



# City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
[www.rva.gov/office-city-clerk](http://www.rva.gov/office-city-clerk)

## Meeting Minutes Governmental Operations Standing Committee

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Wednesday, October 26, 2022

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall

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### DRAFT

#### Committee Members and Others in Attendance

The Honorable Kristen Nye – Chair  
The Honorable Katherine Jordan – Vice Chair  
The Honorable Michael Jones – Member

Susan McKenney, Assistant City Attorney  
Joyce Davis, Interim Council Chief of Staff  
Rachael Paul, Assistant City Clerk  
Candice Reid, City Clerk  
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk  
Pamela Nichols, Council Management Analyst

#### Call to Order

Chair Kristen Nye called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m., and presided.

#### Chamber Emergency Evacuation Plan Announcement and Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Upon the Chair's request, Assistant City Clerk Rachael Paul provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with citizen speaker guidelines.

#### Public Comment Period

Sarah Weisiger addressed the committee regarding the city's gas rate. She stated that the recent increase will severely impact citizens in the coming winter.

Glen Besa thanked the committee for adopting Res. 2021-R049, which declared the existence of a climate and ecological emergency that threatens the city. He informed the committee about leakage rates and stated that the leakage rates in the city were at four percent. He urged the committee to look into how the city can proceed without the use of gas.

Lee Williams, member of the Sierra Club Falls of the James Group, and Co-Chair of Green New Deal Virginia, informed the committee that the Environmental Protection Agency Clean School Bus Award list was posted and the city was not on the list for receiving electric school buses.

*Chair Kristen Nye informed Lee Williams that the information shared needed to be addressed with the Richmond School Board.*

Daniel Klein, Vice Chair of the Green City Commission, advised the committee that he did not have a public comment, but he wanted the committee to know he was available as a resource for the urban forestry discussion item.

## Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections or amendments to the meeting minutes of Wednesday, September 28, 2022, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

[CD.2022.356](#) September 28, 2022 Governmental Operations Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [20220928 Gov Ops Mins](#)

## Presentation(s)

### FY23 Richmond Gas Works Rate

April Bingham, Director of the Department of Public Utilities (DPU), and Billy Vaughan, Deputy Director in the Department of Public Utilities, provided the committee a presentation regarding Richmond Gas Works.

*A copy of the material provided has been filed.*

[CD.2022.363](#) FY23 Richmond Gas Works Rate

Attachments: [20221026 FY23 Richmond Gas Works Rate Presentation](#)

*Vice Chair Katherine Jordan questioned the gas rates and what the city was doing to provide affordable utilities for residents. She also questioned what the environmental impacts were on public health. Vice Chair Jordan advised DPU to look into renewable energy sources and addressed her concerns with the revenue the city receives from Richmond Gas Works.*

*Member Michael Jones addressed his concerns with affordability and asked what the city can do to help residents that are being evicted or having utilities disconnected. He also asked how the city is notifying individuals about payment plans and other available options.*

Ms. Bingham stated that funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), came with a lot of stipulations. She also stated that the city did reach out to commercial and residential customers about applying for funds but were not able to reach them all.

*Member Jones asked why the city doesn't automatically enroll people that are behind on payments.*

Ms. Bingham informed Member Jones that automatic enrollment did occur at the beginning of the pandemic, and she stated that over half of the customers enrolled have stopped paying on their payment plan.

Mr. Vaughan stated that the CARES Act program mandated that customers had to self-attest that they had a hardship, and that the city was able to apply ARPA Funds to anyone that had a past due balance.

*Chair Kristen Nye stated that the increases in the past five years are concerning because of evictions and the city's current homelessness rate. Chair Nye addressed Member Jones about scheduling a follow up at the next Finance and Economic Development Standing Committee meeting.*

*Vice Chair Katherine Jordan stated that she had concerns with Richmond residents struggling to pay gas bills, and she asked if the city was subsidizing expansion in surrounding counties.*

*Vice Chair Jordan and Mr. Vaughan had further discussion about the customer base for natural gas.*

### **Richmond Animal Care and Control Overview**

Christie Peters, Animal Care and Control Director, provided the committee with a presentation regarding Richmond Animal Care and Control operations. Ms. Peters informed the committee of the shelters average statistics for care, calls, and save rate. She also informed the committee of the size of shelters and how many animals are housed or fostered.

*A copy of the material provided has been filed.*

[CD.2022.362](#) Richmond Animal Care and Control Overview

**Attachments:** [20221026 RACC Overview Presentation](#)

*Member Michael Jones stated that he visited the shelter and that staff were helpful and knowledgeable. Member Jones requested Ms. Peters to have budget requests prepared for the upcoming budget cycle.*

Christie Peters informed the committee that she is working on an exotic animal ordinance that will be presented to the Council.

### **2023 Healthcare Rates**

Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer, provided the committee with a presentation regarding the city's 2023 healthcare rates. He stated the city is changing the healthcare plan names because some adjustments have been made to help families with plan cost reductions. He advised that open enrollment begins Monday, October 31, 2022, and ends Friday, November 18, 2022.

*A copy of the material provided has been filed.*

[CD.2022.365](#) 2023 Healthcare Rates

Attachments: [20221026 2023 Healthcare Rates](#)

*Chair Kristen Nye asked when the Benefit Resource Center would be open. She also requested an update on domestic partnerships and if they were able to get the same coverage as married partners.*

Lincoln Saunders informed the committee that the Benefit Resource Center would be open for the three weeks of open enrollment during city business hours. Mr. Saunders also informed the committee that city employees will be paying less overall for the upcoming year for insurance. He also advised the committee that in the new year, the city would have another open enrollment for city employees with domestic partners.

## Paper(s) for Consideration

There were no papers for consideration.

## Board Vacancies

[CD.2022.361](#) October 26, 2022 Quarterly Board Vacancy Report - Governmental Operations Standing Committee

Attachments: [20221026 Gov Ops Board Report Packet](#)

Council Management Analyst Pamela Nichols reviewed board applications for the committee's consideration.

**Member Michael Jones moved to forward the following board appointments and reappointment applications to Council with a recommendation to approve, which was seconded and unanimously approved.**

City Charter Review Commission 2022:

Antoine Banks

Willette King

Steven Koski

City Personnel Board:

Carletta Wilson (reappointment)

Kourtney Smith

Participatory Budgeting Steering Commission:

Quawneisha Peoples

Sister Cities Commission:  
Marcus Henderson  
Nicolai Shuman

*A copy of the material provided has been filed.*

## Discussion Item(s)

### Next Steps Regarding Support of the City's Urban Forestry Work

Torrence Robinson, Deputy Director of Operations and Maintenance for the Department of Public Works, discussed the city's open Urban Forester position. Mr. Robertson stated the city hopes to fill the position in the beginning of the upcoming year.

*Vice Chair Katherine Jordan asked about advertising the position, and she requested that the Urban Forestry Commission report to the Governmental Operations Standing Committee.*

*Chair Kristen Nye informed members that she will partner with Vice Chair Jordan to initiate legislation regarding the Urban Forestry Commission.*

*Chair Nye discussed the City Charter Review Commission, budget, efforts to finalize a MOU between the city and the James River Soil and Water Conservation District, and rescheduling the next two committee meetings.*

## Staff Report

Interim Council Chief of Staff (CCOS) Joyce Davis provided committee members with the staff report, which has been filed.

[CD.2022.368](#) October 26, 2022 Staff Report - Governmental Operations Standing Committee

**Attachments:** [2022 October Gov Ops Staff Report](#)

## Closed Session

At 3:50 p.m., Member Michael Jones moved that the Governmental Operations Standing Committee hold a closed meeting pursuant to subdivision (1) of section 2.2-3711(A) of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to discuss individually with the City Attorney on their performance and how it will be evaluated.

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

*Member Michael Jones motioned to exit closed session. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

Members reconvened in open session at 4:03 p.m.

### **Certification of Closed Meeting**

WHEREAS, the Governmental Operations Standing Committee has convened in closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Governmental Operations Standing Committee that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law:

NOW, THEREFORE,  
BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Governmental Operations Standing Committee hereby certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge (i) only public matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certifying resolution applies; and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Governmental Operations Standing Committee.

WITNESS the following vote of committee members, as recorded by Candice D. Reid, City Clerk:

**CERTIFYING:**

Kristen M. Nye, Chair  
Katherine L. Jordan, Vice Chair  
Michael J. Jones

**DECLINING TO CERTIFY:**

### **Adjournment**

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.*