



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
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## Draft Meeting Minutes Education and Human Services Standing Committee

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Thursday, January 16, 2025

3:30 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

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### Committee and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch - Chair  
The Honorable Andrew Breton - Vice Chair  
The Honorable Nicole Jones - Member  
The Honorable Cynthia Newbille - Council President  
The Honorable Katherine Jordan - Council Vice President

### Staff in Attendance

Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney  
Kimberly Morris, Assistant City Clerk  
Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst  
Candice Reid, City Clerk  
Matthew Slaats, Interim Council Chief of Staff  
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

### Call to Order

Chair Stephanie Lynch called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m., and presided.

### Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Kimberly Morris provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with public speaker guidelines.

### Board Vacancies

Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst, reviewed board vacancies and applications for the committee's consideration

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

[CD.2025.006](#) EHS Vacancy Board Report

**Attachments:** [20250116 EHS Board Vacancy Report](#)

**Chair Stephanie Lynch moved to forward the following board appointment and reappointment applications to Council with a recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved:**

Advisory Board of Recreation and Parks:  
Lisa Mischley

Aging and Disabilities Advisory Board:  
Ida Mitchell

Capital Area Partnership Uplifting People, Inc:  
Mary Montague

Human Rights Commission:  
Whitney Brown (reappointment)  
Breana Beasley  
Emily Wolfeich

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden's, Inc:  
Steven Williams (reappointment)

Richmond Behavioral Health Authority:  
Dennis Cohen, Jr.

Social Services Advisory Board:  
Max Berckmueller

### **Public Comment Period**

LaRon Gibson addressed the committee about the conditions experienced by the unhoused community and the closing of shelters. Mr. Gibson stated the city should prioritize the safety of residents.

Tracey Hardney-Scott, NAACP Richmond Branch Housing Chair, addressed the committee about shelters, warming centers and the unhoused community.

Charles Willis, NAACP Richmond Branch Housing Advocate, addressed the committee regarding homelessness, and he asked that the city take action and find solutions for unhoused individuals. Mr. Willis also addressed the issue of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program EBT theft.

Omari Al-Qadaffi, Legal Aid Justice Center Community Organizer, addressed the committee regarding Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) and its relationship with residents.

Nancy Williams, Three Gifts to You Director, addressed the committee about unhoused veterans and senior citizens in the community. Ms. Williams stated her concerns about the safety of the unhoused individuals with disabilities and the city's obligation to promote its shelters to unhoused individuals.

Rhonda Sneed, Blessing Warriors Executive Director, stated her concerns about food quality at the Salvation Army walk up shelter. She also stated her concerns about families and children in need of shelter.

Beth Vann-Turnbull, Housing Families First Executive Director, addressed the committee in reference to funding of permanent housing for families.

Frances Marie Pugh, Homeward Director of Coordinated Funding, addressed the committee about safe, affordable and permanent housing. She also addressed the committee about housing programs that Homeward supports.

Choice East, Homeward and Greater Richmond Continuum of Care Referral Coordinator, addressed the committee in reference to partnering with the city to create a task force to work on housing solutions.

Pastor Daniel Holmes, Mt. Gilead Full Gospel International Ministries, addressed the committee about Mt. Gilead's Operation Thunder and vacant buildings that could be used for the unhoused community.

*Chair Stephanie Lynch addressed the committee about affordable housing, warming and overflow shelters, intake, case management, and true area median income (AMI) data.*

## **Presentation(s)**

There were no presentations.

## **Discussion Item(s)**

### **Update from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Human Services**

DCAO Traci DeShazor, provided the committee with an update regarding ongoing homeless services and behavioral health needs.

Tiffany Ford, Director of Neighborhood & Community Services, provided an update on the operation of overflow shelters during cold weather, the city's loss of water service, and the need for more partners and volunteers to assist with operating shelters.

*Chair Stephanie Lynch asked can the contract with the Salvation Army be extended and could another facility be constructed. She also asked if there is a possibility of a year-round shelter being offered by providers.*

DCAO DeShazor stated all homeless service providers in the region are willing to partner with the city, however, they have space and staffing limitations.

Stephen Harms, Policy Advisor for the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), provided the committee with updates and information regarding providers that can possibly assist with permanent and inclement weather shelters that will need space, experienced staff and money to operate. He also stated he is asking providers if they have capacity for a year-round shelter.

*Chair Lynch stated residents need more walk up locations to receive assistance.*

DCAO DeShazor stated inclement weather shelters are coordinated through Greater Richmond Continuum of Care's (GRCoC) coordinated entry. She also stated the Homeless Connection Line, the EmpowerNet Domestic Violence Line, and the outreach team, which is made up of staff from various organizations led by the Daily Planet, are the primary points of entry for clients.

*Member Nicole Jones asked what is the possibility of coordinating with hospitals to address mental health challenges.*

*Vice Chair Andrew Breton asked about the difference between a wraparound shelter versus a walk up shelter, and if they are mutually exclusive.*

DCAO DeShazor stated the difference in shelters is a wraparound shelter assists a client through all of their barriers to help them with stability, and that a walk up or inclement weather shelter is mostly transient based to provide the availability of beds.

Mr. Harms stated the need for client overflow in severe weather is the reason shelters are not year-round. He also stated there is no capacity for beds on the provider side.

Ms. Ford stated they are engaging churches to see if they will sponsor families in need of services.

DCAO Traci DeShazor provided a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT theft update.

*Chair Lynch inquired if the Health Equity Trust Fund and the Family Crisis Fund are able to assist with any funds to help SNAP EBT holders that are victims of theft.*

DCAO DeShazor stated the SNAP benefits replacement program effectively ended December 21, 2024, and the federal government did not take any action to provide funding for reimbursement on state and local levels. She also stated food distribution partners are assisting with providing food for families, and that the Health Equity Fund and the Family Crisis Fund are not viable options.

*Council Member Nicole Jones left the meeting at 5:03 p.m.*

*Chair Lynch asked if there is an ability to track offenders that commit EBT theft.*

DCAO DeShazor stated residents are asked to report the theft to law enforcement.

*Vice Chair Andrew Breton asked what made the city's system vulnerable to EBT theft.*

DCAO DeShazor stated it is not a city system issue which makes it challenging to address.

*Chair Lynch stated the committee would like to hear insights from the Commonwealth Attorney's office on the EBT theft issue and the prosecution process.*

### **Paper(s) for Consideration**

There were no papers for consideration.

### **Approval of Minutes**

There were no minutes to be approved.

### **Staff Report**

There was no staff report.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.