

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY OF SUFFOLK and SUFFOLK CITY
SCHOOL BOARD**

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 ~ 3:00 P.M.

City Council Chamber, 442 W. Washington Street, Suffolk, VA 23434

Board Members Present:

Tyron Riddick, *Chair*
Heather Howell, *Vice Chair*
Dr. Dawn Marie Brittingham
Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck
Karen Jenkins
Kimberly Slingluff

Board Member Absent:

Phyllis Byrum

City Council Members Present:

Michael Duman, *Mayor*
Lue Ward, *Vice Mayor*
Leroy Bennett
Roger Fawcett
John Rector
Timothy Johnson
LeOtis Williams

City Council Member Absent:

Shelley Butler Barlow

Administrative Staff Present:

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*
Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*
Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*

OPENING OF JOINT MEETING

➤ **Call to Order / Welcome / Introductions:**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Duman. He welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced City Council Members. Council Member Shelley Butler Barlow was absent from the meeting. School Board Chair, Tyron Riddick, introduced the School Board Members. Board Member Phyllis Byrum was absent from the meeting.

City Manager Al Moor, provided a brief overview of the meeting and presenters. Dr. Gordon, Division Superintendent, introduced Mrs. Forsman, Chief Financial Officer and Mr. Terry Napier, Director of Facilities and Planning. Dr. Gordon highlighted the presentations and presenters. Mayor Duman gave instructions regarding the flow of the meeting and presentations. In order to allow sufficient time for questions and answers, each councilman/board member was allotted five minutes to share their comments, questions or concerns.

DISCUSSION

➤ **Proposed SPS School Board FY 2025-2034 Capital Improvements Plan:**

Wendy Forsman provided an overview of Suffolk Public Schools' 2024-2034 Capital Improvement Plan. She explained that the division's CIP is a one year plan for 10 years. Each year, based on new decisions, a new CIP is submitted to the city for consideration.

Terry Napier presented information from the first five years of the CIP. He indicated that the funds allocated for the major systems repair/replacements were transferred to the addition project at NSES, therefore the first three years of budgeted lines in the CIP were blank. Mr. Napier gave an overview of the replacement projects at JFKMS, EFES, KSES, and FGMS, the addition project at NSES, and the renovation project at CCAP. These projects totaled approximately \$144 million for the first five years. He indicated that the replacement projects at NPES and JYMS, the additions project at NRHS, and Operations Facility Phase II project are not in the first five years but show a projected cost beginning in year 6-10 of the CIP.

➤ **Proposed City of Suffolk FY 2025-2034 Capital Improvements Plans:**

Charles Meeks, Interim Budget Director of the City of Suffolk, stated that the CIP is a plan, not a budget, which is developed over a 10 year horizon with an emphasis on the first five years and is updated annually as some projects move forward, some are pushed back, some are eliminated, and new projects are proposed. Mr. Meeks explained the process for funding projects, and provided an overview of the timeline for CIP processing which begins in late summer, final CIP adoption is in April, and that CIP is then included in the City Manager's proposed Operating/Capital Budget. He indicated that the five year plan totals approximately \$383 million across all funds including public utilities, fleet, storm water, transit, and general government projects (school projects are included in this category). Mr. Meeks provided a breakdown of the schools projects in the city's CIP which includes \$88.2 million over the first five years. He then explained where they are currently with the CIP and the next steps which includes a Public Hearing and Adoption by City Council February 21, 2024.

➤ **Student Generation and School Capacity Projection:**

Dr. Gordon introduced Dr. Byrd, Chief of Schools, Mr. Terry Napier, and Mr. Jeff Harris and Mr. Mark Probst, Principals at RRMM Architects and gave an overview as to what will be presented by the team.

Dr. Byrd presented information on the Functional Capacity (FC) process, providing historical enrollment data from 2019 through 2022 and compared them to the current numbers. Dr. Byrd stated that although the projections showed a decline in numbers for EFES, MBJES, and NSES, according to current data, those schools have grown in enrollment. He explained how the Functional Capacity is used to calculate the number of students that can be served in the school setting. He clarified that the Functional Capacity is different from Building Capacity as certain areas would not be included in the "FC" as they were specifically designed for students to flow through (i.e. the gymnasium, auditorium, art rooms, etc.).

Mr. Napier provided background information regarding a study that was conducted and how each school was assigned a Facility Condition Index (FCI). Mr. Probst, explained what an FCI is and how they calculate to get those scores. These scores are calculated by taking the total deferred maintenance cost (the high priority items), divide that cost by the construction cost to replace each particular school (based on an average cost per square foot for construction based on the existing square footage of the building.)

Dr. Gordon provided additional information regarding data (zeros) listed by certain schools. He stated that it was decided that those schools were newer and not recommended to be a part of the review at that time. Mr. Napier, highlighted the following recommendation: Continue replacing aging schools and/or schools currently utilizing mobile units through the CIP process, utilize school building “functional programmatic” capacity based on available instructional space and specific use of those spaces for future planning/development, consider changing City UDO Level of Service standard for schools from building total square footage to instructional square footage per student.

Kevin Hughes, Deputy City Manager, discussed the Cooperative Strategy Study. He reminded everyone of the other studies that were completed, the Facility Study, Projections for Student Growth, a Census (of students) which help provide consistency when working with the development community in gauging costs related to CIP projects. Mr. Hughes stated that due to the difficulties of where the projections will be, the consultants gave four potential outcomes and recommendations. The consultants projected that over about a 10-year period, there could be 672 new students. He said that the projects the schools want to take on are quite hefty and the city would like to provide support and work through the many variables that relates to student projections.

School Board Members and Council Members each had five minutes to ask questions or make comments. Members on both sides were concerned about and asked questions regarding rehabilitation/expansion versus replacement of schools, and the calculation of space for number of classrooms/square footage. They also expressed concerns regarding mobile units not being included in the calculations, the safety of the children using mobile units, and the over capacity of schools. Some members did not agree with redistricting indicating that it will not solve the problem faced by the schools. They agreed that balance and growth are important and both entities must work together to achieve that balance. Comments were made about growth of the city and the areas projecting the most growth, the possibility of walkable communities, being creative with schools and possibly combination of schools, funding for major systems and repairs and the its current funding. It was suggested that the meetings of the two entities and CIP documentation should be submitted to the City earlier in the year. All agreed that the schools and city must work together to ensure safe schools for all students. Dr. Gordon, Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Moor answered questions, provided clarification and/or additional information regarding members questions, comments, and concerns.

Additional conversation ensued between Vice-Mayor Ward and Board Chair Riddick regarding concerns about scheduling joint meetings and meeting more regularly. Mayor Duman provided clarification regarding this concern. He indicated that the goal should be to utilize resources that will accomplish as much as possible for the school system that will upgrade deteriorating systems. He felt that the Education Committee is a great way to work through the various issues.

➤ **Disposition Process of Suffolk Public School’s Property:**

Mr. Moor shared information regarding the Bright Lane project and the Freeney Avenue project. He highlighted two options according to the State Code Section 22.1-129.A. as to how property can be returned back to the city.

Adjournment

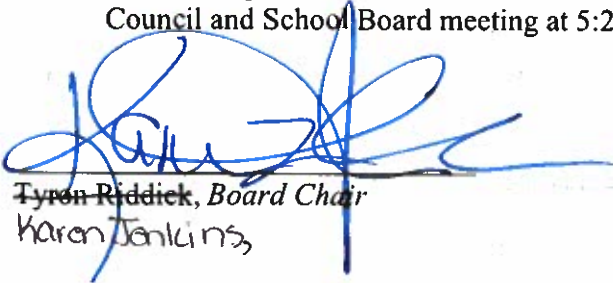
➤ Closing Remarks:

Dr. Gordon provided information and clarification relating to Kilby Shores Elementary and Forest Glen Middle School being located on the same site. He also highlighted the advantage of Joint Meetings taking place in April or October which would allow the City time to act before their CIP is submitted and finalized. Dr. Gordon explained that the Joint Meeting allowed for the understanding of enrollment and capacity which did not include Pre-K, mobile units, etc. so that everyone would be on the same page moving forward when determining the needs of the school division. He stated that the problem with schools is not capacity but condition. He added that although there may be challenges with the budgets, he (Dr. Gordon) and Mr. Moor, would continue working together to come up with creative ideas that would benefit the City and Suffolk Public Schools. Dr. Gordon thanked the Mayor, City Council and the School Board for the meeting.

Mayor Duman asked Mr. Moor to begin working on scheduling the next Joint Meeting. It was suggested that future Joint Meetings to take place on a different day/time from the regularly scheduled City Council meeting. Mayor Duman thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone a happy holiday.

➤ Adjournment of Meeting:

There being no further comments or concerns, Mayor Duman adjourned the Joint City Council and School Board meeting at 5:28 p.m.



Tyron Riddick, Board Chair
Karen Jenkins,



Tarshia L. Gardner, Board Clerk