



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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Minutes

Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, March 5, 2020

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Kristen Larson – Chair
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Council Member (*late arrival*)
Joyce Davis, Council Policy Analyst
Jamie Isley, Assistant City Clerk
M. Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Absent

The Honorable Chris Hilbert – Vice Chair

Call to Order

Chair Kristen Larson called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m., and presided.

Evacuation Announcement and Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Jamie Isley, provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of Thursday, January 9, 2020, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Presentation

Foster Care Services and Caseworker Challenges

Shunda Giles, Department of Social Services (DSS) director, presented the committee with an overview of the challenges DSS experiences regarding turnover and retention of caseworkers. Ms. Giles highlighted issues with heavy caseloads, pay bands, starting salaries, and competition with surrounding jurisdictions. She also itemized several strategies DSS has enacted to remedy retention issues. Ms. Giles stated that Council can support DSS through pay band increases and policy.

Council member Ellen Robertson arrived at 2:10 p.m.

Ms. Giles informed the committee that Richmond is not impacted by Virginia General Assembly House Bill 1410 which requires DSS to participate in the Restaurant Meals Program of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program because the department has always provided such services.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Paper for Consideration

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2020-R013

To request that the Mayor propose a Fiscal Year 2020-2021 General Fund Budget that provides for an appropriation of \$221,770.00 for a third-party equity analysis to measure equity in the City and that further provides for equity training for a core group of City employees and appointed and elected officials for the purpose of eliminating inequities through improved City policy.

Patrons: Ms. Robertson, President Newbille and Mayor Stoney

Councilor Ellen Robertson and Osita Iroegbu, Office of the Mayor senior policy advisor for community engagement, equity and inclusion, introduced RES. 2020-R013. Ms. Iroegbu stated that the goal of RES. 2020-R013 is to utilize the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) model to promote organizational change and equity citywide through an equity study and accompanying training.

Member Stephanie Lynch inquired about past studies regarding inequity in the city and whether the GARE study would provide new information. She also asked if the provider of the training services had been identified.

Ms. Iroegbu detailed the process by which RES. 2020-R013 would normalize equity within internal language and policies, and search for unintentional inequities. She stated that the GARE model empowers employees and provides a framework for the city to develop an action plan and implement real change. She informed the committee that GARE has submitted a proposal with a list of activities, deliverables and training, and that the equity study would be completed by an unknown third party.

Chair Kristen Larson inquired about the procurement process and requested additional clarification since GARE and the appropriation amount are specifically named in RES. 2020-R013.

Councilor Ellen Robertson informed the committee that the city is a professional member of the GARE organization as are many cities that utilize the GARE model. She stated that the Office of the City Attorney creates legislation and is responsible for ensuring procurement laws are not being infringed upon. Councilor Robertson also detailed the process of developing RES. 2020-R013.

Deputy City Attorney M. Janet Palmer stated she would follow-up with the committee regarding procurement law and RES. 2020-R013.

Councilor Robertson stressed the importance of RES. 2020-R013 to creating systemic change and

stated her support for amending the resolution to rectify any issues.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Member Stephanie Lynch moved to forward RES. 2020-R013 to the March 9, 2020, City Council meeting with recommendation to approve with amendment, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

Discussion Item

Formulating Questions for Homelessness Services (Cathy's Camp)

Chair Kristen Larson expressed the need for continued updates regarding shelter placements and plans to assist individuals residing in Cathy's Camp. Chair Larson requested staff compile a list of questions and issues regarding city administration's plan for Cathy's Camp for the next sixty days, to be distributed to city administration and all members of Council.

Member Stephanie Lynch requested that city administration work to ensure that the city is prepared for the next U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant cycle. She also requested staff research city-owned land for a potential pilot program to provide housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Chair Larson asked about revising legislation to provide for public-private partnerships regarding the use of city-owned property for homelessness services provided by non-profits and other private organizations. She also asked for weekly statistical updates regarding Cathy's Camp and the number of shelter refusals. Chair Larson requested a Council representative be present at all city administration meetings with Homeward, and that copies of past and future meeting minutes be distributed to all members of Council.

Councilor Ellen Robertson requested Council move forward with a resolution to adopt the City of Richmond Homelessness Strategic Plan. She noted that city administration is awaiting comments and recommendations from Council before finalizing the Homelessness Strategic Plan and asked for a member response timeline.

Chair Larson requested that the Homelessness Strategic Plan be added as a discussion item to the April 2, 2020, Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting.

Member Lynch requested that Education and Human Services Standing Committee staff facilitate the collection of feedback and input from all members of Council regarding homelessness and compile it into a single document prior to the end of March.

Staff Report

Joyce Davis, Council policy analyst, provided the committee with the March staff report.

A copy of the report has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:46 p.m.