



City of Richmond

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

DRAFT Meeting Minutes **Land Use, Housing and Transportation** **Standing Committee**

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

3:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members in Attendance

The Honorable Nicole Jones – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Andrew Breton – Member

Staff and Others in Attendance

Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Sophie McGinley, Council Policy Analyst
Nahdiah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Danielle Smith, Assistant City Attorney

Call to Order

Chair Nicole Jones called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Nahdiah Muhammad provided information on the appropriate way to evacuate the Council Chamber in an emergency along with public speaker guidelines.

Public Comment Period

Rich Souser addressed the committee regarding concerns about the city's process for reviewing major infrastructure projects and questioned the justification for the proposed north-south Bus Rapid Transit project. He stated that additional context and planning information should be provided before such projects move forward. Mr. Souser also requested an update on the anticipated Department of Public Works briefing regarding the Fall Line Trail.

Thomas Courtney addressed the committee regarding zoning, occupancy, and compliance issues related to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Grove Avenue storage facility. He requested that the city ensure all administrative requirements are met before the facility begins full operations.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the minutes of the May 19, 2026 committee meeting, and the minutes were approved as presented.

[CD.2026.149](#) May 19, 2026 - Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Agenda Amendments

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to continue ORD. 2026-113 to the July 21, 2026, Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

1. [ORD. 2026-113](#) To amend City Code § 11-105, concerning weeds and other vegetation, and to amend ch. 11, art. IV, by adding therein a new section numbered 11-101, concerning definitions, for the purpose of establishing exemptions for Virginia Friendly Landscapes.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Member Andrew Breton moved to continue RES. 2026-R024 to the July 21, 2026, Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

6. [RES. 2026-R024](#) To request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the Department of Planning and Development Review to (i) collaborate with the residents of and stakeholders in the Westwood neighborhood, bordered by Dunbar Street, Patterson Avenue, and Glenburnie Road, to evaluate and recommend appropriate land use, zoning, and policy tools, and (ii) develop community-informed design guidelines and strategies to preserve the cultural and historic character of the Westwood neighborhood and support neighborhood stability, and (iii) provide a written report of such findings and recommendations. (1st District)

Patrons: Mr. Breton

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD. 2026-125](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Standard Project Administration Agreement between the City of Richmond and the Virginia Department of Transportation for the purpose of funding the Chamberlayne Avenue Paving Project.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Kenneth Horak, Paving Division Program Manager for the Department of Public Works, provided an introduction of the proposed legislation, stating that the city was selected to receive 100% reimbursement funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to resurface a portion of Chamberlayne Avenue as a state of good repair project.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2026-125 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinances were considered:

3. [ORD. 2026-126](#) To designate the 6300 Block of Hull Street Road in honor of Eugene and Vivian Mason.

Patrons: Ms. Jones and Ms. Robertson

4. [ORD. 2026-145](#) To designate the 1000 block of North Lombardy Street in honor of Coach Howard D. Hopkins. (3rd District)

Patrons: Ms. Gibson, Ms. Jones and Ms. Robertson

5. [ORD. 2026-146](#) To designate the 2800 block of Fendall Avenue in honor of Reverend A. Lincoln James, Jr. (3rd District)

Patrons: Ms. Gibson, Ms. Robertson and Ms. Jones

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson requested to be added as co-patron to ORD. 2026-126 and ORD. 2026-145.

Chair Nicole Jones requested to be added as co-patron to ORD. 2026-145 and ORD. 2026-146.

Public Hearing

Dr. Lisa Johnson expressed support for ORD. 2026-145. She shared personal experiences and highlighted Dr. Hopkins' more than five decades of service as an educator, mentor, and community leader, stating that his lasting impact on Richmond Public Schools and the community makes the recognition well deserved.

Reverend Wendy Bullock expressed support for ORD. 2026-146. She described Reverend James, Jr. as a pastor and community leader, noting his impact on congregants, formerly incarcerated individuals, and local business owners.

Pierre Johnson expressed support for ORD. 2026-145. He highlighted Dr. Hopkins' long standing impact at Maggie Walker High School as a coach, mentor, and organizer who supported students and school programs over many years.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2026-126, ORD. 2026-145, and ORD. 2026-146 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Presentation(s)

Housing and Business Permitting Timelines

Kevin Vonck, Director of the Department of Planning and Development Review (PDR), presented an update regarding housing and business permitting timelines, stating that permitting efficiency is important for reducing development carrying costs, uncertainty, and delays in bringing projects and tax revenue online. He reviewed the city's permitting process, noting improvements in application intake, plan review turnaround times, and ongoing efforts to meet established performance goals despite increased workload and project complexity. Mr. Vonck also outlined continued process and technology enhancements, including staffing support, third party review capacity, system upgrades, and potential code changes aimed at streamlining approvals and reducing legislative entitlement requirements.

[CD.2026.172](#) Housing and Business Permitting Timelines

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Andrew Breton asked how staff would describe the permitting process for smaller builders and individuals with fewer resources, and whether the city is considering ways to reduce the length of time required for special use permits, in addition to reducing the number of cases.

Mr. Vonck stated that the city supports smaller builders and first time applicants through improved customer service, guidance materials, and increased residential permitting expertise, with potential use of AI tools to further assist applicants. He also noted the use of predevelopment meetings involving multiple reviewing agencies to identify potential issues early and help applicants submit more complete applications. Mr. Vonck added that staff aim to provide initial feedback within about a month and generally complete subsequent review cycles within two to three weeks, depending on applicant response times and project complexity.

Chair Nicole Jones asked what feedback has been received from applicants regarding the permitting process, and how that feedback has influenced process improvements. She also asked how PDR coordinates with the Office of Minority Business Development to help prospective businesses understand requirements before entering the permitting process.

Mr. Vonck stated that staff receives feedback indicating that the permitting process can be challenging, but they use it to identify issues, improve coordination, and strengthen communication through the online system. He noted efforts to distinguish isolated concerns from recurring process problems and adjust workflows accordingly. He added that future opportunities may exist to better align permitting support with business development and community outreach efforts.

Chair Jones inquired about how the city ensures quality and accountability in cases where third party reviewers located outside of Richmond are reviewing local projects, and whether improvements have been made to the process.

Mr. Vonck stated that early issues with third party reviewers have been addressed through improved testing, integration into the city's permitting system, and ongoing audits. He noted that the goal is for applicants to receive the same review quality and experience regardless of whether a project is reviewed by city staff or a third party vendor.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson asked whether permitting workflows can be improved by reducing delays at key review stages and whether zoning changes could reduce the number of special use permits (SUPs). She also inquired about the time and cost impacts of the SUP process and whether internal changes could make the system more efficient and customer friendly.

Mr. Vonck explained that SUP timelines are driven by fixed legislative deadlines for Planning Commission review and City Council introduction. He noted that these schedules require staff to begin preparing applications months in advance to meet set hearing dates. Mr. Vonck added that improvements to the process, including the use of Legistar and standardized deadlines, have helped create a more predictable and organized workflow.

Surplus Land and Affordable Housing

Merrick Malone, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), provided the committee with a brief overview of surplus land and affordable housing, stating that the city is using all available tools to address the housing crisis, including the strategic disposition of surplus properties and development of a pipeline for redevelopment.

Cindy Kong, Senior Project Development Manager for the Department of Housing and Community Development, presented an update on surplus land and affordable housing initiatives, stating that the city is focused on creating affordable and mixed-income housing, strengthening neighborhoods, and reinvesting surplus properties into the community. She provided an overview of two sites, 2503 Q Street and 4929 Chamberlayne Avenue, both currently vacant and slated for a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process, followed by a Request for Proposals (RFP), with timelines extending into 2026. Ms. Kong also outlined the evaluation process, noting that proposals will be reviewed by a five member committee based on affordability, developer experience, design, financing, schedule, and community benefits.

[CD.2026.173](#) Surplus Land and Affordable Housing

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Andrew Breton asked how the city balances revenue generation, affordability, and community benefits when evaluating surplus parcels, including when it is appropriate to consider unsolicited proposals that may expedite disposition. He also asked how such proposals are ultimately selected, including whether the process is handled by a committee or requires City Council approval.

Mr. Malone stated that affordability is the city's top priority when evaluating surplus parcels, with each site assessed individually to balance mixed-income goals, feasibility, and revenue considerations. He explained that unsolicited proposals are reviewed through a competitive process in which a panel makes a recommendation, followed by review by the Chief Administrative Officer before being forwarded to City Council for final action. Mr. Malone added that the city is still refining this process and is considering adding community representation to evaluation panels to strengthen stakeholder input and improve outcomes.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson requested that the committee review additional opportunities to expedite surplus and redevelopment of vacant city properties. She emphasized the need to reduce underutilized land in a landlocked city and expressed willingness to work with administration on process improvements.

Chair Nicole Jones asked whether the property currently zoned Urban Business would require rezoning, and how the ongoing code refresh process could affect its future development. She also requested clarification on the Chamberlayne Avenue property and asked whether HCD is coordinating with the Department of Economic Development on procedures for unsolicited proposals involving vacant properties.

Mr. Malone stated that the current Urban Business zoning allows a two-story mixed use development, but future proposals and community input will help determine whether additional density or rezoning should be considered through the RFP process. He noted that the Chamberlayne Avenue property is a former school building and confirmed that HCD is coordinating with the Department of Economic Development on projects and the development of procedures for unsolicited proposals.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

Council staff provided the committee with the June Land Use, Housing and Transportation staff report.

[CD.2026.176](#) Land Use Staff Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:17 p.m.