



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, July 22, 2025

3:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee Members and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Nicole Jones – Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair
The Honorable Andrew Breton – Member
The Honorable Cynthia Newbille – Council President (via Microsoft Teams)
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Councilmember (late arrival)
The Honorable Reva Trammell – Councilmember (late arrival)

Staff and Others in Attendance

Bonnie Ashley, Deputy City Attorney
Laura Drewry, City Attorney
Nahdiah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk
Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst

Call to Order

Chair Nicole Jones called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Public Speaker Guidelines

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

Public Comment Period

Omari Al-Qadaffi, a Community Organizer with the Legal Aid Justice Center, addressed the committee regarding the partnership between the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) and the Richmond Development Corporation (RDC). Mr. Al-Qadaffi expressed support for both the redevelopment of Gilpin Court and the transfer to RDC. Al-Qadaffi also highlighted the importance of community input and raised concerns related to the broader community development process.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch arrived at 3:10 p.m., and was seated.

Arthur Burton thanked the committee for their involvement in the redevelopment of Gilpin Court. He addressed the partnership between RRHA and RDC, expressing his support for both the redevelopment project and the transfer to RDC.

Councilor Reva Trammell arrived at 3:13 p.m., and was seated.

Sylvia Davis addressed the committee regarding the partnership between RRHA and RDC. Ms. Davis expressed support for the redevelopment of Gilpin Court, but she voiced her opposition to the transfer process to RDC. Ms. Davis also shared concerns about the condition of her apartment and the safety of her family.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of June 17, 2025, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2025.221](#) June 17, 2025 - Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [20250617 LUHT Minutes - DRAFT](#)

Board Vacancies

Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst, reviewed board vacancies and applications for consideration by the committee.

[CD.2025.226](#) July 22, 2025 - Land Use, Housing and Transportation Board Vacancy Report

Attachments: [20250722 - Land Use Housing and Transportation Board Vacancy Report](#)

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Andrew Breton moved to forward the following appointment and reappointment applications to Council with a recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved:

Board of Fire Appeals:
William Andrews (reappointment)

Community Transportation Advisory Committee (MPO):
James Hutzler

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD.](#) [2025-165](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Lease Agreement between the City of Richmond and New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC for the purpose of allowing New Cingular Wireless PCS LLC, to continue to maintain and operate a telecommunications facility at 3518 North Hopkins Road. (8th District)

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-165](#)

Shamiah Wilson, Department of Emergency Communications Preparedness and Response, Program and Operations Supervisor, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Ms. Wilson stated that the proposed ordinance would authorize a new lease agreement between the city and New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC, to continue its operations.

Member Andrew Breton asked about the method used to determine the amount of the lease agreement.

Ms. Wilson stated the lease agreement amount is determined by the market rate for the area and negotiated by the cellular company council. Ms. Wilson also stated that the market rate will begin at \$47,000 and will increase by 103% annually.

There were no further comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2025-165 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following resolution was considered:

3. [RES.](#) [2025-R030](#) To support an application to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for the purpose of participating in the Virginia Main Street Program as an Exploring Main Street community.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Attachments: [Res. No. 2025-R030](#)

Matthew Welch, Interim Director of Economic Development, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed resolution. Mr. Welch stated that the proposed resolution would allow the city to apply to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for the Main Street community program.

There were no comments or discussions, and Member Andrew Breton moved to forward RES. 2025-R030 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following resolution was considered:

4. [RES. 2025-R032](#) To support an application to the Virginia Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program for the purpose of funding the installation of pedestrian safety improvements along Patterson Avenue from Maple Avenue to Libbie Avenue and to commit to the required agreements of the Virginia Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Attachments: [Res. No. 2025-R032](#)

M Khara, Department of Public Works Deputy Director and City Engineer, provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed resolution. M Khara stated that the proposed resolution requests City Council's support for a transportation alternatives program to fund installation of pedestrian safety improvements.

There were no comments or discussions, and Vice Chair Ellen Robertson moved to forward RES. 2025-R032 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD. 2025-161](#) To amend ch. 5 of the City Code by adding therein a new art. VI, consisting of §§ 5-160 - 5-167, for the purpose of establishing a residential rental inspection program.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2025-161](#)
[Rental Inspection Presentation](#)

Kevin Vonck, Director, and Michelle Coward, Deputy Director for Property Maintenance, of Planning and Development Review (PDR), provided an introduction and additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. Mr. Vonck stated that the proposed ordinance will allow for the development of a rental inspection program in the city to promote safe residential dwelling units.

Public Hearing

Latoya Washington spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. Ms. Washington stated that the proposed ordinance can place an undue financial burden on small landlords and target low-income communities. Ms. Washington further stated that the rental inspection program can lead to displacement and increased rent.

Elizabeth Greenfield, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Home Building Association of Richmond (HBAR), spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. She highlighted that the main concern involves the creation of rental inspection districts. Additionally, Ms. Greenfield suggested adopting a more focused approach by inspecting only those properties with a history of poor maintenance.

Erika Misseri, Manager of Government Affairs for the Virginia Apartment Management Association (VAMA), spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. She emphasized that inspections should be more targeted, focusing only on properties with a history of poor maintenance. Additionally, Ms. Misseri suggested potential exemptions for property owners who hold a Certified Apartment Manager (CAM) certification or a real estate license.

Renee Pulliam, Vice President - Director of Operations for Thalhimer Multifamily, spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. She raised concerns about properties being classified as blighted based on calls for fire or emergency services. Ms. Pulliam emphasized that such service calls should not be used as a basis for labeling a property as blighted.

Laura Lafayette, CEO of the Richmond Association of Realtors, spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance, while supporting its intent to improve housing conditions. She cautioned that the ordinance could inadvertently cause displacement, burden small landlords, and reduce affordable housing. Ms. Lafayette advocated for a more targeted approach, focusing on properties with a history of poor maintenance.

Johanna Reynolds spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. She stated that while she supports the rental inspection program, she had concerns about the way the ordinance was written. She also questioned the city's ability to effectively hold property owners accountable.

Debbie Holson spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. She stated that while she supports rental inspections focused on enforcing health standards, all rental housing should be subject to inspection, rather than singling out properties to inspect.

Pinson Neal, owner of Landmark Property Services, spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. He stated that the rental inspection program should be specifically focused on property owners with frequent complaints and violations.

Patrick McCloud, CEO of the Virginia Apartment Management Association, spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance. He emphasized that accountability for property owners should be implemented gradually. Additionally, McCloud noted that residents' rights are incorporated into new lease agreements and that tenants are properly informed of these rights.

Paul Fleisher spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Fleisher stated that it would help ensure his property and neighboring ones remain up to code. He also stated his concern for small, independent landlords, suggesting that the rental inspection program should prioritize larger property owners. Mr. Fleisher provided the committee with suggested changes to the proposed ordinance.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Rachel Hefner, a member of the Richmond Chapter of Virginia Organizing, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. She shared tenant experiences related to code violations and unsafe living conditions. Hefner also emphasized that current code enforcement practices fail to fully hold landlords accountable.

Amoree Speed, New Virginia Majority Community Organizer, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Speed encouraged the committee to move forward with the proposed ordinance for the health and well being of city residents.

Omari Al-Qadaffi, a Community Organizer with the Legal Aid Justice Center, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Al-Qadaffi stated that the increased demand for housing since the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed some landlords to avoid accountability for maintaining safe and healthy living conditions. Mr. Al-Qadaffi emphasized that substandard housing is present in communities throughout the city, and further highlighted the difficulties tenants face when attempting to file assertions against their landlords.

Allan Chipman, Executive Director of Initiatives of Change USA, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Chipman stated that establishing a rental inspection program would promote landlord accountability in a bipartisan manner.

Jim Hill spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. As a property owner and landlord, he stated that his primary responsibility is to provide safe housing for his tenants. Mr. Hill also emphasized that if he is unable to financially maintain the property, it is his duty to sell it to someone who can ensure proper upkeep.

Danielle Smith spoke in support of the proposed ordinance, sharing her personal experiences with unhealthy living conditions. Ms. Smith noted that the frequency of service calls can often be tied to whether a property is being properly maintained. Smith also presented the committee with examples of successful rental inspection programs implemented in other areas.

Netri Davon spoke in support of the proposed ordinance, stating that she currently resides in Gilpin Court and does not feel safe in her home. Ms. Davon shared additional details with the committee about her living conditions and the surrounding environment.

Warren Campbell, New Virginia Majority Community Organizer, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Mr. Campbell stated the challenges regarding filing a tenants assertion.

Dream Boyd, member of Virginia Organizing, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Boyd highlighted that Virginia Organizing and other community led organizations have been fighting to establish a rental inspection program.

Peighton Young, a member of the advisory committee for the Cultural Heritage Stewardship Plan, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Young shared her personal experiences of living in unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions with the committee.

Sylvia Davis spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Davis shared the current conditions of her living environment with the committee. Ms. Davis stated her concerns with maintenance requests not being addressed. Ms. Davis provided the committee with images of her current living environment.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Andrew Breton requested more information about using emergency response calls as a criterion for the rental inspection program. Mr. Breton emphasized the criteria for the rental inspection program should only include properties that are in violation.

Director Vonck stated that the Department of Planning and Development Review (PDR) has access to emergency response call data and is analyzing it to determine its relationship to property maintenance issues. Mr. Vonck explained that including emergency response calls as a criterion in the proposed ordinance, is intended to provide City Council with additional recommendations. Mr. Vonck also stated that Council can amend the ordinance to exclude emergency calls for service as a criteria for rental inspection. Mr. Vonck provided the committee with additional information regarding emergency call classification for the rental inspection program.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson asked if the proposed ordinance will allow for Council to establish rental inspection districts.

Mr. Vonck stated that the proposed ordinance will not establish rental inspection districts. Mr. Vonck stated that Council would need to amend the proposed ordinance to create rental inspection districts.

Mr. Vonck continued the discussion of the proposed ordinance with the committee.

There were no further comments, and Member Andrew Breton moved to continue ORD. 2025-161, to the September 16, 2025, Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Presentation(s)

Special Use Permit (SUP) Briefing with Planning and Development Review (PDR)

Leo Mantey, Senior Deputy Director of the Department of Planning and Development Review, presented the committee with a SUP briefing regarding the definition, approval process, review of applications, how SUPs are handled annually and neighborhoods that use SUPs.

[CD.2025.243](#) July 22, 2025 - Special Use Permit (SUP) Briefing

Attachments: [20250722 Special Use Permit \(SUP\) Briefing Presentation](#)

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

The committee requested clarification regarding its prior motion to continue Ord. No. 2025-161 to the Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Standing Committee meeting on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, and its plans to amend the ordinance.

Bonnie Ashley, Deputy City Attorney, informed the committee of the timeframe required to deliver requested amendments to Ord. No. 2025-161 to Council.

RRHA Annual Accounting, Public Housing, and Homeownership

Steven Nesmith, Chief Executive Officer of Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA), discussed with the committee, the RRHA annual accounting, plans for the future of public housing, programming for homeownership, a proposed relocation plan for the Gilpin Court redevelopment program, and a Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 multifamily income limits summary.

[CD.2025.248](#) July 22, 2025 - RRHA Annual Accounting, Public Housing, and Homeownership

Attachments: [20250722 RRHA Annual Accounting, Public Housing, and Homeownership Presentation](#)

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Andrew Breton requested additional information about RRHA's partnership with the Richmond Development Corporation (RDC), as well as the possibility of allowing City Council members and Gilpin Court residents to serve on the RDC board.

CEO Nesmith stated that RRHA cannot receive philanthropic and foundation funding due to the lack of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, so RDC will serve as the recipient of such funding. Mr. Nesmith also noted that allowing City Council members to sit on the RDC board could potentially create conflicts of interest. Additionally, Mr. Nesmith mentioned that the RRHA Board of Commissioners will vote to allow a resident to serve on the RDC board.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch asked whether RRHA maintains a complete list of all landlords citywide who accept Housing Choice Vouchers, and the number of units that are currently at 40% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and below. Ms. Lynch emphasized the undue burden the redevelopment plan could place on residents, especially given the city's ongoing housing crisis.

CEO Nesmith said he will provide Council with the requested data and that RRHA will offer incentives to landlords and residents during the redevelopment. Mr. Nesmith added that a relocation and Section 18 plan will be introduced by August 15th and shared with Council.

Councilor Reva Trammell inquired about the options for residents who choose not to return to Gilpin Court.

CEO Nesmith stated that residents have the right to receive a Tenant Protection Voucher (TPV), which has a different funding stream. Mr. Nesmith stated that those residents can remain in the city or relocate to surrounding counties.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson emphasized the importance of RRHA's presence in the community to provide affordable housing. Ms. Robertson also highlighted that increased transparency from RRHA is essential for building trust with both Council and residents.

CEO Nesmith continued to discuss RRHA's annual accounting, public housing and homeownership with the committee.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

There was no staff report.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.