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NEWS RELEASE

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Community Advisory Committee Recommends Name for New Charter School: Rose Hill Community School

(ALBEMARLE COUNTY, Virginia) – The Charter School Community Advisory Committee is recommending to Albemarle County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, that the new charter school be named for the historic neighborhood in which it is located. The committee chose “Rose Hill Community School” as its preferred name for the charter school that will now house students in grades six through 12.

“There was a great deal of enthusiasm among community representatives on our advisory committee for Rose Hill Community School,” said Stephanie Passman, the charter school’s Head Teacher and committee facilitator. “It’s a name that not only honors our historical location but the school’s leadership role in educating black students during a period of time when educational opportunities were not equal for all students. Having community as part of our name also will be a constant celebration of an important core value, which is the quality of our relationships among students, staff and families, and with our external partners,” she said.

The school was built in 1959. Of the 26 black students who were the first to attend integrated public schools in Albemarle County, 16 originally attended Rose Hill. Several well-known black teachers taught at the school, including Asalie Preston, for whom both the Minor-Preston Scholarship Fund and nearby Preston Avenue are named.

The charter school’s students, parents, employees, and broader community members participated in two opinion surveys to nominate names for the new school. The most recent survey narrowed the list of names under consideration to 10. Rose Hill Community School was the second most popular choice, selected by just over 40 percent of respondents. Murray Community School was suggested by slightly more than half of those people who responded to the survey. None of the other eight names attracted more than 21 percent support. Respondents were able to list their top three choices.

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The new school was formed from the merger of the division's former charter high school, Murray, and the former charter middle school, the Community Public Charter School. While Murray Community School would have retained the former high school's name, Passman said committee members were concerned about two schools in the division continuing to share the Murray name. Virginia L. Murray is the name of an elementary school in the division built in 1960.

When the charter high school was founded in 1988, it first was housed in Murray elementary school. When those high school students relocated to their present location, they kept the Murray name.

"Our committee heard from parents that having two different schools in the division with the same name has been confusing," Passman said. "Parents cited misunderstandings when it came to making logistical arrangements and in communications. Members of our committee said they too had experienced these frustrations," she noted.

Passman also said advisory committee members preferred a name that was unique to the charter school's identity and culture.

The new school's principal, Chad Ratliff, said perhaps the advisory committee's most important contribution was the process itself. "We had the chance to bring everyone together on a very meaningful decision for our students, parents and staff," said Ratliff. "When naming a school truly is a collaborative process that requires some deep thinking about your school's mission and its values, it has long-term benefits. That's especially true in our case, where relationships are such a strong strategic asset in the growth and development of our students," he said.

The next step in approving the new school name is a recommendation that will come from Dr. Haas to the School Board next month. The Board will make the final decision on the school's name, which is expected prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year.

"I want to thank all the members of the advisory committee and those who participated in this process through the opinion surveys and public meetings, and in the discussions that took place this past year among students, parents and staff. The opportunity to name your own school is an empowering one, and I am proud of how our charter school community turned this into such a thoughtful and unifying experience for all. It's in keeping with the values and purposes upon which our charter schools were founded," Haas said.

The advisory committee, which began meeting last month, included parents of students in the school, school staff, students, parents from feeder schools, and members of the community who do not have children enrolled in the school. Information on the committee's meetings and resources can be found at on our School Naming Review website at <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/school-naming-review/Pages/Murray-High.aspx>.

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