

COUNTY OF HENRICO, VIRGINIA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
SPECIAL MEETING  
January 22, 2022

The Henrico County Board of Supervisors convened a special meeting on Saturday, January 22, 2022, at 8:30 a.m., in the Board Room of the Administration Building, Henrico County Government Center, Parham and Hungary Spring Roads, Henrico, Virginia.

**Members of the Board Present:**

Patricia S. O'Bannon, Chairman, Tuckahoe District  
Frank J. Thornton, Vice-Chairman, Fairfield District  
Thomas M. Branin, Three Chopt District  
Daniel J. Schmitt, Brookland District  
Tyrone E. Nelson, Varina District

**Other Officials Present:**

John A. Vithoukas, County Manager  
J. T. (Tom) Tokarz, County Attorney  
Tanya N. Brackett, CMC, Assistant to the County Manager/Clerk to the Board  
Cari Tretina, Assistant to the County Manager/Chief of Staff

Mrs. O'Bannon opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

Mrs. O'Bannon and Mr. Vithoukas made opening remarks.

**Schools**

Dr. Amy Cashwell, Superintendent of Schools, presented a celebration of outcomes for Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS), including graduation rates, college scholarships, awards and recognitions, and four state athletic championships. She listed current HCPS Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects, potential projects for the 2022 HCPS bond referendum, and projects for long-range planning during FY 2029-32.

Dr. Cashwell described work at County high schools, including updating the Virginia Randolph campus and renovating and expanding the ACE program at Hermitage and Highland Springs High Schools. Other important efforts are the redesign of all high school programs to transform their culture and learning environments and the creation of the Center for Environmental Science and Sustainability at Varina High School and the Allied Health and Human Service Center at Hermitage High School.

Dr. Cashwell discussed the concept of Community Schools which involves partnerships between schools and various community resources using a Hub and Spoke model, such as the Glen Lea Telehealth Clinic and the Oak Avenue Complex located in the former Highland Springs High School.

Dr. Cashwell turned to recruitment and retention of school employees. The school division has improved in both retention and turnover rates during the current year, in part because of the recent pay plan improvements and a new Talent Acquisition Ambassador.

Dr. Cashwell, School Board members, and staff members responded to numerous Board questions and comments about punch lists at the three new schools opened in 2021; the Oak Avenue Complex; whether to renovate or rebuild Highland Springs Elementary School; the Center for Environmental Science and Sustainability; the morale of Schools employees during the pandemic; mask mandates for students; hospitality and tourism management training; timelines for completion of Tucker High School and its parking lot; future needs at Johnson Elementary School; the timeline for the proposed bond referendum; ways being used to address the teacher shortage; efforts to increase teacher diversity; the Math Science Center at Central Gardens; more data about the quality of education in Henrico schools to supplement discussions about programs and buildings; the benefits of longer-range planning; embedding math and science training in the curriculum; and spending plans for CARES Act funding directed to expanded summer school, bus driver bonuses, PPE, teacher stipends, and special education.

### **Economic Development**

Anthony Romanello, Executive Director of the Economic Development Authority (EDA), briefed the Board about initiatives to meet the extremely high demand for wet lab space and the various locations available to do so, *e.g.*, the former Toys-R-Us building on Quioccasin Road. Mr. Romanello also discussed the use of land at White Oak Technology Park for such uses as pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Mr. Romanello proposed a reduction in the business personal property tax rate for research and development to \$1.00 per hundred to attract new businesses. Mr. Branin suggested a further reduction in the tax rate to \$0.98 or \$0.96 for Henrico to be the tax rate leader, and Board members concurred with the general suggestion.

The Board also supported the EDA's exploration of acquiring or building spec building space of 100,000 square feet or more for potential technology uses.

Deputy County Attorney Andrew Newby explained the concept of a technology zone for the Innsbrook area and along West Broad Street Technology zones are created by ordinance to provide incentives for economic development by technology and other sectors targeted by the ordinance. The ordinance may reduce fees and BPOL taxes and permit partnerships with the EDA for custom incentives. The Board agreed with the staff's suggestion to prepare the necessary ordinance for Board consideration in the March/April timeframe.

Mr. Branin asked if the Willow Lawn/West Broad corridor may be a second candidate for a technology zone. Mr. Vithoukas will add information about the operation of the EDA and CDAs in a future Board work session (along with information about shell buildings).

## **Comprehensive Plan Update**

Rosemary Deemer, Henrico County Planner, discussed the process for updating the County's comprehensive plan. The update is scheduled for Planning Commission and Board consideration in late spring 2024. Her presentation included an analysis of inconsistencies between zoning decisions and the current comprehensive plan, demographic trends, existing site conditions, the County's transportation network, a community survey, and the posting of reports, studies, and the plan.

Terrell Hughes, Director of Public Works, presented a Draft Bicycle Plan which will be a new component of the County's comprehensive plan. The plan will provide more opportunities for bicycle riders whose primary use is for recreation. Mr. Hughes asked for permission to implement the draft plan on an interim basis when roads are being repaved even though the comprehensive plan will not be adopted until 2024, and the Board concurred.

## **Solar Projects**

Ben Blankinship, Division Manager in the Department of Planning, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of solar energy sites. The County has already approved two projects, and more have been proposed.

State law changes now permit siting agreements with solar developers in place of substantially in accord determinations by localities. Staff proposes that the staff negotiate siting agreements with project developers for review by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. Staff proposes that siting agreements seek an upfront payment based on site specific factors and a negotiable annual payment of \$1,600 per megawatt hour to replace lost tax revenue, and it recommends that payments be targeted to pay for specific projects. Staff also proposes that approval for specific projects be granted by provisional use permit to allow the Board of Supervisors to impose necessary additional conditions.

James Beazley, Manager of Local and State Affairs at Dominion Power, told the Board that Dominion Power is working on large scale solar projects and will be happy to work with the County on future projects.

Several Board members supported solar projects on former landfills, particularly the Springfield Road Landfill.

## **Major Utility Asset Planning**

Bentley Chan, Director of Public Utilities, summarized the planned capacity increase at the Water Treatment Facility and construction of the Cobbs Creek Reservoir, the latter expected to be substantially complete by the end of December 2022 with filling a year later.

Mr. Chan discussed planned projects for maintenance and upgrades at the Water Reclamation Facility. The major cost is for filter replacements that will ultimately cost \$73 million, and total project costs will exceed \$100 million.

Mr. Chan stated that the estimated cost of the 10-year capital improvement plan for water and sewer is approximately \$600 million. The County is seeking grant funding from FEMA and other sources to supplement funding by ratepayers.

The County is working to provide wet weather in-system storage to handle climate change.

Public Utilities will expand public sewer facilities to replace failing septic systems in the Greenwood Road area, and Public Utilities is also working on other public sewer projects to be paid with \$64 million in federal funds. Mr. Chan described a program for using County credits to defray connection costs for certain homes in project areas.

Mr. Chan described County testing for PFAS chemicals from fire-fighting foam in wells in the Varina District. The County has tested approximately 260 sites and will start sending letters with testing results early next week. Additional results will be sent as received. To date, PFAS has not been detected in wells at a level creating serious health concerns.

Mr. Chan presented a plan for water extensions in the White Oak water basin at a total cost of \$80 million.

Finally, Mr. Chan asked the Board if it was interested in funding a program for street lighting, mostly on state roads in strategic areas outside of sanitary districts. The strategic areas would be selected based on accident reports from the Department of Public Works. Mr. Yob and Mr. Hughes provided information about streetlights on VDOT roads. Board members expressed support of the proposal.

Mr. Thornton asked the Manager to have County departments study areas like Central Gardens where water is coming into homes.

### **Real Property Assessments and Trends**

*Sheila Minor, Director of Finance, discussed rapid price increases in real estate because of a low supply of homes, low interest rates, and pandemic-related factors. The national trend has been reflected in similar increases in Henrico County.*

State law requires localities to appraise real estate at 100% of fair market value, and Henrico uses mass appraisal as its tool for real estate assessments. Henrico traditionally has an assessment ratio of approximately 90% of fair market value.

Some Henrico neighborhoods have had appraisal increases over 30% during the past year. The average assessment increase for residential properties in Henrico County for 2022 is 10.87% as compared to 4% - 5% increases during the previous four years.

To provide tax relief, Ms. Minor proposed a \$0.02 tax rate reduction as well as a \$0.02 tax credit. Staff also proposed an increase in the net worth threshold for the REAP program from \$400,000 to \$500,000.

The estimated amount of foregone revenue due to the tax rate reduction is \$10 million. A similar amount would be required for appropriation for the \$0.02 tax credit. Under the proposed tax credit program, owners who receive \$50.00 or more will receive a physical check; owners with smaller amounts will see the credit on their June tax bill.

### **Proposed 2022 Bond Referendum**

As part of the Board's continuing discussion about a proposed bond referendum in November 2022, Deputy County Manager Brandon Hinton requested feedback from the Board

regarding the priorities, sequence, and calendar for the referendum. The referendum would seek approval for funding for projects in four specific areas: Schools, Public Safety, Recreation & Parks, and Drainage. The proposed bond amount would be \$514.4 million,

The Schools projects include rebuilds of four schools, a renovation of one school, construction of two new schools, and a new Environmental Education Living Building at Wilton Farm. The Schools portion would cost \$340.5 million.

The Public Safety projects include relocations or rebuilds of three firehouses, improvements at four others, a “no kill” animal shelter, and a proposed training center project. Fire Chief Alex Oughton described and answered questions about the proposed Public Safety Training Center project for training firefighters and possibly police officers about different building floor plans and construction. The Public Safety projects would cost \$85.9 million.

The Recreation & Parks projects include improvements at Three Chopt Area Park, Deep Bottom Park, and Tuckahoe Creek Park. These projects would cost \$40 million.

The referendum would also include \$50 million for various drainage projects.

Mr. Vithoukias indicated that funding for improvements to the Vawter Street Park is included in the County’s CIP for \$5.7 million but that the improvements have not yet been funded. Board members discussed the projected cost, and Mr. Vithoukias, Mr. Thornton, and Neil Luther, Director of Recreation & Parks, will visit the park to assess the needs.

Mr. Hinton described the sequence of projects over a six-year period, the debt service costs, and the proposed calendar for the referendum.

### **Crime and Youth Violence**

Lt. Col. Barbara West presented information about an increase in youth crime nationwide and in Henrico County. Mr. Vithoukias stated that the County will be adding 10 more officers each year for the next five years. Lt. Col. West stated the Police Division continues to actively recruit new officers.

### **Holistic Public Safety Programs**

Jelisa Turner, CARE Team Program Manager in the Division of Fire, discussed the increase in the number of older residents in the County and how the County is looking at non-traditional activities for public safety agencies. There is increased use of Basic Life Support transport ambulances for non-emergency calls, proactive engagement and earlier interventions, multi-agency services, and more use of crisis intervention teams.

### **Greater Richmond Transit Authority Board of Directors**

Mr. Vithoukias indicated that discussions continue about addition of a Henrico member to the Board of Directors of the Greater Richmond Transit Authority and stated he hopes to bring names for appointment shortly.

**Action Item Recap**

Cari Tretina, Chief of Staff, recapped the items for further study and action. Ms. Tretina will send a written record of these items to the Board next week.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia S. Banner". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Chairman, Board of Supervisors  
Henrico County, Virginia