

The joint school board meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on July 13, 2026 at Petersburg High School Cafeteria, 3101 Johnson Road, Petersburg, Virginia. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmxUvaNODIY>

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Samuel Parham, Mayor -- Ward 3
Darrin Hill, Vice Mayor -- Ward 2
Marlow Jones, Councilor -- Ward 1
Charles Cuthbert, Jr., Councilor -- Ward 4
Annette Smith-Lee, Councilor -- Ward 6

Absent:

W. Howard Myers, Councilor -- Ward 5
Arnold Westbrook, Jr., Councilor -- Ward 7 (Arrived Late)

Present from City Administration:

City Manager John "March" Altman, Jr.
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
City Clerk Tangi R. Hill

School Board Members Present:

Kenneth Pritchett, Chairman -- Ward 3
Taccarri Tucker, Vice Chair -- Ward 4
Joyce Proctor, Member -- Ward 5
Adrian Dance, Member -- Ward 7

Absent:

Steven Pierce, Member -- Ward 1 (Arrived after roll call at 4:10 p.m.)
Bernard Lundy, Member -- Ward 2
Hal Miles, Member -- Ward 2

Present from School Administration:

Yolonda Brown, Superintendent
Dr. J. Jacob Martinez, Assistant Superintendent of Operations
Dr. Shamica Long-Lane, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Dr. Yozmin Gay, Chief of Staff
Dr. Matthias Greywoode, Chief Financial Officer
Chelsea Vongehr, Chief Communications Officer
Monique Yates, Director of technology
Michael Lee, Technology Support Specialist
James Hill, Technology Support Specialist
Joel Whiting, Technology Support Specialist
Tearia Davis, Clerk of Board
Jeanette P. Berrios, Administrative Assistant PT

2. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:

A quorum was present.

The School Board confirmed they had a quorum present. The School Board moved to allow School Board member Bernard Lundy to participate virtually in the meeting.

3. WORK SESSION ITEMS

a. FY25 Fund Balance Capital Improvement Projects Funding Request Overview - Dr. J. Martinez

Yolonda Brown, Superintendent of Petersburg City Public Schools (PCPS), introduced the first agenda item. She invited Dr. J Martinez to give the presentation on the Fund Balance Capital Improvement Projects Funding Request.

Jacob Martinez, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, provided a brief summary of the request. He explained the School Division's strategy for the Fiscal Year 2025 Fund Balance and Capital Improvement Projects. the FY2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) identified and verified a General Fund balance of roughly \$4.35 million. They subtracted \$1.7 million for Restricted Extended School Year (ESY) Grant funds, leaving them a net balance of \$2,642,690.04 available for priority capital projects.

Dr. Martinez presented the capital allocation matrix for dividing up that remaining funding, which focused heavily on Petersburg High School, with \$2.36 dedicated to safety and facilities modernization work. The remaining \$277,690.04 would be dedicated to Cool Springs & Lakemont Elementary Schools' door and window upgrades, specifically for architectural design, blueprints, and construction documents. He clarified that the capital improvement projects at Petersburg High School were strictly about compliance and safety.

Dr. Martinez stated that this money directly targeted safety hazards, including the weight room, restored operational use to the gym and showers and resolved code-compliant issues with the fire doors and HVAC. Other improvements included auditorium modernization, athletic field scoreboard replacement, and nutrition cafeteria furniture. He summarized that these infrastructure improvements required zero municipal debt and no tax increase; they were leveraging existing audited funds to aggressively clear life safety citations.

Council Member Smith-Lee expresses enthusiasm about the capital improvement items, particularly the auditorium modernization, noting that the chairs and seats at PHS had not been replaced since she graduated in 1979 – approximately 45 years ago.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if they needed a public hearing to approve these funds.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that Council was not taking action here today, and they would need to do a notice for a public hearing before they could appropriate the funds. If Council was inclined to approve this request, they could adopt a Resolution of Intent to proceed with the supplemental appropriation so the School Division knew they would be approving it after all the appropriate steps were taken.

Mayor Parham confirmed that Council would take up the Resolution of Intent at their July meeting so the School Division could move forward with this work.

b. Walnut Hill ES Construction Project Update - Dr. J. Martinez and Dr. Matthias Greywoode

Dr. Martinez presented the Walnut Hill Elementary School Construction Project update. He stated that for background, in September 2025, they received Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act (PPEA) proposals, and on March 18, 2026, the School Board officially selected the industry-leading design-build team, which was Gilbane Building Company. Their design firm was Moody Nolan, the largest African-American-owned architecture firm in the country, and they brought along MBP, a third-party expert oversight project management consultant.

Dr. Martinez stated that on June 10, 2026, the School Board formally approved them to go into the design phase. They had an estimated \$55 million in construction costs for Walnut Hill. He explained that through aggressive grant acquisition, they had secured around \$25 million in Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) literary loans and an estimated \$16.5 million in VDOE School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) grants, so they had secured funding for about 75% of the project costs, leaving \$13.5 million needed to complete the project.

Dr. Martinez stated that part of this project included exploring whether they could build onto the adjacent lot, and after some careful analysis from the design-build team, it was determined that it would be about \$15 million in extra dollars to achieve that. It would be \$9 million in direct cost escalation and a five-plus-year delay between eminent domain, federal wetland replacement mandates, and wildlife protection. This would change the timeline for the school opening from fall 2028 to spring 2034. He reiterated that these were extreme costs associated with expanding the new school building onto adjacent parcels.

Dr. Martinez said that to neutralize those unpredictable real estate variables, they must build on an approved, properly vetted, privately owned property within the next 30 days or on School Board-owned land. Some examples were the PHS student parking lot, Lakemont facility, Vernon Johns Middle School, and maybe some other places. Exploring those options were where they were right now in the design phase. He further discussed modular buildings or temporary classrooms, which were very modern, fabricated modular temporary space, rather than the old-school trailers.

Dr. Martinez stated that the next steps were to meet these external challenges, which first required figuring out where the swing space was going to be while the new school was being built. This would require additional joint meetings between the Schools and the City leadership, as well as analysis of potential sites and then determination of the financial gap they needed to close for this project.

Mayor Parham noted that there was land available beside Vernon Johns, and there was a lot of undeveloped space back there that was for sale. He would suggest locating the elementary school there, and they could share some facilities with the middle school.

Dr. Martinez confirmed that they were exploring all options, and in their next meeting with City and Schools leadership, they would discuss the analysis from their architect.

Mayor Parham asked how much the extra trailers cost.

Dr. Martinez answered that it was about \$1.25 million annually. This was in addition to the \$13.5 million, and they could not use SCAP or literary loan funds to cover that.

Vice Mayor Hill asked what grades composed this school population.

Dr. Martinez answered that they had 600 students in kindergarten through 5th grade.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if they were looking at the parking lot behind the current school, where there seemed to be space available.

Dr. Martinez reiterated that the design-build team had analyzed that parcel and determined it would cost an extra \$15 million to build on that site due to the wetlands and wildlife protections. Furthermore, it would cause a delay for multiple years.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if they could demolish the current school building and built on that site.

Dr. Martinez confirmed that was the plan. He explained that the most efficient plan was to identify the secured location for the temporary space for students and staff to occupy beginning in January 2027 and then demolish and rebuild at the current Walnut Hill location.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that the current location of the school was a great fit, and it being the most efficient approach was an additional benefit.

Council Member Jones expressed concern that relocating students to a temporary space would be disruptive to their education and unnecessary considering the current Walnut Hill was still standing. He said that he did not understand why the timeline would be longer if they located the school on one of the other sites where they had available space to build on. They could start building on those sites today without interruption, which he thought should cost less. He supported looking at existing School- or City-owned sites to build on. He added that it would be reasonable for the School Division's comprehensive plan to include future plans for rebuilding all of the schools in the next 10 to 20 years so they could prepare for that. He reiterated that if there was a City site that the School Board identified as appropriate for a new school campus, he urged them to let Council know and they would give it to them.

Council Member Cuthbert expressed his gratitude for the information presented today. He agreed that one of the big issues here was the location of the elementary school. He agreed with the Vice Mayor that the Wakefield and Boulevard location was best because it was centrally located, which was strongly in its favor. He said that he thought that building a new school in the current location would allow them to make the most efficient use of the land, and avoid future uncertainty as to how to best utilize the old building. He said that he was certain the School Board had thoroughly analyzed the issue and determined the best location, but he would like to hear more about their reasoning.

Steven Pierce, School Board member, stated that the School Board had previously discussed everything they were discussing now, in addition to multiple other scenarios. They wanted to make sure the school was built in an area where the City could see it and was involved, and a site their citizens were familiar with and were supportive of, which was why they chose to build the new school on the same site as the old building. He noted that they would not be disrupting education at all because the students would move to the temporary modular classrooms immediately after winter break, and the only outstanding issue was creating the bus loop for the temporary campus.

Council Member Cuthbert thanked Mr. Pierce for explaining the foundation of the School Board's recommendation. He said that he understood the frictional factors associated with the adjacent lot, and he was wondering if they could find a work-around by avoiding the wetlands and habitat. He asked what the adjacent parcels could be used for in terms of other educational facilities.

Dr. Martinez clarified that to build on that parcel, it would still require an additional \$13.5 million, bringing the total cost to almost \$30 million. It would also push the schedule out, which came with its own cost escalations.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if there were any cost-savings if they broke the project down into phases. He asked what the adjacent parcels would be used for.

Dr. Martinez explained that the only reason or purpose they would acquire those parcels was to build on top of it to keep the students and staff at the remaining Walnut Hill. He said that once they built a new structure, they could take down the old structure and create a parking lot or fields where it was at right now.

Council Member Cuthbert suggested that the adjacent parcels would be great as athletic fields or playground facilities, and it may not cost \$15 million if they designed it correctly.

Dr. Martinez stated that if City Council provided the funding, they could make it happen. He noted that they were also working with the state, and the SCAP grant was time-sensitive. If the schedule was pushed out further, they could potentially lose state assistance.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if dividing it into a phased approach and exploring the possibility of athletic fields would slow the process down.

March Altman, City Manager, stated that there was an opportunity to continue to move forward so they did not lose time or funding, while continuing to look at the future utilization of those fields by the Schools and the City.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he would welcome exploration of that possibility, which would allow students to benefit from having recreational facilities and without infringing on the wetlands or sensitive habitats.

Council Member Jones recommended their approach focus on strategically locating the school, which may require looking at other properties. He said that just being centrally located should not be the prime reason for building it there, and he questioned whether the elementary school was truly centrally located to anything. He emphasized that they owned property that was free for them to build on, and this would allow the kids to stay at Walnut Hill while the new school was being built. He said that there was always potential to build a new school on the Walnut Hill campus sometime in the future.

Mr. Pritchett asked if City Manager Altman could work with Dr. Martinez to identify the properties the City owned.

City Manager Altman replied yes, absolutely. He said that they had multiple sites that may be appropriate for a new elementary school. If the consensus of Council and the School Board was to build a new school and keep students at the current elementary school, they would need to find another site. He noted that another reason for keeping the school on the same site was to maintain their current school zones. Ultimately, much of the property owned by the City was only in one area, which would take this elementary school out of its current neighborhood.

Mayor Parham noted that the old hospital site was a prime location due to the amount of land and need to repurpose the land. He added that the old Walnut Hill site could potentially be the location of a future early childhood development center, which was desperately needed in the City. He said that he would coordinate City staff to work with Dr. Martinez and identify potential locations, and they could have another joint meeting to determine the best site. He agreed they could not afford cost escalations associated with delayed timelines.

Mr. Pritchett asked Dr. Martinez how much time the state had given them for construction.

Dr. Martinez acknowledged that the state had been very gracious as their project timeline had changed, and he was constantly in contact with them to assure they were continuing to work on this project. He said that his action at this point would be to tell their design team to press pause until they determined

what the new site would be. Then, he would reach out to the state and follow up with the Council and School Board. He said that due to the circumstances, he believed the state would continue to give them grace.

City Manager Altman asked if it was possible to design an elementary school that was not site-specific and could be used as a blueprint for any site. He noted that the VDOE literacy loan required 100% design drawings before they could receive funding.

Dr. Martinez said that he would definitely look into it, but he would say the chance was slim.

c. FY27 State Budget Update - Dr. Matthias Greywoode

Matthias Greywoode, Chief Financial Officer of Petersburg City Public Schools, presented the update. He said that his goal was to give a clear, plain language picture of what changed in the state budget, what it meant for Petersburg, and how it affected their FY27 General Fund state revenue. He reported on the key changes in the state budget allocation: the total allocation increased from \$53.6 million to \$54.9 million; the City contribution decreased from \$16.07 million to \$15.23 million; federal and other revenue stayed exactly the same.

Dr. Greywoode explained that with the \$1.33 million in new state revenue, \$1.086 million of that was required by state law to fund the 4% salary increase for standards of quality (SOQ)-funded positions. This left only \$242,000 that was truly discretionary. The School Board already had approved a 3% raise for all employees effective July 1, and on July 15, the Superintendent would recommend adding another 1%, bringing everyone to the full 4%. He said that with regard to the City's contribution, the compensation and classification study was \$2.79 million, but after the state's contribution, that request dropped to \$1.45 million. The City's base education contribution increased slightly due to composite index rate changes, so the total City request went down by \$843,000.

Dr. Greywoode stated that the bottom line was that they were not asking the City to fund the full compensation and classification increase; they were asking the City to fund only the portion that the state did not cover. He stated that with the updated request with the 4% adjustment, the remaining funding gap for the School Division was \$2,103,612. With the comp and class implementation excluded entirely, the gap would be \$654,474. He said that final numbers would be available in July and incorporated into the September consolidated budget amendment.

Mayor Parham confirmed that Council was prepared to give the \$843,000, so the School Division could build their budget to include the comp and class study implementation. He stated that they wanted to ensure their teachers were compensated fairly and at a premium, so they could continue to improve student learning. He expressed his confidence in the School Division to do what was necessary to improve student achievement. He stated that Council would have a special meeting to appropriate that funding by the end of this month.

Superintendent Brown thanked City Council for committing to that funding, which would be crucial to recruitment and retention of their employees. She stated that paying top dollar for talent mattered, and she appreciated Council supporting the School Division and wanting the best for their kids.

Mayor Parham noted that Richmond was currently struggling with budget shortfalls, which was something Petersburg wanted to avoid. They needed to ensure their education system was sound, growing, and had full City support.

Council Member Westbrook asked Superintendent Brown if there were any new initiatives for their school nutrition programs. He noticed there were no changes in the budget with regard to that item, and he wanted to make sure they were making progress there.

Superintendent Brown said that they had previously discussed some ideas for improving their nutrition program, and they planned to leverage their existing funding to implement that. She said that Dr. Martinez worked closely with the state's nutrition program, and while they may not be receiving any additional money for it, they would be repurposing existing money. She explained that their long-term vision was to diversify what they offered so kids would definitely eat lunch and take advantage of their free lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Dr. Martinez stated that he had interviewed a number of students about their opinions on eating the cafeteria lunches, and he wanted to analyze how they could provide their USDA nutritional requirements while making it more appetizing and encouraging students to eat a variety of foods. He said that they had multiple pilot programs and was very excited about the menus planned for the upcoming year. He assured Council that they would continue to analyze and improve their nutritional program to ensure their students enjoyed eating nutritional foods from the cafeteria.

Superintendent Brown added that a future budget may include a request for additional nutrition initiatives if something did not fall within the USDA and state funding guidelines. Currently, they were trying to repurpose what they had now to make the best use of those dollars.

Council Member Westbrook asked how many grant writers they had in the School Division.

Superintendent Brown replied that they had no grant writers.

Council Member Westbrook asked if they could possibly receive more grant funding if they had a dedicated grant writer.

Superintendent Brown explained that each department director was constantly looking for grants, and the state was always in contact for grants that Petersburg could apply for. While they did not have a grant writer, the administration's charge was to pursue as much outside funding as possible.

Dr. Martinez confirmed that all department directors served as program managers, constantly looking for grants and checking state bulletins for new funding opportunities.

Council Member Westbrook said that department heads had multiple other job duties, so they may not have the time to search out every grant, and this could ultimately result in them missing out on funding. He asked if having a dedicated grant writer could potentially be more effective in seeking out and implementing all available grants and partnerships.

Dr. Greywoode agreed with Council Member Westbrook's perspective, although he must acknowledge the budgetary limitations for an additional grant writer position. He explained that just this week, they had paid for two staff members to take courses to become certified grant writers, and in the future, they would work on hiring someone full-time to apply for grants. He stated that with regard to the previous question on the nutrition program, they had a significant fund balance in their nutrition budget, and they were developing a capital improvement plan specifically for their nutrition program.

Council Member Westbrook emphasized the importance of providing a variety of healthy food options for their kids, including vegetarian and vegan meals.

Council Member Jones stated that they were investing in excellence, not adequacy. This was the only way they would receive excellence from their schools. He said that with regard to the nutrition program, he recalled from his school days that everyone had a very positive attitude toward school lunches, and it was only when the USDA implemented strict guidelines that kids started throwing away their lunches. He stated that home-cooked meals were what every child wanted. He asked Council if they could consider using one of the City's existing grant writer in the Police Department to help the School Division find more grants.

Mayor Parham asked City Manager Altman if it was possible for the City budget to include a grant writer position to the School Division. He noted the importance of grants in helping the City flourish and save taxpayer dollars, and that should extend to the School Division as well.

City Manager Altman replied yes, absolutely they could partner with the School Division on their grant processes.

Mayor Parham stated that it was crucial for the City to take advantage of all grants they were eligible for, because if they did not get them, other organizations would. He said that they had many children and families struggling with food insecurity, housing, and poverty, and grants may be able to give the School Division more capability with wrap-around services to support their families during their times of need. He emphasized that this was something they must do.

Council Member Jones stated that it would be a good strategy to put a central grants team together and direct them to focus on distinct sectors, such as grants for schools and families. He said that there was funding available for essentially every type of project, and they had already had great success with grants for City infrastructure projects. He emphasized that the School Division should have a grant-writing team working every day of the week, looking for grants to fill in any gaps.

Dr. Greywoode clarified that the current funding gap faced by the School Division was \$2,103,612 when they included the 4% adjustment for the comp and class study. He stated that this was based on the current appropriation of \$13,126,500 from the City. If they were to implement the comp and class study, they would need \$2.1 million to fill the gap.

d. PCPS Compensation and Classification Study - Dr. Shamica Long-Lane and Dr. Matthias Greywoode

Shamica Long-Lane, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, gave a presentation on the classification and compensation study that was conducted for Petersburg City Public Schools. She stated that Strategic Plan Priority 2, Objective 4 was to increase the retention of staff by working to implement a robust compensation package. In this, they wanted to group jobs with similar requirements into the same salary grade, ensuring internal equity and consistency when hiring, transferring, or promoting staff. They also wanted to develop a robust, modern classification and compensation system that was transparent, competitive, and equitable.

Dr. Long-Lane explained that they currently had two salary scales: one for teachers and those who followed that classification, including counselors and librarians, and then the other scale was called their unified scale. Currently, their annual increases were not based on years of experience; increases were added on the entire salary scale based on the approved budget percentage each year. Salary placements were not documented to determine salary placement consistently, and all job classifications were not currently listed within their salary scale.

Dr. Long-Lane stated that the goal in their new classification and compensation scale would be to determine and update all salary scales with defined range minimum salaries, midpoint salaries, and maximum salaries, as well as to provide appropriate salary grades and steps for teachers and those who

fell on the unified pay scales. Additionally, this would allow them to create a placement guide, which would help them determine how salaries were determined from the time that they were recommending candidates all the way through the end of their employment with Petersburg City Public Schools. Teacher salary scales would include salary increases each year as teachers increased their educational attainment.

Dr. Long-Lane stated that their goal, as asked in the previous presentation, would be to get their starting teacher salaries up to \$60,000. As they looked at the new proposed unified scale, this salary scale would include salary increases also in alignment with the continued years of service in that specific classification. Those individuals would still continue to be eligible for the \$1,200 or \$1,900 educational attainment supplement. Their final new proposed scale would be an administrative scale. What differed was that this scale would have an open range versus one that equated to steps. This would allow them to utilize a salary calculator in conjunction with a review of the attained education and experience to determine the salary of their administrators.

Dr. Long-Lane said that having an open range for the administrative scale allowed them to be very competitive as they worked to attract administrative talent to Petersburg. If approved, their starting teacher salaries would move to \$60,000; their employee salary increases would begin at 4% in alignment with the new budget and would average 6.8%, with some employees receiving more and some less, again depending on the number of years and their specific classification. One of their categories of employees was called a resident teacher, which was a teacher who had not yet acquired a license from the Virginia Department of Education, but was working to become eligible. This would move that salary from a flat rate of \$46,500 to \$47,000.

Dr. Long-Lane said that however, their substitute pay rates, part-time hourly rates, and stipends would remain the same. The supplement amounts for educational attainment would still remain flat at \$1,200 and \$1,900. There were individuals who utilized additional supplements because they were taking on additional responsibilities. That would also remain at 2.5% of the minimum of the salary range for the additional duties that they would be taking on.

Mayor Parham emphasized the importance of this classification and compensation study, which was crucial for them to make meaningful progress in the right direction. He stated that the City was committed to getting this right for all of their employees and getting things aligned for future budget years.

Vice Mayor Hill noted that since the City had finally gotten their pay scales right, they now were a noticeably attractive employer and had seen more people from neighboring localities choose to work in Petersburg. He said that it was important to make sure they got the implementation right and did not miss any employees when making these changes. He agreed with the Mayor that Council was willing to support it, but they had reservations about the company that performed the study for the School Division.

Superintendent Brown asked if Dr. Greywoode could clarify the differences between the costs of implementing the compensation and classification study versus the budget without the implementation.

Dr. Greywoode explained that the School Division had requested about \$16 million from the City, and they received \$13 million appropriated. Based on the changes in state revenue, their request to the City had gone down by \$843,000. This meant the current gap between what the City had appropriated and what the School Division needed to fully implement the compensation and classification study was about \$2.1 million.

Mayor Parham asked if the \$843,000 closed the gap on providing the 4% adjustment.

Dr. Greywoode replied no; it reduced the ask from the City by \$843,000. The total amount needed to implement the compensation and classification study recommendations was about \$15 million, but the City had allocated only \$13 million.

City Manager Altman suggested that staff meet and discuss the numbers to clarify the situation.

Dr. Greywoode replied they could certainly do that.

e. 1% Sales Tax Increase - Mr. "March" Altman, Petersburg City Manager

March Altman, City Manager, gave a presentation. He explained that with the adoption of the state budget this year by the General Assembly, it included language that expanded the authority of all Virginia localities, Counties, and Cities to impose an additional 1% local option sales and use tax specifically for school capital projects. The additional 1% was a local option and would be required to be approved by a voter referendum. If it was approved, then they would be able to add an additional 1% to their sales and use tax for school construction.

City Manager Altman stated that the legislation allowed that it could only be used for new capital projects or major renovations; it could not be used to cover previous debt. He said that taking Walnut Hill Elementary School as an example, if they implemented this tax and Walnut Hill construction started after the implementation date, they could use revenues from this 1% tax to pay for the debt service. Additionally, the tax would expire after 20 years from the date of the resolution.

City Manager Altman said that the next steps for this process would include passage of a resolution by Council to authorize the referendum, and this would have to be done 81 days prior to the November 3 election, which would be mid-August. If the referendum passed, Council must adopt an ordinance implementing the new rate 120 days after that adoption that it would become effective, which would be May 2027. This was a local option for them to consider; citizens could vote yes or no on it. Staff's view of it at this point in time was that the additional 1% would generate around \$5 million annually that could be used toward school construction and renovation projects. This would provide an ongoing source of revenue to finance multiple future school construction projects, and staff recommended allowing the citizens the opportunity to vote on the additional sales tax.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that he could not support any additional taxes right now. He said that he thought there was sufficient growth happening in the City that they could identify a percentage of revenues to be dedicated toward the Schools' CIP. He did not support putting this on the ballot, because he doubted citizens would vote to increase anything. He acknowledged the need for the revenue, but he thought the City could identify those CIP funds in their current finances before considering this direction. He said that it was not a good time to do this, especially as they were trying to lower all their taxes.

Mr. Pritchett asked if a certain percentage was required for the referendum to pass.

City Manager Altman replied that it would be a simple majority. He said that the citizens would be the ones to determine whether it would be implemented or not. If they moved forward, he would put the charge on the School Division to rally support for this, considering it was dedicated solely to school construction and renovations.

Mr. Pritchett asked if Vice Mayor Hill was suggesting that instead of going forward with the referendum, the City would enter into an agreement with the School Division to provide that \$5 million.

Vice Mayor Hill replied yes; if they could identify some other area of their current budget, they could look to that. He said that raising taxes on people was not a good idea in this time, in light of all costs of living

rising so much. He said that this would essentially be an increased cost to anything someone purchased in the City.

City Manager Altman noted that the difference from their regular sales tax was that this 1% would be dedicated solely to school construction. He said that if they were to consider taking that 1% from other areas of their budget, aside from the growth they were experiencing in the City, it may require diverting existing revenues. This meant they must determine how to redistribute those revenues.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that he would like to see something done to that effect as opposed to raising taxes. He said that perhaps grants could also be used for school construction and renovations. He said that however, if Council was supportive and the citizens were supportive, they could see how to be creative with this additional tax.

City Manager Altman stated that from his perspective, this was an instance of the citizens deciding if they wanted to impose the tax upon themselves. He said that there were some time constraints, so if they wanted to have it decided in the upcoming election, they must pass a resolution by the middle of August.

Vice Mayor Hill clarified that he did not want to take anything away from the citizens, as it was ultimately up to them.

Taccarri Tucker, School Board member asked if there was an estimate of what the revenues would be if the citizens were to approve the sales tax in the referendum.

City Manager Altman replied that the \$5 million was based on historical sales tax numbers; however, it could increase in the future if additional businesses developed in the City.

Mr. Pritchett asked if the City had a dedicated percentage of casino revenues to be allocated toward Schools.

City Manager Altman stated they did not. He explained that Council had not formally adopted any kind of dedicated funding agreement policy on anything related to revenue because it was difficult to create an agreement and then impose it upon future elected bodies. He said that when they received gaming revenue, it went into one fund with all the other money and was allocated from there.

Adrian Dance, School Board member, stated that their schools were in bad shape and in dire need of improvements, including for their HVAC systems, school buses, and maintenance department. He expressed his support for the 1% tax, which would provide guaranteed funding for their school renovations. Currently, it could be a struggle to identify funding to fix things when they broke down, and they had numerous infrastructure needs that extended into the future. He felt they should allow the citizens to decide if they wanted the 1% sales tax.

Council Member Jones noted that if they kept raising taxes, they may lose people in the City, making the funding much less guaranteed. He stated it was the School Board's responsibility to ensure they kept up their staff and buildings; that was not the City's responsibility to ensure their funding went toward those things. He said that they received adequate funding, so at that point it became a management issue. He said that the City could not afford an additional tax, and the School Board needed to focus on solving the problems with what they had rather than relying on new taxes to solve their long-standing problems.

Mr. Dance said that their core business was teaching and learning; there was no doubt about that. He said that in order to do the things that they needed to do, they needed money. They gave money back to the City because they did not have time to spend it. There were a whole lot of variables that came into play when they were trying to spend money, and when the fiscal year ran out, they had money left over.

He said that just about every school division in Virginia and across the United States had a rainy-day fund. This was trying to establish a rainy-day fund. He stated that he did not believe one penny on a dollar was going to hurt their citizens at all.

Council Member Jones stated that Council should act as their umbrella, so they should not need a rainy-day fund. He said that this was under Council's and the School Board's watch, and they would not let them fail. He said that they had a duty to act and spend the money they had, rather than raise taxes. He said that they already knew what the issues were, so they should know how to immediately spend the money when they received it. He said that if the School Board requested more money because they ran out, the City would provide it. He stated that they were making significant progress, and Council wanted to continue that trajectory. He said that it was unacceptable for them to say there were things they could not do, because all of these goals were possible if they just worked together.

Ms. Tucker said that going back to the compensation and classification study, she would like to know if Council could recommend a specific company for them to use. She recalled from their last joint meeting that Council had concerns about the company they used because their study for the City had been inaccurate. She wanted to emphasize that people were leaving their organization because they did not have the funding for the pay scales, and it should be known that they still needed a resolution to that situation to avoid having to redo the study once again.

Ms. Tucker said that they wanted their teachers to be paid what they were worth, and it remained a huge issue for them to retain their teachers. She asked if Council could help them find a solution so they could assure their teachers their compensation and classification scales would be updated, because so far it had not.

Council Member Jones suggested that the City refer the company that performed their most recent comp and class study to the School Division. He agreed with Ms. Tucker that they should reach a resolution so everyone knew where they stood at this point.

City Manager Altman explained that the City resolved their issue by performing their study internally; they took the baseline work completed by the consultant and solved the rest themselves. He clarified that they were not suggesting any specific company be used.

Mayor Parham explained that the issue they had was that some positions were overlooked for raises because, despite their years of service, a change in position was not accounted for. He said that they must be intentional about paying each employee fairly and to avoid skipping positions in the study so they did not create a morale issue. He said that as the City Manager said, they had to internally identify all the numbers they wanted to reach, and he would recommend the School Division do that work and confirm everyone was cataloged to reach that solid number.

Superintendent Brown thanked Mayor Parham for the information. She explained that after the School Board had directed staff to look into what the comp and class study would cost to bring every teacher up to \$60,000 base pay, she conferred with other superintendents across Region 1, and they recommended Evergreen. This was why they used Evergreen as their consultant, so it was good information to know that the City did not have faith in them while other school systems did. She said that she would discuss potential next steps with City Manager Altman.

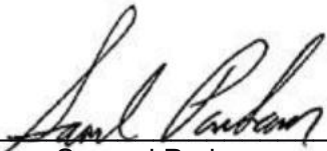
4. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Tucker motioned, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to adjourn the School Board meeting.

Mayor Parham made a motion to adjourn. All members of the Council present voted in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned.

The City Council adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Adopted this the 1st day of September, 2026



Mayor, Samuel Parham

ATTEST:



City Clerk, Tangi R. Hill