



# City of Richmond

## Work Session Minutes

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

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Monday, September 28, 2021

3:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

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### **Councilmembers Present**

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President  
The Honorable Ellen Robertson, Vice President  
The Honorable Andreas Addison (early departure)  
The Honorable Michael Jones  
The Honorable Katherine Jordan (electronic participation expired)  
The Honorable Kristen Larson

### **Absent**

The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert  
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch  
The Honorable Reva Trammell

### **Staff Present**

Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff  
Candice Reid, City Clerk  
Tabrica Rentz, Acting Deputy City Attorney  
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the work session to order at 3:12 p.m. and presided.

### **Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan**

Upon the President's request, City Clerk Candice Reid provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency.

### **Electronic Participation**

President Cynthia Newbille announced that, pursuant to Rule III(D)(4)(b) of Council's Rules of Procedure, Councilor Kathrine Jordan requested to participate in the meeting electronically from her home to provide care to her minor child. Pursuant to Rule III(D)(4)(d) of Council's Rules of Procedure, President Cynthia Newbille solicited a motion from members present to allow Councilor Jordan to participate in the meeting by electronic communication means.

**Councilor Andreas Addison moved to allow Councilor Kathrine Jordan to participate in the meeting by electronic communication means, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 5, Addison, Larson, Jones, Robertson, Newbille. Noes None.**

*Councilor Katherine Jordan joined the meeting by electronic communication means via Microsoft Teams at 3:15 p.m.*

## Discussion Items

### Review of the Responses to Questions Requested of Administration

Acting Chief Administrative Officer Lincoln Saunders discussed city administration's responses to questions raised by Council, regarding the Mayor's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending proposal. Mr. Saunders provided additional information regarding city administration's plan to provide premium pay bonuses to first responders, and he also stated that city administration planned to propose a further General Fund Budget amendment to provide similar bonuses to other city employees.

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

Mr. Saunders provided information regarding Council's inquiry about providing homeowners in need of assistance with paying property taxes, with resources from the city's eviction diversion efforts. Mr. Saunders stated that guidelines regarding the Virginia Rent Relief Program, which provides eviction diversion resources, designated that the assistance was only available to provide rental support, and not homeowners' tax relief.

*Councilor Kristen Larson inquired if city administration could determine other methods to use ARPA funds with assisting homeowners impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Councilor Larson also stated her concerns with the impact of rising real estate assessments in the city.*

Mr. Saunders stated that state guidelines severely limited the city's ability to provide mortgage or property tax assistance for homeowners. Mr. Saunders also stated that he would recommend the city look at assisting homeowners through the next General Fund budget.

*Councilor Katherine Jordan stated that she would prefer assisting homeowners in the city prior to providing premium pay bonuses to city employees.*

*Vice President Ellen Robertson stated it was important that Council and city administration work to provide assistance to individuals most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Vice President Robertson also stated that she supported the premium pay bonuses, but would prefer permanent pay raises for employees.*

Mr. Saunders informed Council that he believed the premium pay bonuses were necessary to show appreciation to all city employees, including non-frontline employees.

*Councilor Michael Jones stated his support for the proposed General Fund budget amendment to provide all city employees with a premium pay bonus.*

*Councilor Andreas Addison stated that he believed additional compensation was necessary to show appreciation to city employees. Councilor Addison also stated that employee compensation, new employee recruitment, and increased employee retention should be addressed annually, and not just during review of the ARPA spending proposal.*

*President Cynthia Newbille requested that city administration look to address employee compensation concerns during the next city budget cycle.*

Mr. Saunders provided information regarding city administration's plans for providing dedicated annual funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF).

*Vice President Ellen Robertson stated her preference for city administration to establish a dedicated funding source for the AHTF. Vice President Robertson also stated that housing plan timelines occur over several years, and that the dedicated funding was necessary to allow the AHTF with the ability to efficiently plan.*

*Councilor Andreas Addison left the meeting at 4:20 p.m.*

*Due to the loss of a physical quorum, Councilor Katherine Jordan could no longer participate in the meeting through electronic communication mean via Microsoft Teams. Ms. Jordan's microphone and camera were disabled at 4:20 p.m.*

Chris Frelke, Parks and Recreation Director, provided Council with information regarding proposed ARPA allocated funding for community centers in certain areas of the city. Mr. Frelke informed Council that the reason the proposed community center spending was designated in the Mayor's proposed spending plan under the "Health" section, was because city administration believed that the establishment of community centers would increase the life expectancy and quality of health in certain areas of the city. Mr. Frelke stated that the community centers would provide more than just recreation activities, and that the facilities would help provide much needed services in an equitable way.

*Councilor Michael Jones stated his appreciation for Mr. Frelke's comments, and he also stated that that the establishment of community centers would help provide an environment for much needed recreation and community services for citizens.*

*Councilor Kristen Larson stated her concerns that the ARPA spending proposal did not provide funding to improve current community centers or address staffing shortages at the existing centers.*

Mr. Frelke stated that it was the goal of city administration to focus future Capital Improvement Project funds to improve current facilities, as the Southside, TB Smith, Church Hill, and Calhoun Community Centers would be removed from the Capital Improvement Project list of projects in need of funds.

*President Cynthia Newbille stated that it would be necessary for Council to meet for an additional work session on October 4, 2021, to provide the opportunity for more discussion between Council and city administration regarding the ARPA spending proposal.*

Lincoln Saunders, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, stated that city administration planned to address flash flooding in the city with the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating budget through the Department of Public Works.

*Councilor Michael Jones stated that certain areas of the city may receive more ARPA funds than others, but he believed the projects would benefit the city as a whole and increase equity in the city. Councilor Jones also stated that other areas of the city would see additional improvements as additional funds become available in the city's Capital Improvement Project budget.*

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the work session adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

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CITY CLERK