



City of Richmond

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

Minutes

Education and Human Services Standing Committee

Thursday, July 8, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch – Chair (early departure)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Vice Chair (late arrival)
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Committee Member
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert – Councilmember (early departure)

Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
M. Janet Palmer, Deputy City Attorney
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Dominique J. Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Stephanie Lynch called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m., and presided.

Electronic Meeting Announcement

Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, as most recently amended by Ordinance No. 2021-181, adopted June 28, 2021, announced the meeting would be held through electronic communication means. Assistant City Clerk Thaxton stated notice of the meeting was provided to the public through a revised public information advisory issued on June 29, 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 Thursday, July 8, 2021, were provided to committee members. Ms. Thaxton indicated that members of the public who signed up to speak and provide comment would be called to speak at the appropriate time.

Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton provided citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment

There were no public comment speakers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the minutes of the Thursday, June 10, 2021

and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Board Vacancies

There were no board applications for consideration.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Chair Stephanie Lynch advised that the Education and Human Services Standing Committee will hold special joint task force meetings along with other City Council standing committees to address affordable housing and homelessness in the city. Chair Lynch emphasized the importance of developing solutions for affordable housing and homelessness prior to the end of the eviction moratorium, projected to expire at the end of September 2021.

Discussion Items

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) Update

Desi Wynter, RRHA Deputy Chief Real Estate Officer and Ben Titter, RRHA General Counsel provided the committee with an overview of transition plans for current residents of Gilpin Court and Creighton Court during the various phases of redevelopment. Mr. Wynter outlined the various housing options and community collaboration methods offered to the residents who stand to be displaced during construction.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson joined the meeting at 2:09 p.m.

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson requested further information on the wraparound services being provided to RRHA residents.

Mr. Wynter expanded on the wraparound services and personalized resources available to residents.

Member Katherine Jordan requested an update on how RRHA plans to address evictions and past due rental balances in the coming months.

Mr. Titter provided information on RRHA's plans for resuming lease enforcement actions due to nonpayment. Mr. Titter shared that RRHA is assisting with connecting residents with rental assistance funds to pay down past due balances.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert requested an update on the RRHA youth summer employment program.

Mr. Wynter stated that he will have the appropriate RRHA staff provide councilmembers with a report on the progress of the RRHA youth summer employment program.

Vice Chair Robertson requested clarification on the source of the RRHA rental assistance funds and if RRHA is expecting to receive additional funds for rental assistance. Vice Chair Robertson also inquired if there is direct rental relief funding received by RRHA, as the authority provides management oversight of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) owned properties.

Ben Titter, RRHA General Counsel, shared that the rental assistance funds comes from a variety of sources and provided further information on how residents are assisted with applying for rental assistance funds.

Vice Chair Robertson inquired about current initiatives in place to address crime in RRHA housing communities.

Mr. Titter provided an overview of the current crime reduction strategies in place and efforts made to foster partnership between RRHA and the Richmond Police Department.

Chair Stephanie Lynch emphasized the importance of leveraging potential funding sources and a network of services that can be accessed to support crime intervention and affordable housing. Chair Lynch asked if all residents that are being displaced by the redevelopment of Gilpin Court and Creighton Court will be guaranteed the ability to utilize the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Chair Lynch also inquired if residents who take advantage of the Housing Choice Voucher Program are assisted with finding housing placement.

Desi Wynter, RRHA Deputy Chief Real Estate Officer, shared that all residents are guaranteed the ability to utilize the Housing Choice Voucher Program if they choose to take advantage of this housing preference option. Mr. Wynter stated that residents are offered assistance with housing placement in coordination with other wraparound services offered by RRHA.

Chair Stephanie Lynch left the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Member Katherine Jordan inquired if RRHA has adequate staffing resources to assist residents with wraparound service needs and asked if the funds used for consultants to provide resource connections to residents, could be better utilized by hiring RRHA staff to facilitate the service needs. Member Jordan also asked for an update on the Calhoun Center reopening.

Mr. Titter shared that RRHA staffing is adequate to assist with connecting residents to necessary resources. Mr. Titter provided information on the status of the Calhoun Center and the various capital maintenance concerns that would need to be addressed in order to safely open the facility. Mr. Titter also provided details on the current recreational programs being offered to residents in lieu of the Calhoun Center pool.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert inquired about the food resource services being provided to the residents of Gilpin court. Councilor Lambert also asked why RRHA is not utilizing the services of the local food bank Feed More.

Mr. Titter provided information on food distribution resource services and stated that RRHA is committed to partnerships with local food distribution organizations. Mr. Titter shared that he will coordinate with the appropriate RRHA staff to provide councilmembers with information on the cessation of the relationship between Feed More and RRHA.

Vice Chair Robertson requested a quarterly service report from RRHA to ensure effective collaboration between the city and RRHA in providing services to residents. Vice Chair Robertson asked that detailed information regarding the funding sources and stakeholder information for resident services be included in the reports.

Member Jordan concurred and shared that a monthly report from RRHA on eviction related services would be appropriate leading up to the end of the eviction moratorium.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert left the meeting at 2:53 p.m.

Paper for Consideration

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2021-R039

To declare racism as a public health crisis in the city of Richmond.

Patrons: Vice President Robertson, Mr. Jones, Mr. Addison, Ms. Jordan and Ms. Lynch

Vice Chair Ellen Robertson provided an overview of RES. 2021-R039.

There were no comments or discussions and Member Katherine Jordan moved to forward RES. 2021-R039 to Council with the recommendation to approve, which was seconded and approved: Ayes 2, Robertson, Jordan. Noes None. Lynch had left the meeting.

Staff Report

Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff, provided the committee with the July report.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.