



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
www.rva.gov/office-city-clerk

DRAFT Meeting Minutes Public Safety Standing Committee

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

Committee Members in Attendance

The Honorable Reva Trammell – Chair
The Honorable Sarah Abubaker – Member

Absent

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Vice Chair

Staff and Others in Attendance

Greg Lukanuski, Deputy City Attorney
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

Assistant City Clerk Nahdiyah Muhammad provided information on the appropriate way to evacuate the Council Chamber in an emergency along with public speaker guidelines.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of February 24, 2026, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2026.076](#) February 24, 2026 - Public Safety Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Paper(s) for Consideration**The following ordinances were considered:**

1. [ORD. 2026-057](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$225,388.00 from the Department of Criminal Justice Services and to appropriate the increase to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Police's Operation Ceasefire Special Fund by \$225,388.00 for the purpose of improving community safety.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

2. [ORD. 2026-058](#) To amend Ord. No. 2025-057, adopted May 12, 2025, which adopted the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget and made appropriations pursuant thereto, by (i) increasing anticipated revenues by \$2,000,000.00 from certain fines and fees collected from the Safety Camera Program, (ii) creating a new special fund for the Department of Police entitled the "Safety Camera Program Special Fund," and (iii) appropriating the increase to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Police's "Safety Camera Program Special Fund" by \$2,000,000.00, all for the purpose of funding the Safety Camera Program and Vision Zero Action Plan.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

4. [ORD. 2026-072](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$150,000.00 from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by creating a new special fund for the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response called the "FY26 NG9-1-1 Additional Funding Special Fund," and to appropriate the increase to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response's "FY26 NG9-1-1 Additional Funding Special Fund" by \$150,000.00 for the purpose of implementing a transcription service for radio transmission.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Chief of Police Rick Edwards provided an introduction and additional background information regarding ORD. 2026-057. He explained that the funding from the Department of Criminal Justice Services would support overtime for officers addressing violent crime, the hiring of a gun violence analyst, and additional training for officers. He also noted the upcoming “Spring Forward” initiative, during which additional officers would be deployed in high crime neighborhoods during Richmond Public Schools’ spring break to enhance youth safety.

Chair Reva Trammell inquired about the current staffing levels of the Richmond Police Department.

Chief Edwards reported that the department currently employs 604 sworn officers, compared to an authorized strength of 755.

Jackie Crotts, Deputy Director for the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response (DECPR), provided an introduction and additional background information regarding ORD. 2026-072. He explained that the funding would be used to implement an artificial intelligence based transcription service for radio communications. The system will convert live radio traffic into searchable, time stamped text.

Member Sarah Abubaker inquired whether a human review component would be incorporated to verify the accuracy of the AI generated transcriptions.

Mr. Crotts stated that communications officers will be able to review transcriptions to verify accuracy and reference missed information as needed.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Chief of Police Rick Edwards provided an introduction and additional background information regarding ORD. 2026-058. He explained that the ordinance pertains to the allocation of \$2,000,000 in revenue generated from the Safety Camera Program. These funds will support the establishment and operation of the Safety Camera Program Special Fund, including the Vision Zero action plan, staffing, and operational costs associated with managing the program.

There were no further comments or discussions and Member Sarah Abubaker moved to forward ORD. 2026-057, ORD. 2026-058, and ORD. 2026-072 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Trammell, Abubaker. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

3. [ORD. 2026-059](#) To amend City Code 2-728, concerning the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response, to require the routing of E-911 calls for emergency medical services to the Richmond Ambulance Authority by the Department of Emergency

Communications, Preparedness, and Response.

Patrons: Ms. Trammell and Ms. Abubaker

Tory Maye, Deputy Director of Operations for the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response (DECPR), provided an overview of the proposed ordinance and outlined risks associated with transferring emergency medical dispatch calls to the Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA). He noted that prior changes reduced call processing times by approximately one minute, but raised concerns about increased call volume, the need for callers to repeat information during transfers, and quality assurance issues involving multiple agencies. He added that the current system aligns with national 911 standards and that additional details were included in a memorandum provided to Council.

Public Hearing

Chip Decker, Chief Executive Officer for RAA, spoke in support of the proposed legislation, stating that data shows emergency medical calls are handled more effectively by the Richmond Ambulance Authority. He noted that RAA is an accredited Center of Excellence and that transferring call handling would improve service quality and reduce workload for DECPR.

Member Sarah Abubaker expressed support of the proposed ordinance while emphasizing the need for continued collaboration between the administration and RAA. She encouraged alignment on best practices, potentially with state guidance, to ensure emergency calls are handled both promptly and accurately, minimizing the need for follow-up calls.

Chair Reva Trammell expressed support for moving the ordinance forward to return emergency medical dispatch responsibilities to RAA and acknowledged the demanding work of 911 dispatchers.

There were no further comments or discussions and Member Sarah Abubaker moved to forward ORD. 2026-059 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Trammell, Abubaker. Noes None.

Public Comment Period

Cheryl Nici, Retired Richmond Police Officer, addressed the committee regarding retired public safety employees, sharing her experience with delayed retirement benefits and limited income. She urged consideration of a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for retirees in the pending budget, emphasizing the service and sacrifices of city employees.

Cathy Burrell addressed the committee regarding stronger pedestrian safety measures and stricter accountability for drivers involved in pedestrian accidents. She also shared that her daughter, Lauren, was fatally struck by a vehicle in November 2025, and noted that the driver was not charged with a crime.

Ezaddin Alasad, President of the Yemeni American Association of Virginia, addressed the Committee regarding the impact of “Operation Vaporize” non-emergency business closures, particularly affecting immigrant owned stores. He stated that dozens of businesses have been closed since December, with many remaining closed for several months, resulting in lost income, displaced employees, and increased vulnerability to vandalism and burglary. Mr. Alasad raised concerns about inconsistent enforcement, lack of clear guidance, and limited opportunities for businesses to correct violations.

Brad Hughes addressed the Committee regarding strengthening enforcement of the Move Over law. He shared his personal experience of being struck by a distracted driver while working roadside and highlighted the daily risks faced by first responders.

Presentation(s)

Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA) 2025 Annual Report and Updates

Chip Decker, RAA Chief Executive Officer, presented the RAA 2025 annual report and updates. He reported that RAA responded to over 61,000 calls in 2025, resulting in approximately 43,000 patient transports, with a 98.5% patient satisfaction rate. He noted that reimbursement is only received for transported patients, and that the Authority collects approximately 23% of the \$88 million billed annually due to payer mix limitations, including Medicare, Medicaid, and uninsured patients. He stated that the Authority has requested a \$10 million subsidy for the upcoming fiscal year, but that the proposed budget includes approximately \$7.6 million, along with limited capital funding for ambulance purchases. He emphasized ongoing financial pressures, including rising costs, increased call volume, and potential impacts from changes in federal health care coverage.

[CD.2026.056](#) March 24, 2026 - RAA Annual Report and Updates

A copy of the presentation provided has been filed.

The committee inquired about the following:

- \$1 million funding for purchasing ambulances
- Number of ambulances that are currently leased versus owned
- Fully replaced fleet
- Preferred and optimal fleet size
- Non-emergency service included in expenses and revenue
- Collections improvements
- Benefits of outsourcing billing

Mr. Decker confirmed that \$1 million in current funding is designated for the purchase of two ambulances. He reported that RAA currently operates a mixed fleet, including leased and owned ambulances, and anticipates completing a full fleet replacement in the upcoming fiscal year if additional units are acquired.

Mr. Decker noted that while staffing levels are adequate, operational capacity is limited by the number of available ambulances. Mr. Decker further explained that efforts to improve revenue collection, including outsourcing billing services, have resulted in only modest gains due to payer mix limitations.

Mr. Decker emphasized that a significant portion of services provided are either under reimbursed or unpaid.

Civilian Review Board Progress Update

Joseph Lowery, Manager of the Civilian Review Board (CRB), presented an update on the CRB. He stated that standard operating procedures were approved in September 2025, and the board has eight members: four appointed by Council, and four by the Mayor. Members received classroom and Police Academy training, including ridealongs, with ongoing annual training through the National Association of Civilian Oversight.

Mr. Lowery also stated that the board meets monthly, rotating locations for public access, and is led by a Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary, and that a subcommittee screens complaints for eligibility before full board review, which issues a public summary within 60 days.

Mr. Lowery reported that the CRB engages the community through its website, informational posters, and attendance at council meetings. He further stated the focus remains on completing case reviews, issuing timely reports, continuing training, and improving policies and procedures.

[CD.2026.093](#) Civilian Review Board Progress Update

A copy of the presentation provided has been filed.

The committee inquired about the following:

- CRB processes
- Public involvement
- Notice of reports
- RPD involvement with investigations and reports
- CRB relationship with the Commonwealth Attorney's Office

Mr. Lowery stated that the board reviewed its first case and is putting together a summary report. Once completed, the report goes to the City Attorney's Office and the Chief of Police for review. Mr. Lowery also stated after their approval, the report is uploaded to the CRB website for public access.

He stated that the City Attorney and Chief of Police review the report to ensure accuracy and completeness, and that a representative from RPD discusses the case with the board and if anything is missed or additional information is presented, the chief can request adjustments before publication.

Mr. Lowery further stated the board has no direct interaction with the Commonwealth Attorney's Office, and does not review any of its cases until they are released.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

Richmond Police Department Updates

Chief of Police Rick Edwards provided an update on Richmond Police Department (RPD). He reported that violent crime is down 6%, homicides are down 36%, and non fatal shootings are down 24%. Chief Edwards reported that individual robberies decreased by 29%, and commercial robberies saw a significant 63% decline. He also reported that property crimes remained largely flat, with an overall 1% reduction following a 12% decrease the previous year.

The committee inquired about the following:

- Decrease in commercial robberies
- Illegal activity involving vape shops
- Potential impacts of legalizing marijuana
- Consequences for exhibition driving

Chief Edwards stated commercial robberies are down 63% year to date. He also stated there is a dual track of vape shop inspections and criminal investigations, including RPD's involvement and to address unlawful activity. He further stated RPD and other agencies investigate unlawful marijuana distribution, which is separate from inspections.

Chief Edwards stated that it is unclear how much of an impact legalizing marijuana will have on the communities, who will sell it, and how it will be regulated, noting that this may create potential challenges for the city.

Chief Edwards also stated that coordinated operations with Chesterfield, Hanover County, and the Virginia State Police to target exhibition driving have led to 11 people being stopped, 12 traffic violations cited, 10 misdemeanor arrests, 1 felony charge, and half a dozen vehicles towed. He further noted that impounding vehicles under Virginia Code allows authorities to hold vehicles for up to 20 days, with costs affiliated to be given to the registered owner.

Staff Report

Council staff provided the committee with the March Public Safety staff report.

[CD.2026.096](#) March 24, 2026 - Public Safety Staff Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.