



# City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

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Tuesday, April 27, 2021

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### 1. Roll Call

Note: All Council Members were present via virtual Go-To Meeting.

**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:** 3 - City Manager Eric Campbell, City Attorney Chris Brown and Deputy City Clerk Ande Banks.

### 2. Invocation

Council Member Hirschmann offered the invocation.

### 3. Pledge of Allegiance

### 4. Special Recognition

#### 4.a. Proclamation recognizing May 2 - May 8, 2021 as the 52nd Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week.

Mayor Reed presented the proclamation recognizing May 2 - May 8, 2021 as the 52nd Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week. Council Member Dent commended Pam Ulmer for her service. Mayor Reed recognized the good work of Pam and her recent Clerk of the Year award.

#### 4.b. Proclamation Recognizing the Purcell Park Bioreactor Project as a 2021 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award Gold Medal Winner

Mayor Reed presented the proclamation recognizing the Purcell Park Bioreactor Project as a 2021 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award Gold Medal Winner.

Wes Runion, environmental specialist with the department of Public Works, thanked City Council for the recognition and department director Tom Hartman for his support, and stated they are hoping to do future projects like these. Eric Campbell, city manager, recognized the department of Public Works for this outstanding honor and its recognition last year by the Alliance for Innovation for the Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program. He stated our department received the gold medal and a NASA project received a silver medal.

**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, that this be adopted. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

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

**No:** 0

**5.a.** Minutes from the April 13, 2021 City Council Meeting

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda.

**5.b.** Consider a request from Margaret Sheridan to rezone a parcel addressed as 518 East Market Street

The rezoning was approved on second reading.

**5.c.** Consider a request from Bridgewater College Properties, LLC to rezone a parcel addressed as 486 West Market Street

The rezoning was approved on second reading.

**5.d.** Consider amendments to the Zoning Ordinance by modifying or removing regulations contained in Section 10-3-55.6 (e) within the R-5 district

The ordinance was approved on second reading.

**6. Public Hearings**

**6.a.** Public hearing regarding the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget

At 7:11 Mayor Reed closed the regular session and called the public hearing to order. A notice appeared in the Daily News-Record on Saturday, April 17, 2021.

James "Bucky" Berry stated the liaison committee met and Council Member Jones and Mayor Reed committed to restart the second high school project four months from now. He stated it is misleading to the taxpayers, had been told no tax increase, should wait until April to restart it, should not use the federal relief money to pay for it, and the school should wait a little longer. He stated there would be a fourteen cent tax increase when the pandemic isn't over, and he doesn't agree with Mayor Reed and Council Member Jones making the commitment to Dr. Richards.

Council Member Jones stated none of what the caller said was true.

Michael stated he is calling to urge the city to take long overdue action prioritizing the needs of our houseless neighbors. He stated the failure to provide a permanent, dignified, low barrier shelter even after more than a year of a global pandemic is a moral failure for the so-called friendly city. He stated among other wasteful expenditures, public money continues to be funneled to policing and prisons, institutions whose own data show clear racist bias and which perpetuate harm rather than strengthening our community as we face historic challenges together. He stated councilors, as our political representatives, have an opportunity now to leave a legacy of compassion and community care or one of continued repression and punitive justice, which is no justice at all. He stated a better world is possible, build a low barrier shelter.

Mayor Reed closed the public hearing at 7:16 p.m., and the regular session reconvened.

## 7. Regular Items

- 7.a. Consider adopting a resolution authorizing the closing of a portion of Heatwole Road to vehicle traffic

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, presented a resolution to close a portion of Heatwole Rd to vehicle traffic. He reviewed the location of the road, the origin of the closure request, the characteristics of the road, the data collected and staff analysis, the recommendation to close a portion of the roadway between Sharon St and Perry St to vehicles with collapsible bollards, and the public outreach.

He stated staff and the Transportation Safety Advisory Commission (TSAC) support the resolution.

Council Member Dent asked about the function of the collapsible bollards. Mr. Hartman stated this is standard equipment used on multi-use trails in the city that can be unlocked with a universal key by first responders.

Vice-Mayor Romero asked what the safety concerns were and why there was not more public comment. Mr. Hartman stated the concerns were raised by residents who were walking and observed excess speed and traffic volume on the narrow roadway and that he is unsure why there was not more public comment after the mailer and two publicly broadcasted TSAC meetings. Vice-Mayor Romero stated he is concerned that there were not more comments received and if that means the safety concerns are not shared by a number of the residents in the neighborhood. Vice-Mayor Romero asked if there were alternatives explored other than closure. Mr. Hartman stated there are speed bumps.

There was further discussion by City Council about resident engagement, why residents do not participate or respond, and surprise that more residents do not participate.

**A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to adopt the resolution as presented. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:**

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

**No:** 0

**7.b.** Presentation on Time Changes for City Owned Downtown Parking Lots

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, provided a presentation on proposed parking changes in city-owned parking lots in Downtown Harrisonburg. He reviewed the downtown parking study recommendations, the public engagement in plan development and recommendation feedback, information on each lot and the proposed changes to parking, the implementation schedule.

Council Member Jones stated for the N. Liberty St parking lot a large sign should have language added to state parking restrictions are between 7am-7pm Mon-Sat. Mr. Hartman stated he will look into it. Vice-Mayor Romero asked who typically parks at the N. Liberty St lot. Mr. Hartman stated he cannot answer that question.

Mayor Reed stated she thought the changes at the Liberty Park lot were good and is better for customers.

Council Member Hirschmann asked how much parking permits cost. Mr. Hartman stated the current cost is \$40 per month, and now we are going to allow monthly, quarterly or annual payments in response to feedback from customers about wanting an alternative to the annual payment.

Council Member Jones asked where employees will park. He stated he agrees with parking being more geared toward shoppers and diners, because he knows this is a reason people sometimes shop at big box rather than local, but he knows the people who work there need a place to park. Mr. Hartman stated employees at later evening businesses could park in a 4hour spot if shift begins at 4pm, other lots are adding permit spaces, and still have 10-hour parking spots but in other areas. Council Member Jones stated he understood other areas of downtown may have more parking for employees but was concerned about this side.

There was conversation about the 10-minute quick pick-up spaces and use for both pick-up and delivery. Council Member Jones stated there is an area of the WHSV parking lot where people often illegally park and he requested that the area be painted to show it is not a legal parking space. Mr. Hartman stated staff will look into

it.

Vice-Mayor Romero stated he rarely sees the Elizabeth St parking deck utilized to capacity, why would we make so much of it permit parking. Mr. Hartman stated it is to offset the loss of 10-hour parking spaces on the Liberty street lots and elsewhere, and that it is not that far of a walk to the core of downtown and with federal street improvements the walkability should improve to downtown businesses.

Mayor Reed asked if the Clark and Bradshaw lot is the same as Capital Ale House. Mr. Hartman stated no, the Capital Ale House lot is privately maintained.

Mayor Reed asked where employees will park when 10-hour parking spaces are removed in Water St lot. Mr. Hartman stated there is additional permit parking being added to other lots.

Council Member Jones stated he thinks the number of 10-minute quick pick-up spaces in the S. Main Street lot near Jimmy Madison's was too many, as this is a valuable location. Mr. Hartman stated that the department of Economic Development and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance liked 4 quick pick-up spaces in this lot due to the restaurants and the bike shop, and people tend to block the aisle in this lot while loading/unloading.

Council Member Jones stated he thinks the tourism vehicle should be parked somewhere else other than behind the Hardesty Higgins House lot because it is a prime lot. Mr. Hartman stated the department of Economic Development recommended one space be left for the Tourism division. Council Member Jones stated it should be parked in the municipal lot with other city reserved spots.

Council Member Hirschmann stated he is concerned about businesses trying to recover and people trying to retain jobs, times are tight, 10-hour parking too far away, needs to be leniency for business owners and workers, this plan needs more room for people who work in downtown regularly for more than 4 hours.

Council Member Jones stated we have received lots of feedback, certain the City Manager did his due diligence to make sure staff reached out to get input. He asked if restaurant owners, retail owners and landlords had any input. Mr. Hartman stated yes, during plan development there was a lot of communications with entities downtown including business owners, property owners, residents, and employees. He stated there was very good attendance at public meetings, and additionally had invitation only stakeholder meetings. He stated the survey had over 1,100 responses. Mr. Hartman stated input was incorporated into the plan and concerns were heard by the consultants when developing the strategies. Council Member Jones stated he thinks the people they are hearing from have sticker shock and the difficulty of the pandemic may be making this change hard to digest for some people. Council Member Jones stated he thinks staff should reach out to business owners, landlords,

and employees, remind them of the study, the survey comments, the stakeholder input, how this will be beneficial, the availability of permits, due diligence was done but people may need a reminder and more conversation.

Council Member Jones stated conversation will help people understand why we are moving to the new model, that people will walk when out of town or at a big box store. Mayor Reed stated when we go to other places we walk, and the city staff is open to more conversation, but we are growing with a vibrant downtown and we need to get more people shopping and dining, more customers means having the economy and revenue we want downtown. Mayor Reed stated we know it is an adjustment and people's input needs to be heard, but we are not a sleepy town anymore and are growing, and some changes are going to need to be made. Council Member Dent stated the increase in permit parking is another indication that we are becoming a city when parking all day isn't free anymore, and this is sticker shock for the residents and employees when you are used to free parking whenever you want but this takes up parking for customers needed for a vibrant downtown.

Council Member Dent asked about the use of the revenue from the parking permits. Mr. Hartman stated it goes into the general fund.

Vice-Mayor Romero stated this caught people by surprise because people thought the final list of recommendation would be shared, thinks we need to engage more, felt part of brainstorming but didn't feel like the follow-up on the recommendations. Mayor Reed stated she worked retail for 20 years and was told to give the customers the closest spot, she knows the city manager is open to additional engagement, these changes are what we need to get more people visiting and shopping in our downtown. Council Member Jones stated we have gotten to a place where parking is a hot commodity, we are hurting restaurants and shops when they are hard to get to, the money that can be made from the customers having better access may offset the cost of the permit parking for some businesses, it is a different picture for landlords and some shops. Council Member Jones provided some examples of how this may benefit specific downtown businesses and stated city staff can help businesses see how this is a win. Council Member Jones stated he was at an event where we were ridiculed for the amount of asphalt and unused parking lots, businesses with parking lots bigger than the building, maybe find a way to work with those private parking lots, need to switch things up but be delicate. Mayor Reed stated we want our downtown to be vibrant. City manager Eric Campbell stated staff is open to reengaging conversations with a communications plan, Desman is a top consultant nationally on parking, these recommendations help position our downtown after the pandemic, in the long run positive for the community.

- 7.c.** Consider amending and reenacting Title 13 Motor Vehicles and Traffic, Chapter 1 Traffic and Parking Regulations, Division 2 Downtown Parking, Section 82 Time Limits for parking on city streets, lots, and parking facilities

Tom reviewed the ordinance changes. He stated the ordinance was very specific and makes it more broad to give public works the flexibility to make changes to parking.  
No questions

**A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero, to adopt the ordinance as presented. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:**

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

**No:** 0

**7.d.** Consider nominations for the 2021 VML Policy Committees

Eric Campbell, city manager, stated this is a process through the Virginia Municipal League to nominate individuals to the policy committees, reviewed the appointments in 2020, and that VML makes the final decision on who will be on the committees.

The City Council unanimously approved the following nominations, each voted on individually by voice vote:

Community and Economic Development- Council Member Jones  
Environmental Quality- Council Member Dent, Council Member Hirschmann  
Finance- Vice-Mayor Romero  
General Laws- City Attorney Chris Brown  
Human Development and Education- Mayor Reed  
Transportation- Council Member Hirschmann  
Legislative- Mayor Reed

The City Council unanimously approved the nominations, each voted on individually by voice vote

**8. Special Event Application Requests**

**8.a.** Consider the special event application request for the EMU Spring Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 1, 2021

Matt Little, recreation and special events manager, presented the special event application for Eastern Mennonite University's commencement ceremony. He reviewed the application, the impacted roads, and the city resources needed to support to the event.

**A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the special event application. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

**9. Other Matters**

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

Panayotis "Poti" Giannakouros, stated he hopes people are celebrating no mow May. He encouraged people to sign the petition to urge Mark Warner to support (unintelligible). He stated he spoke with a resident about their yard and the alley of their former home and the tall grass and weeds ordinance and enforcement. He talked about public comment participation and the percentage of people in the city who agree with him about tall grass and weeds enforcement. He stated his garbage was not picked up after he called and complained about the new toters.

Carrie Knight, Hope Street, called in regarding the construction of HHS2. She reminded City Council of their commitment to construction, COVID-19 prevented a 2022 opening but should not stop construction, and stated the ability to attract and retain teachers is strained by the overcrowding. She stated space issues at HHS places unrealistic expectations and stress on teachers and education will be more equitable if there were no space issues and a state of the art STEM academy. She stated the city needs to commit now, this is urgent and cannot be put off for four months without a plan. She stated a tax increase may be burdensome on some members of the community but some households can afford it, and creative solutions can be found in a progressive tax rate or the American Rescue Plan Act. She stated the bond rates and construction costs will increase, and City Council was elected on support of HHS2 and needs to commit to construction, the funds, and the bond.

Public comment received electronically

**9.b. City Council and Staff**

Council Member Jones stated rent control and progressive tax are not allowed by Virginia law and is not something the city can do. He stated when we increase taxes it is not only to build the second high school, but also a new public works building since the current one is in a flood plain, and the public works employees need to be protected in addition to the students. Council Member Jones stated everyone will feel that tax burden and when rent goes up there is no way to mitigate that and when taxes go up some people's rent will go up and it is tough to get creative. He stated we made a motion for a school and we need to build a school as soon as possible, but no one predicted we would be in the position we are in and we need to be delicate walking out of it. He stated we have some individuals who are financially secure, not all people and businesses are in as secure of a place, and our revenues are not stable. He stated money being cheap doesn't make it affordable to pay it back, it is only affordable if we can pay it back. He stated he is for the school but the city is recovering. He stated he is in favor of looking for solutions and creativity. He stated he has heard the school is being built for black and brown people and the ALICE population, and we are having conversations about opposing jail expansion, hopes



the same people who are using their energy to support HHS2 are also supporting other related issues that involve black and brown people and low-income white people, be consistent in your argument, and do not talk about groups to move it as an agenda item, these are real people. He stated he has noticed that there are segments of our population who are not engaged in this issue and when he talks with them they are talking about food, shelter, health, and vaccination, and the idea of raising taxes is not even on their radar. He stated he hopes we are talking to our neighbors and that as we are pushing for issues we are talking to other people, we all have to live here, we can't move the needle one way for one group and not think it impacts other groups, and shouldn't use the hardships or historical detriments of some to promote your idea as a way out for them.

Council Member Dent commended the superintendent Michael Richards for coming up with a creative solution to restart the project. She stated the city also needs to step up as well and not leave it just to the school. She stated she feels the struggle to figure out what to do, the financial pressure, and how to delay the burden. She stated she wants to learn more about bonds, timing, and the foreseeable impacts. She thanked Mayor Reed for putting her in touch with Dr. Hicks Harper about the Hip Hop to Prevent Drug Abuse, the upcoming conference, and the program for evidence-based interventions to use hip hop to learn positive habits and living skills.

Vice-Mayor Romero stated he has received complaints about having to wear a mask during sporting events in city facilities and teams, and he has a hard time understanding why people are able to play without a mask outside of the city and masks are required in the city. He stated masks make it very difficult to play. He stated he understands city staff's recommendations but doesn't understand why it is different in the county. He stated he would like for the city manager and staff to see if universal wifi and the infrastructure is an eligible project for American Rescue Plan Act.

Mayor Reed stated she hopes everyone knows this Council agreed and supported and voted on the second high school, broke ground on the second high school, had no idea that there would be a pandemic. She stated we are trying to figure out the best way to pursue HHS2, will do what we need to do to get the high school built, and are trying to strategically figure out the best way to handle the pandemic and the capital projects to which we are committed. She stated how we get there is up to City Council. She thanked Council Member Dent for bringing up Dr. Hicks and her initiative.

Mayor Reed announced the budget work session on May 6th.

Mr. Campbell stated that Brian Shull sent City Council an email about engagement with the downtown master plan consultants and scheduling interviews.

Chris Brown, city attorney, stated staff would like to get a future item on the agenda

regarding the resolution on transitioning to renewable energy. He stated EPSAC created the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) and city staff is implementing the EAP, and staff feels there is tension between the resolution and the EAP, staff wants to carry out the direction of City Council, and is seeking direction from City Council on how to move forward.

## 10. Boards and Commissions

### 10.a. Community Policy and Management Team

**A motion was made by Vice Mayor Romero, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to reappoint Kira Newman and appoint Jessica Conway to the Community Policy and Management Team. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

### 10.b. Stormwater Advisory Committee

Chris Brown, city attorney, stated the appointment of Dale Chestnut was voted on at the April 13, 2021 City Council meeting.

**No action was taken on the item.**

### 10.c. Building Code Board of Appeals

**A motion was made by Council Member Hirschmann, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero, to appoint Robert Graves to the Building Code Board of Appeals. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

**No: 0**

## 11. Adjournment

At 9:20 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

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DEPUTY CITY CLERK

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MAYOR