



City of Richmond

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

Work Session Minutes

Governmental Operations Standing Committee

Friday, October 1, 2021

9:30 AM

Conference Room, 5th Floor – Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Kristen Larson – Chair
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Vice Chair
The Honorable Michael Jones – Member
The Honorable Ellen Robertson, Council Member
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Kristen Larson called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. and presided.

Evacuation Announcement

Upon the Chair's request, City Clerk Candice Reid provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Fifth Floor Conference Room is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency.

Electronic Participation

Chair Kristen Larson announced that, pursuant to Rule III (D)(4)(b) of Council's Rules of Procedure, Committee Member Michael Jones requested to participate in the meeting via Microsoft Teams from his home in order to provide care for his minor child. Pursuant to Rule III(D)(4)(d) of Council's Rules of Procedure, Chair Larson solicited a motion from members present to allow Member Jones to participate in the meeting by electronic communication means.

Vice Chair Katherine Jordan moved to allow Councilor Jones to participate in the meeting by electronic communication means via Microsoft Teams, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

Member Michael Jones joined the meeting at 9:38 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.

Discussion Item(s)

Chair Kristen Larson reminded those in attendance that the purpose of the work session was to have an informal discussion regarding the proposed changes to the City Charter.

Councilor Ellen Robertson inquired if the intent of the committee is to forward the proposed changes of the City Charter to the General Assembly.

Chair Larson responded by stating that the Governmental Operations Standing Committee has been tasked with reviewing the City Charter and having discussion with the city's administration in order that a master list of recommended charter changes can be compiled for review.

Interim Council Chief of Staff (CCOS) Joyce Davis stated that she will make contact with Council's lobbyists to ask if a partial listing of requested amendments can be provided to the General Assembly this year with additional amendments being presented at a later time, or if all requests need to be made during the same General Assembly session. Ms. Davis also noted that completion of resolutions for charter changes must be approved by Council prior to any requests being submitted to the General Assembly.

Chair Larson began discussion of the proposed charter amendments as provided to those in attendance. Ms. Larson stated that items one through ten (1 – 10) were from the report of the City Charter Review Commission of September 24, 2009. Ms. Larson noted that items one (1) and two (2) had previously been amended, and item eleven (11) had also been amended. Ms. Larson then read the proposed amendment to item three (3) regarding the appointment of the City Attorney. Vice Chair Katherine Jordan suggested that items three through ten (3 - 10) be reviewed at a later time which was agreed upon by those in attendance.

Chair Larson read item twelve (12) regarding who should be allowed to attend Council's closed sessions. Acting Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Lincoln Saunders stated that he believes a representative of administration should be allowed into closed sessions when discussion relates to a Council appointee who frequently interacts with both Council and administration; such as the City Assessor or City Attorney. Vice Chair Jordan stated that she believes that Council should be allowed the same opportunity as administration when individual meetings are warranted. Chair Larson stated that she had made the request for flexibility of private conversation when needed.

Councilor Ellen Robertson requested that a report that details how many closed sessions and the purpose of each over a period of the last four (4) years be provided.

Acting CAO Saunders stated that he believes a compromise could probably be made between Council and administration.

Member Michael Jones elaborated that there are rules in place for transparency and that administration should not be allowed to interrupt or oversee Council's process of business.

Chair Larson requested that Ms. Davis' staff provide the information as requested by Councilor Robertson and also locate the previous legislation that was introduced regarding closed session attendees. Ms. Larson also stated that she would be willing to discuss this issue offline with acting CAO Saunders to generate a possible compromise between Council and administration.

Chair Kristen Larson read item thirteen (13) regarding consideration of Council members being considered fulltime employees and being compensated accordingly. Ms. Larson requested that Member Michael Jones elaborate on the proposal.

Member Jones stated that the proposal is based upon Council's pay versus the hours that a councilor puts into the position. Mr. Jones stated that the city would be better served by Council if members were compensated for the work that they are already doing which is equivalent to forty (40) or more hours per week. Mr. Jones also stated that being compensated in this manner would allow individuals from varied backgrounds to run for office that would normally not have the financial resources to do so.

Vice Chair Katherine Jordan stated that she would be in support of this proposal and stated that if this amendment were to be approved, it would not take effect until after the next election. Ms. Jordan stated that a councilor's position is not a part time position and that she agrees that the compensation precludes other individuals from running for elected positions.

Councilor Ellen Robertson stated that if the compensation request were to be granted by the General

Assembly, it should not be delayed until after the next election. Councilor Robertson also stated that compensation has been in discussion for many years.

Interim CCOS Davis stated that the Code of Virginia Section 15.2.14.14 provides information regarding the salary caps of councilors, which is based upon the population of the city. Ms. Davis also stated that the change must be made by the General Assembly or by recommendation to change the City Charter to allow for Council to have the ability to set the compensation for Council members.

Chair Larson requested that Ms. Davis pursue both pathways regarding the changing of compensation and provide the information to the committee.

Chair Larson then moved to items 37 through 47 of the recommended changes.

City Transportation Engineer Michael Sawyer provided a summary of the proposed amendments to items 37 through 41 and items 43 through 46, which were related to technical changes of the City Charter. Mr. Sawyer stated that the amendments primarily bring the City Charter up to date with current terminology. Mr. Sawyer informed those in attendance that item 42 would be a new subsection that would allow the city to take a photo of vehicles that are traveling ten or more miles per hour above the posted speed limit.

Vice Chair Jordan asked if stop light cameras could be incorporated into the language.

Mr. Sawyer informed the committee that the state only allows a certain amount of cameras based upon the city's population, and it is recommended that the penalty would be a maximum of \$200.

Councilor Ellen Robertson inquired about other penalties being put in place to help offset the monetary cost.

Acting CAO Lincoln Saunders stated that the city will work on language to comply with the penalty of a maximum of \$200 and/or community service.

Interim CCOS Davis stated that Council will need to determine if the goal is to control the outcome by nonhuman monitoring or if the goal to bring a monetary benefit to the city.

Councilor Robertson stated that residential areas should have a uniform speed limit.

Member Michael Jones stated that he disagrees with this proposal if it includes community service; however, he agrees that there should be a uniform speed limit of 25 miles per hour in residential neighborhoods and 35 miles per hour for city corridors.

Chair Larson and Vice Chair Jordan stated their support of proposal item 42.

Michael Sawyer provided a summary of proposed item 48 which would eliminate the extra step of additional legislation coming before Council regarding previously approved budgeted projects. Mr. Sawyer stated that this would allow the CAO to sign off on state agreements that include federal transportation dollars. Mr. Sawyer also stated that a report could be generated to keep Council abreast of any changes regarding the projects.

Interim CAO Saunders stated that the legislation would normally be placed on the Consent Agenda after Council had previously approved the projects.

Mr. Saunders spoke on amendment proposal 51 informing the committee that a full dialogue is needed to be had to resolve issues regarding the prioritization of projects within the City Attorney's office

Chair Larson noted that several councilors have previously tried to generate legislation to meet with administration to determine the final process.

Councilor Robertson stated that she supports the proposal, and would be willing to work with

administration and the City Attorney to refine the process.

Director of Budget and Strategic Planning Jason May spoke on proposal items 52, 53 and 54 which refer to budget items. Mr. May stated that the charter requires the budget be in a printed format and proposal 52 is requesting the allowance to put the budget in a digital format. Mr. May also stated that currently the charter has the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and General Fund budgets being presented at the same time and that proposal 53 is requesting that the CIP budget be presented to Council at an earlier time for review and editing independently of the general budget; however, the final date of adoption will not change. Mr. May also reviewed proposal 54 which would allow a department the ability to transfer funds within a portfolio or within the general fund with a maximum threshold, which would be determined, without having to go through the legislative process. Mr. May stated that these proposals would allow for mechanisms to be put in place for best financial practices.

Mr. Saunders informed the committee that the cost for printing the budget binders is approximately \$10,000, which includes a proposed budget and final budget of CIP and General Fund budgets. Mr. Saunders also stated that a monthly report, regarding department transfers, could be provided to council for informational purposes.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.