



City of Richmond Meeting Minutes

Public Safety Standing Committee

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

12:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Reva Trammell – Chair (*late arrival*)
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert – Vice Chair
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Member
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Council Member (*late arrival*)
Lisa Braxton, Council Management Analyst
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
Richard Hill, Senior Assistant City Attorney
Jamie Isley, Assistant City Clerk
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Steven Taylor, Council Policy Analyst
Dominique J. Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., and presided.

Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Jamie Isley, 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 meeting would be held through electronic communication means. Assistant City Clerk Isley stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on March 17, 2021, and through Legistar on the city website in accordance with usual practice. She also stated members of the public were encouraged to provide comments in writing prior to the meeting and all comments received prior to 10:00 a.m., on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, were provided to committee members. Ms. Isley indicated that members of the public who signed up to speak and provide comment would be called to speak at the appropriate time.

Councilor Katherine Jordan joined the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Assistant City Clerk Jamie Isley provided the citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment Period

Lissa Searfoss informed the committee of the need for a new crosswalk on Hamilton Street and a repainted crosswalk on Cary and Thompson Streets. She further informed the committee of severe injuries she suffered years ago from being hit by a vehicle turning left at the aforementioned intersection.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert connected Ms. Searfoss with Councilor Andreas Addison, Police Chief Gerald Smith and Lynne Lancaster, Department of Public Works deputy director of parking and mobility, to assist with her complaint.

Vice Chair Lambert held a moment of silence for the lives lost, to include police officer Eric Talley, during the active shooter incident at the Boulder King Soopers Grocery Store located in Boulder, Colorado.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of Tuesday, January 26, 2021, and Tuesday, February 23, 2021, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

There were no board vacancies for review.

Presentations

Richmond LifeSaver Membership Program

Chip Decker, Chief Executive Officer, Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA) presented detailed information regarding the RAA LifeSaver Membership Program. He stated that the RAA LifeSaver Membership Program is restricted to city residents and operates from January 1st to December 31st of each year, with a thirty-day waiting period following application submission. Mr. Decker explained the nuances regarding insurance types and the amount of coverage the RAA LifeSaver Program provides for transport fees. He further explained that Medicaid patients need not apply to the RAA LifeSaver Membership Program, and that the program does not cover non-emergency transports. Mr. Decker informed the committee that the target market for the program is residents who use RAA services several times a year for emergency transport and individuals who are uninsured.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell entered the meeting at 12:11 p.m.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert requested a .jpeg image with information about the RAA LifeSaver Membership Program to distribute to Council and the public through various social media platforms.

Chairwoman Trammell requested information regarding the number of citizens enrolled in the RAA LifeSaver Membership Program by district, to be distributed to the full Council.

A copy of the information provided has been filed.

Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety Update

Police Chief Gerald Smith, Reggie Gordon, Human Services deputy chief administrative officer, and Maggie Anderson, Office of the Mayor interim chief of staff, provided the committee with an overview and update of the recommendations from the mayor's Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety and city administration's progress with the implementation of recommendations.

Police Chief Smith stated that the Richmond Police Department (RPD) has founded the Office of Professional Accountability, designed business cards for all officers, and utilized an external advisory group to advise the RPD on webpage needs and use of force policies. He further stated that the RPD will hire a new public information officer, launch a new community training academy and incorporate new state legislation regarding police officers' duty to intervene during instances of malfeasance, including use of excessive force.

Member Ellen Robertson asked for an update regarding recommendations made by the community and healing engagement subgroup of the Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety.

Police Chief Smith mentioned a grant opportunity available to fund a position which would work with the RPD and Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) to assist the residents of RRHA with issues that directly impact the community.

Ms. Anderson stated that the recommendations from the community and healing engagement subgroup were: to create an Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety, develop and implement community conferencing in schools and communities, resilience training and community engagement and healing events. She further stated that currently, the Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety is under review and that the Community Safety Coordinator position has been proposed for hire within the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget, to prepare for the work the office would potentially undertake. Ms. Anderson informed the committee that city administration has reached out to Richmond Public Schools to discuss community conferencing. She further informed the committee that Virginia House Delegate Reverend Delores McQuinn, held the first of many community and healing engagement events.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert asked for clarification regarding the proposed Community Safety Coordinator position and associated salary, and she also inquired about the Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety.

Mr. Gordon explained that the Community Safety Coordinator would work to analyze current community conditions through the lens of restorative justice and community safety. He stated that if the information gathered shows a need for an Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety, then city administration will work towards that end. He further stated that the proposed position would need to be funded annually. Mr. Gordon informed the committee of city administration's collaboration with the Richmond Department of Social Services to provide suggestions at the end of April regarding 24/7 services to assist first responders. Mr. Gordon voiced plans to work with community connectors to fully understand the community's needs. He further voiced plans for the Office of Children and Families to work with existing community programs to ensure the effective use of funds.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell expressed appreciation for the RPD and the department's accomplishments. She also requested clarification regarding resident's issues obtaining incident reports and requested that the full Council receive a copy of the Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety presentation.

Police Chief Smith stated that the incident report number should be listed on the responding officer's business card and if a response is not received, persons should use the precinct number provided to alert the chain of command.

Councilor Katherine Jordan expressed appreciation for the RPD and reiterated Chair Trammell's request for the information to be shared with the full Council.

A copy of the information provided has been filed.

Richmond Coalition of Police (R.C.O.P.) and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local #995

William J. Pantele, Esq., Representative, R.C.O.P., Brendan Leavy, President, R.C.O.P., and Keith Andes, President, IAFF Local #955, presented information regarding the retention of personnel within the Richmond Police Department (RPD) and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

Mr. Pantele highlighted the discrepancies between career opportunities communicated to incoming officers and the reality of the opportunities for advancement and salary increases under the current pay plan.

Mr. Leavy provided an overview of a survey distributed to RPD officers within R.C.O.P., which revealed the potential for higher turnover, and low morale regarding salary and feeling unsupported by city

leadership. Mr. Leavy emphasized the financial strain RPD officers are experiencing as the lowest paid officers in the region.

Mr. Andes reviewed the Department of Fire and Emergency Services turnover rates, staffing issues and overtime costs that could be attributed to insufficient funding.

Captain Steven "J.R." Hall, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, presented a proposed twenty year solution to the purported public safety pay plan issues. Captain Hall used range recommendations from the Gallagher Compensation Survey, which would provide equity in compensation for public safety employees and promote retention. Captain Hall informed the committee that multiple freezes and inequities in the current pay plan and career development plan, have resulted in experienced officers leaving for higher paying positions in surrounding jurisdictions.

Councilor Katherine Jordan asked if the Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety ever considered public safety officer compensation as an issue to examine further. She also asked for additional information regarding the discrepancy between the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget and the requested public safety officer structure.

Acting Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Lincoln Saunders informed the committee that the city does not have the necessary recurring revenues to fund the increase adjustments in compensation as presented by Captain Hall. Acting CAO Saunders stated city administration's support for the Gallagher Compensation Survey recommendations and increasing compensation for city employees when the appropriate funding is available or identified.

Captain Hall clarified that the \$8,200,000 estimated cost of the proposed pay plan would require an additional \$5,700,000 to implement and is inclusive of the \$3,200,000 allocated to public safety in FY 21. Captain Hall stated that investing in the proposed pay plan is a more efficient use of funds because steps in the proposed plan are more inexpensive than the current pay plan.

Member Ellen Robertson informed the committee that discussions regarding public safety officer compensation were likely assigned to subcommittees of the Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety.

Mr. Pantele stated that compensation may have been discussed in the use of force subgroup, and that there was discussion regarding calls for service and potential reorganization of call type assignments.

Member Robertson stated that the committee may struggle to resolve the compensation issue without the appointment of a task force or creation of a subcommittee to further investigate the matter. Member Robertson emphasized the conditions surrounding the civil unrest in the summer of 2020, and further stated that adequately staffed public safety entities will be needed going forward. Member Robertson asked the committee to consider whether the city should continue to fund the step program or consider plans to make the current pay plan workable over the next two years.

Mr. Andes provided clarification regarding how to read the proposed pay plan and the funding allocation requested.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell expressed frustration with the Richmond Police Department's retention numbers, and noted the urgency of the matter.

Police Chief Gerald Smith thanked city leadership for its support and agreed with Member Ellen Robertson regarding the task force to further investigate solutions to the public safety officer compensation issue.

Chairwoman Trammell stated that the discussion of public safety officer compensation will continue at the next Public Safety Standing Committee meeting.

Fire Chief Melvin Carter agreed that the pay plan is broken, and stated that RPD and the Richmond Fire Department (RFD) are in agreement with R.C.O.P. and the IAFF Local #995. Fire Chief Carter

endorsed the establishment of a task force to resolve the issue of the public safety pay plan and emphasized the importance of commitment to the pay plan going forward to ensure its success.

Member Robertson expressed willingness to meet with city administration, Police Chief Smith, Fire Chief Carter, Mr. Andes and Mr. Pantele, to ensure the proper steps are taken to resolve the pay plan issues. Member Robertson suggested creating a task force to move forward with investigating the matter further.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Paper for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

ORD. 2021-082

To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Procurement Services, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute the fourth Contract Modification to Contract No. 16000022041 between the City and Manchester Marketing, Inc. T/A Seibert's Towing for towing-related services and tow lot operation for the purpose of documenting the exercise of the first renewal option of Contract No. 16000022041 and specifying rate increases for certain rates listed in Contract No. 16000022041.

Patrons: Mayor Stoney

Lynne Lancaster, Department of Public Works deputy director of parking and mobility, introduced ORD. 2021-082.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert mentioned emails received from residents upset about Seibert's Towing's business practices regarding street cleaning.

Ms. Lancaster informed the committee that the Department of Public Works (DPW) posts street cleaning signage 48 hours ahead of time, and that after street cleaning is completed the signs are removed.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell suggested DPW leave the street cleaning signs up for a period of time following the completion of street cleaning so that individuals are aware of why their car has been towed.

Ms. Lancaster advised that she would follow-up regarding street cleaning signage and stated that once street signs are removed, individuals are allowed to park.

Member Ellen Robertson moved to forward ORD. 2021-082 to the April 12, 2021, Council meeting with recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Discussion Item

Speed Enforcement

Police Chief Gerald Smith presented information from a traffic analysis covering a three-year period in the city. Chief Smith also discussed data regarding traffic stops, summons issued and fatalities from 2019-2020. Chief Smith informed the committee of plans to work with the Department of Public Works to implement measures to reduce traffic incidents.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell asked Police Chief Smith to provide the number of RPD officers certified to operate police radar detectors.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert requested additional information regarding the use of red light cameras in the city, and suggested Council consider the topic as a 2022 Council legislative priority.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell on behalf of 9th Voter District Council representative Michael Jones,

inquired about the addition of speed trailers on the Southside of Richmond.

Member Ellen Robertson stated that speeding appears to be a nation-wide issue and asked whether national initiatives might be helpful within Richmond.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Staff Report

Steve Taylor, Council policy analyst, provided the committee with the March staff report.

Mr. Taylor informed the committee that a special meeting may need to occur to discuss the public safety pay plan further in committee.

Member Ellen Robertson discussed how Council and city administration could move forward with the creation of the task force.

A copy of the report provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:49 p.m.

DRAFT