



# Richmond City Council

*The Voice of the People*

*Richmond, Virginia*

## Office of the Council Chief of Staff

### Government Operations Standing Committee

March 26, 2025

### Staff Prep Document for Councilmembers

**Previous Meeting:** February 26, 2025

**Next Meeting:** April 23, 2025

#### Agenda Overview:

##### Presentations:

- Urban Forestry Commission on 6-month status report
- DPU on Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) system update and recent open high-priority audit recommendations
- HR on 2024 Vacancy Report and recent HR Overtime Reports
- Office of Sustainability (OOS) on waste reduction and the circular economy

##### Discussion Items

- Attendance Policies for Boards and Commissions Meetings

##### Ordinances & Resolutions:

1. [None]

## Urban Forestry Commission 6-month Status Report

- Page 14 of the report identifies three main opportunities and recommendations identified through the Commissions' initial work ... please elaborate on each.
  - Attendance Policies
  - District Representation
  - Administrative Support
- Do you have any preliminary recommendations for DPW for updating its Municipal Tree Policy? (Duty #2)
- Do you have any preliminary recommendations for Council on new legislation, plans, policies or programs? (Duty #3)

### ARTICLE XII. - MAINTENANCE AND REMOVAL OF TREES ON CITY-OWNED PROPERTY | Code of Ordinances | Richmond, VA | Municode Library

Sec. 8-544 (a) Established.

- There is hereby created and established an Urban Forestry Commission for the purpose of improving the City's urban forestry resources through policy development, advice, education and fundraising.

Sec. 8-544 (c) Responsibilities and Duties.

- (1) Prepare and submit to Council a report within its first six months of meeting that includes a review of the Commission's mission, scope and duties, appointment procedures, and rules of procedure with the goal of modernizing the commission and ensuring continued future success.**
- (2) Advise the Director of Public Works regarding rules, regulations and policies promulgated under the City's Municipal Tree Policy and any revisions thereof.
- (3) Recommend to the Council any legislation, plans, policies and programs complementary to the intent and purpose of the City's Municipal Tree Policy.
- (4) Facilitate the development and adoption of a tree maintenance and management plan for City-owned trees.
- (5) Assist with public relations and education programs to increase public understanding of urban forestry issues, including programs developed by the Department of Public Works, the Tree Stewards, the Friends of Urban Forestry and civic associations.
- (6) Work with interested private organizations to raise money for projects involving City-owned trees and programs developed by the Department of Public Works.
- (7) Prepare and submit an annual report to the Council and make presentations on an annual basis and as requested by the Council.
- (8) Ensure the continuation of the Commission's purpose by annually providing a list of qualified candidates for expiring terms, if any, for consideration by the Mayor and the Council by May 30 of each year.
- (9) Develop and assist with the adoption of a more comprehensive Municipal Tree Policy and present progress reports on its efforts in this regard to the Council's Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee upon the Committee's request.

## Combined Sewer (CS) System Program Update

### Notes:

- 2020 CSO Law (SB1064) amended the 2005 Special Order by Consent, accelerating project implementation (Interim by July 2027; Final by July 2035).
- Overall goal is to reduce bacteria in James River by 70%.
- Interim Plan costs \$51 million; Final Plan costs \$575 million (Combined \$626 million)
- Slide 15-59 relate to open high-priority Audit recommendations:
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### Questions:

- (Slide 10) Are we on schedule with all the current interim/final plan projects?
- (slide 13) Can you explain how wastewater billing works in Richmond? Your data shows many Richmond residents may not be able to afford these fees ...
- (Slide 14) We didn't get additional money from the state this year through a budget amendment. Where does that leave us with these projects?
- What is our local funding commitment in the current CIP for these projects?
- How are we building in sustainability and resiliency into the Combined Sewer System?
- There are 10 open high-priority recommendations from Audit reports published in October and November of last year related to DPU's warehouse and inventory management systems. **All are listed as "in review by DPU" in your PPT today.** What more can you say about your progress to date to implement them?

## **DPU Open High-Priority Audit Recommendations (12)<sup>1</sup>**

### Audit 2023-02 (August 2022)

1. We recommend that the DPU Director develop and implement processes and procedures to properly administer the hydrant repairs and replacements to ensure that the hydrants are put back into service timely including: a. Establishing a formal goal for hydrant repairs/replacements when utility markings are required; and b. Documenting any encountered delays.

### Audit 2023-09 (February 2023)

2. We recommend the Director of the Department of Public Utilities establish a reconciliation process that includes ensuring bad debt accounts are returned to the City and/or collected accurately and in their entirety.

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<sup>1</sup> Source = Appendix D (p. 8-9); [2025-07 Quarterly Open Audit Recommendations Follow-Up FY25Q2.pdf](#)

Audit 2025-03 (October 2024)

3. We recommend that the DPU Main Warehouse Program and Operations Supervisor develop and implement a process to ensure that the inventory data is accurate and complete, including at a minimum:
  - a. Reconciling the system quantities to physical on-hand quantities,
  - b. Capturing material costs, where appropriate, and
  - c. Updating inventory locations as needed.
4. We recommend that the DPU Main Warehouse Program and Operations Supervisor develop and implement a process to ensure materials and supplies delivered directly to job sites are immediately requisitioned/issued out of the inventory system.
5. We recommend that the DPU Main Warehouse Program and Operations Supervisor develop, document, and implement an inventory count process. At a minimum, this process should ensure an appropriate amount of inventory is counted, assess which inventory items should be counted, and assess the frequency of the counts required.
6. We recommend that the Director of Public Utilities follow through with demolishing Building 20 and ensure precautions are taken for any employees entering the building.

Audit 2025-05 (November 2024)

7. We recommend that the DPU Senior Director establish a process to define, document, and communicate what items should be classified as stock and non-stock items in the WWTP Warehouse. Further, assess the feasibility of centralizing the process of ordering and receiving stock and non-stock items through the WWTP Warehouse. If deemed to be feasible, establish a process to implement centralized ordering and receiving. If deemed not feasible:
  - a. Mandate that all inventory stock items, including those ordered for projects, be ordered through the warehouse, tracked in the inventory system, and managed and monitored by the warehouse staff.
  - b. Establish a process to track all items ordered outside of the established warehouse process that includes tracking receipt and usage and labeling all parts along with their designated location.
8. We recommend that the DPU Senior Deputy Director over the WWTP Warehouse establish a process to ensure all materials are tracked and documented on work orders to include the following:
  - a. The description and quantity of the material used.
  - b. The asset being serviced if not otherwise noted on the work order
9. We recommend that the WWTP Warehouse and Materials Supervisor conduct a full inventory count to establish a baseline for quantities on hand. Once a baseline is established, develop and implement a process to ensure that the inventory data is accurate and complete, including at a minimum:
  - a. Reconciling the system quantities to physical on-hand quantities,
  - b. Capturing costs, where appropriate,
  - c. Updating inventory locations as needed,

- d. Reconciling the quantity of inventory received in and issued from the warehouse to the inventory system to ensure they are accurately keyed, and
  - e. Reviewing the system conversion factors for accuracy.
- 10. We recommend that the WWTP Warehouse and Materials Supervisor develop, document, and implement a formal inventory count process. At a minimum, this process should ensure an appropriate amount of inventory is counted, assess which inventory items should be counted, and assess the frequency of the counts required.
- 11. We recommend the WWTP Warehouse and Materials Supervisor develop and implement a process to:
  - a. establish minimum and maximum levels and re-order points,
  - b. periodically reviewing the inventory data to assess existing minimum and maximum levels and make changes as needed; and
  - c. optimize the level of inventory maintained and document justification for when maximum levels are exceeded.
- 12. We recommend that the DPU Senior Deputy Director over the WWTP Warehouse establish a formalized process to review Mainsaver user access and ensure appropriate access levels are granted based on job duties and responsibilities, including removing any unnecessary access to the warehouse inventory data.

## 2024 Vacancy Report & Recent Overtime Reports (Robin Redmond, Deputy Director)

### Vacancy Report

- 15.5% overall vacancy rate as of 12/31/2024 -- down 0.5% in FY24.
- (Slide 4) Notable vacancy rates:
  - Finance = 28% vacant (51 of 151 funded positions vacant)
  - Parks & Rec = 27% vacant (55 of 218 funded positions vacant)
  - Police non-sworn = 23% vacant (21 of 121 positions vacant)
  - Police-sworn = 20% vacant (144 of 693 funded positions vacant)
  - Public Works/DGS = 16% vacant (66 of 500 funded positions vacant)
- 9.2% overall turnover rate as of 12/31/2024 – down from 11% in FY24.
  - *How is turnover calculated?*
- (Slide 8) Notable turnover rates:
  - Finance = 36.4%
  - Econ. Dev. = 35.8%
  - City Auditor = 35.3%
  - Council Chief of Staff = 33.3%
- *What can you tell us about the departments with high vacancies & turnover?*
- *Describe recruiting efforts to fill persistent vacancies ...*

### Overtime Reports

- The [Richmonder reported](#) paid out over \$26 million in overtime in 2024.
- The [February 2025 overtime report](#) shows 15 police department and 16 fire department employees exceeded the city's 50% threshold for overtime in a month. Why are these two departments seeing so much overtime?
- We've got one fire department employee who has already earned just under \$40,000 in overtime pay this year – across January and February 2025. HOW??
  - This person is working approximately 100 hours per week or 14 hours per day, 7 days a week for two months ... that's too much, right?
- (Slide 12) Causes for excessive overtime:
  - Seasonal occurrences like winter storms, grass-cutting
  - Unusual, unexpected, or occasional events (??)
  - Vacancies ...
- (Slide 13) Department heads are required to report if expecting to exceed 50% threshold for overtime on an annual basis.
  - *What have the police & fire chiefs each said about the causes for their staff's use of overtime?*
- (Slide 14-15) "Calendar Year 2025 started out rough" ...
  - *Why only two DPU employees working a lot of overtime?*
  - *What do you know about the departments that reduced overtime in 2024 and how can we learn from their experiences?*

## Waste Reduction and the Circular Economy

### Notes:

- Virginia Code allows for three sustainability-aligned prohibitions, all apparently coming before the Council before July 2025:
  - Disposable plastic bag tax (5 cents per bag)
  - Polystyrene food service containers
  - Intentional balloon release, age 16+
- Plastic Bag Tax expected to cost residents \$2.12/annually
- Polystyrene Ban – food vendors allowed exemption if “undue economic hardship” – *Unclear how that's defined ...*

### Questions:

- What is the timeline for releasing an ordinance on a disposable plastic bag tax?
- Can you elaborate on your community engagement thus far on these?
- (Slide 7) Can you elaborate on plans to spend bag tax revenue (est. \$391,725/annually)?
- Can you describe our enforcement plans for each of these changes?
  - What is the penalty for businesses that don't comply?
  - Which agency is charged with checking for compliance?

## **Discussion Item: Boards & Commission Attendance**

- Who is tracking meeting attendance across boards and commissions?
- Which boards and commissions are having attendance problems?
- Should the Council exercise its powers (see below) to remove appointees?

### **§ 4.15. - Removal of members of boards and commissions; forfeiture of office or employment for certain convictions.**

- A. Any member of a board or commission appointed by the council for a specified term **may be removed by the council but only for malfeasance in office or neglect of duty**. He/she shall be entitled to notice and hearing. It shall be the duty of the council, at the request of the person sought to be removed, to subpoena witnesses whose testimony would be pertinent to the matter in hand. From the decision of the council an appeal shall lie to the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond, Division I.
- B. Any officer, appointee of the council or employee of the city who shall be convicted by a final judgment of any court from which no appeal has been taken or which has been affirmed by a court of last resort on a charge involving moral turpitude or any felony or any misdemeanor involving possession of marijuana or any controlled substances shall forfeit his/her office or employment.

### **Sec. 2-768. - Removal of members; forfeiture of office.**

- a) If any person appointed to membership upon a board or commission by the Council **misses four consecutive regularly scheduled meetings** of such board or commission or if the board or commission has less than four regularly scheduled meetings within a period of 12 scheduled months and any member of such board or commission fails to attend all such regularly scheduled meetings during a period exceeding 12 months in length, such member of any such board or commission shall be subject to removal from membership on such board or commission, and the Council may remove such member utilizing the procedure provided in [Section 4.14](#) of the Charter or substantially similar procedure. If the information form provided by a member of a board or commission to the Council prior to the individual's appointment is materially false or misleading, that shall also be grounds for removal in the manner provided by law. Unless general law of the Commonwealth, the Charter or other special act of the General Assembly or the ordinance or resolution of the City provides specifically that a person appointed to a board or commission must reside in the City, be a voting citizen of the City, or contain other language of like purport, a person having a principal place of employment within the City may be appointed by the Council to serve on a board or commission.
- b) Any person who is appointed to membership on a board or commission after July 8, 1983, except those subject to [Section 2-926\(a\)](#) and who shall thereafter cease to maintain a permanent residence within the City or who terminates qualifying employment within the City shall thereby forfeit membership on the board or commission of which such person is a member.