



City of Richmond

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

Draft Meeting Minutes Governmental Operations Standing Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Committee and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Katherine Jordan - Chair

The Honorable Sarah Abubaker - Vice Chair (early departure)

The Honorable Kenya Gibson - Committee Member

Staff in Attendance

Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk

Susan McKenney, Senior Assistant City Attorney

Kimberly Morris, Assistant City Clerk

William Perkins, Council Senior Legislative Services Manager

Candice Reid, City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Katherine Jordan called the meeting to order at 1:00 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.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes to be approved.

Presentation(s)

Department of Public Works Operations Overview

Torrence Robinson, Deputy Director of Public Works, provided a presentation regarding employee training and engagement.

[CD.2025.284](#) Department of Public Works Operations and Maintenance Program

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker asked what the city is doing to prevent illegal dumping in the city.

Mr. Robinson stated cameras were being installed throughout the city. He also stated that Public Works is collaborating with the Police Department, Code Enforcement, and the Office of Strategic Communications to help curtail illegal dumping and improve awareness of penalties for the act.

Member Kenya Gibson asked for the status of each open audit recommendation.

Mr. Robinson stated the department submitted a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to address graffiti removal referenced in audit number 2023-03. Mr. Robinson stated that he could not address audit number 2023-10, and he also stated audit number 2025-06's recommendation was two-fold. Part one recommended the department recoup costs, and part two recommended that DPW identify outstanding invoices.

Bobby Vincent, Director for the Department of Public Works (DPW), was available to respond to questions.

Chair Jordan asked if there had been any consideration to moving the leaf collection program to earlier in the year, since leaves were falling earlier. She also asked about the progress of the citywide tree program, and if a schedule was available for trees and plantings on medians and in parks.

Mr. Robinson stated the intent was to start the leaf collection program as early as October.

Michael Webb, Urban Forester, stated the tree plan assessment will kick off in November during tree week. He also stated they would be looking at tree canopy assessments for the proper placement of trees.

Office of the City Auditor Annual Report

Riad Ali, City Auditor, provided an annual update of the City Auditor's office.

[CD.2025.276](#) Office of the City Auditor Annual Update

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Member Kenya Gibson asked if the Auditor's office was able to determine how much money the city could be saving in misspent funds through its audits, and how misspending was being addressed.

Auditor Ali stated that recommendations, policies, procedures, and internal controls help to decrease misspent funds, but it was difficult to conclude what the cost savings would be.

Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker asked if the city allocated a specific amount of money to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), and how the funds were spent since allocated. She also asked about vacancies in the Auditor's office.

Auditor Ali stated that there were two AHTF related items on the audit, the spending item will not happen because of lack of spending, and the other item is about putting money aside. He also stated they were trying to identify how much money has been spent since allocated. He added that his office was recruiting for vacancies, and anticipated being fully staffed by November 2025.

Chair Katherine Jordan asked about acquiring staff with specialized public utilities auditing experience.

Auditor Ali stated that candidates with this type of expertise were difficult to recruit but that he would make an effort.

Office of the Inspector General Annual Report

Foster Curtiss, Interim Inspector General, provided an annual update of the Inspector General's office.

[CD.2025.282](#) Office of the Inspector General Annual Update

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker stated that she would like to see the amounts of funds recovered by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) on future annual reports. She also asked why the investigative process was confidential until released to the public.

Interim Inspector General Curtiss stated the office would be able to provide the amount of funds recovered for the city, and that confidentiality before releasing information to the public ensures protection of city investigations and funds.

Member Kenya Gibson asked Mr. Curtiss to elaborate on the importance of the work of the OIG to the city and the process of substantiated investigations.

Interim Inspector General Curtiss stated the combined efforts of the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of the City Auditor were indispensable and an asset for any large city. He also stated investigation reports and recommendations were posted to the city's website.

Chair Katherine Jordan asked if citizens could make anonymous complaints to the OIG via 311. She also asked if peer review formalization was needed.

Interim Inspector General Curtiss stated that reports could be made through the OIG's fraud hot line, or the office's website. He also stated that peer reviews are essential and most organizations conduct them every 3 years through a professional association.

Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD. 2025-209](#) To amend City Code § 2-772, concerning the filing of statements of economic interests, for the purpose of requiring more detailed disclosure forms of boards and commissions with the power to issue bonds or expend funds in excess of \$10,000 in any fiscal year.

Patrons: Ms. Gibson and Ms. Abubaker

Member Kenya Gibson provided an introduction and background information regarding the proposed ordinance. She stated the intent of the paper is to provide more visibility and transparency regarding boards and commission members. Member Gibson also stated she received feedback regarding the proposed legislation from the City Clerk, and requested that those items be considered for inclusion in the ordinance through an amendment.

Chair Katherine Jordan suggested that the proposed ordinance be continued to the next committee meeting to allow an opportunity for Council and legal staff to prepare amendments.

Public Hearing

There was no public hearing held.

There were no further discussions and Member Kenya Gibson moved to continue ORD. 2025-209 to the October 22, 2025 Governmental Operations Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and was unanimously approved.

The following ordinance was considered:

2. [ORD. 2025-210](#) To amend City Code § 2-1351, concerning definitions related to open data and a transparency program, and to amend ch. 2, art. VII, div. 4 of the City Code by adding therein a new section 2-1361, concerning a Freedom of Information Act request library, for the purpose of establishing an online Freedom of Information Act library. (As Amended)

Patrons: Ms. Gibson and Ms. Abubaker
recommended for continuance

Member Kenya Gibson provided an introduction and background information regarding the proposed ordinance. She stated the ordinance would codify the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Library for the purpose of trust building between citizens and the city through transparency.

Public Hearing

Joe Brancoli, member of Electrify RVA, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. He stated he was looking forward to Council and the Mayor's administration working together to make the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Library successful.

Susan Reblow spoke in support of the proposed ordinance and expressed her gratitude for Member Kenya Gibson and Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker co-sponsoring the ordinance.

Quinton Robbins, Chair of Richmond For All, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. He expressed his concerns about the administrative cost to create positions and the mechanism of control over the flow of information.

Emma Clarke spoke in support of the proposed ordinance. She stated the FOIA library would greatly benefit interested citizens by enhancing trust.

Erin Trimmer a member of Richmond For All, spoke in support to the proposed ordinance. She stated the ordinance was a huge step for citizens who could use the FOIA library. She also stated her concerns about the administrative cost to create positions.

Carol Wolf spoke in support to the proposed ordinance. She stated a FOIA library could create transparency and trust between citizens and the city.

Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), provided the committee with additional background information regarding the proposed ordinance. CAO Donald emphasized that key areas to consider regarding the implementation of a FOIA Library are cost, amendments, impacts, and robust public debate.

Ross Catrow, Director of the Office of Strategic Communications, provided the committee with a presentation as city administration's response to Ord. 2025-210.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker asked if Ord.2025-210 included the hiring of additional staff for the FOIA library.

Mr. Catrow stated staffing was not addressed in the proposed ordinance, but that city administration would need to hire three additional staff if Ord. 2025-210 is adopted.

Member Kenya Gibson questioned the redaction process and the need for additional staff to maintain the FOIA library.

CAO Donald stated the additional staff would ensure service delivery is for the good of the public and would protect the city and administration.

Member Gibson stated that in previous meetings, there were discussions about software; however, there was no discussion about the cost to acquire staff. She also asked if the Richmond Police Department (RPD) had staff to respond to records requests.

CAO Donald stated a different team would be working to implement the FOIA library to ensure accuracy and reduce liability to the city and others. He also stated that RPD does have staff that respond to FOIA requests.

Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker requested a breakdown of the estimated 5,500 requests the city receives annually and asked for the number of media and private citizen records requests versus legal records requests.

Mr. Catrow stated media requests were a small percentage compared to legal and private citizen requests, most of which were housed in the police department.

Chair Katherine Jordan also requested a breakdown of all request received annually and asked how requests to Council would be incorporated into the software. She also asked if Council and city administration requests could continue to be handled separately to assure that the work of the Inspector General is not compromised. Chair Jordan expressed her interest in seeing a demonstration of the FOIA library.

Mr. Catrow stated city administration could present a demonstration to members. He also stated he would like to see one repository for all FOIA requests, and there would be an exemption for active investigations and investigator records.

Vice Chair Sarah Abubaker left the meeting 3:05 p.m.

There were no further comments or discussions and Member Kenya Gibson moved to continue ORD. 2025-210 to the October 22, 2025 Governmental Operations Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Gibson and Jordan. Noes, 0.

The following ordinance was considered:

3. [ORD. 2025-211](#) To amend City Code § 2-1352, concerning general requirements of the open data portal, to prohibit charging fees for requesting information required to be posted in the open data portal pursuant to section 2-1360 and to amend ch. 2, art. VII, div. 4 of the City Code by adding therein a new section 2-1360, concerning required datasets, for the purpose of requiring publication of certain datasets in the open data portal. (As Amended)

Patrons: Ms. Gibson and Ms. Abubaker

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Member Kenya Gibson moved to continue ORD. 2025-211 to the October 22, 2025 Governmental Operations Standing Committee meeting, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Gibson and Jordan. Noes 0.

Member Kenya Gibson requested to postpone city administration's response presentation to Ord. 2025-211 until the next Governmental Operations Standing Committee meeting on October 22, 2025.

The following ordinance was considered:

4. [ORD. 2025-223](#) To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$100,000,000.00 from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Wastewater Utility Budget which appropriated the estimated receipts of the wastewater utility, by increasing estimated receipts and the amount appropriated for the wastewater utility by \$100,000,000.00 for the purpose of funding the Canoe Run Park Storage Tank project.

Patrons: Mayor Avula

Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

There were no comments or discussions and Member Kenya Gibson moved to forward ORD. 2025-223 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Gibson and Jordan. Noes, 0.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

Council staff provided the committee with the September Governmental Operations Standing Committee staff report.

[CD.2025.292](#) Government Operations Standing Committee September 24, 2025

Staff Prep Document for Councilmembers

Chair Katherine Jordan requested Council staff's assistance with formalizing a peer review process for the Office of the Inspector General.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:14 p.m.