



City of Richmond

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

DRAFT Meeting Minutes Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

3:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members in Attendance

The Honorable Nicole Jones – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair

Absent

The Honorable Andrew Breton – Member

Staff and Others in Attendance

Maria Garnett, Council Policy Analyst
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk
Sophie McGinley, Council Policy Analyst
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Danielle Smith, Assistant City Attorney
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst

Call to Order

Chair Nicole Jones called the meeting to order at 3:01 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.

Public Comment Period

Rich Souser addressed the committee about the proposed 14 mile, \$380 million Fall Line Trail project, stating that the committee has had little involvement and that segments have advanced with limited public input and inconsistent planning. He urged Council to require a clear process and full approval of a detailed plan before funding additional segments, and questioned the project's high cost compared to similar trails in nearby localities.

Martin Wegbreit, former member of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Supervisory Board, addressed the committee on Ordinance No. 2026-045, which would provide \$62.8 million to the AHTF over five years beginning in FY 27. He noted the trust fund's citizen oversight and its requirement that 30% of funding serve households at 30% of Area Median Income. He cautioned that replacing forgivable loans with repayable loans could reduce support for developers, discourage projects, and affect the fund's long term effectiveness.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of November 18, 2025 and January 20, 2026 and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2026.013](#) November 18, 2025 - Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

[CD.2026.048](#) January 20, 2026 - Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinances were considered:

1. [ORD. 2026-039](#) To amend City Code §§ 14-181, concerning definitions related to land use and development performance criteria in Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, 14-263, concerning general performance criteria, and 14-264, concerning criteria for resource protection areas for the purpose of aligning the City Code with state law.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

2. [ORD. 2026-040](#) To amend § 14-336, concerning Richmond Erosion and Stormwater Management Program fees, for the purpose of aligning such section with recent amendments to state law and regulations approved by the State Water Control Board.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Rebecca Rochet, Engineering Manager for Public Utilities, provided an overview of the proposed ordinances, stating that Ord. 2026-039 aims to align local regulations with the 2021 Chesapeake Bay Management revisions and maintain compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation ordinance. She further stated that Ord. 2026-040 updates fees under the Richmond Erosion and Stormwater Management Regulation to reflect the 2025 state revisions.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson inquired about the highlights of the proposed fee changes.

Ms. Rochet stated that Richmond's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act ordinance is being updated to enhance environmental protections and climate resilience, including coastal safeguards, tree preservation, and green infrastructure. She also explained that the revised statewide permit fees are designed to cover 60–62% of the city's costs for administering, inspecting, and enforcing permits, with a portion given back to the state.

Vice Chair Robertson asked whether the report assessing the fees would be provided to the Council and emphasized the importance of giving the council insight into the reasons for the increased fees.

Ms. Rochet stated that she would provide Council the fee schedule, and explained that the revised permit fees were set by the State Water Control Board as part of its erosion and stormwater management program. She added that since these are statewide permits, the city collects the fees but must remit a portion back to the state.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2026-039 and ORD. 2026-040 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None.

The following resolution was considered:

3. [RES. 2026-R008](#) To name the alley located in the block bounded by T Street, North 31st Street, Kuhn Street and North 32nd Street as "Strong Oak Alley." (7th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula (By Request)

M.S. Khara, Deputy Director of Public Works and City Engineer, provided an overview of the proposed ordinance, stating that it would name the public alley in the block bounded by T Street and North 31st Street, Strong Oak Alley. He stated Council approved a special use permit for four single-family attached dwelling units on the property and naming the alley was required to provide proper addresses for these units, with the applicant responsible for all costs of fabrication and installation of signage in accordance with city code requirements.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2026-R008 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None.

The following resolution was considered:

4. [RES. 2026-R010](#) To express the City Council's support for and request the Commonwealth Transportation Board to provide funding for the City's SMART SCALE Round 7 candidate projects for 2026.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Daniel Wagner, Traffic Operations Engineer for the Department of Public Works, provided an overview of the proposed resolution, stating that it expresses Council's support for the city's Smart Scale grant projects, a Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) competitive program for major transportation initiatives. He stated that preliminary applications are due April 1st, with final submissions due in August after coordination with VDOT and internal partners. He further stated that the ten proposed projects prioritize high injury areas and key safety and infrastructure needs identified through Richmond Connects.

Public Hearing

Rich Souser addressed the committee and expressed concerns about limited public input and questioned whether the Bus Rapid Transit and Diamond District projects are a wise use of funds. He emphasized the need to evaluate these projects collectively and ensure thorough public review before committing city resources.

Chair Nicole Jones asked about Smart Scale funding for 2025.

Mr. Wagner explained that the Smart Scale program focuses on long term funding, with project funds not expected to be available until 2032 or 2033. He stated project funding approvals will not be determined until 2027, and construction funding would come several years later.

Chair Jones asked how the locations were selected and whether community input was considered.

Mr. Wagner stated that the locations were identified through analysis connected to the Smart Scale program and extensive community input gathered during the Richmond Connects process, which engaged more than 8,000 residents. He also stated that public priorities, safety needs, and city policy goals were aligned with Smart Scale criteria to select the most competitive projects, including some refined resubmissions from prior rounds.

Chair Jones requested that before approving the funding application, Council should receive a clear update on the city's current priorities and alignment, particularly regarding the High Injury Street Network and coordination with Richmond Police Department (RPD). She emphasized the need for greater transparency.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2026-R010 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None.

The following resolution was considered:

5. [RES. 2026-R009](#) To designate the property known as 4611 Walmsley Boulevard as a revitalization area pursuant to Va. Code § 36-55.30:2. (8th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Michelle Brown Peters, Deputy Director for Housing and Community Development (HCD), provided an overview of the proposed resolution, stating that it would designate 4611 Walmsley Boulevard as a revitalization area, enabling Lynx Ventures to pursue financing through Virginia Housing. She stated the \$64 million project will include 219 units affordable at 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI), consisting of 115 one bedroom, 89 two bedroom, and 15 three bedroom units.

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson asked why the area must be designated as a revitalization area to obtain financing and whether the project outlined in the proposed resolution has already been approved.

Ms. Peters stated that Virginia Housing's new process requires the applicant to submit a form notifying the councilor of the district where the project is located to confirm awareness and community engagement. She added that once the councilor indicates support, HCD signs the form for inclusion in the developer's Virginia Housing financing application. She further noted that the application was submitted in November 2025, and Virginia Housing changed its process on January 26.

There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2026-R009 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None.

6. [RES. 2026-R003](#) To commit to working with the City's Administration to development and implement a comprehensive energy efficiency program that reduces the energy burden and cost of living for vulnerable households, supports small businesses, assists in the preservation of housing and the stabilization of neighborhoods, and makes meaningful progress towards the City's climate goals.

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

Chair Nicole Jones moved to continue RES. 2026-R003, to the March 17, 2026, Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes, 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.

Presentation(s)

Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Merrick Malone, Director of Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), presented an overview of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), chronology of funding, units produced/preserved, awarded properties, annual subsidy required to produce 30% area median income (AMI) units, 2025 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income/rent limits, and program evaluation.

Jaynell Pittman-Shaw, AHTF Program Manager for HCD, highlighted the quality and impact of trust fund projects, citing 67 family units at 60% AMI developed by the Better Housing Coalition. She explained the challenges of producing lower income units, noting that households at 30% AMI have very limited income, making rent affordability difficult, even for full-time minimum wage earners. She also described how the trust fund supports a range of affordable housing, including permanent supportive housing and tax credit projects, with the majority of units at or below 60% AMI.

[CD.2026.047](#) Affordable Housing Trust Fund

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Chair Nicole Jones asked whether the term, "low to moderate income" specifically refers to households at 30% AMI.

Ms. Pittman-Shaw explained that low income housing serves households earning up to 60% of the AMI, while moderate income housing serves those between 60% and 120% AMI. She noted that AMI is based on the regional average, and that 30% AMI reflects what households can comfortably afford versus what they are able to pay.

Chair Jones asked for clarification on why there are only 64 units at 30% AMI compared to 214 project based vouchers, and how those numbers relate to overall affordable housing targets.

Ms. Pittman-Shaw explained that the number of affordable units is market driven and reflects what developers include in their applications. She stated affordable units typically range from 0–60% AMI, and project based vouchers are issued by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and can be requested by developers in advance to include in their applications, counting toward AHTF approval.

Mr. Malone stated that increasing units at 30% AMI would require additional vouchers. He noted that while more units could be supported if available, doing so presents significant challenges.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson emphasized the need for accurate, timely data to guide AHTF decisions and program adjustments. She stressed that addressing the housing crisis requires a dedicated funding source, coordinated city efforts, and support beyond housing, such as job and career development to help 30% AMI households improve stability.

Code Enforcement Outreach and Education

Kevin Vonck, Director of the Department of Planning and Development Review (PDR), presented an update on property maintenance and code enforcement, PDR structure, notice of violations, vacant buildings, and citywide enforcement teams.

[CD.2026.046](#) Code Enforcement Outreach and Education

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

The committee inquired and requested information on the following matters:

- Extent to which code inspection data informs target areas and rental inspection decisions
- Outline of the revised housing plan, including interdepartmental coordination, priority zones, and integrated services
- Frequency of property revisits following violations and the overall enforcement process
- Proportion of calls that are citizen initiated versus those identified proactively by inspectors
- Process for verifying and documenting complaints found to be compliant
- Factors contributing to the recent spike in cases within the 8th District
- Availability and currency of the Good Neighbor Guide in both English and Spanish

Director Vonck explained that enforcing safety in occupied residential buildings balances resident protection with minimizing displacement. Rental inspection districts may reserve units for displaced tenants, encourage proactive maintenance, and are established via council resolution or tenant petition with outreach and research to ensure compliance.

Russell Williams, Program and Operations Manager for PDR, stated the department partners with HCD to assist homeowners on fixed incomes and explores funding for commercial rental repairs while maintaining affordability. Extensions are granted for good faith efforts, with noncompliance referred to court, in coordination with the City Attorney's Office.

Mr. Williams stated that education is provided through Notices of Violation, community engagement, and the Good Neighbor Guide, available in English and Spanish. About 90% of cases are citizen initiated via 311, and inspectors document violations with time stamped photos. The 8th District spike was due to an increase in residents and service calls, and new software being implemented to improve timely updates to residents.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

Council staff provided the committee with the February Land Use, Housing and Transportation staff report.

[CD.2026.052](#) February 17, 2026 - Land Use, Housing and Transportation Staff Report

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.