



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
www.rva.gov/index.php/office-city-clerk

Minutes

Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, March 4, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Chair
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Committee Member
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert – Councilmember (late arrival, early departure)

Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
Pamela Nichols, Senior Assistant City Clerk
M. Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Dominique J. Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Absent

The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair

Call to Order

Chair Stephanie Lynch called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m., and presided.

Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, as most recently amended by Ordinance No. 2020-232, adopted December 14, 2020, announced the meeting would be held through electronic communication means. Assistant City Clerk Thaxton stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on February 25, 2021, and through Legistar on the city website in accordance with usual practice. She also stated members of the public were encouraged to provide comments in writing prior to the meeting and all comments received prior to 10:00 a.m., on Thursday, March 4, 2021, were provided to committee members. Ms. Thaxton indicated that members of the public who signed up to speak and provide comment would be called to speak at the appropriate time.

Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton provided citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of Thursday, February 4, 2021, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

Pamela Nichols, Senior Assistant City Clerk, reviewed board applications for consideration by the committee.

Member Katherine Jordan moved to forward the following board appointment application to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved:

<u>Board Name</u>	<u>Criteria for Appointment</u>	<u>Applicant Name</u>
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Board (5 members)	City Resident (1 vacancy)	Joshua Briere 2nd District Resident

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Presentations

There were no presentations.

Papers for Consideration

There were no papers for consideration.

Discussion Items

Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Update

Jason Kamras, Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools, provided an overview of RPS' projected graduation rates for current academic year seniors. Mr. Kamras also provided a breakdown of the RPS initiatives for student enrollment retention and the personalized support programs aimed at encouraging students who have recently dropped out to return to school. Mr. Kamras further highlighted various school programs that offer alternative pathways to graduation for students in need of additional learning support.

Chair Stephanie Lynch inquired if it is possible to reduce this year's performance task requirements to assist more students reach the credit completion requirement for spring 2021 graduation by the March 15, 2021 deadline.

Mr. Kamras advised that the required performance tasks have been simplified but not reduced in the required completion percentages. Mr. Kamras stated that any students who fail to meet the required credit completion before the March 15, 2021 deadline, will automatically be enrolled in a summer credit recovery program with the option to graduate during the summer school session.

Chair Lynch requested that information on credit requirement changes be distributed to the RPS ambassadors and families.

Dr. Jannette DuHart, RPS Bilingual and EL Coordinator, Academic Programs and Student Supports, provided an overview of RPS' Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP) and the models used to

service participating students.

Lily Mirjahangiri, RPS Newcomer Academy Coordinator, Academic Programs and Student Supports, provided an overview of the Newcomer Academy program that delivers specialized support for newly arriving English language learners in middle and high school. Ms. Mirjahangiri also provided the committee with information on the successful outcomes and metrics of the Newcomer Academy participants.

Jennifer D. Blackwell, RPS English Learner Success Specialist, Academic Programs and Student Supports, provided the committee with information on the successful outcomes of the ¡Con Ganas! (With Determination!) program. Ms. Blackwell underscored that the wrap-around supportive services offered through ¡Con Ganas! have led to increased academic performance and graduation rates for English learning participants.

Chair Lynch expressed gratitude to Superintendent Kamras and the LIEP program coordinators for providing a system of academic care for students in need. Chair Lynch inquired if there are expansion plans to make ¡Con Ganas! and Newcomer Academy permanent programs. Ms. Lynch also inquired, if made permanent, how many more staff members the programs would need to operate at optimal capacity.

Dr. DuHart stated that there are plans for expanding the Newcomer Academy and ¡Con Ganas! to service elementary school students in addition to middle and high school students. Dr. DuHart also stated that further analysis of the student/teacher ratio would be needed in order to address potential staffing needs. Dr. DuHart further stated that ¡Con Ganas! and Newcomer Academy are striving to tier the student/teacher ratio based on an individual student's language proficiency level and need.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert joined the meeting at 2:51 p.m.

Cheryl Burke, Chair of the Richmond Public School Board, stated that RPS will research the potential utilization of tier based student/teacher ratio staffing for the entire Richmond school system.

Chair Lynch requested that the appropriate staff coordinate with Chair Burke to determine if the jurisdiction of student/teacher ratio requirement is a state matter or if it can be evaluated at a local level. Chair Lynch inquired if Newcomer Academy and ¡Con Ganas! offer childcare services to participants.

Dr. DuHart stated that childcare is a service that is in the works and would make the programs more accessible to students with children when RPS returns to in-person learning.

Mr. Kamras provided information on the spring 2021 reopening plan for the 800 most at need elementary students who will return to in-person learning. Mr. Kamras shared the goal of offering in-person learning to all students in the fall, while also still keeping the option of a virtual learning platform. Superintendent Kamras also shared information on plans for an extended school year program that would offer an additional seven weeks of lessons for students in need of academic support.

Chair Lynch inquired about the academic eligibility for the extended school year program and if the program is offered across all grades.

Superintendent Kamras advised that the extended school year is offered to students of all grades. Mr. Kamras expanded that eligibility for the extended school year is based on reading skills for primary school students and grades received in core classes for secondary school students.

A copy of all material provided has been filed.

Update on Richmond Public School Board

Cheryl Burke, Chair of the Richmond Public School Board, provided the committee with an update on the Richmond Public School Board's focus and the progress made toward the reopening plan. School Board Chair Burke shared that there has been an increase in the number of teachers receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Ms. Burke also provided an overview of the actions taken by the Vacant School Properties

Committee and the status of the various vacant school properties across the city.

Chair Stephanie Lynch asked for an update on the presently vacant Altria building potentially being used by J. Sargeant Reynolds as a career educational center. Chair Lynch advised that the Education and Human Services Standing Committee will hold special joint task force meetings along with other City Council standing committees to begin deliberating potential use of the vacant school properties.

Superintendent Jason Kamras advised that there are ongoing conversations between Richmond Public Schools and J. Sargeant Reynolds on the potential shared use of the Altria building as a dual enrollment experience for students.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Staff Report

Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff, provided the committee with the March staff report.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert departed the meeting at 3:24 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.