



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

7:00 PM

Virtual

1. Roll Call

Present: 5 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice Mayor Sal Romero, Council Member Christopher B. Jones, Council Member George Hirschmann and Council Member Laura Dent

Also Present: 4 - Deputy City Manager Ande Banks, City Attorney Chris Brown, City Clerk Pam Ulmer and Mayor Matthew Tobia

2. Invocation

Mayor Reed offered the invocation

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance

4. Special Recognition

4.a. Harrisonburg High School Fine Arts Department Winter Musical - Chicago

Phillip Saunders, Harrisonburg High School Fine Arts Department, stated the Fine Arts Department will be performing Chicago this year, it will run from Wednesday February 9, 2022, through Sunday February 13, 2022, and tickets are on sale now and can be purchased online. He stated the students have put a lot of work into this performance and introduced Azalea Twining & Ellie Velker who performed for Council.

Mayor Reed thanked everyone for the wonderful performance and stated she can't wait to see the full musical.

5. Consent Agenda (any item placed on the consent agenda shall be removed and taken up as a separate matter, if so requested by any member of Council, otherwise all items will be voted on with one (1) motion)

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Romero, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice Mayor Romero, Council Member Jones, Council Member Hirschmann and Council Member Dent

No: 0

5.a. Consider approving an ordinance closing a 1,288 square foot portion of an alley

located between 371 Myers Avenue and 445 Myers Avenue Alley closing to Jeffrey B. and Bonnie L.K. Ferguson

The alley closing ordinance request was approved on second reading.

5.b. Minutes from the January 11, 2022 City Council meeting

The Minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

6. Public Hearings

7. Regular Items

7.a. Amendment to the 2020 Action Plan

Ande Banks, interim city manager, stated it is requested that Council approve the final Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) amendments to the 2020 Action Plan as follows:

- \$200,630 of the CARES Act round three of CDBG-CV funds that was allocated to the project entitled Homeless Services Property Acquisition will be allocated to the NEW project Open Doors COVID Shelter Operations.
- \$126,000 of the CARES Act round three of CDBG-CV funds that was allocated to the project entitled Homeless Services Property Acquisition will be allocated to the NEW project The Salvation Army Emergency Social Services.
- \$10,000 of the CARES Act round one CDBG-CV funding that was allocated to the Hotel Isolation Project will be allocated to the NEW project The Salvation Army Emergency Social Services.

He reviewed the proposed schedule.

Mayor Reed asked what happens if the organization doesn't spend the entire amount allocated. Mr. Banks stated the organizations have an entire year to use the funds for approved projects, but if they have not expended all the funds the Action Plan will have to be amended to fully utilize the leftover funds.

Vice Mayor Romero asked if this has been done in the past or is this a unique year. Mr. Banks stated this is unique funding that the US Department of Urban Development received from the CARES Act and are specifically tied to providing assistance or services based on the need coming out of COVID-19 and must be used for costs associated with COVID-19 and one eligible expense is to assist with sheltering homeless individuals.

Council Member Dent asked if any of the reimbursement go to expenses that these organizations have already incurred. Mr. Banks stated he believes these funds follow the same guidelines as normal CDBG funding, therefore they will not be able to seek reimbursement for costs before January 26, 2022. He stated he will double check the

regulations and confirm to Council.

A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the request as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice Mayor Romero, Council Member Jones, Council Member Hirschmann and Council Member Dent

No: 0

7.b. Update on the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) 2045 Long Range Plan

Ann Cundy, director of Transportation, Harrisonburg Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) Shenandoah Planning District Commission, stated this is to update Council on the public engagement - Phase One for the Harrisonburg Rockingham MPO Long Range Transportation Plan update. She reviewed the following:

- What the mission is of the HRMPO, what they do and the areas they represent.
- What the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) covers, latest updates and goals.
- The timeline for the 2045 LRTP
- The Phase One Visioning Survey details and noted the survey will be open from February 1 - March 2, 2022.
- The Phase One outreach strategies

She stated help is needed to reach everyone to complete this survey and get the word out and asked Council to reach out to their constituents. She stated the survey will be available in English and in Spanish and not only available to take online but hard copies are available as well.

Mayor Reed asked if Ms. Cundy would like for Council to have organizations and community leaders contact her directly about the survey. Ms. Cundy stated she would love that and will send a list to Council of those organizations and community leaders that she has already been in contact with.

Council Member Dent stated she sent the materials provided to the Environmental Protections Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) focus area four for transportation, to set targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, perhaps they can help elicit survey responses.

Vice Mayor Romero stated he is interested in the MPO's outreach with college students, high school students and middle school students, as within a 25-year plan, it will be important for them as well. Ms. Cundy stated she agrees and noted the county and city superintendents have been contacted to share the information.

Council Member Hirschmann thanked Ms. Cundy; it was a good presentation with a

lot of material.

This Report was received and filed.

7.c. Presentation of the Urban Forest Management Master Plan

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, stated Jeremy Harold and staff recently completed the Urban Forest Management Master Plan, it has been in the works for over a year, a Department of Forestry grant was used to complete this plan, with the help of Urban Canopy Works consultants, and they were a great partner in putting the plan together. He reviewed what an Urban Forestry Management Plan is and why it is important.

Jeremy Harold, green space manager, Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation, reviewed the following:

- How the Plan was created
- Tree inventory in the City of Harrisonburg, VA
- Tree canopy analysis between the city and other localities
- Benefits of the Plan
- Citizen and shareholder input
- Sustainability analysis results
- Strengths and challenges
- Recommendations
- Urban Wood Program

Vice Mayor Romero asked if staff was able to see discrepancies of trees in certain neighborhoods. Mr. Harold stated staff is working towards that to see where the certain hot spots in neighborhoods are and move forward with a tree planting campaign.

Council Member Jones asked if it would be possible and affordable to plant back the loss incurred with the ash tree borers at a ratio of 2 to 1 or 150%. He asked if trees that will be planted stay green all year long on public property. Mr. Harold stated staff hopes to increase the tree planting in the spring, they have been averaging approximately 300 trees for the past two years, but the challenge is the maintenance afterwards. He stated they would love to increase the planting, they are planting larger trees, growing their own seedlings and the goal is to plant less than 10% of any variety.

Council Member Dent commended staff for the tremendous efforts to mitigate the loss of the Ash trees and to recycle it. She stated she appreciates staff is paying attention to the heat island effect and noted that trees are also the ideal greenhouse gas emissions reduction and air quality improvement. She asked if there are any programs for education and outreach, providing trees or funds for private owners to plant more trees. Mr. Harold stated hopefully through the Service Learning projects

we can unfold some of that, in the action step #2, plant more trees, is to promote more trees on private property.

This Presentation was received and filed.

7.d. Presentation on the timeline and staffing plan for Fire Station # 5

Matthew Tobia, Chief, Harrisonburg Fire Department, stated this is an update to the historic vote taken last month to approve the city's fifth fire station. He reviewed the following:

Project timeline for the construction (estimated completion by January 2024). He noted the timeline for a new fire engine is roughly 22-months and in the works.

Project timeline for personnel. He noted staff will be hired by January 2023.

Grant funding opportunity through Federally funded through the Department of Homeland Security & FEMA called the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant.

- Proposed scope of the SAFER grant
- Probability of success of obtaining this grant
- Timeline if grant is not awarded

He stated, in summary:

- Additional firefighters (in the correct location) represent the critical factor in achieving ISO Class 1 designation
- On-duty staffing in the City Fire Department improves to 21 firefighters (from 17)
- SAFER exists for this type of investment in public safety
- Supports goal of meeting NFPA 1710: A national consensus standard that defines safe and appropriate levels of service

Council Member Jones thanked Chief Tobia and noted the grant would save the city a lot of money. He asked Mr. Banks if specific advertising campaigns can be drafted specifically for the personnel needed for not only the Fire Department but also for the Police Department, and HPD.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the pursuit of the grant as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice Mayor Romero, Council Member Jones, Council Member Hirschmann and Council Member Dent

No: 0

7.e. Consider adopting the SolSmart Solar Statement and allow city staff to become a member of the Virginia Locality Cohort.

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, stated this item for Council to approve the enrollment into the SolSmart Program and seek designation through the program. He reviewed the following:

- The funding, goal, and program components of SolSmart
- What is required for SolSmart designations
- Process of designation
- Tools provided by technical assistance
- City goals
- Cohort participation
- Recommendations

Council Member Dent thanked Mr. Hartman for walking through this process, she stated it is crucial having Keith Thomas, Sustainability and Environmental Manager, Public Works, on board makes this possible as his job is to take charge of the environmental sustainability. She thanked her colleagues on EPSAC, in particular, Joy Loving, who has huge experience in promoting solar and helped work with staff to create the first EPSAC Project proposal.

Council Member Jones thanked Mr. Hartman for all of his hard work, not only with this project, but all of the daily services during the recent challenges of snow removal, etc. Mr. Hartman thanked Council Member Jones for the comments and stated he will pass the appreciation to his staff; they take a lot of pride in making sure the city keeps moving as fast as possible.

A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to adopt the SolSmart statement and allow city staff to become a member of the Virginia Locality Cohort as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice Mayor Romero, Council Member Jones, Council Member Hirschmann and Council Member Dent

No: 0

8. Other Matters

8.a. Comments from the public, limited to five minutes, on matters not on the regular agenda. (Name and address are required)

Bucky Berry, stated they were with the mobile canteen unit from the Salvation Army during the Martin Luther King, Jr. handout day in which the Brent Berry Food Drive provided the food for the event. He stated it was a good event. He stated the food obtained by the recent food drive brought in between \$50,000-\$60,000 worth of food. He spoke on the need for increase in salary of Harrisonburg police officers.

8.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Jones asked everyone to stay warm and help Public Works out by clearing the snow from the sidewalks.

Council Member Dent stated she was out shoveling her sidewalk when an enterprising gentleman came by with a snow blower and she appreciated the opportunity and service he offered. She stated she is thrilled the SolSmart proposal

was approved and looks forward to working with staff and EPSAC on that. She stated she attended the National Community Solar Partnership meeting and spoke with Brian O'Dell with HEC, who reminded her that the ACORN Solar development is being presented as community solar. She stated we are making progress.

Council Member Hirschmann stated the end of the week is going to be seriously cold, single digits, along with possible minor precipitation, and asks everyone to be careful while they are out there.

Mayor Reed stated city staff is struggling, we have some workers out, to keep services going, and there have been some concerns and issues with sidewalks not being cleared. She stated there are many in the community battling with COVID-19, and staff is being caught up in it as well, we need to look out for one another, we are a kind compassionate community, hopefully there are some young men that would like to make a few bucks and shovel snow, the sidewalks must be cleared.

Mr. Banks stated he met with the acting superintendent at Heritage Oaks Golf Course, and he is planning a season of new programs continuing to implement the recommendations that came out of the study, with music venues with food trucks in the spring, summer, and fall, and as part of that ongoing operation he wanted to find out if Council would approve alcohol as part of the ongoing food service there and during the events. Council all nodded in approval. He stated city staff is struggling under the challenging time of the Omicron surge, we have had the most cases amongst city staff in the entire pandemic thus far, and almost 1/5th of city staff has had to be out of work because of quarantine and isolation. He stated an all-hands-on deck call was made during the last snowstorm for snow removal. He stated we have not allowed these staffing challenges to impact services.

9. Closed Session

- 9.a. Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A), under: Subsection 3 for a discussion of the acquisition of real estate for a public purpose

At 8:41 p.m., a motion was made by Council Member Hirschmann, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero, to enter into closed session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A), under: subsection 3 for a discussion of the acquisition of real estate for a public purpose. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice Mayor Romero, Council Member Jones, Council Member Hirschmann and Council Member Dent

No: 0

10. Adjournment

At 9:40 p.m., the closed session ended and the regular session reconvened. City Attorney Brown read the following statement, which was agreed to with a unanimous

recorded vote of Council: I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Chapter 37 of Title 2.2 of the Code, of Virginia, 1950, as amended, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting by the City Council.

At 9:40 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR