

From: Councilmember Sarah Abubaker sarah@rvacitycouncil.ccsend.com
Subject: Fourth District Fridays 5.22.2026
Date: May 22, 2026 at 1:28 PM
To: danielapple@me.com

CA



May 22, 2026 | Issue 60



Dear Fourth District Friends,

This week's Fourth District Meeting on pedestrian and bike safety was such a joy!

We had an incredible turnout across all ages — kids' activities, hands-on resources for adults, and plenty of food and fun to go around. This is exactly why I'm shifting our district meetings to be more family-friendly and accessible: when we create welcoming spaces, our community shows up.

The crowd also asked excellent questions, and several clear themes emerged:

- the lack of sidewalks in the 4th District (we're second to last citywide in sidewalk coverage),
- safety around our schools, and
- improving coordination between the Department of Transportation and the Richmond Police Department.

Any questions that weren't answered during the meeting were collected and passed along to Mr. Boenau for follow-up. We look forward to sharing those responses in the next district newsletter.

In this issue:

- Summer Season at Pony Pasture and JRPS
- Update on Pedestrian Beacons on Forest Hill Ave and 41st/43rd Streets
- Overview of Payment Register Legislation
- Upcoming Events
- Ways to Stay Engaged
- City Resources

Constituent Corner:

- Number of Constituent Emails Responded to Last Week: **88**
- Number of PUBLIC 311 tickets in the 4th District Last Week: **54**
- Top Issues from Constituents: **District meeting follow up, personal property tax bills**

Quick Notes:

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

It was wonderful seeing neighbors connect, kids learn about bike safety, and families walk away with practical tips (and a few new helmets!). Grateful to everyone who spent their Monday night with us, and excited for what's ahead.

With Fourth District Love,

Sarah

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: Summer Season at Pony Pasture and JRPS

Memorial Day marks the time for our annual "Summer Season at Pony Pasture and JRPS Update." We received many emails from residents concerned about conditions and behaviors at Pony Pasture last weekend, so I wanted to take the time to share the planning that occurs each year to ensure the community is able to enjoy our beautiful park space in a safe and accessible manner.

Beginning this weekend, you will notice a few key efforts at Pony Pasture and throughout JRPS:

1. **City street parking enforcement.** As in years past, DPW will be deploying the City's existing parking enforcement vendor, SP+, to do proactive parking enforcement at Pony Pasture and throughout JRPS. While SP+ typically spends most of their enforcement time in areas that have higher parking density (Downtown, Shockhoe Bottom, Scott's Addition, the Fan, etc.), DPW has asked them to provide on-street enforcement

#2 - City: Update on Pedestrian Beacons on Forest Hill Ave and 41st/43rd Streets

As many of you noticed and inquired, the pedestrian beacons on Forest Hill Ave and 41st/43rd Streets were removed.

The purpose for this removal was a planned upgrade that will provide significant safety enhancements once completed. However, like all of you, I was concerned about safety issues in the interim period between the beacon removal and upgrade.

After significant back-and-forth with DPW, I was able to secure the **temporary** portable pedestrian crossing signs that went up this week. While these are not a direct replacement for the beacons, I felt it was important that we have some visible signage in this interim period.

You can find full details in this [press release](#) from DPW. While the dates are obviously not current, the details with the project remain the same. Some key highlights from the project include:

around JRPS for the past few summers, which has made a big difference in illegal parking along streets.

2. **Parking enforcement on Parks property.** Parking enforcement on parks property, including in parking lots and any other illegal parking within the parks, is provided by the Parks Department's existing security vendor, ASG. They are aware of the need for increased enforcement on parks property, so park users should see a noticeable difference this weekend.
3. **Increased RPD patrols.** RPD has committed to increased patrols in the Pony Pasture and JRPS areas. As you're all well aware, RPD remains significantly understaffed, so these increased patrols need to be paired with residents calling RPD to report illegal/problematic behavior.

While the City is taking multiple proactive steps to provide enhanced safety starting this weekend **and lasting throughout the summer season**, it remains **imperative** that residents call RPD to report any illegal/problematic behavior. You can **always** call 911, and should for things like gunshots. For issues like illegal parking that doesn't present a safety risk, you can call the RPD non-emergency number (804-646-5100). Again, never hesitate to simply call 911 as they will forward to you the non-emergency number if needed. With the low staffing levels, RPD has to make data-based decisions on where to proactively have officers on patrol, so it is **extremely** important that they have the call/911 data from Pony Pasture/JRPS when making their staffing decisions.

I am very grateful to our partners in the Parks Department, DPW, and RPD to their continued commitment to a safe and accessible experience at Pony Pasture and in JRPS this summer, but **please** remember that this is a community effort and that we all play a part.

- Installation of **pedestrian refuge islands with ADA ramps**, which will allow pedestrians to cross Forest Hill Ave in shorter, safer stages and reduce the amount of time they are exposed to traffic.
- Relocation of the **Rapid Flash Beacon (RFB)**, which will be enhanced with a permanent power source
 - The RFB alerts drivers with bright and quick flashing lights to let drivers know when somebody is crossing the street and is only activated when a pedestrian presses the button.
- Conversion of the existing buffered bike lanes into **hardened, more protected bike lanes** to keep vehicles out of the bike lanes at key intersections.

This situation has two simultaneous truths: I am grateful that DPW has made a significant investment in the safety infrastructure in the 4th District and I was a little frustrated by the process through which it will be completed. The lack of interim pedestrian safety measures is unacceptable as is the lack of clear and proactive communication. I will continue to share feedback with my partners in City Administration to ensure that safety investments are paired with extensive and appropriate community outreach.

#3 - City: Overview of Payment Register Legislation

The City's payment register has been one of the hottest topics in City Hall and the media over the past few weeks. I recognize that this topic can be confusing and feel a bit like "inside baseball," so I wanted to take the time to offer a thorough explainer of the issues.

In 2015, City Council unanimously passed an ordinance that required the Finance Director to publish a register of every payment made by the City at the close of each month. The following information was required to be published on the register:

- Name of the payee
- Check number, wire number, or electronic funds transfer number
- Date of payment
- Amount of payment
- Invoice description
- Fund code
- Cost center
- Account code
- Payment document used
- Type of disbursement

Further, the ordinance specified that the register must be searchable to provide maximum transparency and enable members of the public to locate individual payments. The ordinance did allow certain information to be redacted consistent with state law, such as the names of individuals receiving certain types of assistance payments.

You can read the full original ordinance [here](#).

The register was published as required from 2015 to 2019. In 2019, then-Mayor Stoney's Administration stopped publishing the payment register and removed the previously published registers from the City's website. At the time, Mayor Stoney's Administration cited concerns that the register was creating too much cumbersome work for City staff and that potentially sensitive information could be missed and accidentally uploaded for public view.

The issue has resurfaced this year and is currently the subject of legislative proposals from Mayor Avula and Councilmember Gibson (co-patroned by Councilmember Trammell). Here is an overview of the two proposals:

Mayor Avula's Proposal - Ord. 2026-081

Mayor Avula is proposing a pretty significant overhaul of the payment register. Rather than including all of the information above for every City financial transaction, Mayor Avula's proposal would primarily include payments to vendors for City services and to employees who are reimbursed for City-related expenses.

Further, Mayor Avula is proposing to remove the provision to publish payments that are especially likely to have sensitive information that needs to be redacted, citing the need to reduce the administrative workload on City staff. The following transactions are specifically **excluded** from Mayor Avula's proposal:

- Payments to City employees (excluding reimbursements, which would be included in Mayor Avula's register).
- Payments to individuals receiving refunds or assistance payments (excluded in the original register as well).
- Tax refunds or tax-related payments.
- Payments made pursuant to legal settlements or claims.

- Payments protected under state or federal privacy laws.
- Any payment that would disclose personally identifiable information that is protected by law.

Consequently, Mayor Avula is proposing that the following information **will be published**:

- The name of the vendor or employee being reimbursed
- The total amount of the payment
- The cost center
- The City department issuing the payment

Further, Mayor Avula's proposal states that the Finance Director will publish a searchable register monthly "within a reasonable time period following the close of the reporting period to allow for reconciliation and review."

You can read Mayor Avula's full proposal [here](#).

Councilmember Gibson's Proposal - Res. 2026-R019

Councilmember Gibson cites the provision in City Code that allows Council to conduct investigations of the Mayor's Administration. Councilmember Gibson cites several factors as to why she believes an investigation is necessary, including:

- The Administration's stated admission that they are not publishing the payment register as required.
- A letter sent by Mayor Avula to Councilmember Gibson that outlined the administrative demands of publishing the register.
- An instance where *The Richmonder* submitted a FOIA request for the register data for Fiscal Year 2025 (7/1/24-6/30/25). They were quoted \$5,732.40 by the Administration for it to be fulfilled, even though the information was required to be published for free under the current City Code.
- Her belief that the Administration is increasing the administrative demands by redacting more information than is allowed by state law.

You can read Councilmember Gibson's full proposal [here](#).

In terms of next steps, both proposals were set to be considered by Council's Finance and Economic Development Committee on Wednesday, but they were continued to the June 17 meeting. They will be subject to hearings in June, at which point the Committee may vote on whether to advance them to the full Council. If they are advanced out of committee, they could be up for a final vote as soon as the June 22 Council meeting (though that could be delayed if there are any amendments). As always, I will keep you all informed about how this legislation advances.

In the meantime, I encourage you to read this [comprehensive article](#) on this topic from *The Richmonder*.

Upcoming Events

May

Sat., May 23 DPW Annual Neighborhood Cleanup for Westover Hills/Forest Hill (see details in [March 20 newsletter](#) or on [DPW website](#))

Mon. May 25 City Offices Closed for Memorial

June

Mon., June 1, 4 p.m. Organizational Development Committee @ City Hall

Fri., June 5 Personal Property Tax Bills Due

Mon. June 8 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @

Mon., May 25 City Council Closed for Memorial Day

Tues., May 26, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

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

Wed., June 10, 7 p.m. WHNA Meeting @ Westover Hills United Methodist Church

Tues., June 16, 7 p.m. FHNA Meeting @ Forest Hill Presbyterian Church

Tues., June 16, 7:15 P.M. SCA Meeting @ Southampton Recreation Association

Fri., June 19 City Offices Closed for Juneteenth

Mon., June 22, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

Council Catch Up

This week:

May 19: The Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Committee held their regular monthly meeting. The committee recommended approval (with amendments) of the paper to conduct a feasibility study for the City potentially purchasing real property for affordable housing; they continued the paper concerning amending City Code related to Virginia Friendly Landscapes. You can watch that recording [here](#).

May 20: The Finance and Economic Development Committee held their regular monthly meeting. I am thrilled to share that the committee recommended approval for my paper to create a real estate tax deferral program for City property owners (which amendments that I had previously negotiated and agreed to); they also recommended approval of papers changing the fee structure for Main Street Station, the Work Plan for the Downtown Special Service and Assessment Districts, applications for Enterprise Zones, and a feasibility study for establishing a registry for non-profit housing providers to provide a list of affordable housing options. The committee continued papers concerning collective bargaining and the City's payment registry. You can watch that recording [here](#).

Next week:

May 26: Council will hold our regular meeting (delayed by one day to Tuesday due to Memorial Day). The meeting's agenda includes only consent agenda items, including several SUPs, the establishment of Enterprise Zones (including for Forest Hill, Stratford Hills, and Stony Point), and the acceptance of funding for public health services. You can tune into that meeting [here](#).

May 27: The Governmental Operations Committee will hold our regular monthly meeting. We will hear a presentation on the plastic bag tax and RVAgreen 2050 goals. We will consider papers regarding illicit discharge and connection violations related to the City's Erosion and Stormwater Management Program, proposed updates to the snow removal policies, and proposed updates to the Public Utilities and Services and Sister Cities Commissions. You can tune into that meeting [here](#).

May 28: The Public Safety Committee will hold our regular monthly meeting. We will hear a presentation from RFD Chief Segal on RFD Response Times and Updates and RPD Chief Edwards on Traffic Enforcement and Safety. Our only paper for consideration is a proposal to revert to having the Richmond Ambulance Authority receive calls directly for medical emergencies. 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 May 11](#)

[GRTC commits to another year of fare-free service](#) (The Richmonder)

[Richmond holds speed management symposium after 4 pedestrian deaths in 2026](#) (12 On Your Side)

[Richmond 911 debate: Mayor, Ambulance Authority clash over EMS call handling](#) (12 On Your Side)

[GRTC reveals redevelopment vision for future Pulse line](#) (Axios Richmond)

Important Contact Information



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

Fourth District City Councilmember

Sarah Abubaker

Cell: 804.418.5963 (Text or Call)
sarah.abubaker@rva.gov

Fourth District Council Liaison

Timmy Siverd

Office: 804.646.5646
Cell: 804.767.0841
timmy.siverd@rva.gov

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

Councilmember Sarah Abubaker | 900 E. Broad St Suite 300 | Richmond, VA 23219 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

