



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

Budget Work Session

1. Roll Call

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

Also Present: 3 - City Manager Eric Campbell, City Clerk Pam Ulmer and City Attorney Chris Brown

2. Regular Items

2.a. Discussion on the proposed 2020-2021 Budget

Note: Meeting was held virtually by all participants

Mayor Reed stated the Virginia State and Local Conflict of Interest Act requires that she make the following disclosure to be recorded in the city records on any matter from which she is prohibited by law from participating:

The transaction involved is agenda item 2(a), the matter involved in the granting of community contributions by City Council as part of the budget. On the Road Collaborative has applied for a community contribution from the City of Harrisonburg; her personal interest affected by this transaction is that she is an employee of On the Road Collaborative; She affirms she will not vote or participate in any manner in this matter.

During the April 14, 2020 City Council Meeting, Mayor Reed requested a date be set for a work session to discuss certain items on the budget.

Discussion and Vote on Community Contributions

Vice Mayor Romero opened the discussion of Community Contributions. Council Member Jones reviewed the spread sheet reflecting his recommended changes, which he previously sent to Council members. He stated there was no increase in the funding for Community Contributions, just readjustments. He reviewed the adjustments made.

Council Member Hirschmann stated it is very difficult, there is only so much money to be disbursed and so many people standing in line, everyone could use the money, we'd like to give them all they ask for, but we can only portion it out as best we can, it all helps. He stated he doesn't think Council could ever get to the point where we satisfy the needs of everyone, but he is happy we are able to do what we can and hopes it helps each of those organizations.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Jones, to amend the Community Contributions in the proposed FY 2020-2021 Budget. The motion carried a unanimous voice vote.

Continued conversation on proposed 2020-2021 Budget

Larry Propst, director of Finance, reviewed the report on the Heritage Oaks Golf Course reflecting three different scenarios:

1. Close the golf course 7/1/2020, reduce full and part-time staff, sell equipment and merchandise, with minimal maintenance. This would create a budgetary deficit of \$117,276.
2. Close golf course 7/1/2020, retain full and part-time employees in alternative positions, sell equipment and merchandise, with minimal maintenance. This would create a budgetary deficit of \$436,896.
3. Close golf course 7/1/2020, retain only full-time maintenance employees in alternative positions, sell equipment and merchandise and more than minimal maintenance. This would create a budgetary deficit of \$372,108.

Council Member Hirschmann asked what Mr. Propst anticipates the cost to be to maintain that area without the golf course in comparison to with the golf course. Mr. Propst stated he would need some direction from Council, as it would depend on what state they would want the golf course property to be into. Council Member Hirschmann stated he feels if the golf course is closed it takes away from a part of our population, outside of just golfers, as it is used for fund raising. He stated if nine holes were closed, which would allow plenty of room to optimize some of the thoughts that have been entertained, we would still have some income, the First Tee Program, property owners that live along the fairway would remain pleased, etc.

Mayor Reed stated she is hearing from staff that direction is needed from Council on what is wanted. She asked the Council members if they know exactly what they want to do with the golf course. Council Member Hirschmann stated the golf course should be open now, we are losing money while it is closed. Council Member Jones stated he has been wanting an outside consultant to look at this so that Council has an objective view because the conversations have been so politically divisive. He stated this would give Council information if it could be profitable, if the property could be used for affordable housing, or any other opportunities. He compared the local Country Club's budget versus the city's Golf Course budget, and noted it is clear we are taking an unnecessary loss. He stated he feels part of the property can be used for other purposes. He asked the Parks and Recreation department to reevaluate the proposed budget for the golf course and make it as lean as possible. He stated Council has mentioned how they wish they had more funds for Community Contributions, by trying to make the budget for the golf course as lean as possible, it may provide additional funding and still have the benefits of green space and possible residential space. He stated he doesn't think the support is there to cease and desist the golf course. Mayor Reed stated we have the battle of the petitions, one

for the golf course to stay open and one to close it. She stated this is how divisive this topic is. She stated this has been an ongoing topic for the past 18 years, Council needs to be able to look at it from all angles. Council Member Jones stated the amount of resources going into the golf course it is not equitable. Council Member Hirschmann stated he doesn't agree with the figures provided by Council Member Jones. He stated the petitions floating around are not even, the pro petition is much larger now. He stated he feels a special meeting just for discussion and presentations from Parks and Recreation, open to the public, would be good. He stated there are a lot of areas in the city that are available to the public that aren't being used. He stated the possible solution he mentioned earlier didn't get much response from Council but may be the best way to go. Council Member Baugh stated he has no objections on obtaining a study, in fact, it is probably what should be done to proceed any further with decisions. He stated the challenge is to figure out how it fits in with Council's priorities, but a study of this is long overdue. He stated he feels there is a glossing over of just how much the actual expense out there is the personnel costs, at least half of the people requesting it be shut down want to keep the personnel on city staff. He stated there is a lot that can be done with the golf course but having a professional study it would provide Council with more accurate information they can use. Mayor Reed asked the city manager to speak a bit about the retention of the golf course city employees. Mr. Campbell stated the bulk of the costs are the personnel costs. He stated if the goal is to save a significant amount of money then it would be the elimination of the personnel costs. He stated we are in a unique economy and economic situation right now with city employees over all, so he can't give a definite answer about any type of retention because he may be faced with the decision retaining public safety employees over golf employees.

Council Member Jones stated he would like to see what Parks and Recreation can do reduce the proposed budget for the golf course.

Council Member Hirschmann stated the city is not making money on any of the Parks and Recreation facilities, these facilities cater to everyone in the city in some way or another. Maybe we should look at all the facilities and how much it costs to maintain these for any segment of the population and is it worth it.

Vice Mayor Romero stated this is a significant situation that has been in the minds of people in the city for many years, if was a simple as closing it or keeping it open, we could have come up with the decision. He stated he agrees with the study because for him to make a decision that he would be comfortable living with he wants to make sure he is well informed. He stated we should be able to look at all the ideas out there, there needs to be a solution that Council believes will meet the needs of the community. Council Member Hirschmann stated golf professionals should be involved in the study. Council Member Baugh stated he feels there will be every opportunity to point out to the consultant exactly what we want them to look at.

Council agreed on directing staff to find and present options of individuals or companies that can provide a thorough study of the golf course to remain open or closed and be utilized for multi-uses.

Mr. Campbell stated he has heard the request from Council to secure a consultant to do a study and bring back recommendations on Heritage Oaks Golf Course. He stated he needs a bit more clarity as to the expectations of the Parks and Recreation staff, as they provided a presentation two and a half months ago to Council outlining action steps moving forward on how they were going to try to implement some new ideas and open up Heritage Oaks to more users, so he needs further direction as to what Parks and Recreation staff is expected to bring back.

Mayor Reed stated the presentation was more of ideas and events that the Parks and Recreation were going to implement. She stated what is now being requested is a revision to the budget for the golf course reflection additional cuts. Council Member Jones stated it could reflect increasing fees or shifting around staff, and he feels the golf course is operating too fat and we should be able to operate the facility a lot leaner. Mr. Campbell stated if we are going to engage a consultant, they would have the expertise to review all those things, but it won't be done prior to budget approval, and asked if Council is requesting a separate budget amendment be done. Further discussion took place regarding the request to staff and it was clarified that Council requested a report reflecting the budget for the golf course reduced to bare minimal operations while keeping open and present at the May 12, 2020 meeting. He stated the Parks and Recreation staff can prepare the report.

Council Member Jones stated he discussed with the Economic Development department in regard to the needs for the SWaM (Small Women-owned and Minority-owned Business), and maybe by cutting the budget for the golf course there will be extra funds to help that group.

Mayor Reed read the following disclosure:

Pursuant to Sections 2.2-3112(B)(1) and 2.2-3115(H) of the Conflict of Interest Act of Virginia, I am declaring for the minutes of this meeting that as a result of my employment with the On the Road Collaborative, which has a contract with the Harrisonburg City Public Schools, I have a personal interest in the transaction of the City's budget as a member of a business, profession, occupation, or group of three or more person the members of which are affected by the transaction. I further affirm that I am able to participate in this Council's consideration of the City's budget fairly, objectively, and in the public interest.

Vice Mayor Romero incorporated by reference his disclosure from the last budget session on May 5, 2020.

Vice Mayor Romero asked for clarification on the budget for the jail, what is the purpose of the increase. Mr. Campbell stated the increase is operational for inmate

services for medical, amaintenance position, and the city's share as part owners of the Middle River Regional Jail (MRRJ). Mr. Propst stated the city's allocation is increasing because of the number of inmates from the city. He stated some of that had to do with the HVAC project at the local jail, where inmates had to be moved to MRRJ. He stated MRRJ also proposed to hire four nurses, one transport office, one maintenance staff, and increased costs in healthcare, food, etc. He stated none of the increase has anything to do with the expansion.

Vice Mayor Romero stated the City Council budget reflected an increase of \$16,000, and stated he would be in favor of reducing it by not going to conferences as much, etc. Mayor Reed stated the conferences are what makes us stronger as Council Members, the opportunities to go out and learn more from other localities, it is a professional development piece that she feels is needed. Council Member Jones agreed with the Mayor, these conferences are not only educational but help see other localities and benefit from their progress. Council Member Baugh stated the points made are well taken, but it might be revisited when doing budget amendments anyways. Council Member Hirschmann stated training and travel should be removed now and revisited next year.

Council Member Jones asked if staff had an opportunity to look at the CDBG funding and can some of the additional funding be used for affordable housing. Mr. Campbell stated that presentation will be on the May 12, 2020 City Council meeting agenda, and as mentioned at the last work session \$314,000 was targeted for the small business grant loan program, and it will be up to Council if they want to amend the CDBG overall program. Mr. Ande Banks, deputy city manager, stated everything will be presented at the next Council meeting. Mr. Campbell stated the CDBG Covid funding cannot be used for affordable housing.

3. Adjournment

At 6:31 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR