



## City of Richmond

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

### Minutes

## Education and Human Services Standing Committee

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Thursday, August 6, 2020

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

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### Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Kristen Larson – Chair  
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Committee Member  
The Honorable Kim Gray – Council Member (*late arrival and early departure*)  
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Council Member (*late arrival, early departure*)  
Lawrence Anderson, Council Chief of Staff  
Meghan Brown, Deputy Council Chief of Staff  
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 2:01 p.m., and presided.

### Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Jamie Isley, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, announced the meeting would be held through electronic communication means. Assistant City Clerk Isley stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on July 31, 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 6, 2020, were provided to committee members. Ms. Isley 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 Jamie Isley, provided the citizen speaker guidelines.

### Public Comment

There were no public comments.



## Public Hearing

### Opposition

**Allison Davis, East View Civic League vice president**, spoke in opposition of ORD. 2020-170 and expressed disappointment at the lack of community input regarding the use of the Annie Giles Community Resource Center. Ms. Davis alleged that the residents of East View have not been able to utilize the AGCRC building due to other organizations using the building for programming.

*Kelly King Horne, Homeward executive director, was available to answer questions.*

*Councilor Gray stated that the AGCRC was originally built by the non-profit Freedom House and partners to provide shelter to individuals without housing. She further stated that the AGCRC is a community and public building which also serves individuals without housing, particularly during various extreme weather conditions.*

*Councilor Ellen Robertson informed the committee that ORD. 2020-170 solely names the AGCRC as the location for individuals experiencing homelessness to find shelter during inclement weather incidents. Councilor Robertson detailed her legislative work with regard to affordable housing and homelessness services, and specified past adopted Council legislation that addressed affordable housing and homelessness in the city. She further informed the committee that African American youth residing in East View were to have access to the AGCRC as a part of the alternatives to incarceration strategy. She respectfully requested city administration provide recommendations and information on services provided to individuals without shelter during inclement weather incidents, and that the AGCRC not be named specifically within ORD. 2020-170.*

*Councilor Gray requested the committee allow members of the public who joined the meeting after the conclusion of the public hearing for ORD. 2020-170, an opportunity to speak. Councilor Gray clarified that she requested the following language be included within the ordinance: "Whereas if the Mayor believes that city-owned real estate other than the AGCRC should be used as an inclement weather shelter for homeless persons in the city of Richmond, when the outdoor wind-chill temperature falls below 40 and above 92 degrees and other conditions cited, he is encouraged to recommend to the Council an ordinance to change the use of such city-owned real estate in accordance with section 8-12.(c)(2) of the Code of the City of Richmond (2015) as amended." Councilor Gray further stated that the purpose of ORD. 2020-170 is to provide shelter during various inclement weather conditions.*

*Councilor Robertson stated that in prior deliberations with the Office of the City Attorney, it was determined that ORD. 2020-170 does mention the AGCRC specifically.*

### Support

**Bridget Whitaker Williams, Blessing Warriors RVA member**, spoke in support of ORD. 2020-170 and stated that there is no shelter currently in place to protect individuals without housing during inclement weather other than when the temperature is below 40 degrees.

**London Sneed, Blessing Warriors RVA member**, spoke in support of ORD. 2020-170 and recounted issues locating housing for individuals during a recent hurricane warning and subsequent inclement weather incident. She also asked that Council consider utilizing the AGCRC for homelessness services in the interim.

*Councilor Kim Gray informed the committee that the intended language referenced earlier in the meeting was requested to provide flexibility regarding shelter locations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies within the city. She further stated that the shelter location should be centralized, and detailed some of the difficulties faced by individuals seeking shelter during a recent inclement weather incident.*

*Deputy City Attorney M. Janet Palmer stated that ORD. 2020-170 only permits the shelter to be located at the AGCRC, and if city administration were interested in another location, an exact address would be required to move forward. She further stated that ORD. 2020-170 only pertains to the Annie Giles Community Resource Center (AGCRC).*

Councilor Gray inquired about the need for an exact address other than the AGCRC for ORD. 2020-170. She explained that ORD. 2020-170 was intended to provide flexibility of choice in physical shelter locations, and that there must be a location listed so that individuals may be aware. She further stated that ORD. 2020-170 expands homelessness services to individuals when temperatures are high, when there is a severe weather forecast, and during precipitation reports.

Deputy City Attorney Palmer stated that at the present time ORD. 2020-170 is associated with one specific location, which is the AGCRC. She further explained that the patron has the option to withdraw the ordinance and replace it with a resolution requesting city administration to identify a suitable location for a shelter.

Councilor Gray expressed willingness to draft a resolution requesting the identification of a suitable shelter location. She reiterated the purpose of ORD. 2020-170, and highlighted immediate needs that would go unaddressed if ORD. 2020-170 was withdrawn.

Member Stephanie Lynch informed the committee that non-congregate shelters are the current national best practice regarding housing individuals without shelter. Member Lynch expressed interest in building permanent non-congregate shelters in Richmond. She inquired whether there are plans in place to develop a non-congregate model for emergency situations and to address the immediate needs of individuals.

Kelly King Horne, Homeward executive director, informed the committee that shelter has been provided to individuals throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and that Homeward is working with emergency planners in the region to develop a comprehensive inclement weather plan.

Councilor Gray stated that while the AGCRC was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals seeking shelter were housed in local hotels. She further stated that hotel rooms were offered to individuals during a recent inclement weather incident, but transportation was not provided. She emphasized the immediate need of individuals without shelter and asked that the AGCRC be considered in the interim.

Councilor Ellen Robertson stated that the Homelessness Strategic Plan 2020-2030 was recently adopted by Council, and requested Kelly King Horne provide information regarding inclement weather provisions. She stated that the AGCRC is not the city's official cold weather overflow shelter, and that it was a temporary location for the cold weather overflow program, which is currently closed. She requested ORD. 2020-170 be tabled and specified plans to draft a resolution to request city administration provide solutions for shelter during critical weather incidents.

Chair Kristen Larson proposed the committee continue ORD. 2020-170 to the September 3, 2020, Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting.

Member Lynch requested the resolution proposed by Councilor Robertson be drafted.

Councilor Gray requested the proposed resolution be drafted in addition to ORD. 2020-170, and asked that a location be identified as soon as possible due to impending cold weather and unsustainability of renting hotel rooms for individuals without shelter.

Member Lynch informed the committee about the Virginia Beach Housing Resource Center's non-congregate model for housing individuals in need of shelter, and suggested the city of Richmond consider implementing a permanent non-congregate shelter model.

There were no further comments or discussions and **Member Stephanie Lynch moved to continue ORD. 2020-170 to the September 3, 2020, Education and Human Services Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

Councilor Robertson departed the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

## **Discussion Items**

### **Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Reopening Plan**

Jason Kamras, RPS superintendent; and Linda Owen, Richmond Public School Board chair, provided an overview of RPS plans for reopening.

*Member Stephanie Lynch inquired about RPS plans for students who are high-risk or require Individualized Education Program (IEP) assistance. She also inquired about the plan for students currently on the disciplinary panel, considered at-risk, or whom are enrolled in alternative school.*

*Superintendent Kamras informed the committee that there are 4,000 students with an IEP, of which most are in general education, and will continue to be supported virtually or with service provider support. He also stated that there are hundreds of students who experience cognitive or physical disabilities which require in home daily support by means of a 1:1 aid group or with other personnel. He further explained that the determination for student IEPs lies with the IEP team whom will create addendums this month for individual students seeking IEP assistance. Superintendent Kamras explained that students will be separated into three tiers and would receive support from a system called Connect RPS, which will be comprised of social workers, counselors, and other personnel to check-in with students and parents on a reoccurring basis. He stated that the first tier would receive monthly support, the second tier would receive support weekly, and the third tier of students would receive daily outreach and support because the third tier is comprised of students who garner the most concern regarding engagement.*

*Chair Kristen Larson asked that RPS give notice and information if additional funding or budget amendments are needed.*

*Councilor Kim Gray departed the meeting at 3:22 p.m.*

*A copy of the material provided has been filed.*

### **Out of School Programming (After School)**

Christopher Frelke, Parks Recreation and Community Facilities director; Abigail Farris Rogers, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Greater Richmond executive vice president; Barbara Couto Sipe, NextUp RVA executive director; and Richard Schultz, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond executive director, provided an overview of the various programming to be offered to Richmond youth during the upcoming virtual school year.

*Mr. Shultz informed the committee that Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond focuses on children ages 0-12 years old. He discussed the needs and disparities for the demographic, and stated that the younger children are prioritized because virtual learning is not a viable option for the younger age group. Mr. Shultz further discussed the results of a regional survey of child care providers whom were found to be facing significant challenges regarding classroom sizes, revenue loss, recruiting and retaining staff and access to supplies needed to reopen.*

*Ms. Couto Sipe informed the committee that NextUp RVA is a coordinating system of after school content providers focused on the middle school population in Richmond. She stated that throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, NextUp has partnered with Richmond Public Schools (RPS) and the YMCA to provide an online portal with resources for 300 local students. Ms. Couto Sipe further described plans for the fall semester, which involves expanding the online portal and ensuring students may access it throughout the day and evening. Lastly, she informed the committee of NextUp RVA's plans to potentially expand services to pre-kindergarten, elementary, and high school students.*

*Mr. Frelke discussed the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities' All Summer Fun Pop Up Camps which operate from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and offers free breakfast and lunch to children. Mr. Frelke informed the committee of plans to expand the programming to the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for the upcoming school year and provide an interactive park experience, snacks, dinner, Wi-Fi access, homework assistance and tutoring services. Lastly, he discussed training staff members to better support the*

children within the program.

Ms. Farris Rogers informed the committee of the YMCA's emergency child care and summer day camp program which have operated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Farris Rogers further discussed safety and health guidelines, plans for physical distancing, and the extension of hours to 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., to provide flexibility and equity to the Richmond community. She stated that staff will help to facilitate virtual learning by ensuring students attend Zoom courses and receive technical assistance. Ms. Farris Rogers explained that during afternoon hours, the students will participate in entertaining learning experiences, to include physical activity. She detailed challenges regarding funding and stated that the YMCA operates childcare services on an income based rate scale.

Mr. Frelke updated the committee on the status of several other community services facilities and modes of operation. He further informed the committee that location determines capacity, and that the YMCA is searching for locations to accommodate the goal of a 1:13 ratio for students per room, no matter the size of the room.

Member Stephanie Lynch discussed CARES Act funding and emphasized the importance of survey data to allocating the appropriate amount of funds to childcare programming. Member Lynch expressed hope that Richmond Public Schools (RPS) will work in tandem with providers and city departments to ensure that available resources are communicated to the RPS community.

Mr. Frelke informed the committee that faith based sites are being evaluated for compliance with Center for Disease Control physical distancing and safety guidelines.

Chair Kristen Larson requested Mr. Frelke connect with members of the committee to discuss the matter further.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

### **Staff Report**

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

A copy of the report has been filed.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.