



City of Richmond

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

DRAFT Meeting Minutes Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee

Thursday, September 21, 2023

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

Committee and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Committee Member
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert – Council Member (late arrival)

Staff and Others in Attendance

Gabriel Boisvert, Assistant City Attorney
LaTanja Davenport, Council Budget Analyst
Joyce Davis, Council Policy Analyst
Laura Drewry, City Attorney
Nahdiyah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Nahdiyah Muhammad provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections or amendments to the meeting minutes of the Thursday, July 20, 2023 committee meeting, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2023.275](#) July 20, 2023 - Finance & Economic Development Standing Committee Minutes

Attachments: [20230720 Finance Minutes - DRAFT](#)

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following resolution was considered:

6. [RES. 2023-R050](#) To support, subject to the approval of the Virginia Retirement System Board of Trustees, the election of the City of Richmond to join the Virginia Retirement System and to provide retirement benefits for its eligible employees beginning the first day of January 2024.

Patrons: Mayor Stoney, Mr. Addison, Ms. Robertson and Ms. Newbille

Attachments: [Res. No. 2023-R050](#)

[Explore VRS transition FE committee 9-21-23_Final](#)

[20230925 Formal 2023-R050-Handout Rick Bishop](#)

Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Finance and Administration, provided the committee with an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed resolution.

Roland Kooch, Senior Vice President, Davenport & Company, provided the committee with an overview of the financial components regarding the proposed resolution.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert entered the meeting at 1:37 p.m.

Public Hearing

Richard Bishop, 8th District Council Liaison, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and he provided a handout to the committee regarding cost of living increases (COLA) built into the Virginia Retirement System (VRS).

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Louisa Meyer spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated the introduction of RES. 2023-R050 has prompted valuable insight into what employees would want their retirement plans to look like.

Robin Redmond, Deputy Director of Human Resources, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated there are only seven Virginia municipalities that are not in VRS. Ms. Redmond also stated that entering into VRS will help bring in more employees and make Richmond City an employer of choice.

Jeffery Crawford, Program and Operations Manager for Department of Finance, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that potential employees won't take the risk of working for the city due to it not being a part of VRS.

Rene Almaraz, Director of Procurement Services, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated entering into VRS will attract and retain quality candidates for employment.

Christine Wengloski spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated her decision to transition from working with the state government to the city was difficult due to the city not being a part of VRS.

Matthew Peanort, Business Services Program Manager, Richmond City Police, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and addressed the loss of quality talent due to the city not being a part of VRS.

Meiling Qu, city employee, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and addressed her previous contributions into VRS, and she stated the choices of asset allocations gave employees the opportunity to choose their own retirement track.

Ashley Crews, city employee, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and addressed the loss of quality candidates due to the city not being a part of VRS.

Robert Steidel, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Operations, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated he had 14 years vested into VRS before coming to work for the city. DCAO Steidel also addressed the difficulty in attracting quality employment candidates due to the city not being a part of VRS.

Sheila White, Director of Finance, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that the passing of the resolution will make the Richmond City an employer of choice.

Tyrome Alexander, Director of Human Resources, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated the city entering into VRS will make the city a top employer of choice.

Rachel Berry, Human Resources Leadership and Development Specialist, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that the city has a multi-generational work force that should have the choice to enter into VRS.

Jessica Singer, city employee, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated VRS offers stability and better funding opportunities due to having a COLA. Ms. Singer also stated that entering into VRS will give her the opportunity for better security for retirement.

Donetta McQueen, city employee, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that her contributions going into VRS will have better financial gain and more retirement stability.

Diveda Palmer, Human Resources Training and Development Division Chief, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that during her onboarding process the discussion of retirement benefits became an issue. Ms. Palmer also stated that the city could use VRS as a employment recruitment tool.

Megan Field, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Senior Policy Advisor, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that the current retirement plan is the least generous she has seen in any locality.

Leonard Sledge, Director of Economic Development, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that the city will benefit from entering into VRS in the recruitment of quality employees.

Sharon Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Housing and Economic Development, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that entering into VRS will help the city maintain and recruit top talent.

Bobby Vincent, Director of Public Works, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that entering into VRS will help the city maintain and recruit top talent.

April Bingham, Director of Public Utilities, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated the employee experience is closely tied with customer experience and entering into VRS will make sure that quality employees are retained to continue to deliver services to the city.

Darryl Rivers, Department of Public Utilities Programs and Operations Supervisor, spoke in support of RES. 2023-R050, and stated that entering into VRS will allow city employees to maintain their retirement future.

Carl Scott, Richmond Coalition of Police (RCOP) Vice President, requested the committee to continue consideration of RES. 2023-R050. Mr. Scott stated the transition from RRS to VRS is monumental, and that incomplete data adds more questions to the policies. Mr. Scott also stated that more questions need to be answered before transitioning into VRS.

Bill Pantele, RCOP representative, requested the committee to continue consideration of RES. 2023-R050. Mr. Pantele stated that the transition to VRS is very complex and should not be rushed.

Chris Waldron, Richmond City Police Department, spoke to his concerns regarding RES. 2023-R050, and stated his concerns about the city having potential difficulty in maintaining employees due to employees being able to transition to different localities that offer VRS.

Keith Andes, Richmond Professional Firefighter Association IAFF Local #955 President, stated his concerns regarding RES. 2023-R050, and stated additional employee informational meetings should be scheduled before moving forward with the transition into VRS.

Councilor Katherine Jordan inquired if city administration could speak to providing additional information sessions to answer employee questions regarding transitioning to VRS. Member Jordan also inquired about implications of having a January 1st start date versus July 1st.

Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Finance and Administration, stated the transition into VRS can wait until July 1st, but would require city administration to reanalyze all of the financial components. DCAO Joy-Hogg also stated that there is an email account in place to provide answers to further questions. DCAO Joy-Hogg further stated that city employees who choose to transition into VRS will have the opportunity to have individual training and counseling sessions with VRS. DCAO Joy-Hogg noted that over 1,000 employees were in attendance over the course of several information sessions.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson stated that the transition to VRS is a complex process and stated her appreciation to city administration for undertaking the transition. Ms. Robertson also stated that she would like for all city employees to have all questions answered to make the transition easier.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert stated that she wanted to make sure that front-line employees who could not attend information sessions are given the most updated information to make their choices. Ms. Lambert also stated she was informed that supervisors of front-line employees did not allow them to attend information sessions.

Chair Cynthia Newbille asked for clarity regarding upcoming transitional steps into VRS.

DCAO Sabrina Joy-Hogg stated that once the transition is made to VRS, employees will have to opportunity to meet with financial advisors to make the best informed choices for their retirement. DCAO Joy-Hogg also stated that current employees will have one year to choose to move into VRS.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2023-R050 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and was unanimously approved.

The following resolution was considered:

5. [RES. 2023-R048](#) To express the Mayor's and City Council's support, should the voters of Richmond approve a referendum for the development and operation of a destination resort and casino in the city of Richmond, for the dedication of gaming tax revenue received from such destination resort and casino to the establishment and funding of a Child Care and Education Trust Fund, and to appropriate funding of approximately \$14,000,000.00 for the construction of new early childhood care centers at T. B. Smith Community Center and Southside Community Center, \$8,000,000.00 for Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities projects across the city, and an immediate investment of \$4,500,000.00 into the Child Care and Education Trust Fund to expand access to affordable early childhood care and education programs across the City, totaling \$26,000,000.00, as soon as Fall, 2024.

Patrons: Mayor Stoney, Ms. Trammell, Ms. Newbille, President Jones, Vice President Nye, Ms. Lambert and Ms. Robertson

Attachments: [Res. No. 2023-R048](#)
[20230921 FED Presentation Res. No. 2023-R048 FINAL](#)

Eva Colen, Manager of the Office of Children and Families, provided the committee with an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed resolution.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Member Katherine Jordan stated she had concerns about a funding source that is not yet available.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert inquired about available North of the James River childcare centers and why the centers are not included in the proposed resolution.

Eva Colen stated there are providers throughout the city that are currently in operation with closed classrooms due to lack of funding available to provide an adequate work force, but that the 8th and 9th districts had no established child care centers.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson inquired about population growth of children ages zero to five years old.

Maggie Anderson, Mayor's Office Chief of Staff, stated that city administration is still trying to gather the data for the population growth.

Eva Colen stated that data set has not been a critical component and the city is only looking at the current population in need of services.

Vice Chair Robertson expressed disappointment regarding city administration not being able to provide the requested data regarding population growth of children.

Jeanna Capito, Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies, Ann Payes, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Thrive Birth to Five, and Robert Bolling, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Child Savers, provided the committee with additional information regarding RES. 2023-R048.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2023-R048 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Newbille, Robertson. Noes 1, Jordan.

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD. 2023-242](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept a donation of a SnapSports mini pitch surface system with goal and lighting installation valued at approximately \$100,000.00 from the United States Soccer Foundation, Inc. and in connection therewith, to execute a Mini Pitch Program Donation Agreement - Fiscal Year 2024 between the City of Richmond and the United States Soccer Foundation, Inc., for the purpose of constructing a SnapSports mini pitch surface system with goal and lighting installation at Oak Grove Playground located at 2207 Halifax Avenue in the city of Richmond. (8th District)

Patrons: Mayor Stoney

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2023-242](#)

Chris Frelke, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, provided the committee with an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Chair Cynthia Newbille stated that this ordinance will help leverage the connection with the Richmond Kickers.

There were no further comments or discussions and Member Katherine Jordan moved to forward ORD. 2023-242 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and was unanimously approved.

The following ordinances were considered:

3. [ORD. 2023-257](#) To repeal City Code § 2-1209, concerning the homeownership incentive program, and to amend ch. 2, art. VI, div. 1 by adding therein a new section numbered 2-1213, concerning the employee first-time homebuyer's assistance program.

Patrons: Mayor Stoney

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2023-257](#)

4. [ORD. 2023-258](#) To amend Ord. No. 2022-284, adopted Nov. 14, 2022, which accepted the second tranche of American Rescue Plan Act funds and appropriated such funds to the General Fund Budget for certain agencies and contingencies, by changing the description and purpose of a priority area in the City's American Rescue Plan Act spending plan from "Covid-19 Administrative Response Reserve" to "Employee First-Time Homebuyer's Assistance Program" for the purpose of providing funding for the implementation of an Employee First-Time Homebuyer's Assistance program instead of for a COVID-19 reserve.

Patrons: Mayor Stoney

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2023-258](#)

Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO), and Paulette Giambalvo, Department of Human Resources Division Chief of Benefits and Wellness, provided the committee with an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson inquired about sources of income and restrictions on area median income (AMI) limits for qualification.

DCAO Joy-Hogg stated city administration would want for the funding to be continuous but that it will begin with funding from the COVID-19 reserve.

Paulette Giambalvo stated city administration will follow the parameters of Virginia Housing Development Authority AMI limits for employees eligibility requirements. Ms. Giambalvo also stated that the AMI for a household of two or less is \$98,400 per year and for a household of three or more is \$119,400 per year.

Louisa Meyer, Office of the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Finance and Administration Senior Policy Advisor, stated she was available to address committee questions and provide requested information.

Member Katherine Jordan stated that the city was facing a fiscal cliff regarding child care and she did not believe the proposed ordinance was a priority for the city at this time.

City administration had continued discussion with the committee regarding the proposed ordinance.

There were no further comments or discussions and Chair Cynthia Newbille moved to forward ORD. 2023-257 and ORD. 2023-258 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Newbille, Robertson. Noes 0. Abstentions, 1, Jordan.

The following ordinance was considered:

- 2.** [ORD. 2023-256](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Memorandum of Understanding for Richmond's Community Climate Funding Table between the City of Richmond and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network for the purpose of funding technical assistance and consulting services for the City to identify climate justice projects and grant funding opportunities.

Patrons: Mayor Stoney

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2023-256](#)

Laura Thomas, Director of Office of Sustainability, provided the committee with an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Chair Cynthia Newbille inquired about the city having the opportunity to receive additional grants.

Laura Thomas stated there will be a presentation given at the Wednesday, September 27, 2023 Governmental Operations Standing Committee meeting where additional opportunities for funding will be announced.

There were no further comments or discussions and Member Katherin Jordan moved to forward ORD. 2023-256 to Council with the recommendation to approve with amendment, which was seconded and was unanimously approved.

Presentation(s)

There were no presentations.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

LaTanja Davenport, Council Budget Analyst, provided the committee with the meeting staff report.

[CD.2023.296](#) Finance & Economic Development Staff Report

Attachments: [20230921 Finance & Economic Development Staff Report](#)

A copy of the staff report has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.