



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

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February 21, 2017

TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

SUBJECT: Consider recommendation of the FY 2017-2018 through 2021-2022 Capital Improvement Program to City Council.

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON: January 11, 2017

Vice Chair Fitzgerald read the request to consider a recommendation for the FY 2017-2018 through 2021-2022 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to City Council and asked staff for any comments.

Mr. Fletcher said the draft of the CIP was sent out a couple of weeks ago for the Commission to review. We asked for anyone who had any questions before hand to submit those questions to staff and then we would try to answer those and/or to distribute them to department directors to be able to do any lengthy research that was necessary to provide answers. We only received a handful of questions; a few were clarification questions that I responded directed to Vice Chair Fitzgerald. There were two questions that were specific to projects for the Department of Public Works and four questions that were specific to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

I sent to you all earlier today the very thorough response, and many thanks to Parks and Recreation Director Luanne Santangelo for following up with those questions. If I could, with the consent of the Commission, have the questions placed into the minutes and the text of her response placed into the minutes so it can be recorded instead of taking the time this evening to hear that thorough response.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald emailed several questions to staff prior to tonight's hearing. The questions and the responses were as follows: (Note: There were several pictures and an Excel spreadsheet shared in the response to the questions; the pictures and the spreadsheet, however, are not included in the minutes.)

Question: Generally, is the purchase of software considered a capital improvement, even if there are no physical/tangible characteristics of the purchase (e.g., the software downloaded, or accessible via a secure password on an off-site server)?

Response: Generally, the CIP should not just be for infrastructure and facilities and should include other large, non-recurring capital outlays that require special planning to ensure that assets are acquired in the time to meet specific needs. Staff's opinion is that almost any software purchase fits as a capital purchase and must be planned for from the context of competing for existing funding with other capital items.

Question: For projects on pages 24, 35, 39, 51, 52, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61, 70, 71, 82, 83, 85 - Are there alternatives? There seem to be a lot of blank alternative boxes this year.

Response: For what it is worth, there might be a few less projects this year than in the previous two years. In the past two years, the CIP had more projects without stated “alternatives” than the proposed CIP. Many of the projects that do not have stated “alternatives” is likely due to the City simply acknowledging that the project is either completed as briefly noted or it is simply not completed, and thus, having nothing listed is meant to mean there are no alternatives. It likely has just as much to do with the personal style of the individual that filled out the project form and believed that leaving it blank was the result of noting that there are no alternatives.

Question: With regard to the project on page 76 (Parks Accessibility Improvement Program), what is the actual capital expenditure? The description of the project sounds more like the explanations/justification.

Response: Parks and Recreation is very fortunate in that an update to the Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan (CRPMP) was completed in 2013. As such, this plan outlines the key goals for the department as we strive to meet the parks and recreational needs of those in the community.

As stated in the Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan:

“The mission of the Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation is to enhance the quality of life and meet the needs of every citizen by providing comprehensive leisure service opportunities...and to develop and maintain a safe system of open spaces and public facilities for the use and enjoyment by the community.”

The Comprehensive Recreation and Park Master Plan (CRPMP) describes the critical role of a full-service parks and recreation in the community. As stated: “Many communities now realize that parks and recreation has a considerable effect on the quality of life, community health and economic sustainability of our communities. A well developed Parks and Recreation system can offer many benefits to a community including improved health, stress reduction, resource conservation and protection, flood protection, improved air quality, improved aesthetics, revenue generation, enhanced property values among others.

The Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation system has grown considerably in the amount of land and facilities it holds and maintains. In spite of a lack of capital improvements, our Parks Maintenance and Field Maintenance provides an exceptional level of service to our community, providing residents with clean, safe, well-maintained facilities. However, in order to maintain this level of service an investment in infrastructure must occur...to put it bluntly, we cannot continue to “kick the can down the road.”

A. Goals

Our primary initiative is to meet the goals established within the Department via the Comprehensive Recreation and Park Master Plan. These goals state:

1. Enhance and improve existing facilities through maintenance and renovations.
2. Increase effective use of existing facilities by aggressive scheduling and maintenance programs.
3. Expand and make accessible an interconnected trail, path and bikeway system to link parks to schools and other areas of the City.
4. Anticipate the needs of a changing, growing community and structure facilities accordingly.

B. Capital Improvement Program

The extreme economic challenges that confronted local governments the last several years caused many to “kick the can down the road.” Harrisonburg was no different. Capital expenditures were extremely limited with minimal funding allocated for parks improvements or park expansion. We are now at a crossroads where we can no longer continue to delay the necessary improvements to our facilities. It is time to reestablish priorities and fund improvements that will ensure the long term sustainability of our parks and facilities for our current and future citizens.

To address specific questions regarding the CIP request of Parks and Recreation, please information provided below.

In direct response to the project on page 76, the intent of this program is to have a yearly allocation through a request of CDBG funds to address accessibility issues within our park system. This became a focus when I (Luanne Santangelo, Director of Parks and Recreation) observed a woman pushing an individual in a wheelchair up the entrance to the Community Activity Center Administration Office. She struggled to push the wheelchair up the too steep ramp and over that separation of the ramp to the platform. While she refused assistance, indicating that this wasn't her first time experiencing this difficulty, she just simply asked if I could hold the door as they entered the building.

Upon further inspection of our facilities there were many areas of deficiency in regards to accessibility. While most able-bodied individuals can easily traverse our parks, many areas are inaccessible or are deficient in meeting the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is our obligation and mandated by the Federal Government to provide proper access to our facilities and programs for those with disabilities.

Question: With regard to the project on page 78 (Heritage Oaks Water Supply), it would be helpful to reorganize the text so that there are separate clear descriptions of the project (here the project sounds like there is an either/or option), and then the explanation of why it is needed.

Response: The Golf Course was built with a retention pond that is used for irrigation. The main source of water replenishment for this pond is run-off from rain. In the past, during times of drought the pond could be filled from the raw water disbursed from the water treatment plant. Basically, we would call and ask to send water and through a series of “canals” the water could be sent to the pond. However, a change in operations to be more efficient at the water treatment plant has negatively impacted our secondary water supply.

This past summer, when we were in drought conditions, we reached a critical point with an almost dry irrigation pond. (Thankfully, the water treatment plant was able to help us out). However, there is a risk to a City asset worth millions of dollars if we continue to operate under these conditions.

We discussed two options, increase storage capacity on-site or find a permanent water source. While we have, internally, discussed the pros/cons of both of these options we are uncertain if there are other alternatives to consider. The intent of this request is to first hire the proper consultant to study the situation and determine options to address the long term need for a permanent water supply. The second part of this request (and would be considered in a future CIP budget year) would be implementation of the best, most economical recommendation provided by the consultant.

Question: With regard to the project on page 80 (Westover Skate Park Improvement Project), much of the description of the project is actually an explanation for why it is needed. Is there a justification for an addition?

Response: The Skate Park at Westover Park continues to be a very popular destination specifically for teens and young adults – our most underserved population, in terms of recreation, in the City. When I (Luanne Santangelo, Director of Parks and Recreation) spoke to our employee (an avid skateboarder) at the site, he highlighted several of the issues and problems with the facility. The riding surface is cracked, uneven and decaying (decaying from within). Park Maintenance staff has shared their frustration with repairs identifying the specific challenge in trying to replace the surfacing material to an interior, wooden frame that is decayed, rotted and unable to hold the screws. Repairs by our maintenance crew are hindered by the interior structure of each obstacle and do not provide a long term solution to, what is becoming, a greater risk to the user and the City.

The intent of this request is for a complete redesign and reconstruction of the skate park. We would evaluate the type of structures, considering concrete instead of the prefabricated wooden obstacles. Research, at this time, shows that concrete has less maintenance, more durability and longevity. We would also want to include the park users in the design process to make sure we get their input for a more functional, enjoyable experience. The project would be spread out over several years with design in year 1 and construction over years 2 and 3.

Question: With regard to the project on page 81 (Athletic Field Returfing Program), much of the description is an explanation. A two sentence description of what the resurfacing program would entail would be helpful. Is there an alternative?

Response: The description of this project would be to simply re-turf existing fields, on a rotating schedule, with a variety of grass that is more durable and quicker to recover allowing for expanded play due to increased demand.

However, this program has to work in concert with the field lighting project also submitted as a CIP. We would begin this project with installation of the infrastructure for fields 1, 2, & 3 and the lights for field 1. Having this field with lights will then allow us to take out of use field 3 so that re-turfing can be completed. The process would then continue until all 3 fields had lights and be re-turfed. In theory, there should be no disruption in play for the current users of the facility. Once this program is completed, we would be able to expand usage to other groups currently being denied access and allow for tournament play contributing to the economic sustainability of our local hospitality businesses.

Mr. Fletcher said let us start with Parks and Recreation, is there any follow up or need for further clarification to the responses.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald said it is exceptionally clear to me.

Mr. Fletcher said there were two questions for the Department of Public Works. One of the questions we were able to provide a response to; and if there is a consensus, that response can be inserted into the minutes as well.

There was a consensus by Planning Commission to add the following question and response:

Question: With regard to the project on page 131 (Drainage and Stormwater Program (MS4 VPDES Permit), what does the actual program entail? The description of the program explains why we have to do it, but what are we going to do with these funds?

Response: These funds will be used to assist the City in meeting the six minimum control measures (MCM) as required by the City's MS4 permit, as well as providing funds for a potential BMP partnership program that is currently under consideration. Examples of MCM are:

1. Public Education and Outreach – publication and advertising expenses, training, flyers, etc.
2. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination – testing supplies, training, enforcement activities, monitoring, etc.
3. Inspection – Inspection of publicly owned BMP's on a yearly basis.
4. Good Housekeeping – Development and maintenance of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans, materials and supplies need to meet the SWPPP requirements.
5. Employee Training – Training staff on good housekeeping and illicit discharge procedures.

Mr. Fletcher said the second question for the Department of Public Works was specific to the project on page 132 and is associated with the Stormwater Improvement Plan. It is somewhat of a question generally to city staff to determine if we continue to feel that a plan/document was a Capital Improvement Project. Staff believes it should be included in the Capital Improvement Program. I see it somewhat questionable and I can understand why the group may have questioned it being that it is sort of an unknown quantity of a project; but, if there is any sort of concern as to remove it or if you want further clarification with other staff members, we have Public Works Department representatives available to answer any of those questions. I believe staff still feels strongly that it should be in the CIP.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald said one of the things we talked about on the tour yesterday was the idea that the benchmarks we have to meet for the Stormwater Improvement Plan change as we go a little bit further they get a little more stringent and stricter. So what we have to do to meet them is going to include improving on some things that we are already doing. It is going to be interesting to see how to fold that into a more conventional plan.

Mr. Fletcher said the other matter I need to address is the additional project that is before you this evening. I am calling it an additional project, but it should have been included in the first place. Mr. Craig Mackail and I have communicated a week ago after the School Board had their meeting and it was recognized that this was not part of the CIP. None of the summary tables or anything like that have been changed simply because there are changes that might come out of this meeting. So, before you is the additional project that is to be inserted into the CIP. Again, that project seems to stand on its own with a very brief description of its purpose; the additional project being to plan for the purchase of additional property needed for the additional elementary school. If there are questions about it, Mr. Mackail is here this evening and can answer any of those questions.

Mr. Colman said is this adjacent to one of the schools right now or is it going to be some other property somewhere?

Mrs. Whitten asked whether this means six more school buses will need to be purchased.

Mr. Mackail, Assistant Superintendent of Operations for Harrisonburg City Schools said that is a Department of Public Transportation question; but I will tell you that as our number grows, it does require more spaces for kids to sit on buses. We continue to see our number grow year to year and it makes sense that we will have to look at all the things that support a new school.

Mrs. Whitten asked what is the projected timeline for the school.

Mr. Mackail said 2021-2022.

Mr. Fletcher said those were the immediate things. I know that in years past the CIP review has been handled in so many different ways, from a separate meeting, which lasted maybe an hour or two, where Department Directors had given very lengthy responses to each project that was before us. We made advances over the years and I think one of the big ones being its association with the goals, objectives and

strategies with the Comprehensive Plan, which is really the key objective to tying it back to the Comprehensive Plan as it is spelled out in the State Code. That is really all I had prepared for you all this evening and I am open to turning it over to the Commission to ask questions. A number of our Department Directors set out time for this evening to come and answer any questions you might have. Those present this evening include Jim Baker and Tom Hartman, Director and Assistant Director, respectively, at the Department of Public Works; Jim Junkins, Harrisonburg ECC; Ian Bennett, Fire Chief; Craig Mackail, Harrisonburg City School; Mike Collins, Department of Public Utilities; Luanne Santangelo, Parks and Recreation; and Kurt Hodgen, City Manager.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald said I had mine answered in email exchanges so I am good and I do appreciate the thoroughness of the response.

Mrs. Whitten said I do have one for the Fire Department. Station 4 is kind of outdated and I understand is too small. Is that pretty much a good description?

Chief Bennett said definitely outdated, size is marginal, it is both a City and County facility. The County operates out of one side and the City operates out of the other. There is a long standing agreement. It is marginal in size but it is definitely outdated. Basically, it needs reconfiguring especially from sleeping areas and working areas.

Mrs. Whitten said that was pretty much what I got from what was on the paper. Has there been any consideration to or would it make sense to consider a way to collaborate or partner with the County? I would think that Station 4 property would be really attractive to the County since they already have buildings in that area. Is there a way for us to work together and get a fire station sooner in the Park View area?

Chief Bennett said Chief Holloway with Rockingham County and I have been talking quite a bit lately about that possibility. There is a lot of constraining factors in how we locate fire stations. The idea of moving Station 4 out of there is tough. There is the Insurance Service Office (ISO) which requires, or gives most credit for, 1.5 road miles to a fire station for an engine, so that is one factor we look at our ISO classification to measure. Obviously, Park View is deficient in that and that is why we are looking at Station 5.

The other piece is response times and that can be measured in two different ways. Traditionally it is measured in average response time. Our average response time is in about the 4 minutes and 15 seconds to 4 minutes and 20 seconds range and we shoot for 4 minutes and 30 seconds. Park View is over 5 minutes; it is in the 5 minutes and 10 seconds range. There is a second piece to that and that is response reliability. The engine at Station 4 is the busiest; it runs about 2,700 calls a year. They are out of their station a lot, which requires another engine which is a longer response time.

Another piece would be moving from average to what we call fractile response time. The new National Fire Protection Association Standards 1710 on deployment moves it from an average to fractile. They look for 90% of the time within 5 minutes of notification. That is what we call turnout time, getting our gear on and getting out the door and 4 minutes of road travel time. We are in the process of gathering that data. This is a new standard, our old software could not gather fractile response time. We had to do it in a spreadsheet and manually do it per 5,000 calls per year. The new data we only have six months worth, so we do not feel like we have a good data set to truly evaluate where that is. We realized we are pretty good in most areas of town.

The idea of taking Station 4 and moving it further out really takes away from our downtown response area, that is our biggest hazard obviously, these type of structures downtown. With respect to working with the County to try and come up with a good area that the City and the County could co-locate is very difficult. The worst thing you can have for a city fire station is to have a city station on the boundary because then you are responding to everything and you are taking away 50% of your response area to get

a good time. You want to be in a central area of that town. The County has the same problem; they would not want to be in the central area of the city because they are going to take away half their response time. Yes we are looking at different areas and land, but we are having trouble coming up with that ideal location where we do not each lose 50% of our response time. Obviously, in our business response time means everything.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald asked if there was anything else.

Mr. Colman said I have a question about Carlton Street Improvements on page 53. The explanation here states high pedestrian volumes near an elementary school with inadequate facilities. The question I have is: Are there safety concerns for the school children, is that an area where school children are being potentially affected by this?

Tom Hartman, Public Works, said the Carlton Street budget that is in there, is taken from the new roundabout at Carlton/Reservoir Street to East Market Street; so it is improving that pedestrian facility in the McDonald's and Subway corridor. Spotswood Elementary School, I think, feeds from across East Market Street, where we had our project of adding sidewalks along East Market Street and up Carlton Street into that neighborhood. This Capital Project would improve the Carlton Street sidewalks right now. Some of the sidewalks have the utility pole embedded in them and others have poles in the gutter pan. It is helping out as well with pedestrian and stormwater. That section there helps tie them to the roundabout and the improvements that we did with pedestrian facilities at the roundabout.

Mr. Colman said I guess what I am wondering is whether that is a priority 2 or if you can call it priority 1. How quickly do we want to move, in here is 2019; is that soon enough considering the schools being populated and more people walking there, is that a concern?

Mr. Hartman said looking at our current forecast and projects we think 2019 will fit in the current lineup with the other projects we have within the CIP in 2019. We are doing improvements on Reservoir Street for safe routes to schools to add some sidewalks there. We are working in the area and 2019 worked out better with the projects we have.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any more questions.

Mr. Finks said I have another question pertaining to the Chicago Avenue improvements. I see here that the Chicago Avenue Improvements with the bike lane, two lanes, turn lanes and the roundabout is a priority 2. My question is on the next page for the Mt. Clinton Pike widening, which is a priority 3, to me it seems like if the Chicago Avenue improvements are being done, it is almost immediately going to put extra pressure on Mt. Clinton Pike. The fact that one could possibly be a priority over the other – I was just wondering why one would have higher priority when they both seem to be affected.

Mr. Hartman said right now we have under development Mt. Clinton Pike to improve it from Route 42 to the Chicago Avenue intersection, at the planned roundabout. The Chicago Avenue Improvements improve from the roundabout heading south towards Waterman Drive, the part you are talking about, so that provides connectivity. The next section of Mt. Clinton Pike that you are talking about starts off at the roundabout and goes up over the hill towards the County. It is a very challenging project because of the tightness of the area with the residential homes close to the street and the grade change. I think that is the reason it got pushed to a priority 3. We want to get that connectivity from Route 42 up Mt. Clinton Pike into the roundabout and down Chicago Avenue towards Waterman Elementary School. That is to be the main priority; and then come back and look at what we can do going up the hill towards the County.

Mr. Fletcher asked Mr. Hartman were there not other issues with the right-of-way acquisition and the curb at the top of the hill.

Mr. Hartman said right, all those play into the constraint. There are rock out croppings, which are scary when you widen the road and build a facility. We want to focus and get down Chicago Avenue as well

with the roadway and pedestrian improvements. There are also stormwater improvements we can tie into that Chicago Avenue project that are needed in that area as well.

Mr. Baugh said this is one that has been discussed. It was hoped from the beginning that we sort of do this as one project; including getting up to the top of County line. The engineering challenges, the right of way, topography, all of that, when you look at the figures it costs as much to do that as it does to do the Chicago Avenue portion. I think that was a component as well as recognizing that it is a lower priority than the immediate Chicago Avenue/EMU portion.

Mr. Finnegan said I have one question I did not see it in here and I do not know if this is even the right place to ask this question, but on Reservoir Street is there any plan to put sidewalk in between Holly Court and Harrisonburg Crossing; on the east side of that road.

Mr. Hartman said I believe that is one of the Reservoir Street Projects that is in the CIP.

Mr. Finnegan said I might have missed it; okay Reservoir Street sidewalk, Harrisonburg Crossing. I saw MLK Jr. Way and I was thinking it was a different part.

Mr. Hartman said that project is another challenging project that we are working through.

Mr. Fletcher said that one has been known for a while. Ms. Dang and I worked on a grant for that a while back that was not awarded.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any more questions.

Mrs. Whitten said when we do streetscape on Court Square does the County participate in that?

Mr. Fletcher said I think the answer to that is no, but someone could correct me.

Mr. Hartman said I do not know if we have had those discussions. We were just looking at our streetscape plan that ties into the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan; I do not think we have taken that step to consider if they are going to partner in the project or not.

Mr. Fletcher said I have to correct myself, I was only thinking the outside and not the inside sidewalk on the square.

Mr. Hartman said I have not been aware of any of those discussions, if we have had those or not. We have been looking at just what the plan shows to do with the improvement of the sidewalks around court square that ties into the projects we have already done.

Mrs. Whitten said it is a good thing to explore.

Mrs. Whitten said I have a question for Parks and Recreation. I am wondering about the playground equipment and the pool resurfacing issues that we say in the CIP there are safety issues. What is our liability when we let those things go, when we say in black and white “we are concerned about this and we know it needs to be fixed.”

Mrs. Santangelo said there is always liability.

Mrs. Whitten said there is always liability, but it seems like that magnifies it.

Mrs. Santangelo said we are recognizing the fact that it does need repair, we are making efforts to make those repairs, and hopefully we get the funding to be able to do that. Specifically, what is our risk liability, I do not know if I can actually answer that because I think it will depend on a lot of different factors of what might happen or what might occur. There is always risk and it is just a matter of what risk are we willing to accept. Right now I am recommending changes and improvements to hopefully minimize the risk that is out there, other than normal use of the facility.

Mrs. Whitten said I know those facilities get used a tremendous amount.

Mrs. Santangelo said I do want to stress that our crews make the repairs that are necessary to keep the facilities as safe as possible for all users. It is just that constant continual repair of those surfaces and those amenities within our facilities, they are trying to keep on top of it as best as they can to maintain that safe level of use.

Mrs. Whitten said I appreciate that. I was just over at Westover for a public meeting. That is a wonderful facility, you guys are doing a great job.

Mr. Colman said I have a question, I guess it is on page 85, a park for downtown Harrisonburg. I know it is a priority 3. Is there no money for it in the future? That is the kind of amenity I feel like a lot of people in Harrisonburg would be very excited about. We see it here and we acknowledge that we want to have that, but there are no plans whatsoever right now to do it, or at least it seems like it is pushed out as far as it can be. Is the issue having the money for it? I just do not know what your opinion might be.

Mrs. Santangelo said from my perspective I think our priority right now should be to improve the facilities that we have and get them up to a standard level that improves the conditions and invest in what we have before we look at building new. When you are looking at building new there are additional costs that come with that; not just the building. You are looking at maintenance and equipment and all those other associated costs and it is not just funding for building the new facility, it is for that long term maintenance. Are we prepared to do that and do we have the resources to do that? That is my perspective and the recommendation that I put forth.

Mrs. Whitten said I live downtown and I look at these other projects that are not getting done and it is really hard to make a case for something brand new, it really is.

Mr. Baugh said plus there is an element with, the Plan Our Park that has always had public/ private aspect to it, which makes a potentially moving target depending on what happens. There can always be developments on the private side, and of course here we just are focusing on the public side of it. The way I read this and this is essentially assuming nothing happens from the private side. There is going to be no guarantee of anything at this point, when would the City, if the City had to do this alone, do this; it is probably an accurate reflection of where it is.

Mr. Colman said it appears to me that all the parks and amenities within the parks are heavily used. The citizens take advantage of that and thank you for keeping up with this as much as you can.

Mrs. Santangelo said I will share that with our staff because they do a wonderful job in maintaining our facilities.

Mrs. Whitten said I would extend that to all the departments in the city this is an amazing place to live.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any further questions. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to endorse the CIP with the additions that were presented tonight and to send it forward to council.

Mrs. Whitten moved to approve the CIP with the additions that were presented tonight.

Mr. Colman seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Fitzgerald asked for further discussion on the request. Hearing none, she called for a voice vote on the motion.

All voted in favor (6-0) to approve endorsing the CIP with the additions that were presented.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Banks

Alison Banks
Senior Planner