

**MEETING MINUTES
CALLED JOINT LOCALITY MEETING OF ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS SCHOOL BOARD
MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Covington’s Council and staff attended a joint locality meeting with the Alleghany Highlands Public School Board and the Alleghany County Board of Supervisors for the presentation of the proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 school budget. The School Board outlined key financial challenges, including reduced state funding, declining enrollment, and rising personnel and operational costs, resulting in increased local funding requests from both the City and County. Council participated in discussion regarding the proposed budget and capital improvement needs; however, no formal action was taken.

JOINT LOCALITY SESSION – SCHOOL BUDGET PRESENTATION

The Council for the City of Covington attended a called joint locality meeting of the Alleghany Highlands Public School Board on Monday, March 30, 2026, at 6:30 PM in the Board Room of the Alleghany County Board of Supervisors at the Alleghany County Governmental Office Building, 9212 Winterberry Avenue, Covington, Virginia 24426.

The purpose of this meeting was to convene in joint session with the Alleghany Highlands Public School Board and the Alleghany County Board of Supervisors for the presentation, review, and discussion of the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026–2027 school budget requests and related information.

The following localities were in attendance: the Alleghany County Board of Supervisors, the Alleghany Highlands Public School Board, and the City of Covington Council and staff.

Mayor Raymond C. Hunter called the City of Covington Council to order at 6:30 PM and asked City Clerk Amber Berberette to call the roll. The following members of Council were present: Councilwoman Susan S. Crowder, Councilman David B. Goff, Councilwoman Susan S. Wolfe, and Mayor Raymond C. Hunter.

Also in attendance were City Attorney Mark Popovich and Finance Director David Bryant.

The Alleghany Highlands Public School Board presented its proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 budget.

School officials noted that the proposed budget is based on preliminary figures, as final state funding allocations have not yet been received. The presentation emphasized that no instructional programs were eliminated in order to balance the budget.

Key points of the presentation included:

- A reduction of approximately 30 positions through attrition and unfilled vacancies, not through layoffs.
- A projected decrease in funding due to changes in Local Composite Index (LCI) and a decline in Average Daily Membership (ADM).
- Total proposed budget of approximately \$47.8 million.
- Payroll and benefits accounting for the majority of expenditures (approximately 70–78% of the budget).
- Inclusion of a proposed 2% salary increase for employees.
- Rising health insurance costs, with noted increases impacting overall expenditures.

The School Board requested increased local funding contributions of approximately \$330,000 from the City of Covington and over \$900,000 from Alleghany County to support the proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 budget.

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The proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 school budget reflects increased local funding requests from both the City of Covington and Alleghany County, driven by reduced state funding, declining enrollment, and rising personnel and operational costs.

In addition to the operating budget, the School Board presented priority capital improvement needs, including:

- Roof replacement at Mountain View Elementary School.
- Sewer line repairs at Alleghany High School.
- Drainage improvements and athletic facility enhancements.
- Asbestos abatement projects.
- Additional infrastructure and accessibility improvements.

School officials noted that these capital requests are not included in the operating budget and would require separate consideration and funding.

Discussion occurred among members of the School Board, Board of Supervisors, and City Council regarding budget impacts, funding challenges, infrastructure needs, and long-term planning priorities.

Representatives from all three governing bodies engaged in discussion regarding:

- Budget pressures related to declining enrollment and state funding formulas.
- The increasing cost of employee benefits and operational expenses.
- The importance of maintaining educational programs and services.
- Capital improvement priorities and potential funding strategies.
- Continued collaboration between the localities and the School Board.

Members of the City of Covington Council participated in discussion during the joint session; however, no formal action was taken by Council.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the joint bodies, the meeting was adjourned by the Alleghany County Board of Supervisors, the Alleghany Highlands Public School Board, and the City of Covington Council.

PUBLIC RECORD / AUDIO NOTE:

The City of Covington did not record audio of this meeting. This joint locality meeting was hosted by the Alleghany Highlands Public School Board, which maintains the official record, including audio.

A recording is available via The Virginian Review YouTube coverage:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/xXD1i57SdE0?si=ecn7cow7xLppM1Pp>


RAYMOND C. HUNTER, MAYOR

ATTEST.


RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:
AMBER N. BERBERETTE, CITY CLERK