



City of Richmond

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

Draft Meeting Minutes Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, May 14, 2026

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee and Other Council Members In Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch - Chair
The Honorable Nicole Jones - Vice Chair
The Honorable Andrew Breton - Member

Staff in Attendance

Whitney Brown, Council Policy Analyst
Keisha Dillard-Brady, Deputy City Attorney
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Kimberly Morris, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Stephanie Lynch called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

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

Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

Presentation(s)

Inclement Weather Shelter (IWS) Review

[CD.2026.133](#) 2025-2026 Inclement Weather Shelter Review

Attachments: [IWS Update - EHS 5-14-26](#)

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Alyson Saylors, Human Services Manager, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, presented an overview of the 2025–2026 inclement weather shelter season and winter storm response.

Ms. Saylors reported the following key points:

- The city operated inclement weather shelters from November through April in partnership with Salvation Army and CARITAS. Due to severe winter conditions, surge shelters were activated for 87 nights, nearly triple the anticipated amount, and shelters often operated at or above capacity in January and February.
- The Office of Homeless Services provided emergency hotel placements and homelessness prevention support for families with children.
- During winter storms Fern and Gianna, the city operated emergency shelters and warming centers for 17 consecutive days, with support from community partners including Greater Richmond Transit Company, the Richmond Public Library, and Feed More.
- Future goals included expanding shelter coordination, improving services for older adults experiencing homelessness, adding outreach staff, updating the regional homelessness strategic plan, and continuing trauma informed care training for shelter staff.

Committee members discussed the city’s partnership with Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and access to vacant public housing units for families experiencing homelessness. Members also expressed concerns that RRHA had many vacant units while families remained in shelters and hotels without access to emergency housing. The committee also discussed funding for emergency hotel placements for families during the inclement weather shelter season. Ms. Saylors confirmed that the current budget included a dedicated line item for family shelter hotel stays totaling approximately \$140,000.

Amy Popovich, DCAO for Human Services, clarified that in addition to the \$140,000 budgeted for family hotel placements, the city allocated another \$514,000 within the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services budget for collective shelter operating costs. She emphasized the importance of distinguishing between public housing units that were temporarily vacant versus those offline for redevelopment projects, and noted that RRHA was required to reserve a certain number of units for emergency placements.

The committee requested additional information from RRHA regarding the number of truly vacant housing units, which units are unavailable because of redevelopment, and how the emergency housing application and placement process works. They closed by thanking Ms. Saylors, DCAO Popovich, and community stakeholders for their efforts during the winter shelter season and acknowledged the challenges of addressing homelessness and emergency housing needs in the city.

Discussion Item(s)

Richmond Public Schools Updates

Jason Kamras, RPS Superintendent, thanked City Council for increasing next year's school funding while also expressing disappointment that the district did not receive its full budget request. Superintendent Kamras also addressed the following items:

- The funding shortfall would require additional cuts, including the closure of the Richmond Virtual Academy and roughly \$800,000 in further reductions. The district is also moving forward with layoffs and furloughs affecting central office staff.
- Enrollment increased by 127 students this year and is projected to grow by another 204 students next year, contrasting with declining public school enrollment trends nationally.
- Demographic shifts within the student population, including decreases in economically disadvantaged students and increases in Latino students, reflect broader changes in population and housing affordability.
- The new Richmond High School for the Arts building is nearing completion, with students expected to move into the facility in late September.
- Upcoming graduation dates for schools across the district, taking place at the Main Library Auditorium and the Virginia Commonwealth University Siegel Center.
- Internal school issues such as bullying and student behavior that may affect attendance and school climate.

Committee members raised concerns about school enrollment trends, student behavior, and long term planning for population growth in RPS. Members also noted that increased rent and housing prices may be contributing to fewer families with children remaining in the city. They also discussed housing affordability as a factor in maintaining and growing the student population.

Shavonda Fernandez, School Board Chair, discussed rapid population and housing growth in the 8th and 9th Districts and its impact on school enrollment in RPS. She noted that the 9th District already had significantly higher student enrollment compared to other districts, and continues to observe substantial residential development. She also emphasized the need for a more proactive and coordinated system with the city to forecast how new housing developments would translate into student enrollment to better anticipate capacity needs.

The committee agreed on the importance of developing a more systematic approach to projecting student population growth tied to new housing units.

Chair Fernandez noted that the upcoming facilities master plan would address some of the growth and capacity projections, and will be brought forward for School Board and City Council review.

Update from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Human Services

Amy Popovich, DCAO for Human Services, presented an update on city Human Services programs and addressed the following items:

- The Office of Children and Families supporting early childhood education and preschool enrollment efforts alongside Richmond Public Schools.
- Older Adult Month activities and upcoming Elder Abuse Awareness Day programming.
- The Greater Richmond Regional Partnership update to the regional 2020–2030 homelessness strategic plan.

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD. 2026-098](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Sixth Amendment to Lease between the City of Richmond, as lessee, and Saul Subsidiary I Limited Partnership, as lessor, for the purpose of enabling the City to continue using 52,411± square feet of the property located at 4100 Hull Street Road for the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services and other City functions.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2026-098](#)

Forwarded to the May 26, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no speakers.

DCAO Amy Popovich provided an update on the Southside Community Services Center lease at 4100 Hull Street. She stated that the city had maintained a lease on the property since 1997, and the site would continue to house social services while transitioning under the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. She also stated that the proposed agreement extends the lease for 15 years with an option for an additional five years, and includes a right of first refusal if the property is sold.

Christopher Nizamis, Programs Administrator for the Department of Economic Development, provided details of the renovation agreement at 4100 Hull Street. He stated that the city would receive a \$576,000 tenant improvement allowance plus additional landlord funded upgrades, including full replacement of HVAC systems, elevator repairs, roof work, and improvements to windows and doors.

Members noted that the long term nature of the agreement would position the city for possible future acquisition of the site.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-098 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 3, Breton, Jones, Lynch. Noes, 0.

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD. 2026-111](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute an Agreement between the Virginia Department of Health and the City of Richmond for the purpose of funding public health services provided by the Richmond City Health Department.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2026-111](#)

Forwarded to the May 26, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no speakers.

Dominic Barrett, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the DCAO for Human Services, provided an update on the Local Government Agreement (LGA) between the city and the Virginia Department of Health for the Richmond City Health District. He stated the agreement formally outlined services provided by the health district and confirmed the city's annual funding for those services in the FY2026 budget. He also noted that all Virginia localities are required to enter into such an agreement with the state health department.

The committee discussed the effectiveness and transparency of the Richmond City Health District and its programs under the LGA, and requested more outcome based reporting tied to the city's investment. The committee also focused on violence prevention efforts, the Community Health Improvement Plan, community health worker deployment and services at community centers, and the state funding formula requiring local match contributions. Members requested follow-up information on outcomes and reporting metrics before the next committee meeting.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-111 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 3, Breton, Jones, Lynch. Noes, 0.

Board Vacancies

None

Approval of Minutes

[CD.2026.134](#) April 9, 2026 - Education & Human Services Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [20260409 Meeting Minutes](#)

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of April 9, 2026, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Staff Report

[CD.2026.136](#) Education & Human Services Standing Committee May 14, 2026 Staff Report

Attachments: [May 2026 EHS Committee Mtg Prep](#)

Council staff provided the committee with the May Education and Human Services staff report.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.