

**Richmond Regional Water Workgroup
Meeting 2 Summary**

September 11, 2026, 9:00am - 12:00pm
Richmond Water Treatment Plant
3920 Douglasdale Road, Richmond, VA 23221

Overview: The General Assembly passed HB 30 including provisions for a group process around the Richmond regional utility issue. This was the second meeting of the Richmond Regional Water Workgroup.

The Workgroup is charged with the following per HB30, Item 283:

The Richmond Regional Water Workgroup shall: (i) review and make recommendations concerning the program for maintenance of and capital improvements and repairs to the City of Richmond's Water Treatment Plant to ensure its reliability as a supplier of drinking water; (ii) review and make recommendations concerning the staffing, operations, and long term sustainability of the City of Richmond's Water Treatment Plant to ensure its reliability as a supplier of drinking water; (iii) review and identify compliance concerns for any party to a wholesale water contractual agreement for the provision of drinking water; and (iv) prepare, publish, and deliver a report of its findings, recommendations, and use of funding in this Item to the Governor, the Chair of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, and the chief elected officers of the City of Richmond, and the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, and Henrico each year by November 1. The Workgroup shall continue to monitor compliance with the grant agreement until all funds provided in this Item have been disbursed and the projects for which the funds were provided have been completed, or until such time as any other state funds appropriated or granted for the Richmond Water Treatment Plant are similarly disbursed and executed.

The meeting was organized by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and facilitated by mediators from the University of Virginia's Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN). What follows is a high-level summary of key areas of discussion. Comments and key areas of discussion are paraphrased and summarized, without attribution.

Attendee List:

Workgroup:

Kevin A. Catlin – County Administrator, County of Chesterfield
Bentley Chan – Director of Public Utilities, Henrico
Odie Donald II – Chief Administrative Officer, City of Richmond
Matt Longshore – Director of Public Utilities, Hanover County
Jeff McBride – Director of Water and Admin, City of Richmond
Scott Morris – Director of Public Utilities, City of Richmond, Vice-Chair of the Workgroup
Matt Rembold – Director of Utilities, Chesterfield County
Dwayne Roadcap – Director of Office of Drinking Water, VDH, Chair of the Workgroup
Bret Schardein – Deputy County Administrator, Hanover County
John Vithoukas- County Manager, Henrico County
Sandra Whitehead – Director of Architecture and Professional Services, Virginia Department of General Services (DGS)
Steven Yob – Deputy County Manager, Henrico County

Subject Matter Experts:

Jessica Cooper – Legal Counsel, VDH
Brookie Crawford, Risk Communications Manager, VDH
Lee Crowell – Deputy Director of Public Utilities, City of Richmond
Bailey Davis – Chief of Field Operations, VDH
Tim Glidewell – Assistant Director of Utilities, Powhatan Public Works
Anthony Hess – Director FCAP, VDH
Rhonda Johnson, Public Information Officer, City of Richmond
James Reynolds – Field Director, Richmond Field Office, VHD
Katie Sallee – Executive Assistant, VDH
Tony Singh – DPU Deputy Director, City of Richmond

Mediation Team: [Institute for Engagement & Negotiation, University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#)

Tanya Denckla Cobb, Director
Kristina Weaver, Project Consultant
Sophie Delzell, Project Consultant

Public:

Dean Mirshahi, VPM News

Kristina Weaver (IEN) called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the agenda. Dwayne Roadcap (VDH and Chair) noted that the mediation team updated the agenda to hold the tour of the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) before the discussion of the Meeting 1 Summary and continued dialogue about proposed capital improvements.

I. Closed Session Tour of Water Treatment Plant (Va. Code Section 2.2-3705.2 (Subdivision 14):

Jessica Cooper (VDH) provided a summary of the requirements for a closed session, emphasizing that any dialogue during closed session must be limited to discussion of current critical infrastructure.

- The Chair motioned to move Workgroup members into a closed session to discuss critical infrastructure and to include subject matter experts and IEN mediation team in the closed session.
 - All aye (unanimous).
- *The group participated in a closed session tour of the Richmond WTP.*
- The Chair motioned to exit closed session.
 - All aye (unanimous).
- Poll of the Workgroup members confirming matters related to critical infrastructure were the only thing discussed in closed session.
 - Ayes - Dwayne Roadcap, Scott Morris, Sandra Whitehead, Matt Longshore, Bret Schardein, John Vitoulkas, Bentley Chan, Matt Rembold, Kevin Catlin.
 - Odie Donald was present at the time of vote but did not participate in closed session.

II. Presentation on Cost of Upgrades: Once the Workgroup was again in open session, VDH presented a summary of the cost of upgrades for the WTP. Paraphrased and summarized questions and discussion items included:

- Q: Does the VDH grant total include contingency and design services?
 - A: Yes. The budget includes design. Notice to proceed is October 6, 2026.
- Q: When did the project go out for bid?
 - A: Several months ago, in early summer.
- Q: Why was the valve replacement shown as a separate cost and who is doing the replacement?
 - A: Part of that work was already done by internal staff.
- Q: Who is doing the design services?
 - A: The City of Richmond is using an annual contractor who is on retainer for upgrades.
- Q: Is the filter upgrade design complete?
 - A: Yes. The design needed to be completed before bidding began. The City feels confident in the design. The costs shown include design.
- Q: What happens if the project costs less than estimated?
 - A: Projects are paid on a reimbursement basis. If a project costs less than estimated, less money would be reimbursed, and funds would be made available for other prioritized projects. Projects often cost more than expected.
- Each county locality operates under a different contract with Richmond for provision of water. Each locality Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes a unique percentage of the cost for the WTP infrastructure improvements, based on the individual locality obligations.
- Q: Now that the grant is available, can the City move more quickly on other projects?
 - A: Work is limited based on the City's contract services. If one contractor is working at the facility, it is difficult to have another contractor working there too.
- Q: Is there a change in prioritization for other projects since this funding is available?

- A: No. If there is another project in the CIP that the counties want to accelerate, the City is open to discussion. The City is pushing to do projects quickly and aiming to address compliance issues in coordination with VDH. If the filter upgrade project is approved by the Workgroup, other projects will proceed as planned. If the project is not chosen, there may be delays in other projects.
- Q: At the first meeting there were other projects on a list. Do all partners agree the filter upgrade project is the most important?
 - A: Yes. There is no question that the filter upgrade project is important.
- A Workgroup member raised the concern that the Workgroup's process is not meeting the charge laid out by the General Assembly (GA), specifically that funding will not be used to supplant other local, state, or federal funds. The City's grant proposal to the VDH was approved *after* the City had released an RFP for a project contractor and hired the contractor. This seems like a situation where the City had funding allocated for the project that is now being supplanted by the VDH grant. The member asked for assurance from VDH and legal counsel that the Workgroup process is meeting requirements.
- VDH received an application from the City which indicated the need for funding. When VDH reviews requests for funding, they review the validity of invoices against the grant proposal. VDH can choose not to reimburse projects if requests are not valid.
- The City entered into a consent agreement with VDH to complete the filter upgrades to maintain compliance and to ensure consumer safety. The City had discussions with the GA and believed that funding would be appropriated for the project. The City took a calculated risk to ensure the filter upgrade project would be shovel-ready in time for funding. The City could increase customer rates if the funding was not appropriated by the GA.
- A Workgroup member noted that not having materials to review in advance of meetings makes it challenging to do their job on the Workgroup.
 - It was clarified that some of the materials in question were provided or discussed in Meeting 1.
 - The feedback was noted, and the IEN mediators affirmed that they would work with VDH to provide materials more in advance while acknowledging the tight timeline for this process.
- Q: How could the City legally advertise a Request for Proposals for the filter upgrade project without having funding in hand? Doesn't this mean that the City had to have had city funds allocated for the project that are now being supplanted?
 - A: No, funds are not being supplanted. The City was operating in good faith, believing that GA funding would come through, but it also knew that if GA fundings didn't come through then it would need to tap into reserve funding, and increase customer rates, which would have trickle down impacts on the county partners. However, the City felt that the alternative of missing out on the grant opportunity, stopping the project to increase rates, or find other funding posed a far greater risk and worse path, as the City is under considerable pressure to complete the infrastructure upgrades. It has a legal and civic obligation to ensure consumer drinking water safety and compliance with VDH.
- VDH then offered more clarification of the situation by explaining the timeline of its grant cycle and how the GA budget discussion continuing into June created significant challenges that they tried to overcome. VDH agreed that the timing for both the proposed upgrades and the grant funding is very aggressive. The VDH process for paying loans and grants starts in January/February. The GA debate on the budget bill was still ongoing in March and was clearly going to continue into June. This required VDH to reach out to prioritized localities – including Richmond – to alert them to the tight timeline that the VDH grant cycle would have (i.e., the release of the VDH grant RFP would have to

wait until the GA budget was adopted, meaning most likely in July; but the deadline for the locality proposals to be submitted would still be August 7). In March, VDH urged the priority localities to be ready to submit their proposals in response to the RFP. Because of this communication from VDH, Richmond opened conversations to learn about possible GA funding and began preparing a proposal based on being told that the GA funding was very likely to be passed. In other words, because of the pressured timeline, and learning that the grant submission deadline would not change, the City couldn't wait until the budget had passed to begin developing a proposal. They worked on the assumption that GA funding would come through, based on a high probability communicated to them, while also having a back-up plan in case it didn't come through – which was to use City reserve funding and to raise rates. The Workgroup members noted that this additional timeline information was critically important to understand what happened, and why.

- Q: Has VDH considered asking for an extension from the GA on the disbursement of its funding?
 - A: Yes, but unlike in past years, the Budget Bill adopted in June does not allow for an extension in the two-year expenditure period; also, the funding cannot be rolled over if not expended during the allotted period. This was another strong factor in the City's decision to propose the most shovel-ready project that could be successfully completed within the 2-year timeframe, which was the filter replacement project. The funding must be spent by June 30, 2028, or the GA would have to reappropriate it.
 - A motion was made, and seconded, and there was discussion, an amendment and a final vote that the City's project in the amount of \$32.8M be approved pending assurances from VDH and Attorney General's office that the City is not supplanting funds and is in compliance with budget item 283 and with the entire budget bill.
 - All aye. (Unanimous)
- III. **Review Meeting 1 Summary:** The Workgroup reviewed the Meeting 1 Summary and discussed several different options for how one issue could be presented.
- A motion was made, and seconded, to use the amended/updated version of the Meeting 1 Summary that had been distributed to all members.
 - All aye. (Unanimous)

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 29th.

The meeting was adjourned.

Appendix – Agenda, Charge Language, Draft MOU, Motion to Enter Closed Session, City Presentation