

CITY COUNCIL MEETING - NOVEMBER 14, 2022 (3 Minutes)

Rev. Marvin Gilliam, Jr.

Greetings Members of City Council. I am Rev. Marvin Gilliam, Jr. and I serve as pastor of The Mount Carmel Baptist Church located in the 7th District of our City. I am here on behalf of over 20 communities of faith and thousands of faith based justice seekers in our city under the banner of Richmonders Involved in Strengthening our Communities, also known as, RISC.

There are many ideas about who RISC is that are out there. Some would call us bullies. However, by definition, bullies are those who habitually seek to harm or intimidate those whom they perceive as vulnerable. We do not seek to harm or intimidate anyone. We are a community organizing group that works in the tradition of Dr. King, Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, Atty. Oliver Hill and many other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. We listen to the vulnerable of our city, put forth solutions for issues that arise, and seek to hold our public officials accountable for creating a just, safe, and equitable community for all of its citizens. And often to get to that result, healthy tension is necessary.

In the fall of 2019, our organization sought to find a solution to the rising gun violence in our city. We shared Group Violence Intervention as a proven solution in cutting gun violence in half in other major cities. We proposed the implementation of GVI, beginning with a problem analysis, in meetings with city officials and community organizations. From the Mayor's Gun Violence Prevention Framework to the work happening in the 7th District led by Council President Newbille and School Board Representative Cheryl Burke, we believe that what we advocate for as a solution works in concert with these efforts.

One of our allies, REAL Life, has secured state and national funding to implement GVI here in Richmond. The effective implementation of GVI is especially contingent on the cooperation of Richmond City governmental agencies, namely the Richmond Police Department and Department of Social Services. This doesn't require any money from the city; it only requires allowing the city entities to share data and resources to help the National Network for Safe Communities and REAL Life do the work of saving lives and providing the appropriate services.

To that end, we are asking each council member to strongly encourage the City to direct the necessary agencies to cooperate with the National Network for Safe Communities and REAL Life in the implementation of Group Violence Intervention here in Richmond so that we save lives and mitigate the trauma that we are experiencing.

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Good evening, my name is Pastor Don Coleman, I am Co-Lead Pastor of East End Fellowship and Co-President of RISC. I am also a life-long resident of the 7th District.

The message I am here tonight to deliver is about hundreds of falling apart mobile homes across our city. They are extremely **hot** during the summer, and extremely **cold** during the winter. Water comes in during storms. Mold grows, and roofs and walls and floors rots. Rats come through holes in the floor at night. Children are getting sick.

Human beings are suffering. When I heard about these living conditions in mobile home parks THAT WERE overwhelmingly populated by my Hispanic sisters and brothers - I was ashamed.

Last Spring you heard these cries too, and you as City Council passed a budget amendment which put \$300,000 toward a mobile home repair and replacement program. We want to commend you for having done this.

BUT – the money has not gone out the door. When we tried to get an answer from administration around why, we heard that a comprehensive plan is being put together for all residents of manufactured homes, etc etc.

Well, “comprehensive plan” sounds good – we want to work with administration on that. But what we don’t understand is why that can’t be happening, at the SAME time that we get this \$300,000 out the door, so we can get some homes repaired or replaced?

We have a RISC leader who lives in a trailer with no heat right now. She’s got 6 kids. How do you tell a child – don’t worry about the fact that you’re freezing, go to bed, the city is working on a plan? You can’t tell a child that, because it makes no sense.

Let’s put the money to use. The temperature dropped today – imagine if YOU had to go home to a home with no heat, that cold blowing through panels in your wall.

Please use your power as City Council, to provoke the administration to follow through on getting THE MONEY YOU APPROVED for this program – put to use! We at RISC will not relent until this program is actually in operation.

People are suffering. And putting an end that suffering, is what we are about, and care DEEPLY about.

Thank you.

Good evening. **My name is Rev. Mairi Renwick, I'm the chaplain @ Union Presbyterian Seminary and a proud RISC member.**

It's no secret. The housing crisis across our city is both AWFUL, and it's getting worse. The price of rent has risen faster than even inflation. People cannot keep up. They're being forced to move out, double or triple up with another family. The numbers of eviction filings we've seen over the last month suggests the rise of evictions is going up and will have more evictions than we had before the pandemic.

Richmond has the 2nd highest eviction rate in the country AND the second lowest vacancy rate at just 1.1% And we're not talking about affordable housing, just ANY housing being available. It's not just that people can't find an affordable place to live. People can't find ANYWHERE to live.

The issue is UNITS. We need a mass influx of UNITS of affordable housing, set aside for those people who've been priced out. And that is what an Affordable Housing Trust Fund is for – to help fund the creation of housing that people can actually afford.

So, thank you to you all for **passing the ordinance establishing the dedicated stream for the Affordable trust fund in January 2021. This **was** such huge movement forward.**

This Ordinance that you all passed said that the dedicated stream would start out at \$2.4 million, but it would grow each year, so that by 2026 it would be above \$10 million. And it would keep growing beyond that. **This is what we need.**

The Trust Fund Board was told by the Director of Finance last Spring that the \$2.4 million from the first year of the dedicated stream would go into the Trust Fund this month. But every time we've tried to get an answer on "will it?" ... we either don't get an answer, or we get the response that "the city is putting \$10 million into the Fund from the ARPA dollars."

Well, as you all know, the ARPA dollars were NEVER supposed to be a replacement for local money. In fact, to use them as a substitute for local dollars would be in DIRECT violation of ARPA.

So, tonight we ask - where is the \$2.4 that is supposed to be allocated? If it isn't going into the Trust Fund, where is it going?

And, the \$2.4 million is from Fiscal Year 22. Where is the dedicated stream for Fiscal Year 23?

The people of Richmond, the same people you all represent and passed this law for, need a place to rest their heads.

We are asking you tonight to join us in asking WHERE is this money, so developers can start breaking ground on a serious number of truly affordable units.

DEACON JANICE LACY @ NOVEMBER 14TH CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Good evening, I am Deacon Janice Lacy from Ebenezer Baptist Church, and proud RISC Leader.

Because of the epidemic of gun violence, because of the housing crisis in our city, because we have children going to sleep in the freezing cold in mobile homes— because of this and more, trust has been eroded between our elected leaders, and the people of this city.

Effective leaders seek ways to re-build that trust. And to rebuild trust, you've got to show up, and you've got to listen.

The largest event in our city, the biggest opportunity for you all to show up and listen, will be the RISC Nehemiah Action this coming Spring. There will be 1,500 of your constituents there. Those constituents deserve public officials that take them and their concerns seriously.

Rebuilding trust is often uncomfortable, and our Nehemiah Actions are often uncomfortable. We live with that discomfort on behalf of the neglected who are far more uncomfortable than any public official ever was at a RISC Nehemiah Action.

What is **uncomfortable** is to lose sleep night after night, wondering how you're going to make rent. What is **uncomfortable** is to open the door one day to an officer who is there to tell you your loved one has been shot.

And, there is tension. As people of faith, our traditions are full of moments of creative and healthy tension. As Dr. King put it in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail – “I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension.’ I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.”

The date is Tuesday, March 28. And it is in your interests to be there.

I have letters of invitation to be hand-delivered tonight to each of you.

(wait for Clerk to take)

Let it be on record tonight that you have all been personally invited to our Nehemiah Action on March 28. We will be following up with each of you, to meet, ensure you have ample opportunity to ask questions, clarify the agenda, etc ... but it is of the **UTMOST** important, Councilmembers, that you are there.

Thank you for time.