



City of Richmond

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

Minutes

Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, December 3, 2020

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Kristen Larson – Chair
The Honorable Chris Hilbert – Vice Chair
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member (late arrival)
The Honorable Kimberly Gray – Councilmember (late arrival, early departure)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Councilmember (late arrival)

Joyce Davis, Council Policy Analyst
Pamela Nichols, Assistant City Clerk
M. Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Dominique J. Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Kristen Larson called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m., and presided.

Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, as amended by Ordinance No. 2020-183, adopted August 20, 2020, announced the meeting would be held through electronic communication means. Assistant City Clerk Thaxton stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on November 23, 2020, and through Legistar on the city website in accordance with usual practice. She also stated members of the public were encouraged to provide comments in writing prior to the meeting and all comments received prior to 10:00 a.m., on Thursday, December 3, 2020, were provided to committee members. Ms. Thaxton indicated that members of the public who signed up to speak and provide comment would be called to speak at the appropriate time.

Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton provided citizen speaker guidelines.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of Thursday, October 1, 2020, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Councilor Ellen Robertson joined the meeting at 2:07 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Board Vacancies

Pamela Nichols, Assistant City Clerk, reviewed board applications for consideration by the committee.

Vice Chair Chris Hilbert stated that although Dr. Andrew Ramsey had applied for several boards, he expressed his preference for the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority. Vice Chair Hilbert also stated his support of the appointment of Joshua Lee Mathews-Ailsworth to the J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Board, and noted his background in information technology being a benefit to the board. Vice Chair Hilbert inquired if Dr. Brian Maiden had expressed a preference of a board appointment since he has active applications for several boards.

Vice Chair Chris Hilbert moved to forward the following appointments to Council with the recommendation to approve and to continue consideration of the remaining board applications to the January 7, 2021, Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting:

Board Name	Criteria for Appointment	Applicant Name
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Board (5 members)	Must be residents of the region that is served by the community college and should include residents from various businesses, industries, and professions being served by the community college (1 vacancy)	Joshua Lee Mathews-Ailsworth (3rd District Resident)
Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (15 members)	*	Malesia Taylor 6th District Employment (reappointment) Dr. Andrew Ramsey (3rd District Resident) (3 vacancies)

**Applicant must work or reside in the city*

The motion was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Larson, Hilbert. Noes None. Lynch had not yet arrived.

Vice Chair Hilbert highlighted the importance of diversity in the boards and commission appointees.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Stephanie Lynch joined the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Agenda Amendments

Member Stephanie Lynch moved to amend the agenda as follows:

ORD. 2020-170

To change the use of the City-owned real estate known as the Annie Giles Community Resource Center and located at 1400 Oliver Hill Way so that such City-owned real estate will be used as an inclement weather shelter for homeless persons in the city of Richmond when the outdoor or wind chill temperature falls to 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below and when the outdoor temperature rises to 92 degrees Fahrenheit or higher,

when there is a forecast of accumulation of one inch or more of rain, snow, sleet or other precipitation within a 24-hour period, or when there is a forecast that includes a warning for a hurricane, tornado or high winds.

Patron: Ms. Gray

To be continued to the January 7, 2021 Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Presentation

Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC) on the Collaborative Action Plan

Kelly King Horne, Executive Director of Homeward, Marvin Green, Program Manager with Richmond Urban Ministry Institute (RUMI), and Annette Cousins, Vice Chair of the GRCoC Board, presented the committee with an overview of the GRCoC action plan and community impact initiatives.

Ms. Cousins provided information on year-round homeless services provided by the GRCoC network and various updates in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Cousins outlined the details of the GRCoC Collaborative Action Plan and efforts to increase resources leading into the cold-weather season.

Mr. Green provided an overview of the non-congregate and safety-net shelter services currently offered to homeless individuals.

Vice Chair Chris Hilbert inquired if the use of hotels as a non-congregate shelter is strictly a response to the COVID-19 pandemic or if the method is a useful tool that has been effectively implemented elsewhere. Vice Chair Hilbert also inquired about the location of the non-congregate shelter as well as the hotel's proximity to bus route access. Mr. Hilbert thanked the presenters for their work in efforts to end homelessness and underscored the extensive work still needed to eradicate homelessness in the city.

Ms. King Horne stated that hotels have traditionally been used as an overflow supplement when shelters are at capacity, but noted widespread use of hotels began with the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a non-congregate housing option. Ms. King Horne also stated that this option has been useful to expand services but is exponentially more costly.

Mr. Green informed the committee of the location of the shelter and that it has close access to a bus route.

Member Stephanie Lynch inquired about the average length of stay for the non-congregate and safety-net shelter and what measures are in place to accommodate for cold-weather. Member Lynch asked for further information on the intake process for the safety-net shelter and the present methods in place to advertise available services.

Kelly King Horne provided the median length of stay data for the non-congregate shelter. Ms. King Horne stated that walk in service is not available and individuals looking for services are encouraged to utilize the homeless crisis line so that they can be assessed for urgency regarding the need for resources. Ms. King Horne expanded that the advertisements of available services are distributed regularly to case managers, local partners and various other interested parties.

Marvin Green provided additional length of stay information for the safety-net shelter and the intake procedures in place during inclement weather.

Member Lynch expressed concern regarding reports of individuals unable to reach a staff member on the homeless crisis line and how increased staffing of the crisis line can be achieved to ensure that individuals in need of services are not overlooked. Ms. Lynch inquired if recent data has shown a need for increased shelter space and funding for services.

Ms. King Horne stated that there is now increased staffing and hours for the homeless crisis line and provided data on peak call volume. Ms. King Horne also stated the difficulty in projecting the needs for resources, given temporary federal and state supplemental assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councilor Kim Gray requested details about the intake process of pairing individuals seeking non-congregate shelter services and case management available for children in the shelters. Councilor Gray expressed concern for the potential pairing of strangers of varying age during the COVID-19 pandemic, where some age groups are at greater health risk. Ms. Gray also inquired if there is 24-hour intake for the emergency and non-congregate shelter.

Ms. King Horne stated that the non-congregate shelter is presently using a double-occupancy model and that families seeking shelter services are connected with several resources to assist in finding more stable housing.

Marvin Green provided information on the current intake process for pairing individuals for non-congregate shelter services and screening for COVID-19. Mr. Green provided information on case management partnerships for students and families to ensure that students have necessary resources to participate in virtual learning.

Ms. King Horne provided information on the designated access hours and intake processing hours for shelters. Ms. King Horne stated that the domestic violence and abuse emergency support shelters are the only 24-hour shelters currently operating in the city.

Councilor Gray inquired about the intake operation and peak times for the shelter services formerly provided in the now closed Freedom House Conrad Center.

Chair Kristen Larson requested that the appropriate staff provide follow-up information to the committee on the Freedom House Conrad Center operation.

Mr. Green provided information on the current peak hours of intake.

Chair Larson inquired how long RUMI staff members have been on-site to provide services in the non-congregate shelter. Chair Larson expressed concern for her own personal inability to reach a staff member on the homeless crisis line. Ms. Larson requested a monthly line item expenditure report for the city's contribution toward the Collaborative Action Plan.

Mr. Green stated that RUMI staff members have been on-site at the non-congregate shelter since April 2020.

Ms. King Horne provided further information on the management of the homeless crisis line and metrics for returned voicemails.

Sharon Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Economic and Community Development, stated that the requested budget information will be provided to the committee.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Paper for Consideration

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2020-R064

To request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the presentation of a report identifying a location for an inclement weather shelter for homeless persons in the city of Richmond when the outdoor or wind chill temperature falls to 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below, when the outdoor temperature rises to 92 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, or when the forecast includes an accumulation of precipitation of one inch or more in a

24-hour period, a hurricane, a tornado, or high winds.

Patron: Ms. Larson

Chair Kristen Larson provided an overview of RES. 2020-R064

Citizens were provided an opportunity to offer comments in writing regarding proposed legislation on the agenda, prior to the Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting. All written citizen comments received by the Office of the City Clerk were provided to members of the committee prior to the meeting, and are included as an appendix to the December 3, 2020 Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting.

Public Hearing

Linda Tissiere, YWCA of Richmond, Chief Executive Officer, spoke in support of RES. 2020-R064, and provided information on the coordinated entry process for homeless services in the city. Ms. Tissiere offered information on the emergency shelter services and case management for those fleeing domestic violence and abuse.

Austin Harber spoke in support of RES. 2020-R064, and expressed concern for the measures in place for funding preventive measures of homelessness in the city.

Rebecca Davidsson expressed concern regarding the current non-congregate shelter method and the inability to reach a live person on the homeless crisis line.

Desiree Taylor, HandUp Community Resource Center, Homeless Veteran's Service Center Program Director, spoke in support of RES. 2020-R064, and provided information on the upcoming services for veterans experiencing homelessness. Ms. Taylor underscored the effectiveness of coordinated entry processes in homeless services.

Member Stephanie Lynch expressed concern regarding individuals not having access to information for the safety-net shelter and non-congregate shelter services. Member Lynch also stated concern for a potential influx in the homeless population when the unemployment benefits extension and the eviction moratorium set in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

Vice Chair Hilbert expressed support for RES. 2020-R064 and the need for increased capacity in shelter resources.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Chris Hilbert moved to forward RES. 2020-R064 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Councilor Kimberly Gray departed the meeting at 3:47 p.m.

Staff Report

Joyce Davis, Council policy analyst, provided the committee with the December staff report.

A copy of the report has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:54 p.m.

From: [John Dougherty](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Council Education and Human Services Committee - Public Comment
Date: Wednesday, December 2, 2020 10:21:24 PM

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Ms. Reid,

I am writing as the interim Executive Director of HomeAgain, a funded partner of the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care, in reference to Resolution 2020-RO64 which calls for a study to identify potential locations for a non-congregate shelter for inclement weather for the current winter season. While adoption of this legislation will not have any affect on the economic or professional relationships, it will likely impact the continued exceptional execution of a highly complex and coordinated response to the unprecedented demand for the array of services for individuals experiencing homelessness, due to COVID-19 and the resulting economic downturn.

On behalf of the Board, staff and the thousands of individuals and families served by HomeAgain over the past 40 years, I respectfully recommend an amendment to the resolution to “publicly adopt and support the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care Coordinated Pandemic Response Plan for the current winter season and as a source of data and guidance to a future seasonal/inclement weather strategy.” This plan lead by our region’s nationally recognized system administrator, Homeward, is grounded in Housing and Urban Development’s best practice recommendations and Centers for Disease Control pandemic guidance for homeless services during the COVID-19 pandemic. HomeAgain has had the opportunity to play an integral role in providing innovative and adaptive solutions as a partner in the GRCoC and has first hand knowledge of how this coordinated effort, lead by Homeward, has created greater access, service offerings and success for our friends and neighbors experiencing homelessness.

Conducting a study for potential locations at this point in the process, when a comprehensive and collaborative response plan has already been implemented and served hundreds of individuals, would only serve to distract the critical, life-saving work that is already underway. Additionally, engaging in such a study would further tap an already over-burdened system of public-private partners during a time when their efforts are most importantly focused on the tireless work at-hand.

HomeAgain is a proud partner to the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care and the City of Richmond. Despite the challenges of this unprecedented time, through these partnership HomeAgain has secured funding to more than double our Rapid Re-Housing cases, double our case management support, expediting successful housing solutions. Furthermore, as a result of this coordinated effort HomeAgain is poised to pursue a public-private partnership to expand permanent affordable housing solutions for over a hundred of our most vulnerable and fastest growing population of older persons experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for your consideration to amend this resolution to support the GRCoC Coordinated

Response Plan for the current winter season and as a source of guidance to a future seasonal/inclement weather strategy.

Respectfully,

John Dougherty

Interim Executive Director

P.O. Box 5222 Richmond, VA 23220-0222



From: [Emily Bell](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Public Comment-Houselessness
Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2020 9:28:14 AM

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currently has a surplus of \$19 million that has to be used immediately and may not be available in the future. Instead of using these funds for covid relief, eviction defense, and providing shelter to the house less in the coming winter, they have dedicated only \$500,00 to house people.

The facility people are being housed in is the Roadway Inn on North Arthur Ashe Blvd. this place has documented serious health concerns including roaches, mold, dirty appliances and lack of clean linens. How is it possible that with \$19 million, we cannot afford to provide safe, clean, warm housing to our houseless neighbors? How can a city government so blatantly ignore the needs of our citizens?

We have seen over and over how deliberately neglectful City officials have been to the needs and demands of the constituents, and we will not tolerate this capitalist abandonment.

We demand that the, AGAIN, 19 MILLION DOLLARS be used to provide shelter, food, medicine, and clothes to our city's most vulnerable. We are watching.

From: [Danielle DiBlasio](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Public comment for Education and Human Services Standing Committee
Date: Monday, November 30, 2020 3:59:44 PM

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Hello,

My full legal name is Danielle DiBlasio. I am a private citizen not representing any organization and do not have any economic or professional relationships that would be affected by the legislation being discussed in this meeting.

Three of the 4 members of this committee who are participating in this meeting will be serving another term on the City Council and I remind you that Richmond citizens have expectations for you to protect the civil rights of all Richmonders while in this position of elected office. In the midst of a pandemic, high unemployment rates, and evictions, Richmond more than ever needs safe housing for our houseless community. The current accommodations offered by the city are unsafe, unhealthy, and unacceptable. With plenty of city budget money to find clean and safe accommodations for community members facing a housing crisis, I demand you find a solution immediately, before the winter season is fully upon us.

thank you,
Danielle DiBlasio

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Danielle DiBlasio

