



City of Richmond

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

Minutes

Governmental Operations Standing Committee

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Kristen Larson – Chair
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Vice Chair
The Honorable Michael Jones – Member
The Honorable Andreas Addison – Council Member (*late arrival and early departure*)
Lisa Braxton, Council Management Analyst
Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
William Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst
Jamie Isley, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Kristen Larson called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m., and presided.

Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Jamie Isley, 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 Isley stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on March 18, 2021, 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 Wednesday, March 24, 2021, were provided to committee members. Ms. Isley 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 Jamie Isley provided the citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of Wednesday, February 24, 2021, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies for review.

Presentation(s)

There were no presentations.

Paper for Consideration

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2021-R019

To request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the development of a digital connectivity map, including both vertical assets and infrastructure owned by the City and of existing fiber networks, for the purpose of developing a strategy to provide universal broadband access across the city of Richmond for all residents.

Patrons: City Council

Member Michael Jones introduced RES. 2021-R019.

Councilor Andreas Addison entered the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated that the city must focus on the current infrastructure and what is needed to expand broadband access city wide. Councilor Addison also suggested the creation of a digital divide working group consisting of Richmond Public Schools, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Utilities, to fully understand what is needed to prepare for addressing broadband access issues across the city.

Robert "Bob" Steidel, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer – Operations, stated that the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will provide significant funding for broadband throughout the United States of America. He informed the committee that the city's Geographic Information System (GIS) possesses the secure information referenced in RES. 2021-R019, within the system. Mr. Steidel further stated that private sector information would need to be obtained from the private sector to help ensure the proper infrastructure is in place. Mr. Steidel also mentioned the Smart Streetlight Infrastructure Project which will inform how the city can use wireless and wired information.

Charles Todd, Department of Information Technology director, highlighted several topics of note regarding digital connectivity, to include:

- *Ensuring the confidentiality of assets and fiber network information*
- *Confirming whether there are any conflicting agreements regarding use of segments of the fiber network that were gifted to the city for the purpose of conducting city business*
- *Checking existing right of way agreements regarding the information allowed to pass through the city fiber network at certain junctions with other utilities*
- *Potential liability in situations where there is a loss of access and damage resulting from the loss; Mr. Todd noted that the Office of the City Attorney would best provide guidance on the matter*
- *The extra lines of dark fiber in the city's possession may be utilized in the future however, the fiber is not connected and investments in junctions would be necessary*

- *Rules that govern the ways in which funds from the Department of Transportation may be utilized for purposes other than transportation related matters*
- *The Last Mile Rule – in which the city has given the carrier control over the connections that go in at building sites – past issues with carriers regarding connecting the final 50-100 feet of cable from the street to a particular building may be cause for the use of outside consultants to assist in the process*
- *The existing infrastructure has historically been used for routine government operations, and in order to offer service city wide, the city must ensure that government operations remain secure from public Wi-Fi service*

There were no further comments or discussions and **Member Michael Jones moved to forward RES. 2021-R019 to the April 12, 2021, Council meeting with recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

Chair Kristen Larson concurred with Councilor Andreas Addison's suggestion for a digital divide working group, and requested staff to collaborate with Councilor Addison.

Discussion Items

Charter Review Process Recommendations

Interim Council Chief of Staff Joyce Davis, William Echelberger, Council budget analyst, and Ron Jordan, Advantus Strategies, Council lobbyist, presented the committee with an overview of the proposed review process for revision of the Richmond City Charter.

Ms. Davis covered the process to review and revise the Richmond City Charter, and she also offered information regarding submission deadlines for the 2022 or the 2023 Virginia General Assembly session. She advised the committee that Council must decide whether to utilize a Richmond City Charter Commission to recommend revisions, a collaborative committee comprised of various departments and city entities, a hybrid of the prior two options, or hire a consultant to facilitate revisions to the Richmond City Charter to include oversight of the decided process for charter review.

Councilor Andreas Addison left the meeting at 2:25 p.m.

Mr. Jordan provided a historical overview of past Richmond City Charter review processes. Mr. Jordan highlighted the importance of a micro level review of the Richmond City Charter, to include resolving everyday issues known to city leadership at the department level, which could result in more efficient city processes.

Member Michael Jones requested the identification of items that could be examined under the Richmond City Charter review process to assist in more efficient city services.

Mr. Jordan recommended conferring with department leadership due to their extensive knowledge of city operations.

Chair Kristen Larson suggested the creation of a working group comprised of several Council members, several members of city administration and Council staff to circumvent the lengthy process of creating a commission. Chair Larson volunteered to participate in the suggested Richmond City Charter review workgroup.

Member Jones suggested allowing the processes to move towards a request at the 2022 Virginia General Assembly session, and if deadlines are not met, continue the process to the following Virginia General Assembly session.

Vice Chair Katherine Jordan voiced support for Chair Larson and Member Jones's suggestions.

Chair Larson requested staff to determine individuals to serve on the suggested working group from Council and city administration. Chair Larson also requested staff to schedule the first meeting of the workgroup and gather all documents needed to move forward with the process. She stated that the goal of the workgroup is to reach a resolution regarding the review of the Richmond City Charter by September 2021, and if the deadline is unmet, the process will continue into the following year.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Fund Balance Allocation Regarding COVID-19

It was the consensus of the committee to reserve discussion of the Fund Balance Allocation Regarding COVID-19 to meetings of the full body of Council.

William Echelberger, Council budget analyst, advised the committee that further discussion with the City Attorney should take place to determine how the funds may be utilized. Mr. Echelberger also advised that Council will need to decide how to utilize the funds and that discussions should continue with the full Council present. He further advised the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will allocate an unknown amount of funds for use until December 2024.

Staff Report

Interim Council Chief of Staff Joyce Davis provided the committee with the March staff report.

A copy of the report provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:49 p.m.