



City of Richmond

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

Draft Meeting Minutes Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

3:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members in Attendance

The Honorable Nicole Jones – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Andrew Breton – Member

Staff and Others in Attendance

Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Nahdiyah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Danielle Smith, Assistant City Attorney
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst

Call to Order

Chair Nicole Jones called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

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

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of July 22, 2025 Special meeting and July 29, 2025 committee meeting, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2025.270](#) July 22, 2025 - Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

[CD.2025.273](#) July 29, 2025 - Land Use Housing and Transportation Special Meeting Minutes

Public Comment Period

Thomas Courtney addressed the committee concerning the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) expansion. Mr. Courtney provided the committee with information regarding VMFA Board of Trustees structure and recent action regarding the museum's expansion.

Omari Al-Qadafi, community organizer with the Legal Aid Justice Center, addressed the committee regarding the proposed Gilpin Court redevelopment. He stated that the project was poorly developed and lacked input from both the community and City Council. Mr. Al-Qadafi also distributed a handout to the committee.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Michaela Ross, housing attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center, addressed the committee regarding the proposed Gilpin Court redevelopment. She stated that the project poses a risk to the community, as public housing remains the only housing option for many city residents.

Jim Hill addressed the committee regarding the Planning Commission's process for the Cultural Heritage Stewardship Plan. He noted that the plan was recommended as part of the Richmond 300 Master Plan.

Portnoy Evans-Johnson addressed the committee regarding the proposed Gilpin Court redevelopment. She expressed support for greater involvement of Gilpin Informed Residents in the process, and stated that community housing should not be privatized for the benefit of stakeholders.

Sylvia Davis addressed the committee regarding the alleged misconduct of Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) Chief Executive Officer Steven Nesmith, playing audio recordings of a conversation she had about Mr. Nesmith's alleged comments.

Umar Kenyatta addressed the committee regarding access to affordable and equal housing in the city.

Lauren King, senior supervising attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center, addressed the committee regarding public housing being the only option for affordable housing.

Kiara Harris, member of Gilpin Informed Residents, addressed the committee regarding the need for more input from residents regarding plans to redevelop Gilpin Court.

Christal Jordan addressed the committee with her concerns over increasing real estate assessments. She stated that she purchased her home through the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) program and that recent increases in property assessments have created a financial burden for her and other HOME program participants.

Presentation(s)

There were no presentations.

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD.](#)
[2025-161](#) To amend ch. 5 of the City Code by adding therein a new art. VI, consisting of §§ 5-160 - 5-167, for the purpose of establishing a residential rental inspection program. (As Amended)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Kevin Vonck, Director, and Michelle Coward, Deputy Director for Property Maintenance, of Planning and Development Review (PDR), provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Mr. Vonck stated that the proposed ordinance would allow for the development of a rental inspection program in the city to promote safe residential dwelling units.

Public Hearing

Thomas King spoke in support of the proposed ordinance, stating that it would reduce the severity of building deterioration while increasing the health and welfare of residents. Mr. King also stated that establishing rental inspection districts would help strengthen the rights of tenants.

Johnny Fuller spoke in support of the proposed ordinance stating that the legal environment favors landlords over tenants and that a rental inspection program would force landlords to reinvest in the proper maintenance of their properties.

Rachel Hefner, member of the Richmond Chapter of Virginia Organizing, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Hefner stated that tenants are in support of the proposed rental inspection program based on data from signed petitions and community meetings.

Paul Fleisher, rental property owner, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Fleisher stated that the rental inspection program is long overdue. He also stated that landlords are taking advantage of the housing crisis in the city and explained the affect that poor living conditions can have on families.

Bob Becker, housing equity advisor for the Richmond-Henrico Health District, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Becker stated that there is evidence of rental inspection programs having a positive impact on health and equity.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Omari Al-Qadafi, community organizer with the Legal Aid Justice Center, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Al-Qadafi stated that the rental inspection program would benefit public housing residents by holding property managers more accountable without residents living in fear of retaliation.

Portnoy Evans-Johnson spoke in support of the proposed ordinance, emphasizing that the rental inspection program would promote community unity by ensuring safe and equitable housing for all residents.

Sylvia Davis spoke in support of the proposed ordinance.

Yohance Whitaker, community organizer with the Legal Aid Justice Center, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Whitaker stated that the rental inspection program would provide increased oversight of rental properties housing individuals who were formerly incarcerated.

Member Andrew Breton inquired about including rental properties with three or more units in the inspection program and suggested grouping properties owned by the same individual. He also emphasized the difficulties in contacting the owners of properties held by LLC.

Director Vonck stated that the rental inspection program would enforce the building code uniformly, and structures with three units would be held to the same standards as those with five units. He also noted that Council may consider limiting inspection districts to better group properties, and he highlighted the ongoing challenge staff faces with identifying and locating property owners.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson asked for additional information regarding the proposed amendments to the pending ordinance that were not supported by city administration and maps presented to the committee.

Director Vonck stated that city administration does not support a proposed amendment to review code violations from the past 48 months, recommending instead a 6-month review period. He clarified that the 48-month time frame was tied to a proactive rental inspection program, where properties with no violations would be exempt from further inspections for 48 months. Mr. Vonck also stated that as an alternative, city administration recommended a 12-month inspection period. He reviewed requested maps with the committee regarding vacant buildings, building code violations, and calls for service.

Vice Chair Robertson asked what the data points on the map represent.

Director Vonck stated the data points represent 4,700 calls and 630 violations. He also stated that the proposed amendments should require the fiscal impact to the city of the rental inspection program after implementation.

Vice Chair Robertson stated the importance of having adequate staffing to support the rental inspection program, and asked about the challenges of establishing rental inspection districts. She also asked about temporarily relocating residents to sufficient housing units while violations are being addressed.

Deputy Director Coward stated that the rental inspection program will need to be established by the city, along with practices and procedures, before Council can create rental inspection districts. She also stated the data presented to the committee is six months of collected data from March through September 2025.

Chair Nicole Jones thanked city administration for providing the committee with responses to their inquiries. Ms. Jones stated that the intent of the amendments is to ensure that residents are protected and provided with safe housing.

Deputy Director Coward stated that working with the landlords to temporarily relocate individuals while violations are addressed is the current strategy.

Danielle Smith, Assistant City Attorney, after questions from the committee regarding its recommendation options, stated that it would be appropriate for the committee to forward the proposed ordinance to Council with the recommendation to amend.

There were no further comments or discussions, and Member Andrew Breton moved to forward ORD. 2025-161 to Council with the recommendation to amend, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following resolution was considered:

2. [RES.
2025-R039](#) To direct the City Planning Commission, as a part of its required review of the Master Plan in 2025, to prepare, submit to public hearing, and consider an amendment to the Master Plan that identifies the area generally bounded by, to the south, Interstate 95 and Interstate 64; to the east, Hermitage Road from Interstate 95 and Interstate 64 to the five-way intersection at Brookland Parkway and Westwood Avenue, Chatham Road from Westwood Avenue to Palmyra Avenue; to the north, Palmyra Avenue from Chatham Road to Hermitage Road, and Oakdale Avenue from Hermitage Road to Catalpa Avenue; and to the west, Catalpa Avenue from Oakdale Avenue to Westwood Avenue, and Westwood Avenue from Catalpa Avenue to Interstate 95 and Interstate 64, as a Neighborhood Node and to request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the Department of Planning and Development Review, the Department of Public Works, the Office of Equitable Transit and Mobility, the Department of Economic Development, and the Department of Housing and Community Development to collectively work with the City Planning Commission to prepare such amendment to the Master Plan.

Patrons: Ms. Gibson

Kevin Vonck, Director of Planning and Development Review, provided an introduction of the proposed resolution, and stated that it would allow for city administration to focus on the neighborhood nodes aligning with updates to the Richmond 300 Master Plan.

Public Hearing

Chris Banks, co-chair of the Government Affairs and Safety Committee of the Sherwood Park Civic Association, spoke in support of the proposed resolution, stating that it was inspired by a similar node designation requested in the 5th & 6th Council Districts.

Donna Hughes spoke in support of the proposed resolution. Ms. Hughes stated that it will help provide a holistic view of the intersection as the area grows and develops.

Ben Campbell spoke in support of the proposed resolution and stated that it will help provide a comprehensive look at current developments.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson expressed the importance of adhering to the requirement to revisit the master plan every five years to keep up with developments.

There were no further comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2025-R039 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinances were considered:

3. [ORD. 2025-184](#) To provide for the granting by the City of Richmond to the person, firm or corporation to be ascertained in the manner prescribed by law of an easement upon, over, under, and across certain property known as Thomas B. Smith Community Center and located at 2009 Ruffin Road for the construction, maintenance, and operation of improvements and associated appurtenances for the generation, distribution and transmission of electricity in accordance with a certain Right of Way Agreement.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

4. [ORD. 2025-185](#) To provide for the granting by the City of Richmond to the person, firm or corporation to be ascertained in the manner prescribed by law of an easement upon, over, under, and across certain property known as Lucks Field Community Center located at 1925 U Street for the construction, maintenance, and operation of improvements and associated appurtenances for the generation, distribution and transmission of electricity in accordance with a certain Right of Way Agreement.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

5. [ORD.](#)
[2025-186](#) To provide for the granting by the City of Richmond to the person, firm or corporation to be ascertained in the manner prescribed by law of an easement upon, over, under, and across certain property known as St. Mary's Hospital located at 5801 Monument Avenue for the construction, maintenance, and operation of improvements and associated appurtenances for the generation, distribution and transmission of electricity in accordance with a certain Right of Way Agreement.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

6. [ORD.](#)
[2025-190](#) To provide for the granting by the City of Richmond to the person, firm or corporation to be ascertained in the manner prescribed by law of an easement upon, over, under, and across certain property known as 510 East 4th Street for the construction, maintenance, and operation of improvements and associated appurtenances for the generation, distribution and transmission of electricity in accordance with a certain Right of Way Agreement. (6th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-184, ORD. 2025-185, ORD. 2025-186 and ORD. 2025-190 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

7. [ORD.](#)
[2025-192](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a First Amendment to Lease Agreement between the City of Richmond and Challenge Discovery Projects, Inc. for the purpose of providing outpatient behavioral health clinic services at 2405 Jefferson Avenue. (7th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Dominic Barrett, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services, provided an introduction to the proposed ordinance which would allow for the city and Challenge Discovery, Inc., to continue a lease agreement.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-192 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

8. [ORD.](#) [2025-191](#) To provide for the granting by the City of Richmond to the person, firm or corporation to be ascertained in the manner prescribed by law of the franchise, right, and privilege to install and maintain a solar farm and pollinator meadow located at 3800 East Richmond Road in accordance with a certain Ground Lease. (7th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Laura Thomas, Director of the Office of Sustainability, provided an introduction of the proposed ordinance through a presentation that covered the following: frontlines of climate change, solar farm and pollinator meadow timelines, clean energy benefits, project "fail out", and future engagement.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson asked about the role Dominion Energy will serve in the proposed ordinance.

Director Thomas stated that the selected developer would work with Dominion Energy to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. She also stated the shared solar program would allow city administration to outline certain areas within the community and the selected developer would enroll residents into the program.

Vice Chair Robertson asked about the communities that will benefit from the reduced energy costs of the solar farm. She also asked about the selection process for the location of the parcel of land.

Director Thomas stated that the 7th Council District will directly benefit from the solar farm due to the farm's location. She also stated that there will be additional opportunities to explore other parts of the city, adding that a developer reached out to city administration to develop on the stated parcel. She noted that utilizing this process as a pilot would allow for the expansion to other communities.

Member Andrew Breton asked about the parks being a potential location for additional solar farms. He also asked about the fiscal benefit and impact for the city and residents, and the Request for Information (RFI) process.

Director Thomas described the challenges of developing a solar farm on park grounds. She also stated that the outline of the RFI process was made available to the public and seven developers made proposals. Ms. Thomas further stated that the review panel consisted of several departments that reviewed the proposals.

There were no further comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-191 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

9. [ORD.](#)
[2025-193](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Standard Project Administration Agreement between the City of Richmond and the Virginia Department of Transportation for the purpose of funding the FLT – Kanawha Plaza Multi Use Trail project.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Dironna Moore Clarke, Department of Public Works Deputy Director of Equitable Transit and Mobility, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Ms. Clarke stated that the proposed ordinance would allow the city to provide funding for the development of the Fall Line Trail.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-193 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinances were considered:

10. [ORD.](#) To designate the 2800 block of 3rd Avenue in honor of the Reverend F.

[2025-194](#) Todd Gray.

Patrons: Ms. Robertson

11. [ORD.](#) To designate the 4800 block of Bryce Lane in honor of Dr. Lois Bias.

[2025-195](#)

Patrons: Ms. Trammell and Ms. Jones

12. [ORD.](#) To designate the 3400 block of Castlewood Road in honor of

[2025-196](#) Bishop Alfred L. Nicholson.

Patrons: Ms. Trammell

13. [ORD.](#) To designate the 200 block of East 19th Street in honor of Curtis

[2025-197](#) T. "Bubba" Johnson.

Patrons: Ms. Trammell

14. [ORD.](#) To designate the 200 block of East Clay Street in honor of Jack Green.

[2025-198](#)

Patrons: Ms. Trammell and Ms. Robertson

15. [ORD.](#) To designate that portion of West Broad Street located

[2025-199](#) between North Foushee Street and North Adams Street in

honor of Ted Santarella.

Patrons: Vice President Jordan and Ms. Trammell

16. [ORD.](#) To designate the 1600 block of South Meadow Street in honor of

[2025-200](#) Dr. Joan Belle Christian.

Patrons: Ms. Lynch

There were no comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-194, ORD. 2025-195, ORD. 2025-196, ORD. 2025-197, ORD. 2025-198, ORD. 2025-199 and ORD. 2025-200 to Council with the recommendation to approve.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson requested to be added as co-patron to Ord. No. 2025-198.

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

The scheduled Cultural Heritage Stewardship Plan discussion did not occur at the meeting.

Staff Report

Council staff provided the committee with the September Land Use, Housing and Transportation staff report.

[CD.2025.274](#) September 16, 2025 - Land Use, Housing and Transportation Staff Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.