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To: danielapple@me.com

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A Newsletter from City Councilmember Sarah Abubaker
Fourth District Fridays

July 10, 2026 | Issue 65



Dear Fourth District Friends,

As summer is in full swing, I wanted to let you know that this newsletter will be taking a short break for the next few weeks. While we'll be away from your inbox, there will be no shortage of important work happening. In the weeks ahead, I'll be participating in a state legislative retreat with my Council colleagues, joining neighbors for National Night Out, and attending neighborhood association meetings. You can find me on social media, and my office number is 804-646-6263.

As always, my office remains committed to working with — and for — the residents of the 4th District. Feel free to reach out with questions, concerns, or any feedback.

I look forward to reconnecting with you when the newsletter returns on Aug. 14.

With Fourth District Love,

Sarah

In this issue:

- Potential 1% Sales Tax for School Construction
- Reminder/Updates on Latest DPU Billing Issues
- Misleading Signs Related to Code Refresh
- Ways to Stay Engaged
- City Resources

Constituent Corner:

- Number of Constituent Emails Responded to Last Week: **127**
- Number of PUBLIC 311 tickets in the 4th District Last Week: **65**
- Top Issues from Constituents: **DPU billing issues, Code Refresh, 1% sales tax proposal**

Quick Notes:

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

There will be **NO** newsletter on July 17, July 24, July 31, and August 7. We will return to our regular newsletter schedule on August 14.

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: Potential 1% Sales Tax for School Construction

In the recently-passed state budget, the General Assembly gave local governing bodies (City Council, in Richmond's case) the authority to allow a voter referendum on whether to implement a 1% sales tax to fund the construction and renovation of public school buildings.

If approved, revenues collected from the tax can only be used for school infrastructure projects and cannot be used for day-to-day operational expenses. Additionally, the sales tax could not be assessed on groceries, essential hygiene products, and prescription medications.

To be clear: the action that is before Council is only whether to allow the voter referendum. If Council votes to allow the referendum, the decision on whether to implement the 1% sales tax will be made by Richmond voters and the City will be bound by the results of the referendum.

Accordingly, Res. 2026-R028, which is the legislation that would allow the referendum, was introduced by Council President Cynthia Newbille and Council Vice President Katherine Jordan on Monday. The resolution was recommended for approval by the Education and Human Services Committee yesterday and will be before Council for a final vote at our next meeting on Monday, July 27.

If approved by Council, the Richmond Circuit Court will then order the

#2 - City: Reminder/Updates on Latest DPU Billing Issues

In my most recent newsletter on June 26, I shared information about the DPU billing issues caused by their transition to a new internal system.

As we have continued to receive an extremely high volume of emails about these latest billing issues, I wanted to address it again in today's newsletter.

There are two key resources I'd like to call your attention to:

- My [June 26 newsletter](#) so you can read my full initial update
- DPU's [FAQs Document](#) on this issue

In the two weeks since my last newsletter, the primary update from DPU has been additional instructions on how to use AutoPay, for those of you who use that option. I've copied that portion of the FAQs below for easiest access.

As always, you are welcome to send your DPU billing issues to my office so we can escalate them to DPU. I do encourage you to review the FAQs as they have satisfied most residents' questions; but if you continue to have concerns, we will be happy to escalate them to DPU on your behalf.

Additional AutoPay Information

What should I expect for July?

July bills will look slightly different due to the utility rate changes that take effect on July 1 and the implementation of DPU's new billing system.

referendum to be placed on the ballot for the November election.

Looking ahead, I anticipate a majority of Councilmembers will vote to allow the referendum as it 1) puts the decision directly in the voters' hands and 2) doesn't incur additional costs to the City since there is already an election scheduled. Should the referendum move forward, I will share more information in this newsletter closer to the November election.

Customers will see separate line items for utility charges on their July bill. Usage and base fees incurred through June 30 will be billed at the previous rates, while usage and base fees incurred on or after July 1 will be billed at the new rates. This ensures that charges are calculated accurately based on the applicable rate structure during each portion of the billing period.

Why wasn't my automatic payment processed? What actions are needed?

For AutoPay through MyHQ:

Customers enrolled in automatic payments whose payment due dates fell/fall between May 26 and July 10, 2026 had their scheduled automatic payments impacted by a system issue following the implementation of DPU's new customer service systems.

Any late fees resulting from this issue will be removed. Customers do not need to contact DPU to have those fees reversed.

Automatic payment processing will be restored July 10, and DPU's payment vendor will add existing AutoPay information to the new account numbers (if not already completed by the customer). Customers who remain enrolled in AutoPay will have future payments processed automatically according to their normal payment schedule.

For Automatic Bill Payments set up as Bill Pay through financial institutions:

Customers enrolled in automatic payments through their financial institutions whose payment due dates fell/fall between May 26 and July 3, 2026 had their scheduled automatic payments impacted by a system issue following the implementation of DPU's new customer service systems.

As a result, those automatic payments were delayed but have been processed. Any late fees resulting from this issue will be removed. Customers do not need to contact DPU to have those fees reversed.

Customers also need to update their account numbers (to the new 10

account numbers (to the new 10-digit account number to ensure no delays) **AND** the payment address to:

City of Richmond
Department of Public Utilities
P.O. Box 70621
Philadelphia, PA 19176-0621

For Automatic Payment through prior AUPP form submitted to DPU:

No action is needed by customers. Automatic payments were uninterrupted.

Please note AUPP is no longer available, as ACH auto payments are now handled through MyHQ.

#3 - City: Misleading Signs Related to Code Refresh

Earlier this week, signs like the one pictured below were placed throughout the 4th District, mostly in its western portion. They have caused considerable concern among 4th District residents and have led to subsequent emails to my office, so I felt it was important to address them in this newsletter.

These signs were not placed by the City government. They were placed by an outside group and are **NOT** related to any active rezoning applications. They appear to have been made to resemble the signs that the Zoning Department is required to post when a legitimate rezoning application is under consideration. I have also included an example of the legitimate sign below for comparison. As you will see, there are considerable differences between the two signs.

I have addressed Code Refresh many times in this newsletter, so I want to provide the same clarifications that I have to individuals who have reached out to my office directly, including:

- The third draft of Code Refresh is expected in late July or early August.
- The release of the third draft will be followed by substantial public engagement and feedback.
- It is possible that the Planning Department will finalize their proposal after the third draft, but there is **nothing** being formally considered by Council at this point.
- The previous two drafts did not propose to allow triplexes or commercial uses in single-family neighborhoods. While I have not seen the third draft yet, I have been assured that it is even further scaled back from the first proposal and certainly does not include anything related to triplexes or commercial uses in single-family neighborhoods.

I know there are **significant** legitimate concerns about the current Code Refresh proposals, many of which I share.

However, as you all know, I count honest, transparent communication as one of my core values and find the seemingly intentional spread of misinformation deeply concerning. I believe it is essential that we scrutinize and have dialogue on every aspect of Code Refresh — and it is equally essential that we do so in a forthright and factual manner.



Unofficial signs placed by outside groups earlier this week



Official signs placed by Planning Department/City Administration when a formal zoning change is pending a vote by City Council

Upcoming Events

July

Tues., July 21, 7 p.m. FHNA Meeting @ Forest Hill Presbyterian Church

Tues., July 21, 7:15 P.M. SCA Meeting @ Boyd Realty Group (6784 Forest Hill Ave)

Mon., July 27, 6 p.m. City Council Meeting @ City Hall

August

Sun., Aug. 2, 6-8 p.m. Music in the Park, ft. Tin Can Fish Band @ Forest Hill Park

Tues., Aug. 4 National Night Out Events in Westover Hills, Cedarhurst, Forest View, and Oxford Neighborhoods (please contact the relevant neighborhoods for more information)

Council Catch Up

This week:

July 7: The Organizational Development Committee meeting held our regular monthly meeting. We heard presentations on the Solar Purchase Power Agreement and the transition of medical emergency 911 calls to the Richmond Ambulance Authority. We did not have any papers for consideration. You can watch that recording [here](#).

July 7: Council held an extremely brief special meeting for the sole purpose of introducing new legislation so it can be considered at our regular Council meeting on July 27. You can watch that recording [here](#).

July 9: The Education and Human Services Committee held their regular monthly meeting. They had robust discussions with Superintendent Kamras for RPS Updates and DCAO Amy Popovich for Human Services Updates. You can watch that recording [here](#).

Next week:

July 13: Council will hold a work session with the Mayor and Richmond General Assembly delegation to begin collaborating on the City's legislative agenda for the 2027 General Assembly session. The meeting will be held at the Valentine Museum from 12-5 p.m. and will be open to the public - however, as this is a "work session" and not a formal Council meeting, there will not be an opportunity for public comments. You can find the meeting agenda [here](#).

July 15: The Finance and Economic Development Committee will hold their regular monthly meeting. They will hear a presentation from the Director of Economic Development on economic development plans, pipelines, and metrics. Key papers for consideration include Mayor Avula's proposal to update the City payment register and Councilmember Gibson's request to for the Organizational Development Committee to investigate the Administration's failure to publish the register as required by City Code. 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 June 22](#)

[Crime continues downward trend in Richmond; Fan passes Shockhoe for car gun thefts](#)
(The Richmonder)

[Avula admin now says medical 911 call switch will happen in late July](#)
(The Richmonder)

[911 call transfer process needs more time before implementation](#) (12 On Your Side)

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

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

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