

Charlottesville School Board adopts funding request for 2018-2019
written by Newspark Team | February 15, 2018



The Charlottesville School Board on Thursday voted, 6-0, to adopt an \$83.7 million funding request for the 2018-2019 school year. School Board member Leah Puryear was absent.

The funding request would require a \$54 million appropriation from the City Council — a \$ million increase from the current fiscal year. As of Feb. 1, the city of Charlottesville's draft budget for fiscal 2019 includes just \$2 million in added funding for the school system.

About \$ million of the division's proposed spending increase would go toward a 4 percent average raise for teachers. An additional \$106,331 would increase the division's annual supplement for teachers with master's and doctoral degrees from \$2,116 to \$2,316.

"I think this budget does represent our commitment to attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers in our school division," Superintendent Rosa Atkins said.

The request includes \$120,280 for a new administrative position dedicated to planning for a specialized academy program within the school division. Another \$120,000 initiative would create a grant program to support teachers' innovative educational units and projects.

"This budget has programs that will help individual students to achieve their best, regardless of where they are [academically] when they enter our school division," Atkins said.

The School Board's request reserves \$358,145 for the division's budgetary fund balance, which is used to fund the costs of additional students; to respond to fiscal stress arising during the school year; and to pay for small capital projects. The division's current fund balance is \$267,851.

School Board member Amy Laufer said she hoped the school division would pursue the creation of a scholarship program that would pay graduating students' tuition to attend a certification program or an associate's degree program at Piedmont Virginia Community College.

Laufer said the "Piedmont Promise" program could be piloted with funds included in the School Board's request for fiscal 2019.

Atkins said division staff is researching the college promise programs of other Virginia school divisions. "They require a philanthropic effort, a community effort and a school division effort," Atkins said.

"We are going to ask the board, as you look at this budget, to also consider allowing us ... to set aside a portion of the year-end funds to allocate towards a college promise program," Atkins said. "A committee would be convened to look at protocol for distribution of that, and we'll use best practices from communities that already have this in place."

Charlottesville City Schools will present its funding request to the City Council on March 5.

In other school division news, the construction of a new track at Charlottesville High School has been scheduled to begin in March. The project has been delayed for a year.

The upgraded Curtis Elder Track and Field facility at CHS will expand the current track from six to eight lanes and add new bleachers and restrooms, along with other improvements needed to host track meets. Jamerson-Lewis Construction, of Lynchburg, will be paid \$2,048,000 to complete the project by this fall.

The city of Charlottesville originally allocated \$1,666,200 for the track project in its budget for the current fiscal year, and has spent \$100,000 on civil engineering and design work with the Timmons Group and Thrive Architecture.

No contractors submitted bids for the track project when it was first advertised in April. Another round of bids in the fall came in over the project's budget.

On Feb. 5, the City Council voted to appropriate an additional \$425,000 for the track project from the City's CIP contingency fund and its Schools Capital Projects Lump Sum account.

"The project was important enough that the City Council increased funding for it," said Tim Breitenbach, project manager for the city.

Curtis Elder, the CHS track's namesake, coached the Black Knights for 44 years and won seven state track and field championships.

"We think it is fitting to have a track that will reflect the legacy of Coach Elder," said School Board

Chairman Juandiego Wade. "This will bring track meets and championships back to our community."