



# City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

*Mayor Christopher B. Jones*  
*Vice-Mayor Richard Baugh*  
*Council Member Ted Byrd*  
*Council Member Kai Degner*  
*Council Member Abe Shearer*

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Monday, January 25, 2016

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### Joint Meeting - School Board

#### 1. Roll Call

The Harrisonburg City School Board and the Harrisonburg City Council joint special meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., in City Council Chambers.

**Present:** 5 - Mayor Christopher B. Jones, Vice-Mayor Richard Baugh, Council Member Ted Byrd, Council Member Kai Degner and Council Member Abe Shearer

**Also present:** City Manager Kurt D. Hodgen; Deputy City Manager Anne C. Lewis; School Board Member Chair Kerri Wilson; School Board Member Vice-Chair Nick Swayne; School Board Member Tom Domonoske; School Board Member Brent Holsinger; School Board Member Andrew Kohen; School Board Member Kelly Rooney; School Board Clerk Lisa Knupp; and School Board Superintendent Dr. Scott Kizner. Absent: City Attorney G. Chris Brown and City Clerk Erica S. Kann.

#### 2. Regular Items

- 2.a. Discussion including but not limited to Harrisonburg City Public School's building projects and preliminary budget planning information

School Board Chair, Kerri Wilson, began discussion by reading the following statement:

*After multiple public hearings for the sole purpose of community input and multiple work sessions dedicated to the discussion of options to address the Harrisonburg High School growth and space issues, the school board made a formal recommendation at our January 5th meeting. It is important for City Council and the community to know that we have not taken this task lightly; we have given a tremendous amount of thought and consideration to all options, all comments and concerns, and all the data (internal and external). We have been intentional in our deliberations; taking into consideration our ability to maintain exceptional curriculum and programs, the safety of our student body and staff, and the fiscal implications a new facility will have on our taxpayers. Ultimately, we are charged with making decisions that are in the best interest of the current and future students and families in our community. It is our recommendation that we build a detached HHS Annex with kitchen facilities on the existing HHS site, with the caveat that any HHS facility, athletic fields and parking lots, removed for the*

construction of the new building will be rebuilt at a separate location, as close to the HHS site as possible. The purchase of land will be required for that purpose. This recommendation takes into consideration addressing short-term needs and provides options for long-term needs, as well.

Harrisonburg City Public Schools is an asset to this community on many levels. Having a quality school system is a critical piece to economic development and stability. We have an excellent school system, highly regarded by our peers from across the Commonwealth and across the nation. The growth of our student body is beyond our control--we educate and accommodate every single child that shows up on our doorstep--and we do an incredible job addressing the vast array of educational, social, and emotional needs of every child...providing opportunities for the academically advanced students to the Newcomer students. WE ARE THE PREMIER-HIGH END ACADEMIC HIGH SCHOOL IN THIS REGION AND we do not want the fact that we are growing to negatively impact the FIRST RATE academic institution we have worked so hard to build. If we do not address the overcrowding at the high school, we run the risk of that happening.

We are asking for your support in this recommendation which will allow us to move forward with an RFP for the Annex project and the authorization to purchase land for the relocation of any HHS facility that is displaced by the new building. That tract of land should be big enough to accommodate the displaced facilities and growth. There is a tract of land on Garber's Church Road, across from the high school, that is for sale. It is ideal for the purpose that we propose and is our preference.

THMS: When the school board made the decision to build a new elementary school, instead of doing a complete retrofit of Thomas Harrison to turn it into an elementary/pre-K school, we made the commitment to keep Thomas Harrison's aging facility a priority. We maintain that commitment to renovate Thomas Harrison so that it is a safe and comfortable environment for our students and staff. We now face a critical problem with the rapid deterioration of the air handling system at THMS. In order to do our due diligence, we have issued an RFP for the replacement of the HVAC system AND we are moving forward with an Energy Performance Evaluation to take a two-sided approach to finding the best solution for Thomas Harrison's physical plant needs. Quality maintenance of our facilities is important for the long-term health of our entire school system. We also know that it is a priority of yours, as demonstrated at your last meeting, to have energy efficient buildings throughout our fine city and this is a goal of ours as well.

Chair Wilson then requested comments from Council members and School Board members. The following comments were made:

Council Member Degner thanked the board for holding public hearings, etc. in preparation of their decision on the high school overcrowdedness. He asked if funds were available, would the Board have asked for something larger, maybe a second high school. Several School Board members responded that they have

taken everything into consideration and a high school annex seems to be the best option and for the immediate need to address the overcrowdedness issue at the high school. Council Member Degner then commented that he supported the Board's decision and would be happy to have the mentioned piece of land, stating he would have supported an option on the land a year ago.

Council Member Byrd questioned what was submitted in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), commenting that the Council has not seen it yet and they need to look at the totality. City Manager Hodgen stated that the CIP goes before Planning Commission prior to it being presented to Council. Dr. Kizner commented that the Board's request is to get a more accurate number so they are able to move forward for proposals for architects to complete a study of what the Board has approved. Dr. Kizner also stated that the Board is not asking for money now, they just need approval to move forward and then the Board and Council can study together. Dr. Kizner also noted that in the CIP moving forward the school project that is being discussed will be addressed in the plan. The Board needs some objective information so everyone will be in a better position to study together and move forward.

Mayor Jones commented he appreciated the statement made by Chair Wilson and agrees with it. Mayor Jones commented he remembered that Council Member Degner suggested a year or so ago to acquire land but it was denied. Mayor Jones mentioned that the 1,600 students at Harrisonburg High School is what they need to focus on. He also realizes the HVAC system at Thomas Harrison Middle School is very dilapidated, is an uncomfortable learning environment, and has heard many complaints about it. The students' body temperature and their ability to learn is being affected and it's in the CIP. He would like to make sure Council makes a move to update Thomas Harrison's HVAC system and would be very insulting to the general public not to. The CIP for the high school annex is not approved yet. Mayor Jones commended the School Board for looking at the high school overcrowdedness issue and have an immediate response and even though it may not be fixed within the next three to five years. We need to show parents, teachers, etc. that we are moving forward with a plan for growth. Mayor Jones supported the general idea of the annex and the acceleration of the process and fully supported fixing the HVAC system at Thomas Harrison.

Chair Wilson informed Council that RFP's have been issued for the replacement or overhaul of Thomas Harrison's HVAC system and that the Board is also moving forward with a performance contract and then will be looking at both options to decide what is best financially and long term for Thomas Harrison. Chair Wilson stated they should be getting the RFP information back by the end of the month.

Council Member Shearer commented that Council Member Byrd's comment regarding the CIP was important as the updated CIP will have refined and adjusted figures which will help Council with planning. He made the point that Council really needs clarity and guidance on expenses they are going to be having in order to make decisions. Council Member Shearer stated figures are adjusted

year after year and is glad to hear the \$57 million figure they have continually heard about is an over inflated number. He also commented that he understood that what the Board is asking Council to do is potentially get more reasonable cost estimates for the kind of expansion the Board has noted the most prudent next step is to determine what is feasible and accurate.

Mrs. Rooney commented that the Board would like to move forward with getting an architect to look at the entire package to get a number the Board can work with.

Council Member Byrd commented he was hearing from what Chair Wilson read the Board is considering one stand alone option but thought the Liaison Committee was suggesting something different and feels there has been some disconnect.

Mayor Jones commented that the last time the Liaison Committee met they had discussed other high school options but that was before the listening session process. The Liaison discussed that it would re-evaluate after the listening sessions took place. No specific recommendations were made but all agreed that RFP needed to be done. City Manager Hodgen responded that he recommends that an RFP be done first and not tie the approval of hiring an architect to explore the high school site to agreeing to purchasing land at this point for two reasons: 1) don't know that a creative architect can't come up with a way to utilize all the existing property on the HHS site and not require relocating any facilities off site; and 2) architect may say that it is not a good idea to build the annex on the current high school site. City Manager Hodgen stated depending on those answers, we can move to resolve the land issue. Mayor Jones commented that no one is disagreeing on an RFP.

Mrs. Rooney stated the Board invites an architect to be creative, with the caveat that if anything had to be moved off site, then land would need to be purchased not that it's a no brainer that this has to be done.

Mayor Jones thinks the School Board is casting a vision and we need to find out what we are working with; no one is disagreeing with an RFP.

Chair Wilson would like to keep communication lines open so the Board and Council can move forward and are on the same page.

Council Member Shearer agreed 100% with Chair Wilson that communication lines need to stay open and will be helpful to Council to get quick feedback.

Mr. Kohen commented that it was made clear by the Board to the public that the Board was not wed to the mentioned numbers and that they were high estimates/guesses.

Mayor Jones asked for acknowledgement that what he was hearing is that Council

and Board agree to move forward with: 1) an RFP on a solution for the high school; and 2) that the Board will bring something back to Council to vote on regarding fixing Thomas Harrison. Council Member Degner suggested the following be entertained in the RFP: building only on the land AND the possibility of buying other land. Keeping in mind the time issue - doesn't want to have to re-start the process if an RFP only on the land would happen to come back and say that it won't work.

Vice-Mayor Baugh commented that as part of this process, he likes the suggestion made by Dr. Kizner in a previous Liaison meeting to have a Council member be involved in the process to help keep communication lines open. Dr. Kizner commented that having a Council member involved creates a link between the Board and Council but he feels both Board and Council respect the fact that the Board makes the final decision on the building plans and Council makes the final decision on funding.

Chair Wilson mentioned that the Liaison Committee has not met this year but will continue to meet to keep communication lines open.

Council Member Degner asked how the current building project of the new elementary school and preschool center was going. Dr. Kizner responded by saying that construction bids would be going out this Thursday and by March hopes the Board will have a recommendation for a construction company and, if things go well, by the end of March construction will hopefully begin. He also informed Council that construction costs have gone up and because of that, an adjustment was made to the kitchen area at the early childhood center and it was reduced by one classroom with the understanding that architects have it as an add-on option if bids come in lower for it to be added back in.

**3. Adjournment**

At 7:42 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR