

# Many Ways to Get There

## *Securing Public Investments*

### *Epilogue*

HUNG VO, ELIZABETH PATTON, MONICA GIANNONE, BRIAN MANDELL,  
JORRIT DE JONG, AND GUHAN SUBRAMANIAN

Shortly after city administrators walked out of the budget hearing session, Mayor Stoney issued a public statement downplaying the situation: “I don’t ever think they will get to a point where a suit would be necessary. I think that we are all adults and that we can work this out.” He noted, “For me, the certification of the new revenues that were not available to us at the time we crafted the budget—that certification is not a matter of if, it’s a matter of when.” He emphasized that his team needed time to review the city assessor’s estimates before certification.<sup>1</sup> In the days following the walkout, the mayor’s administration agreed to certify \$9.5 million in new revenue.<sup>2</sup>

Once these funds were certified, councilmembers collaborated to find ways to balance the budget while also funding Stoney’s priorities. City council reduced funded vacant positions and capital improvement projects, saving \$2.1 and \$7.1 million, respectively. These decisions created enough space for councilmembers to reverse their earlier decisions to cut 1.5 percent across various city departments and return funding to extend the city’s transportation system to underserved areas.<sup>3</sup>

The mayor was pleased with the resulting budget. “Yes, it was a contentious process, but at the end of the day, we came to a resolution and I’m very, very happy about that resolution, he said,”<sup>4</sup>

A few months after the FY20 budget approval, Stoney announced that the city of Richmond ended FY19 with a \$15 million surplus, which would be allocated to city retirees, capital improvement projects from his original FY20 budget, and the city’s rainy-day fund. Councilwoman Gray, while pleased with the surplus, wished the mayor had notified city council of his plan before making an announcement. She told a local news station, “It’s well overdue, but I would like to have had the opportunity to have made decisions and looked at the budget because there may be some other things within the budget that won’t get done as a result.”<sup>5</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Vernon Freeman Jr., “Mayor Responds after City Council Votes to Pursue Legal Action,” WTVR, April 25, 2019, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://wtvr.com/2019/04/25/mayor-responds-after-city-council-votes-to-pursue-legal-action/>.

<sup>2</sup> Gabrielle Harmon, “Mayor’s Administration Agrees to Certify \$9.5 Million in Needed Funds,” WTVR (blog), April 29, 2019, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://wtvr.com/2019/04/29/mayors-administration-agrees-to-certify-9-5-million-in-needed-funds/>.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Robinson, “Days after Chaotic Session, Richmond City Council Balances Budget without Raising Real Estate Tax Rate,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 29, 2019, accessed August 15, 2019, [https://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/days-after-chaotic-session-richmond-city-council-balances-budget-without/article\\_ed7bca71-68bf-56d1-8047-fdfea6648ee1.html](https://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/days-after-chaotic-session-richmond-city-council-balances-budget-without/article_ed7bca71-68bf-56d1-8047-fdfea6648ee1.html).

<sup>4</sup> Mark Robinson, “With Fight over Tax Rate in Rearview, Richmond City Council Slated to Approve Budget Monday,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 10, 2019, [https://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/with-fight-over-tax-rate-in-rearview-richmond-city-council/article\\_a9733a40-88c0-5a72-ad2f-b44c935eff70.html](https://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/with-fight-over-tax-rate-in-rearview-richmond-city-council/article_a9733a40-88c0-5a72-ad2f-b44c935eff70.html).

<sup>5</sup> Gabrielle Harmon, “Mayor Stoney Announces \$15 Million End-of-Year Budget Surplus,” WTVR, August 21, 2019, accessed December 16, 2019, <https://wtvr.com/2019/08/21/mayor-stoney-announces-15-million-end-of-year-budget-surplus/>.