

# Minutes of the Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission December 17<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing

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Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2019

6:00  
PM

George W. Carver Elementary School  
1110 W. Leigh Street, Richmond VA

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## **Members Present**

Pierce Homer (Chair), John Gerner (Vice Chair), Suzanne Long, Mimi Sadler, Michael Schewel, and Dr. Corey Walker.

## **Call to Order**

Pierce Homer called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. These included City Council member Kim Gray.

## **Introductions**

Individual commission members introduced themselves.

## **Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the December 16<sup>th</sup> public hearing were approved.

## **Disclosures**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

## **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**

There were no FOIA requests since the December 16<sup>th</sup> public hearing.

## **Public Comment Period**

There were 16 speakers. Thomas Hogg talked about the rules of economic development and supports the Navy Hill project. Pamela Irving supports the project because it provides opportunities to the city. Jessica Shim is a Richmond Public Schools (RPS) teacher and opposes the project because it diverts funding from schools. Laron Moss supports the project because it brings jobs. Charles Royster also wants more jobs and training. Emma Clark opposes the project and talked about her concerns. Nathanael Harris is a Spectra employee and talked about that company's diversity efforts. Michael James-Derano is a RPS teacher and opposes the project for many reasons, including its impact on school funding. Keri Treadway is also a RPS teacher and is extremely concerned about the project because of its expanded tax increment financing (TIF) district. Margi Rosebery is also a RPS teacher and rejects the project for many reasons, including school funding. Ben Hoyne talked about the lack of tenants for the proposed arena and opposes the project because Wall Street thinks it's a horrible investment. Stephanie Albertson said that the City of Richmond could achieve beneficial ideas in the project, such as the bus transfer center and improving the walkability of that area, without building a new arena. Simon Hetzler said tax money should be spent for community development rather than a new arena. Ben Himmelfarb talked about unsuccessful past urban renewal efforts elsewhere and that Navy Hill developer profits would come from the public coffers. Freddie Robertson works for a workforce development company in low-income areas, and they are excited about the Navy Hill project because of its jobs and training.

Katina Harris is vice president of the Richmond Education Association, and spoke about that organization's opposition to the Navy Hill project. Its statement is at:

[http://www.navyhillcommission.org/Richmond\\_Education\\_Association\\_Opposes\\_Navy\\_Hill\\_Proposal.pdf](http://www.navyhillcommission.org/Richmond_Education_Association_Opposes_Navy_Hill_Proposal.pdf)

Jack Berry spoke at the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, and is President & CEO of Richmond Region Tourism. A letter from that organization supporting the Navy Hill project is attached. Charles Ware spoke at Monday's public hearing and provided a follow-up email message, which is also attached. Other written public comments are also attached. These are from Stephanie Culbertson and Richard Rumrill.

**Latest Information from City Administration and Developer**

This was mentioned during the meeting. Responses to recent Navy Hill commission questions were submitted on December 17th and are available at:

[http://navyhillcommission.org/Navy\\_Hill\\_Commission\\_Questions-Submitted\\_12-17-19.pdf](http://navyhillcommission.org/Navy_Hill_Commission_Questions-Submitted_12-17-19.pdf)

City Administration also provided a memorandum to Julie Timm (GRTC CEO) dated November 30, 2019 that summarizes the status of the process to determine whether a suitable location for a GRTC transfer facility within Navy Hill can be identified and chronology of the discussions to date on the topic of locating a GRTC transfer station within the Navy Hill redevelopment project. This is at:

[http://www.navyhillcommission.org/GRTC\\_Memorandum\\_11-30-19\\_Memo\\_to\\_Julie\\_Timm\\_GRTC\\_with\\_attachments.pdf](http://www.navyhillcommission.org/GRTC_Memorandum_11-30-19_Memo_to_Julie_Timm_GRTC_with_attachments.pdf)

It also sent a copy of Sections 10.3 and 10.4 in the Development Agreement concerning minority business enterprise and emerging small business participation, compliance monitoring and reporting:

[http://www.navyhillcommission.org/MBE-ESP\\_Development\\_Agreement\\_References.pdf](http://www.navyhillcommission.org/MBE-ESP_Development_Agreement_References.pdf)

City Administration also provided a link to the GRTC 2018-2028 Transit Development Plan:

[http://ridegrtc.com/media/annual\\_reports/GRTC\\_Transit\\_Development\\_Plan\\_2018\\_2028.pdf](http://ridegrtc.com/media/annual_reports/GRTC_Transit_Development_Plan_2018_2028.pdf)

**Adjournment****Audio Recording of Entire Public Hearing**

Available at:

[http://www.navyhillcommission.org/2019-12-17\\_Navy\\_Hill\\_Commission\\_Hearing.mp3](http://www.navyhillcommission.org/2019-12-17_Navy_Hill_Commission_Hearing.mp3)

# Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission

## Public Hearing Speakers

Name	General Description of Where You Live
THOMAS HOGG	Henrico Modeland Commons
Katina Harris	Richmond Education Association
Pamela IRVING	Resident 7th district
Jessica Shim	KPS teacher Resident, 4th district
LARON MOSS	Resident of Henrico
Charles Royster	Richmond VA Churchill
Emma Clark	Richmond, VA
Nathanael Harris	Richmond, VA
Michael James-Deramo	Richmond, VA
Ben Hoyne	Richmond VA
Keri Treadway	Richmond, VA
Mangi Potbury	Richmond VA
Stephanie Culbertson	Richmond, VA
Simon B. Hetzler	2nd District, Richmond
Ben Himmelfarb	1st District, Richmond
Freddie Robertson	Rich VA



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[VisitRichmondVA.com](http://VisitRichmondVA.com)

December 18, 2019

Dear Richmond City Council Member:

You have by now heard a broad spectrum of viewpoints about the proposed Navy Hill development. I would like to address the proposal from a narrower point of view – from those of us charged with promoting the Richmond Region to the almost 8 million visitors that contribute \$2.5 billion dollars annually to our local economy. Please consider the following:

- *Hotel capacity.* One of the cornerstones of the development is a 525-room Hyatt Hotel. The addition of such an anchor hotel is critical if the region is going to compete for the hundreds of conferences and conventions that go up for bid each year. Currently, the 600 rooms that are available near the Convention Center are substantially inadequate, putting Richmond at a serious disadvantage and severely limiting the number and size of large meetings that we can compete. Notably, this hotel would be constructed *without* any financial investment or risk from the City, an arrangement that is unthinkable in this day and age. Consider the fact that Norfolk recently agreed to put up \$110 million to help finance the new Hilton. That is the kind of investment that cities around the country are willing to make in order to make the funding of these large hotels financially viable. The Navy Hill development asks for no such City investment and has raised \$900 million of its own financing.
- *Sports tourism.* Tourism related to athletic events is surging. Richmond has seen some of our highest hotel occupancy rates surrounding sports events, which represents 60% of Richmond Region Tourism bookings. Having a first-class arena would present opportunities that we have not seen for decades. In its heyday, the Richmond Coliseum played host to NCAA, CIAA and other intercollegiate tournaments and games as well as those at the high school level. Such events not only attract television audiences, allowing us to showcase Richmond to audiences around the country, but they also attract tourist dollars. Last year's CIAA tournament in Charlotte, for example, brought 140,000 visitors and generated some \$50 million in economic activity to that city. A new arena allows us to compete for that tournament and many, many more like it.
- *Quality of life.* Richmond *needs* a new arena. The Coliseum outlived its usefulness years ago, and based on objective assessments, it is beyond repair. The fact is, arenas are a public amenity that contribute not only to a community's economic vitality but also to its quality of life, attracting sporting events, concerts and large-scale community events that are popular among local citizens. Richmond is the 54<sup>th</sup> biggest market in the country, and we are among just a handful that do not have an arena as a centerpiece of community's life. Why should Richmonders have to travel to Charlottesville or Washington to see major acts and events? Richmond is a first-class city, and our citizens deserve first-class amenities.

Navy Hill represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take Richmond to the next level. If you see fit to reject it, then where do we go from here?

Sincerely,

Jack Berry  
President & CEO, Richmond Region Tourism

## Navy Hill Considerations

Stephanie & Mark Culbertson \_murdoch-Kitt <thekittersons@gmail.com>

Tue 12/17/2019 9:31 PM

To: All Members <members@navyhillcommission.org>

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Culbertson and I live in the 3rd district. Please consider the following:

There are several advantages to the project, but they can be achieved without having the city pay for a new coliseum (especially since there is already JPJ in Charlottesville, the Hampton Coliseum, and the Verizon Center in DC).

Jobs and skilled trades training- have those jobs and skills be applied to new/renovated schools, a bus transfer center, and adjusting the streets of Navy Hill to increase walkability. There is no need for a coliseum.

Bus transfer center- the city doesn't need the NH District Corp. to under take this project.

Improved walkability- the city can get a state grant and fund this without the involvement of the NH District Corp.

If the city has hundreds of millions of dollars it's willing to spend... Using that money in the ways listed above will do more for residents than a coliseum that many will not be able to afford to attend.

Red Flags:

Why aren't private investors willing to undertake this project? If it was likely to make money, it seems like they would.

Why aren't the counties of Henrico, Hanover, and Chesterfield financially contributing? Their residents would also be working jobs generated by this project. Are they shrewd enough to know the numbers don't add up?

Why are there so many stories of ghostwritten letters by prominent people in support of this project? Doesn't this imply that the support for it isn't genuine? The same can be said for the reports that people have been paid to show up to meetings in support of the project.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider these matters.

Regards,

Stephanie Culbertson

## Comments on NHC proposal

Richard and Eniko Rumrill <randerrumrill@gmail.com>

Tue 12/17/2019 10:08 PM

To: All Members <members@navyhillcommission.org>

Dear Navy Hill Commission members,

Thank you again for the time you have taken to inform the public and advise city council on the Navy Hill Corp proposal. I spoke at your December 4 meeting and am writing to clarify and document.

Civil Engineer and project manager Charles Marohn recently wrote “Strong Towns – a bottom-up revolution to rebuild American prosperity”. One point of his book is that throughout human history until around 1950 Humans have used evolutionary processes to develop cities. Marohn argues that the complex systems that have always been a part of human development require evolutionary adaptation, but ‘complicated’ systems actually reduce the human need to adapt because they are designed with the assumption that humans don’t adapt.

In relation to affordable housing, I gave the example to MCV’s West Hospital, a building that MCV wanted to tear down about ten years ago as the building is not easily upgraded as an office building. Blocks away the Art Deco “Central National Bank” and the First National bank building at 823 E. main were rehabilitated into apartments. It is a pretty natural evolution to turn old office buildings into apartments and such conversions can be aided by state and federal historic tax credits. Marohn would argue that such adaptive re-uses do not tax existing infrastructure in a way that would require eternal growth for a town to survive. Marohn makes the interesting argument that Detroit has not failed as a city because of liberal leaders or conservative auto manufacturers, but rather because it saw itself as a complicated system that could be fixed like a watch and not a complex system that would need to gradually evolve to support its’ expensive infrastructure.

The Navy Hill proposal assumes that a central part of a Capital American city cannot grow without a stadium, and that incremental and adaptive choices made by citizens and areas businesses are not as effective as a centralized plan. It is legally and politically hard to sell city or state owned land in Virginia, and this may bias EDA’s towards large projects.

MCV, has clearly supported this project and it would benefit VCU to have expanded housing and office space nearby. However, such big projects discourage the incremental and adaptive risk-taking that has always helped humans to survive. It could be legally and politically complicated for VCU to trade it’s West Hospital building to the city for an empty block that VCU could use for a modern office, but the West Hospital would offer much more interesting views than any apartment buildings built in the middle of the Navy Hill project area, and it would be closer to street activity on Broad and close by in Shockoe Bottom. The Navy Hill proposal, in attempting to design a complete downtown all at once, would not leave space for adaptive human decisions to improve the

area. Only the future knows how much space will be needed for such diverse needs as the Biotech Park, MCV hospital and administration space, housing, restaurants, parks, public transit, future entrepreneurial efforts, and activities to stabilize and subsidize the convention center.

As I understand it, MCV does not pay a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) for its state owned buildings while the state of Virginia does. It makes sense that the city wants taxable properties but it is unfortunate that the city would not want to sell property to MCV (comments in Susanne Long's Nov. 15 Navy Hill Commission meeting). MCV may be on the horns of a dilemma as it desires a larger footprint but is afraid that a larger un-taxed footprint may bring attention to the possibility of paying a PILOT tax, but MCV's burden should not be shifted to the citizens of Richmond.

The Sept 28, 2019 'Economist' special report on Poverty in America states that "Globalization and advances in agriculture mean that modern households now spend only one-eighth of their incomes on food. . . . housing and child care—not food—are the biggest constraints on the household budgets of poor people". Yet the U.S. measurements of poverty still focus on food. Affordable housing is a serious and complicated issue, not one easily fixed by development claiming to need a taxpayer-subsidized stadium. It is good that the Navy Hill Corp genuinely is trying to make housing part of their development package, but the claimed need to develop the whole area with a coliseum anchored master plan could prevent incremental adaptive change that has been the hallmark of recorded human development.

Besides not anticipating adaptive behavior in the city, the NHC proposal also follows the recent trend towards large EDA deals such as the Redskins training camp, Stone Brewery, and the attempted Shockoe Bottom baseball park. Big EDA deals can be over-thought, and un-focused. The Navy Hill project claims to be a big step in affordable housing, VA's best arena, a new dining destination, a new shopping district, a convention center booster, a transfer station, an economic driver, an equitable job creation program, a way to fund schools, and between the lines a way to reduce collective shame of being a smaller city. Bigger isn't always better.

Sincerely,

Richard Rumrill  
105 N. 29<sup>th</sup> Street,  
Richmond, VA  
[randerrumrill@gmail.com](mailto:randerrumrill@gmail.com)

FROM: Charles V. Ware, [stclairware@comcast.net](mailto:stclairware@comcast.net)  
TO: John Gerner, Vice Chair, Navy Hill Commission  
DATE: December 18, 2019  
Re: Public Hearing Comments/Monday, December 16, 2019

Dear Mr. Gerner and Members of the Navy Hill Commission:

I wish to extend comments I made at the public hearing on January 16, 2019, as was requested by members of the commission who were present at that time. As you may recall, I made two requests of the commission:

- 1.--that the commission study coliseum facilities of comparable size to the one proposed by NH Corporation, and:
- 2.--that the commission address questions presented by well-respected architecture critic Edwin Slipek in a November 26, 2019 article in Style Weekly.

I do not have the time or resources to complete a **comparative facilities study** myself. However, as a former AICP certified planner, I have read many articles indicating that coliseum and sports arena projects seldom return promised benefits. The proposed Navy Hill component is the key part of a \$1.5 billion plan that would require dedication of tax revenues from an 80-block TIFF area for a period of at least 30 years. This TIFF area comprises most of the Richmond central business district. Proponents have argued that financing of this project through an IDA, and through the sale of non-recourse bonds, would come at no risk to the city. It is clear, however, that tax revenues that could otherwise fund much-needed infrastructure improvements across the city would be reserved for debt service on this project. It is not clear to me that a new coliseum would defray any of the costs of construction and operation.

As I mentioned in my remarks, there are at least 41 coliseum facilities in the United States with a seating capacity of 16,000 or more. The Navy Hill proponents have provided few details to support their construction cost estimates. An examination of comparable size facilities reveals that there has been a wide range in costs. New York City's Barclay Center cost \$1.1 billion, with an average facility cost in 2018 dollars of roughly \$300 million. Costs are, of course, dependent upon the design of each facility, which is in turn determined by the intended uses {concert use, vs. sports usage for basketball, etc.}. I believe that there is a quite limited market for musical events in large arenas. The Grateful Dead concert era may be behind us. One must consider, also, that there are competing coliseum facilities within an hours' drive of Richmond. The state university subsidized John Paul Jones Center seats up to 14,593, and was constructed fairly recently at a cost of \$178 million, of which a large portion was a gift by a wealthy donor. The Charlottesville facility has received relatively good reviews as a music venue, but it also serves as a university convocation center, and as the home of UVA basketball. In the past year, I have myself attended live music events on more than fifty days this year. It is only slightly more inconvenient for me to drive to Charlottesville for a music event than to drive to downtown Richmond and park.



Richmond is also within close proximity to coliseums in Williamsburg, Hampton, and Virginia Beach. The Hampton Coliseum provides an interesting comparison to the current, disused Richmond Coliseum. Both were built in the same era of civic boosterism, opening in 1969, costing about \$180 million in 2018 dollars, and seating 9,800 for sports events and 13,800 for concerts. The Hampton Coliseum's round design is much like that of the current Richmond Coliseum, and I can attest to the fact that it has horrible acoustics. A comparison of operations of the Hampton and Richmond facilities would seem to be in order.

Richmond is very much in the shadow of Washington, D.C., which is served by a number of coliseum facilities. Despite the fact that the D.C. market for music and entertainment events is much greater than that of Richmond, it should be noted that anyone desiring to see a coliseum-size music event can drive to Washington in less than two hours {depending on traffic}. The commission might also want to examine the operations of the Verizon Center in Washington to see how often it is utilized, and what type of financial return is seen there. However, it again must be noted that the Verizon Center is supported by a major sports franchise, and serves a variety of government event functions. I think that a better investment by the City of Richmond and by the Commonwealth of Virginia would be in a true high-speed rail connection from downtown Richmond {not Scotts Addition} to Washington. This might allow Richmond to develop as a distant suburb of the nation's capital.

Mr. Michael Hallmark of Capital City Partners and Future Cities, and a consultant or partner with NH Corporation, has indicated that he had a role in developing the Kansas City, Missouri Sprint Center. Kansas City might be described as a struggling city, much like Richmond {but considerably larger}. Kansas City constructed and owned the infamous Kemper Center, which was completed in 1974, but collapsed shortly thereafter. This facility was subsequently rebuilt, and now operates as a sports arena {basketball courts for non-professional enthusiasts}. The Sprint Center was opened in 2007, also owned by Kansas City, MO. It cost \$333 million in 2018 dollars, approximately, and has capacities of 19,252 for concerts and 18,972 for basketball. These figures suggest to me that the actual cost of the proposed Richmond facility would be about \$380 million. The Sprint Center was intended to be the home of an NBA expansion team, but has never attracted one. A close examination of the operations record of this facility would seem appropriate.

My cursory examination of coliseum facilities brought my attention to a 17,459 facility in Seattle, Washington that has closed after a public investment of more than \$250 million. There are several coliseum facilities that are moribund, including one in San Antonio, Texas. San Antonio has a vibrant downtown area, and has a stronger local economy than Richmond. However, its coliseum has been described as a white elephant. This is another facility that should be scrutinized by the Navy Hill Commission before a recommendation is made to Richmond City Council.

I was provided a copy of a response to **Edwin Slipek's Style Weekly article**, prepared by Michael Hallmark. I understand that a copy of this response has been provided to the Navy Hill

Commission. I wish to address each point of this reply in turn. I hope that the Navy Hill Commission will also consider and address each point.

First, I would argue that retention of the current coliseum facility is a preferable alternative to the plan advanced by Navy Hill Corporation. It has not been argued that the current coliseum is structurally unsound {like the original design of the Kemper Center}, although it was never a great design, in my opinion. The round design is not ideal for music halls {although it works fine for London's Albert hall}. However, without altering the major structural components, it should be possible to install a better seating arrangement, to provide better and more modern lighting, to lighten the always-gloomy dark brick interior, and to replace outdated restroom and food and drink facilities. This could provide a moderate-size arena facility at a much lower cost. Hallmark did not answer Slipek's first question, however, which was to question who in city government made the determination that the coliseum is obsolete. It is incumbent upon the Navy Hill Commission to consider alternatives to the Navy Hill Plan.

Second, it is clear that Hallmark has provided any real evidence to support the argument that the City of Richmond needs a coliseum. As Slipek said in his article, "there has been little groundswell from individuals or organizations call for (the coliseum's) reopening."

Thirdly, as I stated above, there has been no argument made that the current Richmond Coliseum is structurally deficient, or "operationally wrong (to quote Slipek)." Where is the evidence to support the proposed 17,500 seat coliseum design?

Fourth, the Navy Hill proponents have not provided a detailed analysis of the existing coliseum's operating history, other than noting that in its last year of operation attendance dropped to a total of 320,000, with a stated operations loss of \$512,000. As far as I am concerned, these figures serve only to indicate that Richmond may not need a coliseum. Some of the more recent coliseum events, such as giant truck exhibitions, have presented a major public safety risk, with little or no financial return to the city.

Fifth, it is clear that the Navy Hill project has been developed in a manner that would coordinate with other desired city projects. Including disposition of the Arthur Ashe Center {which as been proposed for demolition}, and the Diamond baseball stadium {also proposed for demolition and replacement}. It is unfortunate that the Navy Hill proposal was not made during the time that VCU developed the Slagle Center. Indeed, the Slagle Center could handle many of the events that might be attracted to a replacement {or renovated} Richmond Coliseum.

Sixth, I have seen no information about which entities were solicited to provide a development proposal for the Navy Hill area. I am also unaware of the makeup of the navy Hill Corporation, nor of the sources of funding for this organization. A major player is the CEO of Dominion Energy, and the Navy Hill plan has been linked in news articles to the construction of a second downtown headquarters tower that would be a part of the Dominion Energy

headquarters. Dominion Energy is a regulated utility. Its income is derived from taxpayers and ratepayers across the Commonwealth. Movement of this regulated monopoly into land development schemes, and particularly ones financed through real estate tax measures that affect Dominion Energy directly, appears unseemly. The Commission should look into any tax benefits that Dominion Energy might gain through the TIFF scheme, and especially whether this would in any way fix the level of taxation in any way that would place other Richmond taxpayers at a comparative disadvantage. Holding out construction of the second tower as a means of gaining approval for a project that might benefit a corporation, or its officers, seems extortionate rather than public-serving.

Seventh, parking will certainly be an issue in the development of the Navy Hill area. I agree that shared-use parking should be an objective of any development plan for the area. The information provided to date by NH Corporation seems to be lacking in detail. How many spaces would be provided, and where? How would these spaces be accessed? What would be done with the existing city-owned parking garages? How would parking needs for city hall, city courts, and local business be met during construction of the Navy Hill project?

Eighth, Slipek asked if the entirety of the Navy Hill plan failed to gain approval, is there a willingness to go forward with components other than the coliseum. Hallmark's response seems to indicate that the NH Corporation would not move forward without the coliseum component.

Ninth, Slipek asks whether a 9<sup>th</sup> Street Marketplace glass-house addition to the Blues Armory should be demolished. It appears that the NH Corporation plan calls for demolition of the glass house, and establishment of a pedestrian-only street on the former location of 6<sup>th</sup> Street. As a Richmond taxpayer and citizen, I would argue that restoration of the Armory, which would provide a music venue of a size which would complement and support existing venues, would provide a useful amenity to Richmond's downtown. It would preserve an historic and architecturally interesting building. Hallmark indicates that the Blues Armory would be attached to the proposed 500-room convention hotel. It is my opinion that the merits of constructing a 500-room hotel with public financing or subsidization should be closely scrutinized. Covenants should be placed on the Blues Armory building and parcel upon which it sits, that would prohibit its destruction in the event that a new hotel transferred ownership in the future, or was itself slated for demolition.

Tenth, Hallmark and Slipek agree that the depressed roadway section of East Leigh Street should be eliminated. Depressed street sections are common in European cities. I see nothing wrong with this one.

Eleventh, Slipek interjected the proposed BridgePark scheme into consideration of the Navy Hill plan. Placing more structures into a whitewater river could present substantial dangers to recreational boaters, like myself, who use this section of the James River. The project would be hugely expensive, and, in my opinion, should not be given precedence over other priorities

contained in the Richmond Riverfront Plan. This is not to say that a reconfiguration of the existing 9<sup>th</sup> Street {Manchester} Bridge to provide a greenway is without merit.

Twelfth, Slipek asks whether the coliseum should be a regional project. Hallmark argues that the city would and should be the sole “beneficiary” of the project. This leaves unanswered the question of whether surrounding suburban jurisdictions might be induced to participate in a coliseum project. If, for example, the existing coliseum was to be retained, and renovated, this might be accomplished through establishment of a regional authority. The current Richmond Convention Center was constructed with regional participation, and might also be placed under the aegis of a regional authority. I personally think that the idea of merging Henrico County and the City of Richmond should be reexamined, and should be an ultimate goal of residents of the city and of the region.

In his thirteenth question, Stipek notes that the John Marshall Courthouse {like many modern buildings} has safety and security deficiencies that were not noted when it was constructed, but which may require its replacement. Hallmark’s response does not make clear whether the John Marshall Courthouse is considered to be within the Navy Hill plan area. He does maintain that the city lacks bond capacity to finance a replacement. Several regional jurisdictions, including Prince George County, Surry County, and Petersburg have relied on state funding {in part} to finance courthouse replacement projects. Hallmark says that the Navy Hill development would improve the city’s credit rating, but that the city will lack the bonding capacity to replace the courthouse until 2023. I would suggest that an adequate courthouse facility, one that is safe for use by all citizens and the employees of this institution, should be the top priority for the city.

Slipek’s 14<sup>th</sup> question asks whether development of North Jackson Ward might be linked to the Navy Hill plan. Hallmark replied that “the boundaries of ‘downtown’ are already decided. Certainly, the current Richmond 300 plans should address redevelopment of these areas adjacent to a proposed taxpayer-funded \$1.5 billion development.

Finally, Slipek’s 15<sup>th</sup> question addressed the role played by the VCU Medical Center in the Navy Hill plan. Hallmark’s response indicated that VCU has played a role in development of the NH Corporation facility. What is unanswered is what entity would own buildings that are prosed for doctors’ offices that would be associated with the VCU hospitals, or what the ownership would be of other VCU facilities that would be relocated. I do hope that the Navy Hill Commission has specific information concerning these points, as it has not been provided to the general public, nor to city taxpayers. Ultimately, the question is whether the Navy Hill Corporation plan provides for the best use of properties owned by the city, or by state agencies, and whether the proposed means of funding this project is sound and in the public interest.