

AT A GLOUCESTER COUNTY TOWN HALL MEETING, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2023, AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE PAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLA, 5198 T. C. WALKER ROAD, GLOUCESTER, VA 23061:

THERE WERE PRESENT: Phillip N. Bazzani
Ashley C. Chriscoe
Kenneth W. Gibson
Michael W. Hedrick
Christopher A. Hutson
Robert J. Orth

THERE WERE ABSENT: Kevin M. Smith

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Carol Steele, County Administrator
Edwin N. Wilmot, County Attorney
Jack Tuttle, Facilitator

Mr. Hutson welcomed everyone and introduced Board members and staff in attendance. He introduced Mr. Jack Tuttle, facilitator for the meeting.

Ms. Steele then provided a presentation on the bond referendum and the projects included on the referendum. She then reviewed the three focus areas of the referendum to include fire and rescue services, public schools, and public parks. She provided a breakdown for each of the projects to include the description and cost. She reviewed the referendum wording. She advised that if approved the referendum would allow the Board to issue bonds in a maximum amount of \$39,582,993 which would result in an estimated real estate tax increase of \$0.02. She noted the impact of the tax increase on the monthly real estate taxes based on the average home value. She reviewed the real estate tax rates of surrounding localities, noting that the tax rates were impacted by the level of services other localities offered. She noted the projected timeline for the borrowings and the start of the projects. She advised that all projects would be funded by 2031 and completed by 2033. She reviewed upcoming election dates.

Mr. Tuttle stated that there were several staff members with microphones. He reviewed the procedure for the evening would be to allow each person to ask one question before moving on. Once everyone had a chance to speak, the procedure would start over and continue until everyone had an opportunity to ask all their questions.

Citizens asked about the \$11 million for the fire station already in hand, why the referendum was not broken into three questions in order to ask only about fire and rescue, a backup plan if referendum failed, which schools were covered under the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) project, if there would be an energy savings as a result of the HVAC project, and why additional funds were needed for HVAC after ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding.

Ms. Steele advised that the County did not have \$11 million currently available for the fire station. She clarified that the County would have the capacity to borrow those funds without a tax increase in the fall of next year. She noted that if the referendum failed, the Board could choose to borrow through another method to fund

a project. Regarding the HVAC, she reviewed the schools. She noted the amount of ARPA funding the schools had received for HVAC but noted that there were still more needs due to the number of units.

Mr. Hartley from the schools noted that there would be some utility cost savings with newer units.

Mr. Hutson stated that a majority of the Board had voted to have all the projects on one referendum question rather than separating the fire and rescue projects from the others.

A recess was called after a physical confrontation in front of the stage.

After the recess, several comments were made by citizens both in support of and against the referendum and specific projects.

The town hall ended at 9:00 p.m.

Christopher A. Hutson, Chair

Carol E. Steele, County Administrator