



City of Richmond

Council Budget Work Session 4 Minutes

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

Monday, April 12, 2021

1:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - City Hall
Virtual Meeting

Councilmembers Present

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

Staff Present

Samson Anderson, Council Budget Analyst
Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney
Joyce Davis, Interim Chief of Staff
Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst
Candice Reid, City Clerk
Dominique J. Thaxton, Assistant City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m., and presided.

ELECTRONIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Assistant City Clerk Dominique J. Thaxton, in accordance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020, as most recently amended by Ordinance No. 2020-232, adopted December 14, 2020, announced the work session would be held through electronic communication means, and stated that notice of the session was provided to the public through a public information advisory issued on February 11, 2021, and through Legistar on the city website in accordance with usual practice. She also stated there would be no opportunities for public comment and no public hearings during the session.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch joined the meeting at 1:09 p.m.

Analysis of the Proposed FY22 Operating Budget - Continued

Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst, concluded his overview of the FY2021-2022 budget proposal, which was first presented to Council at the April 5, 2021 budget work session. Mr. Echelberger provided a detailed review of the proposed general fund expenditures across all city agencies and departments.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Councilor Kristen Larson joined the meeting at 1:14 pm

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert asked for clarification on the proposed organizational changes within the Department of Citizen Service & Response.

Mr. Echelberger advised that the Office of the Press Secretary is being dissolved to become the Office of Engagement under the Department of Citizen Service & Response.

Vice President Ellen Robertson inquired about the reason for repositioning the functions of the Office of the Press Secretary to the Department of Citizen Service & Response. Vice President Robertson also asked if such restructuring will enhance service delivery to constituents.

Mr. Echelberger stated that the primary purpose for restructuring the duties of the Office of the Press Secretary to the Department of Citizen Service & Response is in response to recommendations outlined in a report provided from the Office of the City Auditor.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch asked for a breakdown of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities' submitted budget requests in comparison to what is included in the proposed FY2021-2022 budget.

Mr. Echelberger stated that budget requests submitted by departments within the city administration have not been made available to Council.

Councilor Katherine Jordan requested information on the budget reduction of the family and community category within the Department of Justice Services in the proposed budget. Councilor Jordan expressed concern for the decrease in investment in community programs while increasing security programs and administration budget within the Department of Justice Services.

Vice President Robertson asked for the justification behind the proposed funding reduction of after school and recreation programs in the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

Councilor Lynch requested information on the number of vacant staff positions in community centers and the funding needed for various programs. Councilor Lynch underscored the vital role that after school and recreation programs serve in the community.

Councilor Lambert reiterated concern for the proposed reduction in funding for after school and recreation programs.

Councilor Jordan expressed concern for the proposed reduction in funding for the James River Park System.

President Cynthia Newbille restated the collective concern for reduction in funding across the various programs within the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities. President Newbille requested that the appropriate staff collect Council's requests and coordinate with the administration to provide responses.

Lincoln Saunders, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, provided clarification on the shifts in the proposed funding for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

Vice President Robertson stated the importance of Council receiving a breakdown of the programs with proposed funding reductions in the FY2022 budget that the administration plans to supplement with the forthcoming American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) funds. Vice President Robertson requested a breakdown of newly funded programs that could potentially be funded through the ARP, rather than the FY2022 proposed general fund budget.

Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst, stated that regulatory guidance for the use of the ARP Act funds has not yet been released by the United States Department of the Treasury. Mr.

Echelberger cautioned against removing funds from the FY2022 proposed budget in anticipation of later substituting funds from the ARP.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert asked for clarification on the proposed budget increase for roadway management and the reduction of the solid waste and refuse budget within the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Echelberger provided clarification on the roadway management and solid waste proposed budget allocations.

Councilor Lynch inquired if the funding for the Marcus Alert System is exclusively comprised from city general fund dollars.

Mr. Echelberger stated that the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) compiles all sources of funding into the general fund and that the program managers have the most accurate information on the fund sourcing. Mr. Echelberger shared that he will work with the administration to find a breakdown of the various fund sources for the Marcus Alert System.

Councilor Lambert inquired if funding for the Citizen Review Board (CRB) is included in the proposed FY2022 budget.

Mr. Echelberger shared that funding for the CRB is not included in the proposed budget and the source of funding has yet to be determined.

Councilor Lambert requested clarification on the “other increases” category of the Police Department’s proposed budget.

Mr. Echelberger stated that the “other increases” category of the Police Department budget is reflective of various changes in funding for programs and service level operations.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch inquired if the \$185.3 million in a new appropriation under the Richmond Public Schools (RPS) proposed budget, includes federal relief funding from the CARES Act and the ARP Act. Councilor Lynch also asked for information on the potential savings garnered by RPS in the transportation and operations categories in light of the decrease in service delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Echelberger provided clarification on the new appropriation category of the RPS budget and advised that potential funds from the ARP Act are not included in any section of the proposed FY2022 budget. Mr. Echelberger expanded that examination of various categorical budget savings is under the purview of the Richmond Public Schools Board.

Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert suggested that a special meeting of Council be scheduled to discuss the potential uses of the ARP Act funds.

Councilor Andreas Addison stated that regulatory guidance for the use of the ARP Act funds may not be released by the United States Department of the Treasury until after the FY2022 budget is adopted. Councilor Addison stated that it is imperative to make strategic budgetary decisions to leverage the ARP Act funds to best serve the city.

President Cynthia Newbille stated that there is forthcoming legislation that would place the ARP Act assets into a special fund, and she also stated that staff are working on plans for collaborative action on the allocation of the ARP Act funds.

Mr. Echelberger shared that the forthcoming legislation would place ARP Act funds into a special reserve fund whether they are received directly from the federal government or indirectly from the state as a sub-grantee.

Councilor Kristen Larson requested that a copy of the draft legislation proposed to place ARP funds into a special reserve fund be provided to members.

President Cynthia Newbille advised that the legislation is still in draft form and will be shared with members of Council when it becomes available.

Haskell Brown, Interim City Attorney, confirmed that the legislation is not yet prepared or available to be shared.

Councilor Larson requested information on the Project Experience, RVA League for Safer Streets, and Citizens Against Residential Emergencies non-departmental entities that are posed to receive funding.

Mr. Echelberger stated that the appropriate staff will coordinate with the administration to provide additional information on the new non-departmental entities that are proposed to receive funding.

Vice President Ellen Robertson inquired about the changes in the tax relief for the elderly and individuals with a disability category under non-departmental expenditures. Vice President Robertson requested an analysis of the utilization rate of the tax relief for the elderly and individuals with a disability across the city.

Mr. Echelberger provided clarification on the tax relief for the elderly and individuals with a disability categorical changes and expressed that the reduction in funding is due to a decrease in the projected need for relief. Mr. Echelberger stated that the appropriate staff will coordinate with the administration for an analysis of the tax relief for the elderly and individuals with a disability.

Councilor Stephanie Lynch requested clarification on the proposed economic development non-departmental category budgetary changes, and asked if there is any funding in the proposed budget for new staff positions within the Department of Economic Development.

Mr. Echelberger provided information on the economic development non-departmental funding changes and shared that he will provide follow-up information on the proposed budget of the Department of Economic Development.

Lincoln Saunders, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, provided further clarification on the non-departmental economic development budget.

Councilor Michael Jones expressed concern for funding non-departmental entities, while Council priorities and essential services for city residents remain unfunded.

Vice President Robertson underscored the intent of Res. No. 2020-R053, adopted September 28, 2020, requesting \$10,000,000 in funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) and expressed concern regarding AHTF funding.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

CITY CLERK