

# CITY OF RICHMOND PERFORMANCE REVIEW



**VCU** L. Douglas Wilder School of  
Government and Public Affairs

**MAY 2017**



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# INTRODUCTION

Soon after Mayor Levar Stoney took office, he engaged the Performance Management Group in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University to provide a review of the City agencies under his authority. Mayor Stoney was concerned that City government agencies, the backbone of essential services and economic development, were in need of significant improvement.

With the belief that most of the workforce is committed to improvement, Mayor Stoney sought the input of the employees to understand internal challenges. As is evident in this report, employees of the City stepped forward and offered very frank thoughts about changes necessary to better serve Richmond residents and businesses.

They identified system inefficiencies and breakdowns that have caused needless delays in delivering results and offered possible solutions that could lead to a more effective workforce and the kind of environment more likely to bring about the successful recruitment and retention of the next generation of employees. This report gives voice to the City employees and surfaces their frustrations, as well as their desire to make a difference.

Those who conducted the interviews reported that many employees had not felt their viewpoints were heard in the past. They often noted that they had shared their ideas with others before, but failed to see significant change. The Mayor encouraged the employees to take another chance. It is not assumed that this report contains the full depth and breadth of the employees' ideas regarding change, but rather that this is a key first step. More than likely, as employees and the public see positive changes occur, they will share their thoughts with even greater openness.

Once the Mayor and his team evaluate and prioritize the recommendations alongside other initiatives put forth in this document, leadership may wish to conduct a brief survey of employees and residents in 18-24 months regarding accomplishments, ongoing challenges, and recommended next steps.

The primary focus of this study is the agencies directly under the Mayor's purview. Interviews were conducted with leadership, and often with an examination of the staff. A survey was sent to all areas of City Hall. Several common themes were uncovered and are present in this report. These core themes point to areas where the system limits the employees' ability to serve the residents of Richmond in a timely and effective manner. Excessive bureaucracy, micromanagement, unnecessary delays, and sometimes poor leadership have led to a system that is often not as agile, responsive internally and externally, or as skillful as it should be for Richmond to become the City it could be.

The City is restricted in recruiting and retaining employees in a competitive job market so long as current or prospective employees perceive the weight of bureaucracy to be immobilizing. If the City is to succeed, it will need to

take more informed risk, attract a new generation of employees who are committed to public service, and compete with the surrounding counties in both salary and quality of the workplace.

Comparison of two Service Efforts and Accomplishments (SEA) reports, an annual review of residents conducted by the City Auditor, reveals a stark decline in citizen's satisfaction with City government in the last eight years. In the 2008 report, 81% of respondents said the City was moving in the right direction; that number had plunged to just 34% in the 2016 SEA report. In 2008, 44% of residents surveyed believed they were receiving good value for their tax dollars; that number had fallen to just 31% by 2016.

While it is suggested in the report that residents of Richmond should be interested in the function of all areas, almost every department surveyed revealed a recurring theme springing from four key departments: a need for improved financial controls and re-





porting (Finance), better hiring processes and career development (Human Resources), streamlined procurement practices (Procurement), and upgraded and integrated technology (Information Technology). While all departments' shortcoming must be improved upon, these four touch each department in major ways and are essential if all departments are to effectively deliver services and make City government as a whole healthy.

To this end, it is recommended, perhaps above all else, that City Hall becomes a mission-driven organization with leaders who listen and people who cut through red tape, deliver what is needed while staying within appropriate guidelines, and are not hindered by internal constraints, so that they can carry out their duties with speed and with pride.

## METHODOLOGY

The performance review included multiple methods of gathering data to develop recommendations for operational and cultural improvement. All agencies received a short electronic survey to compile employee perceptions and suggestions. For 19 of the agencies reporting to the Mayor, facilitators interviewed agency leadership for additional perceptions and suggestions. In 11 of the agencies, survey analysis and leadership interviews were supplemented by several focus group sessions with employees. Together this information was compiled to develop this report.

Confidentiality was maintained to the highest level throughout the process to ensure candid and honest feedback.



**35**  
CITY AGENCIES



**1,209**  
EMPLOYEES



**25%**  
RESPONSE RATE

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented here are based upon core themes generated from issues discussed with those who know the City operations best – the City employees. Their candor, concern, and creativity around developing solutions is appreciated.

The recommendations can be classified under the following core themes:

- **PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES**
- **SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY**
- **CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION**
- **CHANGE**
- **PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Some of the recommendations within process and procedures, and systems and technology are pressing and should receive immediate consideration. Simultaneously, there needs to be a concentrated effort to make the inside of Richmond as attractive as the outside appears.



## ▲ PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### RE-ENGINEER PROCESSES

Many of the City's core processes were reportedly inefficient and slow, and in many cases, inconsistent in their application. A core theme throughout the discussions was that critical human resources and finance processes are hampering business conduct and hiring in a timely manner. Immediate re-engineering of core processes should begin with shared services in human resources and procurement, followed by finance and information technology.

### DOCUMENT PROCESSES

It was reported that many formal processes for important functions are lacking and that the ability to maneuver through the system was frustrating, inconsistent, and not professional. The city should document core processes and communicate them to users to ensure consistency and efficiency. There were many accounts of simple business transactions getting lost in bureaucracy without communication on progress.

### EDUCATE INTERNAL CUSTOMERS

Once core processes have been re-engineered for efficiency and effectiveness, educate users on how to navigate through the processes for successful outcomes. Consider newsletters, webinars, short videos, and face-to-face sessions where processes are explained in easily understandable terms.

### MODEL CUSTOMER SERVICE INSIDE CITY HALL

Promote and reward good customer service within City Hall by instilling it as a core value and expectation of the Mayor and his leadership team. Consider adding this as a component in employee work profiles and job descriptions.

## ▲ SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY

### DEVELOP BACK-UP SYSTEMS

There appears to be a lack of back-up systems for critical functions and information, especially in emergency communications and technology services. Develop and invest in contingency systems and practice utilizing them proactively.

### INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY WISELY

Technology updates and systems can enhance efficiency and improve transparency and workflow communication. Invest wisely in systems and updates that improve core functions, especially in human resources, procurement, and public safety. Seek system solutions that reduce turnaround time, and track workflow and accountability.

### EDUCATE USERS

Provide helpful education on existing and new systems with a robust help center to aid usage and realize benefits from upgrades. Discourage continuation of legacy systems and processes after technology roll-outs.

## ▲ CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

### IMPROVE CULTURE

Employees consistently reported that the current culture does not encourage positive internal customer service, collaboration, or friendliness, especially between agencies. Build a culture of mutual respect and shared accountability with a progressive philosophy of leadership and management, core values that are lived, and leadership that model how employees within City offices work with each other and customers.



## **EMPHASIZE PROPER COMMUNICATION**

Encourage improved communication throughout all levels of City Hall. It was often reported that communication stayed at the higher levels and filtered down only when absolutely needed, and then, as an edict. Ask employees for suggestions on the best methods to receive communication and train all employees on communication methods and styles. Develop a culture where people ask for input rather than tell people what to think and where diversity of thought is valued while respecting levels of authority.

## **▲ CHANGE**

### **MAKE IT HAPPEN**

Create a cross-functional team to prioritize the performance review report recommendations and develop implementation plans with timelines, milestones, project teams and leads, leadership sponsors, and resource projections. Employees report that they have experienced many promises of change before, but need to see action.

### **PRIORITIZE CHANGE**

Create a transformation office reporting to Mayor Stoney to implement recommendations from this review and to promote City-wide culture change. Designate at least one liaison in every agency to assist the efforts and communicate progress. Report progress quarterly in public forums and provide opportunities for employee input and feedback.

### **CULTURE SURVEY**

Initiate a culture survey to assess the effectiveness of the change efforts and review morale in 18 months.

## **▲ PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

### **STAFFING AND WORKLOAD**

Consider staffing and workload assessments in selected agencies with reported issues, such as Social Services and Parks and Recreation. Develop a similar long-term plan to assess all agencies for workload, staffing, and with the compensation plan currently underway, proper compensation.

### **WORKPLACE IMPROVEMENT**

Encourage all agency leaders to re-evaluate physical workspaces with the intention of improving quality without excessive capital investment. Often small things improve functionality and morale, so ask employees for ideas on restructuring spaces and improving comfort.

### **BUILD AND NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS**

City government requires trust and collaboration with many units, including the Mayor, agency leadership, City Council, City Attorney, City Auditor, external partners, and others. Work to strengthen all links with the focus on making Richmond an even better place to live, work, and play.

### **DEVELOP THE WORKFORCE**

It was reported that there are not many opportunities for professional development for City employees, and that people are often promoted to supervisory and management position without specific training in people management. Strengthen training and professional development to develop current and future supervisors, managers, and leaders.

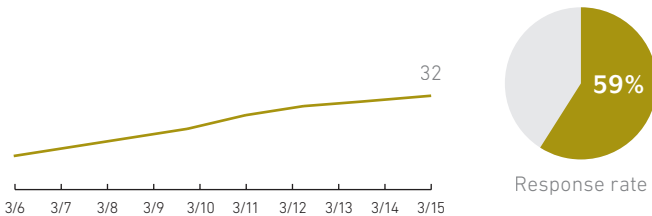
### **BUILD CAREER PATHWAYS**

Employees reported that there are not well developed or clearly communicated career progression paths in many of the work units within City Hall. Develop and communicate career paths for staff so they can qualify for advancement and continue to richly contribute to the City through their knowledge and high quality customer service.

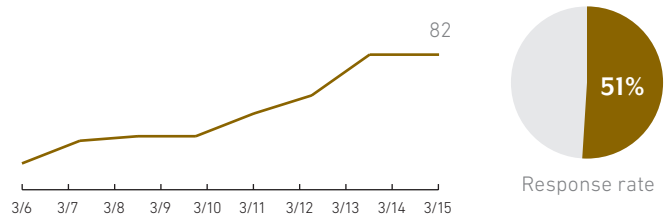
# EMPLOYEE SURVEY

An employee survey was one of three data gathering methods deployed to obtain observations, perceptions, and recommendations for the performance review. The survey was distributed to all employees of the 35 City agencies and over 1,200 responses were collected. The survey was administered through the Survey and Evaluation Research Lab within the L. Douglas Wilder School as an independent entity. All responses were anonymous and confidentiality was maintained to the highest level throughout the process to encourage candid and honest feedback. The response rate by agency is detailed below. Agencies with less than 10 responses were not included in the analysis to protect confidentiality.

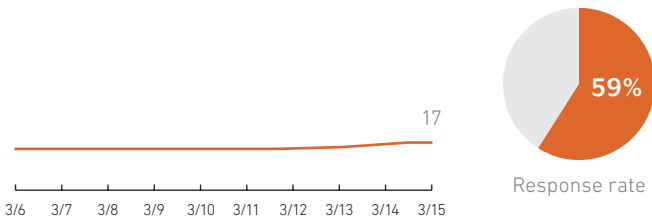
## HUMAN RESOURCES



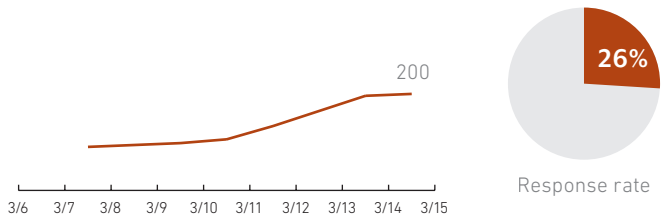
## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



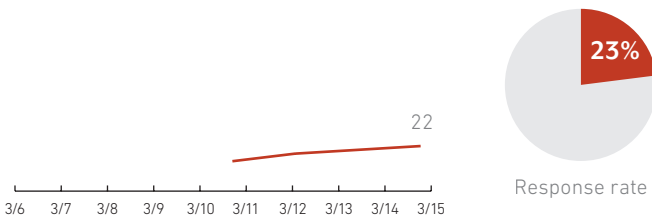
## PROCUREMENT SERVICES



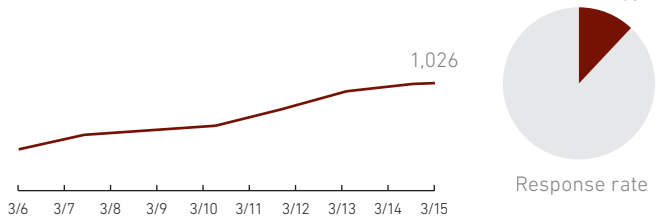
## FINANCE



## BUDGET AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

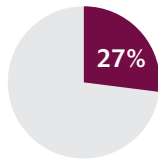
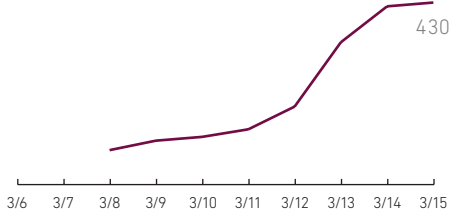


## POLICE



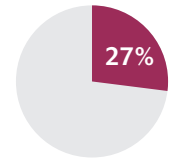
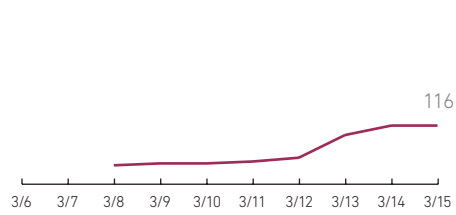


### FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES



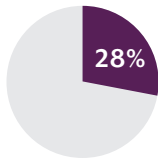
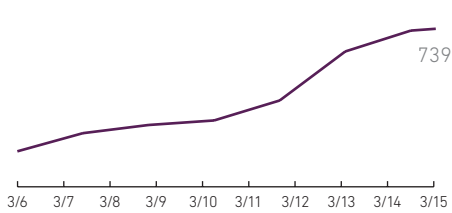
Response rate

### EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS (911)



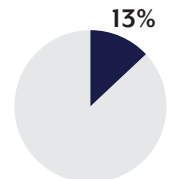
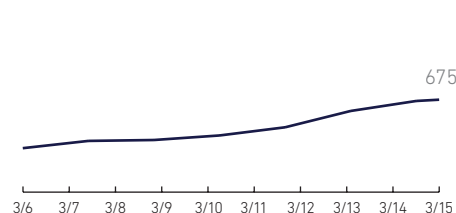
Response rate

### PUBLIC UTILITIES



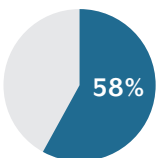
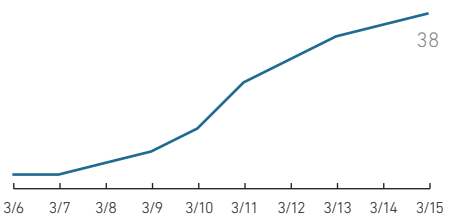
Response rate

### PUBLIC WORKS



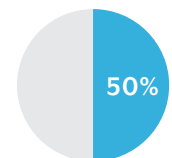
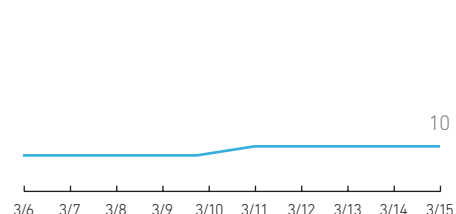
Response rate

### ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



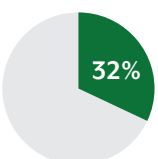
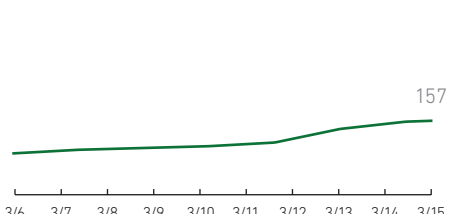
Response rate

### MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



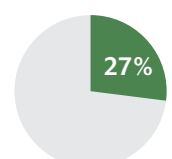
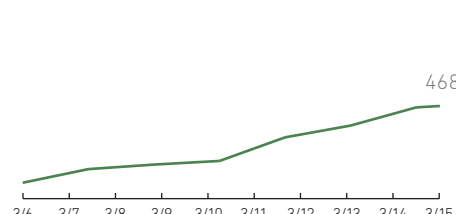
Response rate

### PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW



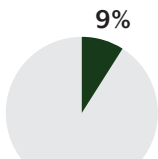
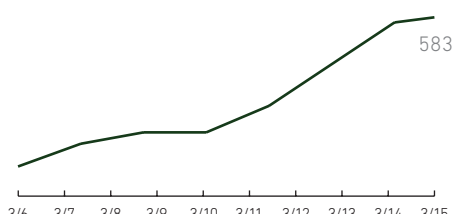
Response rate

### SOCIAL SERVICES



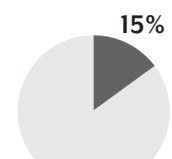
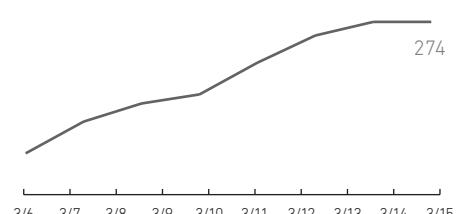
Response rate

### PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Response rate

### JUSTICE SERVICES



Response rate



"I want your ideas. I want to know from you, the experts who do this work every day, what changes or improvements need to be made. I want to know what works in your view, what does not and what could be better."

- Mayor Stoney





## LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

AGENCY OR OFFICE	INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS	FOCUS GROUPS	SURVEY
<b>INTERNAL FUNCTIONS</b>			
Human Resources	✓	✓	✓
Information Technology	✓	✓	✓
Procurement Services	✓	✓	✓
Finance	✓	✓	✓
Budget and Strategic Planning	✓		✓
<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>			
Police Department	✓		✓
Fire and Emergency Services	✓		✓
Emergency Management	✓		✓
Emergency Communications (911)	✓		✓
<b>OPERATIONS</b>			
Public Utilities	✓	✓	✓
Public Works	✓	✓	✓
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>			
Economic and Community Development	✓	✓	✓
Minority Business Development	✓		✓
Community Wealth Building	✓	✓	✓
Planning and Development Review	✓	✓	✓
<b>HUMAN SERVICES</b>			
Social Services	✓	✓	✓
Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	✓	✓	✓
Justice Services	✓		✓
Multicultural Affairs	✓		✓

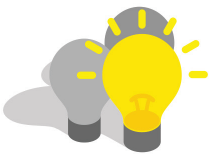


# SUMMARY OF SURVEY THEMES

The comments provided by the City of Richmond employees for each of the six open ended questions highlight that there are many employees who are actively engaged in thinking of ways to make the City a superior place. Responses were thoughtful, sometimes passionate, and heartfelt. The ideas that were shared indicate a workforce that is ready to step up and help the City move in a positive direction—making it a better place to live, work, and play.

There were eight major, often interrelated themes that emerged in the survey analysis.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES



Comments from the employees revealed frustrations with the lack of consistency in processes and procedures across all of departments and agencies. They requested that processes and procedures be reviewed and updated in order to bring about greater consistency. In some cases, there is a need for processes to be developed, as there are none at present. It was reported that there are no standardized processes in place for some critical functions.

## RESPONSIVENESS



Interdepartmental and intradepartmental responsiveness was highlighted throughout the comments. The responses echoed the City employees' frustrations regarding timely responsiveness to one another's inquiries, as well as responses to customer inquiries. A solution collectively expressed throughout the survey was the establishment of guidelines for response to both internal partners and external customers, enabling employees to better understand expectations.

## COMMUNICATION



Improved, and accurate communication was a consistent theme throughout the survey. Comments uniformly agreed that there is a pressing need to establish better lines of communication among departments, agencies, upper management and staff. Several people indicated that upper management could listen better to their employees and provide improved support. Several people stated that employees could communicate appropriately to customers, but needed to more fully understand the roles of other departments in order to provide accurate information to customer inquiries. The comments emphasized the need for the City to provide consistent training to their employees to be able to provide positive external communication.

## TRAINING



Employees stressed the importance of developing consistent and updated training courses at all levels. Customer service training was highly regarded as a priority. In addition, employees frequently mentioned the need to prioritize professional development and higher education opportunities to improve employee performance of customer service. Employees highlighted the need to encourage leadership to promote, identify, and secure professional development opportunities.

## PERSONNEL



Comments indicate that there is an overwhelming need for additional staff, especially those who are highly qualified. Respondents feel that qualifications for each open position should be stated in the announcement and followed carefully when filling vacancies. Competitive pay and recognition of quality performance are desired from leadership. Friendly and helpful personnel acting as greeters within City Hall would enhance a citizen's overall experience.

## TECHNOLOGY



A substantial need for updated software and equipment was reported. Employees recommended a complete transition from paper to electronic files, while also making software and equipment accessible and user friendly. Additionally, the importance of prioritizing technology updates to improve the efficiency of employees was highlighted. Suggestions specified kiosks located in City Hall to direct citizens to services. Some employees emphasized heeding the advice of the IT Governance Committee. In general, there was consensus about investing in technology to enhance the image of the City and the performance of the employees.

## CULTURE



Employees noted the need to make the culture of City Hall more friendly and collaborative. Many felt that leadership sets the tone for culture and can be a driving force for improving customer service. Changing the culture of any organization is difficult. It may be helpful for the Mayor to lead an initiative where there is a clear vision for the preferred culture and initiate a plan of action to achieve this.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



Comments indicated that the physical environment at City Hall could be more welcoming. Restoring the physical space is seen as an opportunity to greatly enhance the visitor experience for anyone spending time at City Hall. Providing more convenient and less expensive parking, improved signage, welcoming personnel, and a more inviting interior would also create a more positive environment.

# INTERNAL FUNCTIONS

- HUMAN RESOURCES
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
- PROCUREMENT SERVICES
- FINANCE
- BUDGET AND STRATEGIC PLANNING





# HUMAN RESOURCES

## **AGENCY MISSION**

To provide a comprehensive human resource management program that is focused on Person Centered services that are Policy Compliant and delivered by a Professionally Competent team

## **INTERVIEWS**

3 groups and 3 interviews with 13 total attendees

## **AGENCY FUNCTION**

Human Resources is responsible for administering employee benefits, classification and compensation, training & development activities, and employee relations programs. We are able to administer such programs and activities through an updated and well-managed human resources information system. The department promotes a "customer first" attitude by demonstrating a spirit of cooperation and by being a trusted and valued source of human resources knowledge and expertise.





# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION-SHARING

Individuals and focus groups cited lack of communication and information sharing within HR groups, between HR, other agencies, and portfolios. This was mentioned particularly with HR liaisons assigned to other agencies. Employees believe they work in silos from others outside their department, and complete tasks without understanding the context and purpose for the work.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institute regular staff and department meetings to ensure employees understand the mission and objectives of the portfolios and departments, including priorities and goals.
- Establish meetings with HR liaisons to understand their needs and expectations while imparting central HR needs and expectations.
- Working together and understanding the work of central HR can create efficiencies and ensure different departments are not working on the same projects. With more information sharing, groups can tap into subject matter experts to assist with projects, which will lead to a more cohesive central HR department. Listening to employees enhances morale and makes them feel valued.

## ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

The core administrative functions of HR are centralized, while HR Liaisons are decentralized and report directly to individual agencies. This decentralized approach leads to inconsistent execution of HR practices and can result in loss of credibility for HR over time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The HR Liaison reporting structure should be re-examined. Consider centralizing all HR Liaisons into HR with specific agency assignments.
- Allocation of work to HR Liaisons should be reassessed to improve efficiency.
- Periodic training of HR Liaisons in the current structure is a temporary solution that does little to reinforce on-going consistency when lines of accountability are fractured.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONSISTENCY

The group consistently highlighted opportunities for greater accountability and consistency in HR practices. They shared that critical HR regulations, policies, and procedures are either outdated or do not exist at all. They also expressed that other departments, and occasionally HR, do not sufficiently follow existing HR guidance, which creates potential compliance concerns, uncertainty, and delay.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Appoint a cross-department task force led by Human Resources to identify the most critical HR regulations, policies, and procedures that need to be updated or created.
- Clear roadblocks for finalizing and approving such guidance and communicate the updated guidance clearly to all stakeholders. Senior City leaders, in collaboration with the HR department, can then hold department directors and other key stakeholders accountable for consistently applying the updated HR guidance in their respective organizations.

## MORALE

Employee morale is low for a variety of reasons, including lack of strategic direction and leadership support, a perceived low standing relative to other City departments, high turnover and perceived insufficient staffing, and lack of incentive compensation or other recognition methods. There were several references to feeling neglected or unappreciated.

### RECOMMENDATION

- In the short-term, engage HR employees further on strategies to improve morale. If some incentive compensation is available, design and communicate the pay-for-performance expectations and guidelines. If incentive compensation is not available, explore non-monetary recognition that align with vision for department culture, for example a "shout out board" posted prominently, quarterly recognition celebration led by HR Director, amplify communications from other departments when they are praising support from HR, etc. Long-term morale improvement depends on progress made against the other identified themes.



## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Management and employees asked for more professional development to become subject matter experts in their respective areas. With three people currently staffed to conduct training for the City, established priorities do not allow for an expanded training program. An additional barrier is the lack of full-time dedicated space to conduct training.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Establish a dedicated training room so training can easily be scheduled five days a week.
- Suggest collaboration among departments and portfolios to allow departments/employees to coordinate and attend applicable training for efficient and effective use of trainers.
- To maximize resources, rely on community partners to send volunteer trainers to assist with training programs.

## **STAFFING AND TURNOVER**

Competitive pay practices were most often cited as reasons for the inability to attract or retain qualified employees. However, an increasing decline in employee morale also contributes to the retention issue. Employee morale suffers when a lack of staff or unaddressed poor performers put an additional strain on the team.

The existing HR team would benefit from a sense of urgency and clear transparency about the plan to fill the role of HR Director. The new HR Director should be a strong leader with the ability to effectively engage and develop employees to support a clear strategic vision for HR.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To further stave off staffing and turnover concerns, employees should be empowered to take an active role in making recommendations for improvement. Examples include forming cross-functional teams to evaluate, recommend and implement new HR practices or other projects that give employees a sense of ownership and the ability to contribute in meaningful ways.

## **TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE**

The current HRIS system is seen as either outdated or not configured to provide maximum effectiveness. This technology challenge is further compounded by limited technical support.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- A comprehensive process evaluation should be conducted.



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## AGENCY MISSION

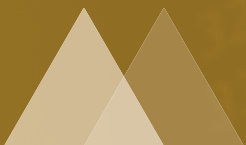
The Department of Information Technology (DIT) seeks to deliver secure, reliable, and convenient technology services that meet the needs of the government of the City of Richmond.

## INTERVIEWS

8 groups with 50 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

DIT designs, implements, operates, and creates strategy for information technology services.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## CENTRALIZED TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP

It was noted in numerous conversations that there are multiple IT departments throughout the City, often with different policies and procedures. This results in a divergence of policy, lack of voice for technology related issues and programs, and the lack of ability to provide economies of scale. Additionally, the lack of a formalized senior leadership role for IT limits the organization's ability to impact policy/behavior across departments that could improve IT services and efficiency.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The creation of a City-wide Chief Information Officer (CIO) position into which all technology departments report should be considered. This position could report to the CAO to make the position a true partner to other department leaders. Funding and filling this position with a qualified candidate could address a number of themes. A qualified CIO would be able to set a strong City-wide vision, strategy, policies and procedures, and be able to affect change that would improve all the themes that were uncovered. The CIO would also communicate the issues clearly to the City Council, provide important communication to the employees of the department and other department heads, would be able to set a customer service culture, and would ensure the City's IT security and infrastructure remain up to minimum standards.

## DISASTER RECOVERY / RESILIENCY

City systems are not in a position to be dependably recovered in the case of a disaster. Although a recovery in an offsite data center was performed in 2012, no recovery in an off-site data center has ever been tested or attempted with the current vendor, and no step detailed plan exists for recovery in an off-site data center in the case of a disaster. The City could be without some critical systems for weeks, if not months, in the case of disaster. In addition, several critical systems are running on aging technology and customized code that cannot be maintained to ensure it is available to meet the needs of the City and her residents. Availability is not measured and reported, thus assessing risk and prioritizing investment is extremely difficult.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The City should consider constructing a disaster recovery plan for all major systems with a step-by-step recovery process and required service level agreements (SLAs) for time-to-recover for each major system.
- An industry best practice is to ensure all systems have SLAs for availability, and actual production performance should be measured and reported at least monthly against these SLAs to all departments.

- It is recommended that remediation plans be developed and executed where systems are consistently failing to meet these availability SLAs.
- Another industry best practice would be for the City to complete a data management plan in conjunction with the DR effort.

## CULTURE

The culture in the City has been noted to not appropriately value respect between departments. Based on focus group data, it seemed that the DIT employees had a good level of respect and camaraderie within their team, however there were numerous examples given where the DIT employees were talked down to and ordered around by leaders and employees of other departments, and there was little appreciation given for the many night and weekend hours that were put in by the individuals in the department.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The Mayor should consider embarking on a City-wide program to instill a culture of respect and employee appreciation across departments for the duration of the administration. This would include town halls, group meetings, a marketing program, continual reinforcement, and a recognition and reward program that allows employees to easily reward others across departments.

## CITY-WIDE PEOPLE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

It was noted in a number of sessions that the Department of Information Technology is not notified when employees from other departments are on-boarded, off-boarded, or change roles. This results in an inefficient on-boarding process where the DIT employees scramble to provision new employees, and the new employees are not productive due to the lack of technology available when starting. This also results in the inability to de-provision employees when they leave the City, which allows for former employees to retain laptops, cell phones, and access to City systems. This represents not only a financial risk, but a material Information Security risk as well.

### RECOMMENDATION

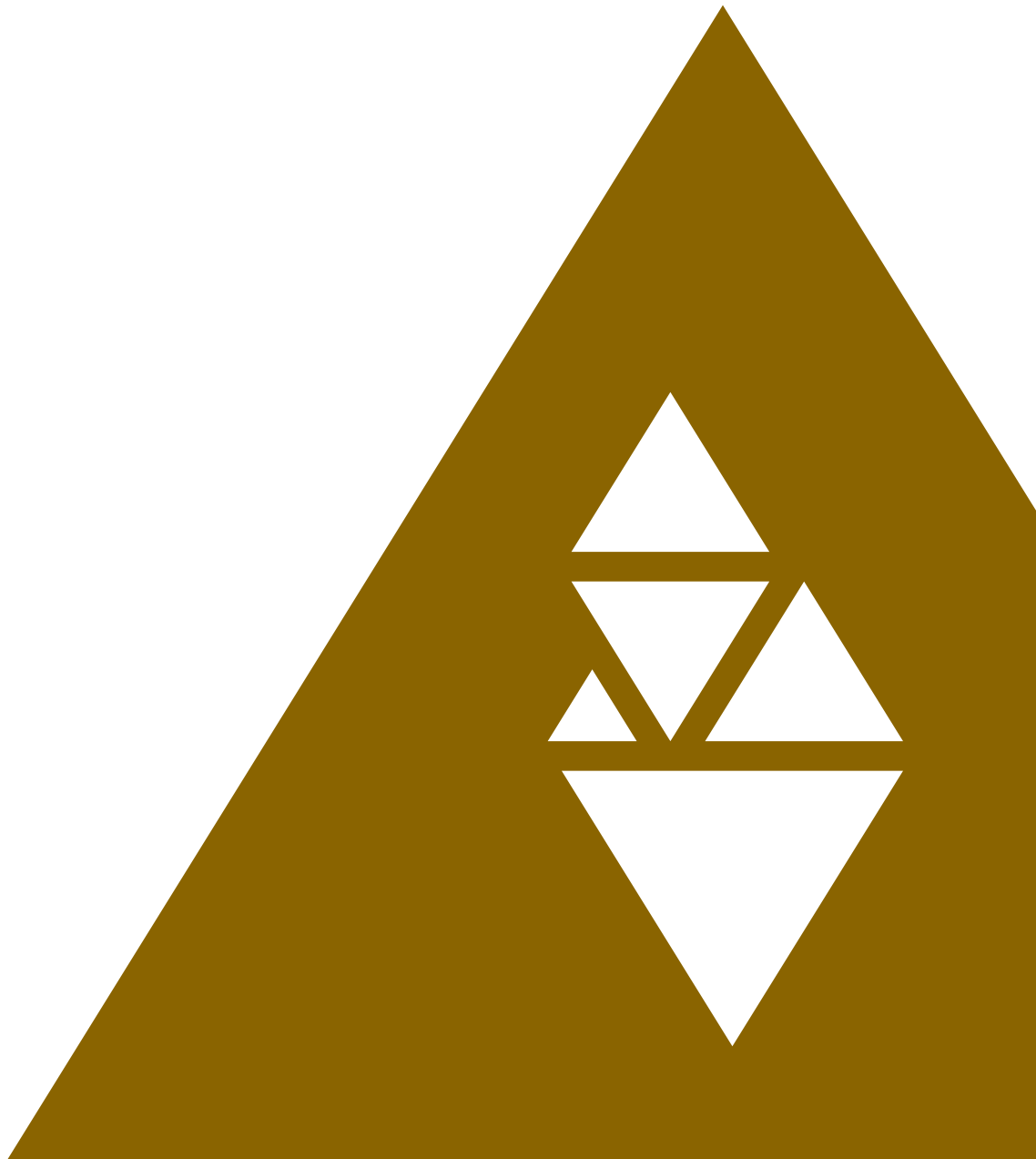
- Institute City-wide communication program that would notify all departments when changes to employment and roles will occur.

## WORK INTAKE

Although one of the strengths of the department is a transition to industry standard ITIL practices and sound governance, a number of challenges were raised concerning the intake of operational tickets and other non-project work requests. The general theme was that many of the requests from other departments do not follow the standard work request procedure and are escalated via department heads. Due to the inability to effectively plan work, the overall effect is a reduction in service quality and efficiency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- City employees should work within the current IT Work Request process. If an executive level of service is required, it is recommended that the City provide extra funding for a new executive service tier and identify individuals who may access that new service tier. This will not only improve service for those in the executive service tier but improve the level of service for all employees across the City.
- Other tactics to consider include reducing the number of escalated operational tickets from all departments across the City by including escalation procedures that require department head approval. Goals for each department could be created to reduce the number of escalated tickets. Another incentive to reduce escalated tickets would be to enact monthly funding transfers to the DIT department based on the number of escalated tickets.





# PROCUREMENT SERVICES

## AGENCY MISSION

Support the City by performing the procurement function in a customer-focused, strategic, ethical, and transparent manner while ensuring opportunities to diverse suppliers and complying with applicable governing laws and policies.

## AGENCY VISION

To be a best-in-class organization through effective use and implementation of the following: strategic sourcing and focused training to contain costs and improve productivity; enabling technology that streamlines processes and empowers end-users to perform their job duties in a more efficient and effective manner, and; proactively and cooperatively engaging with our end-users and suppliers to creatively solve problems in a collaborative manner.

## INTERVIEWS

1 group with 9 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

The acquisition of quality goods, services, and construction at a reasonable cost while maintaining public trust by ensuring all procurement activities are conducted fairly and impartially. Proper administration, disposition, and disposal of all surplus personal property that is no longer needed by the City. Management of the City's vendor database. Providing an array of high quality training offerings to better educate end-users.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## PURCHASING EFFICIENCIES

A variety of legacy processes are viewed as highly ineffective. This department expressed frustration with the extensive paperwork and approvals needed to make small purchases. The process is considered both cumbersome and unnecessary, and the Procurement department is fully in support of a well-researched and documented solution.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implementation and management of a Purchasing Card (P-Card) program would provide an immediate improvement for the City. This could create significant workflow and financial efficiencies across City government, as well as generate revenue for the City. Revenue is generated in the form of a “cash rebate” on purchases and is paid back to the City from the financial service provider. It is estimated that the funds received could offset the cost of staffing.
- With purchasing authority established individually, some vendor acquisitions could also be made on a P-Card. This further streamlines multiple processes, including eliminating the need for finance to process invoices. This allows vendors real-time payment, and improves upon current vendor payment structure which is considered slow. The purchasing change could also create more competitive pricing due to purchases made from vendors who have previously chosen not to do business with the City due to payment processing time.

## PROCESS EFFICIENCIES

Limitations on contracting authority require multiple levels of approval. Review and sign-off by the Agency Director is often required. The City Attorney’s office is considered a significant impediment to an efficient process due to slow turnaround. In general, staff feel that they are specialists and should be entrusted and accountable for completing their duties.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Review and revise contracting authority limits to give contract specialists more autonomy. Take a deeper look at the specifics of current contracting authority and process in order to advise specific limitations/recommendations.

- Create a process of auto-renewals for continuing contracts with sign-off by Contract Specialists to eliminate redundancies for those contracts without substantial changes. Any contracts requiring such changes could be put through the more rigorous review and approval process.
- Vendors could be required to agree to contract terms and conditions of the City rather than supply their own. This would avoid lengthy legal review and approval. An addendum could be attached to note any additional terms required.
- Review and refine the requirements for procurement. In the past, slight changes in an agreement can force an entire re-procurement. This is seen as unnecessary and highly inefficient when modifications could be made through an addendum.

## STAFFING

Current staffing levels are reportedly slightly above 50%, leading to frustration and overburdened employees. Recruitment, hiring, and retention are significant challenges for this department. There is a feeling that the City's brand as an employer does not allow the department to compete effectively for qualified procurement specialists.

Hiring managers are presented a small pool of candidates provided by Human Resources, but this group frequently is not considered to be the best candidates for open positions. Managers believe that HR emphasizes answers to supplemental questions over job experience when selecting the pool of referrals. In some instances, hiring managers have had to go into a third pool to find individuals that they felt qualified for a position, adding unnecessary time to the hiring process.

When a candidate is identified, the hiring process is often so lengthy that desirable candidates have already accepted other positions before an offer can be finalized. Positions that are vacant for a lengthy amount of time can be seen as unnecessary to fill and fund, which places a strain on current resources and creates a domino effect of slower response to contracting needs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional performance review dialogue with the HR department should provide greater insight into next steps for addressing the process of recruitment and hiring. Any new process should be developed in a working group with representatives from across City government, preferably from the supervisory level.
- Hiring managers should have access to the broader pool of applicants at an earlier stage. Managers should have the opportunity to share characteristics and qualifications that they believe are best suited to the open position.
- The candidate approval and hiring process must be streamlined in order to fill vacant positions more quickly. Higher priority should be placed on filling the staffing needs of this agency, as the impact of a fully staffed and highly qualified Procurement office will be felt across City government.



## TECHNOLOGY GAP

The state of current technology is seen as a major impediment to improving productivity. Procurement staff struggle to effectively communicate within or across departments due to email system challenges and other issues. Their work product, such as required forms, cannot always be opened or completed within departments on other versions of Windows or Internet Explorer. Workarounds are in place, but not viewed as effective and can be prone to errors.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Software platforms ideally would be consistent across all departments to facilitate effective communication and workflow.
- Continued movement toward utilization of eVA, Virginia's electronic procurement system, is encouraged. This web-based vendor registration and purchasing system allows the City to conduct purchasing and sourcing activities for goods and services online. While business is still conducted offline after receipt of quotes, the online process of receiving and tracking is a significant improvement. Streamlining the post-quote process into RAPIDS or another electronic system is recommended.

## KNOWLEDGE GAP

High turnover in key positions throughout the City creates an end-user challenge with respect to procurement processes and policies. The lack of knowledge on the process is observed with new employees, as well as long-time employees who have received prior training. Contract Specialists spend substantial time answering questions from employees while they are attempting to submit a procurement request.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Onboarding training should include procurement basic training, and personnel with substantial responsibilities in this area should be identified and required to attend advanced and ongoing training. Knowledge tests should be utilized regularly to ensure that employees retain their knowledge of policies and processes.
- Create a reference guide, as well as list of FAQs and provide them to employees. Place these on the intranet for easy access and consider them the first step for employees with a procurement question. This should maximize productivity for employees as well as the Contract Specialists. The current departmental newsletter is an excellent vehicle for continuing updates and training dialogue.

## CONTRACT EFFICIENCIES

Partnering on state contracts is seen as an opportunity for significant savings in City government.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implementing contract partnerships is an ongoing and longer-term process, requiring time for the department to review contract options as expirations arise. There appears to be substantial support throughout the Agency for continuing to find and promote these opportunities.
- It was also suggested that HR partnering on improved benefit plans could make the City more competitive as an employer and create a positive boost to current employee satisfaction.



# FINANCE

## AGENCY MISSION

The mission of the Finance Department is to lead the City's financial management efforts in keeping with becoming a Tier One City.

## INTERVIEWS

3 groups with 40 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

Finance's objectives are, to maintain strong bond ratings for the City, to complete the annual audit on time, providing the CAFR to the Auditor of Public Accounts by November 30th of each year, to provide accurate Monthly Financial Reports to City Council, and to maximize revenue collections, for both current and delinquent taxes and fees owed to the City.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORTS

The Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR) have not been filed on time for the last several years, but the process has been improving over the last two years. External auditors typically require more time to plan and understand the client in their first year of engagement. Turnover in external auditors in the last several years caused inefficiency, and delays in engaging the most recent external auditors also delayed the process further. In addition, the City lacks full-time permanent technical accountants to perform the specialized accounting work to prepare financial statements. Qualified candidates are hard to find, especially candidates with governmental financial reporting experience.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Strong technical accountants are expensive and may be difficult to hire on a full-time basis. Management hired an external CPA firm to assist with the preparation of the financial statement disclosures, in addition to the external CPA firm that performs the audit. This is an excellent short-term way to approach the deficit in this skill set within the organization, but full-time financial reporting staff would provide for a longer-term solution.

## CUSTOMER CONFUSION

According to the staff, some customers believe that all City services should be provided by one point of contact at City Hall. Other customers complain that they are misdirected to another area by a City employee.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- As suggested by Finance Department staff, the first employee to interact with a customer should own the customer. The owner should lead the customer physically to the appropriate place within City Hall to conduct business, staying until another employee acknowledges they are in the correct location. Some employees voiced concern about leaving their station to abide by such a policy.
- Consider supplemental volunteer-run Information Desks in the lobby of City Hall, in addition to the existing Information Desk at the Marshall street entrance, to ensure all visitors are directed to the appropriate office. One alternative may be to improve signage at the other entrances to funnel visitors to the current Information Desk.
- Another solution may be volunteer greeters who welcome people to City Hall and direct them to the correct location.



## DELINQUENT TAXES AND ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

A substantial amount of delinquent tax revenue relates to property the City could sell. There is an internal dispute between Revenue Administration and the City Attorney's Office regarding the resolution of these amounts due to the City. Revenue Administration wants to sell the properties to clear the accounts from the list of delinquencies. The City Attorney's Office reportedly wants to delay sale to avoid overwhelming the market with sales of properties in a short period of time, perhaps reducing the market price.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The City should accelerate the monetization of this receivable and reduce the market risk of holding assets tied to the real estate market. The City should consider auctioning the entire portfolio of properties to third-party real estate investors or outsourcing the management of the sales.

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures are not in place for many processes in the Finance Department. Policies and procedures aid in the training of new employees, provide a way for management to help ensure compliance with City policies, ordinances and other regulations and laws, including properly limiting the application of inconsistent discretion by staff and management such as waiving penalties due to an error by the City, set expectations between departments; and improve internal controls to prevent fraud by segregating duties when appropriate.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Policies and procedures should be developed and maintained, and available for employees to refer to as they perform their duties.

## SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

Formal Service Level Agreements (SLA) provide an objective way to measure an department's service level, which will help the City improve its culture and reputation as a more customer-focused and results-oriented culture.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify appropriate measures to track performance of the Finance Department, such as deadlines met, taxes collected, customer satisfaction metrics and surveys, etc.
- Create SLAs for services provided to other agencies.
- Consider aligning performance pay of staff and management with results of compliance with SLAs.

## RESULTS-ORIENTED WORKFORCE

Finance Department staff said that pay increases in the past were spread evenly across all employees, rather than based on merit. The City has envisioned a new pay-for-performance program using a new evaluation form that distinguishes strong performers and poor performers. This program has a target effective date in 2018.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt a pay-for-performance program that differentiates between strong and poor performance.
- Continue to promote and otherwise reward hard-working and high-performing employees to reinforce that hard work and talent will be rewarded. As with any change to employee compensation, clear communication is extremely important for employees to understand and embrace the change.

## NEW TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

Several systems used by the Finance Department staff are a source of inefficiency and frustration. The root causes include poor implementation, out-of-date technology, and poor understanding of systems by users. Additionally, various systems used by Finance and other departments do not communicate with each other. The result is decreased efficiency, less than effective work processes, and confusion among the staff and City customers.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Critical work processes surrounding the systems that are not slated for a full-scale upgrade should be identified. These systems should be redesigned with a focus on efficiency and customer service, and the related system features re-implemented to support the functions of the department.
- Application Programming Interfaces (API) could be used to automate the flow of data between systems. If feasible, these APIs could reduce effort and frustration while improving accuracy of data transfer.
- For future implementations, the effort and cost of a system implementation should not be underestimated. These future system implementations should be managed closely and should follow standard practices to ensure all testing is completed before going live. A successful system design and upgrade should be led by a strong group within the user department, rather than an IT department. The team assigned to the project would be able to develop a deep understanding of the specific goals of the new application, ensuring alignment of all the vested parties, before implementation work is begun.
- System implementations are demanding on staff and organizations, but when done correctly can dramatically improve an organization. Automating process can also result in lower operating costs. Poor implementation can result in major cost overruns and result in a sub par system that does not upgrade the organization.

## PROJECT AUTHORIZATION

Projects are often not approved or denied in a timely basis, which leads to uncertainty within the organization. For example, employees are unsure whether a proposal will be approved and, without clear and prompt decisions, other possible solutions to a problem are stymied.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- To speed the process, a new tracking report could be created for upper management that tracks the approval process for proposals.
- For more routine projects and approvals, the process and timelines for approval should be included in the SLA.
- Explanations should be included in the report for delays and periodic reviews with management should be scheduled and held to enforce accountability when target delivery dates are missed.
- Performance pay could be based on a department's record for meeting target dates for approvals, such as Procurement, City Attorney, and others frequently involved in approvals.

## TRAINING

Some of the Finance Department's customer-facing employees expressed interest in learning other functions (i.e. outside of Revenue Administration) which they think will lead to better customer service. They also suggested having better training on computer applications to reduce inefficiencies. Understanding more of an application's features could lead to reducing manual data entry or improving consistency in regards to similar transactions across all users of the system. System training is currently provided by other City employees who do not have deep knowledge of the system.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify staff to serve as internal Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for each of the systems. Train these internal SMEs using external experts. These SMEs should then lead training courses for other employees.
- Provide customer-facing employees with cross-training on the other services provided by the City to improve customer service.

## COMMUNICATION

Staff desired more interaction with upper management. By all accounts, communication levels within the Finance Department have improved dramatically over the last several years. "Coffee and Conversation" and the newsletter have been very well received.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Despite positive feedback from recent efforts, some employees asked for more interaction with management, particularly informal and casual conversation that seeks to include all members of the staff. These causal interactions can lead to a feeling among staff that they have an outlet to discuss issues.





# BUDGET AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

## AGENCY MISSION

To provide corporate oversight for the development, analysis, and execution of the City's budgeting and strategic planning process as well as technical grant support in order to balance the needs and resources of the community.

## AGENCY VISION

All agencies deliver quality services in a fiscally responsible manner in alignment with the City's annual plan.

## INTERVIEWS

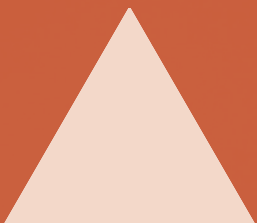
Leadership interview

## AGENCY FUNCTION

The Department has three units that perform interrelated services. The Budget Unit provides corporate oversight of the development, analysis, and execution of the City's budget. This also includes performing budget and financial analysis, forecasting at the departmental, fund, and Citywide level, budget monitoring and reporting, and performing other special projects.

The Grants Unit provides grant coordination and grant writing services to generate revenue for the City to leverage local dollars and pursue projects the City would not otherwise be able to fund. The grant unit specifically identifies grant opportunities, develops, prepares, and submits grant applications for various Richmond City departments in a coordinated and proactive manner, coordinates daily operations of grant-related data management, and consults with City agencies and external organizations, all in a manner that will achieve efficiency in the management of grants and stimulate grant revenue generation.

The Strategic Planning Unit supports transformational leadership and increased service value throughout the organization by utilizing focused planning and data driven analysis of business processes and performance to break down organizational silos and achieve results. The intended outcomes of this unit are improved service delivery, optimal resource allocation and sound fiscal stewardship of taxpayer dollars.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## EMPLOYEE MORALE

It was reported that employees do not feel recognized or appreciated, nor are expectations and responsibilities always fully clear, from departments outside of Budget. Staff reported that they do not feel like they are recognized or appreciated by upper management for the work that they do outside of appreciation from the Budget Department management.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Continue to show appreciation for the work of all employees and promote shared understanding of the importance of their work to the effective operations of City Hall. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Budget Office to other agencies.

## TECHNOLOGY GAP

Software and hardware platforms are not state-of-the-industry nor are they consistent across different City offices and thus not as effective at facilitating workflow or communication. Example: the RAPIDS budgeting module cannot be utilized – it was never installed by the vendor and will not be supported in the future. In the current environment, the Office cannot develop or output automated reporting; staff must use a slow and more error-prone manual workaround with Excel. Other examples include system crashes that cause loss of data as well as the inability to even communicate via email, etc.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Office is investigating the acquisition and development of a new budget model that would resolve current budget tracking, reporting and other issues. The new model should be designed to incorporate efficient use of technological solutions to import/export data within RAPIDS.
- Additional dialogue with the Technology department could provide greater insight into next steps for addressing the myriad technology issues.

## KNOWLEDGE GAP

The inability of responsible parties in within departments to properly prepare forecasts and provide information to Budget places an undue burden on Budget staff and is a significant deterrent to completing budgets on time. Accountability for this is unclear and at times falls on the Budget Office, rather than the department responsible for providing the information.

High turnover, both within this department as well as in key positions in other departments, creates potential knowledge loss when subject matter experts leave.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continuation of ongoing training on budget preparation and forecasting is highly encouraged across all departments. Additionally, clear expectations and accountability for providing forecasts on time to the Budget office should be set by the CAO or DCAO.
- The Office is pursuing cross-training internally to respond to potential vacancies or absences in the future. This is seen as a process that could and should be modelled in other departments.

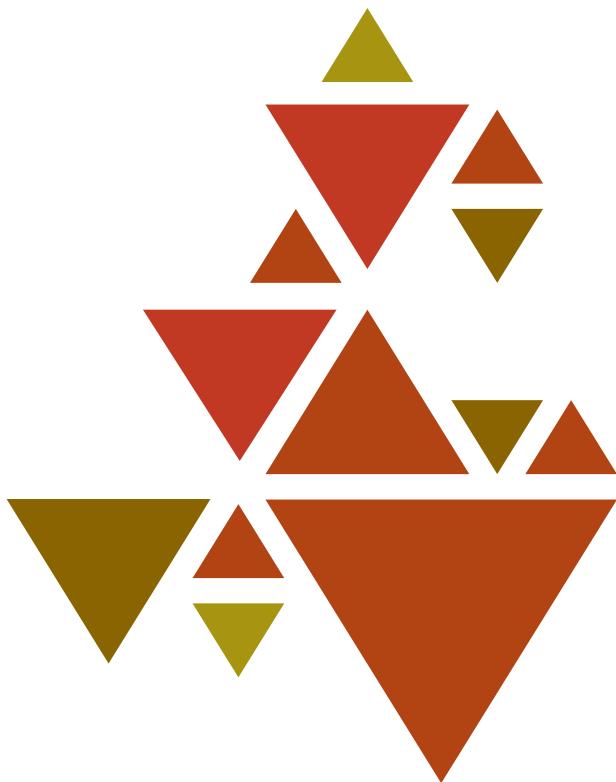
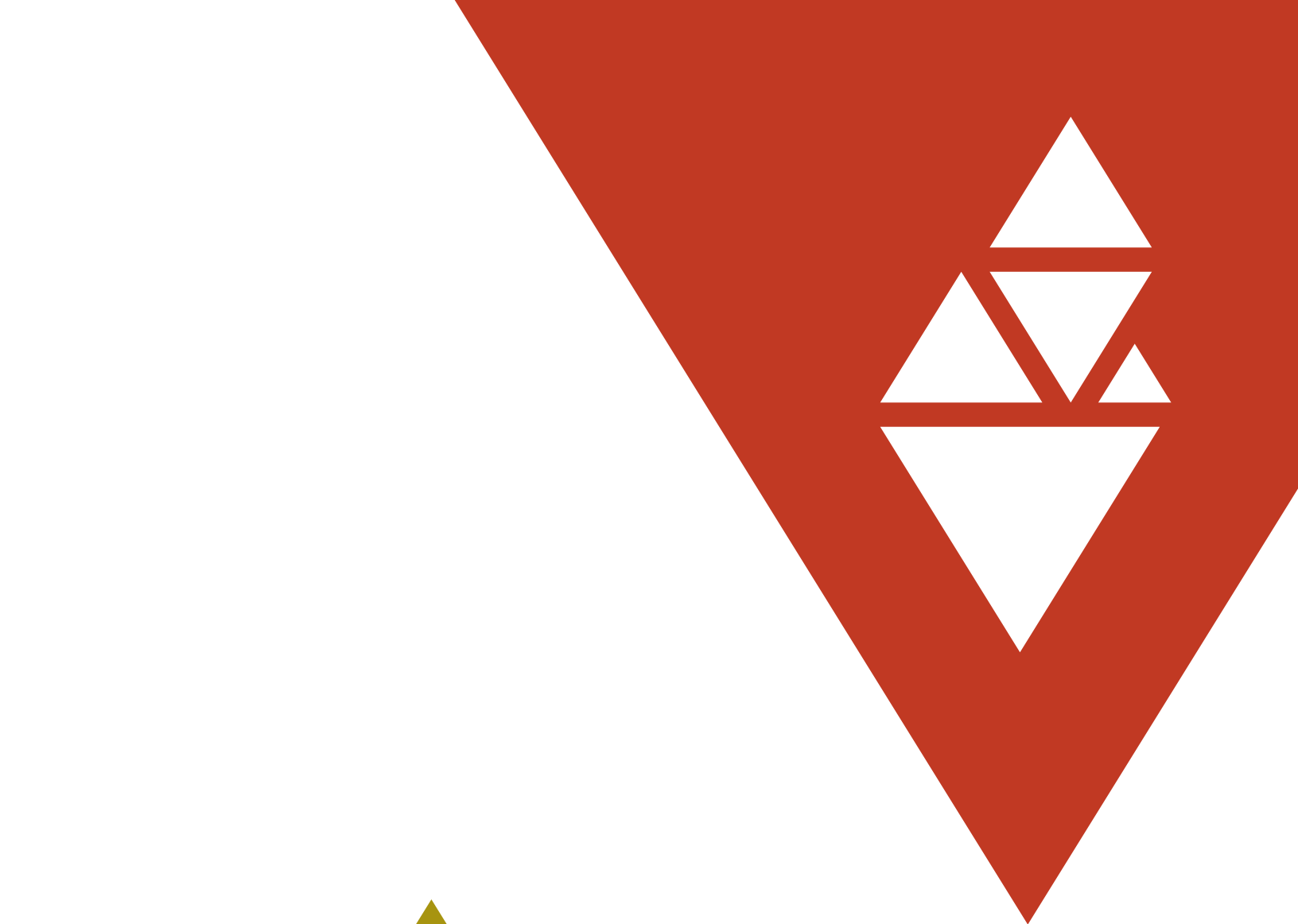
## TEAMWORK & COOPERATION

The new administration has emphasized the value and importance of working together within and across departments. However, there is substantive concern that there continues to be a lack of cooperation and acceptance of this directive from certain departments. Even when joint meetings are held and strategies agreed upon, this department often finds that next steps taken by other departments are outside of the spirit and intent of those agreements. There is ongoing concern that there is an unwillingness to accept responsibility, the focus being on pushing it to other departments. Should this non-cooperation continue, it will further damage the City and slow the efforts of the administration to move beyond the legacy of past problems.

### RECOMMENDATION

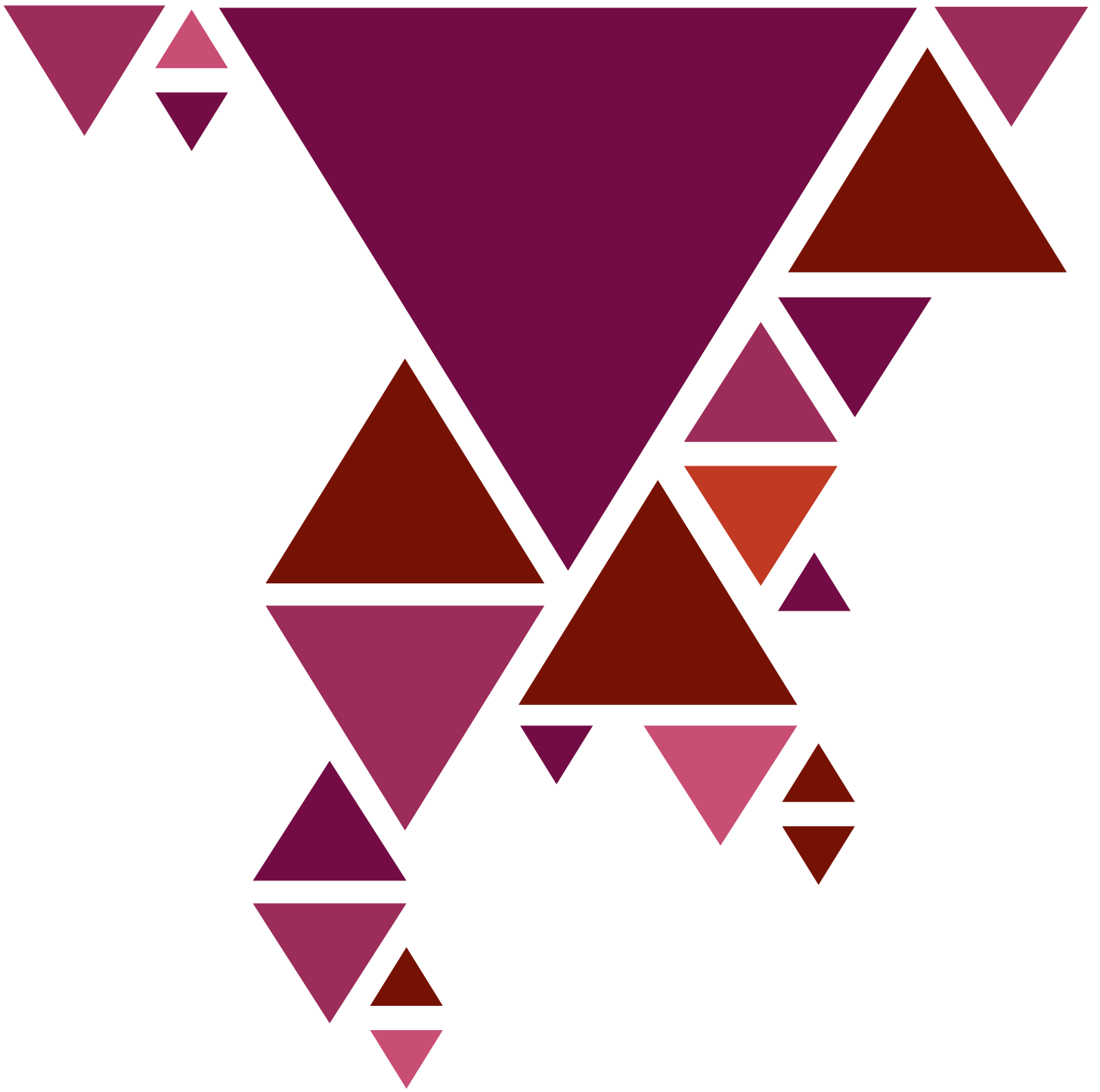
- Focusing on shifting the overall culture of City Hall will only be done department by department. Look for opportunities to build bridges across departments and agencies.





# PUBLIC SAFETY

- POLICE
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
- EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS
- EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



# POLICE DEPARTMENT

## **AGENCY MISSION**

To make Richmond a safer City through community policing and engagement.

## **AGENCY VISION**

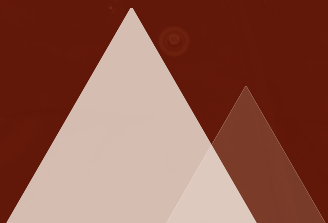
The City of Richmond is a thriving community offering safe neighborhoods and an enhanced quality of life through responsive action, communication and public trust.

## **INTERVIEWS**

5 with 56 total attendees

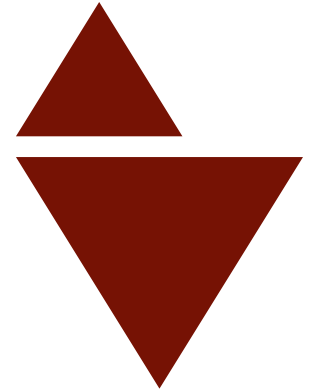
## **AGENCY FUNCTION**

The Richmond Police Department is responsible for the protection of life and property, the reduction of crime and the apprehension of violators of the law. We are always accessing the needs and expectations of the community knowing that the functions and services that we provide are critical in building the trust and legitimacy of those that we serve.





# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## RESOURCES

Low officer numbers was mentioned frequently as an obstacle to agency success. The agency is reportedly rated for 750 officers and is currently 30 officers short. In addition, at the time of this report there were 72 officers unavailable due to military service, medical leave, disability, or academy training. Comments also surfaced that current officers are behind in raises and STEP plan pay - money associated with tenure and promotions.

Some of the results related to limited person resources mentioned include: increased response time to calls for service, restricted special programs like foot patrols, inability to place officers in important focal points, and taking a more reactive policing style, rather than proactive.

Several impacts of limited person resources over the long term were mentioned. It was stated that the agency needs approximately five years of service to recoup the cost of recruiting and training an individual. Officers can be attracted to neighboring agencies because of substantial pay discrepancies. In July 2017, neighboring jurisdictions and the Virginia State Police are raising starting salaries causing more of a pay discrepancy. Officers may also be reluctant to pursue administrative positions, meaning Lieutenant and higher, due to loss of overtime pay. Few long term or career officers on staff can negatively impact agency leadership. In addition, mandatory overtime due to resource limitations was mentioned as a significant negative effect on morale.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review RPD budget relative to personnel. If pay incentives are not available, other incentives, such as a take home car, education support, specialty pay, uniform and clothing allowance, etc. may help facilitate hiring and retention.
- Officers could be asked to sign a minimum contract, possibly three years or longer, to help defer the negative impact of departures.
- Public/private partnerships could be used to help develop resources to support initiatives.

## TECHNOLOGY

One way to circumvent limited resources is to rely on technology. Although there is an initial investment in technology, the long term benefits can be substantial. Body worn cameras are an example—although they cost money up front and ongoing money for upkeep and data storage, they reduce insurance costs and lawsuits, as well as complaints against officers, which require time and resources to investigate.

There were several areas of technology discussed that could assist the agency. These included cameras at intersections recording traffic violations and in high population concentration points to identify suspects, as well as shotspotter technology to locate gunfire.



### RECOMMENDATION

- Consider investment in technology which could enhance police effectiveness and provide a path to circumvent long term personnel costs. Each of the technology approaches noted will increase police capacity to deliver services and will help to reduce crime. Other investments, such as traffic cameras, may also create revenue. Issue laptops to all detectives and officers as part of their standard department provided equipment.

## AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS

It was noted that many agencies ask police to complete tasks outside their job responsibilities because they always have someone on duty. Some of these requests include: unlocking parking gates/locks, providing security at events, etc.

RPD officers are often asked to transport people with mental health issues to a facility and stay until that person is admitted. Given the limited number of beds, this responsibility can take hours.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The scope of work for police should be limited to police work, and other agencies should fulfill their responsibilities through their personnel and budget. Mental health agencies unduly burden police with tasks which could be conducted by persons that have experience in and are responsible for this function.

## ANTIQUATED CITY SERVICES

There are several elements of Richmond City Services mentioned which limit police effectiveness. It was noted that 911 went down three times last year, including one 13 hour delay. While calls to 911 were rerouted, the rerouting was problematic and some calls were lost, while others had serious response delays. The Department of Public Works was also noted as a frequent contributor to problems.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Consider creating an independent public safety network to connect fire, police, and emergency medical services. This could have greater stability and reliability than the current network. This would produce better service delivery and could preclude the dangerous situation of a failed 911 system.



## **PARTNERING WITH CITY AGENCIES**

There are many City agencies which could partner with police to enhance public safety. Information sharing with Social Services, while respecting HIPPA and privacy issues, would provide police officers important information on service recipients. Tearing down abandoned houses, towing abandoned cars, better licensing and inspection practices which target problem establishments can enhance neighborhood safety and increase property values and tax revenue.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Launch a task force to explore agency partnerships that could mutually foster public safety. This could bolster neighborhood development, perceptions of crime reduction, and increase property values and tax revenue. Leveraging City agencies in innovative ways to facilitate public safety is a tenant to successful community policing.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM FRUSTRATIONS**

Police are known as the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system—they are the face of criminal justice to most citizens. When a suspect whom the police have arrested for a violent crime is released on bail and re-offends, citizens lose faith in the police. This is frustrating for officers and negatively impacts the perceived effectiveness of the agency.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

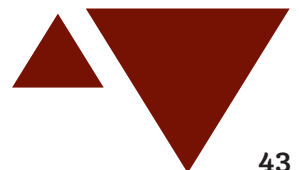
- RPD may want to host a forum to discuss what specific improvements could be made to enhance communication and collaboration among criminal justice agencies.

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

RPD has a good relationship with most residents of the community, however there are neighborhoods where trust is low and where more work is needed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Police community relations cannot remain static, especially in high-crime neighborhoods. Initiatives like foot patrols, mini-stations, targeted programs, neighborhood walks by administration, and other efforts can advance police community relations.
- While resource support can help, organizational culture shifts are likely to be more impactful. Communication with the public is a substantial element of police community relations. Regular reminders, examples, and rewards of good police/citizen interactions can build a relationship with the police viewed as a community friend rather than a community adversary.



# FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

## AGENCY MISSION

Richmond Fire... there when you need us, every day, every call, every time.

## AGENCY VISION

The mission of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services is to provide safe, effective, and efficient emergency services; built on strong relationships and designed to produce high quality results

## INTERVIEWS

5 with 56 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services is an all hazards, emergency service provider responsible for the delivery of a full suite of community services including community emergency and disaster preparedness, fire code enforcement, fire response, emergency medical response, water/technical rescue response, hazardous materials response, and non-emergency service response. The department operates 24 hours a day and prioritizes the safety of both department members and the public, training and development of staff, logistical support and management of fiscal resources for over 430 members operating out of 20 fire rescue stations and three support facilities across the City of Richmond.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The recent change in leadership is offering the opportunity for shifts within the department—both in the way that staff think about how they perform their duties, as well as how they interact with each other. The pace has accelerated and decisions are made quickly. Overall it was reported that the changes are favorable and could result in improved processes, service delivery, relationships, and morale.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide support during the change management process and manage the pace of change. Although indications are that the change is welcome, people handle change differently and some need extra communication and attention.
- Educate and encourage all in supervisory positions to learn about managing change and provide support throughout the process.

## ENTERPRISE SYSTEM SUPPORT

Similar to other public safety areas, the fire department operates on three work shifts for coverage 24/7. The department however, is supported by a 40-hour work-week infrastructure, which can result in delays and unmet needs.

Service time for important functions such as procurement and human resources are reported to be unsatisfactorily slow with cumbersome paperwork and approval processes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop liaisons within the fire department with strong knowledge of procurement, human resources, information technology, and other supporting functions.
- Work with supporting agencies to develop understanding of other department processes, so that prep work can be performed prior to submission and approval.
- Establish regular meetings with these departments to discuss pending needs and upcoming initiatives.



## EQUIPMENT AND FACILITY

Well-functioning, code-approved equipment is critical to operational safety and effectiveness. There were reported concerns about both the slow pace of equipment and facility repairs such as fleets, and fire stations, and a lack of communication regarding progress. It was noted that relationship building with the Department of Public Works is helping to improve communications, but the pace for repairs is still lagging behind departmental needs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue looking for grants and other forms of supplemental funding to leverage budget funding for equipment.
- Develop five year plans for capital including safety equipment and maintenance, to help plan for longer term budgetary needs.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

There is a current initiative to rename some of the fire stations to reflect the community where they are located and highlight the history of the residing neighborhood with plaques and other memorabilia. This is a positive example of community outreach and should help involve the citizens with fire awareness, as well as promote positive roles models among firefighters and leadership.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

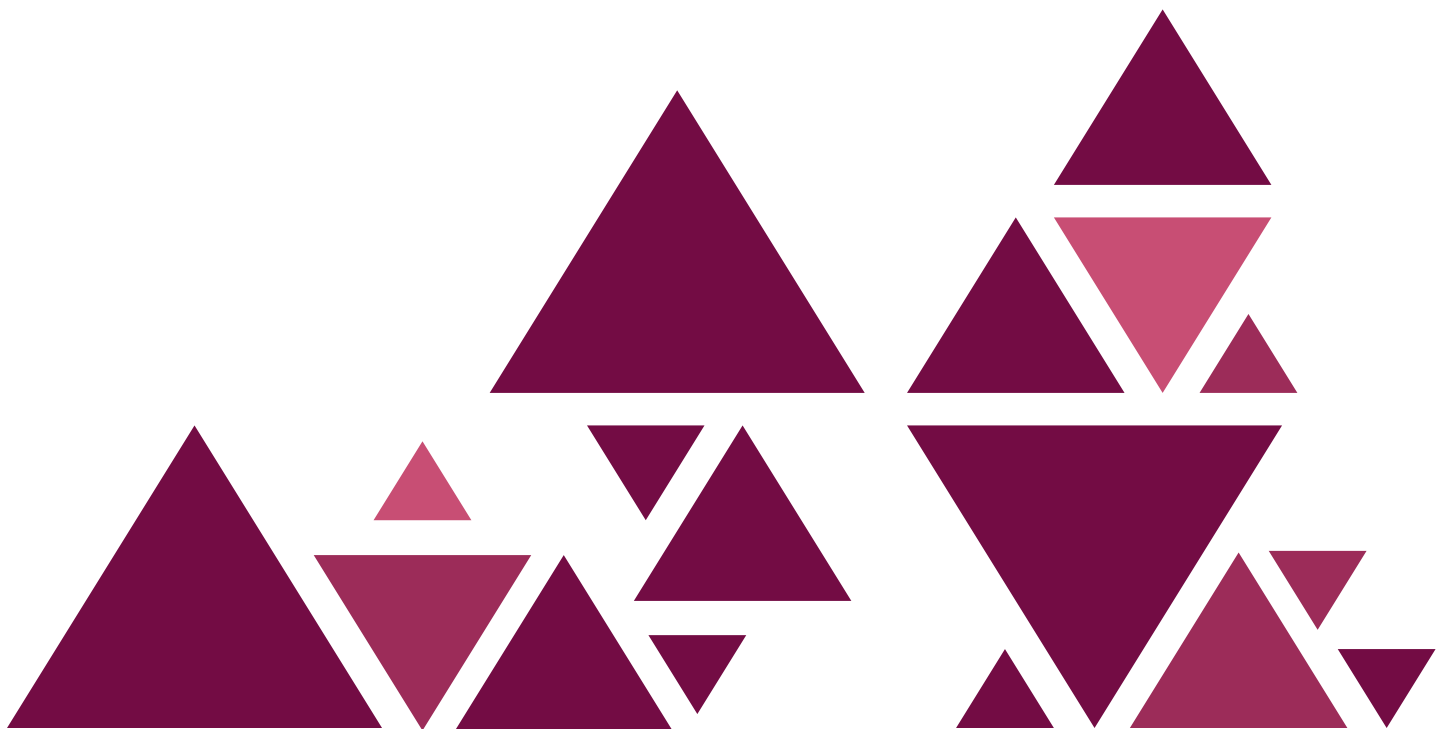
- Continue outreach efforts to educate citizens on fire safety and awareness and increase positive visibility of the Richmond Fire Department and its members.
- Host open houses when the renovated and renamed fire stations re-open.
- Promote two-way communication among fire staff and the community and examine other methods and ways to increase citizen understanding and involvement with fire safety, prevention, and awareness.

## MONITOR AND ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS

Whenever significant change is occurring it is wise to pause occasionally, celebrate successes, and assess progress. People react to change differently, and it is important to acknowledge this. Being flexible, adaptable, and self-aware will increase the chance of overall improvement while sustaining positivity.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider conducting a brief culture survey to obtain a benchmark for important issues such as communication, morale, decision-making, and leadership with a reassessment in 12-18 months.
- Administer a 360 degree feedback tool for the department leadership in 6-9 months to assess how leadership is perceived and identify their current areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.
- Find reasons to celebrate successes and ways to pause and recognize organizational accomplishments.



# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## AGENCY MISSION

To provide comprehensive management and coordination for the prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery from all potential threats. Utilizing the most innovative and efficient methods to preserve life and property, and to stabilize and resolve incidents, we continue to engage and educate those who live and work in our City. By optimizing funding as well as training opportunities, the resilience we nurture will ensure a strong and vibrant community.

## AGENCY VISION

The City of Richmond Office of Emergency Management (OEM) strives to build a resilient community to protect and prepare the citizens and visitors of Richmond from all-hazards including natural, man-made, and terrorist threats.

## INTERVIEWS

1 with 5 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

OEM share the responsibility of the City of Richmond to protect life, property and the environment from the effects of an all-hazards incident by coordinating training, exercises, maintaining the Emergency Operations Plan and ensuring the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is maintained in a state of readiness and supporting education opportunities for our residents.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Richmond employed a \$750,000 federal grant to equip the auditorium at the adjacent main library to act as an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for the City during an emergency. This was an innovative use of limited resources in lieu of the estimated \$20 million necessary to fund a standalone EOC. As City resources were reportedly unlikely to be available in the short-term to support such an effort, the Emergency Management team should continue to identify funding partners.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The traditional federal funding may not be viable in the short and medium term, so efforts to strengthen the current arrangement and identify funding for a standalone EOC, whether from federal or non-governmental sources should be undertaken.

## PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Richmond has been working with the local business and nonprofit community to improve the availability of critical private sector services (e.g. grocery stores or pharmacies) during an emergency. This is a key step toward improving the quality of life for residents during an emergency.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Continue work on innovative private sector partnerships to improve private sector resiliency during an emergency.

## FEDERAL FUNDING

Emergency Management has a reportedly strong reliance on federal funding.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The City of Richmond may wish to make contingency plans for sustaining key functions, such as emergency management, that are significantly dependent on federal funding, given the uncertainties that exist regarding federal funding of domestic programs.



# EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

## AGENCY MISSION

We exist to answer & dispatch all 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls as well as provided and support public safety infrastructures for citizens and other stakeholders of Richmond, internal City departments and other external partners in order to ensure safety by linking the public with the first responders and other non-emergency services so that we deliver efficient, expedient, courteous quality service which promotes a safe, supportive and thriving community.

## AGENCY VISION

We sustain customer trust by providing reliable emergency communications services in a timely and efficient manner.

## INTERVIEWS

Leadership interview

## AGENCY FUNCTION

We exist to answer & dispatch all 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls as well as provided and support public safety infrastructures for citizens and other stakeholders of Richmond, internal City departments and other external partners in order to ensure safety by linking the public with the first responders and other non-emergency services so that we deliver efficient, expedient, courteous quality service which promotes a safe, supportive and thriving community.





# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## BUILD, TEST, AND MAINTAIN BACK-UP PLANS

The recent Internet outage affecting Emergency Communications demonstrated the importance of having adequate well-functioning backup systems with the ability to quickly make decisions on moving to contingency operations. These features are critical and any weakness in the systems; whether in decision making, lack of back-up, or other issues, could have disastrous and life changing consequences.

As in other 24/7 operations, crisis cannot be predicted whether it be situational, equipment failure, or other reasons. It is difficult for centralized services to fully support emergency operations when they are working on a conventional business schedule.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expedite the implementation of an Internet outage back-up plan with operational capacity as soon as possible.
- Review all critical and major non-critical systems and develop, implement, document, and train in contingency operations. Cross-train staff and practice the continuity of operations plan regularly.
- Develop regular communications with support services to discuss and consider the development of emergency procedures in crisis situations.

## CONTINUE TO APPLY BEST PRACTICES WITH STREAMLINED AND DOCUMENTED PROCEDURES

This important practice is well underway and has been helpful in transforming the agency into a centralized, well-functioning emergency communications operation. The desire to continue to improve people and systems was evident throughout the organization.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue on the strategic course to identify and adopt relevant best practices, always with the goal of increased safety, efficiency, and customer service.
- Encourage suggestions for innovative improvement ideas throughout the ranks.
- Develop a method for analyzing the submissions and making decisions toward implementing with follow-up assessment of worthy ideas.
- Continue to document processes and cross-train employees.

## **PRIORITIZE A STABLE WORKFORCE**

There are many known and understandable reasons for high vacancy and turnover in an area such as Emergency Communications; however it affects overall organizational effectiveness in several ways.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Work with Human Resources to understand the challenges in recruiting and retaining employees.
- Consider a deliberate effort to address high turnover and ways to improve retention.

## **FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT**

Emergency Communications is housed in two separate facilities, both of which seem undersized for the number of staff and equipment. There are plans to expand which will help relieve overcrowding and continue to support a state-of-the-art, best practice organization.

Emergency communication equipment is very specialized and rapid technological advances challenge the ability to stay up to date. The communications center is impressive and seems to be an example of a well-equipped and high functioning operation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Continually develop and share short term and long term financial projections for facility and equipment needs to Finance and others, accompanied by clear value statements that explain the return on the financial investment and implications on safety and service delivery.
- Continue to advocate for high standard equipment and systems, while continuing to be proactive about sourcing external funds.

## **STAY FOCUSED ON THE BIG PICTURE**

Emergency Communications is well on its way to becoming a more united agency consisting of specialized and related talent that may have previously been housed within other agencies. Emergency Communications is implementing a strategic plan to help refocus staff from an individual unit perspective toward the mission and bigger picture of integrated emergency communication management.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Continue to message the mission, vision, and big picture while expressing appreciation for the specialization of the units that support the integrated whole.
- Take the time to evaluate the communication plan periodically to ensure the messaging is clear and consistent with your needs of the agency.



## CONTINUE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND MODEL THE WAY

The leadership of Emergency Communications is strengthening relationships within the agency and with interrelated operations. This collaborative approach fosters those relationships and is proving successful. The agency might consider appointing deputies and others who would support the director and work to spread the culture. Leadership is a demanding job and partnering can be very helpful and effective.

It was reported that while the culture within Emergency Communications is improving, there is still work to be done. Change in one agency's culture is difficult when the culture throughout city operations needs improvement. Requests for assistance are generally met with resistance and a "can't do" response, employees are not appreciated for their expertise and effort, and often there is a feeling of hostility.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The agency should continue establishing leadership consistent with its mission, vision and core values throughout the ranks.
- Work with city leadership to design and implement a shift of organizational culture that develops, promotes and holds everyone accountable for values consistent with a healthy and productive workplace.
- Encourage employees to take time to pause and celebrate success; remembering that everyone handles rapid change differently. Demonstrated appreciation goes far toward sustaining morale.

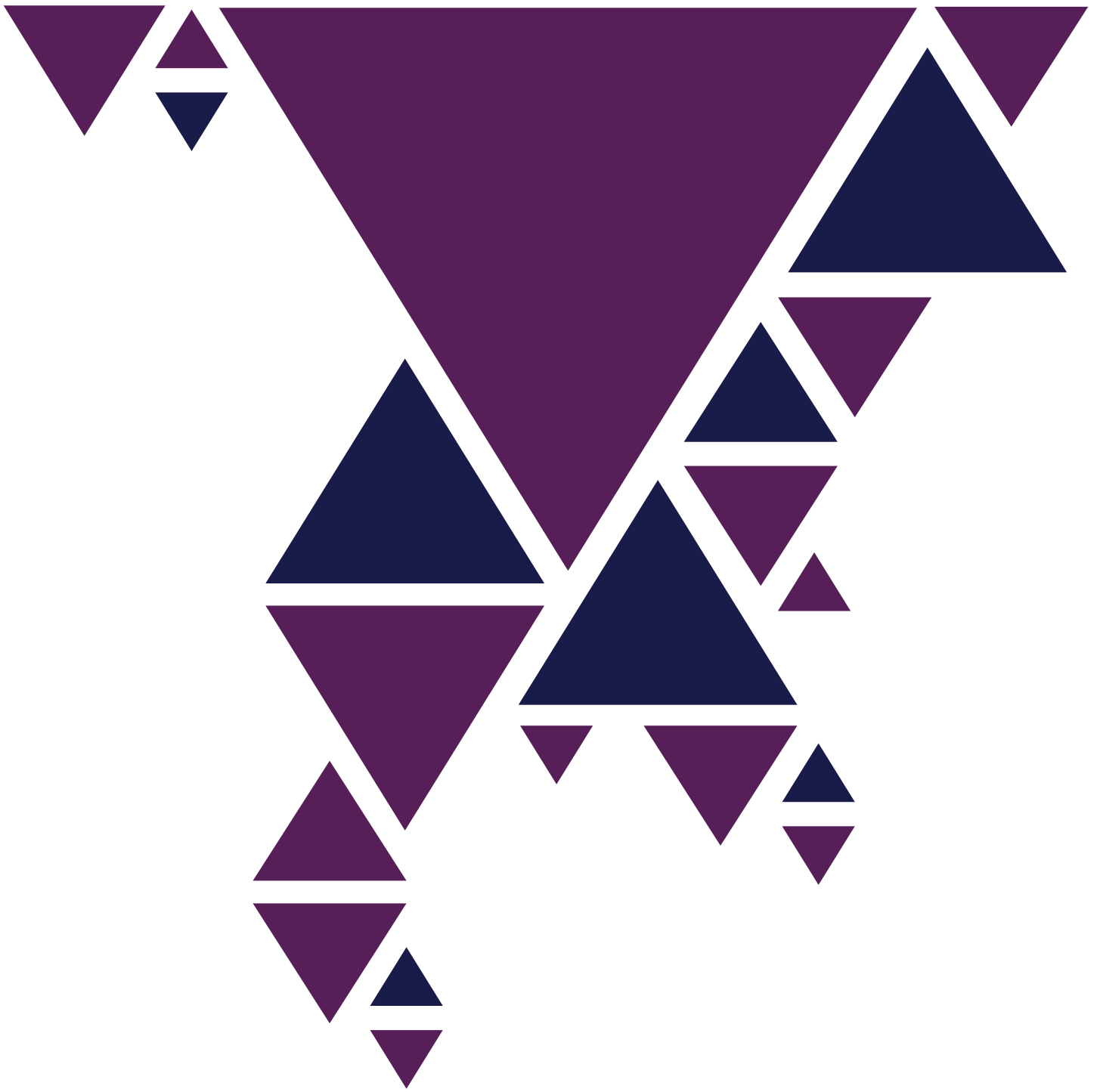




# OPERATIONS

● PUBLIC UTILITIES

● PUBLIC WORKS





# PUBLIC UTILITIES

## **AGENCY MISSION**

To provide safe and reliable utility services while creating exceptional value

## **AGENCY VISION**

Proactively serve the utility needs of regional customers through environmental stewardship and resource conservation while providing cost effective, safe service. Core values: customer service, operational excellence, financial growth and stability, employee pride and ownership

## **INTERVIEWS**

4 with 56 total attendees

## **AGENCY FUNCTION**

DPU provides natural gas, water, wastewater and storm water utility service to more than 500,000 residential and commercial customers in the Richmond metropolitan region. In addition, DPU operates an electric street lighting utility, which maintains 37,000 streetlights within the City. We are first responders with a culture of safe and efficient service delivery by nearly 700 employees working on behalf of all of our customers.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## HUMAN RESOURCES

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) reported a severe staff shortage in staff coupled with a hiring process that is reportedly slow and problematic. Employees feel that Human Resources has been ineffective and unresponsive to staff needs. Additionally, problems concerning the broadband procedure and its benefit to only some employees was mentioned frequently.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allow managers to have more control over the hiring process, including screening the applicant pool and salary decisions.
- Provide clear hiring deadlines to improve the speed in which someone comes onboard.
- Review and restructure the broadband system.

## LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Favoritism was reported as a big problem for the agency. Also, there were complaints that some staff were not held accountable for their actions.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Provide supervisory training for all levels of staff and hold supervisors accountable for their actions.

## TECHNOLOGY

Much of the software within the agency is reportedly outdated. There are several different asset management systems, which makes it difficult to locate and research equipment. Additionally, archived files cannot be accessed. These technology challenges create delays and impact customer service.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a technology improvement plan to address the quality of software, especially RAPIDS, which is felt to be in desperate need of an upgrade or elimination.
- Find an alternate means of acquiring technology, such as leasing.

## PROCUREMENT AND PROCEDURES

Participants stated that the procurement process is often a source of slow starts and then delays for projects. There were considerable problems with timely bill payment and contract expirations while work was still underway.

Additionally, written procedures reportedly do not exist in some areas of the agency. Those procedures that were available are often outdated or were not followed on a consistent basis, according to many of the participants.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expedite the procurement process by giving managers purchasing cards (P-cards) to secure items under a certain monetary limit.
- Contract more services internally that are currently outsourced to reduce expenditure.
- Allocate time for supervisors to write procedures.

## COMMUNICATION

Employees indicated there was a lack of communication across all levels of DPU. There was inadequate written documentation, as well as not enough open dialogue within the agency. This leads to miscommunication and disorganization which impacts customer service. Additionally, knowledge was not passed on and important changes occurring within the agency were often not communicated to those impacted.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be consistent with information and communicate changes to all impacted staff.
- Provide clear job definitions.
- Communicate updates as they occur.
- Ensure that managers are sharing information with all levels of staff.







# PUBLIC WORKS

## **AGENCY MISSION**

The City of Richmond Department of Public Works mission is to provide a clean, safe and healthy environment.

## **AGENCY VISION**

The Department of Public Works will become the organizational leader in customer satisfaction by improving communication, ensuring organizational alignment and affecting positive change while preserving our national accreditation.

## **INTERVIEWS**

10 with 142 total attendees

## **AGENCY FUNCTION**

DPW is organized around the following primary service units: Engineering & Technical Services (ROW, CIP, Bridge/Asset Management, Transportation), Operations Management (Solid Waste, Roadway Maintenance, Urban Forestry, Grounds Management), Administrative /Support Services, and General Services (Fleet, Parking, Facilities). Our primary responsibilities regarding services to external customers involve transportation and cleanliness.



DANGER



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## LEADERSHIP

Responses of the participants reflected a high degree of concern regarding the lack of strong leadership within the agency and the poor relationships which existed between management and lower level staff . Favoritism and exclusion were mentioned as consistent issues within work units. Additionally, employees indicated that leadership could be more transparent. There was reportedly ineffective communication and a lack of respect between management and staff. Supervisors reportedly rarely sought feedback from staff and when it was offered, it was reportedly often ignored.

It is felt that some supervisors were reportedly not prepared to do their job and had little understanding of the work that their employees performed. Employees feel they have untapped skills and talents to contribute, and also mentioned that managers are often brought in as new hires, rather than promoted from within the department.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide training for supervisors and hire those with the appropriate skill set for the job.
- Increase opportunities for discussion and allow staff to share ideas. Fair and honest evaluations are important for employees to feel valued and stay motivated.

## COMMUNICATION

Employees clearly stated that poor communication was a problem throughout the agency on all levels. It was stated that supervisors often do not funnel information to their employees, resulting in errors and delays. Additionally, it was reported that supervisors and subordinates often did not talk to one another in a respectful manner.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Employees should be guided in how to work together and communicate outstanding issues between shifts.
- All levels of staff must be more respectful of one another during discussions.
- Leadership and management should work to instill greater respect among employees during discussions. They may want to invite some expert help to assist them in this.

## PROCEDURES AND PROCUREMENT

Staff indicated that the procurement process was slow and redundant. This included an overabundance of paperwork and red tape and a redundancy of efforts (e.g. leave requests). Staff stated that bills were often paid late and sometimes resulted in equipment repossession directly from the job site.

Additionally, equipment failures and outdated tools were noted as an obstacle. Purchases seemed to take an extraordinarily long time. Equipment was reportedly purchased that was inadequate or inappropriate for the job, in part due to poor leadership by supervisors who did not seek staff recommendations on equipment needs and requirements.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Find ways to streamline processes and eliminate long paper trails and redundancy. A specific suggestion was to reopen the dump and resell materials considered waste, such as natural gas, stones, and mulch.
- Allow equipment purchases at lower levels and improve accounting procedures so vendors can be paid on time. Supervisors should seek subordinates advice on equipment needs and requirements prior to equipment purchases. There were also comments requesting that the current rules and regulations be followed and not to allow exceptions to these for customers for nonemergency reasons.

## TRAINING

Participants expressed that they were not afforded opportunities to improve their skills and advance in their careers. It was reported that the training for some employees was inadequate to the tasks with which they were dealing. For instance, it was stated that some employees do not possess the skills to properly run the equipment and use the technology. This includes seasoned staff and those recently hired. Additionally, some supervisors lack an understanding of the teams they supervise and do not receive the necessary training to lead, many said, resulting in costly mistakes and wasted time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional funds should be included in the budget so that staff can receive adequate training. Training should be made available for both supervisory and non-supervisory staff.
- Staff could be crossed trained and should receive training when new software and equipment are introduced.
- When hiring new employees, they should ensure new hires possess the necessary skills to adequately perform assigned tasks. This would reduce mistakes and speed processes.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Groups indicated there was a severe shortage in qualified staff. Employees also feel that they have been often required to complete responsibilities without fair compensation. Employees shared a general frustration with the responsiveness of human resources and the hiring process. The hiring process was lengthy and often resulted in a prospective new hire accepting a position elsewhere. The current evaluation system is reportedly outdated and needs more oversight. Supervisors were allegedly allowed to give the same evaluations year after year without any documentation to support it, which affects employee morale and motivation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase hiring of skilled employees and provide more supervisors for work crews to ensure that can adequately complete their duties for oversight.
- Review and shorten the hiring process. Improve the evaluation process so that it is fair and supported by documentation.

## MORALE AND RECOGNITION

Comments about a lack of recognition and not feeling valued were mentioned throughout the discussion. The felt lack of respect from supervisors impacted staff morale and employees do not feel supported. Generic evaluations, poor communication and disrespect reduced morale. Participants also felt that the City did not appear to value their more seasoned employees and displayed a lack of confidence in them. Many of the incentives and employee appreciation activities have ended and employees mentioned valuing picnics and other events that had occurred in the past.

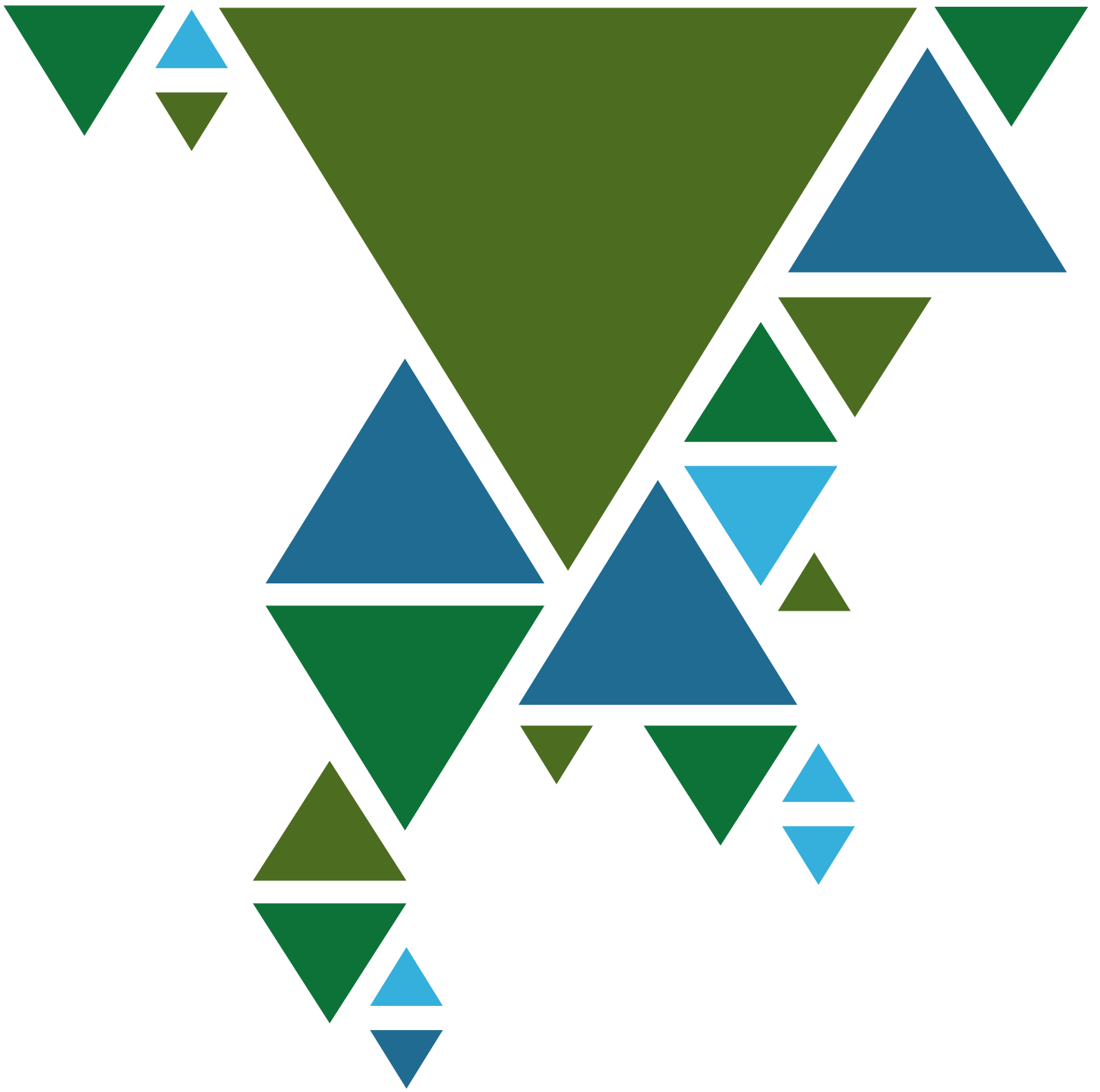
### RECOMMENDATION

- Provide employee appreciation activities and offer more incentives. Introduce merit increases as recognition for high-performing employees.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

- ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW



# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## AGENCY MISSION

Encouraging the long term growth and development of the Richmond job base and workforce by cultivating a diverse and sustainable business community.

## AGENCY VISION

To maximize the City's assets and advantages without compromising the health of its neighborhoods and residents.

## INTERVIEWS

1 with 11 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

ECD provides a robust, searchable sites and buildings database, industry-specific reports and data, custom demographic and location reports, incentive and financing tools and programs, serves as a local and state government process liaison, and connections to key local businesses, suppliers, and talent pools.

### Content Overview

Pages	Pageviews	% Pageviews
/	5,932	23.33%
/information-resources	1,306	5.14%
/decisions	867	3.41%
/information-privacy	697	2.74%
/information-privacy-guidelines	692	2.72%

Visits	Bounce Rate
	43.64%
	Site Avg: 43.64% (0.00%)
% New Visits	Bounce Rate
27.27%	43.55%
85.19%	74.07%
56.52%	39.13%
95.45%	40.91%
92.31%	38.46%
85.71%	28.57%
100.00%	16.67%
40.00%	0.00%
0.00%	80.00%

Google Analytics

Google Analytics





# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Processes and procedures for Economic and Community Development may benefit from careful review and revision. There are reportedly too many sign-offs required for recurring decisions and for initiating previously approved action steps. A strict adherence to policy and process regardless of outcome apparently hinders staff and departmental performance. A lack of properly defined processes and procedures often results in employees devoting significant time to resolve issues that are not within the purview of their own department.

The ordinance and resolution process (O&R) used to initiate decisions requiring City Council action is very poor, it was said. Staff reported difficulty determining the status of O&R memos, draft ordinances, and other Council related papers. Matters reportedly get delayed in the sign-off process and neither staff nor the public are able to learn the status until a paper is introduced or withdrawn.

Because the City Attorney is hired and serves at the pleasure of City Council, his representation of and provision of legal services to City Council, the Mayor, and the Administration reportedly presents challenges and barriers to the administration staff and what seem to be ethical conflicts of interests when issues involve differing interests of the Mayor, Council and/or the administration.

The number of steps and sign-offs required for even simple procurements is a consistent source of frustration and results in higher costs to the City, extremely slow response, and implementation time for all projects.

Employees expressed frustration, apathy, and low morale due in part to a felt lack of empowerment for the direct and most basic functions of their positions. The lack of empowerment at the director level and above has reportedly led to an approach to critical thinking defined as self-protective. Rather than handle and resolve certain things, individuals allegedly pass the problem on to their superiors or a related department to approve it, even when such approval is not required. Employees gave several examples of key people avoiding making decisions so they can distance themselves from the outcomes that may be later criticized by the CAO, the Mayor and/or Council.

Staff reported that they would operate more efficiently and effectively if there were separate and dedicated Economic and Community Development Departments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate and reduce the number of steps and people required to “sign-off” on department decisions, procurements, hiring, and O&R Memoranda.
- Give staff more authority and empowerment to make decisions within appropriate limits.
- Create celebration opportunities for employee recognition, team building and other morale boosting events in City Hall.
- City administration (especially affected department), should have the opportunity to respond to proposed ordinances before they are introduced by council members.
- Reevaluate procurement process at all levels and seek ways to streamline process. Consider ordinance or rule changes in order to speed up the procurement process.
- Streamline development review and permitting process. Assign designated coordinators who are responsible for coordinating a single development project from beginning to end of the review process (ombudsman approach). Establish a defined number of days for each department to respond to development review and permit requests.
- All departments should be required to send an appropriate representative to the Plan Review Committee meetings. Establish accountability measures to create consequences to directors and others who don't follow guidelines.
- Have the CAO and Mayor issue strong statements of empowerment and policy changes that give deputies and directors the power and the clear expectation that they use it day to day.
- Establish clear employee development opportunities, including budgeting for training and development.
- Design clear deal-making procedures and authority for administrative staff.
- Consider the pros and cons of separating Community Development and Economic Development into two new departments both with Directors that report to the Deputy CAO.
- Consider a path to allow the Administration and the Mayor to seek outside legal counsel, at their sole discretion. This may require a change to the City Charter.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESPONSIVENESS

Employees reported that a general sense that urgency was lacking. There is a high level of frustration among employees because of the failure of prompt responses from other departments and to external inquiries. It can reportedly take months and sometimes years to get development agreements through the various city department reviews, especially through legal. Employees reported experiencing bottlenecks with legal documents, O&R papers, general legal questions and contracts. Employees also reported that the Finance Department could be more responsive internally and externally. The lack of responsiveness of sister departments often results in employees going outside existing processes to avoid the slowness and additional steps imposed by other departments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish clear deadlines and guidelines for decision making, responding to inquiries with consistent expectations, and consequences for those who do not comply. Related to this, establish a culture of urgency through-out city hall.
- Communication between ECD and Council could be enhanced so that Council members are able to receive input from subject matter experts, enabling them to make more fully informed decisions.
- Streamline City Attorney work review process.

## COMMUNICATION

Lack of communication and vision from leadership was a consistent theme. Employees want and need a consistent message from the Administration and the Mayor regarding the City's priorities. Staff would like more dialogue between departments, particularly those that often work together. They also would like for upper management to give greater consideration to their input when undertaking key decisions. Training in communication was requested by staff.

Externally, communication needs to be improved by speaking with one voice as a city. Internally, information between departments needs to be formalized with time frame for response, format and accuracy of information.

Employees felt that communication between Council and staff is problematic under the strong mayor form of government, as direct communication is very limited by restrictions.

Council members may benefit from more information regarding the function of city departments, recurring legislative issues, and budget process, etc.

The budget process should include opportunities for departments to see which submitted line items are targeted for cuts and then have an opportunity to respond before such items are cut from the Mayor's proposed budget.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide communication tools and training for all staff who interact with the public, including messaging and position statements for each priority coordinated with the Mayor's office.
- Create templates for department communications providing guidelines for when and how key information will be provided.
- Create opportunities within the law (or make modifications) to allow City Council to communicate with staff directly rather than have ordinances drafted on a case by case basis.
- The Mayor and CAO should visit every department at least once a year to meet and greet staff. They would appreciate this.

## PERSONNEL

There were recurring comments that the Human Resources department process for filling open positions is too cumbersome and time consuming. Staff feel that there are frequently an unreasonable number of position vacancies.

Lack of pay raises over the years is having a negative impact on morale and performance. Insufficient resources are devoted to employee skills training and career development, with the exception of technical and required licensing related training.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Address employee morale concerns.
- It may be helpful for management and staff to develop a practical plan to foster improved morale within the agency.

## TECHNOLOGY

The City's website needs to be more informative, interactive and user friendly. Employees stated that they have insufficient access to needed software applications. There is an inability of some departments to accept certain submissions electronically. IT work requests need to be handled faster in order to address department needs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review best practices of first class municipal websites around the country and use results to upgrade website functionality.
- Survey departments for current use and extent of software applications and additional software needs. Also, survey departments for software training needs.

## ENVIRONMENTAL/WORKPLACE ISSUES

The staff is proud of their offices in the Main Street Train Station and believe it makes them appear more business friendly to be off site from City Hall, although the separate location does present logistical challenges for meetings and communication with other departments.

City Hall lacks the appearance of being well maintained and clean.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider hosting some of the inter-departmental meetings in the EDC offices, as they have the capacity and the professional looking surroundings if the business community is involved.
- Evaluate the visitor experience, security, routine maintenance and cleanliness of City Hall.





# MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

## AGENCY MISSION

Our mission is to facilitate, produce, and advance opportunities for Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Emerging Small Businesses (ESB), and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) to successfully participate in the full array of contracting opportunities available in the City of Richmond.

## AGENCY VISION

Our vision is to achieve greater economic and social equity in our community through the pursuit of parity in the amount spent by the City of Richmond to procure goods and services using taxpayer dollars and user fees.

## INTERVIEWS

Leadership interview

## AGENCY FUNCTION

The Office of Minority Business Development (OMBD) pursues Minority Business Enterprises and Emerging Small Businesses (MBE/ESBs) participation for City of Richmond projects. We assign MBE/ESB participation goals to those projects and monitor the commitment goals by the Primes through contract compliance. We also help business growth by building capacity through technical assistance.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Some in the Minority Business Development (MBD) reported that Economic and Community Development (ECD) could be a more active partner in supporting MBD's efforts. It was reported that ECD does not currently make community benefit plans a regular part of its economic incentive agreements and this represents a lost opportunity.

Lengthy payment cycles with the Finance Department are seen as a challenge according to MBD. Many small businesses cannot survive with subcontractors paid after prime contractors and a payment cycle that is 30-45+ days. Additionally, they said, it takes an unreasonably long time to receive important reports.

It was said that better communication from Procurement will improve opportunities for minority contractors. Small purchase procurements present an easy opportunity to keep revenue in the City and increase spending with small and minority businesses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create protocol for a greater sense of urgency in the Finance Department to respond to departmental needs.
- Consider procurement rule changes that might allow all small purchases to be purchased exclusively from small and minority businesses. This, naturally, could not be applied solely to one agency.
- It would be helpful to MBD if ECD should make community benefit agreements/plans required for all incentive agreements. Compliance requirements, financial covenants, and underwriting should be reviewed to better align with MBD client capabilities.

## RESOURCES

The current office location is neither visible nor easily accessible. Office location and access is considered critical to welcoming current and new clients, as well as providing ongoing training and resources.

The department believes it can provide additional resources to emerging businesses by developing an intern-to-hire program in partnership with local universities. This would provide MBD clients with necessary support resources and create a pool of new and trained potential hires in the community. This value-added support would not be possible with current staffing.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The department could be more effective if it had a consolidated and broader footprint, including a resource center that offers clients access to computers, conference rooms, workshops, training and other resources. It is recommended that the City explore options for better location and expanded access to these and other services. A co-location in unused space within one of the Richmond Public Schools could be ideal to provide greater accessibility.
- Expansion of the MBD mission to provide additional support services will require adequate staffing. Effort should be taken to analyze the impact of proposed services and prioritize offerings, as well as outreach to higher education institutions with partnership opportunities.

## COMMUNICATION

There is a perceived lack of effective communication from Procurement and ECD regarding new procedures and process changes that impact MBD and its clients. It is believed that there is no proactive effort to anticipate how changes impact other departments. There is a need for more dialogue between departments, particularly those that often work together.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a template for inter-departmental communications, providing guidelines for when and how key information will be provided.
- Additional protocol should be created to provide guidelines for management to reach out to staff and affected departments for early input into decision making.





# PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

## AGENCY MISSION

The Department of Planning & Development Review plans for and protects Richmond's unique physical, social, and natural environment in order to enhance the quality of life for our citizens, businesses, and visitors.

## AGENCY VISION

The City of Richmond will be a beautiful, well-functioning, and safe City that is a desirable place to live, work, and play, and is accessible to all.

## INTERVIEWS

10 with 50 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

Planning & Development Review (PDR) is responsible for the City's master planning, land use planning, preservation programs, building permitting and inspections, property maintenance code enforcement, and zoning administration. The Department also supports several boards and commissions, which guide various elements of development such as plan review, historic preservation, urban design, public art zoning appeals, and special project planning and management. The Department also manages the Community Assisted Public Safety (CAPS) program.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

Processes and procedures are felt to need review and revision to create necessary structure. Staff expressed that too many approvals required initiating pre-approved action steps and decisions from leadership. Lack of defined process or procedure often result in employees devoting significant time to resolve issues that are not within the purview of their own department.

The number of steps and signoffs required for simple procurements are a consistent source of frustration. This results in higher costs to the City and extremely slow response and implementation time for all projects. Often strict adherence to policy and process was observed, regardless of effects on outcome can hinder performance. City Attorney's review of scope provisions and other non-legal provisions in procurement documents results in a unreasonably prolonged process.

Employees expressed frustration, apathy, and low morale due in part to lack of empowerment for the direct and most basic functions of their positions. The lack of empowerment at the director level and above has led to a cautious approach. Rather than handle and resolve certain things, individuals pass the problem on to their superiors or a related department to approve, even when such approval is not required.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate and reduce the number of steps and approvals required for departmental decisions, procurement, hiring and O&R memoranda.
- Reevaluate procurement process at all levels and seek ways to streamline processes. Consider ordinance or rule changes in order to speed up the procurement process.
- Streamline development review and permitting process. Have designated coordinators responsible for coordinating a single development project from beginning to end of the review process (ombudsman approach). Establish a defined number of days for each department to respond to development review and permit requests.



## INTERNAL & EXTERNAL RESPONSIVENESS

High level of frustration among employees regarding lack of prompt responses from other departments and to external inquiries. Lack of responsiveness often results in a do-it-yourself approach to avoid the slowness and process imposed by other departments. Overall, staff noted lack of urgency.

The Office of the City Attorney is seen as a backlog for legal documents, O&R papers, general legal questions and contracts. The Finance Department was also mentioned as not being properly responsive internally and externally.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish clear deadlines and guidelines for decision making, responding to inquiries with consistent expectations and consequences for those who don't comply.
- Establish a culture with a sense of urgency throughout City Hall.

## COMMUNICATION

A lack of communication from leadership, including a departmental vision statement was mentioned consistently. Staff wants management to seek input from them when undertaking key decisions.

Staff wanted to see increased dialogue between departments, particularly those who often work together. Internally, information between departments, they said, needs to be formalized with time frame for response, consistent format, and accurate information. Externally, communication needs to be improved with the City speaking with one voice.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Train all staff that interact with the public with communication tools.
- Create messaging for each priority and coordinate with the Mayor's Office. Develop a template for department communications providing guidelines for when and how key information will be provided.
- The Mayor and CAO should visit every department once a year to meet and greet staff and thank them for their service. Management should reach out to staff for input into decision-making.



## **PERSONNEL**

The HR department process for filling open positions is too cumbersome and time consuming. It takes an inordinate time to fill any position. Employees feel that too many positions are currently vacant.

Insufficient resources and lack of empowerment devoted to skills training and career development. Except for technical and required licensing related training, there is little emphasis or opportunity for employee development. Lack of pay raises over the years is having a negative impact on morale and performance.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Address employee morale with workplace initiatives and an evaluation of compensation and raises.
- Conduct overall efficiency and effectiveness review of entire hiring process. Analyze impact of current outstanding position vacancies, prioritize and fill them as soon as possible. Conduct overall efficiency and effectiveness review of entire hiring process.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Employees expressed that the website needs to be more informative, interactive and user friendly. Inability to accept certain submissions electronically.

Insufficient access to necessary software applications. Work requests need to be handled faster in order to address department needs.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Review best practices of first class municipal websites around the country and use results to upgrade website functionality.
- Survey departments for current use and extent of software applications, and additional software needs.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND WORKPLACE ISSUES**

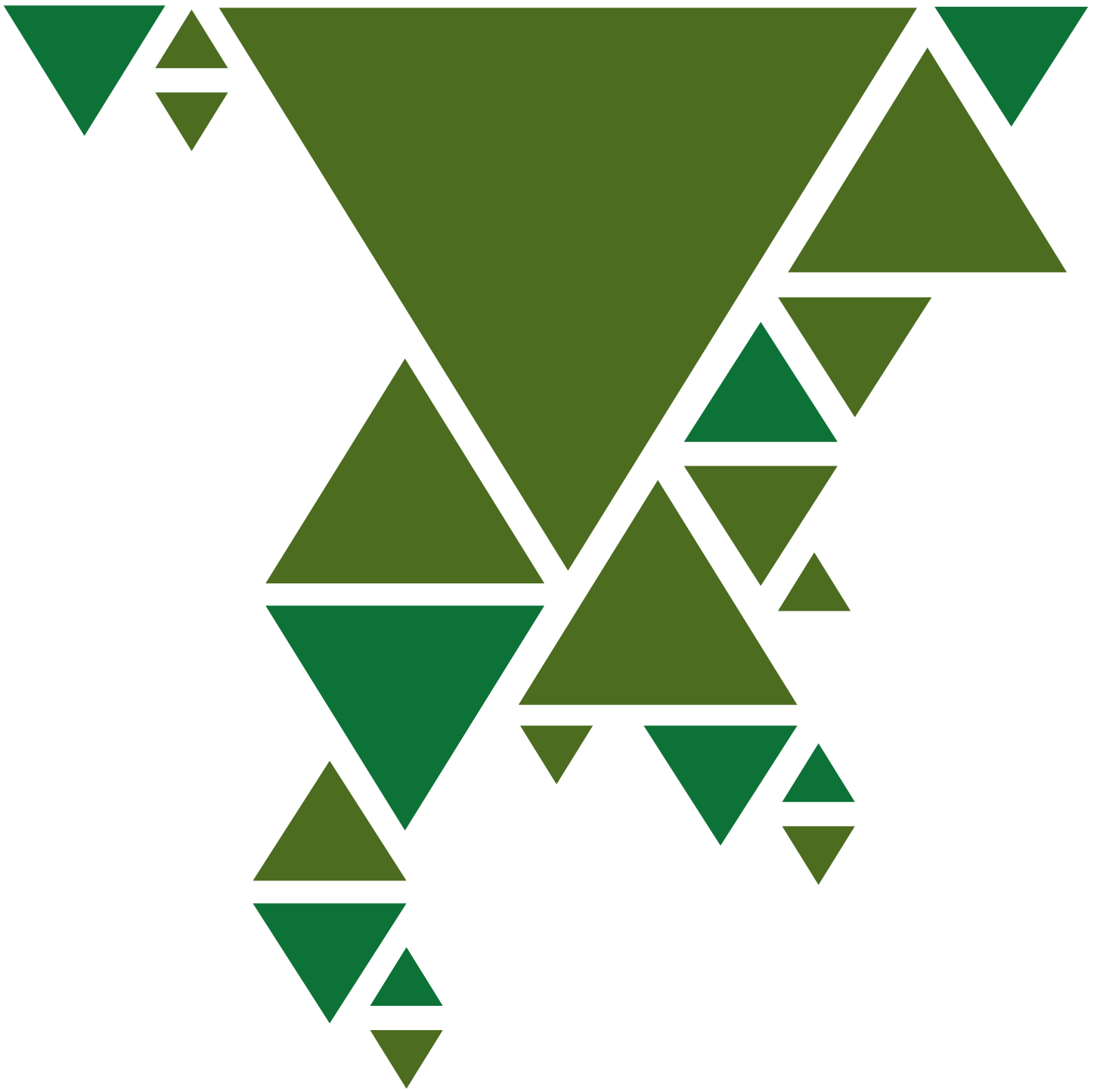
Lack of consistent security features by department. Balance is needed between public access and security. Consistent loitering by individuals on the first floor was mentioned. Employees feel that City Hall lacks the appearance of being well maintained and clean.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Evaluate security measures, loitering, routine maintenance and cleanliness in City Hall.



# **OFFICE OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING**



# OFFICE OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

## AGENCY MISSION

The mission of the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) is three fold: create a system that makes it easier for everyone to build wealth; facilitate pathways to build wealth in order to change the way people live and create a hopeful future for their children; construct an economic environment where families have a living wage that provides the ability to earn, save, and meet unexpected challenges we all face in life.

## AGENCY VISION

The fundamental aim is policy and structural change: building a coherent ladder out of poverty through access to quality employment and related supports, bolstering the community and economic assets of low-income neighborhoods and creating educational opportunities to improve the life chances of Richmond's low-income children. Their current goal is to transition annually 1,000 people from poverty to self-sustainability within the Mayor's first term (before the end of 2020).

## INTERVIEWS

Leadership interview

## AGENCY FUNCTION

The OCWB is the Collective Impact Hub for an in-formed, energized and aligned community of non-profits, ministries, government agencies, funders, businesses and citizens. We coordinate the implementation of poverty reduction strategies to address the current 26% poverty rate. We provide workforce services through the Center for Workforce Innovation. We convene myriad stakeholders, facilitating the action steps to find solutions for the barriers systemic and structural barriers that have limited economic success for thousands of Richmond families.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## STAFF & HUMAN RESOURCES

The Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) is a relatively new and innovative agency designed to develop a Citywide strategy for reducing poverty. It is an agency that is still in development in terms of infrastructure and the comments regarding OCWB should be viewed in light of where it is in terms of its few years of existence.

The tenure in City government of the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) staff ranges from 1-9 years. They view their small staff size as a strength because it affords them the opportunity to be adaptive, take risks, and ask courageous questions in developing people-focused solutions. The staff is entrepreneurial, action-oriented, and have innovative ideas, but reportedly feel inhibited by bureaucratic processes. There is a need to be intentional in managing relationships within City Hall to overcome the feeling of being separate from the rest of the city government. All have worked in the private and public sector out-side of city government, feel energized with the task at hand, and passionate about the cause due to first- or secondhand experience dealing with poverty. The staff is a highly qualified team that brings a significant amount of expertise in nonprofit development and programming that teach people how to be self-sufficient.

The OCWB staff infrastructure lacks sufficient capacity. They feel understaffed and under-resourced. For example, they do not have dedicated staff for budgeting or human resources. Employees expressed a need for coaching support to deal with the trauma of the customers they describe the encounter and the extremely high caseloads. There is a need to better understand and unique stress for caseworkers to ease tension and enable them to provide better service to the residents they serve.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create an outcome-based performance review.
- Consider changing approach to recruit and retain high performing staff or talent by offering competitive wages and compensation packages. Also, include professional development and additional support services to strengthen staff capacity. Incentivize high performance and support employees who take initiative.
- Redefine caseworker position so they can be trained to transition from case managers to coaches and mentors. Redefine the relationship and change the language to enhance the customer experience. Customers must be seen as more than numbers. Explore how they engage their humanity and provide first class customer services.



## SYSTEMS, MANAGEMENT, & EFFICIENCY

There is a perceived lack of connectivity between departments and information systems and a lack of workforce data, which would help identify the easiest customers to help. There is need for more staff engagement and input in improving systems and processes. Data should be more involved as it is tough to quantify collective impact and outcomes. The procurement process is inefficient and staff feel it is too time intensive.

There is a lack of accountability because there is no system to track coordination with procurement. Employees feel a lack of incentive to be efficient when systems, procedures are inefficient. In response, people assume responsibility outside of their job because there are no consistent systems in place to support function, performance, and success.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a standard and universal data operating system. The system would produce data that informs OCWB decision making. Decide who would write a standard operating procedure document. Define how the department heads or the employees can be involved in the process. The system should be user friendly, customer friendly and based on how staff interfaces with people.
- Coordinate and integrate systems to more effectively and efficiently track the pathway from poverty to self-sufficiency, analyze progress and develop a pathway/action plan to assess where a resident is along the continuum, what services they need and connect them to services. Make that data available to other providers within the system who are working with the same residents to avoid duplication. Be strategic about transparency in data sharing.
- Restructure and reevaluate how resources are shared and deployed.
- Utilize other City resources that are already paid for by another department, for example use established technologies for Town Hall events.
- Streamline individual employee daily systems.



## **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

There is a need to strategically coordinate PR and marketing efforts and to leverage the national coverage the OCWB has received.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Prioritize the creation of a marketing and communications plan that includes strategies for outreach and generating public awareness about the OCWB office, purpose and function inside City Hall and beyond. Currently, OCWB benefits from being perceived as a favorable project of the Mayor's office and having received national recognition.
- Launch a high quality and professional marketing campaign that will bring attention to issues, educate community about increasing wealth and speak to multiple audiences and constituencies. The campaign will serve as a platform to:
- Build the OCWB Brand - This brand can be leveraged to serve as the seal of approval, fidelity and vet partners or communicate who is in partnership with OCWB.
- Increase listening sessions to allow people to have more input.
- Simplify messaging and tell a clear and concise story.

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & STRATEGIC FUNDING**

Since OCWB is a start-up, the funding provided by the City should be considered seed funding which is not sufficient to meet the cost of running OCWB and achieving its goals. Participants felt that the City's proposed budget is below their estimate of investment needed to transition 1,000 residents per year to self-sustainability. There is a perceived need to incubate OCWB, develop a sustainable model, and scale the work.

Consensus is necessary on the investment and time required from the public and private sector to transition people out of poverty to self-sustainability. Employees felt that there is an insufficient number of staff available to do the case work and provide quality customer service. Currently, three staff are assigned to case work.

The Office is tackling the challenge of advancing its mission of moving residents out of poverty. Despite having limited resources and needing to grow to scale, OCWB is continually refining and improving processes as experience and knowledge grows in the day-to-day work of moving residents out of poverty.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adapt the vision based on the new information available and frame day-to-day operations to support achieving desired outcomes.
- Create a business development plan to make a case for support. OCWB must make a fiscal case for why its model is economically and socially viable to attract support beyond the city budget. Get clarity around how much an investment it requires at each stage of the pathways continuum to support moving people forward. Identify strategies to reduce costs of doing business or the time it takes to deliver services.
- Consider securing a non-profit foundation similar to the Richmond Public School Education Foundation, which can be an entity to expand ability to raise funding from philanthropic community to support the OCWB efforts to transition annually 1,000 people to self-sufficiency. Another option is to partner with a non-city entity to serve as a development partner and fiscal sponsor to work with OCWB in securing philanthropic investments to support the initiative and amplify city funding. Non-profit status would allow more money inflow, create OCWB partners, and possibly spark financial commitment from the community.

## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

Current partnerships have a perceived need for improvement. Staff and organizations are given multiple objectives, which hinders outcomes. OCWB has developed processes and workarounds for dealing with departments who are not responsive.

OCWB is often mentioned as a partner of non-profit and philanthropic entities in the community. However, they must leverage and monetize opportunities to maximize support of their work.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

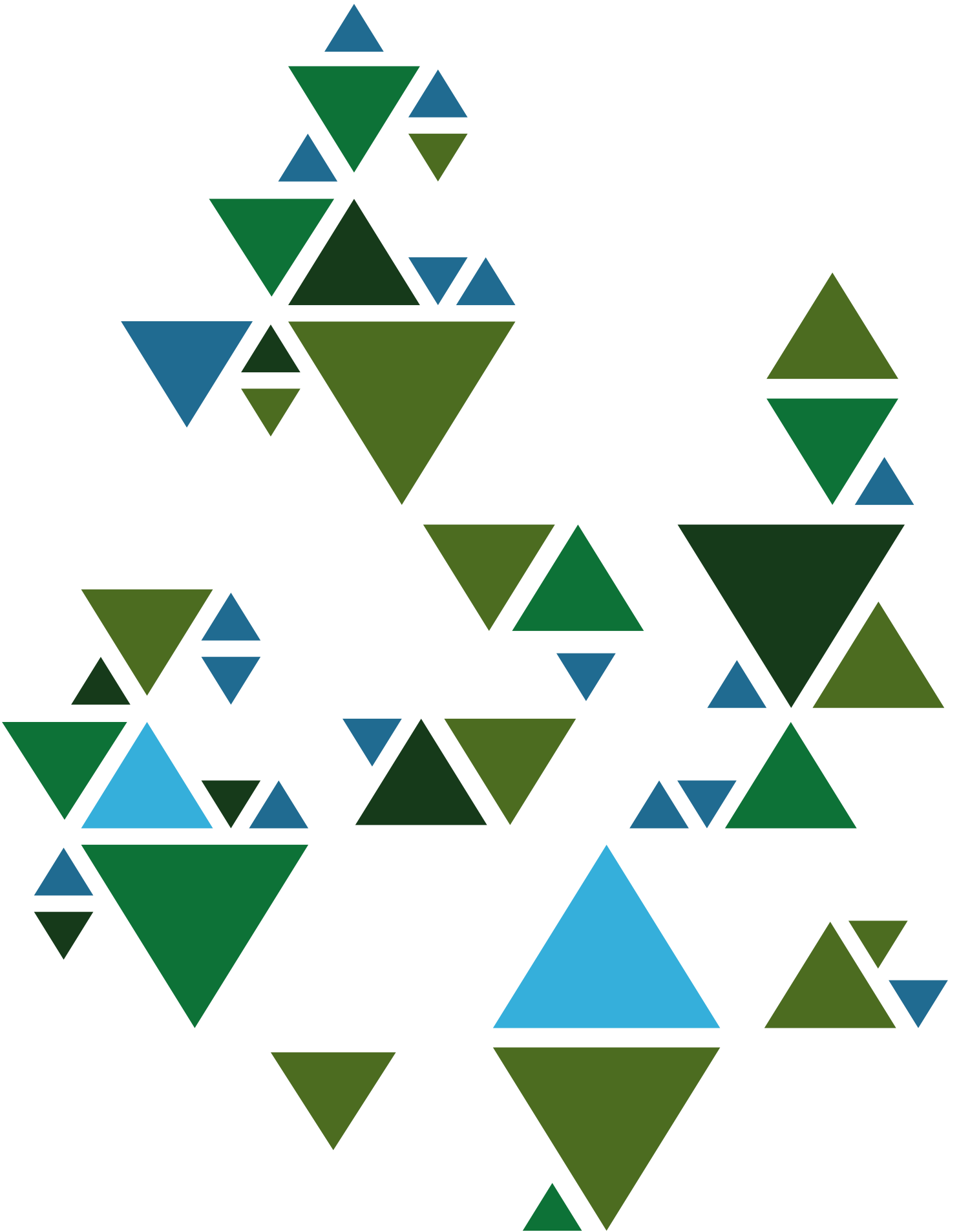
- Identify how to best collaborate with existing agencies, such as the offices of Grants, Budget, Procurement, RRHA, Economic and Community Development, Minority Business Development, and others.
- Consider developing an anchor institution to engage anchor institutions and the business community. They are an important partner in providing social enterprise and living wage employment opportunities.

## CULTURE, CUSTOMER SERVICE & ENVIRONMENT

Culture and morale of City employees reportedly needs to be a priority. The overall morale at City Hall is felt to be low. The environment is not user friendly and this harms customer experience and staff productivity. This group desires to find a way to filter down their passion to help all employees realize their value to the City.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a work environment and space that is more conducive to a healthy City.
- Examine the residents' customer experience with social services, utilities and gain clarity on how people experience City Hall and how it affects their view of the City of Richmond. Change customer/resident interaction with City, DSS & RRHA into an authentic, actionable and applicable experience that is more customer friendly.



# HUMAN SERVICES

- SOCIAL SERVICES
- PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES
- JUSTICE SERVICES
- MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS





# SOCIAL SERVICES

**AGENCY MISSION**

Improving the quality of life for all Richmond residents.

**AGENCY VISION**

Build To Last.

**INTERVIEWS**

2 groups with 35 total attendees

**AGENCY FUNCTION**

Social Services works to ensure that family and children are safe in their homes and community. The agency provides residents in need with tools and opportunities that promote economic stability and encourage self-sufficiency. The Children Service's Act Office helps to provide child-focused, cost-effective services to at-risk youth and their families.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY

The department has been part of a wide-ranging effort in the City to develop a Trauma Informed Community. This approach focuses on the underlying trauma in the lives of clients and staff in challenging environments can result in a more productive, purposeful, and mission-driven orientation and a less adversarial relationship with clients, peer agencies, and stakeholders. This effort was mentioned by several of the department's peer agencies and stakeholders and represents a departmental shift towards a more evidence-based approach. It has also driven notable improvement in children's services.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Continue this effort to build on its success in highlighting the challenges faced by the department's clients.

## CASELOADS

High caseloads can become a negative feedback loop, fostering burnout, staff turnover, even higher caseloads, and even more burnout. The state's staffing model for social services allows the state to reimburse 87.5% of key positions. Cutting these positions to save City-matching dollars results in a loss of six dollars in state funding for every local dollar saved.

Comments indicated that caseloads routinely exceed national best practices and state guidelines by a factor of two or even three. These high caseloads, combined with the complexity of the challenges facing the department's clients, create an unsustainable retention situation for staff, particularly given that the City reportedly pays less than peer agencies and has less attractive health and retirement benefits.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The City should carefully consider evaluating caseloads and developing a plan to create an environment focused on retaining employees and developing the best financial strategy for utilizing the City matching dollars as they relate to the state matching dollars.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As can be the case in other organizations, supervisory and middle management positions are filled based on technical skills, not necessarily leadership skills. This makes leadership development all the more important, especially given the challenging caseloads, complex client population, and wide range of high visibility and high consequence functions that fall under this department's responsibility.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The department should continue to prioritize leadership development, and the City should support efforts to strengthen the leadership capability within the department. The department faces a large scope of responsibilities, staffing stresses, and morale issues that could be improved by stronger leadership.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Caseloads, retention, vacancies, and systems issues are an issue throughout the department, and the challenges facing the eligibility function are particularly acute at present. The division is currently working through state required changes in timing for SNAP benefits, state implementation of a new computer system, and a City decision to rotate caseworkers. This has created something of a crisis-driven environment in the function, where complaints from elected officials, media attention, or some combination thereof drive daily priorities.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Continue work to replicate the strategic planning, culture, and mission success of the children's services function within the eligibility function. The effort is complicated by staffing shortfalls, but department leadership is appropriately using this model of success and creating improvement. These efforts should be continued and supported by the City.

## PRIORITIZE A STABLE WORKPLACE

It was reported that the department's physical space is unsafe and needs upgrading on several levels. Employees stated that part of the first floor is unusable, creating a shortage of space for employees at the Marshall Street headquarters, and parking is a challenge. The department also has the challenge of managing staff at multiple service locations.

### RECOMMENDATION

- As the City identifies long-term real estate leasing and capital improvement strategies, prioritize identifying a more functional and hospitable space for the Department of Social Services.



## RISK ASSESSMENT

There are significant uncertainties facing the benefit programs administered by the department at the federal level, including nutrition benefits, Medicaid, and cash assistance. Significant disruption in any or all of these programs would create disproportionate issues for the City, given the concentration of poverty in the community and would have operational, staffing, and morale implications for the department.

### RECOMMENDATION

- As with other agencies with significant dependence on federal funding, the City may wish to conduct a risk assessment/contingency exercise. This could help the City identify the potential harm and mitigation strategies for worst-case outcomes given uncertainty of federal funding for domestic programs.

## IMPROVE INTERNAL TOOLS

The department has an antiquated approach to purchasing goods and services, even those needed on an emergency basis. For example, the department is greatly limited in emergency housing options by the limited number of hotels that will accept the City's voucher payments.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Consider adopting the use of purchasing cards with appropriate internal controls for routine small purchases of goods and services, particularly those needed to serve the emergency needs of clients.



## INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication is in need of improvement. Department staff members reported learning of their leadership changes from third parties, the media, or others in the office. Communication at the team level seems to be strengthening, though there remain communication issues within the department and among City agencies. Some communication issues are inherent in large organizations with complex missions and high workloads, but communication emerged as a consistent theme.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make improving employee communications a key management priority and performance expectation, perhaps beginning with routine communications such as a daily email to employees from leadership on what is occurring that day in the department, such as staff changes and new policies.
- Keep employees in the communication loop regarding changes and decision-making. Often providing the "why" of a decision is helpful.

## CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Lack of a career path within the department, especially as a technical expert, is a challenge to address. Unlike certain peer agencies within the City or in other human services organizations, the department does not have a career ladder as employees develop technical expertise, for example as a benefits specialist 1, 2, or 3 or as a child protective services worker senior or master child protective services worker. Given current private and public sector thinking on flattening organizations and the recruitment and retention issues facing the department, a career ladder approach may well benefit the department.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Partner with the City's human resources and VDSS team to identify and/or develop a career ladder to encourage retention and development of technical and program expertise among front-line staff. Benchmarking best practices peer agencies would assist in this effort.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Address the department's information technology issues. The department is adapting to a new state computer system, has several of its own systems - primarily the Harmony System, and has to work with City-wide systems such as the financial management system. This combination of systems creates operational issues and gaps in information, and requires frequent rework and re-entry of data, creating potential for both error and missing state and federally required performance benchmarks. In addition, this overlap and lack of compatibility compounds the department's vulnerability to cyber attacks, a City-wide challenge to which the department is especially vulnerable, given the wide range of personal, confidential data that it maintains.

### RECOMMENDATION

- As a follow-up to this performance review, seek private sector assistance to advise the department and City leadership on ways of better integrating its computer systems and reducing the security and operational issues created by the current array of systems used by the department.





# PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

## **AGENCY MISSION**

Richmond's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities shall provide exceptional recreation and leisure programs to enhance the overall quality of life for the citizens and visitors to the City of Richmond. The department strives to preserve, protect, maintain and improve all of its natural resources, parkland, community facilities, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations.

## **AGENCY VISION**

We transform communities by providing safe, creative and life enhancing experiences for citizens of the City of Richmond.

## **INTERVIEWS**

3 groups with 30 total attendees

## **AGENCY FUNCTION**

PRCF exists to provide places and recreational opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment. Besides recreation services, The department consists of Cemeteries, Park Services, Facility Maintenance, Before and After School program, Federal Food Program, Special Services and Finance and Administration.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## STAFFING CHALLENGES

Staffing challenges were reported at all levels. Leadership vacancies within the department are a significant hindrance to a productive and forward-thinking work environment, according to the staff. At present, the interim director is also functioning in both deputy director roles. Further, unfilled vacancies throughout the department put continued pressure on current staff .

Staffing cuts at centers have reportedly left only one individual on site at times. This one person may have to work the front desk, monitor the center, supervise children, provide transportation, and more. Staff noted that centers in higher-risk areas are not able to provide the kind of after school services that staff believes would contribute tremendously to the community, reducing crime, and more.

Temporary staffing at pool facilities during the summer months is even more challenging. Human resource processes limit the ability of hiring managers to adequately secure staff in a timely manner, often losing out on qualified staff to other locales.

Additional concerns were expressed over the need to hire off-duty police officers during the summer months to manage capacity and overflow at pool facilities. This was necessary due to pool locations and conflicts that escalated between pool patrons. Positions that remain vacant for long periods of time are sometimes eliminated because they are seen as unnecessary due to the delay in staffing. This continuously places stress on employees in many areas of the department.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Appropriate funds for summer positions at pool facilities, as well as expedited hiring procedures.
- Fill vacant senior leadership posts in the department.
- Additional consideration could be given to increasing staffing to support after school at-risk youth programs at community facilities.
- The City could also consider extending the length of the term for provisional hires for DPR summer positions from 90 to 120 days.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

The City's parks and community centers are some of its core assets and the City may not be investing sufficiently into these havens. It was reported that there is a long-standing pattern of de-prioritizing park maintenance and capital funding. Budget cuts have created a situation where maintenance and capital outlay needs have been long neglected, creating a substantial backlog. Additionally, as noted above, workaround solutions can end up costing the City more money.

One of the most inspiring strengths of DPR is the commitment of its staff to the City residents they serve. They have always been willing to do more with less, but they feel the pain of the loss of some of the programs and services that benefited populations in need in the past. For instance, DPR staff members noted that lack of full-sized gyms for youth after school activities. DPR employees see themselves as a partner of RPS in providing services to the City's youth all-day and year-round, but they reported that they do not always feel that this role is fully recognized in planning, funding, etc.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Broader asset investment and funding issues cannot be corrected in the short-term. However, critical maintenance and staffing could be prioritized, particularly with respect to health, safety, and sanitation issues.
- Develop a ten-year strategic plan to better capitalize on the strong portfolio of assets managed by the department. In addition to the direction provided, a Master Plan will help the department weather changes in departmental leadership, administrations, etc. DPR was described by employees as the public face of the City and important to the future of the City. One of the many initiatives that could be considered as part of a strategic plan is the expansion of the partnership with RPS on afterschool programs, educational opportunities at James River Parks, and sports and recreation opportunities in the community. These efforts are an example of the type of cross-agency cooperation that improves the quality of services offered to Richmond residents.

## PROCUREMENT CHALLENGES

Tremendous frustration was expressed over the numerous required steps to making necessary acquisitions. Even small purchases appear to require multiple steps for requisition and approval, and sometimes hours of paperwork. In three separate focus groups, employees reiterated the need for a purchasing card.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The P-Card has been proposed by the Procurement division and should be considered expeditiously. Benefits to the City are substantial and outlined in separate departmental feedback. Employees asked specifically for this program by name. They recognize and support the need for adequate controls and management supervision to preclude fraud or misuse. They see it as an important tool that will help them and the City work more efficiently across the board.



## FINANCE CHALLENGES

DPR vendors face problems with timely invoice payments similar to other departments, meaning longer than 30-45 days. According to staff, this has driven many minority vendors away from doing business with the City. Their options for vendor support are limited in many areas. The inability to seek competitive bids in key areas ends up driving costs higher for the City. In another area of DPR, this limits the Production division when booking performers or other acts for their activities.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Performance Review dialogue with the Finance Department should provide greater insight into next steps for addressing issues with invoice processing and payment.
- Allow the buyer to put an invoice in ahead of service with a cancellation clause in place if service or product is not delivered.

## TECHNOLOGY GAP

Not unlike other departments, DPR experiences problems from older operating systems on computers, old versions of Internet Explorer, and dated software. There have also been issues with phone systems that have not been addressed despite six months of requests and work orders. Assisting some of the user population to interface with the software programs can add an additional burden to staff. Provisional staff often do not have access to computers and other IT resources.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Performance Review dialogue with the Technology department should provide greater insight into next steps for addressing the myriad technology issues.

## COMMUNITY ASSET INVENTORY

The City produces a high-quality and detailed program catalog of programs, services, and assets, as well as programming from selected peer agencies, such as the Richmond Library system.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build upon the existing platform to develop the catalog into a comprehensive Citywide listing of programs available for all ages, expanding the network of peer agencies and services. Making this available online would be an important next step to accessibility.
- Improved access to a user-friendly online registration process will improve efficiency within the department by minimizing workload from legacy manual processes and procedures.



## CUSTOMER RESEARCH

Given the department's wide range of facilities and programs, tracking visitors and program participation has been an ongoing challenge.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Efforts are underway to more completely and accurately account for utilization of facilities and participation in the department's programs. These efforts should be continued as the data will be vital in developing a long-term strategic plan that will better maintain and leverage the City's parks, recreation, and community assets.

## ENTERPRISE OPERATIONS

The City operates and maintains several municipal cemeteries. These are considered enterprise businesses and are responsible for revenue for the City. The division is challenged by its inability to compete against alternative options for burial or to provide cremation services, as well as by the staffing challenges faced by other departments.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Status as an enterprise operation should be reviewed and appropriate business planning support should be provided.

## OPERATIONAL ISSUES AND FACILITIES SUPPORT

Vehicle maintenance and servicing with the City garage is an ongoing challenge for staff. For example, it may take months to have a simple oil change. More involved repairs leave staff without reliable vehicles to conduct their work. Further, the aging fleet system adds to the impact of vehicle capabilities.

Staff also raised concerns about the move of departmental administrative offices away from a City-owned building into leased space, where City resources are expended for rent and maintenance on a property not owned. They believe that the funds could be better invested in a City-owned asset where the value would be retained by the City rather than a 3rd party landlord. They were further concerned with the difficulties of conducting daily business requiring interface directly at City Hall and travel back-and-forth and other logistical issues that makes the employee less productive.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dialogue with the appropriate department should provide greater insight into next steps for addressing issues related to the aging fleet and other vehicle maintenance issues.
- Implement an online scheduling system for vehicle maintenance and repairs, with clear accountability for servicing standards and turnaround time.
- Evaluate City-owned assets for potential relocation of DPR administrative offices.





# JUSTICE SERVICES

## AGENCY MISSION

The mission of the Department of Justice Services is to promote a safe and healthy community through evidence-based practices that empower participants to achieve measurable success.

## AGENCY VISION

The Department of Justice Services has a vision of achieving a safe and engaged community by empowering all participants to achieve measurable success and break negative cycles through accountability and competency

## INTERVIEWS

2 groups with 30 total attendees

## AGENCY FUNCTION

RDJS, a variety of services to youth, adults and their families who are either at risk of involvement in the justice system or have been formally processed by the courts. The major operating divisions are the Division of Juvenile Community Programs, the Division of Adult Programs, the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center and Administration.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMPLEXITY OF SERVICES

Justice Services provide a number of different services to constituents, including adult probation monitoring and pre-trial services, juvenile community programs, and the juvenile detention center. This includes a wide variety of functions, such as counseling, drug testing, home electronic monitoring, risk assessment, and more.

Although these programs are broadly related in the criminal justice system, they each have very different needs, require different staff, serve different populations, and have unique issues and problems. Some of these units are entirely public, while there are private entities that provide some services and create a juxtaposition of public and private within the same agency.

### RECOMMENDATION

- It is not clear how the current system evolved such that these units were combined into a single agency. If the City were to undertake a more comprehensive reorganization, this issue should be considered.

## COLLABORATION WITH CITY AGENCIES

Given the complexity of the current iteration of the Department of Justice Services, connections and support from other City agencies are imperative. The success of constituents will be influenced by the resources available to them while under supervision by the department and post-supervision. Agencies such as the Department of Social Services and the Office of Community Wealth Building are critical to the success of adults and juveniles emerging from supervision.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Those emerging from supervision need quick access to services and support. Persons who receive rehabilitation, counseling, treatment, and guidance while involved with the Department of Justice Services need a fast and seamless transition to other support agencies. This will reduce the likelihood of relapse or re-offending. Exit plans, transition strategies, and close communication between and across agencies would assist this transference.

## STANDARDS OF SERVICE

Several agencies in the Department of Justice Services are thriving, while others are not meeting the expectations for success. The Juvenile Detention Center is meeting or exceeding standards and was recently certified on Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). The Home Electronic Monitoring Unit is doing well despite low staffing. By providing free or low cost monitoring, non-violent offenders are not placed in expensive custody, such as the jail.

The day reporting center is not seen as doing as well—an unacceptable number of subjects fail to follow guidelines and get their assignment to day reporting revoked. Additionally, some adult services which have been privatized are not meeting expectations.

The Director believes that the agency can do better with youth, especially those who have a history of involvement with the criminal justice system. The current system is designed to deal with persons on a case-by-case basis rather than a holistic view, which would encompass the history of offending, as well as personal and familial settings.

### RECOMMENDATION

- The department can plot a path to success through careful strategic planning. Begin with goal definition and assessing the obstacles to achieving those goals. Some of those goals may require structural or organizational changes.

## SILOS

By existing in silos, agencies become less efficient and fail to utilize the resources available to the populations they serve. The consequences of these silos manifest themselves in agencies that directly serve clients, such as Justice Services.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Boards, such as the Community Criminal Justice Board, supersede agency and connect decision makers in a forum where successes can be pursued. Identifying success is often difficult and we tend to rely on numbers, such as how many persons under probation were revoked and returned to jail). Introducing more sophisticated, and possibly qualitative measures of success, particularly at the agency director and senior administration level, could foster greater attempts at creative problem solving.
- A better understanding of City agencies, their roles, and the services they provide could help all employees.
- Information distributed to members of proximal agencies could enhance utilization of services or referrals.



## **COST SAVING**

A lag hiring strategy has been implemented when doing so does not interfere with service delivery and public safety.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A regular audit of units, their objectives, and their costs produces a depiction of efficiency. This should not be unique to Justice Services and should be a common practice across all City agencies.
- Examine reintegrating currently contracted functions into the department if doing so will improve service delivery and reduce costs. In particular, this should be considered for contracted functions not achieving established performance metrics.

## **SHOWCASE IMPROVEMENT**

Richmond's Detention Center had previously been shut down due to management and operational issues, as well as accreditation concerns. Today the facility has been revamped and reinvigorated to function as a model of progressive juvenile justice.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Share success stories worth replicating and showcasing. Key components to success with the detention center were new leadership, a strong partnership with Richmond Public Schools, and a strong sense of mission among the employees.

## **COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**

Richmond has developed a series of community-based approaches to reducing the population at the City's Justice Center. Among these is an effective home monitoring program.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Recognizing that access to this home monitoring program is at the discretion of individual judges, the City may wish to consider a formal evaluation of the success of the program and opportunities, as well as required resources, for expanding the program.

## **CASELOAD**

Front line staff in Justice Services, such as probation caseworkers, routinely have caseloads that double the recommended average. This creates the potential for employee burnout, staff turnover, and further challenges with caseload.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- The City may wish to consider a formal staffing review of front-line human services positions to address this issue and to develop the needed budget recommendations.

## WORKING SPACE

The current working space in the Public Safety Building is considered to be inadequate and inconsistent with the City's focus on community-based, restorative justice.

### RECOMMENDATION

- As the City assesses its space planning, maintenance, and capital outlay needs, attention should be given to the conditions in the Public Safety Building and the short-term, medium-term, and long-term opportunities for better maintaining, renovating, or replacing the existing space.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Middle management may benefit from some professional development.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Strengthen the career development pathways of middle management, improve employee relations, and push progressive leadership further down within the organization's management structure.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Further strengthening the client/customer service orientation of the department's engagement with the public is felt to be necessary by employees.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Continue to work on removing small but notable derailers with the department's relationship with the public. Leadership has been proactive in identifying and addressing these derailers and should continue these efforts.





# MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

## **AGENCY MISSION**

To improve the quality of life of diverse cultural communities by increasing their access to City and community based services/resources, promoting education and civic participation.

## **AGENCY VISION**

To be a model of a multicultural integrated City.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Leadership interview

## **AGENCY FUNCTION**

The Office of Multicultural Affairs oversees the implementation of the City's Language Access Plan. It serves as liaison between City Departments and diverse communities to increase access to services/programs and supports City Departments in developing and improving internal capacities to strengthen cross-cultural relationships.



# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMMUNICATIONS

The OMA staff continues to educate people about their mission and vision and the services they provide, but this process is slow due to limited staff and funding. This constant education process includes staff within the City of Richmond, which highlights the need for better communication among City agencies. The OMA wants to support the other agencies and help them connect with communities across the City, but the current communication structure creates challenges. There aren't clear guides to inform staff who to contact for various issues and concerns. Also, the OMA budget doesn't allow for much paid publicity to reach the general public.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Focus on inclusivity of City Hall in future branding efforts. Clarity is needed for communication within the City, as opposed to the current bureaucracy that impedes communication creates complication and unclear accountability.
- Hold monthly lunch sessions for departments to meet and discuss how they can partner to support each other could be a positive step.

## BUDGET

The budget for the OMA is small and the majority is used for office space, utilities, and equipment. The remaining funds are used to reimburse interpreters for mileage and a few events in the City. With little left to provide services, the agency struggles to reach those who most need what their services.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Increased budget to allow outreach and communications to educate the public on access to City services.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

The staff of the OMA includes an administrative staff person and several educated and skilled interpreters/translators. The responsibilities have grown for staff but salaries have not kept pace.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Review the positions and salaries of OMA staff to compensate them fairly for the multitude of services they provide.





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