



City of Richmond

Special Meeting Minutes

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
www.richmondgov.com/cityclerk

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

6:00 PM

Richmond Police Training Academy, Room 103,
1202 W. Graham Road, Richmond, VA 23220

Councilmembers Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Chris Hilbert, Vice President (late arrival)
The Honorable Andreas Addison
The Honorable Parker Agelasto (late arrival)
The Honorable Kim Gray
The Honorable Michael Jones
The Honorable Kristen Larson (late arrival)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson (late arrival)
The Honorable Reva Trammell

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m., and presided.

Vice President Hilbert arrived at 6:06 p.m.

Councilor Parker Agelasto arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Councilor Kristen Larson arrived at 6:07 p.m.

CITIZEN SPEAKER GUIDELINES

Upon the President's request, Deputy City Clerk RJ Warren provided the citizen speaker guidelines.

Councilor Ellen Robertson arrived at 6:11 p.m.

PAPER FOR CONSIDERATION

The following resolution was considered:

RES. 2019-R045

To order the submission to the qualified voters of the City of Richmond of Ord. No. 2019-212, concerning the creation of a Navy Hill Fund for the purpose of setting aside, to the extent permitted by law, and accounting separately for certain City tax revenues and other City revenues to pay for debt service on bonds issued by the Economic Development Authority to finance the construction of a new arena in downtown Richmond, for an advisory referendum thereon.

Selena Cuffee-Glenn, chief administrative officer, and Lincoln Saunders, Office of the Mayor, chief of staff, addressed Council regarding the Navy Hill Development (NHD) proposal, and offered to answer questions Council may have.

Opposition

Edward Lacy spoke against the NHD proposal, and stated more independent studies were necessary.

Michael Williams spoke against the NHD proposal, and said the project wasn't fully vetted.

Jamal Clark spoke against the NHD proposal, and stated the project would not help the underprivileged or underserved.

Ken Cossaboon spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, stating the full review process was incomplete.

Jack Berry, Richmond Region Tourism, president and chief executive officer, spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045. He asked that Council work through the vetting process without a referendum, stating that a referendum would jeopardize future development projects in the city.

Ann Marie Grohs, Boho Studios, owner, spoke against RES. 2019-R045, and in favor of the proposed development, because she said it would help downtown grow and thrive.

Michael Hallmark spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated the NHD would benefit Richmond City schools.

Monroe Harris, Jr., D.M.D., spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045. Dr. Harris said the NHD would create jobs for the city.

Thomas Bowman, Laborers' International Union of North America, spoke against the proposed referendum, and stated the NHD would create jobs for city residents.

Allen Keys spoke against the proposed referendum, and stated it would prevent people from acquiring jobs involved in the construction of the NHD.

Michael Grabow spoke in opposition to the proposed referendum, and stated the complexity of the NHD proposal and language used in RES. 2019-R045 would confuse voters.

Trisha Dunlap spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045. She stated citizens can engage in the vetting process through public hearings and working with Council, rather than relying on a referendum.

John Mateer spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045. He stated a referendum was the wrong approach and that Council could handle review of the NHD proposal.

Will Ritter spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated a referendum would take away from the full review process.

Charles Willis spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, stating that the NHD would decrease crime.

Ben Ragsdale informed Council he had not made a personal decision on the NHD, but spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045. He stated Council and the Navy Hill Advisory Commission should handle review of the NHD proposal.

Lynn McAteer, Better Housing Coalition, vice president of planning and evaluations, spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated the NHD would create more affordable housing. She also stated the NHD proposal was too difficult for citizens to review before voting on a referendum.

Allia L. Carter, executive vice president & chief operating officer for Virginia Union University, spoke against RES. 2019-R045, and stated the Navy Hill Advisory Commission should handle review.

Freddie Robertson III, spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, stating it would slow down the process of approving the NHD proposal.

Sandra Antoine spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated the NHD would increase inclusion and opportunity.

Barbara Brown spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, stating she believed Council should handle the review process.

Charles Skelly spoke against the proposed referendum, and stated Council should handle the review process.

Debbie Lacy spoke against RES. 2019-R045, stating the proposed referendum only addressed the coliseum aspect of the NHD proposal.

Pamela Royal spoke in opposition to the proposed referendum, and stated Council should handle the review of the NHD proposal. She noted additional transit opportunities that the proposed development would provide.

Marilyn Patterson spoke in opposition to the NHD proposal, and stated funds should be directed towards Richmond Public Schools rather than building a new coliseum.

Al Bowers, Black Business Alliance of Virginia, president and chief executive officer, spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated it would serve as a distraction from the review process. He asked that Council handle the review process.

Kenneth Jones spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated Council and the Navy Hill Advisory Commission should handle the review of the NHD proposal.

Harold Parker, Old Dominion Electrical Supply, owner, spoke in support of the NHD proposal, stating it would create for minority owned business participation.

Mike Hopkins spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated winning coalitions are needed to go after opportunities. He stated the NHD would create jobs and tax revenue for Richmond Public Schools.

Glenwood Burley stated he believed the NHD could be an economic engine to a productive city. He also stated he trusted Council to review the proposal.

Warren Holmes spoke against the proposed development, stating he feared the NHD would promote gentrification in the project area.

Michelle Mosby spoke in opposition to RES. 2019-R045, and stated it was unfair to place review responsibilities on citizens. She also stated Council should handle review of the NHD proposal.

President Cynthia Newbille recessed the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

President Newbille reconvened the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Support

Suzanne Keller spoke in support of RES. 2019-R045, and stated it would not prevent Council from completing its review of the NHD proposal. Ms. Keller called attention to a pro-NHD flyer she received when entering the building regarding the proposal.

Councilor Kim Gray stated the referenced flyer was not produced by Council, and inquired from the audience who distributed the document.

Robin Levy spoke in support of RES. 2019-R045, stating she did not believe the city's population could support the largest arena within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

John Moser spoke in support of RES. 2019-R045, and stated he wanted a chance to vote on the proposed development. He also stated citizens could handle voting on the proposed referendum.

Rhonda Hening Davis, Alliance for a Progressive Virginia, president, stated she was in favor of RES. 2019-R045, and that citizens should be given a voice on potential projects.

Steve Wilburn stated he was in favor of RES. 2019-R045. He also stated he supported parts of the NHD, but feared increased home assessments.

Kristin Reed stated she trusted citizens to vote on the proposed referendum and expressed her support for RES. 2019-R045.

Omari Al-Qadafi, Legal Aid Justice Center, Housing Unit, expressed concern that the NHD would exasperate a housing crisis within the city. He added the proposal did not truly address affordable housing.

Turks Sties spoke in support of RES. 2019-R045. He stated Council had the right to allow citizens to be involved in the review process.

Ashley Smith spoke in support of RES. 2019-R045, and stated she should have a direct voice on the NHD proposal. She expressed her concern regarding transparency, and stated she worried about money being diverted from the city's general fund.

Jarrold Blackwood spoke in support of RES. 2019-R045, stating he believed citizens should be able to vote on a project that would have a fiscal impact on the city over a 30-year period. He added that similar projects failed in other cities.

Councilor Gray provided remarks regarding RES. 2019-R045. She stated the Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission would hold public meetings to take questions from citizens. She added that the proposed referendum would not cause any harm to the Commission and its work.

Councilwoman Reva Trammell stated a referendum would not prevent Council and the Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission from conducting research and review of the NHD proposal.

Councilor Andreas Addison spoke of the proposed development's complexity, and added that citizens would be able to engage in the review process through public hearings and discussions with Council. He expressed his concerns with the language used within RES. 2019-R045.

Councilor Parker Agelasto inquired from city administration if the NHD proposed ordinances and resolution were subject to change.

Selena Cuffee-Glenn, chief administrative officer, stated she believed the legislation could be amended by Council, but said she would defer to the Office of the City Attorney.

Tabrica Rentz, Office of the City Attorney, senior assistant city attorney, stated no legislation was finalized, therefore discussions and deliberations on possible changes would be allowed.

Lincoln Saunders, Office of the Mayor, chief of staff, confirmed any changes that would improve the proposed legislation were welcomed.

Councilor Agelasto requested if the Navy Hill District Corporation would agree on possible changes made by either Council or city administration.

Jennifer Mullen, Navy Hill District Corporation, said the corporation was aware of the possibility and welcomed any changes that would make improvements to the proposed development.

Councilor Agelasto stated with the responses from the parties involved, a referendum was perhaps premature.

Councilor Kristen Larson noted she had not decided on the NHD proposal. She said she supported RES. 2019-R045, because it would provide Council with citizen feedback.

Councilor Ellen Robertson expressed her concerns with the language used in RES. 2019-R045. She also expressed her support of the review process of Council and the Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission. Councilor Robertson asked the city clerk to record the number of public hours Council spends reviewing the proposal. In addition, she requested that a schedule be published providing information regarding the review process. Councilor Robertson said she had not decided on the NHD proposal, but would not support RES. 2019-R045.

Councilor Michael Jones expressed his concern with the expedited nature of the proposed referendum, and noted the referendum could be reviewed in committee instead of at a special meeting. He stated he was worried with the language included in RES. 2019-R045.

Vice President Chris Hilbert spoke of a possible upcoming economic recession. He stated he had questions about the NHD, and was currently unlikely to support it. Vice President Hilbert stated he believed review of the NHD proposal was his job as a councilmember, and that he shouldn't push the burden on citizens. He stated he would not support RES. 2019-R045.

President Cynthia Newbille stated Council has the opportunity, responsibility and obligation to fully vet the entire NHD proposal. President Newbille stated this would be done through the Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission and securing an independent consult to aid in review.

There were no further comments or discussions and **RES. 2019-R045 was rejected:** Ayes 3, Larson, Gray, Trammell. Noes, Jones, Robertson, Addison, Hilbert, Newbille. Abstentions 1, Agelasto.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

CITY CLERK