



City of Richmond

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

Meeting Minutes Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

Committee Members and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Chair
The Honorable Nicole Jones – Vice Chair
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member (late arrival and early departure via Microsoft Teams)
The Honorable Reva Trammell – Council Member (early departure)

Staff in Attendance

Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney
Maria Garnett, Council Policy Analyst
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Nahdiyah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Ellen Robertson called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Nahdiyah Muhammad provided information on the appropriate way to evacuate the Council Chamber in an emergency along with public speaker guidelines.

Electronic Participation

Pursuant to Rule III(D)(4)(b) of Council's Rules of Procedure, Committee Member Stephanie Lynch has made a request to participate in this meeting via Microsoft Teams from her home due to her attendance at a virtual work meeting. The committee members present were required to adopt a motion to approve Member Lynch's participation in the meeting by electronic communication means if it appeared to the committee that her request complied with Rule III(D) of Council's Rules of Procedure. A motion was solicited from those members physically assembled to approve Member Stephanie Lynch's participation in the meeting by electronic communication means.

Chair Ellen Robertson moved to allow Member Stephanie Lynch to participate in the meeting by electronic communication means. The motion was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None. Councilor Stephanie Lynch had not yet joined the meeting.

Board Vacancies

[CD.2025.263](#) September 17, 2025 - Finance and Economic Development Board
Vacancy Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones made a motion to continue consideration of appointment applications for vacancies on the Board of Directors of the Economic Development Authority and the Participatory Budgeting Steering Commission, to the October 15, 2025, Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment period held.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of July 16, 2025, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2025.262](#) July 16, 2025 - Finance and Economic Development Standing
Committee Meeting Minutes

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD.
2025-100](#) To amend City Code § 12-12, concerning the form of the budget submitted to Council, to require publication of a side-by-side comparison with the mayor's proposed budget submission with agency-level budget request documents and to amend ch. 12, art. I of the City Code by adding therein a new section 12-25, concerning publication of agency-level budget requests, for the purpose of requiring submission of agency-level budget request documents.

Patrons: Ms. Lynch, Mr. Breton, Vice President Jordan, Ms. Gibson, Ms. Jones, Ms. Abubaker and Ms. Trammell

There was no discussion and Vice Chair Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-100 to Council with no recommendation, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD. 2025-187](#) To approve the Work Plan and Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, for the provision of services in the Downtown Special Service and Assessment Districts.

Patrons: Ms. Robertson and Mayor Avula

Chair Ellen Robertson provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Chair Robertson stated that the proposed ordinance is a part of the budget process to approve the Downtown Special Service and Assessment Districts.

There were no comments or discussions and Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-187 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

3. [ORD. 2025-204](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute an Amendment I: Extension of Project Period between the City of Richmond and the National Recreation and Park Association for the purpose of supporting the ongoing implementation of the Mentoring Opportunities for Youth Initiative project.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Chris Frelke, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Mr. Frelke stated that the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities received grant funding from the National Recreation and Park Association that could not be fully expended due to the pause on federal funding at the time. Mr. Frelke also stated that the project funding period was extended and that the proposed ordinance will help support the local parks and recreation You Matter Program.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-204 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

4. [ORD. 2025-205](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$125,000.00 from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services and to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Justice Services' Help Me Help You Program Special Fund by \$125,000.00 for the purpose of funding the Help Me Help You program.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-204 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following ordinance was considered:

5. [ORD. 2025-206](#) To amend Ord. No. 2025-057, adopted May 12, 2025, which adopted the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget and made appropriations pursuant thereto, by (i) increasing anticipated revenues from certain funds due to the City from the Virginia Department of Taxation, in accordance with Va. Code § 58.1-1748 and Ord. No. 2025-099, adopted Jun. 2, 2025, by \$200,000.00; (ii) creating a new special fund for the Office of Sustainability called the "Disposable Plastic Bag Tax Special Fund;" and (iii) appropriating the increase to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing the estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Office of Sustainability's "Disposable Plastic Bag Tax Special Fund" by \$200,000.00, all for the purpose of funding local environmental cleanups, education programs designed to reduce environmental waste, pollution and litter mitigation, and providing reusable bags to recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Women, Infants, and Children Program benefits.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Laura Thomas, Director for the Office of Sustainability, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Ms. Thomas stated that the proposed ordinance will allow the Department of Sustainability to establish the financial controls to receive and expend the funds from the disposable plastic bag tax special fund.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-206 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

The following resolution was considered:

8. [RES. 2025-R040](#) To express the Council's acceptance of the findings of the MGT Performance, City of Richmond, Virginia Minority Business Enterprise, 2023 Disparity Study and to request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the Office of Minority Business Development to (i) develop and implement a comprehensive plan of action based on the recommendations of such disparity study to promote equity in the City's procurement practices and (ii) conduct a comprehensive minority business enterprise disparity study every five years beginning in Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

Patrons: Ms. Robertson, Ms. Jones, Mayor Avula, Ms. Trammell and President Newbille

Patricia Foster, Director of the Office of Minority Business Development, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed resolution. Ms. Foster stated that the proposed resolution will allow for the Office of Minority Business Development to develop and implement a plan to promote equity in the city's procurement practices.

Public Hearing

Carol Reese, Owner of ReeSources, spoke in support of RES. 2025-R040 and stated that the proposed resolution will shed light on the internal disparities within the procurement department and the burden that minority businesses carry.

Morris Cephas, President of Cephas Next, Inc., stated his support of RES. 2025-R040.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Jones moved to forward RES. 2025-R040 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

Councilor Reva Trammell requested to be added as co-patron to RES. 2025-R040.

The following ordinances were considered:

6. [ORD. 2025-207](#) To amend City Code § 26-355, concerning the levy of tax on real estate, to establish a tax rate of \$1.20 for the tax year beginning Jan. 1, 2026, pursuant to Va. Code § 58.1-3321(b), and increasing such rate from the Rolled Back Tax Rate of \$1.146 as computed in accordance with Va. Code § 58.1-3321(a).

Patrons: President Newbille and Mayor Avula

7. [ORD. 2025-208](#) To amend City Code § 26-355, concerning the levy of tax on real estate, to establish a tax rate of \$1.16 for the tax year beginning Jan. 1, 2026, pursuant to Va. Code § 58.1-3321(b), and increasing such rate from the Rolled Back Tax Rate of \$1.146 as computed in accordance with Va. Code § 58.1-3321(a).

Patrons: Ms. Trammell, Ms. Abubaker and Ms. Lynch

Public Hearing

Felicia Boney, Chapter Chair of the Richmond Chapter of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Virginia 512, spoke in opposition of ORD. 2025-208 and in support of ORD. 2025-207. Ms. Boney stated that the proposed ordinance will threaten the ability to secure a living wage for contracted workers, fund affordable housing and eviction prevention and honor the city's collective bargaining agreements.

Jerry Blow spoke in opposition of ORD. 2025-207 and in support of ORD. 2025-208. Mr. Blow stated that the city needs to collect the owed \$31 million in unpaid personal property taxes. Mr. Blow also stated the proposed ordinance will place an undue burden on the elderly and physically disabled.

Cynthia Hinds spoke in opposition of ORD. 2025-207 and in support of ORD. 2025-208. Ms. Hinds highlighted the burden of increased living expenses and the increased financial strain.

Donald Bryant spoke in opposition of ORD. 2025-207 and in support of ORD. 2025-208. Mr. Bryant highlighted an increase in living expenses and limited financial resources.

Christal Jordan spoke in opposition of ORD. 2025-207 and in support of ORD. 2025-208. Ms. Jordan stated that the recent increase in property assessment values could help offset the costs of a lower real estate tax rate.

Member Stephanie Lynch joined the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Odie Donald, II, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), provided the committee with an introduction and additional background information regarding Ord. No. 2025-207. CAO Donald stated that real estate and property tax revenues make up about 60% of all revenue received. CAO Donald also stated that the city receives 12% of its funding from federal and state governments, and the amount will likely decrease due to the current political climate. CAO Donald stated the current real estate tax rate has not changed since 1998 due to the increased cost of services.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones requested a side-by-side comparison of the services that would be impacted under a real estate tax rate of \$1.16, as compared to maintaining the current rate of \$1.20. She asked for further clarification on the decision-making process used to determine which services would be subject to budget reductions if the tax rate is decreased. Vice Chair Jones asked how city administration can be more transparent during the budget process. She also asked if the proposed real estate tax rates could be viewed before the budget is adopted.

CAO Donald stated that around 60% of the budget goes towards personnel, and a reduction of the real estate tax rate will impact that group and the delivery of services. CAO Donald also stated that the savings passed to the residents will amount to about \$34 per year while seeing a major reduction in service delivery. He added that the next budget process will include a cost analysis of services.

Councilor Reva Trammell expressed her concerns regarding unpaid property taxes, stating that the burden of rising real estate assessments has placed significant financial strain on the constituents in her district, which has been under-developed and has not seen any significant changes despite the increased costs.

Chair Ellen Robertson stated that living in the city is more expensive due to the services that are available. She also stated that there needs to be a policy to justify increasing taxes while maintaining a sustainable cost of living in the city that is competitive within the region. She further stated that the city also needs policies to become less dependent on federal funding due to the decrease in federal support.

Member Stephanie Lynch inquired about the projected surplus for the current fiscal year.

CAO Donald stated that city administration is currently conducting an audit and will not provide surplus projections until the audit is complete. He also clarified that the administration is not anticipating a double-digit surplus, noting that the third quarter of the fiscal year is currently in a deficit.

There were no further comments or discussions and Chair Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-207 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Vice Chair Jones moved to forward ORD. 2025-208 to Council with no recommendation, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Lynch. Noes 1, Robertson.

Member Stephanie Lynch left the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

Councilor Reva Trammell departed the meeting at 3:38 p.m.

Presentation(s)

Fourth Quarter Fiscal Year 2025 Updates

Letitia Shelton, Director of Finance, provided the committee with a brief introduction of her experience and transition into her new role with the city, an overview of the coordination of the year-end closeout and audit process, a third-quarter financial snapshot, a 30-day financial assessment, and her approach to leading the city's financial planning moving forward.

[CD.2025.277](#) September 17, 2025 - Fourth Quarter Fiscal Year 25 Update

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Chair Ellen Robertson thanked Director Shelton for the information she was able to provide the committee through her presentation and requested to meet with her.

Diamond District Updates

Sharon Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Planning and Economic Development, provided the committee with a brief introduction of Angie Rodgers, Director of Economic Development.

Angie Rodgers, Director of Economic Development, presented the committee with Diamond District updates to include the statuses of mixed-use development - Phase 1A program, stadium construction progress, private development, and community amenities.

[CD.2025.279](#) September 17, 2025 - Diamond District Update

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Chair Ellen Robertson thanked Director Rodgers for providing the committee with her presentation and stated the city has an opportunity to develop its land in underserved areas. She also stated that she will meet with city administration to have a more defined view of future revenue projections.

Discussion Item(s)

Introduction of Tanikia Jackson, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Finance and Administration

Tanikia Jackson, DCAO for Finance and Administration, provided the committee with a brief introduction of her experience and transition into her new role with the city.

Staff Report

Council staff provided the committee with the September Finance and Economic Development staff report.

[CD.2025.275](#) September 17, 2025 - Finance and Economic Development Staff Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.