



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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March 30, 2023

**TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

SUBJECT: *Consider approving the FY2023-2024 through 2027-2028 Capital Improvement Program*

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING HELD ON:** March 8, 2023

Mr. Fletcher said the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a multi-year presentation of planned capital projects of \$50,000 or greater with an appropriate financing plan to fund the projects. The CIP is prepared annually to facilitate planning and to set priorities among capital improvement needs over a subsequent five-year period. The CIP is designed to identify projects for all City departments, as well as for Harrisonburg City Public Schools, for which funding has already been committed or is being sought for some time within the five-year planning period.

Planning Commission's objective is to review and evaluate the CIP and, once the document is in an acceptable format, recommend the document for approval to City Council. Remember that the CIP is not a budget and inclusion of projects in the document does not guarantee that such projects will be funded by the City or by any external sources in the year presented or at the level proposed. The actual commitment of funds by the City for any capital item comes with the approval of the annual budget for each fiscal year. However, the CIP serves as an important planning tool for formulating the capital portion of the annual budget.

As can be observed by reviewing previous CIP documents, the CIP is not a static plan. It is part of annual planning and programming, where after each passing year, another year is added to the planning period to maintain the five-year forecast. Each year costs, needs, and revenue sources are reevaluated.

Staff provided Planning Commission draft project information sheets at the February 8, 2023, regular meeting and requested that Commissioners submit comments and questions to staff prior to the Planning Commission review so that responses could be prepared and provided in advance of the meeting. The questions and responses are attached herein. On Thursday, March 2, 2023, the final draft of the CIP was uploaded to the City's website.

Mr. Fletcher walked through some of the tables in the CIP, highlighting the various sections of the Project Request Form, explained how priorities may change over time, and how some of the projects might eventually be funded.

Mr. Fletcher continued, aside from the summary tables and appendices that Planning Commission did not receive in February, staff wants to bring attention to the following projects that have been amended or added since Planning Commission received the early drafts of the projects on February 8th:

- Page 19: HVAC System Replacement,
- Page 20: Cisco Switch Hardware Refresh Program,
- Page 24: HVAC Upgrades District Courts and Old Courthouse,
- Page 93: Solar Panel Installation at Keister Elementary School,
- Page 101: MTC Renovation Request, and
- Page 159: Suter Street Drainage Improvements.

The questions and comments below were submitted prior to the Planning Commission review of the CIP by Commissioner Finnegan via email on Sunday, February 26, 2023. The page numbers have been changed to reflect the current page numbers.

1. **Page 7: HFD apparatus replacement:** How long are these new trucks expected to be in service? This would seem to be locking the city into building around the size and turn radius of the newer trucks for the next few decades. [Some truck manufacturers](#) offer electric trucks with a smaller turn radius, [which affects building and parking lot designs](#). Has HFD explored purchasing more nimble trucks for the updated fleet?

Response: The HFD is constantly scanning the horizon for technology that would improve our ability to reduce the size, and environmental impact, of fire apparatus. Coincidentally, staff evaluated the EV fire engine offered by Rosenbauer at a conference last week in Virginia Beach. Because the vehicle is extremely new, it is still in prototype delivery and the cost of the vehicle is approximately \$1 million **more** than traditional fire apparatus. As the technology around EV's continues to evolve and improve, we expect the price to come down to a market competitive level. Until that time, we continue to evaluate strategies to reduce the overall size of fire apparatus.

2. **Page 9: Fire station #5.** Is this planned to be located on Mount Clinton Pike near EMU? I have concerns about the location of the new station in an area that is not currently well-suited for frequent fire truck access (as opposed to wider roads near industrial buildings like on Acorn Drive). Has the location been selected and finalized?

Response: The preferred location for the new fire station has been selected and the City is in negotiations with a landowner to purchase land on Mt Clinton Pike near EMU. The decision to pursue land in this area of the City is based on an identified need related to reducing response times and improving service delivery. Extensive research was conducted in cooperation with the Mathematics Department at JMU in which more than 15 locations throughout the Parkview section of the city were evaluated. As counterintuitive as it may seem, a ½ mile difference in location adversely changes the desired impact of the station

dramatically. A fire station on Acorn Drive would serve fewer community members than one on Mt. Clinton Pike. In addition, available sites on Acorn Drive are east of the railroad, potentially delaying the response of an engine to calls in the Parkview section. The new station is expected to handle an average of three to four calls per day.

3. **Page 22: Harrison House Renovations.** Why is the city spending \$1,565,000 on this Priority 3 project (scheduled expenditure in 2024) after it was determined that this was not Thomas Harrison's house? How much of that cost is/has been covered by grants? Is this expected to be a tourist attraction? Is this property expected to generate revenue for the city?

Response: While there was a determination made that Thomas Harrison likely did not reside within the building, the structure is still a historic building that was positioned on property likely owned by his family. At this time, \$500,000 is expected from the Margaret Grattan Weaver Foundation. It is in the City's best interest to preserve this historic structure in the heart of our Downtown central business district. A public-private partnership is envisioned as the avenue to make these improvements a reality. The renovated structure is anticipated to enhance the attractiveness of Downtown Harrisonburg, which in turn will lead to increased tourism activity and revenue for Harrisonburg. Preservation of historic properties makes our downtown more attractive to tourists as it promotes an authentic history and pride in community that cannot be manufactured. Well maintained historic sites are a marketable amenity. The "Harrison House" is part of the identity of Harrisonburg from its name and origin story to its role in historic walking trails. One in five visitors to the region list visiting historic sites as the primary reason of their trip and top activity they do when they are here. Once they are here, they impact our local economy in numerous ways from eating meals to shopping at our stores. The Virginia Tourism Corporation statewide plan listed History and Heritage site product development as a high priority in their most recent plan.

4. **Page 23: Courts Building Project.** Is this an expansion into new buildings?

Response: The description of this project within the City's CIP Project Request Form essentially follows the description of the County's Lower Courts Building Additions project as shown on page 38 of their CIP document. As currently presented in the County CIP, the project would be an addition to the Old Courthouse and provide courtrooms for potential use by both Circuit and General District.

5. **Page 24: HVAC upgrades.** What is the state of the current HVAC systems in the jail itself? Is that also in need of an upgrade?

Response: The jail's HVAC system was upgraded in 2020.

6. **Page 25: Country Club Rd. Bridges.** Currently Country Club Rd. has diagonal bike path crossings over the railroad tracks, but no bike infrastructure elsewhere on the road. Does the design of these two bridges allow for future bike lane infrastructure on the road?

Response: Yes.

7. **Page 28: Annual street paving program.** Is the local tax revenue from the neighborhoods/areas where the streets will be repaved enough to pay for this program (\$2.1 million per year)? If not, where is that revenue coming from?

Response: The City receives maintenance funds from the state through the Virginia Department of Transportation. These maintenance funds are used for all aspects of maintenance related to our transportation system. The City does provide some general fund dollars to assist with maintenance operations.

8. **Page 34: Traffic Detection Cameras.** I've noticed that many of the old cameras don't detect cyclists. Is PW prioritizing the new bell-shaped cameras on identified bike routes (e.g. Dogwood crossing West Market)?

Response: Detection systems are upgraded based on the age of the system, other improvement planned at the intersection, or from recommendations from staff. We are aware of the limitations of older detection systems and will work to provide improvements as we are able.

9. **Page 36: Enhanced Signage Equipment.** Several [studies](#) have shown the [relative ineffectiveness](#) of RFPBs in preventing pedestrian crashes, compared with traffic-calming features such as raised [crosswalks, bulb-outs, and traffic refuge islands](#). Is there a plan to implement more effective traffic engineering solutions, as opposed to the less effective RFPBs at pedestrian crossings in Harrisonburg?

Response: VDOT has recently updated their recommended guidance as it relates to pedestrian crossings. These recommendations are based on roadway configuration, speed limit, and presence of pedestrian crossings. These recommendations still include RRFB's as a recommended solution, but also recommends other enhancements be placed at the crossing as well.

10. **Page 46: Bluestone Trail.** What comprises the majority of the projected \$15 million price tag for this? Is that mostly land acquisition or construction?

Response: The largest contributor to cost is the required bridge that will need to span Blacks Run and the railroad. This structure is expected to be approximately 450 feet in length.

11. **Page 60: Central Ave. sidewalk.** If school bus service is not being offered to children in this neighborhood, it would seem that this should be a more immediate priority to provide a safe route to Keister. Why is this not a higher priority? Do these students have a safe route to school without the sidewalk?

Response: Improving sidewalks around schools is a priority of Public Works, and we had recommended ARPA funds for a segment of the Central Avenue sidewalks. As we are

able to apply for and receive grant funding, we will pursue improvements in these areas of the City.

12. **Pages 120 - 143: water & sewer projects.** I added up all the projected total costs for these Public Utilities projects (pages 120 - 143) and came up with a grand total of \$183 million. This may be a question for the City Treasurer or Commissioner of the Revenue (rather than Public Utilities) -- Has Harrisonburg undertaken an analysis of projected revenue similar to [this analysis done in Eugene Oregon](#), which would show how future tax revenues may (or may not) cover these expenditures? If not, what is the plan to pay for those significant projected expenses?

Response: Water and sewer are enterprise funds; there is no tax money used for this. The City generates its own revenue and therefore we plan our own strategy through our Long Term Financial Model. There is a rate increase plan to cover all costs including CIP, which is certainly a major driver. The Director of Public Utilities has given a presentation to City Council each of the last few years as our annual budget is the first year in each revised strategy.

The questions and comments below were submitted prior to the Planning Commission review of the CIP by Vice Mayor Dent via email on Monday, March 6, 2023.

1. Pages 6 and 9: Fire Stations 4 and 5. I'm surprised to see these happening the same year, 2025. I thought the plan was to build FS5 first, and then refurbish or rebuild FS4, so we have the backup of FS5 while FS4 is being renovated.

Response: Great question; your inquiry prompted staff to double check documentation and discussion that occurred in January regarding the timing of the projects. Originally, Fire Station 4 was planned as shown in FY24, however, in mid-January staff decided that Fire Station 4 should be demonstrated as occurring in FY25. After another conversation among staff, we will place Fire Station 4 expenditures and funding sources in FY26.

2. Page 28: Annual Street Paving. This may be affected by the proposed road reconfiguration - at no extra cost?

Response: The roadway reconfiguration will have no effect on this project, as this project is based on pavement condition. Roadway reconfigurations are planned on roadways that are already planned to be repaved.

3. Page 29: Garbers Church/Bluestone ES New Traffic Signal. I'm surprised to see this off in the "Future" when it's a known problem now.

Response: The only warrant that is partially met for this signal is pedestrian due to the elementary school. The addition of the sidewalk along the eastern side of Garbers Church Road and the planned roadway reconfiguration does and will provide additional safety measures. Staff will continue to monitor this intersection to determine if additional warrants are met in the future.

4. Page 42: Chicago Ave and Waterman Drive. Likewise surprising that it's in the "Future" as IJA funding is likely more imminent.

Response: At this point staff needs to better identify the needs and possible solutions for this corridor before we can be successful with any type of grant application. This CIP includes \$150,000 for a small area study in FY24 to study both the transportation and stormwater needs of this area. Following that study staff will have a better idea of funding opportunities and this CIP project may be advanced in subsequent years.

5. Pages 41-66: Several Public Works projects contain the statement "This project would achieve progress towards meeting the Sustainable Transportation Targets in the City's Environmental Action Plan approved by Council on June 14, 2022." Most of these projects are pushed off to "Future" in whole or in part. Some may be done sooner with grants from SmartScale (such as the Reservoir St. Sidewalk). I wonder: how can we meet the ambitious targets for GHG reduction within the time frame required, rather than some vague "Future" date?

Response: If a project is shown as future, it does not mean that staff will not actively pursue studies or grant opportunities that could accelerate the timeframe of the project. However, during the preparation of the CIP each year, it is very difficult to forecast how these projects may develop and grants become available. Therefore, staff places realistic costs in the future column to confirm priority for the project, and allow the public to understand the scale of needs in our transportation system.

6. Page 62: Solar Implementation Plan. Excellent!
No response provided.

7. Pages 70 and 75, Splashpad and Kids Castle: A couple of projects have funding listed from Capital Project Fund when it should (apparently) be in "Other Revenue" for ARPA funding.

Response: Correct. However, the CIP was submitted way before the ARPA funds were allocated.

8. Pages 87 and 88: Chiller and Boiler Replacement at Harrisonburg High School. Are we considering alternatives for greater efficiency and/or use of alternative energy, such as heat pumps?

Response: At this time we have not considered alternatives to increase efficiency, however we would be open to exploring alternatives to improve efficiency.

9. Pages 90 and following: Roof Repair and Parking Lots at the various schools: are we considering solar at the time of the roof repairs, and EV chargers (infrastructure at least) at the time of the parking lot resurfacing?

Response: Yes, we would like to install solar panels at the same time that we replace roof sections, as funding is available. All pavement replacement or resurfacing would include EV charging stations if funding is included.

10. Page 120: Western Raw Water Line. Where is the funding for the **Eastern** Raw Water Line? I'm surprised not to see it in this CIP, as it's a large ongoing project.

Response: The project funding is complete and was removed last year.

Mr. Fletcher added to comment #1 from Vice Mayor Dent that operationally Fire Station 4 would not go off-line until Fire Station 5 was built and operational. In the conversation we had over the past two days, we are going to recommend a change to move Fire Station 4 forward one year. We probably will not reflect those funds until FY26, so we want to reflect that. I will make those changes. That will have a domino effect affecting all of the summary tables. If you find the document acceptable this evening, and you want to offer a favorable recommendation to City Council, please include that change in your recommendation or motion.

Mr. Fletcher added to comment #7 from Vice mayor Dent that I suspect that there are funds in the CIP fund, but as the response noted, these were identified before the ARPA funding was identified. This does not change much. It changes the location of the funding source but does not change the summary tables. I will find the correct answer and make the appropriate accommodations.

The questions and comments below were submitted prior to the Planning Commission review of the CIP by Commissioner Washington via email on Tuesday, March 7, 2023. Page numbers have been changed to reflect the current page numbers.

1. Who sets priorities and what is the criteria for being a priority 1, 2 or 3?

Response: Within the Introduction section of the CIP document, it explains that priority codes are assigned by the CIP Committee in conjunction with Department Directors. The CIP Committee includes the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Assistant to the City Manager, Director of Finance, Director of Community Development, and the Sustainability and Environmental Manager. The Introduction also explains the basic criteria for each priority code. Priority 1 means the project is absolutely required, which staff typically interprets to mean required by law. Priority 2 is a project that is highly desirable, affects efficiency and effectiveness. Priority 3 is simply a desirable project. While there are descriptions for priority 4 and 5 projects, such projects are not included in the CIP document nor were there any projects categorized as 4 or 5.

2. How is equity considered throughout the process?

Response: As noted within the Introduction section of the CIP document, the CIP is not a budget, but a planning tool. The actual commitment of funds for any capital item comes with the approval of the annual budget for each fiscal year, where public hearings are held prior to adoption of the budget. All the proposed projects within the CIP will likely not be funded exactly as outlined due to budgetary restraints.

Equity could be accounted for in different ways. One way is through Planning Commission's review, which allows questions to be asked and recommendations to be offered by the Commission to City Council for consideration. Examples include recommending changes in priority for any particular project or to recommend moving a project to a different desired fiscal year for completion. City Council holds a public hearing on the CIP, which allows the public to offer comments or concerns.

If there are ideas to strengthen equity in this process, suggestions are welcomed.

3. Page 4: Will someone be hired to take on this project, or will current staff be asked to do this on top of their daily tasks? While I'm not sure how often cyber attacks happen, shouldn't the city's technological upgrades to increase efficiency and cyber security happen asap?

Response: The project will be managed by I.T. staff in coordination with a Value Added Reseller (VAR). This is the normal process for purchasing products from Laserfiche, Documentum, Hyland, as well as other vendors in this arena.

The documents are mostly stored as paper rather than electronically; therefore, there is no immediate technology need or cybersecurity risk. The original stakeholders for the project were Human Resources, Finance, and the Commissioner of the Revenue. The Commissioner has a product that was purchased with their assessment and billing software. The other departments have not had this as a priority, so the project has been pushed back several times. Recently, there have been discussions in the City Manager's and Community Development departments, but these discussions are in their early stages.

4. Page 22: Does the city have a budget for historic preservation? Is it the City's job to maintain historic buildings and structures?

Response: The City does not have a specific line item budget for historic preservation. With regard to this project, the Harrison House is owned by the City. At this time, \$500,000 is expected from the Margaret Grattan Weaver Foundation. It is in the City's best interest to preserve this historic structure in the heart of our downtown central business district, which can enhance the attractiveness of downtown and, hopefully, increase tourism activity and revenue for Harrisonburg.

5. Page 25: Are these bridges only used for car transportation or are these bridges that can encourage safe bike and pedestrian transportation?

Response: The reconstructed bridges would include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

6. Page 27: Does this include constructing new sidewalks in areas that don't have sidewalks?

Response: A majority of this project is dedicated to the maintenance of existing curb and gutter and sidewalk segments in the City. New sidewalk segments are typically constructed under other CIP projects or as yearly budget funding allows.

7. Page 29: Why is this priority 3? Could this not be executed asap?

Response: This signal only partially meets warrants. Staff will continue to monitor this intersection and recommend signalization if warranted in the future.

8. Page 31: With all of the new development that is slated to go in this area, infrastructure and adequate traffic equipment should be more than a priority 3.

Response: At this time, staff maintains its recommended priority ranking.

9. Page 34 and page 36: How does traffic detection cameras take priority over street signal upgrades and enhanced signage?

Response: Upgrades in traffic signal detection improves the technology at these intersection and allows for 1) 24/7 traffic and pedestrian counts, which are used by staff to study traffic patterns and recommend improvements, 2) improves the detection ability of the intersection and staff hears numerous concerns from cyclists about not being detected at intersections, 3) improves the video at each intersection, which aids during incident management activities such as detours on I-81. Note that these cameras do not record.

Because of these benefits associated with upgrades to the detection systems, Public Works supports the higher priority given to this project.

10. Page 37: What are the effects of light pollution in these areas?

Response: The addition of LED street signs has little to no effect on light pollution, as these are only located at signalized intersections, which already have streetlights in the area.

11. Page 53: Project 3: Is there conversation around expanding this program throughout the city?

Response: Staff needs more information about this inquiry to adequately address the question.

12. Page 58: Are all pedestrian signals ADA compliant? If not, this should be Priority 1.

Response: All pedestrian signals in the City are compliant as of the date of initial installation. This project is to upgrade pedestrian signals to the most current standard, which requires an Audible Pedestrian System (i.e., the signal talks to the pedestrian). We are only required to upgrade to the most current standard when maintenance activities occur, therefore Public Works supports a Priority 2 for this project.

13. Page 70: This project should be bumped up in priority due to how long the project has been on the table as well as creating equity in regards to water recreation throughout all communities in Harrisonburg. Outdoor learning spaces for the children are extremely important. I hope this happens with improvements to school schedules that will allow students to take advantage of outside time.

Response: We were successful in gaining ARPA funding for this project. The project has already been started with some conceptual planning and will continue through the construction phases that hopefully keep us on a schedule that will allow for the project to progress in a timely manner.

14. Page 113: This is vague.

Response: This item would be similar to what we have proposed and are actively developing for HHS. Our intent will be to renovate the instructional spaces of THMS, upgrade technology, and ensure ADA access for all. Since this project is anticipated for 2027, we have not yet begun working through the specific details of the renovation plan.

Mr. Fletcher said I am available to answer any questions.

Chair Finnegan asked for clarification to one of his questions regarding the County's Lower Courts Building Additions. The answer states "[a]s currently presented in the County CIP, the project would be an addition to the Old Courthouse." A number of years ago, they were looking at taking over the Denton Building. I could not tell if this is an expansion.

Mr. Fletcher said the way it is presented is that it would be an addition to the existing court building.

Chair Finnegan said that is how I read it, but it said "addition to the old Court House" which in my mind means the building that is on Court Square.

Mr. Fletcher said that is correct.

Vice Mayor Dent clarified the requirements for a motion.

Chair Finnegan said voting in the affirmative does not mean that we love everything in here. It means that we understand that these are the priorities. This is not a budget.

Mr. Fletcher said we do not offer any recommendation. These are the needs. These are the demands. These are the projects that we are presenting to serve those needs.

Vice Mayor Dent said, for instance, I do not love adding to the Court House building. I would not like to tear down the Denton Building. What are the solutions? We do not know yet.

Commissioner Baugh said we are not making that decision here. City Council will eventually make that decision. As we note from the past, once you make that transition... The building we are sitting in right now went through about three iterations of what we thought we would do. We seriously looked at another one that we did not go with. This is intended for planning purposes. Decisions will ultimately get made, just like the funding.

Vice Mayor Dent asked would it come through Planning Commission first?

Commissioner Baugh said it depends on what you are talking about.

Mr. Fletcher asked for clarification.

Vice Mayor Dent said the Court House addition proposal.

Chair Finnegan said that is property of the Courts, right?

Commissioner Baugh said I bet City Council will be talking about that in closed session.

Mr. Fletcher asked is there anything that you wanted to discuss that is in here?

Vice Mayor Dent said you mentioned, and I remember that this is in the works, that the Sustainability and Environmental Manager was part of the CIP process. I am not going to insist that you put the solar statement up front because there is the solar feasibility study as one of the projects.

Mr. Fletcher said we still included that statement in the introduction to recognize that. This document is not detailed to get into those types of issues.

Vice Mayor Dent moved to recommend approval of the CIP with the two amendments as presented by staff. The changes include moving the Fire Station 4 expenditures to FY26 and moving the funding for the Splashpad and Kids Castle from the capital projects to "Other Revenue."

Vice-Chair Byrd seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Armstrong	Aye
Commissioner Baugh	Aye
Vice-Chair Byrd	Aye
Vice Mayor Dent	Aye
Commissioner Orndoff	Aye
Commissioner Washington	Aye
Chair Finnegan	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of CIP passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on April 11, 2023.

