



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

Office of the Council Chief of Staff

Government Operations Standing Committee

May 27, 2026

Staff Prep Memo for Councilmembers

Previous Meeting: February 25, 2026

Next Meeting: June 24, 2026

Legistar Link: <https://richmondva.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1346124&GUID=72DECCCD-D4C0-4242-BCF9-19D78F73D6D3&Search=>

Presentation:

- OOS on Plastic Bag Tax and RVAgreen 2050 goals (Office of Sustainability)

Papers for Consideration:

- Ord. 2026-076 (Avula, Erosion and Pre-Treatment penalties)
- Ord. 2026-089 (Jordan, Amend Sec. 24-34 concerning snow removal responsibilities)
- Ord. 2026-091 (Jordan, Public Utilities and Services Commission ordinance updates)
- Ord. 2026-116 (Jones, Sister Cities Commission ordinance codification)

Discussion Item:

- Scheduling updates

Wed, 6/24 Meeting Preview:

- DPU on new Customer Information System (CIS) and billing
- Office of Elections update

Wed, 7/22 Meeting Preview:

- CSR (311) on department SOPs and service level agreements (SLAs) for resident requests

Plastic Bag Tax and RVAgreen 2050 Goals Update – Office of Sustainability, Laura Thomas

Staff Notes:

- Plastic Bag Tax:
 - Ord. 2025-099 established 5 cent disposable plastic bag tax (effective January 1, 2026)
 - Ord. 2025-206 increased anticipated revenue by \$200,000 and created a new special fund called the “Disposable Plastic Bag Tax Special Fund.”
- RVAgreen 2050 plan: [RVAgreen 2050 Plan — RVAgreen 2050](#)
- Big goals: 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.
- Five Pathways, each with its own strategies and actions:
 - Buildings & Energy
 - Community
 - Environment
 - Transportation & Mobility
 - Waste Reduction & Recovery

Potential Questions:

- Plastic Bag Tax:
 - Are we on track to meet our revenue goals for this program? We estimated to bring in \$400,000 annually and collected \$75,699 in the first quarter (Q3 of FY26).
 - Can you provide a more detailed breakdown of appropriated revenue (Sec. 26-1292).
 - How are we monitoring compliance with this tax (alongside the state)? What happens if you receive notice of a potential violation?
 - Describe feedback and outreach received in response to this ordinance including from residents and impacted businesses.
 - Are paper grocery bags supposed to be taxed via this ordinance?
- RVAgreen 2050 plan:
 - What % reduction have we achieved so far in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions?
 - How is the City measuring greenhouse gas emissions? How confident are we in these measurements?
 - How does this plan inform the City’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and building? Are all new building projects built to net-zero standards?
 - This plan requires a lot of cross-departmental execution and collaboration. Please elaborate on Office of Sustainability’s current capacity to monitor and lead these efforts.
 - How does the Climate Equity Index factor into this work?
 - What is the City’s operational status of Resilience Hubs? Can our community centers support ongoing operations if the power grid fails or we experience acute heat waves?
 - What barriers exist to shifting more of the City’s fleet vehicles to electric vehicles?
 - What specific waste reduction strategies are underway to modernize our solid waste management system?
 - How is the City leveraging the Sustainability & Resilience (Green City) Commission?

1. Ordinance No. 2026-076

Patron Mayor Avula

Title: To amend City Code §§14-335, concerning the City's Erosion and Stormwater Management Program, 28-780, concerning the City's Pre-treatment Program, and 28-966, concerning penalties for illicit discharge and connection violations.

Council Staff Notes:

- Ordinance allows for administrative civil penalties, meant to improve efficiency, reduce court burden, improved cost recovery, and enhanced consistency and deterrence.
- Final page attachment outlines rubric for calculating potential penalties by level of harm (marginal, moderate, or serious), compliance history, and potential for aggravating factors.

Council Staff Questions:

- What are some examples of potential violations that would be covered by this program?
- How many times did DPU issue penalties for these programs in Fiscal Year 2025-26?
- What is the total penalty amount for violations in Fiscal Year 2025-26?
- What happens to revenue from penalties paid?
- Is there an appeals process for these violations?

2. Ordinance No. 2026-089

Patron Vice President Jordan

Title: To amend City Code § 24-34, concerning duty to remove snow from paved sidewalks, to modify responsibilities, penalties, and definitions.

Council Staff Notes:

- Ordinance proposes four main changes to Sec. 24-34 of City Code related to duty to remove snow from paved sidewalks:
 1. Shift responsibility to owners for sidewalks fronting large multi-unit (3+) properties.
When several occupants (defined as three or more units) share the same sidewalk, it may be unclear which occupants should physically clear away snow and ice from in front of their building following a storm. This change shifts responsibility to property owners in this case to clarify this duty and help ensure more prompt compliance with City Code requirements.
 2. Clarify that the duty to remove snow from sidewalks also includes ice and other forms of frozen precipitation. Currently, City Code only references “snow” as the substance to be removed from paved sidewalks. This change adds the phrase “and ice” to make clear that both forms of frozen precipitation are to be removed.
 3. Reduce penalty for noncompliance from a Class 4 misdemeanor to a \$100 civil penalty. VA Code § 18.2-11 (d) says the punishment for conviction of a class 4 misdemeanor is a “fine of not more than \$250.” Patron wishes to reduce the penalty for noncompliance to a \$100 civil penalty – an administrative remedy more akin to a parking ticket – that does not result in a criminal record.
 4. Add flexibility in enforcement following declared emergencies. Patron wishes to make explicit that City leadership may choose to waive fines associated with violations of this section of City Code following declared local emergencies or states of emergency, as defined in VA Code § 44-146.16.
- Fiscal impact analysis: Fiscal impact is unknown currently, but likely very small. The City did not issue any fines following the most recent winter weather emergency for non-compliance with this statute, so reducing the penalty from \$250 to \$100 likely will result in no lost revenue or little lost revenue that may otherwise be absorbed within the general operating budget.

3. Ordinance No. 2026-091

Patron Vice President Jordan

Title: To amend City Code §§ 2-1202.7, concerning duties and reporting of the Public Utilities and Services Commission, and 2-1202.8, concerning the conduct of affairs of the Commission.

Council Staff Notes:

- Removes requirements that the Public Utilities and Services (PUSC) maintain five standing sub-committees, including the following:
 - Water
 - Stormwater
 - Wastewater
 - Solid waste
 - Natural gas
- Changes the definition of quorum from a majority of “voting members” to a majority of “the members appointed” – meaning vacancies would not count towards the required quorum number.

4. Ordinance No. 2026-116

Patron Councilmember Jones

Title: To amend ch. 2, art. V of the City Code by adding therein a new div. 23, consisting of §§ 2-1202.15-2-1202.18, for the purpose of establishing the Sister Cities Commission, and to repeal Res. No. 91-R180-207, adopted Jul. 22, 1991, and all amendatory resolutions thereto.

Council Staff Notes:

- The purpose of the Sister Cities Commission is as follows: (i) developing and fostering a sister city affiliation and program through the auspices of Sister Cities International or other qualified organizations and (ii) advising the Council and Mayor on methods of strengthening the City's cultural ties with its sister cities and diverse initiatives to promote the City's priorities in education, the arts, sports, and economic development initiatives, both locally and internationally
- The Commission is currently in place via Res. 91-R180-207 – not codified in City Code. This ordinance follows the precedent set by Ord. 2024-212 which codified the Public Art Commission in City Code.
- The ordinance makes one change to the current operations of the Commission: it allows the Mayor to appoint two members (currently Council appoints all 13 members).