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Henrico County School Board Town Hall, Tuesday, April 23, 2024

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONvFvSdc1S8>
- Official meeting portal (Henrico County Public Schools, Diligent Community): <https://henricoschools.community.diligentoneplatform.com/Portal/MeetingTypeList.aspx>

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[00:00:02] Thank you for joining us for our Henrico School Board Town Hall. This evening, you're gonna learn about some wonderful things that are happening within Henrico County. I am Alicia Atkins, Henrico School Board Chair and Representative for Verena, Sanston and Highland Springs.

[00:00:25] Joining me today are my colleagues, and they'll wave as I say their names, Starting with Mrs. Shea, representative of the Tuckahoe District, Mrs. Kinsella, representative of the Brooklyn District, Mr. Irving, representative of Three Chops, and Mr. Young, representative for Fairfield.

[00:00:51] As you know, Henrico County Public Schools has a diverse community of learners and exceptional employees. We are the sixth largest school district in Virginia and serve approximately 50,000 students with 139 languages spoken across our 75 schools and centers.

[00:01:16] Henrico Schools prides itself on our innovative learning opportunities for students and our robust benefits for staff. As a school board member, I am extremely proud of our employees, students, and administrators.

[00:01:33] And if you've been watching us for a while, you will know we've been engaged in budget conversations, and certainly budget has been our primary focus. And to delve into more details, I would like to have Mrs. Shea join the podium.

[00:01:51] And I apologize because you're hearing this mic, so if we could turn it down just a little bit, that would be wonderful. Thank you, Mrs. Shea. Thank you, Ms. Atkins. In alignment with the Division Strategic Plan Destination 2025, the FY25 Recommended Financial Plan reflects our commitment to academic excellence, safety and wellness, and recruitment and retention of exemplar educators and staff.

[00:02:18] This budget proposal includes a significant investment in instructional resources for our students and staffing and curriculum for further implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act. Additionally, there's funding for the new Center for Innovation at Roth Middle School, expanding career and technical education programs, and to establish Highland Springs Elementary as an opportunity school.

[00:02:41] There are also investments in essential areas such as additional English as a second language instructional staffing and expansion of the HCPS career ladders to recognize advanced professional learning achievements. Working with our funding partners on the Board of Supervisors, we also allocated an additional \$4.54 million, part of which will be used to add 10 pre-K teachers to provide art music and physical education instruction hdps will also add 73 full-time

[00:03:20] positions which will provide classroom support and flexibility for master scheduling and extended planning among other benefits to elementary students and staff remaining competitive in recruiting and retaining employees in all areas is of great importance to us and we are pleased to support, a 4.8% raise for all HCPS employees, and an additional step increase that brings the raise to 7.2% for teachers, licensed instructional staff, and bus drivers. This salary news comes on

[00:03:56] the heels of a March 1st increase to bus driver pay, which means that beginning July 1st, bus drivers will earn \$25 an hour. And with approval of the 4.8% raise, everyone's employee salary will have increased by a minimum of 13% in two years, not including any extra additional step increase, regrades, or employee bonuses that are also available.

[00:04:26] But that's not all. The school board continues to work with Dr. Cashwell to examine all employee categories as needed to provide market adjustments as funds allow on a continuing basis, not just during budget cycles. For example, in the current school year, HCPS upgraded the Exceptional Education Instructional Assistant classification based on responsibilities, leading to a 4.8% salary increase for those employees. This spring, Office Assistant 3 positions were also reclassified, which resulted in a raise there as well. This year, we increased our

[00:05:06] division's hourly minimum wage to \$15 an hour. And for next year, we'll be more than \$15 an hour. Isn't that right, Mr. Wack? In August, the school board passed a robust parental leave policy that provides up to eight weeks of paid job-protected leave for full-time and permanent part-time employees who are becoming parents through birth adoption or foster care programs and hcps continues to shield employees from increasing health care and health insurance costs by absorbing the health

[00:05:42] insurance increase in three of the last four years a relatively small portion was passed on to staff in the calendar year of 2023 as you can see the school board is committed to being a compensation leader and advocating for staff pay and a positive work culture. As we strive to create engaging, life-ready learning experiences for our students, we are poised to expand enrollment in career and technical education programs. We recently cut the ribbon on the renovated ACE Center at Highland Springs High School and the new ACE Center at Hermitage High School. With the completion of

[00:06:20] these construction projects, we have space for an additional 800 students in CTE programs. Demand for CTE courses are continually growing as students pursue pathways leading to employment in in-demand industries. Last year, Henrico students earned 5,565 industry certifications, giving them a leg up when applying for jobs. At this time, Ms. Kinsella will talk about some of the

[00:06:50] very exciting school division capital projects thank you so much Mrs. Shea as you may know the division's third ACE Center is housed on the campus of Virginia Randolph so this is a great opportunity to provide you with an update on the rebuild that is happening at the ACE building the expansion to the ACE building is underway the two-story expansion at the Academy of Virginia at the Academy at Virginia Randolph building has started with footings complete at the south wing and

[00:07:27] foundation work starting at the north wing the renovation of the unoccupied parts of the existing ACE building have also started as a reminder the campus of Virginia Randolph includes an ACE Center the Academy at Virginia Randolph and V-Rec and Pace which are non-traditional programs that serve students who may not find success in a traditional classroom setting here students experience smaller campus smaller class sizes a social emotional support team an individualized plan towards

[00:08:03] graduation 12 different trades programs credit recovery opportunities and mentoring the design and construction project at the campus of Virginia Randolph began in June 2023 and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2025. Next, we also want to provide an update on other renovations and capital improvement projects, and this is Tuckahoe Middle School. This project went out to bid on March 8, 2024. It is going to be an auditorium project. The plan of development

[00:08:42] process is nearly complete. Estimated start date is this summer, summer 2024, with an estimated completion date of the fall of 2025 and next Adams Elementary School renovation groups of students have been relocated to the learning colleges to allow for the contractor to have access to the first phase of construction demolition is well underway with pre-protection fencing installed the contractor has also installed temporary interior partitions to separate students from

[00:09:19] the construction zone. As always, safety is a priority. The estimated completion date is fall 2024 with a project budget of \$19 million from the 2016 bond referendum with an additional \$6.2 million added, I guess for the cost of inflation. Correct, Mr. Wack? Thank you. Next up, Davis Elementary School. This project is a rebuild and it will go out for bid within the next two weeks.

[00:09:51] Tree removal has started by separate contract due to federal regulations regarding the presence of endangered long-eared bats on the property. Estimated start date is spring 2024, so right now, and with an estimated completion date of fall 2026, this project budget is \$41 million, funded by the 2022 bond referendum.

[00:10:19] Next, Long and Elementary School. This project is a rebuild. This project will also go out for bid within the next few weeks. Tree removal is currently underway, taking special care for yet again more long-eared bats that were also found on this property.

[00:10:40] The estimated start date for this project is right now, Spring 2024, with an estimated completion date of Fall 2026, and the budget for this project is \$42 million, funded by the 2022 bond referendum.

[00:10:57] And the next project is a rebuild of Cuyacason Middle School. This project is on track with its design process underway. The design was expanded to encompass a FACE, which is a family and

community engagement, community school center, and the middle school innovation center.

[00:11:20] This project is estimated to be complete by July 2026 with a budget of \$89 million funded by the 2022 bond referendum. And last but not least is our living building at Wilton Farm.

[00:11:42] Our final, this is an incredibly exciting project. A living building is net zero in all kinds of ways in terms of energy consumption. In fact, most buildings actually generate more energy than they actually use.

[00:12:02] A living building connects occupants to light, air, nature, and community, while also making a positive impact on the local environment and sustainability of the ecosystem. Preliminary design of the living building at Wilton Farm is underway with a completion date of fall 2026.

[00:12:24] The project budget is \$16.3 million funded by the 2022 bond referendum. Our incredible partner, Metta, recently committed an additional \$275,000 in grant money to support the development and the use of the living building and living classrooms at Wilton Farm.

[00:12:50] Henrico Schools is so fortunate to have our phenomenal partners in the community, in education, employees, students, and our families who value strong public schools. And that includes not only our counterparts on the Board of Supervisors, but also our elected state leaders.

[00:13:12] Next up, Mr. Irving will now share an update on the school board's legislative priorities. Mr. Irving. Thank you, Ms. Kinsella. Each school year, the school board develops a comprehensive list of legislative priorities that reflect the school division's values, mission, and vision.

[00:13:35] We are committed to the advancement of public education and ensuring all students have the tools and resources they need to achieve their full potential and leave our schools life-ready. Legislation has an essential role in shaping the educational landscape, and as board members, we are dedicated to advocating for policies that prioritize students learning while respecting the expertise of the division's professional educators. The school board firmly believes that any legislation affecting education should be thoughtfully considered to maintain high

[00:14:10] standards and reasonable workloads, ensuring that educators can devote their time and energy to meaningful teaching and learning. The school board's legislative priorities are posted on the HCPS website. I won't read them all to you, but I do want to point out just a few items of significance. HCPS staff helped author a bill to attract more teachers of special education by opening an additional pathway for them through the career switcher program. Our bill for special education career switchers represents the second year in a row we've offered a successful bill to

[00:14:45] get more teachers in the classroom. The division supported successful education that promotes enhanced weapons safety and parental accountability, primarily Lucia's Law. And we supported successful legislation addressing wraparound services, including mental health professionals, social workers, psychologists, behaviorists, and schools, also helping to provide services to families during both before and after school hours.

[00:15:13] As I said, these are just three of the items from the priority list. I encourage you to go online and look at the entire document. This really is an area also where parents can be of massive assistance in terms of advocacy to their state legislators.

[00:15:31] Also, please think about how you can help advocate for our students and schools. Don't be afraid to reach out to school board members and the state legislators. Hearing what is important to you is what this evening is all about. But before we transition to a small group activity to get your feedback, I'd like to welcome Mr. Young from the Fairfield District to share a few important dates and reminders. Thank you, Mr. Irvin. It is hard to believe we only have five weeks left in the school

[00:16:05] year, and planning has already started to ensure that the 2004-2005 school year is off to a great one. Now is the time to register your little ones for preschool and kindergarten. We have QR codes on the screen. Use the camera feature on your phone to scan the code and start the registration process. Here are a few other important updates. Graduations are May 20th through the 31st. Henrico Virtual Academy graduation ceremony is May 20th at 7:00 p.m. followed by the AVR graduation the following night on May 21st. Commencement

[00:16:43] exercises for our traditional comprehensive high schools are May 29th through the 31st. The last day of school is just five weeks away on May 31st. And And as a reminder, that day is a half day. And finally, Summer Academy will take place June 10th through July 18th.

[00:17:02] If you have any questions about summer programming, please contact your child's school counselor directly. As we said earlier, we have a lot of information with you this evening. Now we have to hear what you believe is working well in Henrico schools and where there are opportunities for us to improve.

[00:17:21] As you can see, you are seated in small groups, and each group, an HCPS staff member will serve as a facilitator for a small group discussion. My school board colleagues and I will visit groups to listen in on your conversations. We will also receive a written copy of comments and input gathered this evening.

[00:17:40] At this time, I will hand the program over to the group facilitators. I want to take a moment to thank Principal Powell for allowing us to use his school.

[00:17:53] Let's give a round of applause to our facilitators as well and all that are here supporting us as well. Thank you for coming today. Your feedback is important. We're going to get your cards so for those of you that had much more, know that we will receive and read those things and have discussions on them as well.

[00:18:27] Also, this is not the end. Please continue sharing your feedback. We need that honest, raw feedback. It's easy to get polished, but we also want it broad. It helps us in our decision making. It helps us in our discernment.

[00:18:45] I would like to thank Mr. Irving, Young, Mrs. Kinsella, Mrs. J, I shouldn't say Vice J as the professional term to use. But it's also important that we build relationships with each other because we all represent different areas, but the one thing we all have in common is wanting our children not to just survive, but we want them to be successful.

[00:19:12] So I'm so grateful and I can say on behalf of this entire school board that we appreciate it and we want you to have a safe trip home. Thank you for being here.



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