



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Mayor Deanna R. Reed
Vice-Mayor Richard A. Baugh
Council Member Ted Byrd
Council Member George Hirschmann
Council Member Christopher B. Jones

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

5:30 PM

Council Chambers

School Board/City Council Joint Meeting

Rollcall

- Present:** 5 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Richard Baugh, Council Member Ted Byrd, Council Member Christopher B. Jones and Council Member George Hirschmann
- Also Present:** 5 - City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Deputy City Manager Ande Banks, City Clerk Erica Kann, City Attorney Chris Brown and Police Chief Stephen Monticelli

Also present: Andrew Kohen, Chair; Deb Fitzgerald, Vice Chair; Brent Holsinger, School Board Member; Lauren Penrod, School Board Member; Kaylene Seigle, School Board Member; Nick Swayne, Vice Chair; and, Dr. Scott Kizner, Superintendent.

2. Moment of Silence

Chairman Kohen called for a moment of silence.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Regular Items

4.a. Discussion on Harrisonburg City Schools' tentative building program, budget issues, and school system highlights

Chairman Kohen stated that he hoped this meeting would be the beginning of several meetings because the two bodies have responsibilities of maintenance of the school system in the city of Harrisonburg. Chairman Kohen invited Superintendent Kizner to present some facts about the school system.

Superintendent Kizner stated the real reason the bodies are meeting is because of our students. Superintendent Kizner reviewed the three division wide goals of the school system which are equity, literacy, and social and mental development. Superintendent Kizner stated in the past year the school system has gained 279 K-12 students or a 4.09% increase. Superintendent Kizner noted that 35 Pre-K students are being educated across the city collaboratively. Superintendent Kizner stated the elementary schools continue to expand their dual language programs;

schools are fully accredited, and are offering more programs for parent involvement. Superintendent Kizner highlighted the partnership with JMU with the schools. Superintendent Kizner noted over the past six years we have increased almost 100% the number of students taking algebra or geometry at the middle school level and the passing rate of math SOL's exceeds over 90%. Superintendent Kizner stated the middle school is focusing on reading and writing and is optimistic that SOL scores will increase and the middle schools will be fully accredited. Superintendent Kizner stated the high school remains fully accredited; the on-time graduation rate is close to 90% and more students are graduating with more advance diplomas than a standard diploma. Superintendent Kizner noted more students are now graduating with a career technical education or industry certification. Superintendent Kizner stated that niche publishing as the second best standout high school in Virginia that is making a difference in their community, specifically for preparing students for college readiness. Superintendent Kizner noted that the dropout rate is significantly below the state level for African Americans, Hispanics, and students with disabilities, English learners and students identified as economically disadvantaged. Superintendent Kizner stated we have a lot to be proud of in Harrisonburg, but knows that we have students struggling both socially and emotionally. Superintendent Kizner thanked council for their support and by working together we will design what is best for our students and community.

Mayor Reed thanked Superintendent Kizner and stated tonight will be the beginning of discussions. Council Member Jones asked if City Manager Hodgen had anything to add.

City Manager Hodgen stated he feels everyone recognizes there is a space issue at the current high school. City Manager Hodgen stated from a city management's view it comes down to when it can occur and how much it will cost. City Manager Hodgen stated the preliminary numbers provided are the biggest numbers the city has addressed in a single bond issue. City Manager Hodgen presented both bodies information regarding the numbers and the impact they would cause on the city. City Manager Hodgen clarified that these numbers are no indication of the minimum or maximum that he is recommending. City Manager Hodgen noted that a lot has been added to the tax rate over the last few years and there have been infrastructure needs that the city has undertaken, because if they hadn't been addressed it would have been an even greater undertaking.

Chairman Kohen stated during the election both council and school board members saw the overcrowding issue as a top issue. Chairman Kohen stated growth is a good thing, but can be painful. Chairman Kohen stated he understands that the School Board has a more narrow service objective than City Council does.

School Board Member Swayne stated the School Board's approach to reviewing the issue is to consider the possible solutions, ask are the costs for those solutions, and can the School Board get council's support. School Board Member Swayne stated the annex made the most sense for flexibility, but the architect

informed the School Board that they are always challenged with trying to fix annex problems. School Board Member Swayne stated he was surprised that it didn't cost that much more for an addition versus an annex. School Board Member Swayne stated it is a permanent decision for the community and we would become a 2,000 student high school and it is different than everyone around us. School Board Member Swayne noted that when people are looking for a place to settle, they will note that their kid's chance of being recognized would decrease by approximately 50% than schools surrounding the city. School Board Member Swayne stated he does not want to make a \$45M mistake to solve an \$80-90M problem because that is what an annex is going to do. School Board Member Swayne noted the high school is 400 over capacity. School Board Member Swayne stated if a decision is made tonight, it is still going to be four years until it would open. School Board Member Swayne stated the bottom line is we need another school and he understands that it is going to make the tax rate to increase, which we still would be below other localities in tax rate. School Board Member Swayne stated he understands building another school would make the city go over its policy, but the kids don't get to go through high school a second time. School Board Member Swayne stated he doesn't feel that it is right to put 2,000 students together when half of the population doesn't speak English.

Council Member Jones noted that our city doesn't look like the places that surround us and doesn't want to mirror our neighbors. Council Member Jones stated he could agree with majority of what School Board Member Swayne said except for the size comparison.

School Board Member Penrod stated with her experience if you buy cheap, you buy twice. School Board Member Penrod stated it hurts to pay those extra pennies now but the city will be saving in the end.

School Board Member Holsinger stated he sees a lot of advantages with a bigger high school in terms of what we can offer in terms of programming and curriculum. School Board Member Holsinger noted that the projected increase of students is going to reach 2,150 in five years, which would be the capacity of the proposed addition and/or annex by the time it would open. School Board Member Holsinger stated he doesn't see the city's growth slowing down and feels that it would be a mistake to add on to the existing building.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald noted that the build out level for the city is 75,000. Vice Chair Fitzgerald stated a new high school for a city of 75,000 is probably the more sensible financial decision that we make in both the long and short run.

Council Member Jones asked out of those 75,000 how many are projected to be college students, because when we say 50,000 now approximately 20,000 are college students. Council Member Jones stated his principal duty would be to make a motion on what land we would be moving forward with, when, and where. Council member Jones stated as we continue to have discussions the price will continue to increase. Council member Jones stated we aren't getting anywhere if a

location of a new school isn't decided. Council member Jones noted the other obstacle is operating cost and we don't want to build something that is full or something that would have to be closed.

Superintendent Kizner stated the School Board had asked if there were any other projected numbers available, which he noted numbers will be shared after he reviews the report received by another nationally known company that reviews economic indicators. Superintendent Kizner stated the School Board authorized to contract and release a request for proposal for an architect to do a land study which can be shared at a future meeting.

Chair Kohen stated the sooner we decide something the sooner the benefits are received and the cost will increase the longer it takes to decide.

Vice-Mayor Baugh stated the goal is to find the sweet spot and the sooner is more challenging than later.

School Board Holsinger stated even after we secure the funding the completion date is still several years out. School Board Holsinger stated his understanding of the overcrowding is that it is manageable, but at some point there is going to be a tipping point. School Board Holsinger stated there is the expense side, the debt side, and there are real human beings involved. School Board Holsinger stated he feels that we aren't going to promote our schools if the headlines continue to be about the overcrowding issue instead of the amazing stuff that is happening within.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald stated "if" we decide to build a new high school it is a huge decision the bigger question is how do we do that. Vice Chair Fitzgerald stated we have the time between when we make the decision to when the funds are available to figure out how to do this in the best way to suit our community.

Mayor Reed noted we aren't trying to drag this out and we know something needs to happen, but a good decision needs to be made.

Council Member Jones stated a few years ago a plan was reviewed and it included more than just a high school and those other schools have been addressed and we are now onto the next step of the plan. Council Member Jones noted that this isn't something new, but it is currently more popular. Council Members Jones pointed out an instant rivalry will be made if two schools are opened and isn't sure that is what the city needs.

Chair Kohen stated competition between two schools can be healthy.

Council Member Hirschmann asked if the three scenarios have been laid out in detail and what we accomplish with each scenario.

School Board Member Swayne stated that has been done with the annex and the addition and there is a current contract out to have a plan for the third scenario.

School Board Member Swayne noted the annex and addition are in the area of \$50M and it adds a capacity for approximately 800 students.

Council Member Hirschmann stated the money and the number of students are easy to follow it is more information on how it effects the students and the curriculum.

School Board Member Penrod stated that process has already started, but they are waiting to get numbers back on the second high school. School Board Member Penrod stated a committee of stakeholders is being formed to meet over an eight week period to review data and facts and then report back to the School Board. School Board Member Penrod noted steps are being taken so they can reach the best solution.

School Board Member Swayne stated the architect and educators both stated an annex isn't the best solution.

Chair Kohen stated the architects are also involved in education, they build things for education. Chair Kohen stated the School Board is seeking input from the community. Chair Kohen asked council to consider appointing one member to the Consultant Committee.

Council Member Byrd stated that decision can be made during the upcoming council meeting under other matters. Council Member Byrd asked if there are only three scenarios that the School Board is seeking input on, because he has heard other suggestions from community members such as changing the grades within the schools or the school deficit to the north of Harrisonburg.

Superintendent Kizner stated operational costs increase when you change grades within the schools due to teachers teaching all four grades within the high school. Superintendent Kizner stated he feels that the conversation with the county needs to be initiated by City Council and the School Board. Superintendent Kizner stated he would have huge reservations about using non-city employed teachers for city children. Superintendent Kizner stated we have to look at this through the numbers of students we are looking to have within the school and not through tax dollars. Superintendent Kizner stated that people are choosing to call Harrisonburg home and he is interviewed by a lot of families. Superintendent Kizner noted in 2011 the growth was clear and there were a lot of things we needed to accomplish before the high school could be addressed.

Council Member Jones noted there are a lot of people to present and he is looking forward to hearing their comments during the community meetings.

Mayor Reed stated she was glad that the conversation has begun.

Chair Kohen suggested that there be another joint meeting in June and between now and then communications will continue between the two bodies, which

seemed well received by all. Chair Kohen also stated that when the School Board receives more information they will forward it onto the council and by June there should be more specifics.

Superintendent Kizner asked that during the next meeting that a decision be made, because it is still going to take at least four years to complete.

Chair Kohen stated he wants to clear the uncertainty.

5. Adjournment

At 6:34 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR