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Dear Fourth District Friends,

I want to start this week by addressing the fence in front of Westover Hills Elementary School that was struck by a vehicle and collapsed over the holiday. The safety of our students and children is my highest priority, and School Board Member Hedgepeth and I share that commitment without hesitation.

For context, the playground and fencing around Westover Hills Elementary are owned and maintained by Richmond Public Schools. That said, this incident became a strong example of the City and RPS working collaboratively and in good faith. As soon as both RPS and City offices reopened after the holiday, we were in immediate communication and coordinating next steps.

In this issue:

- Fire Prevention Safety Tips
- [Drastically] Increased Penalties for Demolitions in Old and Historic Districts
- You Asked About Code Refresh, They Answered - DPU
- Upcoming Events
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Constituent Corner:

- Number of Constituent Emails Responded to Last Week: **89**
- Number of PUBLIC 311 tickets in the 4th District Last Week: **69**
- Top Issues from Constituents: **Pedestrian safety, real estate tax bills, Code Refresh/district meeting follow-up**

Quick Notes:

Click [here](#) to access the Fourth District Fridays Newsletter Library

Lane Closures

Powhite Parkway (northbound between the James River Bridge and Forest Hill Ave) from **Saturday, January 10 at 7 a.m. to Monday, January 12 at 6 a.m. and Saturday, January 17 at 7 a.m. to Monday, January 19 at 6 a.m.**

Why and Details: The Richmond Metropolitan Transportation Authority (RMTA) will be conducting

While the fence is not City property, the City stepped in to offer support by helping identify a fencing contractor, and School Board Member Hedgepeth and I worked closely with the Superintendent and the school's principal to ensure families received timely and accurate updates. I know many in our community understandably feel that even one day without a proper barrier between our children and Forest Hill Avenue is too long. I share that sense of urgency.

I want to thank Superintendent Kamras, School Board Member Hedgepeth, my liaison Timmy Siverd, and City staff for their quick coordination, including support from Parks and Recreation. When it comes to student safety, lines of jurisdiction matter far less than lines of communication. There is now a temporary fence up and contractors have been contacted. I'm grateful for the collaboration that helped move this forward quickly.

With Fourth District Love,

Sarah

alternating lane closures on Powhite Parkway for construction related to the upcoming transition to all-electronic tolling. Motorists are reminded to pay attention to signage in the area and to exercise caution while traveling near the work zone. This work will be weather permitting.

Forest Hill Ave. and Bliley Road from Thursday, January 26 through Monday, February 2 (8 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily) **NEW/REVISED DATES**

Why and Details: As part of a traffic signal replacement installation project at the intersection of Forest Hill Ave. and Bliley Rd., the contractor will be removing existing signal poles and mast arms to replace around the intersection. Some travel lanes through this intersection may be temporarily closed during this process. Therefore, motorists must pay special attention to the signage during these days.

Longview Drive (from Rockfalls Dr to Scottview Dr) from **Monday, August 25 for 6 months** (Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily, weather permitting)

Why and Details: Starting Monday, August 25, crews began replacing water mains and laterals under Longview Dr from Rockfalls Dr to Wallowa Rd and Hathaway Rd from Longview Dr to Old Westham Rd. Traffic control measures are in place as alternating lanes on Longview Dr will be closed between Rockfalls Dr to Scottview Dr.

Did someone forward you this message? Subscribe for future updates below.

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Three Big Things

Trying to keep up with all that is happening in Richmond can be overwhelming. Every week, I will share the three most important things to know for the upcoming week.

1 - City: Fire Prevention Safety Tips from RFD

As you may have heard, there was a house fire in the 4th District on December 30 that tragically resulted in a fatality. Of course, I'm devastated by any loss of life and my heart goes out to the victim's family and loved ones.

#2 - City: [Drastically] Increased Penalties for Demolitions in Old and Historic Districts

At our meeting this past Monday, Council passed [Ord. 2025-265](#), which drastically increases the penalties for unauthorized demolition, razing, or moving of certain properties in old and historic districts. Specifically, this amended ordinance sets

In response, the Richmond Fire Department conducted a community canvas to share fire safety prevention tips, provide free smoke detectors to all residents, and offer to check any existing smoke detectors to ensure they were working properly. While RFD is conducting a City-wide prevention campaign, they always canvas neighborhoods that experience a fatal house fire to offer an additional level of support. I'm so grateful to them for organizing the canvas in the 4th District so quickly, even with the holidays, and for making contact with **over 100 houses**.

Additionally, at my request, RFD provided their top "Fire Safety Tips." You can access (and share) this flyer, but I also want to highlight some of the most important tips:

- Keep anything that can burn **at least three feet** away from heating equipment (including furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves, or portable space heaters)
- Have a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have heating equipment cleaned and inspected each year by a qualified professional.
- Remember to turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Test smoke alarms at least once per month.

Lastly, the Richmond Fire Department provides and installs smoke detectors to all Richmond residents **completely free of charge**. To request anything related to smoke detectors (including installation and checking your existing smoke detectors), please call **804-646-1526**.

Having attended the canvas, I can attest to how invested RFD is in

the civil penalty at **twice the market value of the razed, demolished, or moved building**. Clearly, this is a significant penalty and will hopefully make it unprofitable for any developer to alter a structure in an old and historic district and "beg forgiveness later."

Of course, there is a lengthy process by which a property owner can gain authorization for demolishing, razing, or moving a property in an old and historic district. Those properties are, by nature, extremely old, and if there are safety and wellness concerns that can only be addressed by demolition, razing, or moving, there is process to do so. That process is outlined in the ordinance linked above, so if you are interested in learning more, I encourage you to read the full ordinance and/or news articles in the "In the News" section below.

Additionally, to learn more about the City's old and historic districts (i.e., the areas in which this ordinance will apply), you can review this [document](#). While this amended ordinance doesn't solve every problem or address every concern related to Code Refresh, it is an important step nonetheless. I was proud to co-patron this ordinance and thank Council Vice President Katherine Jordan for taking the lead on it. I'll continue to partner with colleagues to look for additional ways to bake in protections for existing properties as we consider revisions to our Zoning Code.

the safety of their communities. They were devastated by the loss of life in our neighborhood and dedicated to doing everything they can to ensure we don't experience additional loss. If you ever need anything related to fire safety, **please be sure to proactively (and frequently) reach out to RFD and/or visit your local station.**



#3 - City/District: You Asked About Code Refresh, They Answered - DPU

As I shared in last week's newsletter, my office compiled all of the questions submitted by the audience at our district meeting and shared them with the relevant City agencies (DPU, DPW, and Planning) for response. This is the first in a three-part series where we are sharing their responses with you, starting with DPU.

If you have additional questions about Code Refresh, you can attend one of the [Public Engagement Opportunities](#) or email Richmond200@va.gov.

- **Stormwater impacts my parcels. Existing businesses have not been required to catch stormwater – why?**
 - Many existing businesses may have been constructed prior to the adoption of the current stormwater management standards. Those businesses are grandfathered under regulations that were in place when they were constructed. New construction may be required to retrofit stormwater infrastructures or manage stormwater when a substantial redevelopment, expansion, or change in use occurs that triggers a requirement for stormwater management.
- **How will the increased stormwater runoff be addressed? What stormwater management requirements will apply to the RD-A, RD-B, and RD-C zoning? Post-development runoff no greater than pre-development runoff does not apply to single family lots.**
 - Stormwater runoff is regulated and permitted through the RESMP permit when development is proposed. Please review the [RESMP Permit Process Quick Sheet](#) for more information on the RESMP process. Typically, for many types of development, the runoff post-construction cannot be greater than run-off pre-construction, however there are some exceptions. The City also tracks 311 requests about localized flooding and works to assess and address flooding due to maintenance (i.e., clogging due to debris or leaves) or requires added infrastructure (more inlets, larger pipe).
- **Will an increase in hard surfaces require the builder to improve drainage from increased runoff? (Especially in areas without drains or ditches, such as Stratford Hills)**
 - Typically, for many types of development that trigger the need for stormwater permitting, the runoff post-construction cannot be greater than run-off pre-construction; however, there are some exceptions. In areas where pipe infrastructure owned by DPU needs to be expanded to accommodate additional flow from development, we work with developers and builders so the City does not assume all of the cost burden. The City will evaluate the additional capacity needed for the development. In some cases, the City may also increase capacity further if it is determined to be in the best interest of the community. In these scenarios, the City will share in the allocation for the portion not needed for the specific development.
- **Similarly, how will power, gas, sewer, or water serve this new DU? Or ADU?**
 - DPU is working with the Planning Department to provide guidance and specifics to accompany Code Refresh updates. The City is not planning to install any new transmission, distribution, or collection lines for these new units and will utilize existing infrastructure, and will maintain the infrastructure through planned capital improvement projects. Each property will be evaluated separately to determine the best way to provide service. In some cases, a public utility easement may be required or a private utility easement may be required. Note that DPU does not have oversight for power, but will work in coordination with Dominion Energy.

Upcoming Events

January

February

Sat., Jan. 17, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. [Bring One for the Chipper Recycling Event](#) @ 1710 Robin Hood Road

Mon., Jan., 19 City Offices Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Tues., Jan. 20, 7 p.m. FHNA Meeting @ Forest Hill Presbyterian Church

Tues., Jan. 20, 7:15 p.m. SCA Meeting @ Southampton Recreation Association

Mon., Jan. 26, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

Mon., Feb. 2, 4 p.m. Organizational Development Committee Meeting @ City Hall

Mon., Feb. 9, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

Wed., Feb. 11, 6 p.m. WHNA Meeting @ Westover Hills United Methodist Church

Mon., Feb. 16 City Offices Closed for Presidents' Day

Tues., Feb. 17, 7 p.m. FHNA Meeting @ Forest Hill Presbyterian Church

Tues., Feb. 17, 7:15 p.m. SCA Meeting @ Southampton Recreation Association

Mon., Feb. 23, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

Council Catch Up

This week:

January 12: City Council held our regular meeting. We approved papers to establish a civil penalty for the demolition of properties in old and historic districts, to support funding for the Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Framework, and support education and prevention efforts related to overdoses, among others. You can watch that recording [here](#).

Next week:

January 20: The Land Use, Transportation, and Housing Committee will hold their regular monthly meeting. They will hear an update about the Maggie Walker Community Land Trust; key papers for consideration include authorizing the CAO to execute a grant agreement to implement certain Vision Zero safety program activities, authorizing the CAO to execute a project agreement related to the Gillies Creek Greenway, and a resolution to commit the City to using energy efficiency best practices. You can tune into that meeting [here](#).

January 21: The Finance and Economic Development Committee will hold their regular monthly meeting. They will hear a presentation from the Department of Economic Development on Coliseum, Convention Center, and City Center Redevelopment. Key papers for consideration include changing the deadline for the Mayor's budget submission to Council from March 27 to March 11, requiring 10% of any annual surplus to fund bonuses to retirees in the Richmond Retirement System, and a number of initiatives to address the opioid crisis. You can tune into that meeting [here](#).

In the News

Here's a few news stories from the week to keep you informed:

[Watch the Council meeting from Jan. 12](#)

[Pending land sale to state delegate on hold as Richmond officials debate process](#) (The Richmonder)

[Council OKs heavy penalties for unauthorized demolitions in historic districts](#) (The Richmonder)

[Richmond toughens penalties for illegally demolishing historic buildings](#) (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

[Vasen Brewing Company opens on Forest Hill](#) (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

[Richmond appoints Foster Curtiss as Inspector General](#) (WTVR)

[Fire crews go door-to-door after 5 deaths spark safety concerns](#) (WTVR)

Important Contact Information



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

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Get Updates Fast on Social Media

In fast-paced situations, I will post to my social media channels in real time as I learn new information. It's always a good idea to follow me on Facebook and Instagram and check my stories for quick information.



City Resources

WHO TO CONTACT?



DEPARTMENT OF
CITIZEN SERVICE
AND RESPONSE

EMERGENCY?

- Police
- Fire
- Medical



Call 9-1-1

URGENT?

- Power outage
- Live power wire
- Natural gas and water leaks
- Sinkholes
- Raw sewage
- Downed streetlight
- Tree blocking road
- Tree on power line
- Traffic signal out
- File a police report
- Homeless crisis

Dominion Energy
866-366-4357

Public Utilities
804-646-4646
then press 1

**Non Emergency
Police**
804-646-5100

Continuum of Care
804-972-0813

PERMITS?

- Permits
- Inspections

**Planning and
Development**
804-646-1628

UTILITIES?

- Utilities billing
- Utilities payments

Public Utilities
804-646-4646

SOMETHING ELSE?

- General information
- Social services
- Trash cans and litter

- Finance and tax questions
- Road, alley and sidewalk repairs
- Streetlight repairs
- Street sign repairs
- Storm water and storm drains
- Code enforcement issues
- Zoning issues
- Damaged tree assessments
- Parking issues

RVA 311
Call 3-1-1 or
804-646-7000

RVA311.com

RVA311 mobile app

Contact Citizen Service and Response with questions or concerns.



Richmond Public Schools

4th District School Board Member [Wesley Hedgepeth](#)



Richmond Public Library



Central Virginia Waste Management

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