



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
[www.rva.gov/office-city-clerk](http://www.rva.gov/office-city-clerk)

## DRAFT Meeting Minutes Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee

---

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

---

### Committee Members and Other Council Members in Attendance

The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Chair  
The Honorable Nicole Jones – Vice Chair  
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Member (late arrival via Microsoft Teams)  
The Honorable Kenya Gibson – Council Member (early departure)

### Staff in Attendance

Tori Cotman, Assistant City Attorney  
Maria Garnett, Council Policy Analyst  
Kiley Kesecker, Deputy City Clerk  
Nahdiyah Muhammad, Assistant City Clerk  
Candice Reid, City Clerk

### Call to Order

Chair Ellen Robertson called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m., and presided.

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

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

### Electronic Participation

Pursuant to Rule III(D)(4)(b) of Council's Rules of Procedure, Committee Member Stephanie Lynch made a request to participate in this meeting via Microsoft Teams from Richmond International Airport, located at 1 Richard E. Byrd Terminal Drive, Richmond, VA 23250, due to work travel. The committee members present were required to adopt a motion to approve Member Lynch's participation in the meeting by electronic communication means if it appeared to the committee that her request complied with Rule III(D) of Council's Rules of Procedure. A motion was solicited from those members physically assembled to approve Member Stephanie Lynch's participation in the meeting by electronic communication means.

Chair Ellen Robertson moved to allow Member Stephanie Lynch to participate in the meeting by electronic communication means. The motion was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jones. Noes None. Councilor Stephanie Lynch had not yet joined the meeting.

### Public Comment Period

There were no public comment speakers.

### Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of November 19, 2025 and January 21, 2026 and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2026.053](#) November 19, 2025 - Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

[CD.2026.050](#) January 21, 2026 - Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

### Paper(s) for Consideration

The following ordinance was considered:

1. [ORD. 2026-045](#) To repeal City Code § 12-46, concerning the disposition of revenues derived from the expiration of partial exemptions from real estate taxation and from certain sales of tax delinquent properties, and to amend ch. 12, art. II, of the City Code by adding therein a new section 12-48, concerning disposition of certain real estate tax revenue, for the purpose of providing for the disposition and evaluation of certain revenues for affordable housing initiatives.

**Patrons:** Ms. Robertson, Mayor Avula, Ms. Lynch, Ms. Trammell, Mr. Breton, Ms. Jones, President Newbille and Vice President Jordan

### Public Hearing

Derek Starr Redwine, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church and Co-President of Richmonders Involved to Strengthen Our Communities (RISC), expressed support for the ordinance and its dedicated funding to address Richmond's housing crisis. He urged compliance with the 30 percent requirement for households at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income and prioritization of surplus funds over bond revenue, and requested that the ordinance be forwarded with a favorable recommendation.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones thanked her colleagues for setting aside differences to support the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, noting that the effort reflects the Council's ability to work collaboratively and effectively.

Councilor Kenya Gibson inquired about the likelihood that borrowed funds would be used to support the ordinance in the upcoming budget. She also asked whether the previously cited \$22 million figure remains an accurate estimate of the projected surplus. Additionally, she requested any further insight that could be provided regarding the anticipated audit results prior to their release.

Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), stated that the decision to potentially use debt to fund this initiative was made prior to his tenure, and those resources are available. While debt is not typically used for operations, it may be appropriate over the next two years, alongside other dedicated funding sources, to align with budget realities. He noted that the previously cited \$22 million surplus is an estimate, as the audit is not yet complete, and the final amount may be lower than expected.

**There were no further comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-045 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.**

**The following ordinance was considered:**

2. [ORD. 2026-041](#) To amend Ord. No. 2025-057, adopted May 12, 2025, which adopted the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 General Fund Budget and made appropriations thereto, by (i) transferring \$14,700,000.00 from the Contingency Reserve; (ii) creating a new line item in the Outside Agencies and Central Appropriations agency entitled "EDA - Diamond District;" and (iii) appropriating such transferred funds to such new line item in the Outside Agencies and Central Appropriations agency, all for the purpose of providing funding to the Economic Development Authority of the City of Richmond for the redevelopment of the area known as the Diamond District.

**Patrons:** Mayor Avula

Sharon Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Planning and Economic Development, provided a presentation regarding the proposed ordinance, stating the Economic Development Authority (EDA) is implementing Phase I under a development agreement with Diamond District Partners. She stated the EDA sold Phase 1A in 2024, construction is underway, and the Authority must now acquire 6.6 acres from VCU for \$25 million to complete critical public infrastructure and support the new Sports Backers facilities.

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

## Public Hearing

There were no public hearing speakers.

### **Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward ORD. 2026-041 to Council with the recommendation to approve.**

Councilor Kenya Gibson inquired about the proposed use of contingency reserves, asking what the original intent was for the \$14 million and whether it had always been anticipated that contingency funds would be used for this development. She noted that city code outlines the permissible uses of contingency funds, and this does not meet the legal definition of a catastrophic circumstance.

DCAO Ebert stated that the use of funds was not identified in 2023 or 2024. She explained that the EDA was informed that the funding was available and would be made accessible.

CAO Donald stated that the project aligns with the public good and prior economic development commitments, and no funding source was identified when the original decisions were made in 2023. Using the contingency funds is now the most appropriate option to fulfill those commitments and avoid negative impacts. He added that this approach, structured as an interest-bearing loan, supports fiscal operations and may positively influence how rating agencies evaluate the city.

Michael Nguyen, Deputy Director of Finance, explained that the EDA cannot borrow independently and that the current \$14 million need is too small to access the debt market efficiently. He stated the city's use of contingency reserves is secured by a promissory note from the EDA backed by the land sale, effectively maintaining the reserve balance.

DCAO Ebert stated that Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) required a finalized lease for its use of the CarMax Park Stadium and an operating agreement with the Navigators, before proceeding with the purchase and sale agreement for the Sports Backers parcel. She also stated that since the Navigators chose not to move forward, the city was unable to borrow the necessary funds at that time. As a result, the funds had to be held until the agreements could be executed.

Ms. Gibson inquired about the balance of the contingency reserve fund as of June 30, 2025.

Letitia Shelton, Director of Finance, stated that the current balance of the contingency reserve fund is \$29 million, with an unaudited balance of \$34 million.

**The motion was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.**

### **The following resolutions were considered:**

3. [RES. 2026-R011](#) To provide for the issuance of general obligation public improvement refunding bonds of the City of Richmond, Virginia, in the maximum principal amount of \$42,085,000 to refund all or portions of certain general obligation bonds previously issued by the City, and to authorize

the Director of Finance, with the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City, to sell such refunding bonds for such purpose, to provide for the form, details and payment of such bonds, and to authorize the issuance of such bonds as either federally tax-exempt or federally taxable bonds, or both.

**Patrons:** Mayor Avula

4. [RES. 2026-R012](#)

To provide for the issuance of public utility revenue refunding bonds of the City of Richmond, Virginia, in the maximum principal amount of \$294,280,000 to refund all or portions of certain public utility revenue bonds previously issued by the City, to authorize the Director of Finance, with the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City, to sell such refunding bonds for such purposes, providing for the form, details and payment of such bonds and approving the form of supplemental indenture of trust, and to authorize the issuance of such bonds as either federally tax-exempt or federally taxable bonds, or both.

**Patrons:** Mayor Avula

David Rose, Co-Director of Davenport & Company, provided a presentation on the city's credit rating status, key debt policies, general fund capital funding approach and the bond funding process, and stated that Richmond's strong financial policies and high credit ratings reduce borrowing costs and support the city's capital programs. He also stated that the city plans to borrow \$250 million this spring as part of a multi-year capital plan, drawing funds strategically to minimize budget impact. Mr. Rose added that these policies reflect prudent financial management.

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

### **Public Hearing**

There were no public hearing speakers.

Councilor Kenya Gibson asked about the following:

- Difference in borrowing costs between AAA and lower ratings
- Savings from maintaining AAA versus a lower rating
- Likelihood of keeping AAA with Fitch
- Potential to improve Moody's rating

Mr. Rose stated that the city's financial policies are conservative compared to national standards and peer Virginia localities, with a 10-year payout ratio above 70% reflecting a strong position. He noted that a full AAA rating slightly lowers borrowing costs, while lower ratings could significantly increase interest expenses. Maintaining balanced budgets, growing the fund balance, and supporting economic development and affordable housing helps maximize the city's chances of keeping its AAA rating.

Chair Ellen Robertson asked about the impact poverty has on the city's bond ratings.

Mr. Rose stated that meeting community needs requires comprehensive social services and strong economic development that creates stable jobs, particularly for historically underserved residents. He also emphasized continued investment in affordable housing and prudent fiscal decision-making.

**There were further no comments or discussions and Vice Chair Nicole Jones moved to forward RES. 2026-R011 and RES. 2026-R012 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Jones, Robertson. Noes None.**

## Presentation(s)

### Department of Finance RVA Pay Updates and Process Improvements

Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer, presented an update on the Department of Finance RVA Pay updates and process improvements. CAO Donald provided an overview of the Department of Finance, including FY 26 fiscal challenges, operations stability, leadership and staffing constraints, RVA Pay system, real estate tax collections, and early returns.

[CD.2026.051](#) RVA Pay Updates and Process Improvements

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

*Member Stephanie Lynch joined the meeting at 3:38 p.m.*

Chair Ellen Robertson stated that Council staff would submit additional questions to city administration.

Vice Chair Nicole Jones asked about updates regarding Purchase Cards (P-Cards), and cross departmental efficiency with tax collection and businesses.

CAO Donald stated that the administration has submitted follow-up materials to the City Auditor and is addressing issues in the P-Card program by reducing cardholders, strengthening controls, and implementing a phased approach. He also noted efforts to improve the business license process by coordinating across departments to share best practices and encourage compliance through supportive strategies.

*Councilor Kenya Gibson departed the meeting at 4:01 p.m.*

Chair Ellen Robertson requested that Council staff provide questions to city administration before committee meetings to ensure that city administration is adequately prepared to provide responses.

### **Board Vacancies**

There were no board vacancies.

### **Discussion Item(s)**

There were no discussion items.

### **Staff Report**

Council staff provided the committee with the February Finance and Economic Development staff report.

[CD.2026.054](#) February 18, 2026 - Finance and Economic Development Staff Report

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

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.