



City of Richmond

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

City Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

8:30 AM

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, 1800 Lakeside Ave,
Richmond, VA 23228

Council Retreat

Councilmembers Present

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

Others in Attendance

Robert Bobb, Robert Bobb Group, LLC - President and Chief Executive Officer
Shantae Coleman, Council Management Analyst
Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney
Joyce Davis, Council Policy Analyst
LaTanja Davenport, Council Budget Analyst
LaTasha Holmes, Council Chief of Staff
Jason Hundley, Council Communications and Marketing Analyst
Craig Johnson, Deputy Inspector General
Kimberly Kyle, Council Management Analyst Senior – HR Solutions
Lou Lassiter, City Auditor
Richie McKeithen, City Assessor
Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group, LLC – Principal
Tabrica Rentz, Deputy City Attorney
Debra Shaw, Council Management Analyst
Steve Skinner, Council Public Information Manager
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

President Michael Jones called the retreat to order at 9:03 a.m. and presided.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Vice President Kristen Nye provided opening remarks and welcomed Council members and attendees to the retreat.

[CD.2023.250](#) 07122023 Council Retreat Documents

A copy of all material provided has been filed.

Agenda Review

Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group Principal, provided an agenda review and outlined the goals of the Council Advance Retreat.

Rules and Procedure Open Discussion

Councilor Andreas Addison suggested the importance of being aware of state legislation and inquired as to how Council may have more access to information pertaining to state legislation.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert requested more information to be made available regarding state legislation relating to Council priorities and the actions of the General Assembly.

Councilor Cynthia Newbille stated her belief that a new strategy should be developed in order to stay informed regarding state legislation and legislative actions.

Vice President Kristen Nye noted possible solutions available to reviewing state legislative actions in line with Council priorities.

Councilor Ellen Robertson questioned staffing and hiring practices within city administration and how it impacted the ability for Council to conduct business. Councilor Robertson also discussed the complications she had faced regarding budget amendments, line items, and certain voting practices.

Vice President Nye suggested working with the City Attorney to align the budget design process and the voting practices of Council.

President Michael Jones noted the importance and need to have more collaboration with city administration in terms of transparency and financial information.

Councilor Katherine Jordan suggested outlining specifics of what to discuss with city administration.

President Jones suggested creating a staff position that would be responsible for reviewing and reporting on the fiscal status of the city and other Council priorities.

Councilor Lambert stated there were difficulties in establishing clear lines of communication with city administration.

Heather Ness inquired whether Council should play the role of a watchdog in regards to the actions of city administration.

Councilor Addison also stated the need of information to design an accurate budget. Councilor Addison stated that inaccurate financial reports from city administration made it difficult to plan a budget as a council.

Vice President Nye stated that Council previously had access to analyze city administration's actions, however, more staff is necessary to return to that practice.

President Jones stated that he had difficulties receiving information from city administration.

Louis Lassiter, City Auditor, suggested the need for a new staff member, specifically a budget analyst, that could collaborate with city administration to receive accurate budget related information.

Robert Bobb, Robert Bobb Group President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), suggested the creation of work sessions with city administration in order to solve the issue.

Councilor Newbille requested the ability to hold discussions with city administration in collaboration with the Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee.

Councilor Ellen Robertson stated the importance of including all Council members in collaborations with city administration.

Mr. Bobb suggested that collaborative sessions should be between Council staff and city administration staff instead of Council members and the Mayor directly.

Enhancing What Richmonders See and Want

Clerk Add-Ins and Add-Ons

Deputy City Clerk RJ Warren provided Council with a presentation regarding the work and responsibilities of the City Clerk's Office.

President Michael Jones inquired as to the seating policies of Council meetings and how to ensure available seating for the public.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated the importance of having presentation materials available in accordance with the established rules, and suggested the need for consistent enforcement.

President Jones requested Council uphold and enforce rules and regulations regarding presentations at Council meetings.

LaTasha Holmes, Chief of Council Staff, provided input on the importance of pre-meetings for standing committee meetings.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert requested the ability to have more lines of communication among staff in order to provide more legislative action.

Councilor Ellen Robertson stated the need for standing committees to receive priorities and goals from the larger Council body.

Councilor Cynthia Newbille requested the ability to have pre-meeting reviews and hard copy reports for the Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee.

Councilor Reva Trammell arrived and was seated at 10:31 a.m.

Councilor Addison stated his belief in the need for more information to be communicated through staff and departments.

Councilor Katherine Jordan supported the idea of a formal brief meeting among councilors that could update members regarding Council goals.

Office of the City Attorney

Tabrica Rentz, Deputy City Attorney, provided a presentation regarding the responsibilities of the City Attorney's Office.

A Day in the Life of a Liaison

LaTasha Holmes, Council Chief of Staff, provided a presentation regarding the responsibilities of Council liaisons.

Councilor Lambert raised her concerns regarding collaboration among liaisons, the public, and city administration.

Councilor Reva Trammell stated the importance of Council members being available for work sessions.

President Jones raised his concerns regarding the ability to freely discuss government work, and discussed procedures regarding communication.

Councilor Robertson left the retreat at 11:23 a.m.

The retreat recessed at 11:23 a.m.

The retreat reconvened at 11:35 a.m.

Unity Activity

Ron Keith, Cross Dynamics President, led retreat attendees in a team building activity.

The retreat recessed at 12:38 p.m.

The retreat reconvened at 1:30 p.m.

Lobbying

Kathy Burcher, Advantus Strategies Senior Director, Government Relations, and Ron Jordan, Advantus Strategies Managing Director, provided Council with information regarding the role of Advantus Strategies as the city's lobbyists.

Richie McKeithen, City Assessor, stated the city faced issues common across the Commonwealth.

Councilor Andreas Addison raised his concern regarding the city's ability to manage the housing crisis on a local level without state assistance.

Councilor Cynthia Newbille stated her belief for the need to create a clear legislative strategy in terms of city priorities and representation within the Commonwealth's General Assembly.

Councilor Addison requested the ability to track Council priorities and opportunities to work within the General Assembly.

Councilor Reva Trammell left the retreat at 2:27 p.m.

Comprehensive Agenda Setting through Advocacy

Councilor Andreas Addison provided Council with a presentation regarding comprehensive legislative agendas and collaboration with other cities to solve legislative problems.

Councilor Addison also discussed ways in which local governments could lobby together within state and federal government in order to address locally shared priorities and goals.

Robert Bobb, Robert Bobb Group President and CEO, shared his experiences and advice regarding intergovernmental collaboration.

Councilor Cynthia Newbille left the retreat at 2:39 p.m.

Shared Priorities - Legislative Application

Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group Principal provided an administrative summary and reviewed the major topics discussed throughout the retreat.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch arrived and was seated at 2:58 p.m.

Vice President Kristen Nye stated the importance of sharing information amongst councilors and between city administrative departments.

Councilor Andreas Addison discussed challenges of addressing legislative priorities.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert discussed the need for intentional collaboration between Council and city administration.

Robert Bobb, Robert Bobb Group President and CEO, stated the importance of Council staff, and the analysis necessary to keep up with city administration and other groups of interest.

Ron Jordan, Advantus Strategies Managing Director, discussed the importance of collaboration between city employees and community members.

LaTasha Holmes, Council Chief of Staff, stated the need for more collaboration and staffing in order to address more priorities. Ms. Holmes also discussed the possibility of developing Council approved directives for standing committees.

Heather Ness stated the importance of developing clear goals and expectations.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch questioned ways in which to expand Council staff.

President Michael Jones stated his belief that LaTasha Holmes, Council Chief of Staff, should have the ability to manage the Chief of Staff's Office with Council's shared input.

Vice President Kristen Nye and President Michael Jones discussed the need to hire more Council staff.

Amy Robins, Council Liaison, raised concerns regarding the challenges commonly faced by liaison staff.

Ms. Holmes discussed the need for a Deputy Council Chief of Staff, and the hiring process involved in filling that position.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch stated the need for collaboration with city administration to solve issues.

Councilor Katherine Jordan left the retreat at 3:52 p.m.

Kiya Stokes, Council Liaison, discussed the communication challenges between administration and Council, and how they contribute to dangerous situations for city residents. Mr. Stokes stated his belief in the need for collaboration in order to address issues facing the city in a timely manner.

Joyce Davis, Council Policy Analyst, discussed the importance of collaboration and distribution of resources across staff and between other organizations.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the retreat adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

CITY CLERK