

City of Lynchburg
Task Force on the Future of Education in the City of Lynchburg: PreK-12 and Beyond
December 21, 2020 Meeting Notes
Virtual Zoom Webinar – 10:00 a.m.

Members in Attendance

Dr. Michael Gillette, Chair
Ms. Gloria Preston, Co-Chair
Ms. Susan Morrison, Steering Committee Member, City School Board Member
Dr. Atul Gupta, Steering Committee Member, City School Board Member
Mr. Beau Wright, Steering Committee Member, City Councilmember

Staff Present

Dr. Reid Wodicka, Interim City Manager, City Staff Liaison
Dr. Crystal Edwards, Superintendent, Lynchburg City Schools (LCS)
Ms. Amy Pugh, Deputy Superintendent, LCS
Ms. Alicia L. Finney, Administrative Support

Members Unable to Attend

Mr. Randy Nelson, Steering Committee Member, City Councilmember

Overview of the Charter

Adopted in June 2019, the charter currently states that the Task Force, which is empowered by both the School Board and City Council, will have a quasi-independent structure consisting of members of the community serving as the Chair and Co-Chair. These members will not be associated with either entity; however, representatives of both governing bodies will be on the Steering Committee. The charter also states that the Steering Committee will onboard other community members to the Task Force to work with previously defined subcommittees.

Discussion

The foreword of the charter gives the Task Force a very broad means in which to work, with regards to scope, mission, and values. However, the subcommittees' objectives and deliverables are more specifically defined to certain issues that may no longer be relevant given the effects of the global pandemic. The Steering Committee based discussion around two questions:

- 1) How is it productive for a group like this to move forward?
 - a. Is the Task Force still an appropriate structure for taking on a strategic planning effort of this magnitude?
- 2) If the Task Force is still relevant, in what way do we modify the objectives and deliverables to the subcommittees?

- a. Does the Steering Committee ask for a new charter, a revised charter, or do the governing bodies issue a statement saying the Steering Committee has the authority to alter the charter?

Since the Task Force is comprised of community members who are independent of both empowering bodies, they are uniquely situated to perform thoughtful and potentially controversial analysis, and can serve as a conduit for a holistic approach to education and beyond.

The group discussed the importance of a community swell around students and families in order to recover from the short- and long-term effects of the pandemic. Dr. Edwards cited internet competition within households as a major concern and how these services need to be delivered to entire families who may be working from home or job hunting, not just students. Ms. Morrison stated that the Task Force should also include a social, emotional, and mental health aspect. The schools are now responsible for addressing issues they have not previously been accustomed to, such as food insecurities and providing counseling for students in a new virtual era. These efforts will require a citywide approach. Dr. Wodicka stated that the subcommittees and the expected deliverables should be retooled to be acutely focused on these new issues. He also indicated the city's desire to support the schools' and the community's needs in addressing the short- and long-term effects of the pandemic.

Pertinent and timely issues within the school system and the community have arisen. The group identified three new areas that the Task Force should focus their efforts:

- Equity issues within the education system in regards to technology and needs
- Social, emotional, and mental health wellbeing with wraparound services within the city.
- Changing structures in the delivery of education

Conclusion

The Steering Committee, with input from the schools and city administration, decided that the group is relevant and is distinctively positioned to help bring a neutral perspective to both the schools and the city to mount a unified response to these issues. The Task Force will produce a memo to the School Board and City Council, asking them for their input for the Task Force's new vision. The Steering Committee also noted that if the scope and goal of the charter change, then the team may change as well.

Adjourned

11:17 a.m.

Meeting Notes prepared by: Alicia L. Finney