

Albemarle County forced to reconsider allowing school workers to collective bargain after more than 100 people descend on meeting
written by Newspark Team | February 24, 2023



Filadelfia Soto placed a single golden apple on the podium. It's an award she received last year for her dedication to serving the students she teaches and their families.

"This golden apple represents my commitment to do my best," she said as she raised the apple. "Unfortunately, the working conditions we as educators experience are not supporting the commitment this golden apple represents."

Soto was one of more than a hundred Albemarle County Public School workers and families who filled the county school building at Thursday night's meeting in support of the Albemarle Education Association's second submission of its collective bargaining proposal.

The meeting comes weeks after Charlottesville City Schools recently announced its support for a collective bargaining resolution with its workers. Some in the group have said that now is the time to apply even more pressure onto the county School Board.

More about local efforts to launch collective bargaining



Last August, the board rejected the education union's first proposal. Instead, the School Board created the Employee Voice and Action Committee to offer a space for workers to share their concerns with no formal bargaining power.

The union has not let up since. Thursday night's meeting agenda called for a public discussion for collective bargaining. A vote will be made at an undetermined later date.

More board members are now showing support for collective bargaining, but not all.

Board members Graham Paige, Katrina Callsen, Rebecca Berlin, Ellen Osburne and a student school board representative all expressed support to engage with the union.

Board members Judy Le and Callsen want further clarity on whether or not collective bargaining will impact bridging the achievement gap.

"The biggest concern for me is making sure our students are coming out of school with opportunities to grow," said Callsen.

Board member Kate Acuff stated her uncertainty about the process due to the lack of guidance from the original 2021 legislation. She claims to still support collective bargaining, but would rather wait to see Charlottesville, Richmond and Arlington school districts go through their proceedings before starting theirs.

For other members, there is no better time than now to get the ball rolling. Paige worries that workers who don't feel fulfilled with the county may take their talents over to City Schools.

"If we want to keep the best teachers we have in Albemarle County, we have to recognize that this is something we have to deal with," said Paige.

The session wrapped up with Callsen, who was newly appointed chair of the Board, announcing that the county School Board hired a lawyer to conduct negotiations. The Board hopes to have meetings between themselves and lawyers before next Thursday's meeting.