



City of Richmond

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

City Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 11, 2023

8:30 AM

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden,
1800 Lakeside Ave, Richmond, VA 23228

Council Retreat

Councilmembers Present

The Honorable Michael Jones, President
The Honorable Kristen Nye Vice President
The Honorable Andreas Addison (late arrival)
The Honorable Katherine Jordan
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch (late arrival and early departure)
The Honorable Cynthia Newbille
The Honorable Ellen Robertson (late arrival)
The Honorable Reva Trammell (late arrival and early departure)

Others in Attendance

Robert Bobb, Robert Bobb Group, LLC - President and Chief Executive Officer
Shantae Coleman, Council Management Analyst
Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney
Joyce Davis, Council Policy Analyst
LaTanja Davenport, Council Budget Analyst
LaTasha Holmes, Council Chief of Staff
Jason Hundley, Council Communications and Marketing Analyst
Craig Johnson, Deputy Inspector General
Kimberly Kyle, Council Management Analyst Senior – HR Solutions
Lou Lassiter, City Auditor
Richie McKeithen, City Assessor
Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group, LLC – Principal
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Debra Shaw, Council Management Analyst
Steve Skinner, Council Public Information Manager
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Council President Michael Jones called the retreat to order at 8:49 a.m., and presided.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

President Michael Jones welcomed attendees and stated his appreciation to Council members and staff for taking part in the City Council Advance Retreat. President Jones also stated the Council Advance would help unite Council members in providing needed services and effective government for city residents.

A copy of all material provided has been filed.

[CD.2023.249](#) July 11, 2023 Council Retreat Handouts

Councilor Ellen Robertson arrived at 8:53 a.m. and was seated.

Advance Objectives and Introduction of Facilitators

Council Chief of Staff (CCOS) LaTasha Holmes addressed attendees and provided information regarding Council Advance objectives, goals, and facilitators.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch arrived at 8:55 a.m. and was seated.

Councilor Andreas Addison arrived at 8:56 a.m. and was seated.

Retreat to Advance: A Look Back to Establish the Way Forward

Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group, LLC Principal, discussed prior Council retreats and outlined the agenda for day one of the Council Advance. Ms. Ness also addressed Council's plan to analyze and amend City Council's process for reviewing and approving the city's budget.

Office of the Council Chief of Staff - Foundational Tools and Continuous Support: Chiefing, Staffing and Winning

CCOS Holmes reviewed her goals for the Office of the Council Chief of Staff. CCOS Holmes also addressed proposed staffing changes for the Office of the Council Chief of Staff.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch inquired about the proposed Office of the Council Chief of Staff organizational chart and requested additional information regarding newly created positions.

CCOS Holmes provided anticipated responsibilities of newly created positions.

President Michael Jones stated it was important Council members to avoid working in silos with Council staff.

Councilor Ellen Robertson stated her support for increasing staff, but she requested additional review of the responsibilities of the proposed new positions.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated it was important that the Office of the Council Chief of Staff increase staffing to adequately address the needs and goals of Council. Councilor Addison also stated it was important to move forward with hiring staff soon.

Vice President Kristen Nye stated her support for the proposed Office of the Council Chief of Staff organizational chart, and she provided more details on the desired goals of newly created positions.

Councilor Katherine Jordan stated it was important to have more policy staff to assist Council with policy goals. Councilor Jordan also stated it was important that Council have enough budget staff to monitor budget actions by city administration throughout the year.

Councilor Cynthia Newbille stated Council needed to hire enough staff to assist Council with accomplishing its goals and objectives for the city.

President Jones stated he did not believe Council was staffed for success, and he also stated Council cannot match the staffing resources of city administration.

Robert Bobb, Robert Bobb Group, LLC, President and Chief Executive Officer, stated his agreement with President Jones and noted that city administration would continue to outpace Council so long as it has more staff.

CCOS Holmes provided Council with a demonstration of a proposed intranet site for Council and Council agencies.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert stated Council's website needed to be updated to provide more district specific information to city residents.

The retreat recessed at 10:19 a.m.

The retreat reconvened at 10:34 a.m.

Councilor Reva Trammell arrived at 10:34 a.m. and was seated.

Dollars, Cents and Sense

Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group, LLC Principal, addressed Council's review of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budget and Council's ability to incorporate Council priorities into the budgeting process.

Auditing as a Performance Tool

Lou Lassiter, City Auditor, provided attendees with a presentation regarding the Office of the City Auditor and how the office can help Council create a more efficient government.

Vice President Kristen Nye stated her appreciation for the Office of the City Auditor, and she noted that more legislation should be reflective of city audit recommendations.

Promoting Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Craig Johnson, Deputy Inspector General, provided attendees with a presentation that provided an overview of the Office of the Inspector General.

Real Estate Assessment and the Budget

Richie McKeithen, City Assessor, provided attendees with a presentation providing an overview of the city real estate assessment process. Mr. McKeithen also addressed recent General Assembly of Virginia action regarding new requirements for issuance of property assessments. Mr. McKeithen stated that the new requirements would provide more data about real estate increases and potential roll-back tax rates. Mr. McKeithen also addressed the lack of programs available to provide citizens with real estate tax relief.

Councilor Reva Trammell stated she believed several rental property owners were selling their property to real estate developers due to the rise of real estate tax assessments.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated that he believed the city should institute a land value tax to help increase real estate tax revenue without raising taxes on the majority of citizens.

Councilor Ellen Robertson stated the city needed to align the real estate assessment process with the city's schedule for approving the city budget. Councilor Robertson also stated the realignment would help determine if the city should lower the city's real estate tax rate.

Mr. McKeithen informed Council that he was working with city administration to align the schedules once the new city assessment software was implemented. Mr. McKeithen stated that the alignment should be able to occur within 18 months.

Revenue Review

Justin Sterritt, Accenture Strategy and Consulting Senior Manager, provided attendees with a presentation that addressed the city's revenue.

Vice President Kristen Nye stated her concern that Council and Council staff did not have full access to city budget documents and data.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch stated she believed all city departmental budget requests should be available for Council and public review.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated he believed the city could cut costs and increase revenue by making it easier for citizens to pay bills and taxes electronically. Councilor Addison also stated that the ability for citizens to pay electronically would cut costs by decreasing the need to process paper documents.

The retreat recessed at 12:12 p.m.

The retreat reconvened at 1:08 p.m.

Dollars, Cents and Sense: Discussion

Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group, LLC Principal, led Council and attendees through a discussion about the city's budget process.

President Michael Jones stated it was important that Council and Council staff have access to budget data and documentation.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch requested that city departments provide Council with a list of preliminary budget requests. Councilor Lynch also discussed with colleagues adopting an ordinance that would institute the requirement that city departments submit the referenced budget requests.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated he believed conversations and budget work sessions with city administration should take place earlier in the budgeting process.

Councilor Cynthia Newbille stated it was important that Council begin working on the city budget earlier to keep pace with city administration.

Councilor Ellen Robertson suggested that the city work harder to obtain state and federal funding through grants. Councilor Robertson also stated that Council needed to draft more legislation to address revenue and the city budget.

President Michael Jones stated that Council and city administration should collaborate to address the lack of state funding the city receives due to tax exempt properties in the city.

Council had further discussion on how it can improve the city budget review process.

The retreat recessed at 2:25 p.m.

The retreat reconvened at 2:42 p.m.

Council and Staff United

Ron Keith, Cross Dynamics President and Founder, led Council and attendees through a group team building exercise.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch left the retreat at 3:00 p.m.

Councilor Reva Trammell left the retreat at 3:00 p.m.

Summing it all Up and Bringing Us all Together

Heather Ness, Robert Bobb Group, LLC Principal, addressed attendees and summarized the discussions that occurred throughout the first day of the Council Advance Retreat.

Councilor Katherine Jordan stated that she believed Council was better prepared to address the city's budget due to the conversations that occurred throughout the day's discussions.

President Michael Jones stated he believed members now had a better understanding of the need to hire additional staff within the Office of the Council Chief of Staff.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the retreat adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

CITY CLERK