



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

Committee Members and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Chair
The Honorable Nicole Jones – Vice Chair
The Honorable Kenya Gibson – Council Member

Absent

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member

Staff in Attendance

Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney
Maria Garnett, Council Policy Analyst
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Nahdiah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff

Call to Order

Chair Ellen Robertson called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

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

Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of May 20, 2026, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2026.159](#) May 20, 2026 - Finance and Economic Development Standing
Committee Meeting Minutes

Paper(s) for Consideration

1. [ORD.
2026-081](#) To amend City Code § 12-16, concerning publication of the City's payment register, for the purpose of promoting transparency and accountability in the expenditure of public funds by providing public access to information regarding payments made by the City to vendors for goods and services and reimbursements to employees, while protecting confidential and personal information as required by law.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

**Continued to the July 15, 2026 Finance and Economic Development Standing
Committee meeting**

Chair Ellen Robertson stated that there was a request from city administration to continue ORD. 2026-081 for consideration.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to continue ORD. 2026-081 to the July 15, 2026, Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following resolution was considered:

6. [RES.
2026-R019](#) To authorize the Council's Organizational Development Standing Committee to investigate the City's failure to publish a monthly payment register as required by City Code § 12-16 and application of exclusions allowed under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Patrons: Ms. Gibson, Ms. Trammell and Ms. Abubaker

**Continued to the July 15, 2026 Finance and Economic Development Standing
Committee meeting**

Councilor Kenya Gibson stated that the city has not consistently complied with the requirement to publish its payment register and expressed concern that proposed changes would reduce transparency. She stated that the proposed investigation resolution would allow Council to review more complete payment data with only legally required redactions, and asserted that the redaction process could be completed efficiently while maintaining public accountability and trust.

Public Hearing

Almonte Canselo expressed support for RES. 2026-R019 and stated that the council should investigate the city's failure to comply with existing payment register requirements before reducing transparency. He urged Council to review all relevant information before considering changes to current disclosure requirements.

RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff, stated that if the resolution was adopted, the Organizational Development Standing Committee would direct the investigation, and Council staff would assist by facilitating requests for documents, testimony, and other information as directed by the committee.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked whether Council staff would facilitate the collection of information and coordination of investigative hearings with administration staff. She also inquired about the next course of action if Council's requests were not fulfilled.

Mr. Warren stated that if city administration refused to provide requested documentation or testimony, the committee could take formal action, including pursuing legal measures such as a subpoena to obtain the information.

Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney, stated that Mr. Warren's comment reflected her understanding but noted that additional research would be conducted to confirm it.

Chair Robertson stated that ORD. 2026-081 addressed the same subject matter but had a different purpose. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that reports provided by the administration are timely, consistent, and meet the legislative requirements of Council. She added that it was equally important for the council to receive reliable information from the administration and to establish a shared understanding on how to proceed.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones acknowledged concerns regarding transparency and the need for Council to request information through legislation.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to continue RES. 2026-R019 to the July 15, 2026, Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD. 2026-130](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$69,920.00 from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' African American Cemetery and Graves Fund and to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by creating a new special fund for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities called the "Historic African American Cemeteries Special Fund," and appropriating the increase to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community

Facilities' "Historic African American Cemeteries Special Fund" by \$69,920.00 for the purpose of providing funding for preservation, maintenance, and stewardship activities at historically African American cemeteries.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Kimberly Jackson, Community Engagement Manager for Cemeteries with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, stated that the city is requesting acceptance of \$69,920 in funding from the Department of Historic Resources to support the preservation and restoration of the city's historic African American cemeteries. She also stated the funding will be used for burial plot enclosure repairs, marker and monument restoration, and property delineation.

There were no discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-130 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

3. [ORD. 2026-131](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$611,807.50 from the National Opioid Settlement Fund, resulting from settlement agreements with Settling Distributors, Walgreens, Walmart, Distributor, CVS, Allergan, Teva, and Kroger, and to amend Ord. No. 2025-057, adopted May 12, 2025, which adopted a Special Fund Budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026 and made appropriations thereto, by increasing revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services' National Opioid Settlement Special Fund by \$611,807.50, for the purpose of funding opioid abatement and remediation strategies to combat the opioid crisis.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-131 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

4. [ORD. 2026-132](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$1,000,000.00 from the National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund and to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by creating a new special fund for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities entitled "Broad Rock Creek Park Grant Special Fund," and appropriating the increase to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities' "Broad Rock Creek Park Grant Special Fund" by \$1,000,000.00 for the purpose of providing funding for improving access to and installing amenities at Broad Rock Creek Park.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-132 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

5. [ORD. 2026-133](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Right-of-Entry Agreement between the City of Richmond and Capital Trees for the purpose of performing tree improvements in Byrd Park located at 1401 Pump House Drive, 2601 Police Memorial Way, and 2301 Amelia Street in the city of Richmond. (5th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-133 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

7. [ORD. 2026-148](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$150,000.00 from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, and to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by creating a new special fund for the Richmond Recovery Court entitled "Byrne State Criminal Justice Improvement Program (SCIP) Grant Special Fund," and to appropriate the increase to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Richmond Recovery Court's "Byrne State Criminal Justice Improvement Program (SCIP) Grant Special Fund" by \$150,000.00 for the purpose of providing funding to combat the public health crisis caused by escalating substance use, opioid use disorders, and opioid-related overdose.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-148 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinances were considered:

8. [ORD. 2026-149](#) To amend City Code § 21-4, concerning definitions related to public procurement.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

9. [ORD. 2026-150](#) To amend City Code § 21-40, concerning joint and cooperative procurement, for the purpose of conforming the City's cooperative procurement laws to the optional provisions of Va. Code § 2.2-4304.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-149 and ORD. 2026-150 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

10. [ORD. 2026-151](#) To amend City Code § 26-610, concerning the evaluation and expiration of the partial exemption of certain rehabilitated commercial or industrial structures from real estate taxation, for the purpose of extending the expiration date from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Forwarded to the June 22, 2026 Council meeting with recommendation to approve

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-151 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

Presentation(s)

P-Card Program Overhaul

Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), provided an overview of the city's Purchasing Card (P-Card) program overhaul. He highlighted the administration's focus on continuous quality improvement, recognized the procurement team's leadership in strengthening financial processes, and stated that procurement challenges identified over the past year led to improvements in oversight, accountability, and program management. Mr. Donald noted that future updates would be provided to City Council to ensure transparency.

Rene Almaraz, Director of Procurement Services, presented an update on the city's P-Card program overhaul. He explained that a comprehensive audit identified deficiencies in policies, internal controls, oversight, and staffing, resulting in 16 audit recommendations and 58 action items. In response, the city reset the program by reducing the number of active P-Cards, restricting certain purchases, implementing mandatory pre-approval requirements, enhancing data analytics and monitoring, and revising the P-Card policy. Mr. Almaraz reported that 75% of the audit recommendations have been completed, 19% have been submitted for closure, and one recommendation remains in progress.

[CD.2026.175](#) P-Card Program Overhaul

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Chair Ellen Robertson requested additional information regarding the status of the audit recommendation closures.

Mr. Almaraz explained that completed audit recommendations were submitted to the City Auditor with supporting documentation and have been formally closed following the Auditor's review. He stated that a few audit recommendations remain outstanding and actions have been submitted for review and potential closure of the recommendations.

Chair Robertson asked whether revised policies and procedures have been developed to administer the P-Card program in accordance with the audit recommendations. She also inquired how those policies could be accessed, whether there is a process to validate that the approved corrective actions have been implemented and formally approved by the administration, and what authorization process, including required signatures, is used for P-Card purchases.

Mr. Almaraz explained that the overhauled P-Card program includes multiple levels of review, requiring cardholders to reconcile purchases with supporting documentation, supervisor approval, and a final compliance review by procurement services. He stated that oversight has been strengthened through expanded staffing, enhanced training, reduced active P-Cards, stronger internal controls, and revised policies developed with assistance from a national procurement consulting organization. Mr. Almaraz highlighted additional program enhancements, and added that department and agency heads are prohibited from serving as cardholders. Mr. Almaraz reported that mandatory training, fraud awareness, conflict of interest acknowledgments, and annual refresher training have been implemented, with 100% completion achieved for both cardholders and approvers. He stated that the city is in a 90 day soft relaunch period and that any future expansion of the P-Card program will depend on meeting established performance and compliance metrics.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones acknowledged the challenges associated with managing the city's procurement system and implementing the audit recommendations. She thanked procurement services for its efforts to strengthen the program and asked about the long term goal for restoring the P-Card program once the remaining performance metrics and audit recommendations have been satisfied. Vice Chair Jones also asked whether the audit findings support greater reliance on city contracts and cooperative procurement to reduce the need for P-Cards, whether maintaining fewer P-Cards improves program efficiency and oversight, and whether procurement services has observed changes in purchasing behavior since the program was scaled back and enhanced controls were implemented.

Mr. Almaraz stated that additional P-Cards will be issued based on demonstrated business need and supported by appropriate oversight and accountability measures. Mr. Almaraz added that procurement services is working to expand the city's portfolio of competitively procured and cooperative contracts to reduce reliance on P-Cards and improve purchasing efficiency. He also noted that procurement services provides departmental support to help staff identify appropriate contracts and purchasing methods. Finally, Mr. Almaraz stated that he has observed a positive shift in employee behavior and organizational culture since the program overhaul, with departments demonstrating greater cooperation and commitment to strengthened procurement policies.

Chair Robertson expressed appreciation for the work completed and the level of audit recommendation closures achieved. She requested further clarification on what is needed to reach full closure for the remaining items and whether there is an anticipated timeline for achieving closure.

Riad Ali, City Auditor, stated that audit recommendations will not be closed until key controls are fully in place, particularly a completed discretionary spending policy defining allowable and restricted P-Card uses. He added that the city's procurement threshold and related controls are still under review, and that while other recommendations have been closed based on adequate documentation and control design, some areas remain under evaluation or follow up.

Councilor Kenya Gibson asked whether all P-Card transactions could be included in a publicly published payment register. She also requested clarification on staffing levels prior to the program overhaul. She further asked for more detail on the software and tools used to monitor P-Card activity, and inquired about the overall cost of the P-Card program software.

Mr. Almaraz stated that he would need to consult with city administration regarding whether P-Card transactions could be included in a publicly available payment register, noting that transaction data is currently housed across multiple systems and would require evaluation to determine feasibility. He explained that the program was previously understaffed, with approximately one to two positions established at its inception around 2018, and only one staff member was actively managing the program. He added that staffing limitations and competing procurement priorities contributed to oversight challenges. Mr. Almaraz also described the city's use of Card Integrity, a data analytics vendor that reviews Bank of America Works data to identify trends, anomalies, and compliance issues across P-Card transactions. He noted the service costs \$1,400 per month.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

Maria Garnett, Council Policy Analyst, provided the committee with the June Finance and Economic Development staff report and presented follow up items requested by the committee.

[CD.2026.179](#) June 17, 2026 - Staff Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.