



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

Office of the Council Chief of Staff

Land Use, Housing, & Transportation Standing Committee

June 16, 2026

Legislative Summary

Previous Meeting: May 19, 2026

Next Meeting: July 14, 2026

Legistar Link: [City of Richmond - Meeting of Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee on 6/16/2026 at 3:00 PM](#)

Agenda Overview:

Presentations:

- **Planning and Development Review:** Permitting Timeliness
- **Housing and Community Development:** Disposition of Surplus City-Owned Properties for Affordable Housing

Six Papers for Consideration:

1. [Ord. 2026-113](#) Establish exemptions from vegetation regulations for Virginia Friendly Landscapes.
2. [Ord. 2026-125](#) Authorize a VDOT funding agreement for the Chamberlayne Avenue paving project.
3. [Ord. 2026-126](#) Honorarily designate a portion of Hull Street Road in honor of Eugene and Vivian Mason.
4. [Ord. 2026-145](#) Honorarily designate a portion of North Lombardy Street in honor of Coach Howard D. Hopkins.
5. [Ord. 2026-146](#) Honorarily designate a portion of Fendall Avenue in honor of Reverend A. Lincoln James, Jr.
6. [Res. 2026-R024](#) Initiate a planning and preservation study for the Westwood neighborhood.

Next Meeting Preview (Tues, 6/16):

- **Housing and Community Development (HCD):** Partial Tax exemption program 5-year evaluation
- **Department of Economic Development (DED):** Annual Real Estate Reports

Presentation: Planning and Development Review – Kevin Vonck

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- Slides 3-4 Development activity remains relatively strong, with more than 17,000 building permit applications annually and recent increases in subdivisions, site plans, and special use permits.
- Slide 5 Building permit processing times have improved dramatically since 2021, with average intake times declining from ~29 days to ~five days in 2025.
- Slide 6 Building plan review performance generally meets or approaches the City's target of reviewing 80% of plans within ten days, although commercial review performance remains somewhat lower than residential review performance.
- Slide 7 SUP timelines remain substantially longer than ministerial permitting processes, averaging ~179 days in late 2025 despite recent improvements.
- Slide 8 Staff estimates that projects requiring discretionary approvals can spend ~275 days in rezoning or SUP review before site plan and permit review processes.
- Slide 9 identifies key strategies for continued performance improvements.

Council Staff Questions:

Accessibility & Customer Experience

1. Who is the permitting system currently designed for? Does someone effectively need to hire a professional to navigate the process, or should an average resident be able to do so independently?
2. What feedback does PDR receive most frequently from applicants about pain points in the permitting process, and how has that feedback shaped recent process improvements?

Housing Production & Code Refresh

3. How does PDR think about the relationship between permitting efficiency, housing production, and project feasibility — particularly for smaller infill projects and local builders?
4. SUP approvals continue to represent one of the longest timelines shown in the presentation. What types of projects are most commonly seeking SUPs today, and are there recurring themes that suggest opportunities for zoning reform through Code Refresh?

Technology & Implementation

5. The City is transitioning to a new permitting platform through Trimble. What specific improvements will applicants notice, and how will the online experience differ from the current permit portal?

Presentation: Housing and Economic Development – Merrick Malone

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- Slide 2 The presentation identifies three core goals for surplus property disposition: affordable housing production, neighborhood investment, and revenue generation through activation of underutilized public assets.
- Slide 3 Staff describe the initiative as part of a broader strategy to create a sustainable reinvestment cycle in which proceeds from property development help fund future housing and community development efforts.
- Slides 2,4,7 Two initial sites are highlighted: 2503 Q Street in Church Hill and 4929 Chamberlayne Avenue in Northside. Both were previously declared surplus by City Council and are proposed for affordable or mixed-income housing redevelopment.
- Slides 4,7,10 The proposed process includes RFQs in summer 2026 followed by RFP issuance later in the year.
- Slide 10 The presentation contemplates a qualifications-based process followed by a competitive solicitation process to identify development partners.

Council Staff Questions:

Housing Strategy & Affordability

1. How does the City determine the best use of City-owned land for housing and community development goals?
2. When the City disposes of publicly owned land, how does staff balance immediate housing production goals with long-term affordability preservation and public stewardship of land?

Governance & Transparency

3. How does the City currently handle unsolicited offers or development concepts for City-owned property, and are there formal policies governing those situations?
4. When is it appropriate to consolidate the process in City Code ([Ch. 8, Art. III](#)) for declaring as surplus and directing the conveyance of City-owned real estate?
5. Does staff believe Richmond would benefit from a more comprehensive surplus property disposition framework that standardizes how properties are evaluated, marketed, solicited, and ultimately disposed of?

Strategic Land Policy

6. Beyond price and unit count, what criteria will be used to evaluate proposals?
7. How does staff view the relationship between surplus property disposition, land banking, and future land acquisition for affordable housing?

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW & OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. Ordinance No. 2026-113

Patron Mayor Avula

** Patron has requested continuance*

Title: To amend City Code § 11-105, concerning weeds and other vegetation, and to amend ch. 11, art. IV, by adding therein a new section numbered 11-101, concerning definitions, for the purpose of establishing exemptions for Virginia Friendly Landscapes.

Council Staff Notes:

- This proposal is intended to align with Richmond 300, RVAgreen 2050, the Richmond Sustainable Design Standards, and the City's Bee City USA commitments.
- It establishes new definitions for native plants, invasive plants, pollinator gardens, rain gardens, wildflower meadows, and Virginia Friendly Landscapes.
- To qualify for exemption, properties must contain at least 80% native plant species, avoid invasive plants, maintain five-foot setbacks, incorporate "cues-to-care," and receive certification or designation.
- The legislation is intended to support biodiversity, pollinator habitat, stormwater management, urban heat mitigation, and lower-maintenance landscaping practices.
- Staff materials indicate implementation would include public education efforts, outreach connected to "No Mow May," and training for code enforcement staff.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

2. Ordinance No. 2026-125

Patron Mayor Avula

Title: To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Standard Project Administration Agreement between the City of Richmond and the Virginia Department of Transportation for the purpose of funding the Chamberlayne Avenue Paving Project.

Council Staff Notes:

- The ordinance authorizes execution of a project administration agreement with VDOT for resurfacing Chamberlayne Avenue between Walton Avenue and Hammond Avenue.
- The project includes milling, resurfacing, and ADA upgrades.
- Total project funding is approximately \$325,267, including VDOT administrative costs and construction reimbursement to the City.
- Funding is provided through Virginia's State of Good Repair Program and is fully reimbursable to the City.
- The project is part of the Commonwealth Transportation Board's pavement prioritization process for state-maintained primary arterial roadways.

Council Staff Questions:

1. Beyond pavement condition, what opportunities exist to coordinate paving projects with broader corridor improvements such as pedestrian safety upgrades, transit improvements, traffic calming, tree planting, or streetscape enhancements?
2. How does the City prioritize resurfacing investments among competing needs, particularly on corridors that may also have significant safety, multimodal, or economic development challenges?
3. Are there opportunities to better align future State of Good Repair investments with Richmond 300 priorities around walkability, transit access, corridor revitalization, and complete streets?
4. What additional improvements, if any, are planned or anticipated along this segment of Chamberlayne Avenue beyond the paving work itself?

MISCELLANEOUS

2. Ordinance No. 2026-126

Patron Councilmember Jones

Title: To designate the 6300 Block of Hull Street Road in honor of Eugene and Vivian Mason

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- Eugene Mason served Richmond as an entrepreneur, faith leader, Richmond Public Schools School Board member, and later as Ninth District City Council representative.
- Throughout his public service career, he advocated for educational equity, youth development, community engagement, and neighborhood-based decision-making.
- Vivian Mason dedicated approximately 40 years to Richmond Public Schools as an educator specializing in early childhood and special education.
- Together, the Masons' legacy reflects a lifelong commitment to education, mentorship, public service, and expanding opportunities for Richmond residents.
- The honorary designation recognizes their combined contributions to Richmond through public education, civic leadership, scholarship, and community service.

3. **Ordinance No. 2026-145**

Patron Councilmember Gibson

Title: To designate the 1000 block of North Lombardy Street in honor of Coach Howard D. Hopkins.

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- Coach Howard Hopkins dedicated approximately 30 years of service to Richmond Public Schools as a teacher, coach, athletic director, and administrator.
- He served at numerous Richmond schools, including Maggie L. Walker High School, Armstrong High School, Franklin Military Academy, Huguenot High School, Albert Hill Middle School, Richmond Technical Center, and Richmond Community High School.
- Hopkins is particularly recognized for his role in preserving and sharing the history of the Armstrong-Walker Classic, a longstanding cultural tradition and source of pride within Richmond's Black community.
- Former students and community members describe him as a mentor, educator, and role model whose impact extended beyond athletics and into broader community leadership.
- The honorary designation is intended to recognize his contributions to education, youth development, mentorship, and Richmond's cultural history.

4. **Ordinance No. 2026-146**

Patron Councilmember Gibson

Title: To designate the 2800 block of Fendall Avenue in honor of Reverend A. Lincoln James, Jr.

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- Reverend A. Lincoln James, Jr. served as pastor of Trinity Baptist Church for more than 45 years and became one of Richmond's most prominent faith and civic leaders.
- Under his leadership, Trinity Baptist Church expanded community outreach efforts and became the first Black Baptist church in Richmond to televise its services.
- Reverend James helped establish the Trinity Family Life Center, which provides youth, education, and family support services and became nationally recognized for its community impact.
- Beyond his pastoral work, he served in leadership roles with the Virginia Baptist State Convention, Richmond Virginia Seminary, Virginia Union University School of Theology, and other educational and civic institutions.
- The honorary designation recognizes his decades of spiritual leadership, community service, mentorship, and contributions to Richmond's civic and cultural life

5. **Resolution No. 2026-R024**

Patron Councilmember Breton

** Patron has requested continuance*

Title: To request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the Department of Planning and Development Review to (i) collaborate with the residents of and stakeholders in the Westwood neighborhood, bordered by Dunbar Street, Patterson Avenue, and Glenburnie Road, to evaluate and recommend appropriate land use, zoning, and policy tools, , and (ii) develop community-informed design guidelines and strategies to preserve the cultural and historic character of the Westwood neighborhood and support neighborhood stability, and (iii) provide a written report of such findings and recommendations.

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- The resolution requests a community-driven planning process focused on the historic Westwood neighborhood.
- The study would evaluate zoning tools, overlays, design standards, anti-displacement strategies, infrastructure investments, and preservation approaches.
- The resolution specifically identifies options such as special zoning districts, design overlays, Old and Historic designation, and other preservation mechanisms.
- The requested report would include recommendations related to housing stability, transportation, stormwater infrastructure, and community priorities.
- Findings and recommendations would be returned to Council and Planning Commission within 180 days following adoption.