



2022 Annual Report

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Overview

The Green City Commission (GCC) was established by City Council in 2009. The responsibilities and duties of the Commission include:

- providing expertise and information to the City to support its sustainability efforts;
- consulting with state government and other local governments regarding sustainability efforts and methods;
- recommending changes to the Code of the City of Richmond, Code of Virginia, and other laws as necessary to implement sustainable methods in the City;
- encouraging the adoption of sustainable business and building approaches by the private sector;
- working with the Department of Public Works to preserve trees and plant life in the City; and
- preparing and submitting an annual report to the Council.

The Commission is comprised of nine members, seven appointed by Council and two appointed by the Mayor, serving terms of three years and limited to two consecutive terms. The Council-appointed members include one member with expertise in urban forestry and representatives in the fields of sustainability, green building practices, energy efficiency and environmental protection.

The Commission is required to meet at least quarterly.

2022 Commission Member List

| Name | Current Member? | Criteria for Appointment | Term | Commence | Terminate |
|--|-----------------|---|-------------|------------|------------|
| Emily Francis <i>Outgoing Chair</i> | ✓ | At Large Rep. (Appointed by Mayor) | First Term | 1/19/2018 | 8/10/2020 |
| | | | Second Term | 11/9/2020 | 8/10/2023 |
| Daniel Klein <i>Acting Chair</i> | ✓ | Environmental Protection Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 10/25/2019 | 10/24/2022 |
| | | | Second Term | 10/26/2022 | 10/25/2025 |
| David Evans | ✓ | At Large Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 7/23/2022 | 7/22/2025 |
| Daniel Hart | ✓ | Sustainability Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 11/14/2022 | 10/25/2025 |
| Bill Nickerson | ✓ | Energy Efficiency Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 11/9/2020 | 8/25/2022 |
| | | | Second Term | 10/26/2022 | 10/25/2025 |
| Christiane Riederer | ✓ | At Large Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 7/25/2022 | 10/25/2025 |
| Alicia Zatcoff | ✓ | Employee of Dept. of Public Works (Appointed by Mayor) | First Term | 1/16/2018 | 8/10/2020 |
| | | | Second Term | 11/9/2020 | 8/10/2023 |
| <i>vacancy</i> | | Urban Forestry Rep. (Appointed by Council) | | | |
| <i>vacancy</i> | | Green Building Rep. (Appointed by Council) | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|------------|-----------|------------|
| Margaret Hopkins | | At Large Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 7/22/2019 | 7/28/2022 |
| Bill Riggs | | Green Buildings Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 3/9/2020 | 10/25/2022 |
| Mike Mather | | Urban Forestry Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 11/9/2020 | 3/1/2022 |
| Robert Birdsey | | Sustainability Rep. (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 3/22/2021 | 10/25/2022 |
| Sarah Shaughnessy | | At-Large Rep (Appointed by Council) | First Term | 9/27/2021 | 2/18/2022 |

Summary of Activities

Developing a Plan, Funding that Plan, and Achieving Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions Community-Wide for the City of Richmond by 2050

Families in Richmond are already feeling the impacts of climate change—from increased flooding and more intense storm events to hotter and more frequent summer days to more asthma attacks, Richmonders are on the frontlines of a changing climate. We must take steps to reduce our pollution emissions, and the City’s Climate Action Plan—RVA Green 2050—will chart the path to achieve significant greenhouse gas reductions that benefit all Richmonders while helping our community adapt to local climate impacts.

The Green City Commission continues to support and advocate for the realization of the City’s climate action goals. In 2020, the City passed [Resolution 2020 – R024](#) to “recognize the effects of global warming caused by human activity and to establish a climate action goal to achieve a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 from the 2008 baseline.” In 2021, community leaders developed and advanced (with the City’s passage) [Resolution 2021 – R049](#) to “declare the existence of a climate and ecological emergency that threatens the city of Richmond.” And through the work of the Office of Sustainability and many community leaders and partners, the City has drafted its [RVAgreen 2050](#) climate action plan.

Throughout the year, the Commission has sought to communicate key opportunities for climate action to City Administration and to Council Members. Below you can see three letters the Commission either drafted or signed onto to advance real climate action.

We greatly appreciate the actions of Council and the Administration to expand the Office of Sustainability with a newly-formed Director position and to re-orient the Office within the City’s organizational structure. Sustainability is cross-cutting. Decisions made across the City’s jurisdiction have wide ranging impacts on air pollution and climate change, which then have serious impacts on individual residents, communities, and local businesses. It is critical that the Office of Sustainability has the ability to work across all sectors of City government to implement programs that reduce pollution as well as financial and health risks associated with climate change. Thank you for that critical shift this year. We look forward to continuing our work alongside the newly-positioned Office of Sustainability.

And as you’ll see in the November 17, 2022 letter (below) developed by a robust group of community and civic organizations, we have much work to do in the coming year and years to implement the programs and to realize the underlying goal of RVAgreen 2050: net-zero carbon emissions community-wide by 2050. Step one, of course, is to formally approve the plan. From there, our collaborative work continues.



To: Mayor Stoney and Richmond City Council Members
Re: Oppose House Bill 1257 in the 2022 General Assembly

February 21, 2022

Thank you for all you are doing to address climate change – including establishing the goal of reducing Richmond’s greenhouse gas emissions 100% by 2050, acknowledging our climate crisis, and identifying short term actions the City can take to mitigate our climate and ecological emergency (Resolution 2021 – R049).

As you know, climate change is already impacting the lives of families in our community. These impacts are wide-ranging from immediate economic pressures to public health implications to overall quality of life. Richmond’s low-income residents and people of color are on the frontlines of climate change where these impacts are likely to hit the hardest; families who struggle to afford to cool their homes will be even further strained as longer and hotter heat waves occur more often. And many of these frontline community members will also experience the worst effects of flooding from increasingly severe rainstorms. The importance of local government action has never been more urgent.

That is why we call on you today to stand up for your local government authority to make local land use decisions that are right for the residents of Richmond. House Bill 1257, if passed, would take away that authority and impose a one-size-fits-all plan for local utility decision-making. One size does not fit all.

This bill, under the guise of “choice,” actually takes away our choices for future action to reduce climate pollution and increase our resiliency to climate changes. It takes away flexibility for future local government decisions related to gas infrastructure. It ensures that Richmond will have gas service *forever*, regardless of the views of Richmonders, Council or the Administration and regardless of whether that is the right decision for *us*.

We are in the midst of developing Richmond’s equity-centered climate action and resilience plan – RVAgreen 2050. We need all options for pollution reductions and resilience actions on the table. HB1257 takes options off the table and ties the City of Richmond’s hands moving forward. The Commonwealth of Virginia should let Richmond make the best decisions for itself and its residents. We ask you to oppose HB1257 publicly, communicate that position to the Richmond General Assembly Delegation, and take additional actions to see that HB1257 is not enacted.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent and critically important issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Francis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Francis
Chair, Richmond Green City Commission



To: The Honorable Levar Stoney, Mayor of Richmond
Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget - Office of Sustainability

March 2, 2022

Thank you for all you are doing to address climate change – including establishing the goal for Richmond to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, fully acknowledging our climate crisis, and identifying short term actions the City can take to mitigate our climate & ecological emergency (Resolution 2021 – R049).

Resolution 2021 – R049 resolves that the City “commits to fund and empower the City’s sustainability programs by creating a new Office of Sustainability, the agency head of which shall ... oversee a community-wide mobilization effort to be implemented by all departments and agencies of the City, and provide for the powers and resources necessary to coordinate the City’s climate and environmental programs.”

As you approach presentation of the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, we ask that you include these commitments and therefore a) fully fund the Office of Sustainability at current staffing levels and b) include one new position for a Director of Sustainability. The new Director is critical to successful implementation of RVAgreen2050 strategies as well as climate and sustainability goals established in other City plans including Richmond 300 and Richmond Connects.

Thank you for supporting climate action with critical funding in your FY2023 Budget.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Francis".

Emily Francis
Chair, Richmond Green City Commission

cc: Maggie Anderson, Chief of Staff
Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer
Sharon Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer – Economic & Community Development
Jason May, Budget Director

FY2024 Richmond Climate Justice Energy and Climate

November 17, 2022

Dear Mayor Stoney and City Council Member:

Following the unanimous passage by Richmond City Council of the [Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution](#) in September of 2021, working groups were created in an effort to make the resolution's passage the starting line, not the finish line. Our health - and our climate - can't wait! Communities across Richmond face unaffordable energy and housing costs, disproportionately higher energy burdens, exposure to poor indoor and outdoor air quality and the worst impacts of our changing climate. Richmond's FY2024 budget is an opportunity to advance the city's commitment to equity and justice by upholding the vision of the resolution. Climate action must be a priority, as the budget is a significant opportunity to take meaningful steps to reduce emissions, mitigate heat island effects, and offer equitable and transformative solutions in four key areas where investment is critically needed, especially in historically underserved neighborhoods:

- Housing: Affordability, living conditions, tenant rights, weatherization, renewable energy and efficiency, electrification and reducing energy burden.
- Infrastructure: Invest in "healthy streets", green spaces and parks, expand sidewalks and increase safety and access for pedestrians and transit users, including protected bike lanes for scooter and bike users.
- Transportation: Improve access to public transit by supporting fare free ridership, and increasing routes and frequency.
- Economic Development: Build grocery stores in Richmond neighborhoods that lack healthy food access, create new green jobs and incentives for real estate developers to electrify their utilities and appliances, and utilize/implement solar (especially important with expansion of growth nodes from Richmond 300).

Facilities

Facilities account for 45% of the City Government's emissions. The City can immediately deploy energy efficiency upgrades, heat pumps, and renewables, while creating a clean energy and resiliency plan to power all government facilities with 100% renewables and batteries and replace all fossil fuel heating with energy efficient heat pumps. We recommend Richmond:

- Deploy energy efficiency upgrades citywide to minimize the energy needed for heating and cooling
- Replace all fossil fuel heating, cooling, and water heaters with electric heat pumps.
- Add solar and batteries on all eligible facilities getting a new roof.
- Add solar and batteries in all locations in need of a new generator.
- Replace all end of life HVAC equipment (boilers, furnaces, chillers, A/C) with modern air source heat pumps.

Office of Sustainability

Establish effective Key Performance Indicators and mandate all agencies integrate these KPIs into their planning and budgeting processes.

- 50% renewable energy by 2023 and 100% by 2025 (as the Mayor [promised](#) in his 2021 State of the City address).
- Report % of City government energy use powered by on-site and off-site renewables.
- Report % of fossil fuel HVAC infrastructure replaced.
- Report % of fossil fuel generators replaced.
- Report % of City fleet replaced with electric or renewable powered vehicles and bicycles.
- Detail and report opportunities for bikes and walking and telework for fleet vehicles rather than trips.
- Hire a Program Manager to help pitch, pilot, and operationalise environmental work within the ultimate care of cross-functional departments as that work moves from initial concept to actioned program.

Waste Mitigation & Green Job Creation

To “develop an equitable organic waste composting program that includes regular curbside pickup and accessible drop-off locations” is a stated objective of the **City of Richmond’s RVA Green 2050** plan.

Whereas the **Virginia Clean Economy Act** asks for robust action toward emissions reduction, and a call for green jobs; and **Governor Youngkin’s Executive Order 17** requires cooperative actions toward dramatic reductions in food waste, we recommend Richmond:

- City Council supports legislation for a municipal composting program.
- Create a public-private partnership with an industrial compost organization who can run operations in collaboration with the Department of Public Works Curbside composting program pilot in high-density neighborhoods in the City or Richmond run by the Department of Public Works
- Activate the 2023 City of Richmond curbside composting program feasibility study
- Pilot a fee-based trash program based on bin size.
- Launch a municipal composting pilot program for all City of Richmond offices with incentives and ambitions toward 50% waste diversion of food waste.
- Hire a full-time Compost Program Manager within the Department of Public Works.

Fleet Management

According to Richmond’s 2007 Green Fleet Action Plan, 18% of the fleet is made up of light-duty cars, and another 37% is light-duty trucks, vans and SUVs. As a part of the City’s plan to address the climate emergency, we recommend that Richmond:

- Follow the [City's Green Fleet Action Plan](#)
- Update and publish 2022 fleet inventory.
- Make vehicle purchases based on total lifecycle costs to account for fuel and maintenance costs.
- Purchase EVs for budgeted new light duty car and truck acquisitions (a number of cities are using Tesla 3s, VW id4s, Ford Mustang Mach Es and Kia Niros as police vehicles. GM Bolts and Ford E Transit cargo vans are good options for other departments).
- Allocate funding to build charging infrastructure for the city's EV fleet.
- Purchase or [subscribe](#) to electric school buses to avoid the health [risks](#) of diesel fumes on children's health.
- Apply to federal school bus replacement program opportunities offered by EPA Clean School Bus Program.
- Halt purchase of gasoline vehicles.
- Publish retirement schedule for diesel vehicles aged older than 2008.
- Be more responsive to complaints received about violations of idle reduction policies and enforce [VA Code](#) and [Richmond's 2011 Anti-Idle Policies](#).
- Update and publish the idle reduction policy.

Richmond Gas Works

Fossil gas leaks from aging infrastructure are a serious health and safety risk, as well as a lost gas expense that has not been adequately addressed from a cost or climate perspective. The City Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution calls for "an equitable plan to phase out reliance on gas and shift to City-owned renewable energy". We recommend the following:

- Establish more effective oversight of RGW.
- Explore how RGW can help residents, particularly low-income and underserved populations, electrify and weatherize their homes through various investments (such as [neighborhood electrification](#)) and financing mechanisms (such as [on bill financing](#)).
- Analyze how the total lifecycle costs of electrification for households compares with rising fossil gas costs, and how rising fossil gas costs affect energy insecurity.
- Enable a just transition for workers at RGW.
- Repair all leaks, but at a level of investment in maintenance consistent with an eventual phase out of the gas utility.
- Holistically account for the cost of emissions and health effects of fossil gas combustion on air pollution inside and outside the home.
- Halt the expansion of pipelines and other gas infrastructure.
- Explore converting the utility into a sustainable energy utility to align the utility with the City's emissions, health, and equity goals.

GRTC and Bike/Walk Infrastructure

Transportation accounts for roughly half of carbon emissions in the Commonwealth. Richmond needs to lead the commonwealth in ensuring access to cleaner transportation and mobility for everyone – including and especially the most vulnerable among us. We recommend that Richmond:

- Continue to fund GRTC's Fare Free Initiative
- Restore the 2020 funding cut to GRTC by the City of Richmond
- Invest in significant improvements to sidewalk connectivity, bike lane networks and first/last mile connection (especially on Richmond's Southside)
- Remove mandatory parking minimums
- Facilitate the construction of a North-South Bus Rapid Transit line
- Provide substantial funding and advantageous right of way to the Fall Line Trail
- Initiate pilot studies for dedicated bus lanes, pedestrian streets
- Apply for RAISE grant funding for the Reconnecting Jackson Ward
- Fund increased bus service to accommodate the influx of activity at the Diamond District

Urban Forestry

To bring the Urban Forestry Division in line with our peer cities around the commonwealth, we recommend that Richmond adopt significant changes to improve budgetary transparency, increase the division's budget, adopt an urban forest master plan, reinstate the urban forestry commission, and hire an urban forester. These structural changes will enhance the city's ability to achieve the objectives laid out in Richmond 300, and to be best positioned to receive funding opportunities on the state and federal levels:

- Reinstate the Urban Forestry Commission staffed with the new Urban Forester, under the authority of the Government Operations Committee to provide guidance and support for the city to maintain and enhance tree populations with the goal of improving the urban environment.
- Update the commission bylaws to reflect Richmond 300 objectives, RVAgreen2050, and RVA H20. Responsibilities of the commission include reviewing remediation policies, and educating and engaging the public on urban forests.
- Develop an Urban Forestry Master Plan to increase citywide tree canopy cover to at least 60%. The strategic plan will incorporate the Richmond 300 Master Plan, RVAgreen2050 plan, and RVA H20 objectives and priorities outlined in The City's Equity Agenda.
- Require DPW to provide a transparent annual budget for the Urban Forestry division which breaks out expenditures for new plantings, maintenance, contract work, community engagement, and Adopt-a-Tree.
- Increase DPW budget for tree maintenance, preventive care, and watering to ensure trees can grow to maturity, provide maximum ecological services and improve public safety.
- Triple the existing budget for contract work so Richmond can scale up tree operations.
- Increase the city's planting budget to achieve canopy goals set in Richmond 300 Master plan.
- Expand the current Adopt-A-Tree program and update the program for community organizations to buy trees in bulk and commit to steward the trees.
- Allocate \$15,000 for community outreach efforts to educate and engage the public in practices that benefit soil health and trees.

- We recommend that the Department of Parks and Recreation fund its community gardening program, Richmond Grows Gardens (250k) yearly for food justice, nutrition education and climate resiliency programming.
- The Department of Public Works and/or DPU fund community engaged Stormwater BMPs in formerly redlined neighborhoods within public green space in South Richmond. (500k) yearly.
- The Office of Community Wealth Building with the Department of Social Services (SNAPET & TANF) fund community urban agriculture and solar power installation training and workforce development in formerly redlined neighborhoods in South Richmond (250k).

Broad Rock Creek Park

Richmond has no new green spaces despite the 2020 mayoral initiative to bring online five new green spaces in South Richmond and securing more than \$1M to do so. The onboarding of these new parks is in alignment with Richmond 300, RVAgreen2050, Richmond’s Equity Agenda, RVA H20, Virginia Outdoors Plan, and will be a focus of the PRCF System Wide Master Plan. We recommend that Richmond:

- Allocate \$1.8M to bring online Broad Rock Creek Park – one of five new park spaces announced by Mayor Stoney in 2020. The community-driven vision of this space is already underway and can be used as a model for capital investment and future planning processes. Investment in these spaces are immediate “matching” dollars for ongoing grant requests
 - The Fall Line Trail route through Broad Rock Creek Park will make this park a community-envisioned regional destination with opportunity for events, gatherings, and recreation.

To date, the following Richmond organizations endorse the Clean Energy and Climate Justice FY2024 Policy and Budget Recommendations:

Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Divest RVA
Extinction Rebellion Richmond
Faith in GOD Ministry
Green New Deal Virginia
GreenUR
Initiatives of Change, USA, Inc.
Richmond For All
Richmond Green City Commission
Richmond Teachers for Social Justice

Richmond Tree Stewards
RVA Interfaith Climate Justice League
Sierra Club, Falls of the James Group
Southside Releaf
The Giving Wall
Third Act - Richmond
Th!rd Act - VA
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Virginia Organizing

Advancing GCC's Tree Committee

Trees add significant value to urban environments by reducing the heat island effect (exacerbated by climate change), helping to capture and filter stormwater runoff, sequestering carbon, and beautifying and increasing the quality of life for residents. A strategic plan with updated policy recommendations and guidance for city departments is warranted.

Members of the Green City Commission continued ongoing support for a range of urban forestry initiatives. Alongside a coalition of stakeholders including the Green New Deal Virginia, Sierra Club, Southside ReLeaf, the Richmond Department of Public Works, Reforest Richmond, and Capital Trees, the GCC worked to advance the Urban Forestry-related items in the Climate Emergency Resolution adopted last summer.

Throughout the year, these tree stakeholders collaborated with Council Members to fund the city's first dedicated Urban Forester position, a significant development for the Richmond DPW Urban Forestry division. This stakeholder group is continuing to work with Council on a draft ordinance to formally create that position.

The GCC also dedicated time throughout the year to advocate for a rebooted Urban Forestry Commission and for updating the commission bylaws to reflect the Richmond 300 tree canopy objectives, stormwater runoff reduction language in RVAH2O, and equity language in RVA Green 2050. The Urban Forester position is a natural fit for the city appointee or admin role for the rebooted Urban Forestry Commission and therefore conversations around both topics have been coordinated.

A major reason for developing an Urban Forester role and restarting the UF Commission is to ensure both entities are fully up and running in time to best support the Office of Sustainability's Urban Forest Master Plan process.

2022 Meeting Dates & Attendance

| Name | 1/31/2022 | 3/21/2022 | 5/16/2022 | 9/19/2022 | 11/21/2022 |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Emily Francis | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Daniel Klein | Y | Y | N | Y | Y |
| Bill Nickerson | Y | N | Y | Y | Y |
| Alicia Zatcoff | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Robert Birdsey | Y | N | N | Y | n/a |
| Bill Riggs | Y | Y | Y | n/a | n/a |
| Margaret Hopkins | Y | Y | Y | n/a | n/a |
| Sarah Shaunghnessy | Y | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Michael Mather | N | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| David Evans | n/a | n/a | n/a | Y | Y |
| Christiane Riederer | n/a | n/a | n/a | Y | Y |
| Daniel Hart | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | Y |

2022 Meeting Minutes

Green City Commission Meeting Minutes

January 31, 2022

Members Present:

Robert Birdsey, Emily Francis, Maggie Hopkins, Daniel Klein, Bill Nickerson, Bill Riggs, Sarah Shaughnessy, Alicia Zatcoff

Member Absent:

Mike Mather

Public Attendees:

Sandra Leibowitz, Dan Motta, Sven Philipsen, Dave Pohlman, Erik Shilts, Virginia Slattum, Toby Vernon, Lee Williams

The meeting was called to order at 5:34pm. Commission members introduced themselves.

Commission discussion focused on determining 2022 Priorities. Based on previously brainstormed ideas and idea synthesis, three topics rose to the top:

- 1) Advance Specific Climate Policies from RVAgreen 2050 Plan, Richmond 300, Climate Resolution
- 2) Follow & Engage with LUHT Committee and Planning Commission to elevate and include Climate impacts in future deliberations and discussions
- 3) Organize or Support Specific Outreach & Education Activities for Sustainability

#1 - Advancing Climate Policies (discussion):

- While we're not technical experts, our objective should be advocate for climate action and to ensure that elected officials are factoring this into their decision-making process
- Support for all 3 items. FYI: Mayor will present his city budget on the first Friday in March and Office of Sustainability will need dedicated funding as it transfers from one department to another. Advocacy from outside the office would be very helpful.
- Would be helpful for GCC to actively lobby for adoption of 2030 Climate Equity Action Plan in September '22 and then for funding for specific plan initiatives in FY'23 budget. Final community engagement period starts in April '22 and believes March / April would be a good time to advocate for the plan and funding when meeting with council members.
- Alicia has a timeline for moving plan forward but needs advocacy (adoption + funding.) Need 1-2 commission members to take this on to submit public comments and be in contact with council on adoption.
- **Volunteers:** Maggie Hopkins (lead) + Daniel Klein (support)

#2 – Elevate Climate Impacts Discussions

- The idea is to work more closely with Land Use, Housing and Transportation Committee to strategically inject climate objectives or climate questions in the discussion. Ensure we are considering climate throughout major city decisions related to that Committee’s subject matter.
- This category of work feels like a very big lift, but is very important. Ongoing, long term.
- There are also opportunities with the City’s zoning code rewrite and also to better address food insecurity
- Ideally we operationalizing climate thinking in the city’s decision making. Pulling climate thinking into every decision is no small feat. How do we go beyond the climate emergency resolution?
- One option is to work with Council to develop an ordinance that “bakes” climate considerations into council decision-making. Perhaps there can be a specific individual who can focus on supporting the council on this consideration.
- **Volunteers:** Continue to discuss

#3 – Sustainability Outreach & Education

- Our Green City Commission meetings are one opportunity to bring together the public and decision makers and to elevate climate and sustainability issues.
- There should be a strong equity component - connecting groups that are doing this work and haven’t had the chance to engage directly with their representatives.
- The content of our meetings can be used as education opportunities. Additionally, separately organized education/connection opportunities exist—we could organize them or we can support events that others are already organizing.
- These meetings are more powerful when there are more community members in attendance.
- An example would be to invite a guest speaker + local advocates to a meeting to discuss a specific topic and invite council members to attend. In this way GCC forges the connection between the public and decision-makers.
- **Volunteers:** Sarah Shaughnessy (lead) and support from Bill Nickerson

We discussed the need to meet with City Council members directly. Initial outreach will include:

District 1: Robert

District 2: Daniel + Maggie

District 4: Maggie

District 5: Bill Riggs + Emily

District 9: Bill Nickerson

Approval of November Meeting Minutes:

Sarah - motion to approve minutes, Daniel - second

Rollcall Vote:

Daniel Klein: aye

Bill Nickerson: aye

Bill Riggs: aye

Sarah Shaughnessy: aye

Robert Birdsey: aye

Alicia Zatcoff: aye

Maggie Hopkins: aye

Emily Francis: aye

Election of Green City Commission Officers:

Maggie nominates Emily Francis to continue as Chair; Daniel seconds.

Rollcall Vote:

Daniel Klein: aye

Bill Riggs: aye

Robert Birdsey: aye
Maggie Hopkins: aye
Bill Nickerson: aye

Sarah Shaughnessy: aye
Alicia Zatcoff: aye
Emily Francis: aye

Maggie nominates Daniel Klein to continue as Vice Chair, Bill seconds

Rollcall Vote:

Daniel Klein: aye
Bill Riggs: aye
Robert Birdsey: aye
Maggie Hopkins: aye

Bill Nickerson: aye
Sarah Shaughnessy: aye
Alicia Zatcoff: aye
Emily Francis: aye

Daniel nominates Bill Riggs to continue as Secretary. Maggie seconds

Rollcall Vote:

Daniel Klein: aye
Bill Riggs: aye
Robert Birdsey: aye
Maggie Hopkins: aye

Bill Nickerson: aye
Sarah Shaughnessy: aye
Alicia Zatcoff: aye
Emily Francis: aye

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05pm.

Green City Commission Meeting Minutes

March 21st, 2022

Members Present:

Bill Riggs, Maggie Hopkins, Daniel Klein, Alicia Zatcoff, Emily Francis

Member Absent:

Robert Birdsey, Bill Nickerson

Public Attendees:

Joe Brancoli, Falls of the James Group, Sierra Club; Jenn Clarke, City of Richmond; Ben Gates; Erik Shilts, Falls of the James Group, Sierra Club; Sven Phillipsen, 2nd District Council Liaison; Lauren Bailey, VCU Planning & Design; Virginia Slattum, Richmond City Health District; Lee Williams, Sierra Club & Green New Deal Virginia; Sandra Leibowitz, Sustainable Design Consulting; Sarah Barber, VCU Planning & Design; Glen Besa, Falls of the James Group, Sierra Club

The meeting was called to order at 12:04 PM. Commission members introduced themselves.

Updates Since Last Meeting

**Mayor introduced his FY2023 Budget on March 4. It includes a reorganization of the Office of Sustainability and 4 positions (including a newly created Office Director reporting under the DCAO for Planning and Economic Development). The Green City Commission previously sent a letter requesting level funding of staff, reorganization and the new Director position; the Climate Resolution also called for this reorganization. City Council is holding a work session today and additional hearings & meetings will be taking place over the next couple of months to finalize the budget details. More details: <https://www.rva.gov/budget-and-strategic-planning/budget-home>.

**Sierra Club has been scrutinizing the details of the budget; focusing on a few major categories: 1) City Facilities/Capital Improvements including generators, roof replacements and HVAC upgrades. These have huge potentials for cost savings and climate action at the same time. Choosing solar electric options; heat pumps instead of boilers where possible; solar ready roofs; etc. 2) Fleet Management including electric bikes and EVs for City Fleets; 96 new police cruisers are in the budget for example. 3) City Gas Works. What's the plan for stranded assets here?

**The Office of Sustainability has received ARPA Funding. One project in the works using this funding is funding the Urban Forestry Master Plan. OoS is currently drafting a scope of work for a future RFP. The ~1 year process will be inclusive of tree advocates and the community of organizations that have spent the last few years advancing tree policies/education/action. More to come on this; exciting news. For more information contact Alicia Zatcoff or Daniel Klein.

**The Urban Forestry Master Plan is just one of 4 major policy requests of the Richmond Tree Committee. The other three are: 1) Fully fund 2 new forestry positions in the City, including an urban forester; 2) Reinstate the Urban Forestry Commission; and 3) Update the City's Tree Ordinance (which manages street level details/requirements of trees: species preference, education programs, planting schedule, watering, preserving special trees, etc. In addition to money in the City's budget for such things + ARPA money, there's also grant money available if the City chooses to apply.

**The GCC submitted its 2021 Annual Report to the City Council Clerk's office. If anyone would like a copy, just let Emily Francis know: emilycfrancis@gmail.com. It should also be posted on the Boards and Commissions' website for the City.

**We now have 2 open seats on the GCC: A Forestry Appointee position and an At-Large City Council Appointee position. Over the last few years, we have expressed the need for recruiting and identifying more Commission candidates who live in Districts 6, 7, 8, or 9; reflect the diversity of the City; and/or have community outreach experience. [Open Seats are listed here.](#)

**GCC also recently sent a letter to the City Council and the City Administration expressing our opposition to HB1257, which as originally drafted would have banned localities from banning new natural gas hook ups -- even if those actions are in the best interest of the locality, climate action, public health, etc. The City did not officially take action on this piece of legislation. It was amended in early March and has a narrower focus. It still requires some action by the General Assembly at this point -- it wasn't finalized before Adjournment on March 12. You can see details of the bill [here.](#)

GCC 2022 Priorities Discussion:

Commission Members continued its discussion of how to best engage and advance climate action at the City. Meeting with Council Members was encouraged. Additionally, VCU is beginning its process of a Sustainability Master Plan. With respect to outreach, Gallery 5 has programming opportunities.

Approval of January 31st, 2022 Minutes:

Daniel Klein made motion to approve minutes, Bill Riggs - seconded

Rollcall Vote:

Bill Riggs: aye

Emily Francis: aye

Alicia Zatcoff: aye

Daniel Klein: aye

Announcements were shared.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:32 PM.

Next Meeting is May 16, 2022, 5:30 – 7:00 pm

Green City Commission Meeting Minutes

May 16th, 2022

Members Present:

Bill Riggs, Maggie Hopkins, Alicia Zatcoff, Emily Francis, Bill Nickerson

Member Absent:

Robert Birdsey, Daniel Klein

Public Attendees:

Joe Brancoli (Falls of the James, Sierra Club) Lee Williams (Falls of the James, Sierra Club) Glen Besa (Falls of the James, Sierra Club) Richard Sebastian (RVA Green Community Workgroup) Irina Calos (Buildings and Energy Workgroup) Dawn Olesky (Office of Sustainability), Sandra Leibowitz (Sustainable Design Consulting) Sarah Weisiger (Falls of the James, Sierra Club)

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM. Commission and guests introduced themselves.

Updates Since Last Meeting:

**GCC Updates: 2 open positions, Maggie to reapply for her position. Over the last few years, we have expressed the need for recruiting and identifying more Commission candidates who live in Districts 6, 7, 8, or 9; reflect the diversity of the City; and/or have community outreach experience. [Open Seats are listed here.](#)

**Meeting on the books for July, Emily will not be present. Historically have cancelled this meeting in the past.

**Note from the city to reconsider whether we want to have meetings in person or remain on zoom – guests on the call mentioned that meetings are much more accessible via zoom. Discussions held of a potential hybrid strategy.

**Sierra Club pushing for initiatives through ordinances now that the budget is wrapped up. Anticipate many meetings over the summer pushing for ordinances and using the climate resolution as a template.

** ICA, this Friday, Extreme Heat, Climate Change and Racial Equity: A Movie Screening and Panel Discussion
<https://icavcu.org/events/rree-extreme-heat/>

Updates from Dawn Olesky:

Draft Climate Equity Action Plan 2030: Office of Sustainability Link to the plan can be found here:
<https://richmond.konveio.com/rvagreen-2050-climate-equity-action-plan-2030-spring-community-review-period>

Last month the community engagement plan launched – aimed at making it all accessible to all Richmond residents. Sections 1-6, serve as a great reference for lessons learned. Focusing on sections 7 & 8 of the plan, which are the actionable sections of the plan.

RVA Green by the numbers – our ideal vision for the future. 45% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

Transportation and mobility: Accelerate the transition for all to clean and equitable mobility systems. (3 sub objectives within)

Waste Reduction and Recovery: Fostering sustainable methods of waste reduction, wasting less, and reusing more.

Chapter 7 is the meat of the plan. City Steward: The City of Richmond department or unit with primary responsibility for implementing the action. Office of Sustainability will be the champion, but hoping another department will be leading. Thoughtful cost analysis, timelines, priority, GHG Emission reduction, and status built into the various goals on the plan.

Chapter 8: Accountability and measuring progress – there are 12 different outcomes within this section. Advanced green economy, cleaner and more efficient buildings, cleaner and more efficient transportation, climate ready community, engaged and involved community, improved air quality, increased flood resilience, increased heat resilience, support for climate action, less landfill waste, lower GHG emissions, more green space and trees. Each outcome has its own indicators so the goals of the plan can be tracked, one of which is an equitable indicator. Shared accountability framework built into the plan to ensure the implementation is equitable.

GCC will be responsible for reviewing annual reporting information within the plan. Provide recommendations and input on updates.

****Sign up for the Newsletter for updates and information on opportunities for action. Spread the word!****

Dawn responded to questions and discussion took place. There was general interest in more specific information/modeling/technical information that underlies the support for climate actions – expectation is to share that information with smaller groups as advocacy continues.

Deadline for Plan comments is June 19. Education and support for climate action is needed during budget process and beyond. Agreement to coordinate work with local volunteer climate advocates.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Richmond Green City Commission Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2022

Members Present: Robert Birdsey, David Evans, Emily Francis, Daniel Klein, Bill Nickerson, Christiane Riederer, Alicia Zatcoff

Members Absent: Bill Riggs

Members of the Public: Glen Besa, Falls of the James, Sierra Club; Bennie Gates, Virginia Organizing; Daniel Hart, University of Richmond Sustainability; Susan Kruse, Community Climate Collaborative; Sandra Leibowitz, Sustainable Design Consulting; Virginia Slattum, Richmond Health District; Lee Williams, Falls of the James, Sierra Club & Green New Deal Virginia

The meeting was called to order at 5:35pm. Commission members introduced themselves.

Updates Since Last Meeting:

- **Office of Sustainability:** Alicia Zatcoff provided an update on the approval process for the RVAgreen 2050 plan. The goals include 45% reduction of GHG community wide by 2030 and to reach net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. Big emphasis on community engagement to develop the plan. The plan is now drafted and waiting for CAO and Mayoral approval – anticipated timing is this fall. Then City Council will need to adopt the plan – ideally this year.

Additionally, there has been a change in the Office of Sustainability structure. There is a dedicated funding stream in the budget. The office was moved from Operations to Planning and Economic Development, which is a good fit for the Office.

- **Community Advocates:** Lee Williams updated the group on the community conversation highlighting budget items for FY2023. There is a letter supporting specific budget requests being circulated for sign on.
- **Reforest Richmond:** Daniel Klein provided an update on forest and tree-based work taking place. Urban Forester + Urban Forestry Committee = Master Plan + Tree Ordinance. Essentially, with those two entities filled and functioning, we can create a Urban Forestry Master Plan and update the City's Tree Ordinance. We need a transition from arborist focus (i.e. tree surgeons) to urban forestry (i.e. an internist or whole systems approach). \$150,000 are available for two positions and we need an act of Council to approve these two new forestry positions in the staff structure. There will be a forthcoming job description. Also: Arbor Day events for the third year in a row will be Oct 15 – 23. A citywide celebration of trees! Check out [Reforest Richmond](#) for more info.
- **City Committee Meetings:** discussion related to how best the Green City Commission can follow and influence sustainability policy across all the City Council Committees. Climate decisions are made in many places – or decisions made by the City that impact climate are made in many places. Following Committees is time intensive and it can be a challenge to quickly react or inject an opinion or perspective in order to influence the discussion. We've talked about this for the last couple of years without a tried & true approach. We will continue to consider how to best advance climate and sustainability policy overall. Which leads into the next agenda item...

Discuss Commission's Climate Priorities:

- When initially created in 2009, the GCC organized itself into committees that mirrored the City’s Sustainability Plan at that time. Over the last few years, we have identified a few priorities ourselves to advance while the development of the new RVAgreen2050 plan was in the works. Most recently that has included Supporting the Climate Emergency Resolution and also building out a framework to increase Richmond’s Tree Canopy (i.e. Daniel’s updates on Reforest Richmond).
- We find ourselves at a critical moment of transition where we need to identify where we should focus our attention as a Commission. Former Commission member Maggie Hopkins generously built a list of the RVAgreen 2050 action items listed in the Draft Plan. We asked Commission members to rank their top few actions (i.e. what would you personally want to work on in the coming year). Our interests seemed to coalesce around:
 - Energy efficiency efforts for retrofits of residential/commercial buildings
 - ...With a special emphasis on low-income residents
 - Required energy efficiency for new buildings
 - Resiliency efforts such as addressing heat island effects and preparing community infrastructure for climate threats (flooding, extreme heat, extreme weather).
- Alicia offered that once Implementation Teams are in place the GCC could provide support. The “objective” level of the Plan seems to be the right level for Implementation Teams to exist. For example there is already an active Composting Team. The Office of Sustainability is the champion for the plan and will support the Teams. There is to be a City Steward for each Team responsible for implementation.
- New Commission members expressed interest in meeting directly with Office of Sustainability staff to discuss the Plan and better understand it. Anyone is welcome to reach out to Dawn Oleksy at: 804-646-6913 or dawn.oleksy@rva.gov.

Commission Transitions

- Huge thanks to Bill Riggs & Robert Birdsey for their service to the Green City Commission. This will be their final meeting as their terms expire in October. Thank you!
- This will be Emily’s last meeting as Chair of the Commission. Daniel Klein will serve as Acting Chair for the final 2022 meeting, where elections will be held for the 2023 calendar year.
- With Bill & Robert rolling off, that leaves us with three vacant Commission positions starting in October. Please encourage interested residents to [apply online](#).

Approval of Minutes

- David Evans made a motion to approve the Commission minutes from both March 21, 2022 and May 16, 2022. Daniel Klein seconded the motion. And the motion passed unanimously:

David Evans: aye

Christiane Riederer: aye

Emily Francis: aye

Alicia Zatcoff: aye

Daniel Klein: aye

The next GCC meeting is November 21 at noon – 1:30pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05pm.

DRAFT – Richmond Green City Commission Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2022

Members Present: David Evans, Emily Francis, Daniel Hart, Daniel Klein, Bill Nickerson, Christiane Riederer, Alicia Zatcoff

Members of the Public: Sarah Barber, VCU; Glen Besa, Falls of the James, Sierra Club; Joe Brancoli, Falls of the James; McKenna Dunbar; Faith Harris, Virginia Interfaith Power and Light; Rob Jones, GroundworkRVA; Susan Kruse, Community Climate Collaborative; Sandra Leibowitz, Sustainable Design Consulting; Dan Nelson; Dawn Oleksy, Office of Sustainability; Keenan Rowe; Virginia Slattum, Richmond Regional Health District; Laura Thomas, Office of Sustainability; Lee Williams, Falls of the James, Sierra Club & Green New Deal Virginia; Charles Woodson

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 pm. Daniel Hart, newest Commission Member, introduced himself.

Approval of Minutes

- Emily Francis made a motion to approve the Commission minutes from September 19, 2022. David Evans seconded the motion. And the motion passed unanimously:

David Evans: aye

Bill Nickerson: aye

Emily Francis: aye

Christiane Riederer: aye

Daniel Hart: aye

Alicia Zatcoff: aye

Daniel Klein: aye

Election of Leadership for 2023

- Emily described the three typical positions and their responsibilities.
- Nominations for Chair

Daniel Klein was nominated by Christiane Riederer and seconded by Emily Francis. Unanimous vote:

David Evans: aye

Bill Nickerson: aye

Emily Francis: aye

Christiane Riederer: aye

Daniel Hart: aye

Alicia Zatcoff: aye

Daniel Klein: aye

- Nominations for Vice Chair

Bill Nickerson nominated Daniel Hart and seconded by David Evans. Unanimous vote:

David Evans: aye

Bill Nickerson: aye

Emily Francis: aye

Christiane Riederer: aye

Daniel Hart: aye

Alicia Zatcoff: aye

Daniel Klein: aye

- There were no nominations for Secretary

Introductions

- Faith Harris introduced herself and shared a little about the work of Virginia Interfaith Power and Light. Visit them at www.vaip.org. Statewide organization committed to working with communities of faith to advance climate action and environmental and social justice. Their current three priorities are: Transit, reducing Energy Burden, and Water Quality.

- Laura Thomas, new Director of Sustainability for the City of Richmond, joined the call and introduced herself and her vision for the office. She is thrilled to help guide implementation of the RVA Green 2050 plan. And sought feedback from the group on how we would like the office to operate. If folks have suggestions or want to talk, she is laura.thomas@rva.gov or 804-432-5931.

2023 Meeting Dates

- Discussion around meeting schedule; anticipated dates for 2023 are:

January 23, 12 – 1:30pm

March 20, 5:30 – 7pm

May 15, 12 – 1:30pm

July 17, 5:30 – 7pm

September 18, 12 – 1:30pm

November 20, 5:30 – 7pm

Commission Vacancies

- There are two current commission vacancies – the forestry position and the green buildings position.
- Discussion around ways to increase diversity of the Commission to better reflect the City itself; one idea is to shift the 9 appointees to be based on the 9 City Districts – one appointee from each district. Various other Commissions are structured that way. Suggestions include reaching out to partners to advertise the openings; Commission members share with their networks; etc. Additionally discussion around instituting a process that mirrors the Office of Sustainability’s approach to their Equity Committee.
- There are currently questions on how appointments get made; criteria and decision making; what standard or elements go into their decision?
- Next step: Daniel Klein will reach out to Land Use, Housing and Transportation Committee to discuss how appointments are currently being made and if they have suggestions for a better, more inclusive process.

2023 Commission Priorities

- Potential to focus on Federal resources available to the city – advocate for best use of Federal funds to advance Climate Action. The Office of Sustainability is also doing work in this realm.
- Lots of interest in Energy Efficiency associated with residential buildings – the work is very distributed and retrofits involve a lot of complexity, but very important from an energy burden perspective. (fyi: RISC is engaged in a Healthy Homes initiative in the City.)
- Additionally incentives for businesses and commercial buildings to go netzero or green – new and old.
- Commission members should consider how they want to spend their time in 2023, expect a call from Daniel, and use the listserv to share ideas or suggestions.

The meeting adjourned at 1:34pm.