



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
**VOTER
REGISTRAR**

HARRISONBURG CITY HALL
409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801
OFFICE (540) 432-7707 • FAX (540) 432-7784

To: Ande Banks, Interim City Manager
From: Mark Finks, General Registrar
Date: March 8, 2022 (Regular Meeting)
Re: Election ordinance amendments for sections 1-1-11 and 1-1-12 to adopt a new City precinct map and move the JMU polling location.

Summary:

Public Hearing to consider amendments to sections 1-11-11 to adopt new ward boundaries, and 1-11-12 to adopt new precinct boundaries as well as changing the polling location in the 105 (JMU) precinct.

The Electoral Board voted 3-0 to adopt new ward and precinct boundaries and voted 2-1 to change the JMU polling location from the Convocation Center to Godwin Hall.

Background:

Every ten years each state receives updated information from the Federal Census to conduct redistricting. The Virginia Supreme Court (empowered by new legislation adopted by referendum) with the help of two party nominated “Special Masters”, approved new maps for Virginia on December 28th, 2021. Therefore, with new maps in place we can consider changes to Harrisonburg voting precincts. In the state of Virginia Electoral Boards can recommend changes to precincts or wards, but it’s up to the Governing Body (City Council) to make the final approval. Also, Governing Bodies are empowered to make changes to Precinct or Ward boundaries at any time, they are not restricted to performing this task after statewide redistricting.

Harrisonburg currently has 8 voting precincts and 2 wards. Precincts represent a subdivision that determines where people vote, Wards are a subdivision that determines Governing body representation. Currently the City of Harrisonburg votes at large (citywide) for all elected offices. Ward lines are required to stay intact in case of legislative or Governing body changes made to representative classification of elected office. Each ward or precinct must have clearly defined lines. Clearly defined lines could mean streets, train tracks, interstates, property lines, or Census tracts. Each precinct must be wholly contained in a ward and must have one polling location either inside its border or within one mile of the border.

After discussions with the Electoral Board in 2021 on what concerns they had with the current precinct configuration, the General Registrar met with GIS Admin. Chip Brown to formulate map options. At a January 14th work session, Mr. Brown presented 3 map options based on various scenarios created by the General Registrar. These options used Census tracts, Interstate 81, and existing streets to draw clearly defined precinct and ward boundaries. At its January 24th meeting the Electoral Board voted 3-0 to recommend Ward 1 Scenario 1 Ward 2 Scenario 1 (Scenario 1).

In 2020 JMU alerted the General Registrar’s office that after 2021 the Convocation Center would be unavailable for an indefinite amount of time. Working with representatives from JMU the General Registrar and the Electoral Board toured six locations on campus: Students Success Center, URec, The Festival, Atlantic Union Bank Center, X-Labs and Godwin Hall. After comparing each location against criteria created by staff, the General Registrar was able to narrow down the choice to two locations: X-



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Labs and Godwin Hall. At the February 14th meeting the Electoral Board voted to recommend Godwin Hall by a vote of 2-1, with X-Labs receiving 1 vote.

Key Issues:

There are a few parameters to consider when creating new precinct maps for Harrisonburg. No precinct should have more than 4,500 registered voters, as state law says a precinct can't have more than 5,000 voters. The borders for wards and precincts are clearly defined, and that each precinct is wholly contained within one ward. Each precinct boundary should fall within a mile of City Hall, so that City Hall can continue to be the emergency back up polling location for all precincts. Addressing population growth in precincts 101 Simms, 103 Stone Spring, 104 Smithland, and 201 Waterman, bring all voters on EMU and VMRC campuses under one precinct. Addressing voters in 203 THMS that must drive past Waterman Elementary to vote at THMS and bring voters from surrounding precincts into 102 Spotswood to address overall population growth.

Here are the changes made by the proposed map

- **101 Simms:** Voters south of East Rock Street will be moved into 102 Spotswood.
- **102 Spotswood:** Adding voters between East Market Street and East Rock Street from 101 Simms and voters south of Old Furnace Road, east of East Market Street and north of Blue Ridge Drive from 104 Smithland.
- **103 Stone Spring:** Voters between Interstate 81 and Main Street will be moved into 201 Keister.
- **104 Smithland:** Voters between E Market Street Blue Ridge Drive and 101 Simms will now be in 102 Spotswood.
- **105 JMU:** No Boundary Changes
- **201 Waterman:** Adding voters north of Mount Clinton Pike. Moving voters east of North Dogwood Drive and south of West Wolfe Street into 203 THMS.
- **202 Keister:** Adding voters between North Main Street and Interstate 81 until Port Republic Road. Losing voters north of South Avenue and west of South High Street to 203 THMS.
- **203 THMS:** Adding voters east of North Dogwood Drive and south of West Wolfe Street from 201 Waterman. Adding voters north of South Avenue and west of South High Street from 202 Keister. Moving voters north of Mount Clinton Pike to 201 Waterman.

Estimated Population Changes with Proposed Map

| Precinct | | Current Map | Proposed Map |
|------------------|--|-------------|--------------|
| 101 Simms | | 4,189 | 3,815 |
| 102 Spotswood | | 1,851 | 2,475 |
| 103 Stone Spring | | 4,000 | 3,313 |
| 104 Smithland | | 3,950 | 3,700 |
| 105 JMU | | 1,577 | 1,577 |
| 201 Waterman | | 3,574 | 3,976 |
| 202 Keister | | 3,505 | 3,567 |
| 203 THMS | | 3,370 | 3,593 |



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When considering a new polling location for JMU there are state standards and a few precinct specific parameters to address. There are around 100 off campus voters between Main Street, Port Republic and JMU campus, that are predominately in nonstudent housing. Registrations on Campus can fluctuate annually between 500 to 3,000 voters. The location should be compliant with all ADA requirements. The location needs adequate parking, and a curbside voting location within 150 feet of an ADA entrance. The location should not be interior to campus gates. The locations size and availability need to be considered for the variety of Elections that can be held over the years (Primaries, Presidential, Special). The location needs to balance convenience for students, off campus voters, officials, and staff.

Based on that criteria staff created a formula that assigned numbers to five criteria was created: convenience for students, convenience for off campus voters and staff, meets state criteria, availability, and size. Here are the scores for each location based on those criteria. The higher the number the better the score.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Student Success Center</u> Convenience for students: 4 Convenience for off-campus and staff: 4 Meets state criteria: 1 Availability: 1 Size: 3 Total: 13</p> | <p><u>URec</u> Convenience for students: 4 Convenience for off-campus and staff: 3 Meets state criteria: 1 Availability: 1 Size: 5 Total: 14</p> |
| <p><u>Festival Conference and Student Center</u> Convenience for students: 3 Convenience for off-campus and staff: 5 Meets state criteria: 4 Availability: 1 Size: 5 Total: 18</p> | <p><u>Atlantic Union Bank Center</u> Convenience for students: 1 Convenience for off-campus and staff: 5 Meets state criteria: 5 Availability: 3 Size: 5 Total: 19</p> |
| <p><u>JMU X-Labs</u> Convenience for students: 2 Convenience for off-campus and staff: 5 Meets state criteria: 5 Availability: 5 Size: 3 Total: 20</p> | <p><u>Godwin Hall</u> Convenience for students: 5 Convenience for off-campus and staff: 3 Meets state criteria: 2 Availability: 5 Size: 5 Total: 20</p> |

The General Registrar believes that the recommended map and recommended JMU polling location addresses the stated parameters. While there could be population increase issues that could affect the number of registered voters in a few of these precincts in the coming years, the boundaries can always be adjusted if any precinct approaches 5,000 voters. There are a few potential issues with accessibility with Godwin Hall, but the General Registrar believes that working with JMU these issues can be addressed.



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However, should there be a desire for more discussion on either Ordinance Amendments, the General Registrar recommends moving forward with a decision on a new polling location for JMU 105 first. As the 105 Precinct does not currently have a operational polling location it will be imperative to have one in place if there is Primary on June 21st or a Special Election. There is an alternate draft Ordinance Amendment that changes the 105 JMU polling location from the Convocation Center to Godwin Hall without changing the precinct and ward boundaries that can be approved.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Approve the Election Ordinance Amendments with new ward and precinct boundaries and Godwin Hall as polling location for 105, as recommended by Electoral Board
- (b) Approve the Election Ordinance Amendments with new ward and precinct boundaries and Godwin Hall as polling location for 105, with other provisions
- (c) Approve the Election Ordinance Amendments with new ward and precinct boundaries as recommended by Electoral Board and deny Godwin Hall as polling location for 105.
- (d) Approve the election ordinance amendment with Godwin Hall as the polling location for 105 and deny the amendments with new ward and precinct boundaries
- (e) Deny the Election Ordinance Amendments

Community Engagement:

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for City Council's public hearing. The advertisement was published as shown below:

Election ordinance amendment for sections 1-1-11 and 1-1-12 to adopt a new City precinct map and move the JMU polling location from the Convocation Center to Godwin Hall.

Public hearing to consider a recommendation from the Harrisonburg Electoral Board to change the Harrisonburg precinct / ward boundaries, and the polling location for the Southeast Central precinct (JMU) from the Convocation Center to Godwin Hall. The proposed precinct map can be viewed online at <https://tinyurl.com/Hburg-Proposed-Map> and is available for review in the City Manager's Office, 409 South Main Street, Harrisonburg, Virginia, Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P. M.

Recommendation:



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The General Registrar recommends alternative (a) approve the Election Ordinance Amendments with new ward and precinct boundaries and Godwin Hall as polling location for 105, as recommended by Electoral Board

Attachments:

- a) Memorandum
- b) Public Comment email from JMU students.
- c) PowerPoint
- d) Proposed Precinct Map
- e) Current Precinct Map
- f) Electoral Board Minutes Extract
- g) Ordinance Amendments
- h) Electoral Board Memorandum

Review:

The Electoral Board recommended (3-0) approval of new ward and precinct boundaries and recommended (2-1) approval of Godwin Hall as the new 105 JMU polling location. There was one vote in favor of recommending X-Labs.