



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

Thursday, June 8, 2017

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

School Board/City Council Joint Meeting

1. Roll Call

Present: 4 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Richard Baugh, Council Member Ted Byrd and Council Member George Hirschmann

Absent: 1 - Council Member Christopher B. Jones

Also Present: 5 - City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Deputy City Manager Ande Banks, Deputy City Clerk Pam Ulmer, 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; and Dr. Scott Kizner, Superintendent; Nick Swayne, School Board Member was absent.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance

3. Regular Items

3.a. Discussion on addressing the high school space issue

Mayor Reed stated this is the second discussion regarding recommendations from the School Board.

Chairman Kohen stated on June 6, 2017 the School Board unanimously accepted the recommendation from the space study committee to move forward in solving the overcrowding problem at Harrisonburg High School (HHS) by erecting a second high school. Chairman Kohen stated the School Board is respectfully offering this recommendation to city Council and the School Board asked Council to endorse this decision and allow the School Board to move forward. Chairman Kohen also stated there was a second motion that was also approved unanimously, which was a request that Council authorize the School Board to evaluate potential site locations for a new high school. Chairman Kohen stated

the objective being to share the preferred site with Council through the Liaison Committee process. Chairman Kohen stated the land study would include preliminary civil engineering work to help determine if the site is viable and any site challenges that may exist.

Mayor Reed stated this is the time to ask any questions Council or School Board may have pertaining to the recommendation by the School Board.

Council Member Hirschmann stated he would like to know how the School Board arrive at the \$100M plus figure for the cost of the new high school.

Chairman Kohen stated the estimated figure was based on a prospectus prepared for the School Board by VMDO Architects on the likely costs given the parameters of the size of school and the timing of the erection of the building. Chairman Kohen stated this figure is speculative in the sense that a lot of the dimensions that go into determining the precise cost are unknown at this time. Chairman Kohen stated these are best guesses being made about a number of different dimensions of the final cost. Council Member Hirschmann asked if this figure is a guess. Chairman Kohen stated it is an educated estimate.

Chairman Kohen stated there are representatives from VMDO Architects, Kelly Callahan and Bryce Powell, are present for any questions Council may have regarding the process by which they arrived at the broad based estimates.

Kelly Callahan stated the proposed costs estimation was from a combination of state averages based on historical data provided by the Department of Education, average facility size based on the number of students that will be housed in the new building, the square foot per student, which is an average, and then multiplying that by the average cost per square foot. Ms. Callahan stated those calculations were then escalated based on professional estimators averaging the percent of escalation that would happen in the construction industry moving forward, which was 4.5% per year.

Board Member Penrod stated a couple of months ago, when VMDO presented to the School Board, it was stated an exact number couldn't be calculated at that time because of everything that goes into it, but for the School Board and city Council purposes this was an educated guess, it doesn't mean that if the budget approved doesn't meet the \$100M figure the school can't be built. Board Member Penrod stated she understood there are ways to work within the budget. Mr. Powell stated the other significant is identifying a site, which has a number of unknowns relative to general site development and other aspects that would affect the project, up or down depending on what type of site was selected. Mr. Powell stated those variables included utilities, materials, etc. Board Member Penrod stated those are unknowns but VMDO has a strong history of staying within the budget.

Ms. Callahan stated the numbers are intimidating; however the last thing anyone

wants is to embark on a four year journey to construct something that is the right thing to do, but then come up short on funding. Ms. Callahan stated the funds would not need to be available immediately as construction wouldn't start for almost another two years, which is the bulk of the spending. Ms. Callahan stated there will be costs that occur in the beginning: fees to design, engineering and site study.

Vice-Chairman Fitzgerald stated it is uncomfortable to talk about this without a final price tag, but so many unknowns are still outstanding, and the School Board is asking Council to approve the School Board to move forward and resolve the unknowns, such as investigating land and estimated costs to prepare the site chosen, and what a building on the site would look like. Vice-Chairman Fitzgerald stated the School Board cannot move forward until we get the green light from Council to look at land.

Chairman Kohen stated the School Board needs to know what the budget is in order to accomplish the goal of constructing a second high school.

Mayor Reed asked Council if there is any question as to what the School Board is asking for.

Vice-Mayor Baugh stated at the last city Council meeting on May 23, 2017 it was discussed that at least looking at some real estate is a component for moving forward, however, per a letter received by the city manager from the superintendent, there is mention of preliminary civil engineering work to be done to help determine if a site is viable. Vice-Mayor Baugh asked if this is a request for funding.

Chairman Kohen stated yes, the School Board would like adequate funding to conduct the appropriate consideration of possibilities for site acquisition as drive by viewing of the sites would not provide answers needed to provide Council with a firm estimate of construction costs without being evaluated by civil engineering.

Council Member Byrd asked if the School Board was looking for the option to take physical control of land. Vice-chairman Fitzgerald stated no. Council Member Byrd stated that normally physical control of the land takes place prior to any civil engineering work. Vice-Chairman Fitzgerald stated leadership was advised of the three step site selection process in order to select property that is viable. Council Member Byrd stated that would then dictate what type of facility will be built. Vice-Chairman Fitzgerald stated the process could take three months or so, ideally land would be selected and purchased by the end of September 2017, in order to stay on track with occupying in 2021. Council Member Byrd asked if the School Board is requesting city Council purchase the land by September of 2017. Vice-Chairman Fitzgerald stated the School Board is not committing anyone to a particular timeline, but simply asking to move forward with the next step.

Vice-Mayor Baugh stated when the Skyline Pre-K project reached a similar point and School Board identified sites, and discussed the pros and cons with Council

without any engineering involved at that point. Vice-Mayor Baugh stated his vision for the next phase for this project would be similar and accepted that some funds may need to be allocated for study.

Mayor Reed asked, for those that weren't on Council or School Board during the Skyline Pre-K project, if a Council Member could walk the group through the process that took place then.

Vice-Mayor Baugh stated, at that time, the School Board looked at sites, reached a conclusion as to their opinion of those sites, and then had a meeting with Council to discuss their findings.

Vice-Chairman Fitzgerald stated she wasn't sure if any pre studies were done on the Skyline Pre-K site, however, there was quite a bit of unexpected subterranean issues, with karsts features on the site that were not known ahead of the purchase of the property. Further discussion took place on the Skyline Pre-K site selection process.

Board Member Holsinger stated he is unclear as to what Council is asking of the School Board. Council Member Byrd stated the School Board needs to present Council with a plan. Board Member Holsinger stated the School Board has gone through an extensive planning process for the best long term solution, taking over two years, and most intensively over the past year, and came to a decision that a second high school would be the best long term solution for the entire community. Board Member Holsinger stated the School Board is in need of Council's support to continue with acquisition of land. Vice-Mayor Baugh and Council Member Byrd disagreed, as the School Board does not need Council's approval to proceed with site selection, only site purchase.

Board Member Penrod asked Council if it would be helpful if the School Board came to Council stating they have twelve sites, which are the top three and their recommendations.

Vice-Mayor Baugh stated until he saw the engineering need, he thought the School Board would be already working on site selection. Council Member Byrd stated to do the engineering physical control of the land must be obtained.

Chairman Kohen stated in order to meet a time line to open a new high school by 2021 the experts are saying the site must be selected and purchased by September 2017. Chairman Kohen stated he understands this process does not happen overnight and is keenly aware that the longer this decision is pushed out the more difficult and urgent the problem becomes. Chairman Kohen noted the School Board has done their due diligence in studying the solution, to take the next step, which is the location of this new school, therefore seeking Council's endorsement to take that step.

Vice-Mayor Baugh noted the School Board does not need Council's approval to look at sites, it doesn't hurt to communicate with community development, but a general blessing, if needed by the School Board, Council provides it.

Board Member Holsinger stated that is helpful.

Council Member Byrd stated in order for Council to make a decision regarding timing a total package cost must be presented to Council, so a best estimated guess to inform the citizens of the costs can be presented to the public and determination of when and if this project can be done.

Mayor Reed stated Council is ok for the School Board to go forward at this point.

Vice-Mayor Baugh stated the letter from the superintendent states it perfectly, "The School Board also unanimously adopted a motion to request that the City Council authorize the School Board to evaluate potential site locations for a new high school. The objective would be to share their preferred site to the City Council through the Liaison Committee process." Vice-Mayor Baugh stated there are two asks, one to move forward with evaluating potential site locations, the other being funding for civil engineering.

Council Member Byrd stated the second ask should be brought back to Council once preferred sites have been determined.

Board Member Holsinger stated the last five minutes of this conversation have been helpful, much more than the first 10 minutes, and feels better about the conversation.

Council Member Byrd stated for the School Board to go through the initial process, but Council has not said a new high school will be built, but Council needs a true representation of the costs of such a project so the citizens are aware and see if that is the direction they want to go. Council Member Byrd stated Council's job is to be fiscally responsible while balancing the other side of city operations for their five year plan of approximately \$140M. Council Member Byrd stated if the School Board wants a budget and a time line, Council has to have good numbers.

Board Member Holsinger stated the School Board has good ball park figures, based on qualified estimates, which should be enough to have community conversations.

Mayor Reed stated the School Board has completed a very thorough process but it will also be a very thorough process with Council, hence the reason for Council being careful of what is being discussed.

Chairman Kohen stated everyone one needs to be careful, and asks that Council be mindful of the fact that the School Board was not ignoring the fiscal dimensions, which is why the School Board consulted with the city's bond counsel

about capacity of the city to borrow sufficient funds to erect a building that would be within the ballpark ranges of those given based on state averages, size, etc.

Board Member Penrod stated she feels that for the School Board to be effective on planning this project, it is helpful to have input and instruction from Council. Further discussion took place regarding communication between the School Board and the Liaison Committee and next steps.

Council Member Byrd asked that since the fiscal issues will fall on Council, if, for some reason Council doesn't go with the School Board's recommendation, does the School Board have a plan B. Chairman Kohen stated there is no plan B. Council Member Byrd suggested the School Board not put all their eggs in one basket and have a plan B and C. Board Member Holsinger stated all plans would be contingent upon funding, so until funding is determined alternate plans can't be made.

Board member Seigle asked if the School Board and city Council have ever done the studies together on capital projects. Council Member Byrd stated Council Member Jones was part of the space committee and Vice-Mayor Baugh and Mayor Reed along with the city manager are on the School Liaison Committee. Board Member Penrod asked if there was anything Council would like the School Board to know or provide to Council, to help this process go smoothly. Council Member Byrd stated once Council discusses further, he is sure there will be questions. Further discussion took place on how the two bodies interact and communicate.

Mayor Reed asked if both bodies were clear on how to proceed. All members responded positively.

Mayor Reed noted the next Liaison Committee Meeting will be held on June 21st, 2017.

4. Adjournment

At 7:55 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK

MAYOR