other

[03:04:09] professional industries I believe in sitting down across the table to discuss wages hours and working conditions I am angry that society doesn't value the profession as I believe it should and I have made it my mission to work to correct this error I simply believe that tonight the advocacy that we heard about the plight of teachers is misplaced with this board and this school system I just don't believe that we're the real enemy thank you thank you mrs.

[03:04:38] Paul and with my comments I want to begin by saying that this is not a political decision it's a practical one and it's grounded in deep respect for both our students and our educators this has not been a rushed or easy conversation we've taken the time to understand the full impact of what collective bargaining could mean for Manassas City while well-intentioned the process can be lengthy costly and sometimes limit our ability to act quickly and in the best interest of students whether it's adjusting class

[03:05:18] sizes schedules curriculum or staffing models it's not about devaluing educators quite the opposite it's about ensuring we support you in ways that are responsive flexible and focused on what matters most our students because our just our students deserve better our educators deserve better and we're committed to doing better together thank you I will call for a vote now I

[03:05:53] have a motion by miss Brescia seconded by mrs. Spall at the school board of the city of Manassas approved resolution our 20-2503 regarding employee management relations and collective bargaining is there any further discussion all in favor I may have a show of hands please may I have are there any nays no the

[03:06:33] - The motion carries. The vote is 5-2 with Stevens and Brown opposed.

[03:06:49] We'll move along to board members' comments and I'll go first to Ms. Miles. - Okay, before everybody leaves, I want to thank all the teachers, community members, and students who took the time to share their thoughts and collective bargaining. I appreciate their ability to share their feelings.

[03:07:05] However, I would ask everyone to give us, your governance team, a chance to do the job you elected us to do. So before you guys leave, please hear that. I have other things to say, so I wanted to make sure I said that before they leave. Congratulations to all the Mets wrestlers who placed at the recent tournament.

[03:07:21] I want to congratulate Mets Fine Arts Department for all your accomplishments, all district and band, superior ratings for the choir, the orchestra for excellent ratings as well. It's just wonderful to see how well everyone is representing MCPS. I also love the robotics presentation.

[03:07:39] Seventh out of 35 is amazing. Congratulations, excuse me, on getting the quality award. And qualifying for the district championship. I want to invite everyone, of course, to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month.

[03:07:55] That's why all of us have our t-shirts on, by including all our autistic students. I had the privilege of working with autistic students in an inclusion classroom a couple years ago, and it just was very rewarding for me. And just making sure we're understanding their differences, celebrating what they bring to the world and advocating for all of our students.

[03:08:16] There was a quote I found from Haley Moss that I thought was really important to share. I might hit developmental and social toll milestones in a different order than many of my peers, but I am able to accomplish these small victories on my own time.

[03:08:32] And that's just so important to remember that our kids are going to meet those milestones in their own time. So a couple more things and then I'll be done. Last week, I was able to attend the Elementary STEM Night at Dean. It was so nice to see so many parents and students participating in the events and games, and it was also so wonderful to see so many partnerships we have with local businesses.

[03:08:55] And then last Thursday, I was able to attend Osborne's Spring Musical, The Wizard of Oz. It was such a joy to see all the talented performers. It was a great play. And that is it for my comments. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Miles. Dr. Jones? I want to say congratulations to all our spotlight winners, Mets Middle School, the wrestling team, the fine arts department, and to Osmond's robotic team.

[03:09:22] And once again, it was amazing to see how great our students are doing with robotics. And the presentation on autism was very informative as we celebrate the month. I wanted to mention that I went

to the astrology night at Mets Middle School. It was a great success. I heard one student ask what equipment to buy to watch the stars.

[03:09:40] So I want to thank the GT Advisory Board for sponsoring activities and enhance student learning. And the next GT Advisory Board meeting is on April 21st. The multicultural event and talent show at Baldwin Intermediate was outstanding. The student posters on the countries helped inform everyone about areas and cultures around the world.

[03:09:59] And I even have now a few more vacation ideas. We also got to eat some dishes from different countries and the students share their talents. So I know Mets and Osborne will be excited when those students arrive to join their bands, dance teams, and choir. Our very own Chris Taylor was on the panel at the Education Workplace Breakfast last Thursday.

[03:10:18] The event focused on discussions about preparing students for evolving workforce. And just for your information, Manassas City Public School currently offers courses in areas such as health and medical science, information technology, business and marketing, family and consumer science, skill trades, the ROTC, and STEM engineering.

[03:10:39] The application deadline was March 31st for the school board representative, and we will be interviewing applicants later this month. And then I want to thank Manassas City Public School employees for your service. Student success and outcomes is our main goal. So that's all. Remember, the children are our future.

[03:10:56] Teachers guide their journey, and the board supports every effort that benefits our students. Together we educate and empower the next generation. Thank you, Dr. Jones. Ms. Brescia? Yes. My most important announcement is that the Little Feet Meet was rained out and is now scheduled for this Friday.

[03:11:17] so please make time to attend. It is, if it doesn't rain again, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Osborne High School. So everybody please stop by if you can. Please remember that tomorrow is a early release day.

[03:11:33] I do want to thank the communication strategy at Baldwin Elementary School where they take a sticker and they slap it right on the front of the kids when they come out, so when I pick up my kid half day tomorrow, perfect, I love it. Everybody should be doing that. Maybe not at the middle school, not high school.

[03:11:48] But anyway, so those two things, report cards are coming out also on Friday. So look out for those. And everybody enjoy spring break, which is next week already. That's it for me. - Mrs. Stevens. - Thank you.

[03:12:03] Spring break is right around the corner, although it's a time for celebration for many. For some of us, it's a very difficult time. It's a time when we are away from the people we know and we love and we care about. So please, if you're feeling stressed or unsure of yourself over spring break, reach out.

[03:12:19] There are people who can help you out. As you might know, Autism Acceptance Month is a very important month for me. I am an autistic, I'm a mom of autistic children, and I'm a wife of an autistic person. So I can tell you personally, when you've met one autistic person, you've met one autistic person.

[03:12:37] And I just want to share real quick about someone you may not know who has autism. That's Dan Aykroyd. Dan Aykroyd credits his autism with his coming up with the idea for Ghostbusters. I don't

think there's a person sitting in this room who's not familiar with and did not love and binge watch Ghostbusters That's Dan Ackroyd's creation and it was created through his autism and his special interests. Thank you. Thank you, Miss Stevens. Miss Brown. Thank you, Madam Chair Thank you staff and citizens who engaged with us tonight

[03:13:14] Engagement continues to be key to our change and progress I want to go ahead and congratulate once again the Mets Wrestling Champions and all the students who were recognized tonight for the fine arts, gifts, and talents. Congratulations to the Osborne Robotics team as well.

[03:13:33] And a big thank you to all the sponsors who were mentioned tonight who also support our students. In honor of Autism Month, I want to highlight parents of children with autism. I want you to know that you're doing great.

[03:13:49] you've been chosen to parent children who have such wonderful unique talents and creative spirits we are your support team and we are here to empower you every step of this journey so Manassas City Public Schools honors you and sees you in regards to the vote that was taken tonight I'm asking that we pause and suspend generalizations when examining the votes on this resolution I want everyone to remember that this board did not propose collective bargaining legislation without funding, nor does this board have the authority to levy taxes to offset the projected costs for collective bargaining. This board that I've been serving

[03:14:27] with for three months is invested in the business and heart of Manasseh City Public Schools. Some of these members, I cannot take credit for this, they've worked so hard for the past five years to improve compensation for all employees. They are behind the 29, almost 30 increase in average salaries. This reflects their collective clear priority to support and retain our educators. So tonight as teachers are hearing this I'm sending you a message and I hope you hear it. As the board we are fully committed to engagement, transparency and respect for all

[03:15:04] employees. I am encouraged by the steps we have taken to improve dialogue and transparency and I'm looking ahead our plan to implement the meet and confer process which again is a structured forum for ongoing meaningful communication with representatives from all employee groups this is not a replacement for bargaining but it is a step forward and how we can continue to engage and how we will we will continue to show you that we value you as a workforce so thank you everyone once again Thank You Miss Brown Vice Chair Spall yes I'll try to be brief but I just want to say you know I appreciate

[03:15:44] the fine arts and the robotics superintendent spotlights tonight, but one of the things that impressed me most about who we are as MCPS is the multiple times that we took the picture for wrestling because we try to recognize and honor all kids.

[03:16:01] So, you know, in that spirit, I attended my first academic meeting as a committee member, and I also want to thank the students of METS for their well-prepared and thoughtful remarks on dress code. You know, that's another example of who we are and how we are. we try to listen to the kids we try to care about stakeholders so you know I'm not sure how the message from tonight is going to be conveyed in the rip the big wide world but I'm very satisfied in who and how we are and I feel like we're going to be able to can't grow from this so that's all we we went to a couple we

[03:16:36] did a lot of stuff last week thank you thank you vice chair um I have a few things first I'd like to acknowledge the city leaders here tonight madam mayor Davis Younger councilman Smith Ralph Smith

earlier we had Miss Sonia Vasquez Luna and mr. Demeria commissioner of the revenue so thank you for being here and being a part of this and who and and Michelle Maldonado our delegate did I say Sonia Vasquez Luna okay all right all right congratulations to all our

[03:17:15] students and the staff honored here tonight and I wanted to do a shout out to all our assistant principals our AP's are awesome and we count on you thank you to the parents that are supporting our programs and continuing contributing in many ways we heard a little bit of that tonight with some of the presentations and superintendent spotlights thank you what thank you to everyone that participated in healthy discussion we received all your emails your calls and thank you for participating tonight being present tonight even if you didn't speak the board's actions here tonight reflect a commitment to balance the needs of our students and our staff with the funding

[03:17:55] issues we face it is a challenge to compete with neighboring districts that have more recess more resources than our little city but we can build off of the strength that we have thank you very much can I get a motion to adjourn second I have a motion by mrs. Stevens second by mrs. Brescia that the school Board meeting adjourned.

[03:18:20] Is there any discussion? All in favor? - Aye. - Any opposed? Motion carries 7-0, we are adjourned.



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