



City of Richmond

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

Minutes

Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, December 9, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Chair (*late arrival*)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Committee Member

Samson Anderson, Council Budget Analyst
Debra Bowles, Assistant City Clerk
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
M. Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Vice Chair Ellen Robinson called the meeting to order at 2:18 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Announcement and Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Vice Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Debra Bowles provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the minutes of the Thursday, November 18, 2021, committee meeting, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies for consideration.

Presentation(s)

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson confirmed that the Health Equity Fund Update presentation would be scheduled for a later date.

Paper(s) for Consideration

There were no papers for consideration.

Discussion Item(s)

Richmond Public Schools Update

Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Jason Kamras stated that the Richmond City School Board (RCSB) adopted a collective bargaining resolution at their December 6, 2021 meeting and that RPS is the first school division in Virginia to adopt a bargaining resolution. Mr. Kamras also stated that the resolution allows for three (3) bargaining units to be formed for teachers, support staff and administrators over the next several months, and that it should be in place by spring to aide in administering new contracts for the upcoming school year.

Mr. Kamras informed the committee that the school board is continuing their review of design proposals for the new George Wythe High School. Mr. Kamras also stated that RPS is continuing to receive survey feedback regarding the extended calendar options for the 22/23 school year.

Superintendent Kamras provided information regarding the RPS budget and informed committee members that Virginia's governor requested a 10.25% pay increase for teachers over the next two (2) years; however, he noted that could change based upon a new governor taking office in January 2022. Mr. Kamras also noted that if the 10.25% increase is approved, city government would need to fund approximately \$15,000,000 for each of the next two (2) budget cycles and approximately \$7,000,000 of additional funding that would be necessary to satisfy raises and continue operations within RPS. Mr. Kamras further stated that government stimulus funds cannot be used to support previously mentioned budget items. Mr. Kamras stated that student priority items are early literacy, mental health and improvement of the graduation rate.

Mr. Kamras discussed the Local Composite Index (LCI), stating that the LCI determines how much funding a locality can offer towards education. Mr. Kamras explained that the LCI is based on property values, which have increased within Richmond; however, he stated that the LCI does not take into account the concentrated poverty level in the city and that the cost for educating students within the concentrated poverty level is much greater than the other students.

Chair Stephanie Lynch arrived at 2:27 p.m. and was seated.

Chair Stephanie Lynch inquired on the need of \$22,000,000 in additional funding.

Superintendent Kamras stated that the \$22,000,000 would cover the city's cost of raises, a cost of living (COLA) increase and increased health care costs, and other required payments that will keep current operations going. Mr. Kamras stressed that the amount would not cover anything new within the school division.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson stated that city taxpayers need to be educated on a full understanding of the education budget process. Ms. Robertson also stated that a conversation to discuss the RPS budget would be beneficial before RPS budget requests are before the full Council.

Member Katherine Jordan inquired on the latest action steps RPS is taking to address gun violence within the community.

Mr. Kamras praised the Richmond Police Department (RPD) stating that they are partners with RPS specifically regarding gun violence.

Richmond City School Board Update

Richmond City School Board (RCSB) Chair Cheryl Burke offered a brief summarization of the day-to-day activities for RPS. Ms. Burke stated that Comcast has provided 500 computers to community centers for senior citizens and students, and that Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) provided a shopping trip for several elementary students. Ms. Burke also stated that Franklin Military Academy and Armstrong High School are collecting books to send to Ghana and that the last day of school before the winter holiday is Friday, December 17th.

Chair Stephanie Lynch stated that a formal invitation is forthcoming to RCSB members for them to attend the December 13th City Council meeting regarding the transfer of funds for the construction of the new George Wythe High School.

2022 Human Services Priorities

Chair Stephanie Lynch requested priorities of committee members regarding human services within the city.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson stated that a review of priorities that were not funded in previous budgets should be reviewed in addition to administration's revenue projections. Ms. Robertson also stated that current budget items that are already in process, in addition to strategic goals, should also be reviewed.

Member Katherine Jordan stated that a full understanding of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and how they can be used needs to be provided.

Chair Lynch stated local choice subsidies for public housing, raises for and the underfunding of the Department of Social Services work force, and the deployment of emergency family crisis funds, are her priorities.

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Human Services Reginald Gordon stated that organization is the key factor to the integration of services and systems of the Human Services department. DCAO Gordon also stated that all external partners that provide homelessness services need to notify each other of their service abilities to provide equity, a drop in the poverty rate and to offer stabilization.

Director for Housing and Community Development Sherrill Hampton stated that two workshops were held regarding ARPA funds, providing the general guidelines of the ARPA regulations and the ARPA application process. Ms. Hampton stated that the entire application packet would be released on Friday, December 10, 2021. Ms. Hampton also stated that all funds must be proposed for ARPA projects within the city by December 31, 2021, and that funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024, with all funds expended and project activities closed by September 30, 2026.

Director Hampton informed the committee that the low income tax credits annual cycle deadline is March 10, 2022. Ms. Hampton stated that the city is in desperate need of affordable housing units and explained the requirements for local housing voucher programs.

Staff Report

Council Budget Analyst Samson Anderson stated that there was no staff report due to no legislation being considered by the committee.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:42 p.m.