

**CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**Community Budget Forum and Public Hearing**  
**March 21, 2024 at 6:00 PM**  
**CitySpace, 100 5<sup>th</sup> Street NE**

The Charlottesville City Council met on Thursday, March 21, 2024, to hold a Community Budget Forum and Public Hearing on the City Manager's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Budget development documents were made available on the City website at: <https://www.charlottesville.gov/169/Budget>.

Mayor Juandiego Wade called the meeting to order, and Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas called the roll, noting all members present: Mayor Juandiego Wade, Vice Mayor Brian Pinkston, and Councilors Natalie Oschrin, Michael Payne and Lloyd Snook.

City Manager Sam Sanders made opening statements summarizing the work session agenda and budget funding priorities: 1) Fairly compensating employees and recruiting the best in our market so this organization performs optimally for residents; 2) Investing in our Schools; 3) Affordable Housing; 4) Climate Action; 5) Transportation; and 6) Public Safety.

Mayor Wade opened the public hearing.

1. Shannon Flanigan, city resident, spoke in support of funding for Charlottesville Area Transit and the need for more reliable service.
2. Liz Emory, city resident and pastor representing IMPACT (Interfaith Movement Promoting Action by Congregations Together), spoke in support of more funding for Charlottesville Area Transit to bring six buses to operation, and the need for more reliable service.
3. Suzanne Bailey, city resident representing IMPACT, spoke in support of more funding for Charlottesville Area Transit and the need for more reliable service. She supported an increase in the real estate tax rate.
4. Josie Fishman, with the Green BACON Environmental Club at Charlottesville High School (CHS), spoke in support of more funding for Charlottesville Area Transit and requested funding for completion of the four-mile loop around Charlottesville High School as a budget priority.
5. Derek Bond, local restaurant owner asked about the proposed increase in meals tax and expressed concern about a correlation with less demand. He expressed concern about the real estate tax as related to business owners. Regarding the year-end surplus he stated that funds should go back to community members.
6. John Santoski, city resident, expressed understanding of the City Manager's proposal for tax increases to meet the priorities set by Council. He requested more funds for education and

using year-end surplus funds to send back to citizens and business owners.

7. Kevin Lynch, city resident, spoke against tax increases. He expressed that he did not think the issues with area transit were because of funding. He spoke about the real estate tax rate over time.
8. Emily Dreyfus, PHAR (Public Housing Association of Residents) and LAJC (Legal Aid Justice Center), shared a list of recommendations from the PHAR Intern team to improve quality of life for residents.
9. Matthew Gillikin, city resident and Livable Cville member, spoke in support of the proposed FY25 City Budget. He stated that because past budgets did not account for major projects, the City is making up for lost time in more recent budgets. He requested additional funding for sidewalks, addressing accessibility, and to support more bus drivers. He suggested finding more revenue sources and requiring UVA to pay through the PILOT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) program.
10. Sullivan McDowell, city resident and Government Affairs Coordinator for the Virginia Restaurant and Lodging Travel Association, spoke in opposition to proposed meals and lodging tax increases.
11. Lyla Castleman, member of the Green BACON Environmental Club at CHS, thanked Council for funding green spaces and requested additional funding to complete the four-mile greenway loop around CHS.
12. Amy Gardner, city resident, asked Council to reconsider the funding request from the School Board. She spoke in support of the Vibrant Community Fund process and stated that by setting so many priorities, Council has spread itself thin. She requested that Council hold off on funding the \$1 Million for the Office of Sustainability to add to the Schools budget.
13. Celia Debowe, member of the Green BACON Environmental Club at CHS, requested additional funding to complete the four-mile greenway loop around CHS.

With no additional speakers coming forward, Mayor Wade closed the public hearing.

Budget Director Krisy Hammill answered questions that arose at the previous City Council meeting and Misty Graves, Human Services Director, answered Council questions about the Pathways Program.

Council expressed a desire for staff to research and report on potential cost increases for refuse collection to offset subsidy costs. Transit Director Garland Williams clarified information about transit and buses that are out of service and shared that equipment for the buses is still with the manufacturer. He also answered questions about City-County revenue sharing for transit services. Council and staff engaged in discussion about a variety of budget funds and Chris Engel, Director of Economic Development answered questions about the Parking Enterprise Fund and the change

to a new parking management company April 1, 2024.

Council provided guidance to the City Manager to fund the City Schools budget up to \$7 Million in the FY25 budget contingent on State budget allocations, and considering provisions for obtaining a refund for any amount that Schools receive over \$9 Million total. Councilors provided feedback on proposed tax rates and generally agreed on increases of 2 cents for the real estate tax rate, and 1% each for meals and lodging tax rates. Council suggested various adjustments to the Vibrant Community Fund allocations and having a conversation with The BUCK Squad to reach an understanding of their operations and their request for funds through the Vibrant Community Fund.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council