



Richmond City Council

Budget Work Session Minutes

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

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Budget Work Session

Council Members Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Katherine Jordan, Vice President
The Honorable Sarah Abubaker (late arrival)
The Honorable Andrew Breton
The Honorable Kenya Gibson
The Honorable Nicole Jones
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch (late arrival, early departure)
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 1:16 p.m. and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Announcement

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

Council Amendment Considerations

[CD.2026.122](#) FY 2027 Proposed City Council Amendments

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Councilor Sarah Abubaker arrived at 1:23 p.m. and was seated.

Councilor Reva Trammell expressed strong concerns regarding media reports that described the retiree cost of living adjustment as a “bonus” rather than a COLA, stating that she told retirees it was a COLA and wants that distinction publicly corrected.

RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff, clarified that what was discussed was a one time payment to Richmond Retirement System beneficiaries in the amount equivalent to what a 1% COLA for the year would be. If it were a true COLA, that 1% increase would be permanent and ongoing, and the cost would extend over 10 years.

Council President Cynthia Newbille stated that Council wants a long term, annually recurring COLA solution, but financing it could not been resolved in the current budget cycle, so the one time payment is a bridge until a permanent COLA policy and funding plan can be developed, which Council is committed to.

The Council Chief of Staff provided an overview of the budget amendment work session agenda and procedures. He also reviewed items from the previous work session, noting the \$113,000 funding gap to be closed in order to provide the proposed 3.25% raise to all city employees on July 1.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch arrived at 1:28 p.m. and was seated.

Councilor Lynch proposed reallocating Clark Springs consulting funds to close the \$113k gap so all employees can receive 3.25% raises on July 1. She also discussed proposed FY27 budget amendments as follows:

- Assigning the remaining \$11,908 to the Randolph Community Center
- Increased transparency in Complete Streets funding

Councilor Kenya Gibson described issues with the FY27 budget as follows:

- Treatment of \$3.9 million Gap Grant revenue as essentially one time funding
- Using one time surplus funds for recurring expenses
- Some funding proposals or reductions not being fully transparent

Chief Administrative Officer Odie Donald II explained that the city’s property tax assessments for FY25 were finalized after the budget was adopted and came in higher than projected. The timing mismatch produced about \$12M in additional revenue, part of which funded the \$3.9M Gap Grant and other largely one time initiatives.

Councilor Andrew Breton discussed proposed FY27 budget amendments as follows:

- Cutting \$100,000 from the car wash line to fund TJ High School field lights
- Complete Streets restructure by breaking the \$21M line into visible sub lines

Council members discussed the structure and transparency of the Complete Streets appropriation within the transportation budget.

CAO Donald suggested a compromise in which the line item breakdown is documented in a supplemental budget page showing planned allocations by subcategory. He also noted that some movement between funding "buckets" may occur to meet project demands.

Council members generally supported this approach as a way to improve public transparency while preserving necessary administrative flexibility.

Vice President Katherine Jordan suggested routing city support through the Richmond Education Foundation, with funds earmarked specifically for the TJ lights project.

Councilor Sarah Abubaker requested a complete list of positions by department showing which will get the July 1, 2026 salary increase versus the January 1, 2027 increase.

Councilor Reva Trammell expressed concerns with funding for Richmond Virtual Academy (RVA) and suggested repurposing funds toward supports for students with special needs and community programs, rather than cutting a program that is working for some families.

Councilor Gibson stated that RVA is a successful program and questioned the logic of cutting it while continuing to outsource substitutes.

Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Jason Kamras responded that RVA's approximately \$3.2 million cost is largely personnel and its 25 staff would be reassigned into existing vacancies rather than laid off. He further emphasized that nearly all students with disabilities are already served in person pursuant to federal law, and noted that RVA primarily serves general education students rather than functioning as a special education placement.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch left the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

CITY CLERK