

Mandy Townes:

This is not a normal monthly meeting, and you will all notice that the usual committee reports and celebrations of green are not on the agenda. This is a special meeting that I had called as a chair, because I have been hearing concerns from stakeholders across the system, and we need to meet as a board to listen to and address these concerns. This means that we're going to be hearing an update from our finance team, and then the board will be moving into executive session. We do not use executive sessions lightly. This is where the board moves so that we can discuss matters that require confidentiality, such as personnel matters, legal matters, and contractual matters.

We will be coming back into open session afterwards, and if there are any action items, we will take a vote in public session. So we do not vote in an executive session, only in public session. Before we get started, I'd like to make a few remarks, and then we will, get on into the numerous stakeholders that we have for public comments. I'd just like to address a few things. First off, I would like to thank my board members for showing up here, on a Monday night, which is not a normal night in a month when we do not normally meet, because I know that you you have taken your time out to be here, and it's important that we are here.

I wanna remind everyone else that's on this call that doesn't normally attend our calls that this board is comprised of volunteers, most of whom are parents and former parents and supreme students. We all joined the board for different reasons, but I can assure you that every member of this board wants to see Green not just succeed, but thrive. We all care about Green's students and teachers and staff members. We celebrate Green's victories, and we mourn when there are failures. We have heard and read your concerns, your complaints, and your frustrations, and we even share in some of them.

It would be disingenuous for me to sit here and tell you that everything is great right now, and we're obviously going through some tough storms. It would also be disingenuous for me to sit here and claim that the board is going to fix everything tonight because that's simply not possible. We are not employees of the school. We do not get paid to serve on this board. We do not benefit from serving on this board.

We are also not the daily boots on the grounds folks in our schools. I can say that I've actually gotten messages from people asking me what happened to this teacher or what sport is happening tonight in the gym, and I I can tell you that I don't necessarily know because that's not really the board's role. There's a lot of misconceptions about the role of the board. We do not hire fire people. We don't handle student discipline matters, and we do not select school's curriculum. That's the rule of school administrators, school leaders, the executive director, teachers, and staff. The board governs by setting and adjusting policies and procedures, but it doesn't mean that we are matched to stakeholders' feedback or concerns. We do listen to you and we do read your emails. We may not directly respond to emails, but we do often pass your thoughts along to the leaders in the school who are on the ground and are able to affect the daily operations. Board members as a standard practice are discouraged from engaging 1 on 1 and answering questions. It's not because we don't support. That's that's not what this is. It's more that we cannot foster a school culture where jumping the chain of command or accountability is the norm. If a parent writes an email and a board member steps in to bypass the teacher's recommendation or a school leader's policy, it erodes trust up and down the chain. This chain of accountability exists for a reason, and the board should be the final and rare step, not the starting point.

Secondly, a single board member should not speak unless you guys understood that they could be speaking for the board. And in doing that, without having the opportunity for the board to all confer, the single board member could be stripping the other campuses' elected stakeholders their agency. We can't have that because we have to come together as a board to make sure that whatever policies are being done for 1 campus, they are also going to affect the other campuses. You may notice that we have a slogan around the school that says green for ball and girl for green, and that's not just a clever little slogan. It does mean that we are all tied together. We are not 1 individual school, but 7 individual schools that are all part of a system. They all have a unique culture. They all have unique school leaders. They all have unique challenges. The board is here to try to look at the entire system as a whole and not necessarily focused on 1 campus or 1 set of issues, but in all of them.

We do try very hard. We try very hard to listen and to help where we can, but please understand that the the first start for effecting change in this school is at the teacher level and then at the school leader level and then at the administrative level and then at the board level because that is what the chain is. I just wanted to to give that little bit of overview because I've had a lot of people ask me what our role is and what we do. I feel like sometimes people don't understand because we're we're not the same as, a private school. We're not the same as your your big public school district down the street.

We we are accountable. We are elected by you. At the end of the day, you cast your vote as a stakeholder just like I, as a stakeholder, cast my vote, and we all listening. And I do appreciate everyone for showing up here tonight. So with that said, I am going to try to look at this list of, public speakers.

So I have emailed the public speakers who emailed me before the 3 o'clock deadline, And, I have a list of 11 or 12 of them right here. I'm going to give the same, it's the same language I give with any public speaker, whether it's this meeting or 4 meetings ago or 5 meetings from me. And, basically, the joint public contact I wanna address this. Our agenda typically limits us to 30 minutes for public comments. And never before have we had an issue where we wouldn't be able to get our public comments in for 30 minutes.

We may have that issue tonight because we have so many people that will have to speak. I am not inclined to cut people off, but I am willing to make the point that this meeting is for the board. It is a public meeting. We do wanna hear what you have to say, but we can't sit and and listen to 2 hours of public comments and then go into a 2 hour meeting. You'll never get anything accomplished that way.

So that is the reason why we have our, 30 minute limit that we put. I think we can get these public comments done in 30 I'm gonna do my best because like I say, I really don't want to have to cut people off. But we do have some rules. So we, we welcome public comments. We welcome stakeholder feedback.

We do put these rules in place though because we need everything to be respectful and timely. Public speakers are given 3 minutes to speak, and they are not allowed to cede their time to any other speaker. The board is not going to respond to public speakers, and, the speaker is not allowed to ask the board board members questions and expect an answer, collectively or individually. The board does not permit speakers to reveal information regarding confidential matters such as legal matters, student discipline matters, or personnel matters. Those matters are, a matter of confidentiality, and and we can't allow that to be breached in our public meeting.

Those things should really be taken up with administration directly because we don't handle personnel or student discipline matters. The board does not it will not. It doesn't but will not tolerate hate speech or any kind of defamatory speech towards any green student, any teacher, any staff member, or any administrator. And if a speaker does that, then they will void the remainder of their time, and I, as the board chair, have the right to end the speaker's time at any time if they violate those board rules above rules. Sorry.

It's a tongue twister. I would also like to add in there, you know, please, keep it respectful to my fellow board members. We we've had some some pretty nasty, feedback recently, and, I would just ask that whatever is said be said in a respectful manner. And the same way that we teach our children to be respectful, we would expect ourselves to be respectful. So with that said, I'm going to call your name, and I'm gonna hopefully be able to find you in this list and unmute you if you can't unmute yourself.

Everyone else, I ask that you please stay muted. And, so the first 1 is Kristen Livingston.

Good evening. My name is, and I'm the parent of an eighth grader who's been part of the Green system since elementary school. Over the years, our family has valued so many things about Green, strong teachers, meaningful friendships, supportive staff. We've also been aware of challenges with communication and we've accepted those. But over the past year, these communication challenges have become significantly more concerning, particularly when it comes to transparency and financial stability.

So, I recognize that the system is navigating some ongoing legal matters and cannot comment on those issues and those can't be discussed publicly. However, these events understandably raise questions among parents about leadership and decision making. Many parents expect clear and more proactive communication this year. And instead, we've received less. For an extended period, board meetings have been held virtually.

And that limits meaningful parent engagement. During this time, the minutes of the board meetings have been fairly brief with the majority noting that committees had no reports or no votes were taken. Under this environment, parents weren't informed of the financial challenges that resulted in staff reductions across campuses. Annual report and publicly available financial information, which really emphasized enrollment growth and highlighted items like a 5.5% teacher pay increase. So when the official reports present a picture of stability, families are seeing staff reductions, issues, supply limitation, there's really a lot of uncertainty about the full financial condition.

Parents have also heard reports about class families struggling to access basic supplies like paper, temporary suspension of employer retirement matches, disruptions with third party contractors, ongoing issues about outfitters. And so while each of these issues may have explanations individually, when you take them together and you combine it with limited communication, they contribute to this growing concern. And so when the communication is limited or it's delayed or it's unclear, it naturally undermines the trust that parents and staff and teachers are having. So I know we can't ask questions of you, but I'd like to relay questions that I think parents are seeking answers to, and we would expect to be forthcoming. And those are, first, what are the current financial condition of the school system?

Particularly for the Greenville campuses, are they financially stable, and should families anticipate further changes? 2, when is the next independent external financial audit schedule? What firm is gonna conduct it, and how will the findings be made available? And then lastly, what concrete steps is the board taking to improve transparency and communication? At this point, in closing, confidence among us really strained to the point that people have thrown around the idea of confidence.

And so we're asking respectfully but directly for factual answers to those questions.

Thank you. Okay. Our next speaker will be April Smith. Oh, wow.

Mandy, could you mute your microphone when the people are speaking? That's echoing really bad. Sorry to jump in.

Sure. Sorry.

Hi.

Yeah. So my name is April. I'm a parent at Green Charter Middle School. And, before I begin, like Kristen, I wanna clarify that I understand no questions will be answered tonight, and I'm here just really to voice concerns for all of us. So I'm really here to speak on behalf of Green Charter Families who really appreciate the extraordinary efforts our teachers and staff do every day.

They're really the heart that makes our school special, and it's really made an impact in our children's lives. So let me do that for let me give you 3 examples. Like, at the Simpsonville campus, we've got Patty Barker. She teaches all day, and then on Wednesday, she gives her time in the afternoon to coach speech and debate. And then on Saturdays, she gives up for Saturdays to be there at tournaments from 7:30 in the morning till 5 o'clock in the afternoon because she loves the kids.

And then at our campus at the middle school, I'm gonna recognize miss Young. She's my daughter's English teacher. My daughter's always hated to read. She's never loved it. But now my daughter has stolen my Kindle just so that they can she can read the next book in the series that they just started even though they're not gonna read it.

And then we've got teachers like miss Jamieson at our school. She's a math teacher. My daughter's always hated math, but she's encouraged her and other students to really challenge themselves to do higher level math and then even offers to help them in the mornings if they struggle even though she's not even their teacher anymore. So I say all that because these are just a couple of examples of teachers that go above and beyond for our kids. Like, our campus is wonderful.

We've got great staff and teachers. But with that, we feel a deep deep loss, and we're pretty sad over the loss of the individuals that really made us happy to be green. And as parents, we're extremely concerned that the current climate of insecurity, whether it's due to staffing reduction, financial concern, basic lack of supplies that teachers need to teach our students. Yeah. The that'll make teachers either leave, or we won't be able to get decent teachers to replace who leaves.

So, and then when we're told mid enrollment that staff is being cut back due to financial concerns, and then we realize the school lacks basic supplies, Really, all we can do is have our imagination to fill in the blanks, and then the resulting picture is just serious instability. So, frankly, the rising insecurity is deeply impacting the future of our student body. Many of the families I know are actively considering withdrawing their students midyear or over the summer if teachers leave or concerns aren't addressed. And these are really the parents and families that show up, volunteer, and make a difference at the school. So, so if there's really no visible positive change and are in a way of, you know, stabilizing our staff and having necessary resources, I really think that enrollment's gonna suffer.

So, anyway, thank you for your time.

Mandy Townes: Make sure I'm unmuted. Thank you, miss Smith. Mhmm. Okay. Our next speaker is, sister Chris Watts.

You mute.

There we go.

Good evening, members of the community and the Green Charter Board. Like Mandy said, my name is Chris Watts. I was a, Green employee for 6 years. I was, 1 of the first teachers of the year at the high school.

Tonight, though, I'm not here in that capacity. I'm here in a in a much more important capacity. I'm a very proud father of 2 green charter school students at the Simpsonville campus. My son in 4th grade, and my daughter in kindergarten. So I wanna begin by first expressing genuine gratitude to principal Warner, the teachers agreeing across all the campuses, the staff at all the campuses.

I know you work tirelessly every day to create a place where children feel supported, known, and able to grow. However, based on public publicly available information, I am deeply concerned, like many of the parents here, about decisions that appear to be affecting the school's ability to function effectively. In our home, my wife and I teach our children that actions have consequences. When you make harmful choices or even honest mistakes, you take ownership and work to correct them. That standard should apply to everyone regardless of their position in life.

Tonight, I want to focus on 2 observable impacts. 1st, in instructional consistency. Teachers and administrators are clearly doing everything within their power, but stability becomes impossible when staff are stretched so thin that teachers and by many public accounts, even students, are cleaning buildings, covering gaps, absorbing extra duties on top of already demanding days. This pulls time and energy away from learning and affects children both academically and emotionally. And then, of course, second as, it's already been brought up, staffing shortages. There are these are not mere inconveniences. They they're very harmful. When any school experiences significant layoffs, substitute shortages, gaps in required special education services, and inadequate operational staffing, the consequences fall on the children and those dedicated staff trying to serve them. When conditions like these arise, accountability and transparency become a nonnegotiable. Families deserve clear communication about how these decisions are made and how taxpayer dollars are being utilized effectively.

For the holiday season are the teachers, the staff, and the students who show up every day working harder and harder to toward the school's success. Thank you so much for your time. Have a merry Christmas.

Mandy Townes:

Thank you, mister Watts. Hey. My next speaker is, Emily Whittam. I hope I said that right. Emily, did you hear me?

Did that Emily Whittam, you're the next speaker? Yes. You you said Patrick. Oh. 0.

Yes. I can hear you.

I can hear you. Okay. Sorry. I wasn't sure if I was muted or unmuted, but Okay. I'll mute you. Alright. Thanks. Alright.

So my name is Emily Whittam, and I've been teaching at Green. This is my 7th year. This school has absolutely been my favorite place to work at in all of my 21 years of my teaching career. I'm not here to spread rumors or gossip, but there is a lot of that floating around in our schools and within the community. Instead, I want to address and share concerns with changes that I've seen this year. So facts, not rumors, that are quite unsettling. Number 1, this year, we've all noticed obvious financial cuts being made, many of which trickled down into our classrooms.

Some of these cuts include rationed copy paper. We no longer have a set grade level fund like in past years and even stipends previously given to teachers for extracurricular activities or for taking on leadership roles like grade level chair seem to be a thing of the past. I'm grateful that we have an amazing PTO at our school that helps fulfill teachers' grants as a way to counterbalance these obvious spending phrases. Number 2, field trips are not being paid in a timely manner. This year, the day before our planned field trip, we were informed that we might not be going after all because the invoice was never paid even though all money had been collected a month prior.

When these kinds of errors happen, it makes us and our school look bad. Unfortunately, my grade level isn't the only 1 that's happened to this year. Number 3, administration and teacher cuts midyear. Unlike bigger school districts, we've never had contracts here at Green Charter, and as long as we were doing our jobs, I felt safe. However, with recent layoffs happening with 0 forewarning to staff, This has created much tension in our school, and everyone is left wondering who's next.

Number 4, we received a notice on December 5th from Tom Cronin that they will suspend the employer portion of our retirement contributions for the remainder of the fiscal year. We are already in a difficult place recruiting teachers by not offering state retirement. We have always been able to boast that we offer match 3% or 7% for retirement, but with this sudden cut, what new teachers will trust our 403 b retirement plan? And lastly, number 5, disappearance of custodial staff. By Wednesday, we were told to bag up our trash and put it in the hallway. No explanation, just directions. By Thursday morning, my classroom had not been swept. There was trash on the floors, and I still had snack crumbs scattered all around my classroom. Our classrooms must be getting cleaned especially during this heightened flu season. Now that I have shared my concerns from a teacher perspective, I want you to know that a lack of transparency has caused rumors to flow, and our reputation is now tarnished.

Parents and teachers outside of the green network are talking about and asking questions on social media regarding the downfall of green. Perhaps my biggest concern at this point is how will we be able to recruit teachers. They have now heard of sudden firings due to budget cuts, retirement contributions being cut, and financial setbacks, none of which is enticing enough to pull experienced teachers in our direction. I speak not only for myself but for also many teachers at Green who feel the same way. We need transparency because no 1 is feeling secure right now. And in closing, an apology can go a long way, but an apology also admits some kind of shortcoming or mistake. I haven't heard any apologies from those making these tough decisions, so that might be a good place to start. Thank you.

Mandy Townes:

Alright. Thank you, miss Williams. Next is, Sarah Erb. Sarah, I think you're on the call.

Hello. Hi. My name is Sarah. I fear I'm going to, echo a lot of what you've heard, but just from my own perspective. I'm a parent at Green.

I've been a very proud supporter of Miss Fits and the entire staff at Green Pelham. I am so pleased with the work that our teachers and our staff do, which is why we've returned year after year. And it's also why I wanna use my time to raise concerns that I feel will directly and negatively impact our students, our teacher, and ultimately, the green environment, and as this would have said, the reputation at large. Green has a history of not being transparent, a theme I'm hearing tonight, and I would like the board to know that we depend on you to hold central office and leadership accountable to all financial and personnel decisions. Through public documents, publicly available documents, we see the way that headquarters is well paid and well cared for and has continued to even grow and expand and create new professional positions. But my concern is that the teachers, staff, and basic supplies like paper and staples and pencils, among other things, are not being met in the name of this growth at the top.

We've seen layoffs happening in positions our school very much depend on for its basic function in the name of these cutbacks, and yet I wonder if anyone at central offices had their benefits cut, their hours, their staff, or their salaries have been cut. We're being asked as parents, as stakeholders, to pay unusually inflated fees for field trips, extra school supplies, and now even annual school fees on top of any extracurricular fees or athletic fees that keep coming our way from the green leadership, yet there is no transparency or paper trail to show where these funds are actually going. I have been concerned and digging for the last 12 months. Myself and numerous families have been asking for a detailed budget of our campuses and yet we are provided with a few Excel rows that include things like other materials as a budget line item. This does not offer much confidence.

As a stakeholder, I wanna know that whoever is responsible for the seeming alleged financial hardships we're facing is held accountable and potentially removed. Then punishment of those decisions should not fall to families, teachers, or the staff of green systems, but those who ultimately make the decisions about our finances and who give their approval for our budgets. I want you to know that justice and integrity and transparency need to prevail from the top down and it needs to begin now. Thank you for your time.

Mandy Townes: Thank you, miss Herb. The next person that I have is Alicia Laird. I don't see her on the list, so we will come back to her if we have time. The person after that will be, Kaylin Remington.

Hi.

I wanted to focus mostly about our, about academics and the fact that that seems to be something that our school is no longer focusing on, as we don't have a continuity in curriculum across, all of our campuses. I actually don't even know what the curriculum is at Simpson the Simpsonville campus, and there's no way to check that on the website because, it doesn't really function for us as enrolled, parents. I also wanted to point out the fact that there is no school performance committee on the board, no academic committee that is consistently monitoring and reporting, how the schools are doing, how the students are doing, how the teachers are doing as far as growth, and development. And I also wanted to point out that we don't even know Okay. We're supposed to be a STEM school, but we don't even know, Make sure you have a how

many people how many faculty members are certified, if we have any in our schools. Currently, our the Simpsonville campus, I don't know of any elementary, STEM initiatives happening or programs or extracurricular activities. There's no focus on technology instruction. Our GT teacher, sometimes is sometimes used to substitute teach in other classes, which makes changes the schedules and makes our kid, either totally miss GT and have to make it up later. We aren't implementing reading initiatives that are have been promised in our read to succeed program, and

I

I we also are lacking in resources as everyone has pointed out. And worse is we are head office is hurting our instructors, our teachers, and, that is the absolute only reason we are at Green is are the teachers. Because currently, with a new school that has very little resources and a lot of the resources parents the the early parents, the original parents are having to pay for them,

It's

I'm already afraid we've already lost an important IEP instructor, because of what has been done, and I wanna see I wanna see them out, basically. So if we could return to a focus on academics and how we actually support that, although I don't know what good that's gonna do now. But so, yes, ditto everybody else. Amazing job. Anyone who wants to start a school, let me know. Thank you.

Mandy Townes:

Thank you, miss Remington. Sorry, everyone. COVID hit our house last week. So, the next speaker that I have is, Catherine Paulus. We have 220 people here now.

Hey, Caitlin. Yes. Can you hear me?

Sorry, Caitlin. Yeah. No worries.

So I am absolutely going to just repeat basically what everybody else has said because, I I wanna say first of all that I adore our school. I love our teachers. I love our staff. I love everything that we have going on. They are amazing.

So all of the issues that I have heard has been with funding cuts, janitors either being fired or walked out, teachers retirement cuts, the substitutes are no longer allowed to be able to sub for the teachers. And so, the teachers have to find their subs split among the other classes or they have to go to their related arts teachers. And in my opinion, that just absolutely lowers morale and it just kinda wonders the teachers are gonna be wondering while they're trying to educate our children if they're the next on the chopping block, which cannot be great for morale and ultimately can't be great for our children's education. There's no special education services as they completely cut it. And the first, they cut all the substitutes, and then all of the, the single person that's left there that's handling all of the IEPs, which were over 40 IEPs within the school. She has ultimately been let go or put in a position where she has had to quit, which is awful. And then just ultimately, there's just been no communication to the parents. All of this has been communicated to me via parents who have been volunteering in the school daily or through a parent chat that we have. I mean, there's just been no communication, which has been ultimately frustrating because I work a full time job. I'm not able to be there all the time, but I have a vested interest in my child's education and I know that this is just completely going to affect her. It's been very frustrating. That I mean, I just I don't know why there's been funding cuts. I don't know why there's been no communication. I don't know why the support system for our children has been just pulled out from under them and it's just been, like, no transparency. It's been very frustrating.

Like, I I love the education from the teachers that my my kid has been getting, but it's I I feel like it's just gonna fail. There's just no support system for them and they just feel like they have no security. I I've experienced that in a preschool previously for 1 of my child my children and I just I would hate to see that happen to this school because so far, everything that we've had has been great and it's it's frustrating to see this go downhill so quickly. And if there's anything that we as parents can do, we just need open communication ultimately to be able to support them. So I I just feel like that's that's been the most frustrating part about all of this.

So I just wanna reiterate everything that everybody has said. They have been so well spoken and everything. I think the main point of what we're getting is, like, why are we getting these funding cuts? And we just would really appreciate open communication about everything that's happening. Thank you.

Mandy Townes:

Thank you, miss Hollis. I have, Melissa I think we messed this up. Broski Broski? Hi. Sorry. I couldn't do the microphone. That's fine.

Yes. It's Broski. And I just wanna say that, pretty much it's a little bit of the same with the transparency.

It's it's getting old really quick. It's really frustrating. I have 3 kids in, green schools. I have 1 in high school and 2 in Simpsonville, in the 3rd grade. And, my big problem right now is, with the IEPs, honestly. My 2 boys have IEPs, and, I am getting 0 communication, 0 transparency, 0 help, and I'm just I'm really frustrated. I mean, IEPs have timelines. They have, deadlines. Uh-uh.

It's unacceptable is really what it is. It's unacceptable. And my son is already behind. 1 of my sons I have twins, but 1 had leukemia, and he missed, almost 2 years of school. He's in remission, and he's great, and, you know, and he's amazing, but he does have some learning disabilities.

And what hurts the most right now is that the special ed teacher that is at Simpsonville right now, she's leaving. He learned how to read. I watched him read a book because of her, and she's leaving. Friday will be her last day. She taught my son how to read because she told me to buy a chapter book for dyslexic children, and now she's leaving because we're not gonna meet her at her retirement.

That's absurd. That's absurd. I don't even have any words for that. Honestly, we have to do better. Really.

So now what about the other 47 kids that have IEPs? They're all gonna lose her. Midyear. Midyear, they're gonna lose this teacher who's incredible. It's not like it's like a family.

You know? Green is kinda like a family. You can't just fire people like it's nothing. You know? Last year was so different.

Last year was so incredible. The principal, man, she's amazing. You know? The administration, they're amazing. We saw them all the time.

Talks to them all the time. Now they are so busy. They're so overwhelmed. Nobody sees them. It's crazy.

It's crazy. You can't overwork people. You can't it's not right. It's it's terrible. Terrible. It's very sad.

Mandy Townes:

Thank you for your comments. I'm afraid your time is up. Thank you, though. Thank you. I have 2 more speakers, and I wanna get through these last 2, and then we will move on to the rest of our meeting.

That way, everyone will have that had signed up will have opportunity. The next 1 is Lauren Rapaport.

Okay. Can y'all hear me? Yes. Okay. Cool.

People seem to have a lot of questions, and I am just requesting that the executive leadership post an open q and a meeting for all stakeholders in January of next year. Thank you very much.

Mandy Townes:

Okay. Thank you, miss Rapoport. Sorry. I'm just taking a lot of notes, so give me a second.

Alright.

And our last, speaker is, Joanna Appell.

Hi. So I'm a parent of 3 students at the Simpsonville campus. This is our 2nd year as a Green Charter family, so we're we're still fairly new. But my family feels like we've finally found our home here at Green Charter.

We absolutely love the community. And, you know, I I really, everyone's pretty much said the words that I wanna say, and so, you know, for the risk of just being redundancy, I really just wanna hopefully wrap this up so we can move on. My my goal tonight is to inform that the school remains a sustainable, safe, and supportive environment for our children and their amazing teachers and staff that we've had the opportunity to learn and grow with. My statement is going to be brief because we're still learning our way around the green community, but I feel compelled to speak up on behalf of my children, their teachers, staff, and friends. I would like to express my deep concern regarding the current allocation of the school's financial resources.

We're witnessing a troubling shift where significant funds appear. And I I say appear because as previous speakers have said, we're left to surmise and postulate in the absence of information and this lack of transparency. So the funds appear to be directed toward administrative legal expenses while our campuses are simultaneously losing essential support staff. The impact of these financial decisions is visible in our children's daily lives. We've seen a reduction in custodial staff cafeteria support to where our principal is is serving you know, working in the cafeteria to help keep that going and also with our substitute teachers.

It's reached a point where my own middle schooler shared with me that students are feeling the need to take on custodial responsibilities to keep their learning environment clean. So while I believe in teaching children responsibility, students shouldn't be fulfilling operational gaps caused by financial strain. When the budget prioritizes extensive legal cost over the hiring of essential staff and the retention of Greene's incredible teachers, the mission of the school is compromised. So I'm I'm asking Greene Charter leadership to realign their priorities. We ask you that you stop prioritizing the defense of administrative liabilities and obscure agendas and start prioritizing the teachers standing in front of our children and the support staff who keep the buildings running.

Please put the students and the financial health of the school first so that families like mine can continue to call Green Charter home with confidence. We adore Green, and we can't imagine having to rehome our children yet again should things continue to progress in the direction that things seem to be heading. So thank you for your time.

Mandy Townes:

Thank you, Visapel. Okay. I think that is everyone who had signed up by the deadline. So to the letter next. Thank you all. I wanted sorry. Not that many years ago, I was a parent sitting exactly where you are speaking up at a board meeting. When I joined this board, I had no idea what I was getting into. I'm still a parent speaking at a board meeting, but it's a little bit different situation. But I know what it's like what it takes.

And not just parent. We had staff members step up tonight too, and, I want you to know how much I appreciate you doing this, how much I appreciate all of you taking your time to do this. I know that every bit of it comes from the heart, and every bit of it is because you want the best for your children and for everyone else's children and for the staff and the teachers. And, I hope you know that I also feel the same way, and I'm speaking for the rest of the board here, but I think they would agree that we we all want to see green succeed. We all want to see our students and our staff members and our teachers succeed.

So thank you all for speaking up tonight, and, and thank you all for for being here. Now I'm gonna get to the the normal kind of boring part of the meeting. And, so we will go to someone who I know is on the list because I just saw him. And, well, he was on here. Chance, are you on here?

Chance from Copper?

Chance Cooper:

Yes. I'm on here.

Mandy Townes:

Alright. Chance, I know this is a big audience, and, but the board is here, and, we would like for you to please give us, your brief financial overview, to the board and explain where things are standing for us right now, please, if you don't mind.

Chance Cooper:

Sure. Absolutely. Good evening, everyone. My name is Chance Massey, and I'm a, CPA partner at Copper Advisors. And, we are we're assisting the school now, for with some high level, financial analysis, and we're gonna talk about we're gonna first start with our fiscal 2025 results, and then we'll move into where fiscal 2026 is sitting, some some positives and also some challenges that the school is facing at the moment.

First, I'd like to say that part of my role with the schools that I work with is to analyze from a bond covenant perspective what the requirements are for your school to meet in order to be in compliance with your bond. Your the 2021 bond that the school has is at a great interest rate. It actually when I analyze this school as an overall network, and I look at the debt payment for principal and interest, Even inclusive of the new bond that was issued, it's around 10% or less of gross revenue, and I've seen some schools as high as 16 or 18%. So you will find that the benchmark typically can be around 15, but, it's a great 2021 bond. And the debt payments the school has, are about 10% of where we anticipate revenue being, which is which is a good benchmark.

I say all that to say, part of my role in the call that I have tomorrow with the investors, part of my role is to analyze the school's activity to ensure we're in line with 2 covenants that the school has to adhere to. 1 being a debt service coverage ratio, which means we essentially have to do a certain level of activity in order to meet that covenant and also, some days cash on hand, which is available unrestricted cash, which we're gonna talk about in just a second. For 2025, for the fiscal 2025 audit, the school had a 1.24 debt service coverage ratio. What does that mean? That means that we were in excess of the 1.1, but not by much.

1.24 met the 1.1. We also the school also had 51 days cash on hand. The requirement there is 45. So it doesn't take you know, if you look at fiscal 2024 and then analyze that versus this last fiscal year that we had just ended in June of 2025, the 1 major differences between the 2 years is around the available unrestricted cash. And a large part of the challenge that this school is facing in terms of the cash is that upon opening since the Simpsonville location, typically, when schools are gonna if schools are gonna if a network is gonna open a new school, typically, there's a bond issuance.

And when there's a bond issuance, that's gonna have different sources and uses. Part of the sources would be to purchase the property itself. Part of it would be for improvements and that type of thing. There was no bond issued to get Simpsonville up and running. And when it was discovered that there was an HVAC concern that would need to be addressed prior to that campus opening, this school took it on to fund that, and, that call to get Simpsonville up and running and operational was, there were over 4,000,000 there there was over \$4,000,000 in capital outlay that needed to be expended to get Simpsonville up and running.

I visited that school. I actually had a a 1 day session that I met with some administrators and just hoping to to everyone to get an understanding of enrollment and that type of thing. But, that is largely what has caused a bit of a cash flow crunch that the school is experiencing right now. To alleviate that, we're gonna talk about our we're gonna move into fiscal 26. So for fiscal 25, we met both of our numbers.

Wasn't great, but, certainly not as good as fiscal 2024, but we we met the numbers. The large cap the large cash that was necessary to fund the capital out, like, to get Simpsonville up and running and is what has really restricted, the school's available unrestricted cash. Now if anybody was look to look at the balance sheet or look at the audit that's out there, you'll see 2 forms of cash. 1 is restricted. The school cannot expend because it's cash that's held in that service reserve and that type of thing, and the other is available unrestricted cash.

Opening of the Simpsonville office did put a a significant damper on the operational cash. So when we started fiscal 2026, there's 2 things also there's another thing also around cash just so we can talk real briefly about how charter schools and other schools get funded. You know, green as a network is going is experiencing an increase in enrollment this fiscal year. However, schools get funded in July August based on their prior 135 day count numbers. So for any schools that have, and this is all this is something that I'm I'm there's a proposal that I have out there where I'm I'm, you know, certainly advocating for additional funding for charter schools, for, timing of resources and potential funding of growth.

But if you think about it, Green has had to fund that growth from, the growth in enrollment based on a 1 35 day count, which has caused a little bit more, pressure on our cash reserves. So we started this fiscal year. There are a number of counts that are that that dictate when funding occurs for a a fiscal year for our charter school. 1 being a 5 day, 1 being a 45, and 1 being a 30 1 35 day. Our 5 day count for fiscal 26 was 200,923.

That was about 230 higher than the prior fiscal year. So we have a growth in enrollment, and that is that that is a positive. Certainly is a positive. The challenge that we are facing is that when we projected and we and when when the budget was done, it was done off enrollment of 3,110. So the difference in the 3,110, the 2923, that by the time our 45 day count numbers came out, some cuts were gonna be necessary for us to meet our 1.1 debt service coverage ratio that we talked about earlier.

And so that's why, you know, the school has has, initiated some cuts and accounts payable has has ballooned a bit as we're navigating the cash flow crunch. But on Wednesday of this week, there will be a, there's a lot of credit that's gonna be executed that will allow us to clear some significant outstanding balances. And, again, you know, we're we're projecting that the school will need to utilize that line of credit, to be able to meet today's cash on hand, but we're developing we're currently developing a plan, projection, and forecast to restore fund balance, to restore available unrestricted cash on hand, and to make it to where this line of credit that we're putting in place isn't necessary into the future. So that those things are being done. We're analyzing that.

And, you know, also based on the projected revenue, and after the the cuts were initiated, we are anticipating the school will navigate fiscal 26 meeting their debt service coverage ratio, and, also, we'll be able to meet their days cash on hand covenant, as well while utilizing a portion of the line of credit. So, it's not guaranteed at the moment. However, we are showing that, we should be able to meet those covenants, post cuts. And cuts, again, cuts are are never easy. These are, you know, significant decisions that the the school had to make.

But some cuts were necessary because of the enrollment miss in order for the school to meet their debt service coverage ratio for this fiscal year. So I hope that's been, hope at a high level that's been informative, and I, sure we're gonna have many a few questions as we move to executive session.

Mandy Townes:

Alright. Thank you, Chance. The 1 thing the 1 question that I have, while we are here is, there have been a lot of rumors online and, you know, a lot of, talk. There are people that say that Greene's getting ready to close the doors.

Chance Cooper:

No.

Mandy Townes:

Can you please reassure people that we are not closing the doors in the next few weeks?

Chance Cooper:

Green is is not gonna close the doors, December or January. Again, there were several other large charter networks that, obtain line of credits that the school is obtaining right now to make sure that we can, you know, clear some of these large accounts payable items. However, no. There's no plan.

And, based on the projections that we're doing right now, we are showing that Green is going to, restore their fund balance and restore their available cash reserves within the next, you know, 12 to 18 months. The 1 thing that I would like to say, there is a this can be posted on the boards, but there there there are surveys out there and there's also, some communication that that parents and teachers and everyone I would urge you to analyze, some of these reports that are coming out and some of the you know, talk to send some emails to the legislators and to others that, that are analyzing because I'm working hard to protect to protect revenue and charter school funding in South Carolina. And, I think that with your voice as well, we can get the, we can maybe do some things that will help, increase the funding for charter schools, certainly relative to some of the public school districts.

Right. Because we get a significantly less amount per pupil than a traditional public school even though we are a public charter school.

That is correct. The school, based on the fiscal 2025 numbers I've routed, it's it's about \$12,900, inclusive of local, state, and federal is the revenue that charter schools get. Just as an example, you know, when you analyze this report, and this report can be posted on the school's website for anyone to analyze. But, you know, I believe Greenville County is up over 16,000 per pupil inclusive of federal, state, and local. Charleston County School District's above 20,000.

So, we're we're in challenging territory, but it's something that we, you know, together can work together, can plan better for the future. We're gonna start some high level, budgeting analysis in January. And this year, there will be a, you know, significant effort towards projecting, budgeting. I kinda have a figure an idea of where revenue may land, per pupil next year, but, you know, we'll be very conservative in our estimates for enrollment and, do a much better job.

Mandy Townes:

Thank you, Chance. Sure. Okay. With that, that concludes the first part of our meeting where we are in public. We are now going to move into executive session.