



RICHMOND
SUSTAINABILITY &
RESILIENCE
COMMISSION

Richmond Sustainability and Resilience Commission

2024 Annual Report

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Included in the Richmond Sustainability and Resilience Commission (“SRC”) 2024 Annual Report is an overview of the SRC’s function and aim as a City Commission, a summary of the work of the SRC for 2024, the Commission's By-Laws, the current membership of the Commission including commissioners terms, as well as a the minutes from the 6 SRC meetings that took place over the calendar year.

Overview

The Richmond SRC is a 10-member public Commission tasked with advancing climate action in Richmond. The SRC collaborates with the Richmond Office of Sustainability (“OOS”) to implement the RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Action Plan 2030 and holds 6 annual meetings that are free and open to the public. Originally the SRC was created as the Green City Commission (GCC) and was established by Richmond City Council in 2009. In early 2024, the GCC was rebranded as the SRC to more accurately reflect the aim and work of the group.

2024 Year End Review

2024 was a year of transition for the SRC, as in January, we hosted our first in person meeting since the COVID-19 Pandemic, with hybrid meeting options also available. Six convenings of the SRC took place in 2024: on 1/29, 3/18, 5/20, 7/15, 9/18, and 11/18. The SRC welcomed two new commissioners over the calendar year: Abigail Thompson (Mayoral Appointee) and Harrison Wallace (Environmental Protection Appointee). Officers of the SRC in 2024 included Daniel Hart (Chair and Sustainability Appointee), Victor McKenzie Jr. (Vice-Chair and Mayoral Appointee), and Dave Evans (Secretary).

Originally meeting in the annex room of the basement of the Richmond Public Library at 101 East Franklin Street in Downtown Richmond, active participation and attendance from the public quickly necessitated the need for the SRC to find a larger meeting space, and in mid-year we began meeting in the Gellman Room on the main floor of the library. In these times of climate crisis and decisiveness in society, many are yearning for connection and one of the SRC’s strengths in 2024 was serving as a conduit for the public and members of the community to gather at the intersection of issues of social and environmental concern that relate to sustainable development, climate action, and resilience in the City of Richmond.

In an effort to provide a platform for community-based organizations to share their needs and to highlight their work, the SRC provided the space for numerous local organizations to share their work in 2024. Another highlight and strength of the SRC in 2024 was serving as a platform for the City of Richmond’s Office for Sustainability to report-out and share their work with the Commission for feedback and consultation in addition to orienting members of the public who’ve been increasingly showing up to learn what the City is doing in terms of creating a more

sustainable culture and how they can get involved. 2024 continued to be a year of positive capacity building and staffing growth in the City's Office for Sustainability, and the SRC is grateful to Council and City leadership for this investment.

Additional highlights of the SRC's impact in 2024 included:

- SRC Chair and Vice-Chair serving on the grant administration and review team for the Neighborhood Climate Resilience Grant Program, supporting the distribution of \$250,000 funds for local climate justice and resilience projects.
- Supporting Richmond Tree Week in partnership with Reforest Richmond and the newly established Urban Forestry Commission.
- Engaging with Mayor Levar Stoney, City leadership, and non-profit leaders at the Building a Greener Richmond panel in October of 2024.
- Supporting the City's educational Sustainability Workshops and the development of the City's Sustainability Guide, helping to provide educational access for community members in the City of Richmond to engage in sustainability education and climate literacy.
- Supporting the continued implementation of RVA Green 2050: the City of Richmond's Climate-Equity Centered Action Plan.
- An updated webpage for the SRC hosted on the Office for Sustainability's website, thanks to partnership with OOS staff.
- SRC leadership engaging with City leadership through providing welcoming remarks and invitation call for engagement with the Commission at the FY24 Office of Sustainability Annual Report at City Hall.
- Hosting a social for community members at Veil Brewery in Forest Hill in early December.

Looking Ahead

Moving into 2025, the SRC will continue to serve as a space for connection, networking, and relationship building at the intersection of sustainability, climate justice, and resilience in addition to continuing to pursue opportunities to advance and advocate for policy in the City.

Potential opportunities for 2025 include:

- Supporting the development of and integration of sustainability, climate justice, and resilience best practices into Richmond Inspires: the City's upcoming Parks and Recreation Vision Plan.
- Exploring opportunities to expand the impact of the newly established Sustainable Design Standards to non-municipally owned properties through the encouragement and

buy-in of related standards for private capital construction, development and renovation projects in the City.

- Consider and evaluate opportunities related to establishing a “Youth Council” for sustainability, either as an off-shoot of the SRC or as part of the existing commission.
- Opportunities around affordable housing at the intersection of social sustainability
- Seek opportunities for integration with other related City Commissions, such as the Urban Forestry Commission, Clean City Commission, and Public Utility Commission.

We look forward to a productive 2025 as we work towards a more sustainable and resilient Richmond. The SRC’s meetings for 2025 will continue to take place in person with hybrid options available at the Main Branch of the Richmond Public Library from 4:00-5:30 pm on 1/27, 3/17, 5/19, 7/21, 9/22, and 11/17. Cities, local municipalities, community-based organizations, businesses, and individuals all have a critical role to play in the creation of a more just, equitable, sustainable, and livable world as we move into 2025 and the SRC will continue to support efforts towards sustainability, climate justice, and resilience in the City of Richmond.

SRC By-Laws

Established

There is hereby created and established a Sustainability and Resilience Commission for the purpose of providing expertise and information to support the equitable sustainability efforts of the City of Richmond.

Composition; Terms of Office

The Commission shall consist of nine voting members and one non-voting member who shall be a City employee in the Office of Sustainability appointed by the Mayor. The Council shall appoint seven voting members. The Mayor shall appoint two voting members.

Members shall demonstrate expertise in sustainability or equitable climate action through professional or volunteer efforts, or experience, which may include policy expertise, technical skills, community outreach, organizing, advocacy, or other sustainability and climate related skills. The composition of the Commission’s membership shall reflect the diversity of the City. The voting members of the Commission shall serve for terms of three years and shall be limited to two consecutive terms. All voting members shall reside in the city.

Upon the expiration of a term of office, the member holding that office may continue to serve until a successor is appointed and qualified. Any vacancy shall be filled for the unexpired term in the 3 same manner as provided in this subsection. All other aspects of the Commission and its membership not addressed in this division shall be governed by Article V, Division 1 of the Chapter.

The **responsibilities and duties** of the Commission include:

- Provide expertise and information to the City to support the equitable sustainability efforts of the City.
- Consult with the state government and other local governments with regard to such governments' sustainability efforts and methods.
- Recommend changes to the Code of the City of Richmond (including the City's zoning regulations and building codes), the Code of Virginia and other laws as necessary to implement sustainable methods in the city of Richmond.
- Encourage the adoption of sustainable business and building approaches by the private sector and sustainable, community-led approaches by the residential sector.
- Meet with other City boards and commissions with a similar or related purpose on a regular basis to coordinate the goals, efforts, and recommendations of each such board or commission with the goals, efforts, and recommendations of the Commission.
- Consult with the Office of Sustainability to support the implementation of the RVAgreen 2050: Climate Equity Action Plan 2030, established by Resolution No. 2023-R005, adopted February 13, 2023, any amendments to such plan, and any future sustainability plans adopted by the Council.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Council by December 31 of each year.

Rules of Procedure

The Commission may adopt rules of procedure or by-laws not inconsistent with this division to govern the conduct of its meetings and operations. The Commission may elect a chairman and such other officers in accordance with the Commission's rules of procedure or by-laws.

Meetings

The Commission shall hold regular meetings at least quarterly and other meetings as needed.

Administrative Support

The Commission shall have as its staff the Council Chief of Staff and such other staff as the Chief of Staff may identify. The Council Chief of Staff shall coordinate with the Chief Administrative Officer and the City Clerk as needed to furnish the Commission with such other staff and resources as may be necessary to assist the Commission in discharging the duties imposed on the Commission by this division.

Members

The SRC has 10 seats of which 7 are Council-appointed and 3 are Mayor-appointed.

Commission Member List

Name	Criteria for Appointment	Status	Term	Commence	Terminate
Abigail Thompson	Mayoral appointee		1st Term	7/1/24	6/30/27
Daniel Hart Chair (Formerly Vice Chair)	Sustainability Rep. (Appointed by Council)		1st Term	11/14/22	10/25/25
David Evans Secretary	At Large Rep. (Appointed by Council)		1st Term	7/23/22	7/22/25
Harrison Wallace	Environmental Protection appointee		1st Term	5/13/24	10/25/25
Laura Thomas	Employee of Richmond Office of Sustainability		1st Term	5/18/23	8/10/26
Bill Nickerson	Energy Efficiency Rep. (Appointed by Council)		1st Term	11/9/20	10/26/22
			2nd Term	8/25/22	10/25/25
Christiane Riederer	At Large Rep. (Appointed by Council)		1st Term	7/25/22	10/25/25
Rob Jones	Forestry Rep. (Appointed by Council)		1st Term	10/26/23	10/26/26
Luis Huertas	Green Building Rep (Appointed by Council)		1st Term	5/8/23	10/25/25
Victor McKenzie Vice Chair	At Large Rep. (Appointed by Mayor)		1st Term	11/14/23	8/10/26
Laura Thomas	Director of Office of Sustainability, Mayoral appointee		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Richmond Sustainability & Resilience Commission Meeting Minutes

Jan. 29, 2024: 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Agenda:

4:00 pm	Call to Order, Introductions, & Intentions
4:10 pm	Approval of minutes + Update SRC name change process
4:15 pm	New Officer Elections for 2024
4:25 pm	Update from Laura Thomas, Director of Richmond Office of Sustainability - Looking ahead to 2024
4:40 pm	Annual GCC/SRC Report
4:50 pm	Discussion of 2024 Agenda
5:10 pm	Upcoming GCC Meetings, Dates, & Times 3/18, 5/20, 7/15, 9/16, 11/18
5:15 pm	Community Updates & Announcements
5:30 pm	Close

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: David Evans, Daniel Hart, Daniel Klein (chair), Victor McKenzie, and Christiane Riederer were present. Commission members Luis Huertas, Rob Jones, Bill Nickerson and Laura Thomas were unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the Public: Peter Braun RHHD), (PlanRVA), Vernon Hall, Bethany Mizell, Qui Nguyen (Parks and Recreation), Gregory Powers (JR-SWCD Board), Rosie Riley, Jane Sayner, and Michael Smart (OOS).

The Meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by Daniel Klein. He noted the official name change to Sustainability and Resilience Commission, to better align with ongoing and planned focus areas, is expected in March 2024. Daniel also explained that he has recently been hired by the Office of Sustainability, and thus will need to end his term on the Commission. Daniel's position will be posted soon by the City. Also, Bill Nickerson has recently been appointed to the Public Utilities Commission, and it is unclear if Bill will complete his GCC term.

Daniel Hart was elected to be the Commission chair for 2024. Given that several members were absent, a vote on backfilling the Vice Chair position was deferred until the March '24 Commission meeting.

Daniel Klein continued to chair this meeting, and briefly discussed expectations of Commission members. Members should take lead for one of the issue areas/topics the Commission follows, research the matter, engage/collaborate with others, and share issue updates at semi-monthly meetings. Daniel proposed that all 2024 meetings would be held at the Main Branch City

Library, with a hybrid approach to allow members and the public to participate remotely. The schedule, location and hybrid type meetings were approved.

Daniel highlighted the Commission's 2023 activities, referencing the annual report he submitted to the City: (1) Urban Forestry – new Commission stood up, \$6 million USDA grant, and an urban forester was hired; (2) Waste Minimization – engagement with Industry/Clean City Comm, and composting pilot program at parks and libraries (including Main Branch); (3) VCAP – the VA Conservation Assistance Program, was stood up for the City, with the James River SWCD and Capital Region Land Conservancy providing admin and technical support; and (4) a climate action program *dashboard* has been discussed and proposed to increase public awareness of climate work in Richmond.

A few comments were shared during Daniel's remarks:

- Daniel Hart noted that in recent years the Commission has advocated budget priorities to City Council and the Administration, but to date we haven't for 2024.
- Greg Powers reported that Chesterfield County is interested in a composting program.
- Christiane observed that an industrial scale compost facility in the metro area is needed to significantly expand composting from the City's current pilot program.

Office of Sustainability (OOS) Update: Michael Smart highlighted a number of recent and upcoming activities and accomplishments of the Office of Sustainability, in Laura Thomas' absence:

- Brian Epps recently departed his position as Sustainability manager, this position has been posted and applications are being evaluated now.
- Feb, 15th RVA Green2050 event: a celebration of the first anniversary of the adoption of RVA Green2050 will be held at Common House Richmond (303 W. Broad St.), from 6-8 pm.
- Fifteen (15) Neighborhood Resilience Grants were awarded a total of \$855,000 from 2023 ARPA funds. Additional ARPA funding is pending, to support more neighborhood scale climate action work in 2024.
- The Racial Equity Roundtable, active during development of RVA Green2050, will be reinvigorated to ensure focus on equity during implementation of the Plan.
- The State of the City event, Mayor Stoney's last such event as mayor, is on Jan. 30th at the Science Museum. A reception begins at 6pm, and the mayor's remarks will be at 7pm.
- Victor McKenzie asked a question about the Climate Ready Community Fund

2024 Commission Agenda: Daneil Klein led a discussion of priorities for the Commission in the year ahead:

- OOS is looking for the Commission to provide ongoing support for the Sustainability Guide, currently under development. The goal is to create a tool to promote RVA Green2050 implementation overall, by improving public awareness, involvement and support for the Plan's implementation.

- Commission members could serve as points of contact for various elements of the Plan, and identify community and school groups that members would engage to discuss RVA Green 2050 goals and implementation.
- Daniel K. suggested we might work to develop an inventory of community groups to engage on sustainability. Rosie noted that school and youth groups would be good opportunities for public outreach as well. Daniel Hart observed that environmental clubs at schools of secondary and advanced education may be rich opportunities, and Daniel Klein noted that PTA's may be good outreach targets as well.
- Dave Evans suggested Commission members might each identify one school and one community association to reach out to and engage in discussion. Victor McKenzie said some members might feel more inclined toward school or community outreach, and we could engage where we each feel drawn. Qui noted that many citizens are used to reaching out to city government using the RVA 311 call, and it may be possible to explore ways to use it to reach the public.
- Victor suggested that we should identify groups that are doing important sustainability work in the Richmond area, and invite them to present and discuss their works with the Commission, ideally one such presentation for each meeting.
- Daniel Hart shared his current thoughts about leading the Commission: he plans to reach out to each Commission member to discuss areas of interest/ideas for Commission meetings, and also plans to reach out to Commission members and past public participants with meeting agendas in advance of each 2024 meeting .

Member/Participant Updates

- Qui discussed the City's pilot composting program. It has been grant-funded to date, and is being made permanent by adding it to Parks and Recreation Department budget. She also noted that (1) there are improvements underway for Branch Trail, near George Wythe high school, and (2) the City is pursuing grant funding to create more gathering spaces on Belle Island.
- Richmond will host both Earth Day and Arbor Day events in April.
- PlanRVA has received a \$1 million grant for CO2 reduction planning/climate resilience by Richmond metro jurisdictions.
- Electrify RVA recently completed a letter of advocacy for the 2024 City budget.

The next Commission meeting will be on Monday, March 18th (4:00 – 5:30pm) at Main Branch Library.

Richmond Sustainability & Resilience Commission Meeting Minutes

March 18th, 2024: 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Agenda

- Call to Order, Introductions, & Intentions 4:00pm
- Open Seat and Elections for Vice Chair 4:10pm
- City of Richmond Office of Sustainability Updates
4:15pm
(Laura Thomas, Director of Sustainability and Mike Smart, Sustainability Engagement Coordinator)
- Participatory Budgeting Process, (Civic Innovation Manager, Matthew Slaats) 4:40pm
- SRC Website Overview (Daniel Klein, Sustainability Coordinator)
4:45pm
- James River Soil and Water Conservation District Update
4:50pm
(Dave Evans, SRC Secretary)
- Community Climate Collaborative (Jacqui Bauer, Climate Services Manager) 4:55pm
- Upcoming GCC Meetings, Dates, & Times (5/20, 7/15, 9/16, 11/18)
5:10pm
- Community Updates & Announcements 5:15pm
- Close 5:30pm

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: David Evans, Daniel Hart, Daniel Klein (chair), Luis Huertas (Zoom), Victor McKenzie (Zoom), Bill Nickerson, Christiane Riederer, and Laura Thomas were present. Commission member Rob Jones was unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the Public: Kate Brazwell, Jackie Bower (C3), Peter Braun (PlanRVA), Martha Dollman, McKenna Dunbar (Sierra Club), Emily Frances (past president), Leila Gustavsson (OOS), Ryan Jackson (City Budget), Daniel Klein (past president, OOS), Jane Mallechi (ULI), Bethany Mizelle, Qui Nguyen (Parks and Recreation), Dawn Oleksy (OSS), Jane Sayner, Matthew Slack (City Budget), Michael Smart (OOS), Tara Worden (OOS) and (Harrison Wallace).

The Meeting was called to order shortly after 4:00 pm by Daniel Hart. Daniel welcomed participants and briefly discussed recent history of the Green City Commission, now formally renamed the Sustainability and Resilience Commission (RSC). Daniel noted for all participants that this is the Commission's first "hybrid" meeting, allowing for remote participation. All present in person or remotely then introduced themselves.

Daniel turned to the replacement of the Commission's Vice President position (which he vacated to take on the president's role). Dave Evans nominated Victor McKenzie, who accepted the nomination. Christianne Riederer seconded the motion; Victor was unanimously supported by Commission members; and will serve the remainder of 2024 in that position. Daniel also informed everyone that there is a current vacancy (Daniel Klein's former position) on the Commission, and encouraged those interested to check the City's Commission website ([Boards and Commissions | Richmond \(rva.gov\)](#)).

City Update (Laura Thomas)

- Laura welcomed new OOS staff Leila Gustavsson (Leila.Gustavsson@rva.gov), and Tara Worden (Tara.Worden@rva.gov). Tara is Sustainability manager, and Leila is in a temporary grants specialist position. Two additional staff are being hired into the office, which all in attendance were excited to hear.
- Final work on the Sustainable Design Standards, drafted in 2023, will follow a Summer 2024 community engagement process.
- The City's Urban Forestry partnership (includes 4 local community organizations) will soon have access to the \$6 million in USDA grant funding awarded in 2023. The City will complete a Canopy Assessment and then authorize and fund tree planting work by the local organizations.
- Neighborhood Climate Resilience grants (13 in all) were selected for \$800K in funding, which is pending City Council approval.
- Green House Gas Inventory: Dawn Olesky is wrapping up the comprehensive update of the City's GHG inventory, which will be shared during Earth Day Events.

Participatory Budget Process (Matthew Slack)

- The City is beginning a community engagement process to award \$3 million in funding for small scale local projects recommended by City residents. Each of the nine Districts will receive \$200 K, and the remaining \$1.2 million (40%) will go to disadvantaged communities (Social Vulnerability index), in advancement of EJ-40 goals.
- The upcoming meetings are all about rebuilding community trust in city government. All City residents 14 and older may attend, with the goal of increasing engagement of youth and young adults in local governance.
- Questions were raised about (1) how funding decisions would be made; Matthew indicated that following the \$200K/District allocation, "Justice40" principles would guide decisions, and (2) whether there is a website laying out the participatory budget process; The "People's Budget Richmond Rulebook" was shared with Commission members in followup communications.
- The first year (2024) of the process will focus on community engagement and project selections, and the second year (2025) will allow for project implementation. In the next (2026-7) cycle, \$5 million will be awarded in this manner, and \$7 million is planned for 2028-9). All funds are derived from the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which must be expended on "physical", aka on-the-ground, projects.

- In followup to the meeting, Matthew shared with Commission members e-copies of his English and Spanish language meeting handouts, and the larger “People’s Budget Richmond Rulebook.”

Citizen Engagement in Sustainability (Michael Smart)

- To advance its goals of citizen engagement, OOS will : a series of meetings that would include educational presentation leading to discussions of sustainability. Modules on Sustainability, RVA Green2050, and Taking Action are envisioned.
- Michael asked Commission members and others present to consider volunteering to speak at 3 or more community organizations later this year. Michael will work with volunteers to identify organizations interested in hosting a meeting.
- Earth Day 2024: OOS is also looking for volunteers to help staff the City’s Earth Day public activities. Most have yet to be scheduled, but anticipate that many will be held April 19-21, and the Bryan Park event at RVA Big Market” on April 20) has the greatest need for volunteers. Victor requested that a written schedule of Earth Day events be shared when available.

SRC Webpage Update (Daniel Klein)

- Daniel Klein is focused on updating the OOS webpages, which currently focus on RVA Green2050 development. The update will be comprehensive in nature, including OOS staffing, RVA Green2050 implementation, and the Sustainability and Resilience Commission meetings website.

VCAP Update (Dave Evans)

- Dave indicated that implementation of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is proceeding, though slowly due to the vacancy of the lead technical position that is within the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC). The James River Soil and Water Conservation District (JR-SWCD) has one of their staff conducting approximately 3 fields visits monthly, while an average of four new applications are submitted by City property owners.
- An important goal of VCP implementation in Richmond is to advance social equity goals as well as achieve water quality improvements. While targeted outreach to disadvantaged communities is envisioned, until CRLC’s lead technical staff position is filled, those plans are on hold.

Community Climate Collaborative (C3, Jackie Bower)

- C3 is a nonprofit that was founded in Charlottesville in 2017, with a focus on local action to advance ecological sustainability. Jackie is new to C3, as its Richmond area lead.
- Existing programs focus on policy (advocacy research), and partnering with the commercial sector, which she noted is extremely important for Richmond as it pursues its RVA Green2050 goals.

- An April 18th Kickoff Event will be held in Richmond to promote commercial sector partnerships.

Community Updates

- Qui Nguyen shared information about upcoming Earth Day events. The first will be at the Science Museum of Virginia on Saturday, April 13.
- Many additional events will be held April 19-27, most are still in the planning stages. There will be events for community tree planting, and there will be a larger Arbor Day Richmond event on April 20th. Qui encouraged participants to look at the City’s Volunteer Opportunities through the CFEngage website, which were shared in followup to the meeting: (<https://www.cfengage.org/organization/001A000000aAvQLIA0>) (<https://www.cfengage.org/organization/0011J0000113a9FQAQ>) (<https://www.cfengage.org/organization/001A000000aAvPSIA0>), and consider participating.
- Qui noted also that the City is undertaking a comprehensive update of its Parks Master Plan, called “Richmond INSPIRE”. This process has already begun with internal stakeholder meetings, and will continue for the next 8 months with Community Engagement sessions.
- Peter Braun discussed the City’s “Mayorathon” civic education project. A candidate questionnaire has been developed to document the candidates stance on Transportation, Housing, Public Safety, Environment and other issues. Peter encouraged us to share information on this with our networks, and shared an e-copy of the Mayorathon handout in followup to the meeting.
- McKenna Dunbar of the Sierra Club asked if the SRC is linked well with other related Commissions, and sees benefit to more collaboration among SRC and the following related commissions: Clean City, Urban Forestry and Public Utilities.
- Bill Nickerson noted that he is a member of the newly formed Public Utilities Commission. The Commission is still in the formative stages, and has yet to hold its first meeting.

Richmond Sustainability & Resilience Commission Meeting Minutes

May 20th, 2024: 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Agenda:

4:00 pm Call to Order and Introductions

Approval of Minutes

SRC Website is Live

Update from City of Richmond Office of Sustainability

Sustainability Guide, Forest Service Dollars, Sustainability Design Standards and Diamond District , FY 25 Budget, GHG Inventory

Update from General Assembly - RGGI

Upcoming SRC Meetings, Dates, & Times

7/15, 9/16, 11/18

Community Updates & Announcements

5:30 pm Close

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: David Evans, Luis Huertas (Zoom), Rob Jones, Victor McKenzie (acting Chair), Bill Nickerson, Christiane Riederer, and Laura Thomas were present. New Commission member Harrison Wallace was unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the Public: Emily Frances (past president), Jack Iglehart (OOS), Daniel Klein (past president/OOS), Jane Mallechi (ULI), Ann Marie Katherine, Michael Smart (OOS), Jonathan Williams (Sunrise Movement), Lee Williams (VA Sierra Club), and Zach. MS Teams remote participants included: Ailita Whalen (Richmond city resident and Urban Agriculture Program Technician with the Farm Service Agency), Leila Gustavsson (Sustainability Grant Administrator, Office of Sustainability), Julie Buchanan (Public Relations Coordinator, Central Virginia Waste Management Authority), Michael Wong, and Samuel Lilly.

The Meeting was called to order at 4:06 pm by Victor McKenzie, who chaired the meeting due to Daniel Hart's travel. Victor welcomed Commission members and public participants, all who introduced themselves.

Victor asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the **March 18, 2024 meeting notes**. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes, which was offered, seconded, and unanimously **approved** by Commission members present.

OOS Website: Daniel Klein, OOS, gave a presentation of the recently redesigned Office of Sustainability website. Daniel/OOS's goals for the redesign were to improve accessibility of the RVAGreen2050 Plan and streamline and improve public contact with OOS. Also, the webpage now has a direct link to the Sustainability and Resilience Commission, to access meeting registration, agendas, and past meeting notes.

There is direct access from the homepage to each of the plan's "Pathways", to display the strategies framed for each. A new section has been added to focus on plan implementation and

outcomes. For outcomes, Daniel is researching the best/most relevant data sources to report on progress and equity for plan implementation. Outcome data will be (ultimately) updated automatically as the source data is kept current.

The “Our Staff” and “Connect with us” sections facilitate public access to OOS’s activities, individual OOS staff, and the office’s monthly newsletters are available for viewing and download.

- Commission members conveyed appreciation for the features of the revised website, addressed data update frequency (noted above), and raised interest in having hardcopy public outreach materials to engage audiences that may favor handouts. OOS will consider what easy to produce hardcopy (screen shots, and formatted output) could be made available.
- A public member asked how clearly progress data will be presented, noting that currently it is reported that 12% of actions are complete. Will stages of progress be evident? Daniel said that is the intent, and suggested stacked barcharts for action categories may be a valuable display tool to show the desired detail.
- A Commission member complimented OOS on the redesigned website, and noted he found the “Pathway” strategy displays very helpful to understand the plan better overall. He suggested it may be valuable to consider a standing agenda slot of about 15 minutes to focus in on an individual pathway as part of each meeting, rotating pathways through the year.
- A public member inquired as to whether the website is searchable, and Daniel indicated it will be (internal searches within the OOS website).

Daniel concluded by encouraging Commission members and the public to share any feedback and suggestions with him.

RVAGreen2050 Public Outreach: Laura Thomas asked Michael Smart to bring the Commission up-to-date of public outreach plans. Michael conveyed that:

- OOS appreciates Commission members and others who have offered to present at future community meetings on RVAGreen; others are welcome.
- A “**Train the Trainer**” Zoom meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 28th from 6:00-8:00pm.
- A meeting to discuss climate action funding opportunities is later this week, Thursday, May 23rd at 4:00pm.

In discussion, Michael noted that the general expectation of RVAGreen presenters is to present at approximately 1 community event each quarter (4/yr.). The first pilot outreach meeting is planned for June 6th – details to follow. Michael invited members and the public to share their suggestions for local groups to present to; OOS will maintain an outreach inventory and set up plans/priorities to follow through.

Recent Grant Funding to Richmond: Laura noted the \$6M USDA Forest Service grant is ready for City Council approval on June 10, and OOS hopes to see work underway in July. Laura briefly noted the \$350K grant for a Greenhouse Gas Inventory update and grant.

- Laura noted that many other grant applications are under development, and that Richmond Gas is participating in a proposal to develop a “beyond gas” utility plan for Richmond. Renewable energy experts will study and recommend a mix of alternative energy sources.

- A Commission member noted a recent article that the City will spend \$40 million for gas line repairs/replacements. In the discussion it was noted that OOS is not involved in this program, but understands it would address gas leaks and degraded pipelines, and that upgraded lines would have the ability to transport geothermal energy in the future.

Additional OOS News: Laura noted that the *Sustainable Design Standards* that will apply to all city facilities are ready for public engagement. Draft technical standards were recently completed. The *Diamond District* design presents a near-term opportunity to apply the new standards, and OOS is leading the design team to focus on street design, bike paths and tree plantings. The *2025 budget* was premised on modest reductions to current funding/staffing. In that tough climate, OOS was approved for another 2 FTE, to take staffing to 8 FTE. In addition, the neighborhood resilience grant program received a \$250K increase. Finally, she noted that the *Greenhouse Gas Inventory* would be released soon, and shared with Commission members.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Update: Laura opened a discussion of the status of Virginia’s participation in RGGI, following Governor Youngkin’s decision to pull out of the compact. Richmond had received \$8 million in funding from Virginia’s initial participation, and the City has pressed for VA to return, including legal action. The House of Delegates sought to reverse the Governor’s action, but ultimately that effort was not successful and Virginia remains outside of RGGI.

- A participant asked whether the City had formally expressed its disappointment that VA remains outside of RGGI.

- A Commission member noted that approximately 10% of funds Richmond has received from RGGI have gone to weatherization projects.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule, and Community Updates: Victor reviewed the schedule for the remainder of 2024: July 15, Sept. 16, and Nov. 18th. He then welcomed everyone in attendance to share any relevant information with the group.

- Emily Frances noted that PlanRVA (Peter Braun lead) is seeking participation in the upcoming Mayorathon, which will frame questions to put to the City’s mayoral candidates for written response. Anyone interested to participate in framing the environmental questions should contact Peter, Emily, or Victor. Mayorathon planning meetings will begin in the next few weeks.

- Daniel Klein shared information about a “Pop Up” park in Scotts Addition, created by temporarily closing off traffic from the street. It will be up for a few more weeks, check it out.

- Rob Jones noted that the organization “Bike Race Across Georgia” has organized an East Coast Greenway race that will be coming through Richmond on June 30th – details TBD.

- Laura shared that the Southeast Sustainability Directors will hold their May 2025 meeting in Richmond.
- Jonathan Williams of Sunrise Movement noted that his group of young adults are working for climate justice in Richmond.

Victor requested and received a motion and Committee approval to close the meeting at approximately 5:25pm.

Richmond Sustainability & Resilience Commission

Monday, July 15th, 2024 – 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Agenda:

4:00 pm Call to Order and Introductions

- Who are you and what are you hoping to get out of this meeting?
- Approval of Minutes
- Update from City of Richmond Office of Sustainability
 - Sustainability Guide Overview
 - NRC Grant - Chair & Co-Chair
 - East End Solar Community - Engagement Sessions
 - Sustainable Design Standards - Community Engagement Sessions
 - GHG Inventory Roll Out
 - Innovation Hub
- Virginia Clean Cities Introduction - Graham Sheridan
- Upcoming SRC Meetings, Dates, & Times: 9/16, 11/18
- Community Updates & Announcements

5:30 pm Close

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: David Evans, Daniel Hart, Rob Jones, Bill Nickerson (MS Teams), Laura Thomas, Abigail Thompson, and Harrison Wallace were present. Lui Huertas, Victor McKenzie, and Christiane Riederer were unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the Public:

Sign-in Sheet: Emily Frances (past president), Jack Iglehart (OOS), Daniel Klein (past president/OOS), Michael Smart (OOS), Lee Williams (VA Sierra Club), Robert Sullivan, Matt Szucs, Maria Duster, Richard Walker, Qui Nguyen, Peter Braun, Lee Williams, Kate Braswell, Bethany Mizelle, Luke Hancock, McKenna Dunbar, Bo Fairlamb, Jan Baker, Asheley Greene, Robert Sullivan, and Graham Sheridan.

The Meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by Daniel Hart, who briefly discussed the Sustainability and Resilience Commission's (SRC) purpose and meetings. Daniel welcomed Commission members and public participants, all whom introduced themselves. Daniel noted that he had circulated notes from the **May , 20th, 2024 meeting notes**, and asked if there were any questions or revisions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes, which was offered, seconded, and unanimously **approved** by Commission members present.

OOS Update: Laura Thomas, OOS Director, noted that the Richmond City Council approved the RVAGreen2050 Climate Action Plan in February, 2023, and that good progress is happening to implement it. Laura then turned to her staff to highlight the following topics:

- **Sustainability Guide:** Michael Smart noted that the guide is being shared for comment with the public, and thanked Commission members and others who participated in Zoom training session to present it to the public. One public information session was held during the previous week, and another is planned for later in July.
- **Neighborhood Resilience Grants:** Michael also shared that Richmond has awarded \$800K in local action resilience grants, derived from ARPA Federal funding. The City will fund additional grants totaling \$250K for the upcoming year. This amount (\$250K) is planned as an annual allocation within the City's budget.
- **East End Solar:** A handout was provided to summarize the proposed Solar Farm Project proposed for 3800 East Richmond Road to create a sustainable energy hub and pollinator garden. Public information sessions are scheduled for July 19 and 24. The revenue from the Solar Farm will be reinvested in the surrounding community.
- **Sustainable Design Standards:** Tara Worden noted that three public engagement sessions are scheduled for July 18, 20, and 24 to address the Sustainable Design Standards. The information sessions will also address as the City's infrastructure investment decision process; future plans are to revisit how community benefit analysis is incorporated in these decisions.
- **Diamond District:** Laura noted that a major planning session is scheduled for July 20th. OOS has lead within the City for the Diamond District's design, which provides an

excellent opportunity to apply the new sustainable design standards to planning building, streetscape, parks, vegetation and other elements of the district's design.

- **Richmond Sustainability Grants:** There are \$10 million in awarded grants, all listed on the OOS website. A new integrated sustainability grant proposal of \$20 million has been submitted to EPA, and another \$3 million grant application has moved forward to Phase II.
- **Greenhouse Gas Inventory:** The recently updated inventory for Richmond shows a slight overall reduction from 2018 levels, primarily from the Transportation sector. Public outreach is planned for Fall 2024.
- **Book Club Initiative:** Jack Iglehart of OOS noted that he will be leading a monthly book discussion group. He welcomes suggestions.
- **Innovation Hub:** This initiative will work to promote a circular economy when current waste stream products are repurposed/reused, and includes efforts to create local markets. This effort will be funded by the City in the year ahead, and it will be in partnership with the VCU Business School's supply chain work. Richmond will be a national pilot city, supported by Circular City International and a grant from the McArthur Foundation.
- **Implementation Tracker:** Daniel Klein provided an update on the OOS website implementation tracker, designed to foster transparency and accountability in assessing implementation of RVA Green2050 actions. Progress can be viewed for all 132 discrete actions, and the information can be sorted by Pathway (e.g. Buildings and Facilities) or Progress Status (Completed, Underway, etc.). Daniel requested Commission members and public participants spend time exploring the site and offer OOS feedback and recommendations for further refinements of the tracker.
- A Commission member inquired about how equity in implementation is being monitored. OOS noted that there is currently an informal review of proposed projects to ensure the overall distribution appears equitable, with an intention to more formally evaluate implementation equity in the future.

Virginia Clean Cities: Laura introduced Graham Sheridan who presented information on the work his Federally-funded agency can support. Graham's presentation focused on electrification and alternative fuels, and can be found at: via connecting w/ the SRC Chair, Daniel Hart at danielemmetthart@gmail.com

- There are 75 Clean City Coalitions funded by the Federal Department of Energy.
- A key takeaway from Graham is that Virginia spends \$50 million/day on petroleum products, while producing no petroleum. Pursuing electrification and alternative fuels can retain much of these funds in the Commonwealth.
- Local efforts to convert fleets over time to EVs, as included in the Richmond Connect's E-mobility Plan, was noted as a positive development. Virginia Clean Cities can provide expert consultation on strategic planning for fleet modernization.
- As a Federally funded program, VCC must direct 40% of its project funding to socially/economically disadvantaged communities per the Federal government's Justice 40 initiative.

- Graham cited a few notable local developments: (1) the Lego facility in Chesterfield will use hydrogen fuel technology, and (2) Henrico County was awarded a \$3 million from the Electric School Bus Grant program (the City also applied for this, but did not receive a grant award).

Community Updates/Announcements

- Qui Nguyen noted that the City of Richmond has a new parks plan, “Richmond Inspire.” Parks and Recreation is looking to identify local park stewards for all Richmond City parks. Qui also noted that “Richmond Trees” is the new name for Arbor Day RVA, which will be held Oct. 5-11, 2024.
- Toby Vernon discussed the Richmond Tool Bank, which he heads. Richmonders can request public outdoor furniture projects; already, Richmond Public Schools and many parks have had outdoor furniture projects completed by the Tool Bank.

Daniel expressed appreciation to all who attended, observing the high level of public participation at this meeting, and closed it at approximately 5:20pm. The next SRC meeting will be held at Main Branch Library, from 4:00 – 5:30pm on Monday, Sept. 18th.

Richmond Sustainability & Resilience Commission

Monday, Sept. 16th, 2024 – 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Agenda:

4:00 pm Call to Order and Introductions

Who are you and what are you hoping to get out of this meeting?

Approval of Minutes

Update from City of Richmond Office of Sustainability - Laura Thomas

- Welcome Africana Thornton
- East Richmond | Solar Farm & Meadow Update
- SDS Update
- Cool the City
- Fireside Chat w Mayor Levar Stoney
- EPA Region 3 Director Site Visit
- Other

Richmond Tree Week - Qui Nguyen

Upcoming SRC Meetings: 11/18

Community Updates & Announcements

5:30 pm Close

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: David Evans, Daniel Hart, Victor McKenzie, Christiane Riederer, Laura Thomas, and Abigail Thompson (MS Teams) were present. Lui Huertas, Rob Jones, Bill Nickerson, and Harrison Wallace were unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the Public:

Sign-in Sheet: Emily Frances (past president), Jack Iglehart (OOS), Daniel Klein (past president/OOS), Tara Worden (OOS), Michael Smart (OOS), Lee Williams (VA Sierra Club), Robert Sullivan, Matt Szucs, Maria Duster, Richard Walker, Qui Nguyen, Peter Braun, LeeWilliams, Kate Braswell, Bethany Mizelle, Luke Hancock, McKenna Dunbar, Bo Fairlamb, Rootary, Jan Baker, Asheley Greene, Robert Sullivan, and Graham Sheridan.

The Meeting was called to order at 4:05pm by Daniel Hart, who asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Daniel discussed the meeting agenda and noted for participants that time was reserved for input from the public in the “Community Updates” topic at the end of the meeting. Daniel then turned to Laura Thomas to provide an update on her office’s current activities.

OOS Update: Laura Thomas, OOS Director,

- **OOS Staffing:** Laura began by introducing Africana Thornton, who participated remotely via MS-Teams. Africana is OOS Grants Manager, an area she has great expertise in from past Federal and State government positions. OOS now has grown to a staff of 11, with one additional hiring action underway.
- **East Richmond Solar Farm/Pollinator Meadow:** A former landfill/Brownfield site on East Richmond Road will soon be developed into a community asset, with energy generated from the facility to be invested in the neighborhood. Residents of the surrounding community were extensively involved in the design. Final approval of the site lease agreement and project plans will be an agenda item for City Council in an upcoming meeting.
 - A question was raised about the project application and approval process. Laura noted that project evaluation criteria are included in the Request for Information (RFI). OOS will use the information provided in response to the RFI to prepare its recommendation for City Council.
 - Tara Worden (OOS) also noted that there is a need for debris cleanup prior to site/project development, and that the City will explore opportunities to create Bio-Char for use in landscaping applications from the woody debris that will be removed.

- o The City has a Joint Energy Team, which has a renewable energy study underway to identify a wide range of renewable opportunities and prepare recommendations for future renewable energy sites/projects.
- **Sustainable Design Standards:** Tara Worden noted that the City’s new Sustainable Design Standards will be presented for approval by City Council at its Oct. 8th meeting. The standards will apply to all new and major renovation building and infrastructure projects, and address stormwater management, renewable energy, community engagement and more. Daniel Hart asked how the City envisions marketing the standards to private developers. OOS noted they convened a “Developers Forum” earlier this year, and plan another for Fall 2024. A key strategy to foster their incorporation in private developments is to hold more meetings early in project planning with private sector developers.
- **Cool the City Campaign:** EPA Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz will participate in the Sept. 18th official kickoff meeting for the City’s \$6 million USDA grant at the Broadrock Sports complex. The grant will support development of an Urban Forest Master Plan, and grant funds will go for workforce development, street and park planning, and tree plantings to reduce heat island effects in Richmond, focusing on low canopy areas that largely coincide with formerly redlined areas of the city. Most of the \$6 million will be allocated to four Black-led non-profit organizations. Tree plantings will begin this Fall, and a major public event will be planned for Spring 2025.
- **Fireside Chat with Mayor Stoney:** Laura called meeting participants attention to an Oct. 8th (4-6pm) event with Mayor Stoney, in which he will discuss the accomplishments and future plans to put Richmond on a path of long-term sustainability, guided by the RVAGreen2050 plan developed during his mayoral tenure. Laura and Michael Smart encouraged all meeting participants to consider attending the event, which will be held at the Bon Secour Training Center.
- **Circular Economy/Innovation Hub:** This initiative, in partnership with VCU’s Business School, will work to promote a circular economy, where current waste stream products are repurposed/reused, and includes efforts to create local markets. The City will form a multi-disciplinary/co-located team to lead this long-term effort to identify ambitious and innovative new initiatives to make sustainability a central part of Richmond’s future.
- **Book Club Initiative:** Jack Iglehart of OOS noted that he leads a monthly book discussion group, with meetings held on the last Monday of each month. Jack welcomes suggestions for books to include in the series.
- **Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP):** A meeting participant inquired about the status of VCAP funding for Richmond. Laura noted that she is fully engaged in efforts to provide the funding needed by the James River SWCD to continue implementing the program in partnership with the Central Virginia Land Conservancy. Laura reported she has a positive outlook following a meeting on this issue earlier today.
- **Richmond Tree Week (formerly Arbor Day RVA):** Qui Nguyen provided the Commission with an update on plans for Richmond Tree Week, renamed to recognize that it now encompasses 10 days over 2 consecutive weekends. There are a total of 37

individual events being planned. Native trees, tree re-use opportunities – including artistic efforts, and promotion of mature tree preservation (“500 year forest”) will be areas of emphasis. ReforestRichmond.org is coordinating these events, which can be found on their website. Some of this year’s events are partnerships of the City and adjoining Counties.

- o A meeting participant asked about the status of decisions on the routing of the Fall Line trail through Bryant Park. Initial plans would have resulted in the removal of many mature hardwood trees. Trail planning/alignment is still under consideration.
- A question was raised about rain barrel programs within the City. It was noted that the Dept. of Public Utilities previously had a rain barrel program for City residents. Greg Powers (JR-SWCD Board member) noted that the James River Association and the JR-SWCD partner to provide Rain Barrel workshops, and would be able to offer them within the City if funding were made available.
- Another question was raised by a meeting participant about the City’s plans for its Community-based Budgeting initiative. OOS noted that \$3 million (\$200K/District + needs-based additional funding) has been reserved for projects proposed by local communities. No one was able to explain the specifics of current engagement plans, and Daniel Hart committed to invite Mathew Stark (Budget office) to participate in the Nov. ’24 SRC meeting.

Community Updates/Announcements

- Greg Powers reported that the **Chesterfield Master Gardeners** are planning a Feb. 2025 event that he will provide additional information on in the future.
- Qui Nguyen briefly noted that the City’s **composting pilot program** will use leaves from DPW’s Fall collection to blend with compost waste to provide a resource to support the City’s landscaping needs.
 - o A meeting participant inquired if finished compost is available to city residents. Currently all compost from the City’s pilot program is used in public site landscaping. There are private companies in the area that market compost for private use.
- A participant asked if there are any plans/current efforts related to “**Green Alleyways**”. Daniel Klein noted that there were some pilot projects in the past, but no active work is currently underway.
- A reporter from the Chesapeake Bay Journal inquired about how the City of Richmond **integrates its environmental work** with efforts to address **heat island effects**. Laura noted that Richmond300 is the overarching framework for achieving these mutual goals, and the RVA Green2050 Climate Action plan provides more detail on how. Daniel Klein added that the City is just beginning to frame a detailed/operational plan to fully address heat island impacts of current development. Peter Braun will lead a “**Lunch and Learn**” event focused on urban heat islands. Greg Power noted that the VCAP program has best management practices that can address localized heat impacts.

- A final question was raised by a VCU student participant about opportunities for **connections with area students** (high school and both two and four-year college students) in Richmond’s climate action efforts. Laura noted that Michael Smart is the lead for student engagement within OOS and it was also observed that Groundwork RVA does a great job of engaging high school students in some of its work. Victor McKenzie suggested that the Commission should include student engagement as a topic for planned discussion at an upcoming SRC meeting.

Daniel Hart expressed appreciation to all who attended, observing the high level of public participation at this meeting, and closed it at approximately 5:30pm. The next SRC meeting will be held at Main Branch Library, from 4:00 – 5:30pm on **Monday, Nov. 18th**.

Richmond Sustainability & Resilience Commission **Monday, Nov. 18, 2024 – 4:00 - 5:30 pm**

Agenda:

- 4:00 pm** **Call to Order and Introductions**
Who are you and what are you hoping to get out of this meeting?
- Approval of Minutes**
- 2024 SRC Report**
- Participatory Budgeting in the City of Richmond** - Matthew Slaats
- Update from City of Richmond Office of Sustainability** - Laura Thomas and Team
- (SDS Adoption & Event; Climate Vulnerability Story Maps; Urban Heat Toolkit; New Team Member; EVSE RFP; Other)
- SRC December Social**
 December 5th, 5:00-6:30pm, Veil Brewery, Forest Hill
- Upcoming SRC Meetings**
 1/27, 3/17, 5/19, 7/21, 9/22, 11/17; 4:00-5:30pm
- Community Updates & Announcements**
- 5:30 pm** **Close**

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: David Evans, Daniel Hart, Rob Jones, Bill Nickerson, Christiane Riederer, Laura Thomas, and Abigail Thompson were present. Lui Huertas, Victor McKenzie, and Harrison Wallace were unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the Public:

Sign-in Sheet: Barb Adams, Christine Banks, Elizabeth Barrett, James Boatright, Susan Bragg, Joe Brancoli, Kate Braswell, Peter Braun, Daryl Downing, McKennah Dunbar, Maria Duster, Thomas Grinnan, Amanda Hayton, Tarana (Sara) Jobin, Leah Jones, Eva Letteron, Steve Marzolf, Susan Miller, Brittany Mizelle, Qui Nguyen (MS Teams), Jesse Palma, Denise Payne, Trey Peters, Amelia Powers, Chloe Stanton, Matt Szucs, Lee Williams, Diane Woolard, and John Henry Williams

MS Teams Participants: Qui Nguyen,

The Meeting was called to order at approximately 4:05pm by Daniel Hart, who noted the significant changes that may lie ahead, and observed that the work of the Commission is both energizing and more important than ever. He then asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Daniel highlighted the handoff of the SRC president position from Daniel Klein to himself in January, and the reinstatement of in-person (with remote option) meetings throughout 2024, after 3 years of remote deliberations.

At this point in the meeting there wasn't a quorum of members present, so Daniel deferred discussion and approval of the Sept. '24 meeting minutes. He then introduced Matthew Slack from the City's budget office, to discuss the status and next steps of the "People's Budget" initiative.

Participatory Budgeting: Matthew Slack

Matthew shared a brief overview of the City's efforts under the Participatory Budgeting (aka "People's Budget"), which have been underway since 2018 (with delay in the early phase of Covid). This initiative to allow direct citizen impact on a portion of the City's budget allocation builds on a history of 30 years experience in other communities. For example, the City of Durham, NC has a well-established participatory budget process.

A key goal of the program is to rebuild the trust of city residents in the City's governance. So far, the most frequent suggestions for community improvements have covered the "basics," such as pothole repairs, sidewalks, etc. Improved communication with local communities and an increase in civic engagement are essential to this work, and all city residents aged 14 and up are welcome to participate in upcoming community meetings.

Idea collection is underway now, and the 4" x 6" Idea Cards used to collect suggestions for physical improvement projects ("capital" projects, such as bus stop shelters, tree plantings, flood mitigation, etc.) were shared with meeting participants. Next steps are:

- Complete idea collection
- Prioritize ideas
- Request and receive priority project proposals (by March 31, 2025)
- Citizen voting on finalist projects and allocation of funds to city contracts for construction

Laura Thomas noted that a citizen Prioritization Committee will be formed with 3 citizen representatives from each City District. She encouraged those attending to consider a position on the Committee, with will meet weekly for about 2 months in the first half of 2025. Modest stipends will be available to Committee members in recognition of their time commitments to the process.

A question was posed as to whether a homeless shelter would be within the scope of this program. Matthew said that they are hearing about the need for a permanent shelter in meetings, but that the cost of a shelter is well beyond the scope of the program. In 2025, each City District will receive an allocation of \$200,000, with another increment possible based on Justice40 eligibility. Matthew noted that the ultimate goal is that 1% of the City's budget (currently \$1.1 billion) will be allocated through the participatory budgeting process.

OOS Update: Laura Thomas, OOS Director

- **RVAGreen2050 Update:** There are 136 individual actions in the plan, and over 50% have implementation underway, and 18% are complete.
- **Sustainable Design Standards:** City Council adopted these standards, culminating over 2 years of development efforts to prepare a comprehensive set of sustainability requirements that all new City-funded physical projects must meet. Mayor Stoney will highlight these standards and the broader RVAGreen2050 progress at a Nov. 22, 2024, event at City Hall.
- **Climate Vulnerability Index:** OOS plans to create Story Maps that will illustrate and communicate to city residents the relative vulnerability of distinct parts of the city to changing climate health and community impacts (primarily heat and flooding effects). Relatedly, work is beginning to develop an **Urban Heat mitigation toolkit**. Initial efforts will be internal (city staff) to explore opportunities to remove barriers to implementing mitigation efforts. Community engagement will follow the completion of a draft document, planned for Spring '25.
 - Rob Jones asked how the city can influence private sector development consistently with the SDS. Daniel Klein said OOS plans to complete best practice designs for features like building frontage awnings, plantings, pavement coatings, etc. He also suggested there may be an opportunity to incorporate some SDS elements in the City's zoning code revision. OOS also plans to hold periodic developer forums, like that held at the Quirk Hotel earlier this year. Finally, Laura noted that the "Dillon rule" precludes the City and other local governments from requiring private developers to follow the SDS, though incentives can encourage their use by developers
 - A participant suggested that it would be appropriate for the city to work to encourage the General Assembly to allow local governments to incorporate sustainability elements into updated building codes.

- o Another participant asked what type of data informs the Climate Vulnerability index. Peter Braun, who completed this analysis, offered to share the data with those interested.
- Laura wrapped up her report with several quick notes on the following:
 - o **OOS Staffing:** all authorized positions have been filled, and OOS has 9 staff on board.
 - o **Fleet Conversion/Charging stations:** an RFP has just been issued to solicit bids to construct charging stations within the City. The city continues to pursue its fleet conversion to EVs.
 - o **Solar Farm** construction on the closed East End landfill will begin soon, and the site will also include a pollinator garden.
- **Sustainability and Resilience Guide:** Michael Smart asked Commission members and other participants to consider volunteering to present information on the new guide to local community groups. Training is available for those interested to help bolster OOS ability to get the word out. Local leadership is the key to sustainability, and there is a need to spread the word and engage citizens beyond what OOS can do directly.
 - o Dave Evans suggested that Council members reach out to their District's City Council members to discuss opportunities to meet with community groups/civic associations.
 - o Dawn Oleksy noted that it would also be valuable for Commission members to participate in and support implementation of the **energy pathway actions** of RVA Green2050.

Community Updates/Announcements

- Daniel Hart opened the concluding section of the meeting by encouraging all to attend a social event hosted by the Commission at the Veil, on Forest Hill Ave, on Dec. 5th at 5pm. He then welcomed participants to share any community updates they may have.
- Monthly "Green" gatherings are being held by Green Drinks with the next one just days away, Thursday, Nov. 21st.
- **Climate Opera Project:** a participant noted that there will be an on-line performance of these four short climate opera series. See: [Climate Opera Project — AOP](#) for background information.
- **Cold Weather Shelter:** the City's shelter is open now through April '25. It is in the Convention Center. It was also noted that heating financial assistance is available to those in need.
- **Connecting with Youth:** VCU has been highly active in the sustainability field for years, and a participant asked what collaboration there is between OOS and VCU. Daniel Hart noted that a "youth commission" was active in the past, and it may be possible to reinvigorate that effort. Jonathan Williams also welcomed participation in the group he leads.
- **Urban Forestry:** Qui Nguyen said she plans to share information with the Commission on upcoming projects before the year-end holidays.

- **Climate Funding:** Jonathan asked, considering the Presidential election results, whether climate action funding is secure. Laura noted that much of the IRA Federal climate action funding has been approved, but is yet to be allocated, and that she considers the City's own funding for climate action to be very secure. While Federal direct funding may change with the new Administration, the IRA also made permanent changes to create Tax Exemptions to support climate action. Revision of the tax exemptions would require new action by Congress, which is a high hurdle.
- **Meeting with Mayor-elect Avula:** Abigail Thompson asked whether there may be opportunities to meet with the incoming Mayor and new City Council members. Laura said transition team meetings are underway and will continue through the mayor's inauguration. McKenna Dunbar encouraged Commission members to step out/up to communicate RVA Green2050 and OOS' work.

Daniel Hart expressed appreciation to all who attended, observing the meeting had the highest level of public participation of the year, and closed the meeting at approximately 5:30pm. The next SRC meeting, the first for 2025, will be held at Main Branch Library, from 4:00 – 5:30pm on **Monday, Jan 27th**. Officer elections will be held during the January meeting.