



Richmond City Council

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

Budget Work Session Minutes

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Council Members Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Katherine Jordan, Vice President
The Honorable Andrew Breton
The Honorable Kenya Gibson
The Honorable Nicole Jones (later arrival)
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch (late arrival)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson
The Honorable Reva Trammell

Absent

The Honorable Sarah Abubaker

Others in Attendance

Lisa Braxton, Council Management Analyst, Principal
Laura Drewry, City Attorney
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Tabrica Rentz, Deputy City Attorney
RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff

Call to Order

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement

Upon the President's request, Council Management Analyst Lisa Braxton provided information on the appropriate way to evacuate the Council Chamber in an emergency.

Prior to the presentation, Council Chief of Staff RJ Warren reviewed the schedule for the FY2027 budget work sessions, explained the process for submitting and tracking Council questions, and outlined the procedures governing presentations, Council questioning, and the budget amendment timeline. CCOS noted that meeting materials and responses would

be provided in advance to promote transparency and support Council's deliberations.

Overview of Economic Development and Planning Budgets

Chief Administrative Officer Odie Donald introduced the Planning and Economic Development portfolio and noted that Deputy Chief Administrative Officers and department directors would present their respective budgets and respond to Council questions.

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Sharon Ebert presented the Planning and Economic Development portfolio, highlighting FY2027 budget priorities focused on economic growth, housing production, development review, neighborhood revitalization, sustainability, workforce development, and implementation of major initiatives, including Richmond 300, the zoning code refresh, the Jackson Ward Community Plan, and the Diamond District. A copy of the presentation provided has been filed.

[CD.2026.085](#) Budget Work Sessions Documents - Planning & Economic Development

Planning and Development Review

Council discussed staffing requests and the department's ability to support anticipated growth resulting from the zoning code refresh.

City administration explained that permitting and building code positions are primarily funded through building permit fees, while zoning and planning functions rely largely on general fund support. Staff stated that the zoning code refresh is expected to streamline approvals by allowing more projects to proceed by-right, reducing legislative reviews while increasing permit activity and smaller-scale residential development.

Council expressed concern that additional development activity could increase future staffing needs.

Housing and Community Development

Council discussed the proposed budget request for dedicated legal support to assist affordable housing initiatives.

City administration explained that dedicated legal resources would expedite contract negotiations, affordable housing agreements, and project implementation but noted that legal work would continue through the City Attorney's Office if the request is not funded.

Council requested clarification regarding the appropriate placement of the proposed attorney position within either Department of Housing and Community Development or the City Attorney's Office.

City administration responded that legal staffing decisions remain under review and will require further discussion.

Councilor Nicole Jones arrived at 1:57 p.m. and was seated.

Jackson Ward Community Plan/Gilpin Court

Council requested additional information regarding the proposed \$450,000 implementation funding.

City administration explained that the funding would support personnel responsible for coordinating implementation of the Jackson Ward Community Plan and Gilpin Court redevelopment, including community engagement, project management, and resident support associated with the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

Council requested a detailed breakdown of the proposed expenditures and implementation plan.

Housing Performance Measures

Council questioned why several Housing and Community Development performance measures were listed as “To Be Determined.”

City administration stated that department performance continues to be guided by the city’s Equitable Affordable Housing Plan and that performance measures are being updated to reflect current housing market conditions and revised implementation targets.

Office of Community Wealth Building

Council discussed coordination between workforce development programs and youth-serving initiatives.

City administration reported strong collaboration with partner agencies and stated that workforce, youth, and family support programs are coordinated across portfolios. Staff confirmed that the proposed FY2027 budget does not include funding for an additional Richmond Resilience Initiative cohort beyond the existing two-year commitment.

Economic Development/Performance Measures

Council discussed staffing capacity, redevelopment priorities, and long-term economic development strategy.

City administration explained that the proposed “property programs” position would transfer from General Services to Economic Development to better align management of city-owned property with redevelopment priorities. Staff indicated that current staffing levels are adequate for FY2027 planning activities but acknowledged additional capacity may be needed as projects move into implementation.

Council recommended revising performance measures to better demonstrate the city’s return on investment, including:

- General Fund revenue growth;
- Commercial tax base expansion;
- Property value increases;
- Leveraged private investment; and
- Financial returns from major redevelopment projects.

City administration explained that while project-specific outcomes are tracked, broader revenue growth is influenced by overall market conditions and economic activity beyond individual city investments. City administration agreed to provide additional financial projections, including anticipated revenues associated with the Diamond District.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch arrived at 2:12 p.m. and was seated.

Downtown Revitalization and Redevelopment

City administration outlined current priorities, including:

- GRTC Transit Center redevelopment;
- Coliseum site redevelopment;
- Broad Street activation;
- Adaptive reuse of vacant office buildings;
- Mixed-use development; and
- Downtown business attraction.

City staff described these initiatives as key components of the city's long-term economic development strategy.

Grocery Access and Commercial Development

Council discussed expanding grocery access, particularly in underserved neighborhoods.

City administration stated that efforts are focused on attracting smaller-scale grocery retailers, leveraging public-private partnerships, and coordinating multiple development opportunities to improve market feasibility.

Southside Growth

Council emphasized the importance of planning for Southside growth corridors and ensuring sufficient staffing and economic development resources to support future investment.

City administration indicated planning efforts are underway, and staffing needs will continue to be evaluated as projects advance.

Minority Business Development

Council requested additional information regarding support for minority-owned businesses, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

City administration explained that recent organizational realignments strengthen collaboration

among Economic Development, the Office of Community Wealth Building, and the Office of Minority Business. Staff stated that future efforts will emphasize supplier diversity, workforce development, small business assistance, and stronger partnerships with chambers of commerce, Venture Richmond, and other business organizations.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

CITY CLERK