



City of Richmond

Work Session Minutes

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

Monday, July 12, 2021

3:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall
Virtual Meeting

Councilmembers Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Ellen Robertson, Vice President (early departure)
The Honorable Andreas Addison (late arrival)
The Honorable Michael Jones
The Honorable Katherine Jordan (early departure)
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert (early departure)
The Honorable Kristen Larson (late arrival)
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch (late arrival and early departure)

Absent

The Honorable Reva Trammell

Staff Present

Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst
Samson Anderson, Council Budget Analyst
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Tabrica Rentz, Acting Deputy City Attorney
Steve Skinner, Council Public Information Officer
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the work session to order at 3:02 p.m. and presided.

ELECTRONIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

City Clerk Candice Reid, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, as most recently amended by Ordinance No. 2021-181, adopted June 28, 2021, announced the work session would be held through electronic communication means, and stated that notice of the session was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on July 8, 2021, and through Legistar on the city website in accordance with usual practice. She also stated there would be no opportunities for public comment and no public hearings during the session.

Discussion Items

Review of an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Implementation Model and the Process

Dana Wedeles, Special Assistant to the Alexandria City Manager, provided Council with an overview of Alexandria City's allocation plan process regarding funds received from the ARPA.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Councilor Andreas Addison joined the work session at 3:15 p.m.

Councilor Kristen Larson joined the work session at 3:16 p.m.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert inquired about the staffing needs for providing collaborative work between multiple city departments. Councilor Lambert also asked about data collection of a food security advancement program and a guaranteed basic income program.

Ms. Wedeles stated that a total of 12 staff members were required during the allocation plan review process. Ms. Wedeles also stated that Alexandria City was tracking the distribution of food gift cards and food provided at food hubs for those in need. Ms. Wedeles further stated that the city was providing a guaranteed basic income of \$500 dollars to a group of citizens, and added that the city was partnering with non-profits to provide financial planning advice for individuals that received the guaranteed income.

Councilor Michael Jones inquired about Alexandria City's plan to specifically address poverty with ARPA funds, and the city's plans to address issues with equity.

Ms. Wedeles stated that Alexandria City wanted to reach pre-pandemic poverty levels, but also that the city wanted to identify insufficient services to help citizens rise above those prior levels. Ms. Wedeles also stated that the city used an equity score to review the completed list of proposed projects to determine which programs should be prioritized to address the city's needs in an equitable way. Ms. Wedeles also provided Council with information regarding the city's use of a community survey to identify issues that the city should address with ARPA funds.

Councilor Katherine Jordan inquired about Alexandria City's use of ARPA funds to secure an attorney to provide legal representation to citizens regarding possible evictions.

Ms. Wedeles stated the attorney was contracted for a year, and that Alexandria City would continue with the provided representation if needed. Ms. Wedeles also stated that the city was hiring an eviction data analyst.

Councilor Andreas Addison inquired about small business recovery.

Ms. Wedeles informed Council that Alexandria City's tourism department received funding to help promote tourism efforts in the city, and she also stated that funds would be provided to new businesses to help support new business openings.

President Cynthia Newbille requested that Ms. Wedeles provide Council with more information regarding Alexandria City's use of an equity score.

Vice President Ellen Robertson inquired about Alexandria City's efforts to address homelessness, and she also asked about public school performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Wedeles stated that Alexandria Public Schools was set to receive \$35,000,000 separately from the federal government to address education loss due to the pandemic. Ms. Wedeles also stated that city government was planning to use ARPA funds to provide enrichment after school programs for students.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch joined the work session at 4:18 p.m.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert left the work session at 4:21 p.m.

Proposed Steps for Agreement and Consideration to Develop a Framework for the Planning

and Decisions for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding

Martha Marshall, Work Session Facilitator, led Council through a discussion of a framework for planning uses of ARPA funding. Ms. Marshall provided Council with a proposed list of eight steps to initiate discussions of a possible ARPA plan development agreement.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Councilor Kristen Larson stated that she would prefer Council ensure certain ARPA funding be reserved for potential unknowns in the future, as the city works to recover from the pandemic.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated that he was hopeful that Council would work to establish a list of priorities to be addressed by the first half of ARPA funds, which Council could update prior to receiving the second allocation of ARPA funds.

Councilor Michael Jones stated that he believed Council should commit to the challenge of implementing an equity lens regarding the distribution of ARPA funds. Councilor Jones requested that Council hold a special community session for citizens to provide feedback on ARPA funds in a public setting before Council.

President Cynthia Newbille stated it was important that Council leverage ARPA funds to secure additional funding from other external sources.

Councilor Larson requested that a list of prior and future priorities be recorded for reference during review of ARPA allocations.

Vice President Ellen Robertson requested that established guidelines, such as equity and shovel-ready projects, be used during the review of ARPA allocations.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated his concerns with ensuring that a greater portion of the city population is involved in the ARPA allocation review process.

President Newbille stated that collaboration between Council and city administration in the form of a work group, would occur to help review ARPA allocations. President Newbille informed Council that all members of Council would have final review of any allocation recommendations provided by the work group.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch left the work session at 5:17 p.m.

Update on Federal Lobbyist Activities and Funding

Ron Jordan, City Lobbyist, Advantus Strategies, provided Council with an overview of state and federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) guidelines, and the upcoming Virginia General Assembly special session. Mr. Jordan also addressed the potential American Jobs Act and steps taken by Advantus Strategies to ensure projects are included in the federal legislation that would benefit the city.

Exploring Next Steps and Key Questions Moving Forward

Martha Marshall, Work Session Facilitator, led Council through a discussion of next steps and key questions moving forward regarding decisions for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Vice President Ellen Robertson stated it was important the city determine projects prior to the adoption of the potential American Jobs Act. Vice President Robertson also stated her concerns that the city was not prepared to review and allocate the amount of federal funding to be provided to the city.

Acting Chief Administrative Officer Lincoln Saunders stated his support for collaborate efforts between Council and administration regarding the review of ARPA funding.

President Cynthia Newbille stated Council would work to ensure collaboration between Council and administration regarding the review and final decisions for an ARPA framework.

Interim Council Chief of Staff Joyce Davis stated Council staff would review questions raised by members during the work session.

Councilor Katherine Jordan left the work session at 5:51 p.m.

Vice President Ellen Robertson left the work session at 5:51 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the work session adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

CITY CLERK