



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee

Thursday, January 16, 2025

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

Committee Members in Attendance

The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Chair
The Honorable Nicole Jones – Vice Chair
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member (late arrival)

Staff in Attendance

Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney
Nahdiah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Ellen Robertson called the meeting to order at 1:00 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 manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with public speaker guidelines.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of December 18, 2024, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2024.386](#) December 18, 2024 - Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [20241218 Finance Minutes - DRAFT](#)

Board Vacancies

Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst, reviewed board vacancies and applications for consideration by the committee.

[CD.2025.007](#) January 16, 2025 - Finance and Economic Development Board Vacancy Report

Attachments: [20250116 - Finance - Board Vacancy Report](#)

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward the following board appointment application to Council with a recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None. Member Stephanie Lynch had not yet arrived.

Board of Directors of the Economic Development Authority:
Jared Loiben

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD. 2025-001](#) To amend Ord. No. 2024-099, adopted May 13, 2024, which adopted the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 General Fund Budget and made appropriations pursuant thereto, to (i) transfer \$500,000.00 from the Non-Departmental agency Right to Counsel for Evictions, (ii) create a new line item in the Non-Departmental agency called the "Right to Counsel for Evictions Program - Central Virginia Legal Aid Society," and (iii) appropriate such \$500,000.00 to such new line item in the Non-Departmental agency for the purpose of providing funding for a right to counsel for evictions program.

Patrons: Mayor Avula, Ms. Lynch, Ms. Robertson, Vice President Jordan, President Newbille, Ms. Jones, Mr. Breton and Ms. Gibson

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-001](#)

Michelle Brown Peters, Deputy Director for Housing and Community Development, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked for more information regarding the partnership with Southside Community Development and Housing Corporation.

Ms. Peters stated that Southside Community Development and Housing Corporation manages the city's eviction diversion program. Ms. Peters also stated that the organization received a \$1 million award from the city's budget, and \$753,200 went towards paying the owed rent of residents facing eviction. Ms. Peters provided additional information to the committee regarding the proposed ordinance.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-001 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None. Lynch had not yet arrived.

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD. 2025-002](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$1,850,287.27 from the National Opioid Settlement Fund, resulting from settlement agreements with Settling Distributors, Janssen, Allergan, Teva, Walmart, CVS, Walgreens, and McKinsey, and to amend Ord. No. 2024-099, adopted May 13, 2024, which adopted the Special Fund Budget for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 and made appropriations thereto, by increasing the revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services' National Opioid Settlement Special Fund by \$1,850,287.27, for the purpose of funding opioid abatement and remediation strategies to combat the opioid crisis.

Patrons: Mayor Avula, Ms. Robertson, President Newbille and Ms. Jones

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-002](#)

Michael Fatula, Human Services Policy Advisor for the Opioid Response Coordination, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked for additional information regarding the severity of the opioid crisis, and the plans for the settlement funding.

Mr. Fatula stated that the opioid crisis in Richmond has produced the highest fatal overdose rate out of all 133 Virginia localities in 2022 and 2023. Mr. Fatula also stated that he is waiting on more data from the Virginia Department of Health to further calculate any increases or decreases for 2024. Mr. Fatula further stated that funds from the settlement can be used to establish remediation programs as long as the funding needs fall under a classification category stated in the settlement agreement. Mr. Fatula provided the committee with additional information regarding the opioid crisis in Richmond.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones asked if the strategies used to combat the opioid crisis will include neighborhood collaboration.

Mr. Fatula stated that the Richmond Opioid Task Force conducts monthly meetings to identify solutions that will productively address the opioid crisis. Mr. Fatula also stated that the city has been identified as a locality that qualifies for a targeted overdose prevention grant through the Opioid Abatement Authority, and that efforts will include a strong focus on community participation.

Mr. Fatula further discussed the proposed ordinance with the committee.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-002 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None. Lynch had not yet arrived.

The following ordinances were considered:

3. [ORD. 2025-003](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$2,377,500.00 from the Virginia Resources Authority, and to amend the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Water Utility Budget which appropriated the estimated receipts of the water utility, by increasing estimated receipts and the amount appropriated for the water utility by \$2,377,500.00, for the purpose of funding the City's lead water service line replacement and water service line inventory programs.

Patrons: Mayor Avula, Ms. Robertson and President Newbille

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-003](#)

4. [ORD. 2025-004](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Financing Agreement between the City of Richmond and the Virginia Resources Authority for the purpose of funding the City's lead water service line replacement and water service line inventory programs.

Patrons: Mayor Avula and Ms. Robertson

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-004](#)

Billy Vaughan, Deputy Director for the Department of Public Utilities, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinances.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones asked for more info regarding the 1% interest loan reference in the proposed ordinances.

Mr. Vaughan stated that the low interest loan program from the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) is specifically for lead line replacements on the city's side.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked about the strategy for grant implementation. Chair Robertson inquired about the process for residents to request the grant and services.

Rhonda Johnson, Public Information Manager for the Department of Public Utilities, provided the committee with program guidelines and the process for residents to receive a grant for request of services.

Chair Robertson asked about who would qualify for the ten spots available in the grant program.

Ms. Johnson stated that any resident that has city lead lines leading to their homes can qualify.

Member Stephanie Lynch arrived at 1:25 p.m., and was seated.

Chair Robertson asked if the funding can be used to test and replace water lines in public facilities. Chair Robertson stated that some residents might be reluctant to have their homes tested due to the possibility of their homes testing positive for lead and not knowing what services can be provided to combat the lead exposure.

Ms. Johnson stated that most of the lead pipes used in the 1960's and 1970's were smaller pipes that mostly fed into private residences. Ms. Johnson also stated that Richmond Public Schools (RPS) and daycare facilities have conducted their own research and identification of lead pipes within their water delivery systems. Ms. Johnson further stated that the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) provided funding for initiatives by RPS. Ms. Johnson provided the committee with additional information regarding lead testing.

Chair Robertson requested that info regarding education and available resources for families on testing and exposure be sent to all Council Members.

Ms. Johnson further discussed the proposed ordinances with the committee.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-003 and ORD. 2025-004 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

5. [ORD. 2025-005](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$262,500.00 from the United States Department of Energy, and to amend the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Special Fund Budget by (i) creating a new special fund for the Office of Sustainability called the "Grant - EECBG Home Energy Audits, Energy Savings for Richmond's Workforce Housing Project Special Fund," (ii) appropriating the increase to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Office of Sustainability's "Grant - EECBG Home Energy Audits, Energy Savings for Richmond's Workforce Housing Project Special Fund" by \$262,500.00, and (iii) appropriating \$250,000.00 of such funds to Viridian, all for the purpose of providing funding for energy efficiency assistance for low-income residents.

Patrons: Mayor Avula, Ms. Robertson, Vice President Jordan, President Newbille and Ms. Jones

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-005](#)

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

Public Hearing

There were no public comment speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Member Stephanie Lynch moved to forward ORD. 2025-005 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinances were considered:

6. [ORD. 2025-006](#) To amend Ord. No. 2022-244, adopted Sept. 23, 2022, which authorizes the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Vehicle Lease Agreement between the City of Richmond, as lessor, and the Richmond Ambulance Authority, as lessee, for the purpose of leasing to the Richmond Ambulance Authority certain ambulances owned by the City, for the purpose of adding six “chase” vehicles to the Vehicle Lease Agreement and leasing certain City-owned personal property to the Richmond Ambulance Authority.

Patrons: Mayor Avula and Ms. Robertson

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-006](#)
7. [ORD. 2025-007](#) To amend Ord. No. 2024-100, adopted May 13, 2024, which accepted a program of proposed Capital Improvement Projects for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 and the four fiscal years thereafter, adopted a Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, and determined a means of financing the same, by increasing estimated revenues from the JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A. line of credit borrowings, authorized by Ord. No. 2023-077, adopted May 8, 2023, by \$977,721.00 and appropriating such \$977,721.00 to the Vehicle Replacement project in the Capital Vehicle and Equipment category for the purpose of purchasing six “chase” vehicles to be leased by the City to the Richmond Ambulance Authority.

Patrons: Mayor Avula and Ms. Robertson

Attachments: [Ord. No 2025-007](#)

Michael Nguyen, Deputy Director of Finance, provided the committee with an introduction and additional information regarding the proposed ordinances.

Member Stephanie Lynch asked about the total cost of the chase vehicles compared to other localities.

Chip Decker, Chief Executive Officer for the Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA), stated that the total cost for the chase vehicles is reasonable considering the cost of the equipment on the vehicle. Mr. Decker also addressed the difficulty of obtaining chase vehicles. Mr. Decker further stated that a chase vehicle can be staffed with a paramedic and an emergency medical technician (EMT) to go to the most critical calls or respond to home assistance calls.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked if chase vehicles are standard for emergency medical service providers in other localities. Chair Robertson inquired if more response vehicles will be sent to assist with emergency calls and why all six vehicles are needed for purchase.

Mr. Decker stated a tier response is a standard system design for emergency medical responses. Mr. Decker also stated that all six chase vehicles are needed and that currently, RAA is using older supervisor vehicles to assist with emergency calls. Mr. Decker further stated that budget priorities are staggered for buying emergency medical equipment or new ambulances in certain years.

Mr. Decker further discussed the proposed ordinances with the committee.

There were no further comments or discussions and Member Stephanie Lynch moved to forward ORD. 2025-006 and ORD. 2025-007 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

8. [ORD. 2025-008](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Grant Agreement between the City of Richmond, 2811 Rady, LLC, and the Economic Development Authority of the City of Richmond for the purpose of facilitating the construction of an affordable residential development located at 2811 Rady Street.
(6th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula and Ms. Robertson

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-008](#)

Merrick Malone, Director of Housing and Community Development, provided the committee with an introduction and additional information regarding the proposed ordinance.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked for additional information regarding the \$4 million grant referenced in the proposed ordinance.

Mr. Malone stated that all of the Housing and Community Development performance grants have a requirement to provide evidence of sufficient funding to conduct capital improvements over the course of the 15-year grant.

Public hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Chair Robertson stated that there will be a special use permit (SUP) related to the proposed ordinance before Council at an upcoming meeting, and that the SUP will need to be approved before the development can begin.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-008 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Presentation(s)

Finance Payment Grace Period

Sheila White, Director of Finance, provided the committee with information about the payment grace period due to the declaration of a local emergency.

Chair Robertson stated that the initial request was for the Department of Finance to present to the committee, information regarding the Department of Finance's operations, organizational chart and programs. Chair Robertson requested the Department of Finance to provide the committee with a presentation regarding the committee's previous requests during the February committee meeting.

Discussion Item(s)

Committee Presentation Planning

Chair Ellen Robertson stated that she would like to set committee agendas for the year, and that there are many challenges that need to be addressed by the committee. Chair Robertson further stated that a work session of the committee will be scheduled to address challenges and agenda setting before the committee's next regular meeting in February.

Staff Report

There was no staff report.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.