



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, February 4, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair (late arrival)
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

Call to Order

Chair Stephanie Lynch called the meeting to order at 2:00 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 January 29, 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, February 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.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson joined the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections or amendments to the minutes of the Thursday, December 3, 2020 and Thursday, January 7, 2021 committee meetings, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Public Comment

Chair Stephanie Lynch moved to continue the following board appointment application to March 4, 2021 Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting, 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)	Dr. Brian Maiden 7th District Resident

Chair Stephanie Lynch 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>
Social Services Advisory Board (9 members)	City Resident (1 vacancy)	Anna Mickles Koehle 3rd 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

Proposed Survey Instrument for a Community Engagement Survey

Chair Stephanie Lynch led the committee in a discussion to determine the best methods to promote community engagement. Chair Lynch emphasized the importance of aligning policy goals to the perspective and needs of city residents. Chair Lynch stated that a survey may serve as the most accessible instrument for reaching community members.

Member Katherine Jordan expressed support for a survey instrument and suggested the use of a Quick Response Code (QR Code) imbedded on laminated flyers to be posted throughout the city.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson shared the challenges faced from previous attempts at community engagement and highlighted the successful efforts of the Office of Community Wealth Building in engaging a diverse population of city residents. Vice Chair Robertson stated that the committee should discuss and prioritize key objectives to be included within the potential survey so that the community can weigh in on the goals.

Chair Lynch expressed the importance of having a list of prioritized goals for guidance during the upcoming budget season.

Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Update

Jason Kamras, Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools, provided an overview of RPS' proposed budget. Mr. Kamras provided a breakdown of the RPS proposed budget with local, state and CARES Act federal funding. Mr. Kamras also highlighted various school program proposals that are built into the budget

to provide academic and emotional support for students when returning to in-person learning.

Chair Stephanie Lynch inquired if funding for childcare partnerships with local nonprofits is included in the proposed RPS budget to ensure that students and parents continue to receive the added support while under a virtual learning setting. Chair Lynch also asked if RPS plans to hire more support and tutoring staff to assist students beyond the pandemic.

Mr. Kamras confirmed that funding for facilitated learning centers is included in the proposed budget to maintain the programs through the spring of 2021. Mr. Kamras also confirmed that there are plans to hire support staff to mitigate any learning loss during the virtual school year and expressed hope to continue the use of support staff as a permanent method to assist students moving forward. Mr. Kamras highlighted that RPS has three academic years to spend the CARES Act funding and has made plans to stagger the spending across the allotted time frame.

Member Katherine Jordan expressed support for the proposed year-round school plan and offered to assist with communicating the new school year plan with RPS families.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson inquired how RPS plans to measure the impact of academic setbacks due to the pandemic. Vice Chair Robertson asked for clarification of the percentage of funding RPS is requesting from the city and discussed how the reduction in city revenue over the past year may impact budget projections. Ms. Robertson also inquired how the CARES Act funding is distributed to RPS and expressed the importance for RPS to provide a breakdown of the programs funded by the one-time payment that may need continued funding in the future.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert joined the meeting at 2:48 p.m.

Mr. Kamras provided a further breakdown of the RPS budget requests from the city and how plans to provide instructors with raises will help with employment retention. Mr. Kamras stated that the federal CARES Act funding is distributed to RPS through the state.

Chair Lynch requested that Mr. Kamras share information on the current RPS programs that help mitigate learning loss during the pandemic and beyond.

Mr. Kamras shared information on the various challenges faced by RPS families and instructors during the pandemic. Mr. Kamras expressed a strong push for returning to in person learning to minimize and begin correcting any learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair Lynch expressed the importance for in person learning for students and the need to prioritize vaccinating instructors.

Vice Chair Robertson inquired as to what is needed to prioritize vaccinating RPS employees given that the vaccine is in short supply.

Mr. Kamras shared that the Virginia Department of Health and the Richmond Health District have been excellent partners in assisting with vaccinating RPS employees when vaccines become available. Mr. Kamras stated that educating those citizens who are hesitant about receiving the vaccine is imperative.

Vice Chair Robertson stated that the city and RPS should partner on an aggressive educational campaign regarding the safety of the vaccine.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert departed the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Chair Lynch requested data points on RPS graduation rates and student retention progress.

Mr. Kamras provided an overview of the metrics of graduation rates, student retention and various Dream4RPS support programs in place to improve graduation rates overtime.

Chair Lynch stated that the effectiveness of the various Dream4RPS programs is commendable and should be further explored by the committee at a future meeting.

Member Jordan asked if the metrics of the graduation rates, student retention and Dream4RPS program are relatively new.

Mr. Kamras stated that the aforementioned metrics are from November 2020.

Vice Chair Robertson stated that the graduation rates, student retention and Dream4RPS programs success should be widely distributed to the community.

Chair Lynch stated that the Education and Human Services Standing Committee can serve as a collaborative venue to highlight RPS' achievements and opportunities for improvement.

A copy of the 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 RPS strategic plan during the pandemic. School Board Chair Burke requested a partnership with vaccinating multigenerational families so that parents feel safe with students returning to school.

Chair Stephanie Lynch requested a list of vacant school properties and any plans for repurposing the structures. Chair Lynch reiterated the need for collaborative efforts in vaccinating RPS teachers and students

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson suggested that the committee explore collaborating with the Richmond Health District to potentially set up vaccination clinics in schools. Vice Chair Robertson also suggested a partnership with the Department of Economic Development to better leverage the valued assets of school buildings in a manner that effectively increases the city's capital wealth.

Staff Report

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

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.