



City of Richmond

Minutes

Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee

Thursday, May 21, 2020

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Others in Attendance

The Honorable Michael Jones – Chair
The Honorable Kristen Larson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Ellen F. Robertson – Committee Member
The Honorable Kimberly Gray – Council Member
Lawrence Anderson, Council Chief of Staff
Samson Anderson, Council Budget Analyst
Meghan Brown, Deputy Council Chief of Staff
Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst
Allison Miessler, Boards and Commissions Administrator
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Tabrica Rentz, Acting Deputy City Attorney
Dominique Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Michael Jones called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m., and presided.

Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, announced the meeting would be held through electronic communication means. Assistant City Clerk Thaxton stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on May 14, 2020, 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 Thursday, May 21, 2020, were provided to committee members. Ms. Thaxton 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 Dominique J. Thaxton provided citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections or amendments to the meeting minutes of the Thursday, January 16, 2020 committee meeting, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

Allison Miessler, boards and commissions administrator, reviewed board applications for consideration by the committee.

Chair Michael Jones requested that the appropriate staff reach out to the Office of the Mayor for recommendations of appointment to the Minority Business Enterprise & Emerging Small Business Advisory Board.

Member Ellen Robertson asked if any applicants were currently serving on any other boards or commissions.

Vice Chair Kristen Larson noted that filling the certified public accountant vacancy has been particularly challenging and inquired whether the criteria should be amended.

Vice Chair Larson moved to continue consideration of the following board appointment applications to the June 18, 2020 Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved:

<u>Board Name</u>	<u>Criteria for Appointment</u>	<u>Applicant Name</u>
Board of Directors of the Economic Development Authority (7 directors)	Resident of the city	Charles D'Aprix 7th District Resident
		Michael Dickinson 1st District Resident
		Nathan Joyce 6th District Resident
		Neil Millhiser 2nd District Resident
		Lewis Nelson 3rd District Resident
		Kenneth Smither 3rd District Resident
	(1 vacancy)	

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Papers for Consideration

Vice Chair Larson moved to amend the agenda as follows:

ORD. 2019-275

To amend ch. 6 of the City Code by adding therein a new art. XII (§§ 6-596-6-602) to establish a technology zone program in accordance with Va. Code § 58.1-3850, for the purpose of facilitating the development and location of technology businesses in the city of Richmond, capital investment, and job creation.

Patron: Mr. Addison

To be continued to the June 18, 2020 Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting

ORD. 2019-276

To amend City Code §§ 26-872, concerning definitions related to license taxes, and 26-989, concerning licenses taxes for personal services businesses, and to amend ch. 26, art. XV, div. 2 of the City Code by adding therein a new section numbered 26-1003.1, concerning the license tax for technology businesses, for the purpose of creating a new business, profession, and occupation license category called “technology business” and imposing a new license tax on such businesses.

Patron: Mr. Addison

To be continued to the June 18, 2020 Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2020-R026

To request that the Mayor introduce such budget amendments and propose other such legislation as may be necessary to establish a grant program to be administered by the Economic Development Authority of the City of Richmond for restaurants within the city of Richmond affected by the spread of COVID-19.

Patron: Ms. Gray

Councilor Kimberly Gray provided an overview of RES. 2020-R026.

John Wack, Department of Finance director, explained that the fiscal impact of the resolution would be roughly seven million dollars and the administration had not yet identified a funding source for the grant program. Mr. Wack noted the small business disaster loan program, the first responder’s meal program and tax amnesty programs are ongoing assistance efforts.

Councilor Gray stated that she would be amenable to amendments proposed by city administration but expressed her concern for new businesses that may not qualify for assistance programs under current guidelines.

Vice Chair Kristen Larson requested information regarding how the administration arrived at the seven million dollar fiscal impact. Vice Chair Larson stated that the proposed grant program would give a much needed boost to restaurants needing assistance with reopening.

Member Ellen Robertson asked if the proposed resolution seeks a rebate of the Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) taxes paid this year, in the form of a grant and for further clarification on funding options amid budget constraints. Member Robertson also asked for an economic strategy for potential funding sources and detailed recommendations from the administration.

Councilor Gray stated that the resolution requests a program to assist restaurants with their reopening efforts, particularly given the additional COVID-19 response guidelines.

Chair Michael Jones expressed his support for all businesses during this time and that he would like potential funding sources identified to ensure that there is not an undue burden placed on the taxpayers.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Member Ellen Robertson moved to continue RES. 2020-R026 to the June 18, 2020 Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved:** Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes 1, Larson.

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2020-R027

To request that the Chief Administrative Officer, in accordance with City Charter § 5.05.1(c), provide the Council with revised financial and activity reports due to reduced economic activity in the business communities within the city of Richmond occasioned by the disaster presented by the spread of COVID-19.
Patron: Ms. Gray

Councilor Kimberly Gray provided an overview of RES. 2020-R027.

Jay Brown, Department of Budget and Strategic Planning director, stated that RES. 2020-R027 requests reports on economic activity changes as a result of COVID-19. Mr. Brown clarified that the third quarter report previously provided to Council includes such updated projections for the changes, as well as recommendations for the 2021 fiscal year.

Member Ellen Robertson asked if there is any further information that could be provided to satisfy the resolution.

Mr. Brown responded that the reports are regularly provided to Council and stated that the administration is committed to collaborating with Council on budget amendments.

Vice Chair Kristen Larson asked for a status on the requirement to provide recommendations concerning actions the city may take to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on restaurants and businesses. Ms. Larson also requested an update on the assistance programs currently administered by the administration.

Leonard Sledge, Department of Economic Development director, provided an update on the city programs currently available to businesses.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Vice Chair Kristen Larson moved to forward RES. 2020-R027 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which failed for lack of a second.**

Member Robertson stated she did not want to move RES. 2020-R027 forward because it is unclear what information the resolution is seeking from city administration. Ms. Robertson added she believes city administration is already providing Council with the information requested within the resolution.

Member Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2020-R027 to Council with the recommendation to strike, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes 1, Larson.

Chair Michael Jones requested Council staff work with city administration to provide a report on the impact of lost revenue due to COVID-19.

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2020-088

To repeal City Code § 26-902, concerning erroneous assessments and refunds and exoneration from payment of local taxes, and to amend ch. 26, art. II, div. 1, by adding therein a new § 26-48, for the purpose of authorizing the Director of Finance to refund and exonerate taxpayers from any local-tax and requiring approval of any such refund or exoneration by the City Attorney.

Patron: Mayor Stoney

John Wack, Department of Finance director, provided an overview of ORD. 2020-088

There were no further comments or discussions and **Vice Chair Larson moved to forward ORD. 2020-088 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2020-114

To amend ch. 26, art. I of the City Code, concerning taxation, by adding therein a new § 26-3, concerning the application of payments for taxes, for the purpose of providing that the Director of Finance shall not be required to credit all payments of local levies first against the most delinquent account and may instead credit such payments, to the extent permitted by law, in the manner deemed appropriate where the taxpayer has entered into a bona fide payment agreement with the City.

Patron: Mayor Stoney

John Wack, Department of Finance director, provided an overview of ORD. 2020-114

Member Ellen Robertson requested to be added as a co-patron to ORD. 2020-088 and ORD. 2020-114. Ms. Robertson asked that Council be made aware when the administration introduces items that bring the city in compliance with state legislation, so members may request to be co-patrons.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Member Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2020-114 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2020-115

To amend Appendix A of the City Code for section 12-120(a)(20), concerning rates and discounts for parking facilities operated by the City

Patron: Mayor Stoney

Lynne Lancaster, Department of Public Works deputy director of parking and mobility, provided an overview of ORD. 2020-115.

Member Ellen Robertson requested a breakdown of the monthly parking rate. Member Robertson also inquired about the impact of designating certain spaces of the parking lot specified in the ordinance.

Ms. Lancaster explained that the rate change came about because restaurant employees found trouble parking when reporting to work. Ms. Lancaster also stated that the impact will be better assessed when the construction phase of the area is complete.

Chair Michael Jones requested more information on the impact of designating certain areas in front of restaurants as no parking zones so restaurants may extend their outside eating areas.

Vice Chair Larson asked if Council President Cynthia Newbille was consulted about the proposed ordinance being that it would impact her district and how the monthly parking would be enforced.

Ms. Lancaster responded that President Newbille was heavily involved and the monthly parking participants would receive hang tags to place in their vehicles.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Vice Chair Larson moved to forward ORD. 2020-115 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2020-R036

To urge the city of Richmond's small businesses, real estate companies, and landlords, who receive governmental financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, to share the benefits of such financial assistance with the employees and tenants of such entities, as applicable, to minimize employment terminations and housing evictions within the city of Richmond.

Patron: Mr. Jones

Chair Michael Jones provided an overview of RES. 2020-R036.

Lincoln Saunders, Office of the Mayor chief of staff, expressed his appreciation for the proposed legislation as it is in step with the administration's efforts to speak with lending institutions and partners in the community.

Member Ellen Robertson expressed her concern regarding the amount of evictions and increased homelessness the city may see. Member Robertson asked that the committee reach out to Housing Opportunities Made Equal and other agencies that manage the city's eviction diversion program. Member Robertson requested to be added as a co-patron to RES. 2020-R036.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Member Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2020-R036 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

Presentation

Tax Relief for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

John Wack, Department of Finance director, presented the committee with an overview of the tax relief for the elderly and disabled program. Mr. Wack provided information on the application process and the eligibility parameters currently in place for applicants. He further outlined the outreach methods in place to reach citizens and how such methods were altered due to COVID-19.

Chair Michael Jones expressed his thanks to the administration for its work on the program. Chair Jones also extended his gratitude to his fellow Councilmembers for extending the parameters to allow for more citizens to participate.

Vice Chair Larson inquired about the percentage of uptick in new participants and if there were any changes to the program budget.

Mr. Wack stated that while there were only ten new applicants in the newly expanded income category, he expects that this is due to the effects felt by the elderly and disabled populations from the pandemic. Mr. Wack also stated that budget changes will be more evident towards the end of June.

Member Ellen Robertson requested that the administration look into a centralized location in the Northside so that citizens gain access to services. Member Robertson also asked for an analysis of the age demographic of applicants and participants and that the information be used to potentially simplify the application process.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Staff Report

Bill Echelberger and Samson Anderson, council budget analysts, provided the committee with the May staff report.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m.