

September 11, 2017s

A Special Joint Work Session of the Danville City Council and the Danville School Board convened on September 11, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. in the Galileo Magnet School, 230 South Ridge Street, Danville, Virginia. Council Members present were: James B. Buckner, L. G. "Larry" Campbell Jr., Mayor John B. Gilstrap, Vice Mayor Alonzo L. Jones, Dr. Gary P. Miller, Fred O. Shanks, III, J. Lee Vogler and Madison J.R. Whittle (8). Sherman M. Saunders was absent (1). School Board Members present were Sharon Dones, Steven Gould, Terry Hall, Jeffrey Hubbard, Renee Hughes, Dr. Ed Polhamus and Dr. Philip Campbell.

Staff Members present were: City Manager Ken Larking, Deputy City Manager Earl Reynolds, City Attorney W. Clarke Whitfield Jr., Assistant City Attorney Alan Spencer and City Clerk Susan M. DeMasi.

Also present were: John P. Thomas of DecideSmart and A. Tyler St. Clair.

Mayor Gilstrap noted the target areas for the City are Crime, Grow Danville and Education. After a Joint Retreat with the School Board, they identified goals and items they wanted to address; they also wanted to get a strategic plan and noted that is where they are going tonight. School Board Chair Renee Hughes echoed what Mayor Gilstrap said, the School Board is glad to meet again with the Council, believes it is going to be a very productive meeting, and is looking at the next steps.

Mayor Gilstrap noted Sherman Saunders is still having a few health problems and thought he would be released to come home today, but they decided to keep him one more night.

Mr. John Thomas noted in a past meeting with community leaders, his opinion was this area is poised for the future, but it can't get there with its current culture around education. If that culture can't be changed, there is no way for this community to compete with the neighbors to the south or to the northwest. Ms. St. Clair reviewed what was done at the joint retreat in February. The goal of the retreat was that the two bodies would be brought together to create a joint vision for public education in the City and to come up with some strategies to work on it together. Ms. St. Clair explained they also wanted to achieve agreement on partnership roles and some steps for moving forward with it.

Ms. St. Clair reviewed her PowerPoint *Danville City Council and School Board Joint Retreat Purpose* (a copy of which has been retained in Laserfiche in the City Clerk's folder *Presentations to Council*) and noted after the group had a conversation about what vision the City needs to have for public education, to make sure to accommodate the changes the City is experiencing, but propel the City successfully to achieve that future. Ms. St. Clair noted a vision statement needs to be inspiring, and the group was asked to create a transformational vision for Danville public education, think about where the City has been, the opportunities it has and come up with some phrases and sentences that describe the way they want their public education to be. The Danville Public Education Vision is "A Destination School System." If Danville Public Schools is a Destination School system, it has education that prepares students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy; a mindset that education is an asset that enables individuals to move beyond where they are today; education that enables Danville to be a great place to raise a family (again), keep the children in Danville and have well-educated children here; the schools and businesses need to work together to have a workforce that is ready to work in this community in the way that it is evolving. The business community needs to work together with the schools so they are mutually prepared for the

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opportunities it has. The group also said the school system needs to be strong at its core and it needs to be able to survive and thrive in change.

Dr. Miller noted he did not remember the 2037 part of the vision, that is twenty years, Danville has to do better than that. Ms. St. Clair noted it came from how they did the exercise at the joint retreat, participants were told to think twenty years out, past being elected, and imagine it as if it were there. Ms. St. Clair noted with the elements of the vision identified at the retreat, they worked together as a body to identify what it is they are going to need to do and change in order to achieve that. The group had a brainstorming effort to try to identify all the issues that were associated with that vision. From that, they identified target areas to work on that might be a part of that vision including facilities, human capital and engagement, student development, funding, positive perception of the Danville Public Schools, academic programming and performance, and strong Council/School Board relationship.

They talked about the working relationship, what kind of strategies should they use about their relationships, and what do they need to remember as they move forward with the education vision. The next piece, what bold steps will move that vision forward, is where the group starts to take it more to strategic planning, figure out the targets, what are the clear outcomes, what kind of goals fall there, and what kind of action plan goes with those goals. The School Board, as the top policy body as it relates to public education, has the responsibility to set the framework in place with the desired direction, the policy issues that are associated with that, identifying the top goals and making sure about those outcomes and clear about where they need to go. The staff has the background in education and the expertise to bring together a good plan to achieve the outcomes that are hoped for and also to help refine those. There are other key stakeholders, people in the community, businesses, parents, other people that care about public education that perhaps need to be involved at the right place. What is the role of the City Council and School Board together; they need the entire plan to be endorsed and owned by the School Board, need for City Council to see it and both bodies to say, yes, this is where they want to go going forward.

Ms. St. Clair reviewed the Highlights of the Master Planning Steps:

Step 1. Public Education Master Planning Assessment. Conduct individual interview with School Board Members to gain strategic direction on needs/issues; gain understanding of desired direction of school system and policy issues to be addressed to achieve it; and identify overall direction, needs, goals and agendas for Steps 2-4.

Step 2. School Board Master Planning Session. Conduct master planning session with School Board to develop collective Master Plan policy framework; develop outcomes, needs/issues/solutions to achieve outcomes, relationships needed to foster success; develop Master Plan framework for future strategic efforts of school staff members and other key leaders that are to be engaged in further defining goals/action plans /accountability.

Step 3. School Staff Master Planning Session. Convene school staff in master planning session to develop comprehensive Public Education Master Plan; work from School Board's outcomes and direction; use professional knowledge and expertise in crafting more detailed action plans to achieve vision; action plans to include specific steps/responsibilities/timetable to ensure accountability; works groups may be used to complete actions plans in areas where further information or involvement of others is needed.

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Step 4. Review and Implementation. Superintendent provides proposed Danville Public Education Master Plan to School Board and City Council for appropriate reviews and endorsement; School Board, school staff, and stakeholders who have accountability of results will implement Master Plan, to include monitoring and reporting of progress.

Mr. Thomas noted Danville is on the cusp of an opportunity to do something significant, and what they have done is extremely considerable and complementary work; where it goes from here is entirely dependent on the School Board and Council. If the culture in this community about education is going to change, the School Board and Council are the change agents. They have to reach the constituents who may care about education but don't come out to vote; elected officials have to stay connected to those people.

Mayor Gilstrap noted education is very important to him, it is also important to him for the two bodies to develop a strategic plan, develop targets and how they are going to get there. It is important for the School Board to develop this plan and City Council buy into this plan; to get behind it and say they are changing Danville.

Council Member Shanks noted he thinks it is critical timing with the City going to do the budget the way they proposed to do it, prioritize the City's expenses so things like Public Safety and Public Schools can go in a higher priority and look somewhere else to lower the other priorities. Mr. Shanks noted he thinks they are in a critical place in the process, where they could help generate a document like this. But the budget has to be built on the next six months and not the following three months.

Ms. Hughes noted they talked about a time frame, how did Mr. Thomas see the School Board doing this strategic or master planning. Mr. Thomas noted the first step is he and Ms. St. Clair would like to do individual conversations with the members; they will work with Dr. Jones and set a schedule with at least an hour with each member. The faster they can do that, the faster they can put together the agenda they would have as a group. Mayor Gilstrap questioned if the School Board had approved the concept and Ms. Hughes noted they are in agreement that they need one, but as far as steps for scheduling these meetings, they have not done that as yet; that is where they are going from here. Mr. Gould noted they view tonight as a jumping off point.

Mayor Gilstrap questioned how long a master planning schedule is going to take; the City is going to have a really difficult budget year without some plan in place. Mr. Thomas noted he believed they could get the conversation around the key elements and some of those can have tangible numbers to go with them. Ms. Hall noted her agreement with the budget process, not just for Council but for the School Board in developing their budget. It is important they have their strategic plan in place or have some priorities where they want to put the focus. Mr. Thomas noted the first step is to figure out which needs are the most critical and immediately can be attacked; what are the things they want to do and show some successes in the community.

Vice Mayor Jones asked what Mr. Thomas' suggestion was for City Council while the School Board is creating a master plan; Council wants to make sure they are involved and a part of what they doing. Mr. Thomas noted Council, like the School Board, are heard in the community, they can talk about the fundamental changes they are doing and where education fits in the community.

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Ms. Hughes stated what puzzles her a bit that the expectation is that the School Board does the master plan and then the last step talks to stakeholders; in theory she would think that getting stakeholder input at the beginning of the process might make for less reworking. Mr. Thomas noted their experience is that the group has to have a pretty clear perception of what they want to do, then bring in the stakeholders and ask them if they think the School Board has this right, are they missing something; it does allow them some buy-in.

Dr. Jones asked if it was fair to say that the buy in has to be set at the top of the organization, by the governing body and Mr. Thomas explained if the School Board can't come to grips with this, then just set it aside, if they can't go to the community with a bold statement that this is what they want to do in the community and are committed to it. Mr. Thomas noted there is agreement that what they have been doing doesn't work, and the question is, where do they go from here.

Mayor Gilstrap questioned, can they all agree that change is needed and Dr. Miller noted it is critical. Mayor Gilstrap noted if both bodies can agree to that, then what they need to agree to is how do they get there, what does that change look like; they have pretty much defined what they want it to look like. The next step is a plan to do it, and that come from the School Board. Mayor Gilstrap noted three things jump out at him from the review, Trust, Commitment and Working Together, and it is pretty simple what they have to do.

Council Member Campbell moved to adjourn; Council Member Vogler seconded the motion and the motion was carried unanimously.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:25 P.M.

APPROVED:

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK