



City of Richmond

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

Council Retreat Minutes

Monday, October 24, 2022

9:00 AM

Willow Oaks Country Club
Main Building
6228 Forest Hill Avenue
Richmond, VA 23225

Council Retreat

Councilmembers Present

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

Others in Attendance

Robert Bobb, Bobb Group, LLC - President and Chief Executive Officer
Haskell Brown, City Attorney
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff
Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Finance and Administration
Kimberly Kyle, Council Management Analyst Senior – HR Solutions
Lou Lassiter, City Auditor
Jason May, Budget and Strategic Planning Director
Richie McKeithen, City Assessor
Heather Ness, Bobb Group, LLC – Principal
James Osuna, Inspector General
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Tabrica Rentz, Deputy City Attorney
Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer
Debra Shaw, Council Management Analyst
Steve Skinner, Council Public Information Manager
Steve Taylor, Council Policy Analyst
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk
Sheila White, Finance Director

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the retreat to order at 9:11 a.m., and presided.

Welcome, Purpose, and Agenda Overview

President Cynthia Newbille provided opening comments and stated her appreciation for the investment members were making by attending the Council retreat. President Newbille also stated that the purpose of the retreat was to create a collective vision, determine Council priorities for the next two years, and review Council's budget process. President Newbille further stated that Robert Bobb Group, LLC's Robert Bobb, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Heather Ness, Principal, would moderate and lead discussions throughout the retreat.

[CD.2022.381](#) Council Retreat Documents

A copy of all material provided has been filed

Councilwoman Reva Trammell arrived and was seated at 9:13 a.m.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budgeting Process

Robert Bobb and Heather Ness informed attendees of guidelines and goals for the upcoming retreat discussions. Ms. Ness proceeded with reviewing Council's budget process and facilitated discussions addressing how the process could be improved.

Councilor Michael Jones arrived and was seated at 9:16 a.m.

Councilmembers discussed prior issues related to Council's budget process and provided suggested changes and new policies to be implemented. City administration staff was present to provide additional information and perspective on issues and policies addressed by Council.

Jason May, Budget and Strategic Planning Director, provided a presentation that addressed the city's budget timeline. Mr. May noted Council's necessary involvement with certain aspects of the timeline, and he provided additional information regarding phases of the budget process throughout the calendar year.

Councilor Kristen Nye requested that city administration provide the public access to review the city's budget process throughout the year-long time frame.

Councilor Andreas Addison requested that city administration inform Council of scheduled capital improvement projects that are not included in the current or upcoming fiscal year city budget. Councilor Addison stated that if a project is not include in the current fiscal year budget, but a future budget, it would be beneficial for Councilmembers to have the ability to provide citizens with proposed future budget dates for projects.

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Lincoln Saunders informed Council that city administration was apprehensive of attaching specific dates to future capital improvement projects, because city administration needed the ability to adjust budget resources based on continuing infrastructure and deferred maintenance needs.

President Cynthia Newbille stated that it was important for Council to submit budget requests in a unified fashion, and she suggested that Council identify priorities collectively.

Councilor Nye stated that members should collectively submit Council priorities to city administration as soon as possible. Councilor Nye also requested that Council should schedule fewer budget work sessions with the goal of increased Council attendance and participation.

President Newbille stated Council would hold budget work sessions in November 2022 to compile and submit Council's budget priorities and requests.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch requested that city departments inform Council of budgetary needs early and prior to Council's budget deliberations.

Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Finance and Administration, stated that city administration should review city department budget requests prior to consideration by Council. DCAO Joy-Hogg informed Council that city departments are informed to only submit necessary requests, because city administration has a responsibility to compare the requests with other city needs prior to budget submission to Council.

Councilor Michael Jones stated that Councilmembers have direct contact with citizens regarding city services and funding requests. Councilor Jones also stated that Council has the responsibility of finalizing the city budget once submitted by city administration.

CAO Saunders informed Council that he believed that proposed across the board percentage budget cuts did not work, and he requested that Council work with city administration to identify opportunities for budget amendments and reallocations.

The retreat recessed at 11:50 a.m.

The retreat reconvened at 12:22 p.m.

Virginia General Assembly Legislative Update

Kathy Burcher, Council Lobbyist, Advantus Strategies, Ron Jordan, Council Lobbyist, Advantus Strategies, and Laura Bateman, Council Lobbyist, Advantus Strategies, provided Council with a presentation regarding Council's legislative requests for the upcoming 2023 Virginia General Assembly session. Kathy Burcher discussed legislative strategies and potential action to be taken at the upcoming Virginia General Assembly session.

Vice President Ellen Robertson arrived and was seated at 12:44 p.m.

Ron Jordan informed Council that its lobbyist team would work to promote Council's legislative requests and work to combat any legislative efforts that did not align with Council's priorities. Mr. Jordan also stated that city's lobbyists would identify opportunities to work with suburban and rural localities to promote issues such as affordable housing.

Ms. Burcher addressed the risks associated with having the Virginia General Assembly amend the City Charter and noted it would be wise to limit the number of amendment requests.

Councilor Kristen Nye stated that Council's City Charter Review Commission was beginning its work on reviewing possible Richmond City Charter amendments. Councilor Nye informed members she was comfortable with reserving previously identified City Charter amendment items, and waiting until the City Charter Review Commission completed its work, so that the city could submit City Charter amendments only once.

Ron Jordan and Kathy Burcher also discussed how the city's lobbyists would promote to members of the Virginia General Assembly, the city's desire to establish a casino resort in the city.

After additional discussion, it was the consensus of Council to remove ranked choice voting as a Council legislative priority.

Councilor Michael Jones inquired what the city could do to receive more revenue from tax exempt real estate, such as Commonwealth of Virginia state-owned buildings and Virginia Commonwealth University property.

Mr. Jordan advised Council that the tax exempt real estate question would need to be addressed by the city assessor, city administration, and state government.

Review of Virginia Commonwealth University Reimagining Study and Recommendations

Robyn McDougale, PhD, VCU L. Douglas Wilder Center for Public Policy - Performance Management Group, and Wheeler Wood, MS, VCU L. Douglas Wilder Center for Public Policy - Performance Management Group, provided Council with a presentation that addressed the VCU L. Douglas Wilder Center for Public Policy - Performance Management Group's report on restructuring and reimagining Richmond City Council.

Councilors Michael Jones and Kristen Nye discussed efforts to identify and hire a candidate for the position of Council Chief of Staff.

Building Towards a More Efficient and Effective Richmond City Council

Robert Bobb Group, LLC's Robert Bobb, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Heather Ness, Principal, discussed with Councilmembers action to be taken to increase Council efficiency and effectiveness.

Councilor Michael Jones left the retreat at 2:25 p.m.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert requested that standing committee chairs provide more leadership on committee activities and agenda setting.

Councilor Kristen Nye addressed the effectiveness of committee chairs conducting pre-meetings to increase efficiency at standing committee meetings.

Councilwoman Reva Trammell suggested that Council's Organizational Development Committee address more issues before Council because all nine members of Council would be able to participate.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch confirmed that the Organizational Development Standing Committee agenda provides an opportunity for other standing committee chairs to provide reports from respective standing committees.

Councilmembers discussed improving the onboarding process for new Councilmembers, and also addressed how to increase the effectiveness of Council informal and formal meetings.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the retreat adjourned at 3:33 p.m.