



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes - Draft Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, March 10, 2022

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Committee Member

Debra Bowles, Assistant City Clerk
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
M. Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney
Candice Reid, City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Stephanie Lynch called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Announcement and Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the 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.

Chair Stephanie Lynch amended the agenda by allowing Richmond School Board Chair, Dr. Shonda Harris-Muhammed to address the committee first virtually.

Richmond School Board Chair Dr. Shonda Harris-Muhammed provided the committee with updates regarding Richmond School Board. Dr. Harris-Muhammed stated that the Richmond Public Schools (RPS) budget was submitted on March 1, 2022. Chair Harris-Muhammed stated further that RPS has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), and on Thursday, April 14, 2022, at 1:00 p.m., there will be a quarterly meeting with VDOE in preparation to move RPS forward academically.

Chair Stephanie Lynch thanked Dr. Harris Muhammed for her comments, but stated that a more detailed, itemized budget is needed for Council to determine funding of the RPS budget.

Public Comment Period

Theresa Kennedy, representing Richmond Together, stated that the organization has been disappointed with the Richmond Public Schools (RPS) budget process. Ms. Kennedy also stated that she represents Kids First RPS, and that Kids First RPS questions if all students are learning and thriving. Ms. Kennedy stated further that the school administration, School Board, the Mayor's administration and City Council need to work together to develop a plan that meets the needs of students and families, in and outside of school.

Rev. Robin D. Mines, representing Richmond Together, shared concerns regarding the RPS budget, stating that the RPS budget process has not been publicly available. Rev. Mines also stated that a summary update was provided by the School Board; however, there were no specific line items or funding sources available. Rev. Mines stated further that a detailed, itemized budget for Council's review should be provided by RPS.

Presentation(s)

Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Requested Budget Versus Funded Budget

Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Jason Kamras addressed comments of the School Board Chair Dr. Shonda Harris-Muhammed and stated that the budget letter provided to city administration was parallel to the budget request of Fiscal Year 2021-2022 (FY22). Mr. Kamras also stated that an itemized budget cannot be provided until the undefined \$6,000,000.00 operating budget cuts, and the assignment of new spending funds have been considered. Mr. Kamras further clarified that the operating budget resolution approved on February 28, 2022 by the School Board did not include the finalized reduction cuts for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (FY23).

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson thanked Superintendent Kamras for the overview of the RPS budget. Ms. Robertson also stated that Council entrusts the operation of RPS to the School Board and school administration to make decisions on the curriculum, number of teachers and staffing. Ms. Robertson also stated that it is the duty of Council to provide for the funding of the RPS budget.

Superintendent Kamras also provided the committee with an update regarding William Fox Elementary School, which burned on February 11, 2022, stating that RPS has been working with the Fox community to determine the appropriate plan of action for students. Mr. Kamras stated that Fox Elementary students would begin classes at First Baptist Church, on Monument Avenue, beginning Monday, March 21, 2022. Superintendent Kamras further stated that additional facilities had been considered and analyzed; however, it was determined that First Baptist Church met student needs. Mr. Kamras also stated the church cannot accommodate the extended day program or transportation based upon the programs that are already in place at the church.

Superintendent Kamras commented on Clark Springs Elementary School, stating school renovation should be completed by April 19th. Mr. Kamras also stated that Fox Elementary students have an option to remain at First Baptist Church through the remainder of the school year or complete the school year at Clark Springs Elementary School; however, all students will begin the 2022-2023 school year at Clark Springs Elementary School.

Mr. Kamras commented that the William Fox Elementary School structure has been deemed unsafe and is currently under the purview of the Richmond Fire Department (RFD). Superintendent Kamras stated that the recommendation is to stabilize and renovate the current structure which will be considered at the School Board meeting of Monday, March 21, 2022.

Member Katherine Jordan expressed appreciation for the update on William Fox Elementary School and stated that the stabilization needs to be completed soon.

Director of Planning and Development Review Kevin Vonck spoke virtually regarding William Fox Elementary School. Mr. Vonck reiterated that the building structure is still under control of RFD and a preliminary engineering assessment of the structure has been completed. Mr. Vonck also stated that RFD needs to complete its investigation before releasing the structure to the control of the building commissioner. Mr. Vonck further stated that the School Board has the engineering report and can begin to prepare for stabilizing the structure, and the building commissioner has committed to moving quickly regarding the needed permits.

Superintendent Kamras stated that the city has been very supportive of RPS during this process. Mr. Kamras also stated that preserving the façade of the structure is significant and could allow qualification of tax credits that could equate to 25% of the total renovation cost.

A copy of the following presentations has been filed.

[CD.2022.109](#) Richmond Public Schools Presentations - March 10, 2022

Discussion Item(s)

Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (PRCF) Update

PRCF Director Chris Frelke provided information regarding updates for PRCF and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds of \$78,000,000.00. Mr. Frelke reviewed the PRCF System Wide Master Plan, which includes information regarding land acquisition to make parks within a ten minute walk of city residents, the transfer and renovation of the Calhoun Center, and the construction of the Southside Community Center. Mr. Frelke also stated that

the Luck's Field and T.B. Smith Community Center's kickoff was held on Saturday, March 5, 2022. Director Frelke stated further that the North Bank Tower will be replaced and the Reedy Creek Bridge will be constructed with receipt of the second ARPA tranche dollars in July 2022. Mr. Frelke completed the update by stating that the city is working to purchase property to complete the James River Branch Trail.

Mr. Frelke responded to questions and concerns of committee members stating that door-to-door contact is important regarding community needs. Mr. Frelke also stated that programming is very important to communities, and the PRCF is willing to work with partners that are already doing the work but need a permanent space for engagement. Mr. Frelke further stated that PRCF has a translator on site for citizens that do not speak English.

Recreation Services Managers Priscilla Wright and Raqiyah Waajid provided an overview of the PRCF 2022 summer programs. Ms. Wright and Ms. Waajid informed the committee that scholarships are available for paid programs; however, there will be free programs available at ten community center locations. They also informed the committee that teens can apply for summer job opportunities online through the Office of Community Wealth Building.

A copy of the following reports have been filed.

[CD.2022.110](#) Parks, Recreations and Community Facilities (PRCF) Presentations

Paper(s) for Consideration

[RES. 2022-R014](#) To express the Council's support, should the citizens of Richmond approve a second referendum for the development and operation of a resort casino, for appropriating one-third of the revenues received as a result of the development and operation of such resort casino to a reserve fund for the purpose of supplanting any decrease in funds received by the School Board of the City of Richmond as a result of adjustments to the Commonwealth of Virginia's Composite Index of Local Ability to Pay.

Patrons: Ms. Lynch and Ms. Lambert

Chair Stephanie Lynch introduced RES. 2022-R014 stating that the intention of the proposed resolution is to offset the loss of funding to Richmond Public Schools (RPS) by the state based upon the new formula of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Composite Index of Local Ability to Pay.

The committee discussed the city's economic development plan and the status of the General Assembly's action on the state budget as it relates to a casino in the city.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to continue RES. 2022-R014 within the Education and Human Services Standing Committee, which failed due to the lack of a second.

Member Katherine Jordan moved to forward RES. 2022-R014 to Council with no recommendation, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Board Vacancies

None

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections or amendments to the meeting minutes of Thursday February 10, 2022, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2022.095](#) February 10, 2022 Education and Human Services Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Staff Report

[CD.2022.106](#) Education and Human Services Staff Report - March 10, 2022

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.