



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

Thursday, October 15, 2015

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

Joint Meeting

Joint Meeting with School Board

1. Roll Call

- 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:** 3 - City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Anne Lewis and City Clerk Erica Kann

Also present: School Board Member Chair Andrew Kohen; School Board Member Vice-Chair Nick Swayne; School Board Member Tom Domonoske; School Board Member Brent Holsinger; School Board Member Kelly Rooney; School Board Member Kerri Wilson; and, Superintendent Dr. Scott Kizner.

2. Regular Items

2.a. Discussion on Harrisonburg City Public School's enrollment growth and draft building program

Superintendent Kizner stated the enrollment of Harrisonburg City Public Schools had seen an increase of 5.96% in the last year within grades kindergarten through twelve. Dr. Kizner reported according to the Weldon Cooper Center, high school enrollment is projected to be 1,960 by 2019-2020. Dr. Kizner reviewed the high school's student capacity that was provided in August 2012 by Moseley Architects, broken down into the following three categories: effective capacity: 1,363; core capacity: 1,550; and, cafeteria capacity: 1,650. Dr. Kizner shared that in the last year, enrollment has shown a 9.06% increase within the high school, 5.58% within grades five through eight and a 4.16% in grades kindergarten through four. Dr. Kizner provided three high school options with enrollment numbers and estimated costs, which were the following: new high school/middle school combined complex: 1200/900 students and \$160.6 million; new high school: 1200 students and \$102.5 million; and, additional building for current high school: 600-800 students and \$57 million and includes a cafeteria.

There was an acknowledgment to staff for their work. A brief discussion was held regarding the reduction of dropout rates, the increase to advanced diplomas and

on-time graduation. A discussion was held regarding the growth of grade levels and which grades were seeing the most growth.

City Manager Hodgen reviewed the statutory legal debt margin imposed by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Harrisonburg's financial management policies. City Manager Hodgen stated \$102,489,563 is available and that amount doesn't include the new elementary school project, a few city projects or the hotel and conference center. City Manager Hodgen noted the hotel and conference center isn't city issued debt, but it is viewed by auditors and the rating agencies as outstanding debt of the city. City Manager Hodgen noted that after those projects are considered, approximately \$51M is available.

A discussion took place regarding the city's policy and how the city has improved over the years in bond ratings. There was a question to where the city compares to other cities with their financial management policy limit. City Manager Hodgen noted that it wouldn't be in the city's best interest to change policy prior to entering the bond market in January 2016. There was further discussion regarding how the city would compare to other local localities with their tax rates if the most expensive option would be chosen. It was noted that when looking at the different school options, other city projects are being considered too as well as sustaining the city that we are living in today. It was noted that until this year, the city has seen approximately a 10% build out. It was also noted that the Weldon Cooper Center's 2040 projection has the city's population at 70,000.

City Manager Hodgen continued with his presentation reviewing the financial management policy debt expenditures limit. City Manager Hodgen reviewed borrowing scenarios and tax rate implications for the new elementary school as well as the other school construction project options. City Manager Hodgen presented the projected real estate tax rates as well as the general fund debt service payments if school projects would be implemented. City Manager Hodgen also presented a non-exhaustive list of city anticipated project needs.

It was mentioned that economics could be impacted if real estate taxes were increased too much. There was discussion regarding the importance of the process and timing of the projects and communication would continue to be key. There was also discussion regarding future joint meetings, but suggested to continue with the scheduled public hearing meetings that the School Board has planned to receive feedback prior to another joint meeting. There was continued discussion regarding building options, and the School Board asked for land to be explored as well so a recommendation can be made by the School Board and lump sum for both. It was noted the School Board isn't asking for City Council to find the land; but rather, make purchasing land a possible option. Further conversation took place regarding the price point of the project. It was noted when looking toward the future and the continued growth, safety and the current conditions of the schools need to be addressed. There was brief discussion regarding standard quality ratios. It was noted that even with the limited space, staff is providing great experiences to the students, but functionality is important

too. There was discussion regarding adding on to the existing high school and the findings of the architectural study; however, if another building was added, additional core spaces would be needed. There was a brief discussion about council discussing the land request during a future meeting, but also made note that council would have to be cautious when speaking about and/or approving the request to search for possible land. There was discussion about the liaison committee meeting, but then noted that it would be helpful to have joint meetings as the process moves forward, so a timeline can be created. There was a brief discussion regarding the anticipated projects that were included on the non-exhaustive list and which were included in the bond issuance. City Manager Hodgen stated he could provide that list after the meeting. It was noted the \$2M for architectural and engineering was included within the \$33M amount for the elementary school and pre-k facility. A discussion regarding future projects took place regarding the price and the capacity. There were mixed comments regarding building large now to handle future overcrowding and what the city is able to afford. Discussion took place regarding the building of the last three schools and how they were built to last many years. It was noted that money was built into the schools budget for some improvements onto Garber's Church Road. Again, there was discussion about the Weldon Cooper numbers. It was asked for parents to come out to the public hearing sessions led by the School Board to discuss the process and programming and come to council meetings with thoughts on tax increases and costs, not the process or programming. It was also mentioned that it is important for the public to review what both School Board and City Council are reviewing. It was asked if council would view its capacity without being locked in to 6%. Dr. Kizner noted that indicators weren't available like they are now when the last schools were being planned and built. It was also noted that zoning and land use rules have changed, which should alter the current growth rate and those changes should be considered when making our best projections. After closing remarks, it was agreed that City Manager Hodgen and Dr. Kizner will communicate a future joint meeting to be held after the School Board's public comment meetings.

3. Adjournment

At 8:55 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR