

March 26, 2024

// A joint meeting of the Council of the City of Lynchburg and the School Board was held on the 26th day of March, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. at 300 Lucado Place, Stephanie Reed, President, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present:

Present: Stephanie Reed, Chris Faraldi, MaryJane Dolan, Jeff Helgeson, Martin Misjuns,	
Larry Taylor, Sterling A. Wilder	7
Absent:	0

The following School Board members were present:

Present: Atul Gupta, Martin Day, Anthony Andrews, Christian DePaul, Randy Trost,	
Sharon Carter, Martin Day, Letitia Lowery, Atul Gupta, Farid Jalil, Gloria Preston	9
Absent:	0

// In the matter of the Budget, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Crystal Edwards presented the Lynchburg City Schools FY 2025 Budget.

Vice Mayor Faraldi asked whether the budget request would enable LCS to keep Sandusky Elementary open. School Board Vice Chair Dr. Martin Day explained that all the financial planning projections were based on the decision of the School Board to close TC Miller and Sandusky Elementary by fall 2025. He stated that the annual cost for keeping the schools open was more than \$3 million, and the School Board had been informed by Council that they could not afford to keep 11 elementary schools open. He said that they had not produced a budget that was contrary to the School Board's decisions. School Board Chair Dr. Atul Gupta clarified that with the current budget request, Sandusky Elementary and TC Miller would remain open through the upcoming academic year.

Vice Mayor Faraldi asked why the School Board did not request full funding if there was going to be a shortfall from the start related to the \$17 million in COVID-19 pandemic funding. Superintendent Edwards explained that during the pandemic, when LCS received CARES funding, they ran on a lower budget, supplemented by the CARES funding, to reduce the budget impact on the City. She said that since then, in the absence of additional CARES or other

federal funding, they had been working to get back on track with a regularly funded budget, and over the past few years, they had requested incrementally more funding each year to achieve that goal. She said that for the current school year, the goal was to support the schools and not bankrupt the City. She said that they had worked with staff and the City to plan and forecast the next couple years, and they were willing to do the hard work and make the necessary cuts to get back on track in a fiscally responsible manner.

Vice Mayor Faraldi asked why the budget request from the School Board was not fully funding the schools. Vice Chair Martin replied that they believed a request fully funding the schools would not be accepted.

Councilmember Helgeson said that he questioned the cost increases associated with utilities being attributed to rate increases. He said that in order for the cost increase to be associated with rate increases, rates would have had to be increased by 25%. He said that each year, Council voted on the rates, and they had not been anywhere close to increasing by 25%. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Reid A. Wodicka said that he would share the consumption data for water and sewer for the schools after the meeting. He noted that during the pandemic when schools were closed, consumption data would appear much lower.

Councilmember Misjuns asked how many positions were added since 2020. Superintendent Edwards said she did not have that data, but she could provide the total FTEs. Councilmember Misjuns noted that last year, they lost several teaching positions due to late contracts. He asked whether there was a plan to issue contracts by May 1. Superintendent Edwards explained that only when the state and the City issue their final budgets can the schools issue contracts, and in the past few years, the state had been late in releasing its budget. She said that they could draft contracts prior to budget approval if they were confident in the funding they would receive, otherwise, it was difficult to determine the contracts.

Councilmember Misjuns asked if they had considered K-6 elementary schools and converting Sandusky Elementary into a middle school. Superintendent Edwards said they had

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consultants develop potential options for the School Board's consideration, and options similar to Councilmember Misjuns' suggestions did not rise to the level of being presented to the Board. School Board member Randy Trost said that if they did not receive appropriate funding, they would have to close the schools early. He said that the Board wanted the opportunity to evaluate creative ideas to prevent closing the schools, but they would not be able to do so unless the \$43 million request was approved. School Board Chair Dr. Atul Gupta said that they did not have the capacity or funding to rebuild either of the schools. He said they had considered the consolidation of middle schools, but they lost 77 seats by converting three schools into two, so they did not have the space to consolidate in the upcoming school years.

Vice Mayor Faraldi asked whether the \$43.7 million funding request would achieve the 3% salary increase for teachers. Dr. Gupta said that it would if they received the projected state funding, however, currently, it only provided for a 1% bonus.

// Mayor Reed called a five-minute recess at 05:26 p.m. to allow Dr. Edwards to respond to a school alert.

// The meeting reconvened at 5:38 p.m.

Councilmember Helgeson asked whether there had been savings associated with the electric buses and if they were working. Dr. Edwards said that they only had one electric bus at the moment, but they were awaiting more. She said that the electric utility costs were not associated with the electric buses.

Councilmember Wilder asked for information about the impacts on the community without the non-SOQ positions and without the additional \$3 million. Superintendent Edwards said that if they did not have additional teachers, they were not in a position to maintain the support they received from class size reduction. She said that class size reduction funds allowed them to have class sizes between 19 and 24 students for K-3. She said that removing the non-SOQ positions would result in higher class sizes. She said that in regards to the \$3 million in funding, without it, they would have to make additional cuts, and one option was to

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close a school in the fall. She said that a rushed school closure would have significant negative impacts on the community.

Mayor Reed apologized to the parents and teachers fighting to keep their schools open. She stated that the rollout for school closures has not been good and that they've been put in the middle of what feels like a game.

// Council held a discussion regarding the Lynchburg 25 Year Population Change and the Lynchburg ADM as a Percentage of Population. Councilmember Helgeson provided a presentation outlining the increasing City population and a decreasing school enrollment.

// The meeting recessed at 6:12 p.m.

// A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Lynchburg was held on the 26th day of March, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Stephanie Reed, President, presiding. The following Members were present:

Present: Stephanie Reed, Chris Faraldi, MaryJane Dolan, Jeff Helgeson, Martin Misjuns,	
Larry Taylor, Sterling A. Wilder	7
Absent:	0

// Councilmember Misjuns led the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

// In the matter of Bid Openings, Agenda Item #1, Council opened bidding on the Appalachian Power Company Easement at 3405 Odd Fellows Road. Clerk of Council Alicia L. Finney announced that as a result of an advertisement placed in *The News and Advanced* on February 29th and March 8th, one bid was received on March 20th from Appalachian Power Company. Ms. Finney read the bid into the record. There were no additional bids, and Mayor Reed closed the bidding.

Councilmember Wilder motioned, seconded by Councilmember Taylor, to accept the sole bid from Appalachian Power.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi	7
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Noes: 0

// In the matter of Recognitions, Agenda Item #2, Mayor Reed read a proclamation recognizing National Community Development Week. Grants Coordinator Gabrielle Bateman accepted the proclamation.

// In the matter of the Consent Agenda, Agenda Item #3, Councilmember Misjuns requested to correct the three uses of "Senator Bob Good" on page 21 of the November 28, 2023 minutes to "Congressman Bob Good". Vice Mayor Faraldi motioned, seconded by Councilmember Dolan, to approve the November 28, 2023 City Council meeting minutes as amended.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi 7

Noes: 0

// In the matter of Public Works, Agenda Item #4, Council held a public hearing in consideration of adopting Ordinance #O-24-018 authorizing an easement to Appalachian Power Company at 3405 Odd Fellows Road. Council received a summary of the request from Deputy Public Works Director Clay Simmons. ApCo needs to obtain an easement across the City property located at 3405 Oddfellows Road to provide permanent power to the new Police Department headquarters. A grammatical correction was made on page 2 of the proposed ordinance.

There was no one to speak in favor or opposition, either by phone, email, or in-person, so the public hearing was closed and the matter rested with Council.

Vice Mayor Faraldi motioned, seconded by Councilmember Taylor, to adopt Ordinance #O-24-018.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi 7

Noes: 0

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #5, Citizen Phillip Stump who previously signed up was not present.

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// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #6, Citizen Robert Flood addressed Council regarding the fight at Heritage High School and what needed to be done about it. He said that the superintendent should not be forced to resign due to the fight, and the City should stop trying to find parties to blame for the problems. He said that they should instead come together and find solutions.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #7, Citizen Michael Bremer addressed Council regarding the importance of public education. He said that public education was a public good, and quality public education benefitted everyone. He said that Council should consider the long-term value of the schools and fully fund the LCS budget request.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #8, Citizen James Citty was not present.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #9, Citizen Kacey Crabbe was not present.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #10, Citizen Christopher Glover was not present.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #11, Citizen Randy Dunton was not present.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #12, Citizen Nettie Webb, representing Save Our Schools, addressed Council regarding the failure of the school board and administration and the upcoming budget. She requested Council to increase funding for LCS. She said that despite promises from the School Board that positions will not be cut, LCS teachers and staff would lose their jobs due to the decreased funding. She said that there was no trust between the teachers and administration, and there was no transparency. She said that ultimately, the students were harmed by Council and the School Board blaming each other for the shortfalls in the school system.

// In the matter of Finance, Agenda Item #13, Council considered adopting Resolution #R-24-019, authorizing the issuance of not to exceed \$76,950,000 of General Obligation Public Improvement Refunding Bonds, Series 2024, and introducing Resolution #R-24-020 authorizing

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appropriations for issuance costs. Mayor Reed stated that the item was presented to Council during Business Item Briefings on March 12, 2024.

Vice Mayor Faraldi motioned, seconded by Councilmember Taylor, to adopt Resolution #R-24-019 authorizing the issuance of not to exceed \$76,950,000 of General Obligation Public Improvement Refunding Bonds, Series 2024. Vice Mayor Faraldi said that he appreciated how staff had structured the authorizations, which would result in about \$6 million in net savings for the life of the bonds.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi 7

Noes: 0

Vice Mayor Faraldi motioned, seconded by Councilmember Helgeson, to adopt Resolution #R-24-020 authorizing appropriations for issuance costs.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi 7

Noes: 0

// In the matter of Public Works, Agenda Item #14, a second reading was held and Council considered adopting Resolution #R-24-021 approving the City of Lynchburg's Flag Display resolution. Mayor Reed stated that the item was presented to Council during Business Item Briefings on March 12, 2024.

Vice Mayor Faraldi motioned, seconded by Councilmember Taylor, to adopt Resolution #R-24-021. Vice Mayor Faraldi said that the resolution was an opportunity to standardize how the City presented, displayed, housed, and handled flags.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi 7

Noes: 0

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// On the motion of Councilmember Misjuns seconded by Councilmember Helgeson, Council elected to enter into a closed session to discuss the investment of public funds connected to proposed energy storage system siting agreements with a private party, where bargaining is involved and where if made public initially, the financial interest of the City would be adversely affected, and to receive legal advice in connection with the same, pursuant to Sections 2.2-3711(A)(6) and 2.2-3711(A)(8) of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following voice vote was recorded:

Ayes: Reed, Helgeson, Misjuns, Dolan, Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi 7

Noes: 0

// The meeting was reopened to the public.

// Vice Mayor Faraldi made the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Lynchburg has convened a closed meeting on this date, pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of The Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2 3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by City Council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Lynchburg certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by Council.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Helgeson, and Council, by the following recorded vote, adopted the motion:

Ayes: Wilder, Dolan, Helgeson, Reed, Faraldi, Taylor, Misjuns

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Noes:

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// The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Clerk of Council