



# Richmond City Review Commission

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, 3 February 2009

# **Richmond City Charter Review Commission to hold meeting**

*Charter topics to be discussed*

**WHAT** Members of the Richmond City Charter Review Commission will meet and discuss the Richmond City Charter. The public is invited and encouraged to attend any and all meetings of the Richmond City Charter Review Commission, which are open to the public.

**WHEN** Thursday, February 5, 2009  
9:30-11:00 a.m.

**WHERE** Richmond City Hall; 2nd Floor Large Conference Room  
900 E. Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia

**CONTACT** For more information, please contact Daisy E. Weaver, Richmond City Council Chief of Staff, at 804.646.5921

## **BACKGROUND**

The Richmond City Charter Review Commission was established on July 28, 2008 by a Richmond City Council Resolution. The Commission will assist Richmond citizens with a comprehensive review of the Richmond City Charter in order to identify and correct potential conflicts and ambiguities in the present Charter following the City's change from a Council-Manager to a Council-Mayor form of government in 2004.

### **Importance of Richmond City Charter**

Citizens of Richmond govern themselves at the state, local and federal level through a process known as Representative Democracy. In this form of government, people choose (elect) fellow citizens to act on their behalf in governing themselves. This self-governance includes deciding how tax monies are to be invested; what laws are needed; and, providing oversight on how government services are managed.

In the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Virginia, the foundation of government is established in national and state constitutions. In Richmond, the city "constitution" is the Richmond City Charter. The Richmond City Charter contains the essential laws that define the structure, organization and powers of Richmond City government. The Charter is established by and can only be changed by an official act of the Virginia General Assembly.

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## **Uniqueness of Richmond's New Form of Government**

Richmond has the only Council-Mayor government of its type in Virginia and, due to the uniqueness and differences of State/local governments across the country, is the only one like it in the U.S. Some of the differences include, but are not limited to, the many differences in how local governments are established; national, state and local differences between the many powers and relationships of cities, counties, burrows and villages; and what is considered Virginia's strict use of the "Dillon Rule", which is essentially a legal principal that limits the powers granted to local governments to those expressly granted or implied by the state, or essential to a locality. The fact that the Dillon Rule principal is not uniformly applied nationally and/or is used differently by different States adds to the uniqueness of Richmond's form of government.

## **Richmond's Change of Government Highlights**

- The Richmond City Charter has undergone a number of changes since the last comprehensive review in 1947.
- In November 2003, Richmond citizens voted by city referendum to essentially separate the legislative and administrative powers of Richmond Government and replace the Council-Manager form of government with a Council-Mayor form.
- In support of this change, in 2004 the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 76, which changed the Charter of the City of Richmond, authorizing it to provide for the direct election of a mayor. Thus creating a Council-Mayor form of government.
- The city now has three distinct government branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial - which is similar to the state and federal "check and balance" government model.
- January 2005 - New Council-Mayor Form of Government began.

## **Resolutions Creating Richmond City Charter Review Commission**

- Richmond City Council Resolution # 2008-R114-115, establishing the Richmond City Charter Review Commission
- Richmond City Council Resolution # 2008-R 136-137, amending the Richmond City Charter Review Commission in order to establish a deadline for the selection of a chairman by the Commission

## **Richmond City Charter Review Commission Process**

The members of the Richmond City Charter Review Commission will follow a process and timeline to review the Charter. This will include breaking the Richmond City Charter into sections or functional areas and establishing sub-committees to address those specific areas. These sub-committees will then bring recommendations back to the full Committee for review and discussion. The entire Charter review process will be open to the public and all citizens of Richmond are invited and welcome to attend any and all meetings and to provide written suggestions and/or recommendations.

The work of the Commission is scheduled to take place from October 2008 through completion. A tentative deadline of October 1, 2009 has been chosen by the Commission for completion of their review. The review process will include soliciting, collecting and reviewing recommendations from Richmond Citizens, city government staff and local elected officials, which will include Council members that have served since the change in government in 2005.

Once completed, the findings of the Commission will be presented to Richmond City Council and the Mayor for their consideration.

Once recommendations are considered, and if action is determined, a Council Resolution enumerating any specific changes will be prepared for Council approval.

Once approved, a request would be made to the Richmond Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly (VGA) for changes to be made during the 2010 VGA Legislative Session.

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## **MEMBERS**

Tasked with an historic undertaking, the Richmond City Charter Review Commission consists of nine members, who either live or work in Richmond; four of which appointed by Richmond City Council, four appointed by Mayor L. Douglas Wilder and a member selected by the original eight members of the Commission from outside the group to serve as chairman. Members of the 2008-2009 Richmond City Charter Review Commission include:

1. **Chairman**  
[John G. Douglass](#), Esq.  
Selected by Richmond City Charter Review Commission Members 11.10.08
2. Ms. Jeannie Baliles  
Appointed by Mayor
3. Mr. Orran L. Brown, Esq.  
Appointed by Richmond City Council
4. Ms. Jacqueline G. Epps, Esq.  
Appointed by Mayor
5. Dr. Robert Holsworth  
Appointed by Mayor
6. The Honorable Benjamin Lambert III  
Appointed by Mayor
7. Mr. Frederick Marsh, Esq.  
Appointed by Richmond City Council
8. Dr. John Moeser  
Appointed by Richmond City Council
9. Mr. John Thompson, Esq.  
Appointed by Richmond City Council

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