**City Charter language may stymie efforts to remove Confederate statues**

By Jeremy N. Laurie

As demonstrations in Richmond for racial justice and police brutality continued for the 12th day on Wednesday, all nine members of City Council already are on board for monumental change — removal of the statues of Confederate traitors that sit on Monument Avenue and other parts of the city.

But even as two City Council members added proposals to change the already-defining City Commission of names of Jefferson Davis Highway and the Robert E. Lee Bridge, the committee was being reminded that removing the city-owned Confederate statues could require General Assembly help to deamend a legal barrier.

The legal complications that have held back the state's plans for quick removal of the Lee statue on Monument Avenue, also could mar future efforts for the city's efforts to remove its statues.

The Free Press has learned that in a behind-the-scenes effort to get rid of the legal barrier, that barrier is a line in the City Charter — the city's constitution — that makes it the duty of the Planning Commission to "preserve historical landmarks." Virtually every one of the statues neglected for removal is listed on the state and national registers of historic sites and places.

Despite a state law approved by the General Assembly this year that allows localities to decide what to do with their Confederate statues at the end of July, the Richmond charter provision appears to pave the way for any action for now.

At least that was the 2017 opinion of then-City Attorney Alan L. Jakubeck.

Under the charter, City Council itself has no authority to remove public statues. The city Planning Commission controls the location and design of public spaces — and art under the charter.

In response to a council query, Mr. Jakubeck wrote: "Please turn to A4."

**Richmond reopening takes next step Friday under state’s guidelines**

By George Cappuccio Jr.

Remnants of the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions in Richmond can open more to the public beginning Friday as the city enters Phase Two of the state's reopening plan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stepped-up opening will apply to Richmond and Northern Virginia locations that are about two weeks behind the rest of the state, including Hunters and Chesterfield counties, under Gov. Ralph S. Northam’s guidelines.

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Tina people has been lauded in some quarters. Elected officials are playing cat-and-mouse, but every step is a new. They’re not interested in finding a solution. The 20-minute meeting, which was scheduled for June 4, was called to discuss the city’s response to the George Floyd protests. But the city’s leaders have not announced any concrete plans.

The Grayson said the group of Monument Avenue residents and others dedicated to removing the Confederate statues and other symbols of oppression from public spaces.

A link to the survey will be on RPS Super@

Continued from A1

Richmond reopening moves to next level

As detailed by Dr. M. Norman Oliver, the Richmond Department of Health has developed a plan to gradually reopen the city’s businesses.

Gov. Northam announces plan to reopen schools in the fall

The Virginia Education Association, which represents teachers and staff, said the measures are not strong enough.

The school system is still determining how to proceed with the reopening plan, but the governor said he expects to have a decision by the end of the month.

The plan will be submitted to the public and the General Assembly for review. When complete, it will go to the VDOE for approval. The Virginia Education Association, which represents teachers and students, has supported the plan. The measures are not strong enough.

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