



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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Minutes

Organizational Development Standing Committee

Monday, March 2, 2020

5:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille – Chair
The Honorable Andreas Addison – Member
The Honorable Kim Gray – Member
The Honorable Michael Jones – Member (early departure)
The Honorable Kristen Larson – Member
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member (early departure)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Member
The Honorable Reva Trammell – Member (early departure)

Absent

The Honorable Chris Hilbert – Vice Chair

Others in Attendance

Lawrence Anderson, Council Chief of Staff
Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan

Upon the Chair's request, Deputy City Clerk RJ Warren provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency.

Approval of the Minutes

There were no corrections or amendments to the minutes of the Monday, February 3, 2020, Organizational Development Standing Committee meeting at 5:00 p.m., and the minutes were approved as presented.

Reports from City Administration, Council Staff and Other Parties

Richmond Behavioral Health Authority

Dr. John Lindstrom, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) chief executive officer, addressed the committee and provided an overview of RBHA's impact on the city and citizens.

Member Kristen Larson inquired if RBHA had any involvement with assisting homeless individuals

residing in “Camp Cathy”, an encampment of tents providing shelter outside the city’s cold weather overflow shelter located at the Annie Giles Community Resource Center at 1400 Oliver Hill Way.

Dr. Lindstrom informed the committee that RBHA was active in responding to individuals at “Camp Cathy” and performing evaluations to provide services for willing individuals. Dr. Lindstrom stated RBHA had increased housing assistance to individuals with mental illness.

Member Ellen Robertson inquired if larger mental health hospitals were necessary to address the needs of individuals with mental illness in the city.

Dr. Lindstrom stated that state mental hospitals were consistently filled at 95% capacity levels. Dr. Lindstrom expressed his belief that expanded community services would better address the needs of mental illnesses rather than larger hospitals. Dr. Lindstrom also stated challenges for RBHA included funding and retaining trained professionals with addiction expertise.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Tobacco Cessation Program Update

Dr. Danny Avula, Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts director, addressed the committee and introduced Avis Thomas, Richmond City Health District free from tobacco coordinator.

Ms. Thomas provided the committee with an overview and update of the Richmond City Cessation Program and its impact with helping citizens quit smoking.

Member Michael Jones exited the meeting at 5:50 p.m.

Member Kristen Larson requested more details be provided regarding the program’s funding breakdown and the program’s goals when Council reviews the Fiscal Year 2021 Richmond Government Budget.

Member Stephanie Lynch inquired about additional funding methods through Commonwealth of Virginia programs.

Sarah Birkhead, Virginia Department of Health tobacco control program regional coordinator, addressed state funding options. Ms. Birkhead informed members about the Virginia Department of Health’s Quit Now Virginia program and its relationship with the Richmond City Health District’s efforts to help citizens quit smoking.

Member Ellen Robertson inquired if multiple entities being involved in helping citizens quit smoking resulted in a duplication of services.

Ms. Birkhead informed members that state enforced restrictions prevent the Quit Now Virginia program from providing direct cessation services that the Richmond City Health District provides citizens.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update

Dr. Danny Avula, Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts director, provided the committee an update regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how the federal government, Virginia Department of Health, and Richmond City Health District were responding to the disease.

Member Kim Gray addressed Richmond Public Schools (RPS) and inquired about steps necessary to provide adequate cleaning materials such as soap and papers towels.

Dr. Avula stated it was a major concern and informed members that he recently spoke with RPS Superintendent Jason Kamras regarding providing necessary cleaning materials in schools. Dr. Avula stated Superintendent Kamras acknowledged providing and refilling cleaning materials in schools was a priority.

Member Stephanie Lynch inquired about COVID-19 prevention efforts in Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority properties.

Dr. Avula stated he had identified potential funding sources available to assist in providing prevention materials to communities unable to provide such materials in the event of a large COVID-19 outbreak.

Member Andreas Addison engaged in a discussion with Dr. Avula regarding a timeframe for production of a potential vaccine or potential antivirals.

Dr. Avula stated the best strategy moving forward was to limit exposure and spreading of the disease until a potential vaccine or potential antivirals are available.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Building for Innovation and Startups Update and Startup Ecosystem Overview

Carrie Roth, Activation Capital president and chief executive officer, provided an overview of Activation Capital's involvement with the entrepreneurial community and also provided an update regarding the construction and design of an entrepreneurial space dedicated to innovation and startups.

Member Ellen Robertson inquired about a timeline for the building's construction at the intersection of 8th Street and Leigh Street, and if the striking of the proposed Navy Hill Development project would have any negative effects on Activation Capital's efforts.

Ms. Roth stated construction was projected to begin in the spring of 2020. Ms. Roth informed members she was unsure about the impact the striking of the proposed Navy Hill Development project would have on Activation Capital's future plans.

Member Stephanie Lynch exited the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Member Andreas Addison stated he hoped the entrepreneurial space would address equity and provide supportive services with a welcoming atmosphere for all citizens of the city.

Member Reva Trammell exited the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Discussion Item

City Homelessness Update

Reginald Gordon, deputy chief administrative officer – Human Services, addressed the committee and provided information regarding the city's cold weather overflow shelter located at the Annie Giles Community Resource Center at 1400 Oliver Hill Way. Mr. Gordon also addressed "Camp Cathy", an encampment of tents providing shelter located outside the cold weather overflow shelter. Mr. Gordon stated the primary purpose of the cold weather overflow shelter was not to necessarily provide shelter, cots, or blankets, but to protect individuals without accessible shelter from hypothermia and possible death.

Member Kim Gray inquired about providing cots to individuals with disabilities or mobility issues and providing blankets rather than emergency thermal aluminum foil.

Mr. Gordon stated it was possible and relayed to the committee cost estimates for providing cots and blankets to individuals seeking assistance at the cold weather overflow shelter.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Phyllis Grooms-Gordon, Department of Social Services children, families and adults – operations manager, informed members that the thermal aluminum foil was easier to sanitize and that blankets were difficult to consistently launder.

Member Kristen Larson inquired about the number of people residing in “Camp Cathy” outside the cold weather overflow shelter and expressed her concern that a solution to the encampment was not being addressed quickly enough.

Kelly King Horne, Homeward executive director, stated an estimated 80 tents were erected outside the center, but it was difficult to accurately provide a number of individuals residing in the tents or any personal information of those individuals residing in the tents.

Mr. Gordon stated a task force was actively seeking information on individuals residing in the tents to determine an action plan to provide shelter and assistance.

Member Larson requested the task force provide recommendations that Council could take to address solutions to the encampment.

Douglass Dunlap, Housing and Community Development director, was available to provide information regarding the city’s eviction diversion program. Mr. Dunlap stated a presentation on the program was scheduled to occur at the March 9, 2020 Informal Session of Council.

Member Ellen Robertson expressed her concerns with affordable housing options in the city and its effect on working citizens unable to afford permanent housing in the city.

Sharon Ebert, deputy chief administrative officer – Economic and Community Development, was available to address questions regarding legality and zoning of encampments in the city. Ms. Ebert also informed members that Virginia Commonwealth University owns the property that contains the encampment.

Member Robertson requested additional information be provided to Council regarding necessary budgeting to address homelessness in the city and also potential regional efforts that can be made.

Chair Cynthia Newbille requested Mr. Dunlap provide statistics regarding those impacted by the city’s eviction diversion program at the March 9, 2020 Informal Session of Council.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.