



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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City Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 25, 2022

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

Council Budget Amendment Work Session #2

Councilmembers Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Ellen Robertson, Vice President
The Honorable Andreas Addison
The Honorable Katherine Jordan
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert (late arrival)
The Honorable Kristen Nye (early departure)
The Honorable Reva Trammell
The Honorable Michael Jones

Absent

The Honorable Stephanie Lynch

Staff Present

Samson Anderson, Council Budget Analyst
Debra Bowles, Assistant City Clerk
Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney
Myrtle Brown, Council Budget Analyst
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
Bill Echelberger, Office of the Council Chief of Staff
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Debora Shaw, Council Management Analyst
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Call to Order

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:16 p.m., and presided.

Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement

Upon the President's request, Assistant City Clerk Debra Bowles provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency.

President Cynthia Newbille thanked members of administration for their work in reviewing and responding to Council's proposed amendments, and she recognized Council staff for their work and efforts relative to the budget preparation.

Council Budget Amendments

Bill Echelberger, on behalf of the Office of the Council Chief of Staff, provided an overview of the budget worksheet that was provided to Council. Mr. Echelberger informed Council that a \$1,173,000.00 short fall needed to be addressed to balance the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) General Fund Budget. Mr. Echelberger reviewed specific items with Council and provided recommendations for consideration.

Mr. Echelberger reviewed the category of Council agencies and stated that administration did not address the \$232,000.00 requested from the Office of the Inspector General (IG). Mr. Echelberger also stated that the IG was Council initiated and if the desire is to allow progression of the department, Council should provide the requested funding.

Mr. Echelberger supplied insight regarding the Spanish language translation services funding request stating that the difference between Council and administration was the allocation of funds. Mr. Echelberger informed Council that the original intent was to appropriate the funding to the Office of the City Clerk.

Chief Administration Officer (CAO) Lincoln Saunders stated that administration's desire is to designate funding for translation services through the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Engagement.

Councilor Michael Jones recommended that the funding for Spanish language translation services be appropriated through the Office of the City Clerk.

President Cynthia Newbille stated that Councilor Jones' recommendation had been noted.

Mr. Echelberger noted that the \$200,000.00 for the Council Chief of Staff (CCOS) Office was originally placed in the budget for a study; however, the funds are actually for consulting services.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert arrived at 1:39 p.m. and was seated.

President Cynthia Newbille stated that a portion of the \$200,000.00 would be used for the implementation of recommendations of the fiscal and efficiency review study and that remaining funds could be used for consulting services.

Councilor Kristen Nye stated that the funds are designated for internal work within Council agencies.

Mr. Echelberger addressed the category of Richmond Public Schools (RPS) and the \$15,000,000.00 that is currently in the non-departmental fund. Mr. Echelberger suggested that the funds be moved from the non-departmental fund to the education budget with notation that funds would be appropriated by category.

Mr. Echelberger stated that administration and Council staff are in agreement with the \$425,000.00 funding for the category of housing and homelessness.

Vice President Ellen Robertson addressed the amendment of Councilwoman Reva Trammell and Councilor Katherine Jordan that requests \$300,000.00 be used to rehabilitate mobile homes. Vice President Robertson suggested that the money be placed in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to oversee the spending of the designated funds for rehabilitation efforts.

Councilwoman Reva Trammell expressed her concern that the money would be removed and not be used for mobile homes.

President Cynthia Newbille reassured Councilor Trammell that the \$300,000.00 would not be removed from assisting in the rehabilitation of mobile homes, but the recommendation is to place the oversight of the funding for rehabilitation efforts under the purview of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Mr. Echelberger reviewed the compensation category and stated that Council staff did not recommend language differential pay for police officers at this time, based upon administration's recommendation to include this item within the FY23 compensation review.

Mr. Echelberger recommended that funding for collective bargaining be removed from the budget as collective bargaining legislation has not been approved.

Councilor Kristen Nye stated that she disagrees with not funding collective bargaining as the proposed legislation for collective bargaining was introduced in December 2021, and would be heard at the May 2nd Organizational Development Standing Committee meeting. Councilor Nye also stated that funding would need to be in place to fund the City Attorney's Office for consulting fees, labor relations managers and a labor relations attorney. Ms. Nye further stated that it is important that Council show employees that collective bargaining is an important initiative.

CAO Lincoln Saunders addressed Council regarding the funding recommendation of administration for the collective bargaining initiative. CAO Saunders stated that administration reviewed the initiative and the timeline and it would be the 2nd or 3rd quarter of FY23 before positions would be in place to oversee the collective bargaining process.

Mr. Echelberger explained the rationale of zero cost to the retiree compensation and benefits adjustment, stating that the city's retirement system is multi-faceted, and the defined benefit system does not include any type of cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Mr. Echelberger stated that should Council wish to provide a COLA for retirees, the city needs to review and provide a prefunded retirement program. Mr. Echelberger further stated that surrounding areas participate in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) which provides annual COLAs and has a planned design that includes a prefunded rate built into the program.

CAO Lincoln Saunders informed Council that administration is actively reviewing additional retirement options, including VRS; however, it is a very complex issue and information would not be available until early fall. Mr. Saunders also stated that administration is not proposing a COLA for retirees but instead a one-time bonus of \$300.00 per retiree.

Mr. Echelberger noted that VRS will not accept an unfunded liability.

Mr. Echelberger addressed the category for governmental services stating that zero dollars had been budgeted for the land value tax study, the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) free fare funding and the expanded library hours. Mr. Echelberger stated that administration and Council staff agreed to provide funding to the Department of Public Works (DPW) for an additional arborist and an additional maintenance worker for graffiti abatement. Mr. Echelberger also stated that there is agreement to allow for the Brookland Park Boulevard/North Avenue study for a mixed-use development. Mr. Echelberger stated further that the Chamberbrook Small Area Plan is already included in the Planning and Development Review portion of the budget, and the Vision Zero trash can component for DPW would be covered through the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Complete Streets program as stated by administration.

Councilor Andreas Addison explained that the funding proposal for the land value tax study would provide an aggressive engagement of land value as opposed to a conservative value.

Councilor Kristen Nye inquired on what libraries are funded for extended hours.

CAO Saunders stated that the proposed budget did not allow for extended hours at the public libraries due to the high costs for staffing to maintain extended hours. Mr. Saunders also stated that after discussion with the library board, a letter would be provided to Council to clarify information regarding extended library hours.

Councilor Kristen Nye left the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

Mr. Echelberger stated that the funding stream for the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) free fare has been identified; however future funding would need to be considered.

CAO Saunders stated that the number of sources within the GRTC budget and the city's allocation to GRTC should maintain free fare funding for the immediate future.

President Cynthia Newbille stated that an assessment to determine funding to continue the free fare program beyond the near future is important to citizens.

Councilor Addison stated that there needs to be a commitment from the city to continue the free fare program through GRTC.

Councilor Jones stated that the free fare program should be funded as many citizens depend on GRTC for transportation to and from work.

Mr. Echelberger stated that after conversation with the Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA), it was agreed that the \$571,000 would allow for coverage of the debt service.

CAO Saunders stated that additional conversations with the RAA are needed for a third party review regarding the purchasing of new equipment.

President Newbille noted that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be provided, after previous discussion, to move forward on the RAA proposal.

Mr. Echelberger stated that Council staff and administration were in agreement with the remaining governmental services budgeted items.

Mr. Echelberger explained the budgeting for the human services category stating that gun violence prevention was apparent in several areas of the budget and that administration had supplied explanation within the administration's summary of Council's questions and concerns. Mr. Echelberger also stated that administration and Council staff were in agreement to fund an additional staff position in the Office on Aging and Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Echelberger spoke regarding the non-departmental category stating that the administration and Council staff balances, with exception of the discrepancy of \$150,000.00 for the funding of Storefront for Community Design. Mr. Echelberger stated administration did not address this fund line as it is a Council initiative.

Mr. Echelberger provided an overview of the proposed budget reductions.

Council had a discussion regarding the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) and the Help Me Help You Foundation proposed reductions. Councilor Addison stated that an amendment to offset the Business, Professional and Occupational License (BPOL) tax reduction will be withdrawn from consideration.

President Newbille provided a brief summary regarding categories and the fund lines that need additional review for decisions at the Tuesday, April 26, 2022 budget meeting.

A copy of the material provided has been filed and can be accessed below.

[CD.2022.186](#) Council Budget Amendments

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

CITY CLERK