Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Notes – November 12, 2013

Present: Cole Hendrix, Bitsy Waters, Ernest Chambers, Nikki Hastings, Steve Runkle, Marijean Jaggers, Elliot Weiss, Steve Campbell, Ann Brown, Matt Trowbridge

Maurice Jones, Allison Linney, Ed Gillaspie

I. **For this meeting:** break into two subgroups, City and Schools, to discuss ideas, options to consider, how to proceed to recommendations.
   a. Discussion: may not get to public meeting before holiday; maybe a framework could be presented before holidays to get public reaction; how much time does commission have? Not every item will be settled in one budget cycle.
   b. City and school staff should review the documents created by commission to ensure accuracy.

II. Groups reported out:

   a. **CITY GROUP:** started with big ideas, given recent history and projections, currently not enough money to sustain programs. Need to focus on how to sustain current programs, not new. Not going to dig into budget for cuts, but instead look for big ideas for revenues. Identify without judgments what are big revenue moves that could be made. Examples: meals, real estate rate, change 40% formula, dedicate to schools portion of Albemarle County revenue sharing funds, look at percent of city budget targeted for schools.
      i. Discussed pros and cons of each idea. Looked at longer term options: if flat or declining enrollment, look to close a school; more collaboration between city and schools; look at payments in lieu of taxes from the University of Virginia. Discussed communication to the community regarding the schools programs and the investment being made.
      ii. Question: What came across as clarity for the group? Answer: getting focused on big levers and what are the options. There was a general consensus on specifics and progress was made.
      iii. Allison: each person should write up your feeling of where committee is on tone and tenor.

   b. **SCHOOL GROUP:** went through historical funding to schools from city. Numbers demonstrate a gap not from adding programs, but from declining revenue. Ideas were presented and discussed: population numbers show large number of students from refugee placements and juvenile offenders. These are high cost students. If City policy attracts these placements, should city fund extra specifically for these? Raise non-resident tuition; crowd source specific programs; discussed operations and reconfiguration, 60MM seems not reachable for whatever advantages would be; bus
services supplemented by city transportation rather than school buses; extend bus replacements to 15 years. Group looked at data related to schools as percent of overall city budget from 1970, 30%; 1990 38%; then fell back to low 30s when commitment to fund 40% was in place. Suggestion to put this data into findings. Other items: UVa should be brought into the tax fold in some way; rental fees, auto taxes (hard to enforce); inspection fee when tenants change; occupancy tax.

III. **General Discussion:** Should commission deal with reconfiguration at all due to time needed to address and complexity of issue. Address operations first. Don’t overthink options, but focus on those that can drive large amounts of money.

IV. **Items to Address:**

a. Allyson and Nikki will figure out how to better share and collaborate on the documents.

V. **Next Steps:**

a. Each member should put down in writing what their thoughts are regarding potential reports, key findings and recommendations to discuss at next meeting.

b. When editing or adding to document: use “comments” if you want to comment on someone else’s work, put your initials next to your own work.

c. Due by midnight on Sunday for posting on Monday. Members can then process this information and be ready at the next meeting to work on the report. Be thinking about key items that need to be discussed further.

VI. **Additional Information Requested:**

a. None