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Subject: Fourth District Fridays 3.21.2025
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To: danielapple@me.com

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Dear Fourth District Friends,

It's been a busy week at City Hall, and I want to keep you updated on some of the most important discussions affecting our community.

At our Public Safety meeting, I raised serious concerns about the reliability of our 911 system. Despite claims of improved response times, I fact checked the Director of Emergency Communications for misleading the public about calls to 911 going to voicemail. When it comes to public safety, transparency and accountability are non-negotiable, and I will continue pushing for real solutions to ensure every emergency call is answered without delay.

This week also saw the Mayor's proposed budget presentation, which includes a historic **\$249 million investment in Richmond Public Schools**—a 64% increase since FY17. As a proud product of public schools, a longtime advocate, and a former member of Superintendent Kamras' administration, I have always fought for RPS students and teachers. That's why I take issue with the false and provocative claim (please see The Richmonder article below) that the Mayor's proposed budget somehow shortchanges RPS children when it **increases funding to RPS by \$9.6 million over last**

In this issue:

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Constituent Corner:

- Number of Constituent Emails Responded to Last Week: **132**
- Number of PUBLIC 311 tickets in the 4th District Last Week: **65**
- Top Issues from Constituents: **Missed bulk pickup, road conditions/safety, speed mitigation**

Where you can find me:

- Councilmember Abubaker Office Hours on **Tues., April 1, 7-8 a.m.** at Blanchard's (4930 Forest Hill Ave)
-

fiscal year or that Council would acquiesce to a budget that provides anything less than what our children need to succeed. The reality is that RPS must decide whether this year will mark a shift away from the usual budget season politics toward true accountability and partnership. I know which approach I will take, but I will not stand by and allow political spin to replace the hard work that real solutions require.

While RPS attributes much of this year's budget increase to collective bargaining, they have known for years that these agreements were coming. It is unfair to blame financial challenges on paying teachers a living wage, particularly when responsible fiscal planning could have accounted for this. Instead, the Superintendent and School Board must focus on making tough but creative choices to ensure that this significant investment is used in the best possible way—always prioritizing students and supporting educators.

Beyond education, I will continue advocating for sensible investments in our city's infrastructure, including ongoing road improvements, pedestrian and bike safety, and a more efficient and responsive City Hall. These investments are crucial to ensuring Richmond works better for everyone, and I will keep pushing for solutions that deliver real results.

With Fourth District Love,

Sarah

Quick Notes:

7100 Jahnke Road SUP has been continued until April 1

Lane Closures

Forest Hill Ave (between W 45th and 46th Streets) from Jan. 6 to April, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (M-F)

Why and Details: Water main replacement. Flaggers will be out to alternate traffic flow through the area.

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

[Sign Up for this Newsletter](#)

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 - District and City: Zoning Districts Survey and Zoning Advisory Council Working Groups

The City is undergoing a thorough and lengthy process to rewrite the Zoning Code, that they have and will continue to include multiple opportunities for public comment.

The latest venue to provide feedback is the Proposed Zoning Districts Survey. Under the

2 - City: City Council Budget Season Schedule

Mayor Avula announced his proposed budget yesterday, which is online for your review [here](#).

While the Mayor gets the first shot at the budget through his proposal, Council has the final say. To that end, we have scheduled four work sessions and two public hearings to dig into all aspects of the budget. While there will be opportunities for

new Zoning Code, the zoning codes (i.e., residential, mixed use, industrial) will be consolidated and modernized. Zoning codes determine which projects are permitted by-right and which require a Special Use Permit, so they are integral to the process, and resident feedback on them is especially valuable. The deadline for this survey is **March 31** and you can access it [here](#).

There is also an opportunity to contribute by joining a Code Refresh Working Group. This opportunity will be managed by the Planning Department. I encourage all 4th District residents to consider this opportunity and to complete the [interest form](#) by the **April 13** deadline!

public comment at the hearings, the work sessions are an opportunity for Council to dialogue internally and ask questions of City Administration - the public is invited to attend the work sessions, but it won't be the venue for public comment.

By state code, the RPS budget must be adopted by **May 15** and the City's must be by **May 31** however, I anticipate that both budgets will be adopted simultaneously before **May 15**.

I have included the dates for the work sessions and public hearings in the calendar below, but you can also view the Council's full budget calendar [here](#).

3 - District: Cavitation on Forest Hill Avenue in front of Food Lion

As you may have seen, an indentation (or as DPU described it, "a cavitation") emerged in front of the Food Lion on Forest Hill Avenue this past Saturday. Fortunately, my office was alerted quickly and we, in turn, notified DPU, who had crews on-site within an hour.

Upon investigation, which included audio and video scoping of the stormwater, sewer, and water lines, DPU determined that a stormwater line was in need of minor repair. That repair was completed and DPU contractors have excavated and backfilled the cavitation and restored the roadway back to standard. DPU has confirmed that the roadway is safe for travel and all other lines are undamaged.

Upcoming Events

April

Mon., April 7, 1 p.m. Council Budget Work Session #2 (Overview of Operating Budget) @ City Hall

Mon., April 7, 4 p.m. Organizational Development Committee Meeting @ City Hall

Tues., April 8, 6 p.m. Oxford Annual Meeting @ St. Luke Lutheran Church

Wed., April 9, 7 p.m. WHNA Meeting @ Westover Hills United Methodist Church

Mon., April 14, 1 p.m. Council Budget Work Session #3 (Overview of Capital Improvement Budget) @ City Hall

Mon., April 14, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting and Public Hearing on Mayor's Proposed Budget @ City Hall

Tues., April 15, 7 p.m. FHNA Meeting @ Forest Hill Presbyterian Church

May

Mon, May 5, 4 p.m. Organizational Development Committee Meeting @ City Hall

Mon., May 12, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting and Final Vote to adopt FY26 budget (anticipated) @ City Hall

Wed., May 14, 7 p.m. WHNA Meeting @ Westover Hills United Methodist Church

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

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

Mon., May 26 City Offices Closed for Memorial Day

Tues., May 27, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

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

Wed., April 16, 10 a.m. Council Budget Work
Session #4 (Council Amendments Consideration) @
City Hall

Fri., April 18 City Offices Closed for Spring Holiday

Mon., April 21, 1 p.m. Council Budget Work Session
#5 (Council Amendments Consensus) @ City Hall

Wed., April 23, 6-7:30 p.m. 4th District Council
Meeting, ft. Mayor Avula (Location TBD)

Sun., April 27, 11:30 a.m. Forest Hill Spring Classic
Bike Race @ Forest Hill Park

Mon., April 28, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting and
Introduction of Council Budget Amendments @
City Hall

Council Catch Up

This week:

March 24: City Council held our regular meeting. All papers under consideration were on the consent agenda - you can find the agenda [here](#) and view the recording [here](#).

March 25: The Public Safety Committee held our monthly meeting. We received dueling presentations on 911 call response times from the Richmond Ambulance Authority and Department of Emergency Communications. The discourse got a bit heated and I encourage you all to watch the recording [here](#).

March 26: The Governmental Operation Committee held our regular monthly meeting. We heard presentations concerning Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) updates and audit recommendations, Human Resources vacancy and overtime reports, waste reduction and the circular economy (including the Office of Sustainability's proposed bag tax), and the Urban Forestry Committee's Six Month Status Report. We also received a last-minute presentation from the Finance Department, which explained the error that led to 6,000 erroneous tax rebate checks being mailed as well as their plan to have all corrected checks mailed by next Friday, April 4. You can view the recording [here](#).

March 27: Council held a special meeting for Mayor Avula to introduce his proposed budget. You can view the recording [here](#) as well as the full budget document [here](#).

Next week:

No Council meetings.

In the News

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

[Watch the City Council Meeting from Mar. 24](#)

[Avula's first Richmond budget includes \\$9.6 million more for schools and higher utility bills, but no tax increases](#) (The Richmonder)

[What happened with the erroneous tax rebate checks? A Richmond official explains](#) (The Richmonder)

[Richmond City Council to consider plastic bag tax this spring](#) (The Richmonder)

[Ambulance authority, city department battle over who will field Richmond 911 calls](#) (The Richmonder)

[Richmond is paying tens of millions for overtime every year. That's raising some eyebrows.](#) (The Richmonder)

[CarMax Park, under construction, already getting upgrades](#) (Richmond Times-Dispatch)
[VCU approved to buy \\$300 million Altria building](#) (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

[Judges threaten legal action against city over condition of John Marshall Courts Building](#) (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

[Richmond leaders meet with community to discuss solutions for homelessness](#) (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



DEPARTMENT OF
**CITIZEN SERVICE
AND RESPONSE**

WHO TO CONTACT

Emergency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Fire • Medical >	Call 9-1-1
Urgent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power outage • live power wire • Natural gas • water • raw sewage • downed streetlight • Tree blocking road • tree on power line • traffic signal out • file a police report • Homeless crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">>>>> 	<p>Dominion Energy 866-366-4357</p> <p>Richmond Public Utilities 804-646-4646</p> <p>Non Emergency Police 804-646-5100</p> <p>Continuum of Care 804-972-0813</p>
Permits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits • Inspections >	Planning and Development 804-646-1628
Over 70 non-emergency requests including:			
Something Else?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		<p>RVA 311 3-1-1 or 804-646-7000</p> <p>online at RVA311.com</p> <p>Use the RVA311 mobile app</p>
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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