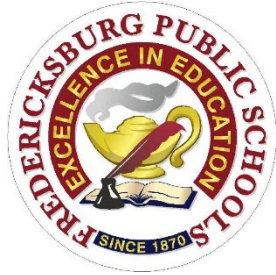


News Release



For more information, contact:
Sonja Cantu, Public Information Officer
540-372-1010
spcantu@fredericksburgva.gov

Fredericksburg City Council & School Board Reschedule Joint Public Hearing on Interim Agreement for March 24, 2022

FREDERICKSBURG, VA – February 4, 2022: The City Council and the School Board have rescheduled the public hearing to consider a school construction Interim Agreement for Thursday, March 24, 2022. The meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. at James Monroe High School. An “Interim Agreement” is the first step of two under the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Public Private Education Act (PPEA) procurement process whereby communities can obtain more cost effective design and construction services from just one qualified team.

The meeting was originally scheduled for January 13, but the City Council paused that meeting to consider a proposal from Mary Washington Hospital to trade the 2300 Fall Hill Avenue building (old hospital) for land at Idlewild. That proposal is currently under study by an independent team from Moseley Architects, funded in part by the City’s Economic Development Authority. This team is committed to unbiased work that will lead to the development of “pros and cons” related to the potential reuse of the old hospital building property.

“Moseley Architects has done a lot of work in Virginia, and in the City, and are familiar with this building as well. They are part of the First Choice team - the schools preferred vendor for the new school being discussed - and they have a demonstrated ability to be creative. They’ll do a thorough evaluation of the potential for the 2300 Fall Hill building, and also the potential for co-location of a school and an office building on the Idlewild land,” said Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw. “It was important to City Council to gather and consider information on all of the possibilities. That evaluation is underway, and it should be complete prior to the meeting on the Interim Agreement.”

The Moseley feasibility study will consider the below possibilities (not in order of preference) for the 2300 Fall Hill Avenue property:

- 1) Evaluation as a potential secondary school
- 2) Evaluation as a potential primary school

- 3) Evaluation as an office use
- 4) Evaluation for Career & Technical Education and associated classroom space
- 5) Some combinations of the above, and a review of it being developed as a larger campus (combined with JMHS), and
- 6) Evaluate Idlewild site for both a school and an office building

The target completion date for the feasibility study is March 4th, which enables information to be available to both the City Council and the School Board as they consider the new school Interim Agreement.

This new schedule will provide an opportunity for the City Council and the School Board to hear public input and consider the Interim Agreement (and the feasibility study) that was originally proposed between the School Board and First Choice, LLC. The Interim Agreement as currently crafted provides funding for partial design work for a community middle school on land the City owns in Idlewild. The Interim Agreement cost is \$1.3 million, and if approved by both the City Council and the School Board, should take ninety days to complete.

Once the work of the Interim Agreement is complete (again, if approved), a final Comprehensive Agreement to complete the design and construct the middle school would need to be negotiated and agreed to by First Choice and the School Board, and approved by City Council. The estimated cost of the full middle school project at this time is approximately \$55 to \$65 million, but the project costs will be further refined through the Interim Agreement process.

School Board Chair Katie Pomeroy adds that “we all know time is of the essence. Delays will have higher associated costs, and ESSER federal funds we plan for Walker-Grant renovations must be spent by fall 2024. Working together with the City Council toward an Interim Agreement is important right now because it will give us the cost of the new middle school. But, it will also keep us in the best position to simultaneously open a middle school in fall 2024 and open the current Walker-Grant Middle School as the third elementary school.”

Both the City Council and the School Board acknowledge existing school capacity issues are real, and a very high community priority.

###