



Richmond City Council

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

Budget Work Session Minutes

Monday, April 20, 2026

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Council Members Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Katherine Jordan, Vice President
The Honorable Sarah Abubaker
The Honorable Andrew Breton (late arrival)
The Honorable Kenya Gibson
The Honorable Nicole Jones (late arrival)
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch (late arrival)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson
The Honorable Reva Trammell

Others in Attendance

Laura Drewry, City Attorney
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Tabrica Rentz, Deputy City Attorney
RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff

Call to Order

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:14 p.m. and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Announcement

At the President's request, the Deputy City Clerk provided information on the appropriate way to evacuate the Council Chamber in an emergency.

The Council Chief of Staff outlined the procedures governing the work session, explaining that proposed Council amendments would be considered in descending order of co-patronage and, within each level of co-patronage, from highest to lowest cost, so that Council could track available funding as it proceeded.

Councilors Andrew Breton, Nicole Jones and Stephanie Lynch arrived at 1:16 p.m. and were seated.

Council Amendment Considerations

CD.2026.119 FY 2027 Proposed City Council Amendments

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

The Chief of Staff reported that \$3.168 million remained from the GAP grant program appropriated in October 2024 under the RVA Stay initiative, which had not been exhausted by the December 2025 deadline. City Administration agreed to redirect the full remaining balance to four active FY2027 housing initiatives currently serving residents — the Family Crisis Fund, Eviction Diversion, the Real Estate Tax Freeze, and Right to Counsel — matching those programs' proposed FY2027 allocations and thereby releasing an equivalent amount of general fund dollars for FY2027 budget amendments.

Members discussed at length whether the funds constituted one-time or recurring revenue; City Administration clarified that the balance had been repurposed prior to any surplus declaration and was therefore not treated as one-time funding.

The Chief of Staff further noted that Council retained access to approximately \$1.2 million representing ten percent of the prior year's surplus for one-time projects, reduced by two previously agreed items (the Southside Community Lab and a traffic study). Council indicated its consensus to proceed on this basis.

Amendments Considered: Six or More Co-Patrons

Elimination of new funding for gas new business: \$500,000 reduction; eight co-patrons. Received as consensus.

Dedicated mailing line item, Office of Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities: addressed by administration; approximately \$75,000 is budgeted for mailers in FY2026 and FY2027. No formal amendment required. Members emphasized the need for targeted outreach to seniors regarding available tax relief, and Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer, described a three-part outreach approach.

Transportation and security for RPS after-school programs: seven co-patrons; updated cost of \$483,000 (revised from \$428,000). Received as consensus.

Richmond Retirement System cost-of-living adjustment (COLA): Council considered a 1% COLA financed over ten years at \$971,000 per year and a one-time payment equivalent to a 1% COLA at \$716,400. Members discussed the relative merits of a flat one-time payment, which would provide the same dollar amount to every retiree regardless of pension level, versus a percentage-based COLA, and touched on the system's funded status of approximately 84.9%. Consensus was reached to proceed with the one-time payment equivalent to a 1% COLA for the current year only, together with a commitment to convene a working group, including Richmond Retirement System representatives, to develop a long-term COLA solution ahead of the next budget.

Westover Hills Elementary School external facility redesign: six co-patrons; \$500,000, funded from the released general fund dollars in connection with the Jahnke Road improvements and the new Westover Park (school parking and dropoff). The proposed offsetting reduction to the Sheriff's Office was removed from consideration. Received as consensus. Questions regarding year-over-year increases in the Sheriff's Office contracted services and printing and postage lines were deferred for follow-up.

Forest Hill Avenue traffic study: six co-patrons; \$100,000. Being addressed separately; no formal amendment required.

Family Crisis Fund increase: seven co-patrons; \$100,000. Received as consensus, to be funded from released or one-time surplus dollars.

Council recessed at 2:20 p.m.

Council reconvened at 2:37 p.m.

Amendments Considered: Five Co-Patrons

The following items were reported as being addressed administratively, requiring no formal amendment: a customer service representative for the City Assessor; transition of the Council Chief of Staff vacancy; transparency in street-safety spending and urban forestry; citywide school safety study recommendations (to be funded through the ordinary course of transportation grants); and additional legal services staffing for EDA and HCD matters (collaboration ongoing to identify vacancies).

Splash pad at Broad Rock Sports Complex: \$1.5 million. The Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities advised that only \$250,000 is available across all aquatic facilities and that a phased-design figure had not been developed. Insufficient funding was available; the item did not advance.

3.25% salary adjustment effective July 1 for all city staff: approximately \$1 million including benefits, accelerating to July 1 the increase otherwise scheduled for January for certain employees. Received as consensus. Councilor Kenya Gibson requested a position-level export comparing FY2026 and FY2027 salaries and identifying bargaining-unit status.

Youth and senior programming at Southside Community Center: \$300,000. Received as consensus.

Game room and fitness equipment upgrades, Randolph Community Center: \$40,000. Received as consensus, to be funded from one-time surplus.

Amendments Considered: Four Co-Patrons

Neighborhood Displacement Investment tax performance grant: \$1.5 million. Sufficient funding was not available; the item did not advance.

Richmond Ambulance Authority fleet completion: \$800,000. Received as consensus, to be funded from one-time surplus.

Inspector General / audit team FTE and additional Social Services FTEs: to be addressed administratively through identification of existing vacancies, subject to confirmation. Council requested that any such positions be clearly delineated in the adopted budget document and that Council staff conduct 30-day implementation follow-ups. A note stating that the Inspector General falls under Council for funding purposes was identified as a miscommunication to be corrected.

Clark Springs Elementary School redevelopment planning: \$125,000. Received as consensus, to be funded from one-time surplus. Members discussed coordination with Richmond Public Schools (RPS) and the School Board, the site's reversionary deed restriction requiring continued school use, and the concept of a mixed-use, affordable-housing partnership.

Several members placed concerns on the record regarding the conduct of the budget process. Councilor Gibson expressed reservations about the informal consensus method, noting that it can be difficult to follow, and requested that future sessions move toward a more formal vote; the President acknowledged the request for consideration at a subsequent meeting.

Councilor Nicole Jones observed that certain amendments had remained pending across multiple budget cycles and urged the body to prioritize funding equitably for young people across the city rather than by the ability to gather co-patrons. Councilor Ellen Robertson raised similar concerns about equity and the geographic distribution of funding, and about proposed reductions being adopted without a full account of their impact. Members agreed to continue process and equity discussions beyond adoption of the budget.

Richmond Virtual Academy (RVA)

Councilor Gibson proposed funding the Richmond Virtual Academy. The full request was \$3.2 million; a partial level of approximately \$1 million was described as serving roughly fifty students. The proposed offsets, totaling approximately \$2.2 million, drew from strategic communications, economic development, and neighborhood and community services positions.

City Administration advised that the identified positions were largely filled, reclassified, or in active recruitment (approximately \$725,000 in Neighborhood and Community Services being out for requisition or interview), did not support the proposed reductions, and cautioned that using those vacancies would limit its ability to fill positions requested elsewhere by Council. Council declined to reduce the Police Department budget.

Consensus was reached to hold approximately \$200,000 remaining from released and surplus funds toward a \$1 million RVA amendment, to remove the proposed cuts from consideration, and to work with City Administration and the Superintendent before the Wednesday session to identify the balance.

Documentation Requests and Next Steps

Members requested that positions and agreements described as being addressed administratively be clearly delineated in the adopted budget document, and that the final adopted budget be published promptly following the vote. Councilor Gibson requested a complete Richmond Public Schools facilities master plan with timelines to inform future budget decisions, and a text amendment providing additional transparency into the School Board's budget request and revisions. Council also asked that the after-school transportation correspondence and related RPS responses be forwarded to all members.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

CITY CLERK