



# City of Richmond

## Budget Work Session 1

### Minutes

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

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Monday, March 22, 2021

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

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#### **Councilmembers Present**

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President  
The Honorable Ellen Robertson, Vice President  
The Honorable Andreas Addison (late arrival)  
The Honorable Michael Jones (late arrival)  
The Honorable Katherine Jordan  
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert  
The Honorable Kristen Larson (late arrival)  
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch (late arrival)  
The Honorable Reva Trammell

#### **Staff Present**

Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney  
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff  
Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst  
Samson Anderson, Council Budget Analyst  
Candice Reid, City Clerk  
Tabrica Rentz, Acting Deputy City Attorney  
Dominique J. Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk  
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. and presided.

#### **ELECTRONIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT**

Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, as most recently amended by Ordinance No. 2020-232, adopted December 14, 2020, announced the work session would be held through electronic communication means, and stated that notice of the session was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on February 11, 2021, and through Legistar on the city website in accordance with usual practice. She also stated there would be no opportunities for public comment and no public hearings during the session.

*Councilor Michael Jones joined the meeting at 1:07 p.m.*

#### **Overview of Richmond Public Schools (RPS) FY22 Budget**

Jason Kamras, Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools, acknowledged that Cheryl Burke, Chair of the Richmond Public School Board, was present and available to respond to questions. Superintendent Kamras provided an overview of RPS' FY2021-2022 budget proposal. Mr. Kamras highlighted the success of the various school programs and initiatives funded by the FY2020-2021 budget. Mr. Kamras also provided a breakdown of the proposed local, state and one time federal stimulus funding.

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

*Councilor Kristen Larson joined the meeting at 1:11 p.m.*

*Councilor Stephanie Lynch joined the meeting at 1:13 p.m.*

*Councilor Stephanie Lynch inquired about plans for the reallocation of the \$8 million dollars of funding that will no longer be used toward the RPS extended school year plan.*

Superintendent Jason Kamras stated that pending Richmond Public Schools Board approval, the funds are being considered for use in a six-week summer jump start session that will serve as an accelerated specialized learning term for students ahead of the start of the traditional school year. Mr. Kamras also stated that the funding could be used toward individual student tutoring and other various programs throughout the school year.

*Councilor Michael Jones asked about the impact that providing the full RPS budget request would have on student test scores and the timeline for seeing any potential academic performance improvement.*

Mr. Kamras stated that there is a direct correlation between providing the full RPS budget requests and the increases in overall student success shown in recent years. Mr. Kamras stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges for students and that fully funding the RPS budget request is essential to continuing the upward trajectory of student success.

*Councilor Andreas Addison joined the meeting at 1:23 p.m.*

*Vice President Ellen Robertson requested analysis on potential budget allocations that would fund programs that would provide literacy support to students. Vice President Robertson also requested clarification on the RPS budget proposal's request for funding employee salary increases. Ms. Robertson expressed concern for RPS' proposed budget using one time federal relief funding on critical initiatives, and the budgetary implications a funding cliff may have on future fiscal years.*

Mr. Kamras provided clarification on the employee salary increases and shared that the proposed increase is contingent on both state and local government contributions. Mr. Kamras further clarified that the one time federal relief funding cannot be used toward employee salary increases.

*Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert requested an update on any actions taken by the Vacant School Properties Committee and expanded that the selling of unused property would help close the gap on the budget concerns.*

Cheryl Burke, Chair of the Richmond Public School Board, provided an update on the status of the various vacant school properties across the city.

*President Cynthia Newbille requested information on the timeline of the emotional and mental support services outlined in the budget proposal, being available to students. President Newbille also asked for further information on budget consideration for network connectivity across RPS facilities.*

Mr. Kamras provided information on the ongoing partnerships with local organizations that provide mental and emotional support to students. Mr. Kamras shared plans to expand the efforts of emotional and mental support to students and staff during the transition to returning to in-person learning. Superintendent Kamras discussed the updates made during the current academic year to RPS internet connectivity infrastructure.

*Councilor Andreas Addison proposed that RPS consider utilizing the one time federal relief funding to provide renovations to school facilities infrastructure and network connectivity repair.*

Council Budget Analyst Bill Echelberger reviewed the priorities for the upcoming Council budget work session and was available to answer further questions.

*Vice President Ellen Robertson requested that Council receive any presentation materials for the upcoming budget work sessions ahead of the sessions to allow Council and staff adequate time to review.*

Jay Brown, Department of Budget and Strategic Planning director, stated that his office would ensure that the presentation was available to Council and staff ahead of the March 29, 2021 budget work session.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

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CITY CLERK