
Statement from the Joint Construction Team Regarding the Costs of the New School

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Statement from the Joint Construction Team Regarding the Costs of the New Mason Elementary School, Greene Elementary School and the New Middle School on Hull Street to be Named Later

Richmond, VA - The Facilities Plan adopted by the Richmond City School Board in December of 2017 including the following estimates for new school construction:

- George Mason Elementary School: \$25 million
- E.S.H. Greene Elementary School: \$35 million
- New Middle School on Hull Street: \$50 million

These estimates have been updated now that the procurement process for the design and construction of all three schools has concluded:

- George Mason Elementary School: \$36 million
- E.S.H. Greene Elementary School: \$42 million
- New Middle School on Hull Street: \$62 million

It is now clear the initial estimates, provided in 2017, under-represented the true cost of construction. Both RPS and the city had concerns this might be the case, which is why both entities discussed engaging a third party to evaluate the costs of rebuilding and/or renovating all RPS schools. The RPS administration brought this proposal to the school board on September 4, 2018 (see screen shot below). The cost of such an evaluation was initially estimated at \$100,000, to be split evenly between the city and RPS. Upon further investigation, it was found the price would actually be closer to \$200,000, or more. Given the higher cost, the school board decided not to proceed.

The screenshot shows a slide with a blue header bar containing the text "Joint Construction Team: Monthly Update for Richmond City School Board". Below the header, the title "Proposed Third-Party Assessment of Rebuilding & Renovation Costs" is underlined. The slide contains four bullet points:

- Building on the success of the JCT collaboration, the RPS Administration and the City would like to partner on a comprehensive third party review of the cost to rebuild and/or fully renovate all remaining RPS schools.
- The JCT would oversee the study to ensure that it meets its objectives.
- The cost of the study would be shared equally by RPS and the City. We estimate the total to be no more than \$50,000.
- Data from the study will ensure that RPS and the City have a common set of numbers when it comes to the cost of rebuilding or fully renovating all remaining schools.

Not only were the initial cost estimates low, they also did not take into account the following:

- Construction costs have increased significantly over the past two years.
- The size of Greene Elementary School has been expanded from 650 students to 750 students.
- Per the policy adopted by the Richmond City Council (Res. 2015-R8-15), all schools must be LEED Silver certified, which adds significant expense.
- The current estimates include a 2% contingency, which if not necessary, will go unspent.

Background on the Joint Construction Team

After the passage of the meals tax last year, the City of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools agreed to develop a joint body, the Joint Construction Team (JCT), to manage the process of building new schools. This group includes the CAO, the mayor's chief of staff, the superintendent, the RPS board chair and other representatives from each agency. The JCT meets weekly for one hour and only proceeds on key decisions when both parties agree. JCT representatives provide monthly updates to the school board and minutes from all JCT meetings are uploaded to RPS "Board Docs."

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