



City of Richmond

Special Meeting Minutes

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
www.richmondgov.com/cityclerk

Thursday, August 20, 2020

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall
Virtual Meeting

Councilmembers Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Chris Hilbert, Vice President
The Honorable Andreas Addison (late arrival)
The Honorable Michael Jones
The Honorable Kristen Larson
The Honorable Ellen Robertson (late arrival)
The Honorable Reva Trammell

Absent

The Honorable Kim Gray
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m., and presided.

ELECTRONIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

City Clerk Candice Reid, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, announced the meeting would be held through electronic communication means. City Clerk Reid stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on August 11, 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, August 20, 2020, were provided to Council members. Ms. Reid 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 President's request, Council Management Analyst Lisa Braxton provided citizen speaker guidelines.

PAPERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2020-183

To extend the expiration date of Ord. No. 2020-093, adopted Apr. 9, 2020, which assures the continuity of government during the disaster resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic by modifying the practices and procedures of public bodies to permit electronic meetings as authorized by Va. Code § 15.2-1413, from Sept. 12, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2020.

President Cynthia Newbille provided additional information regarding ORD. 2020-183.

There were no further comments or discussions and **ORD. 2020-183 was adopted:** Ayes 5, Jones, Larson, Trammell, Hilbert, Newbille. Noes None. Robertson, Addison had not yet arrived.

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2020-184

To amend and reordain City Code § 19-334.1, which prohibits the carrying of firearms within certain places, to modify the nature and extent of the firearms and prohibited places subject to inclusion as permitted by Va. Code § 15.2-915.

Citizens were provided an opportunity to offer comments in writing regarding ORD. 2020-184, prior to the Special City Council meeting. All written comments received by the Office of the City Clerk were provided to members of the Council prior to the meeting and are included as an appendix to the August 20, 2020 Special City Council meeting minutes.

Public Hearing

Councilor Andreas Addison joined the meeting at 1:14 p.m.

Dr. Dennis Petrocelli, Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership member, spoke in opposition of ORD. 2020-184, and informed Council he was a forensic psychiatrist that had studied human violence and aggression over the past twenty years. Dr. Petrocelli requested Council not adopt ORD. 2020-184, and stated he did not believe the proposed ordinance would provide safety or security at community gatherings in public spaces. Dr. Petrocelli also provided information regarding the impact of legal gun possession on criminal activity.

Councilor Ellen Robertson joined the meeting at 1:16 p.m.

Charles Margerison spoke in opposition of ORD. 2020-184, and informed Council of his work as a mental health professional assisting both victims of crime and violent criminals. Mr. Margerison expressed his concerns regarding the number of public events that occur in the city and the likelihood of unintentionally attending such an event while carrying a firearm. Mr. Margerison stated it was unfair for elected officials to receive protected security from armed officers, while citizens were not allowed to do the same.

Dennis Sisk addressed Council and expressed his concerns with the phrase “adjacent to” being included within the proposed ordinance language, because he believed the phrase was too ambiguous. Mr. Sisk stated he did not oppose ORD. 2020-184, but informed Council he opposed ORD. 2019-165, in-part, because of its impact prohibiting individuals from carrying a firearm while present on trails located in city parks. Mr. Sisk also stated that trails are secluded and not often patrolled by police. Mr. Sisk informed Council of his desire to carry a concealed firearm for protection while walking or bicycling on city trails.

Michael Dickinson spoke in opposition of ORD. 2020-184, and stated the Second Amendment provided the right for self-defense at all times. Mr. Dickinson also stated that gun-free zones do not protect citizens.

Cheryl Nici-O’Connell spoke in opposition of ORD. 2020-184, and informed Council that she was a victim and survivor of gun-violence. Ms. Nici-O’Connell requested Council take into account the potential consequences of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Nici-O’Connell stated ORD. 2020-184 would increase gun-violence in the city and put law-abiding citizens in danger.

Ben Ragsdale spoke in support of ORD. 2020-184, and stated he did not believe the Second Amendment was threatened by the proposed ordinance. Mr. Ragsdale also stated the protection of citizens should be addressed by the police and not armed vigilantes.

Councilor Kristen Larson inquired why ORD. 2020-184 was not referred to a Council designated standing committee for review prior to consideration by Council.

President Cynthia Newbille stated consideration at a Special meeting of Council was due to the Public Safety Standing Committee not meeting in August and that the time-sensitive issues related to ORD. 2020-184, required prompt review.

Police Chief William Smith addressed Council and provided additional information regarding ORD. 2020-184. Chief Smith stated the ordinance would prevent individuals from using firearms as a method of intimidation at protests and would also increase public safety at festivals in the city.

Vice President Chris Hilbert stated he was concerned that potential legal proceedings could find the language included in ORD. 2020-184 as too vague.

David Mitchell, Richmond Police Department (RPD) general counsel, informed Council that ORD. 2020-184 was drafted to reflect language included within the Code of Virginia. Mr. Mitchell stated the ordinance requires that signage be posted at events where firearms would be prohibited.

Interim City Attorney Haskell Brown provided additional information regarding potential legal proceedings that challenged ORD. 2020-184.

Councilor Larson inquired about the enforcement of the ordinance and sign postage in the event of an unpermitted gathering.

Mr. Mitchell stated the ordinance would be enforced the same as it would be at a permitted event. Mr. Mitchell also stated the city would preemptively post signs at unpermitted events based on prior knowledge through social media.

Councilor Michael Jones stated his concerns regarding the likelihood of protesters seeking a permit for social demonstrations. Councilor Jones also stated he wanted to obtain additional information regarding ORD. 2020-184.

Councilor Ellen Robertson addressed the necessity of providing a protected environment for peaceful protests. Councilor Robertson inquired if the requirement for a permit infringed on the right for free speech.

Interim City Attorney Brown provided Council with information regarding the city's requirements for permissible protests and peaceful assemblies.

David Mitchell informed Council that city code provided exceptions to the permit requirement in the event of unforeseen news or circumstances coming to the public's attention.

Councilor Robertson inquired about city administration's response to the possibility of Council continuing consideration.

Chief Smith stated RPD planned to enforce the ordinance once adopted and that a continuance would delay enforcement.

Councilor Kristen Larson moved to continue ORD. 2020-184 to the Tuesday, September 8, 2020 Special Council meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 7, Jones, Robertson, Larson, Trammell, Addison, Hilbert, Newbille. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2020-185

To accept an additional \$20,104,653.00 from the Commonwealth of Virginia's allocations of monies from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, to transfer \$20,104,653.00 from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' COVID-19 Relief Special Fund, to amend the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 General Fund Budget by appropriating \$40,209,306.00 to a new program in the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, and to repeal Ord. No. 2020-133, adopted Jun. 22, 2020, all for the purpose of funding necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic.

John Wack, Department of Finance director, provided an introduction of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Wack also provided Council with information regarding the allocation of funding addressed in ORD. 2020-185.

Sharon Ebert, Department of Economic and Community Development deputy chief administrative officer, provided Council with information regarding the impact of the allocated funding on evictions through rental and mortgage payment assistance.

Councilor Ellen Robertson requested a more detailed breakdown of the allocated funding provided by ORD. 2020-185.

Mr. Wack stated a more detailed breakdown would be provided through budget projections submitted to Council.

Councilor Kristen Larson requested city administration to review the possibility of providing the Richmond Ambulance Authority with a portion of the allocated funding for its work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councilwoman Reva Trammell stated her support for ORD. 2020-185 and suggested Council adopt the ordinance.

There were no further comments or discussions and **ORD. 2020-185 was adopted:** Ayes 7, Jones, Robertson, Larson, Trammell, Addison, Hilbert, Newbille. Noes None.

MOTIONS TO AMEND AND CONTINUE

Councilor Michael Jones moved that the ordinance entitled:

ORD. 2020-167

To amend City Code §§ 10-79, concerning the award of franchises and permits to operators of emergency medical service vehicles, 10-80, concerning the responsibility of authorized providers to respond to the City's centralized dispatch center, and 10-83, concerning the suspension of authorization to operate emergency medical service vehicles, to make modifications to the City's regulations governing the operation of emergency medical service vehicles in the city.

be amended and continued to Monday, September 14, 2020, as follows:

Page 3, Line 3

After the word "permit", insert a comma followed by the phrase "except for a franchise or permit granted to the Richmond Ambulance Authority" followed by a comma

The motion was seconded and approved: Ayes 7, Jones, Robertson, Larson, Trammell, Addison, Hilbert, Newbille. Noes None.

Councilor Michael Jones moved that the ordinance entitled:

ORD. 2020-168

To grant to Med-Trans Corporation a permit for the operation of rotary-wing emergency medical services vehicles in the city to provide non-emergency aeromedical services, upon certain terms and conditions.

be amended and continued to Monday, September 14, 2020, as follows:

Page 1, Line 5

After the word "provide", strike the word "non-emergency" and insert the word "emergency"

Page 1, Line 13

After the word "provide", strike the word "non-emergency" and insert the word "emergency"

Page 2, Line 1

After the word "provide", strike the word "non-emergency" and insert the word "emergency"

The motion was seconded and approved: Ayes 7, Jones, Robertson, Larson, Trammell, Addison, Hilbert, Newbille. No None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

CITY CLERK

From: [Mike D](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Ord 2020 184
Date: Tuesday, August 18, 2020 2:41:47 PM

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

This ordinance is a violation of the Second Amendment.

It is farcical that Mayor Stoney wants to remove citizens Constitutional protections to defend themselves, while he is surrounded by a taxpayer funded armed security detail.

It is also scary that while City Council considers proposals to "defund the police" during a two month crime wave, they want to further remove the rights of citizens to defend themselves.

You cannot defund the police and disarm the citizens.

Mike Dickinson
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Jeff Crenshaw](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Public Comments for ORD 2020-184
Date: Wednesday, August 19, 2020 10:11:53 PM

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

I am writing as a constituent to voice my opposition in the strongest terms to Mayor Stoney's proposed ordinance to prohibit firearms next to permitted events. There are several reasons such an ordinance is a bad idea:

1. As with any gun-control law, it only affects law abiding citizens. Those who carry a firearm with the intent to commit an already illegal act aren't going to be deterred by another law. This type of ordinance only affects a citizen's lawful right to carry a firearm for self defense.
2. Unlike the ban on carrying firearms in city-owned buildings and parks, which can be clearly marked, an area "being used by, or adjacent to, an event that requires a city permit" is a more fluid area, and not clearly defined and marked. This presents a huge opportunity for a person legally carrying a firearm to inadvertently enter a prohibited area.
3. As if an area being used by a permitted event wasn't enough of a gray area, Mayor Stoney also indicated that firearms would be prohibited when an event that **should** be permitted is nearby. So now it is incumbent on the average citizen to not only keep track of permitted events in the city, but also to know whether a gathering or large group of people **should** have a permit?? That seems a bit far fetched.
4. This is clearly an attempt to curtail events such as the VCDL's Lobby Day, which has been an entirely peaceful event, even with the large numbers that gathered last year. This is clearly not an ordinance to increase public safety, but rather a move to further restrict the rights of law abiding citizens.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey T. Crenshaw

[Redacted signature block]

From: [Steve Rothwell](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Ordinance 2020-184 - Richmond City Council Meeting 8/20/20
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2020 8:12:04 AM

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

This ordinance, if passed, would be very intrusive and confusing. How am I supposed to know if a gathering I am adjacent to has a permit is would require a permit? So do your peaceful protests/riots require a permit? If the peaceful protests/riots are happening in front of my home, my business or a local business that I am supporting, does this make it illegal from me to carry my legally authorized concealed weapon? You are wanting to take away my right to self-defense in a time that it is needed most since you, as a government, have decided that your will not protect your citizens. You are going to make a criminal out of a citizen for driving down the road with a legal firearm and they happen to come upon one of the peaceful protests/riots that you refuse to do anything about. We have the right to bear arms and the right to protect ourselves. If the Mayor decides to make one of his speeches on a street corner, how far away does an citizen have to drive to be considered non adjacent. This ordinance is just an outright assault on the rights of law-abiding citizens of Richmond. I know that does not really concern the leftist agenda of the City and the State, but you can count on multiple lawsuits if this is passed.

Do the right thing and vote against this ordinance. It is way too vague and it is a violation of the Second Amemdment.

Sincerely,

Steve Rothwell
Law Abiding Richmond Resident

From: Newbille, Cynthia I. - City Council
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2020 12:34 PM
To: Warren Jr., Richard A. - Clerk's Office [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: City Ordinance Regarding Firearms in City Parks

FYI

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Dennis Sisk [REDACTED]
Date: August 19, 2020 at 12:28:45 PM EDT
To: "Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office"
[REDACTED], "Saunders, Lincoln - Mayor's Office"
>
Cc: "Addison, Andreas D. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Hilbert, Chris A. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Larson, Kristen N. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Robertson, Ellen F. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Newbille, Cynthia I. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Trammell, Reva M. - City Council"
[REDACTED], "Jones, Michael J. - City Council"
Subject: Fwd: City Ordinance Regarding Firearms in City Parks

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Ms. Lynch and Mr. Saunders,

Having received no reply to my message below, sent a month ago, and in light of the hearing scheduled this Thursday 8/20 on a further amendment to this purported City Ordinance, I am forwarding this message to the other members of Council. I have signed up for my allowed 3 minutes tomorrow. I will not be able to squeeze my message into 3 minutes, but I respectfully request consideration of the views expressed here.

As a citizen, a father / grandfather, a professional, a progressive Democrat on most issues, and a concealed-carry permit holder, the proposal that will come before Council regarding firearms at permitted public events is not what I find objectionable (except that the "adjacent to" language is a troublesome ambiguity in what is proposed to be a criminal statute; though that language is in the State's enabling statute, that statute does not impose criminal penalties, as this proposed ordinance would; the ambiguous and undefined "adjacent to" language should be removed). I said in my message last month (forwarded below) that I think it makes sense to ban guns in public buildings as well as *open-carry* weapons at public events and rallies because (1) open-carry weapons can be seen as provocative and (2) armed law enforcement personnel are generally present at such buildings and events.

What I find objectionable is the ban against lawful holders of valid permits issued by the Circuit Court for the City of Richmond carrying concealed weapons for personal and family protection, out in the woods and on the park trails where law enforcement is rarely present. So far as I can tell, that impact of the ordinance was never considered -- the telling events in 2019 that rushed the ordinance through were the Virginia Beach public-building rampage and the heart-breaking loss of a 9-year-old out in the open at Carter Jones Park (neither of which, in my view, would have been prevented or affected in the least by this ordinance). We live directly across from Byrd Park. I have been bicycling the Carillon, James River and other wooded trails with regularity for years. Until this ordinance was purportedly made effective (it was unlawful under state law when it was passed in 2019), I have always carried a concealed handgun while bicycling, walking or jogging on the trails -- for precisely the same reason that this ordinance was passed in 2019, i.e., there are a few crazy, dangerous people out there. The ordinance will never dissuade those people (like the madman who massacred people both outside and inside the public building at Virginia Beach) from possessing and using guns in and around our parks. I agree with Mayor Stoney that people -- like me and my family -- should feel safe in our parks. That's why this ordinance was ill-conceived and inadequately considered. The only tangible impact of the ordinance will be to deprive citizens like me of self-protection, and the ability to protect others dear to us, out in the woods and on the trails.

I share the Mayor's and Council's passionate desire to blot out gun violence in our public spaces. But an ordinance banning guns in our parks will not make it so. Because of that passion, this ordinance was passed in 2019 in dramatic haste with inadequate public input, little consideration of practical facts, and no consideration of the rights of tax-paying citizens with valid permits to protect themselves and their families -- and the ordinance never came back before

Council for public input after the State Legislature enacted an enabling statute in 2020. I am particularly offended by the fact that this ordinance carries a "Class 1 misdemeanor" penalty -- the most severe penalty the City can impose under Section 2.06 of the City Charter -- up to 12 months in jail, for otherwise lawful and state-permitted possession of a concealed firearm for personal protection.

As custodians of the public trust and the power to legislate at the local level, I believe it is Council's duty to consider facts and constitutional requirements, rather than act impulsively in the understandable heat of passion, feeling that we need to "do something" about gun violence. Real, not imagined, public safety benefits should be balanced with constitutional rights. I do not agree with the NRA's absolutist views on the Second Amendment. But I do believe that citizens have a Second Amendment right to possess and carry firearms for personal and family protection, subject to reasonable regulation that will actually help protect public safety. One thing that the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Heller* makes clear is that the right to bear arms in the Second Amendment is not confined to "militias" (like the police, military and security-guard exceptions in the City's 2019 ordinance); it applies to individual citizens, as well.

Thus, there is both a constitutional and a personal safety issue on the side of those of us who are responsible citizens and have lawful permits. Both of these interests, I submit, were ignored or treated dismissively when this ordinance was passed. What then, are the public safety benefits to be derived from depriving citizens like me of our otherwise protected rights? Facts can be hard to face. The fact is that the lunatic who perpetrated the Virginia Beach massacre and the youths who engaged in a gun battle in Carter Jones Park knew full well that they were violating state (and federal) laws regarding firearms at the time those incidents occurred. This ordinance would have made no difference. It will likely have little or no real public safety benefit. Instead, I believe it adversely affects public safety.

The request I am making is not repeal of the ordinance. The request I am making is modest, but I believe it is necessary to strike a responsible and meaningful balance between our collective desire to stop gun violence, and the need to protect the rights and safety of City residents like me. I respectfully ask that Council consider an amendment to the ordinance as passed in 2019 as follows:

§ 19-334.1 Carrying firearms in certain places:

No person shall carry any firearm within any City-owned building, park, or recreation or community facility. This prohibition shall not apply to any duly authorized (i) military personnel in the performance of their lawful duties, (ii) law enforcement officer, or (iii) security guard contracted or employed by the City. (Ord. No. 2019-165, § 1, 7-1-2019).

What's needed is "...or (iv) citizen in possession of a valid Permit

to carry a concealed handgun issued by a Virginia Circuit Court, while such citizen is lawfully present on any portion of the James River Park trails, Carillon trails, Forest Hill Park trails, or any entrance or exit thereto."

This would track the State statute that prohibits carrying loaded firearms with extended magazines in public areas, including parks, in specified metropolitan areas including Richmond. That statute similarly exempts law enforcement, military and security personnel, ***but also exempts concealed-carry permit holders:***

"Va. Code§ 18.2-287.4. **Carrying loaded firearms in public areas prohibited; penalty.**

It shall be unlawful for any person to carry a loaded (a) semi-automatic center-fire rifle or pistol that expels single or multiple projectiles by action of an explosion of a combustible material and is equipped at the time of the offense with a magazine that will hold more than 20 rounds of ammunition or designed by the manufacturer to accommodate a silencer or equipped with a folding stock or (b) shotgun with a magazine that will hold more than seven rounds of the longest ammunition for which it is chambered on or about his person on any public street, road, alley, sidewalk, public right-of-way, **or in any public park or any other place of whatever nature that is open to the public in the Cities of Alexandria, Chesapeake, Fairfax, Falls Church, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond, or Virginia Beach or in the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Henrico, Loudoun, or Prince William.** **The provisions of this section shall not apply to law-enforcement officers, licensed security guards, military personnel in the performance of their lawful duties, or any person having a valid concealed handgun permit** or to any person actually engaged in lawful hunting or lawful recreational shooting activities...."

(emphasis added).

If you have read this and my more detailed message below, thank you most sincerely for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Dennis Sisk



Ms. Lynch,

Janice and I live directly across from Byrd Park on Blanton Avenue, next to the Unity Church. We regularly walk in and around the park and the Carillon. My primary exercise is mountain biking on the James River Trails. When I cycle (often multiple times each week), I usually ride one of several variants of a loop, entering behind the Carillon down the street, taking the northbank / buttermilk trails all the way downtown and back, crossing the river at both ends, and frequently including the Forest Hill Park trails. We love it here, and this is one of the main reasons. I have been doing this for years. After this email introduction, I would like to meet with you, if possible.

We are progressive democrats. Parker, your predecessor, met with and listened to us in helping to get the speed limit lowered from 35mph to 25mph on Blanton Avenue. Personal and public safety is, of course, a priority -- and we do feel reasonably safe and secure here. I am an ethics compliance attorney with a large law firm whose name you would recognize, formerly a partner with another, and Janice is a stylist at the Pine Street shop in Oregon Hill.

I have four adult children -- one in California, one finishing a graduate program in physical therapy at ODU, and two in Richmond. One of my sons has a home across the Boulevard Bridge from us. One of my daughters and her husband live nearby on Rosewood. We are all regular users of the parks and trails.

I became aware last year, after the fact, that Council had passed an ordinance banning guns in City parks and public buildings. The ordinance was unlawful under state law, and was known to be so when it was passed. It was rushed through Council about a week after being introduced by Mayor Stoney, with practically no public notice, little input, and no meaningful debate. The rush to judgment was in the heat of the Virginia Beach shootings and not long after a young girl was killed in cross-fire among youths in Carter Jones Park, both in May 2019. There was obviously a heart-felt desire to "do something" about the gun violence -- not the first, and certainly not the last we will experience.

The state legislature failed to authorize localities to pass such regulations during a special session in July 2019. When I learned that the state legislature had passed enabling legislation in 2020, I assumed that the issue would come back to City Council, this time with some meaningful opportunity for public input and debate. I was planning to provide my own perspective, to meet with City personnel, and to appear personally before Council.

I was surprised and dismayed, therefore, to learn last week that the Mayor's office unceremoniously announced that the previously unlawful ordinance, passed in 2019, is now supposedly in effect as of July 1, 2020. See <https://www.nbc12.com/2020/07/06/guns-banned-city-owned-facilities-parks>. The door on any public input was simply slammed shut, on the unstated assumption that the state law authorizing the City to act in ways that it could not lawfully act when the ordinance was passed in 2019, now makes the void 2019 ordinance valid. I question the legality of this retroactive announcement and I will be evaluating my options in that regard. For now, however, I wanted to reach out to you to express what I believe to be a responsible and reasonable opposing view.

For reasons similar to those sparking the rush to pass the ordinance, I always carry a concealed firearm for personal protection when I am cycling, walking or jogging on the James River trails. I of course have a valid permit issued by the Richmond Circuit Court. Janice has such a permit as well.

By way of background, I grew up in western Kentucky. My father, grandfather and uncles were all hunters, and so was I when I was young. My father gave me my first rifle when I was 10 years old. We always had firearms in the family home and vehicles. I learned gun safety, responsibility and marksmanship from an early age. The James River trails to some degree "take me back" to the woods of western Kentucky where I grew up -- woods like our family has owned since I was a child. I am now 68, and recently a grandfather. When I go out on the trails with my kids, I also carry -- because it helps me feel safe and more capable of protecting them should the need -- God forbid -- ever arise.

So I agree with Mayor Stoney in this public statement:

“No Richmonder should ever be threatened by gun violence,” said Mayor Stoney. “This is especially true in public spaces like parks and community centers, where residents expect to enjoy public amenities, not fear for their lives.”

<https://www.nbc12.com/2020/07/06/guns-banned-city-owned-facilities-parks>. That is exactly why this ordinance is completely ill-conceived. It is based on grief and passion, with little or no consideration of practical facts, and with utter disregard for the rights of law-abiding citizens to protect themselves and their families.

Let me clarify that I do not belong to the NRA, nor do I support the NRA's rabid opposition to reasonable gun control measures to protect public safety. There should be background checks for *all* firearms purchases. I don't have a need to own a military assault-style weapon. I have no issue with banning guns in public buildings. Over the years, I have been accustomed to leaving even my cell phone behind when going through security for court appearances. I would have no issue even with banning open-carry at public events (like Dogwood Dell), because open-carry could be provocative, depending on the circumstances (for example, the recent BLM protests). In all of these circumstances (public buildings, public events), armed law enforcement personnel are almost always present. Not so out in the woods on the James River, Carillon and Forest Hill trails.

So I believe in reasonable, considered, and factually supported gun control measures. But I also believe that I have a constitutional right to keep "and bear" arms for personal protection, and that "bear" means "carry" in public places, subject to reasonable regulation for public safety. That right deserves and demands careful thought and deference when measures to "ban guns" come under consideration.

We have all heard the hackneyed saying "If you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns." That proposition may be debatable depending on the context and circumstances in which it is

asserted.

Respectfully, however, I think there is little doubt that this purported City ordinance will have no effect whatsoever in enhancing public safety, particularly on the hiking / biking trails. Instead, it will have exactly the opposite effect. Responsible gun owners with valid government-issued permits will be deprived of personal protection, while misguided, disturbed individuals and sociopaths -- who are already violating state laws in their use of firearms -- will go right on doing what they have always been doing. It may "feel good" to say "we have banned guns in City parks" -- but passing an ordinance will not make it so. Any belief to that effect is well-intentioned wishful thinking. Guns will be there, in the hands of the people who cause the senseless violence -- but not in the hands of tax-paying citizens with valid permits who want to be able to protect themselves and their families from exactly the kind of people who killed Markiya Dickson in Carter Jones Park and the 16 victims in the Virginia Beach Municipal Center shooting. Markiya's father, in fact, was quoted in the media as saying that any teenager with \$200 can get an illegal gun, and it has been that way since he was young. DeWayne Craddock legally purchased the .45's he used. He started his rampage by killing one person in the parking lot, then another person on the steps, before entering the building with an employee security pass and shooting 14 more people on all three floors inside. A City ordinance "banning guns" in parks and public buildings would have had, and will have, no effect whatsoever in deterring any of that kind of behavior. It's like telling a kamikaze pilot that he's going to have to pay a \$500 fine if he doesn't call off his attack.

The *only* people who will be deterred by such an ordinance are people like me, who would prefer not to be dragged off of their hikes or bicycle treks in handcuffs for doing absolutely nothing wrong.

Would you be willing to meet with me, to discuss the possibility of bringing the void 2019 ordinance back before Council for public input and a vote, and for consideration of an exception for lawful concealed carry at least on the James River trail system -- out there in the miles of wonderful woods where people like me spend

hours in relative seclusion every week, and have been doing so for years?

An amendment would not be difficult. The void 2019 ordinance says:

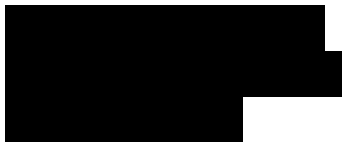
§ 19-334.1 Carrying firearms in certain places:

No person shall carry any firearm within any City-owned building, park, or recreation or community facility. This prohibition shall not apply to any duly authorized (i) military personnel in the performance of their lawful duties, (ii) law enforcement officer, or (iii) security guard contracted or employed by the City. (Ord. No. 2019-165, § 1, 7-1-2019).

What's needed is "...or (iv) citizen in possession of a valid Permit to carry a concealed handgun issued by a Virginia Circuit Court, while such citizen is lawfully present on any portion of the James River Park trails, Carillon trails, Forest Hill Park trails, or any entrance or exit thereto."

Thank you,

Dennis Sisk



From: [Bill Andrews](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: 2020-184 against gun near event
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2020 8:18:38 AM

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Please relay comment to City Council for today's meeting agenda, against 2020-184, plea avoid city making illegal to possess, transport ammunition, firearm, or components near event which needs permit. As stated, possession, transporting mere empty bullet casings, or parts of firearm after disabled, to metal recycling center, could result in arrest, prosecuting in court, penalty if pass near event needing permit, although person maybe not know of event until there.
Please vote against 2020-184

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Andrews <cyur2b@verizon.net>
To: RVAmayor@richmondgov.com <RVAmayor@richmondgov.com>
Sent: Fri, Aug 14, 2020 9:58 am
Subject: Amend or withdraw 2020-184 against gun near event

Please amend or withdraw proposed your proposed 2020-184 to ban guns near public area events.

As is, proposal would make it illegal to possess, transport ammunition, firearm, or mere components on public roads near events which need permit. Officially law would require entries to area be posted, yet such events may occur without needed permit, thus not posted, and doubtful driver may be likely to read normal postings typically driving by.

Someone driving with lawful firearm, ammunition, or mere component should not be arrested, prosecuted, and punished for innocently driving by such event. As proposed, 2020-184 could result in police arresting, charging driver, or person in vehicle (or on bike, or walking), for simply being near an event they were unaware about before approaching area; due to taking harmless inert component of ammunition or firearm elsewhere. Possession, transporting legal firearm, ammunition, etc. should not be illegal due to actions by others.

Bill Andrews, cyur2b@verizon.net

