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Henrico County School Board Work Session, Thursday, December 12, 2024

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon. Welcome to the December 12, 2024 school board work session. We will now move into the Pledge of Allegiance. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the board and our audience. Would you please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance? I pledge allegiance to the flag

[00:00:35] of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. If you would remain standing as you're able for a moment of silence. And you may be seated. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. The next item on the agenda

[00:01:14] is the approval of the agenda. Is there a motion to approve the agenda? I move that the school board approve the agenda for today's meeting. Is there a second? Second. All in favor, say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The agenda is approved. We will move along to the next agenda item which is closed session is there a motion to go into closed session i move that the school board go into closed session for the discussion of matters covered under items a1 and

[00:01:47] a2 of section 2.2-3711 of the code of virginia 1950 as amended pertaining to the assignment appointment promotion performance demotion salaries disciplining or resignation of specific school board employees and the request for religious exemptions from compulsory attend compulsory

attendance that would involve the disclosure of information contained in scholastic records concerning individual students thank you mrs shea is there a second second all in favor say

[00:02:18] aye aye be opposed the ayes have it we will now go into closed session we will reconvene the work session at the conclusion of our closed meeting we're back we'll now move forward with certifying closed session is there a motion to certify closed session i move that the school board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each school board member's knowledge only public business

[00:02:56] matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the virginia freedom of information act and identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard discussed or considered in the closed meeting thank you mrs gonsella is there a second second thank you mr irving all in favor say aye aye any opposed the eyes have it closed session has been certified dr cashwell thank you madam chair members of the board for the first item i'm recommending that the school board approve the request for release from compulsory school attendance for student case

[00:03:34] numbers 24-25-RE-6 and 24-25-RE-7 based on bona fide religious beliefs and of course the names of the students are protected under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Thank you Dr. Cashwell.

[00:03:50] Colleagues, is there a motion? I move that the school board approve the requests for release from compulsory school attendance for student case numbers 24-25-RE-6 and 24-25-RE-7 based on bona fide religious beliefs. Thank you, Mr. Young. Is there a second? Second. All in favor, say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The requests are approved. Dr. Cashbow. Thank you. For the next items, these are a review

[00:04:25] of some grant related policies and regulations, both retirements and revisions that we have previously reviewed and will be seeking your approval of at our monthly meeting this evening. These are items 6.01 through 6.06. Should you have any questions. Colleagues at this time, if you have any remarks or questions, please yield the floor and ask away. Hearing none, we will move forward thank you for the next item we'll have an opportunity to have a brief review

[00:05:00] once more of our fiscal year 25 25 26 capital improvement plan for which again we'll be seeking your approval of that plan for a request for funding at our monthly meeting but wanted to review that once more and offer an opportunity for any board questions mr pritchard is here also susan moore and rachel fair so mr pritchard good afternoon madam chair members of the board and dr Cashwell. Today, I will provide a review of our proposed capital improvement plan for the FY2526 funding request, as well as an update on the tentative long-range capital plans and functional

[00:05:36] capacity from the October presentation. The CIP is funded on a one-year basis, and tonight we are seeking the board's approval. If approved, these requests will be forwarded to the board of supervisors for reviewing during their budget deliberations. As noted in the previous presentation, This funding request includes increases for mechanical and roofing projects, as well as continued support and funding for technology, vehicle replacement, and playground equipment.

[00:06:07] In addition to our CIP requests, we are excited to share that the Environmental Protection Agency selected the 2023 Clean School Bus rebates application submitted by Highland Electric Fleets Incorporated on behalf of the Division.

[00:06:23] The division will receive \$3.45 million in rebate funding through the grant award. The funds will be used to purchase 10 new electric school buses, charging infrastructure, and other related expenses.

[00:06:45] In addition, we hope to receive \$400,000 in commercial clean vehicle tax credits to further reduce the net local funding needed. The cost of the buses will be paid with the combination of clean school bus rebates, funding, and pupil transportation funds in the 25-26 Capital Improvement Program budget.

[00:07:05] I would like to express my thanks to this board and the Board of Supervisors for your continued support in this annual funding. These investments have been crucial in meeting the needs of our schools in both instruction and transportation. The CIP cycle allows us to plan for future projects in a strategic and organized way.

[00:07:28] This slide highlights a list of upcoming projects that are not included in the current CIP draft and currently lack funding sources. However, these projects are part of our long-term planning efforts and are projected to need attention in years 8 through 10 of our plan.

[00:07:46] As long-range planning progresses, additional projects may be added. At the October meeting, the board requested that Hermitage High School be moved to year one of our long-range planning list. And as you can see, this change has been made and will be reflected in future CIP presentations.

[00:08:04] In October, the board requested staff begin examining potential solutions to address schools over and or under capacity to ensure the most prudent use of space across the division. Staff continue to review capacity and student enrollment projections as well as growth and development due to construction.

[00:08:25] In addition, we will examine how new school construction projects and new capacity will be available in future years might best be leveraged in addressing capacity needs. Staff will provide additional information and updates as requested to ensure that the board remains informed and confident in the ongoing efforts.

[00:08:43] This concludes the update. We will be requesting the board's approval for the 25-26 CIP in this evening's monthly board meeting. And following that, we will submit the proposal to the Board of Supervisors for consideration during their budget deliberations. Thank you.

[00:09:01] Thank you, Mr. Pritchard. No, just would offer again, I know we've shared this information previously with the board or happy to answer any questions before we move on to the monthly meeting where we'd be, again, seeking your approval of the funding request, which would then go on to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration.

[00:09:23] Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. All right, we'll begin dialogue to my right with Mrs. Kinsella. Thank you so much, Chair Atkins. I know we discussed this when it was originally presented, just my full support for the capital improvement funding for mechanical roofing, technology, bus and vehicle items, and I just want to thank my colleagues as well as the team for prioritizing Hermitage in year one of our long-range planning, though I know we don't have funding yet.

[00:10:00] I just want to thank you for prioritizing that school as a steward of dollars. I would not be a good steward of dollars if I just recommended small improvements. I believe it would be a waste of money given what needs to be done there.

[00:10:16] I would like to encourage my colleagues and Dr. Cashwell for us to continue having discussions on class sizes as we enter the budget cycle. perhaps adding compliments in some of our schools where the

class sizes are larger than they should be, though I believe we are still under what the state allows.

[00:10:44] Correct, Dr. Cashwell? I would still like for us to continue to look at that, but that's all I have. Thank you, Mrs. Kinsella. Mr. Young? Thank you, Mr. Pritchard, for the presentation.

[00:11:01] fully support the capital improvement plan for 2526. And when it comes to now, you know what, we're good to go. Thank you. Mr. Irving. I echo my colleagues, I'm in full support of the capital improvement plan. And I'd like to highlight again, the how amazing it is that we got the 3.4 or 5 million from the EPA for the 10 electric school buses. And I would like us to continue conversations moving forward about how we can, you know, commit ourselves as a division over the next 10 to 15 years to ensure that we phase out our entire vehicle fleets to have electric and carbon

[00:11:39] neutral vehicles. And I look forward to those conversations. Thank you, Mr. Irving, Ms. Shea. Thank you so much. You know, just reiterating, I appreciate you highlighting at the beginning that what is being voted on tonight is really the approval of next year. So that 28, what is it, 25.6 number, million, is that it?

[00:12:04] And so anything in the long-range plan, while it is really helpful for us to have an understanding of, you know, it's not final until it gets to what we're voting on for the next year. So I appreciate you highlighting those things.

[00:12:22] You still feel like \$10 million for mechanical is a great number for next year? Yes, ma'am. Sufficient? Yes, ma'am. Okay, because we support you, and we support what you need, and we just, you know, want to make sure you have everything you need to make all the things happen.

[00:12:40] Thank you very much. So, thank you. I do want to share a little bit about, I am a little disappointed in not having something more concrete to share with the public. Currently, with respect to boundaries and capacity, I fully understand the staff is not bringing forth any specific recommendations currently, and that we're not ready to make adjustments or decisions at this time.

[00:13:06] But I continue to feel urgency around the concerns that I shared at the October meeting. I think this issue is kind of like trying to eat an elephant, right? It's big, but it's done one bite at a time. And I believe there's an opportunity, as we digest one bite at a time, to have multiple decision points along the way, giving timely solutions within the context of knowing what's coming down the pike with our new building projects from the bond and our rebuilds.

[00:13:40] I know these are hard decisions, but it's incumbent upon us to make hard decisions and have hard conversations to ensure the best learning environments for our students and staff. Perhaps the next step for the board is to look early in the new year at process, procedure, thresholds, et cetera, on how we can tackle these conversations and give transparency and clarity for our communities.

[00:14:07] I continue to feel urgency around the capacity at Freeman and also acknowledge that there are challenges in other part of the county, and I encourage my colleagues to help troubleshoot for their districts and work together. I recognize that some boundary solutions in other parts of the county, and with some of the new buildings that are coming, they are complex, involving multiple boundaries, and they take more time.

[00:14:33] I believe there are viable, straightforward solutions to relieve enrollment at Freeman by utilizing available capacity at Godwin, and these solutions will not create a rippling domino effect to other

high schools or to elementary and middle school boundaries.

[00:14:53] So I look forward to working collaboratively as a board and with staff as how we create guidelines, how we create procedure, how we create policy around this, so that not only in the near context, but as we work further out with other things coming down the pipeline, that we can make decision points together and with staff and for what's best for the community.

[00:15:18] Thank you. - Thank you, Mrs. Shea. Thank you, Mr. Pritchard, for the presentation. The insight really do provide valuable context for our discussions. I also appreciate your team's work in addressing the board's request to examine school capacity and the many factors that go into affecting school boundaries.

[00:15:44] I think all of us here on this board recognize reviewing student enrollment projections plan development across Enrico County is complex and it is a ongoing process. I know this board remains committed to approaching capacity challenges thoughtfully and strategically, understanding that solutions may evolve in stages. While no adjustments are currently being recommended by school administration, ongoing dialogue and consistent communication about

[00:16:17] boundaries will continue. So thank you again. We certainly look forward to much more dialogue, discussion, and data in 2025 as we continue to meet and exceed needs for our students, for communities, and for our staff. So Mr. Pritchard and team, all that to say thank you so much, and the conversation continues. Thank you. We thank you all for your support. Thank you.

[00:16:46] Thank you. And Madam Chair, that concludes items from me. All right. We are going to take a brief recess and then reconvene at 6 p.m. for our public input session.

[00:17:05] Good evening. We will reconvene with our public input session.

[00:17:21] Dr. Cashbaum. Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. John Wack, our Chief Financial Officer, will kick off the budget input session, which is, of course, the final component of our work session. Mr. Wack. Good evening, Dr. Cashwell, members of the board. This is our annual opportunity where we give citizens the chance to come give us what their thoughts are and what our priorities should be during the upcoming budget process.

[00:17:47] If I may have recognized Monique Barnes, who has served as our budget director since July, he's here, along with Mila Morris from the budget office. I just wanted to give just a brief overview of our operating budget and then open the floor to any comments.

[00:18:03] So this screen before you just has our operating budget, our total operating funds for the current fiscal year are \$881 million with our general fund being \$704 million of that. And looking at the revenue sources behind our general fund, about just over 54% are coming from the state with the county providing local funds to make up the balance with a very small component of federal funds. When it comes to spending you can see the vast majority of our budget is dedicated to instruction which is nearly 75% of our general fund budget in the current year. So looking forward this is

[00:18:40] our essential kickoff of our budget process where we're seeking public input and then on January 23rd we'll be presenting the superintendent's recommended budget and then February 13th we'll be asking the school board to hold a public hearing on that recommended budget and then February 27th approve that recommended budget with any amendments at that time.

[00:19:02] Subsequent to that, the county manager's budget will be introduced in March and the Board of Supervisors will take action on the overall county budget. And on April 17th, we'll be back before the school board to seek approval of the adopted budget. Happy to answer any questions or cede the floor.

[00:19:18] Thank you so much, colleagues. Do you have any questions or remarks at this time? Thank you so much, Mr. Wack. At this time, we're going to solicit input from the public on the proposed 2025-2026 budget priorities.

[00:19:39] Anyone who wishes to speak may come to the podium. We ask that each speaker come to the microphone and clearly state your name and school affiliation, if applicable. The use of obscenity or defamation is strictly prohibited and will be ruled out of order.

[00:19:57] Once you've finished speaking, we ask that you write your name and contact information on the sign-in form located on the table in the back of the auditorium. Speakers are allotted three minutes to address the school board. To assist you in tracking your time to address the school board, there is a timekeeping system displaying the elapsed time on the screen.

[00:20:22] Speakers will also receive a notice from me when their time has expired. The school board is here today to hear from you. We will not be responding to speakers' concerns or questions. However, we will carefully consider your comments regarding budget priorities.

[00:20:38] We appreciate your attendance here this evening and for providing your input. The first speaker may come to the microphone. I'll say it one more time.

[00:20:55] Going once, going twice, you may approach the microphone. All right. Hearing none and seeing none, please let the record reflect that we did not have any individual share at this time.

[00:21:12] Moving along to our next agenda item, which is unfinished business. Colleagues, do you have any unfinished business to present today? Hearing none, we'll move forward with new business items. Colleagues, do you have any new business items to present today?

[00:21:30] All right. The next item is the announcement of meeting dates. Our school board's next meeting is this evening at 6 30 p.m. here in the New Bridge Auditorium. This concludes our work session.



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