



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, December 27, 2022

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Roll Call

Present: 4 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice Mayor Sal Romero, Council Member Christopher B. Jones and Council Member Laura Dent

Also Present: 5 - City Attorney Chris Brown, City Clerk Pam Ulmer, Police Chief Kelley Warner, Chief Matthew Tobia and Acting Deputy City Manager Amy Snider

2. Invocation

Council Member Jones offered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance

4. Special Recognition

4.a. Resolution

Mayor Reed presented Vice Mayor Romero with a resolution honoring him for his service with Harrisonburg City Council. She invited his family to join him during the reading of the resolution.

Vice Mayor Romero thanked his family for their support, thanked his campaign team for all the hours to make it happen, he thanked all those that voted and believed he could make a difference for the city, he thanked city staff as they made his work a lot easier, and thanked his fellow Council members for challenging him to be better. He stated anyone that serves as City Council can say it is the honor of their life, he stated they really mean it, it has been an honor for him. He stated he came into this county undocumented, not knowing if he would have a pathway to serving this nation and when, in 2004, he became a citizen of the United States he committed himself and promised he would serve in any way possible. He stated he served within the Board of Education, to boards and commissions in the city and then City Council, he is finding ways to give back and will continue to find ways to give back to this great community that has given him everything he has. He stated it is his hope the people were able to see that he served the city with the upmost responsibility, with integrity, with passion, with dedication, and with an open mind and heart. He shared a story of him visiting with a resident that was very upset with the operations of the city and with a different political alignment than himself and in the end, she thanked him. He

stated he served everyone and although there could have been so many more things accomplished if it weren't for the pandemic, this Council made significant changes and it was done as a Council as a whole and he was happy to be a part of it. He wished the next Council members the best of luck and will be available to help out in any way possible.

Mayor Reed thanked Vice Mayor Romero, and stated they were friends before he came on Council. She stated the way that he served was with honesty and integrity which made so many people feel comfortable even if there was a disagreement. She stated it has been great working with him and he will be missed. She thanked his family for sharing him with the city.

Council Member Dent stated the story he shared reminded her of a time early on when he was first running, she discovered an issue that they were never going to agree on, but she recognized that if we are a truly diverse community, we aren't going to agree on everything. She stated she appreciated his thoroughness, conscientiousness and integrity.

Council Member Jones stated he hopes that a city in Virginia, if not Harrisonburg, is blessed to have Vice Mayor Romero as a superintendent of schools, it is a calling for him. He stated he hopes his real estate career grows and flourishes as well as any other business career he pursues. He stated he hopes and prays his children continue to do well; he hopes our community continues to give to Vice Mayor Romero for all he has sacrificed for the city. He stated it has been great becoming friends with him and he appreciates all he has done. Vice Mayor Romero stated when he first started on Council the relationship he and Council Member Jones had was not like it is now, over the years he has learned from Council Member Jones and the rest of Council, he appreciates his view on the business perspective and the friendship will continue. He stated he hopes the community is able to see the commitment and the work and hopefully he has opened the door for anyone out there that doesn't think they can be an elected official, it is life changing.

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)

Council Member Dent asked that item 5d be removed and voted on as a separate matter.

A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Council Member Jones, to approve the consent agenda removing item 5d. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice Mayor Romero, Council Member Jones and Council Member Dent

No: 0

- 5.a.** Consider a request from Martha Ann Miller to rezone 1051, 1067, 1069 Smith Avenue

The rezoning request was approved on second reading

- 5.b.** Consider a request from Northside LLC and Joseph H. and Linda H. Moore to rezone 36, 40, 44, 75, 81 Wilson Avenue, 25, 35, 45, and 55 Mount Clinton Pike, and portions of 1411, 1421, 1431, and 1441 North Main Street

The rezoning request was approved on second reading

- 5.c.** Consider a request from Greendale Road LLC to rezone six parcels addressed as 2744, 2752, 2758, 2762, 2766, and 2770 Dorval Road

The rezoning request was approved on second reading

- 5.e.** Consider approving an amended and restated ordinance for the Joint Exercise of Powers for the operation of an Emergency Communication Center

The ordinance amendments were approved on second reading

- 5.d.** Consider a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$22.9 million

Voted on as separate matter

Council member Dent stated she cannot in good conscience support the spending of ARPA funding that puts more in recreation than in housing, childcare, and mental health combined.

Council Member Jones stated he is most appreciative to our Parks and Recreation staff, the services that have done have been outstanding, and Parks and Recreation helped build the fabric of our economic development backbone in addition to one of the deliverables that folks look for when we provide services. He stated our goal is to ultimately provide services. He stated the ARPA funding was to be used for revenues lost during the pandemic, it is dollars that need to go back into the coffers and back into service delivery. He reviewed some of the projects funded by ARPA funds and stated this is one of the greatest decisions Council could ever do and one of the most diverse, equitable, and inclusive decisions ever made.

Vice Mayor Romero stated he wholeheartedly agrees with Council Member Jones, and this Council endured the pandemic, we saw firsthand of the needs, we committed ourselves to go through the process and finalize it to the best of our ability and knowledge based on the process that we instituted. He stated delaying this would not benefit anyone, and all decisions have been based on the pulse of the community

Mayor Reed stated that it frustrates her when she hears that Council is not doing certain things for certain organizations or groups. She stated Council has

approved so many housing projects, so much consideration has been given to the non-profits all throughout the year, she wanted to use the ARPA funds to reach as many projects as possible, and she feels as if that was done. She stated so many other localities didn't do the process Harrisonburg did, they did a few big projects, didn't talk the community etc.

Vice Mayor Romero agreed with Mayor Reed, at the last meeting another housing development was approved, we know there is a housing crisis, but Council is working on it as much as possible. He stated perhaps something needs to change to help speed up development processes.

Council Member Jones stated we did fund a \$2M Housing Trust Fund and a homeless shelter with ARPA funding, if that doesn't cover housing issues than he is not sure what else could.

Council Member Dent stated we did cover the low end with the shelter and the mid to upper end with the developments already approved she was advocating for the permanent supportive housing that is the step up and out of homelessness and that is what we are losing with this funding plan.

Council Member Jones stated there are other resources with local organizations that is their job.

Council Member Dent stated that Senator Warner and Senator Cain both received approval for \$500,000 in the Omnibus House Emergency Bill that kept the government from shutting down, so that was a major vote of confidence for us, and the Commerce Village Annex could only go forward if we allocated ARPA funding specifically to that project or it may be delayed a year or more or not get the funding at all.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero, to approve the supplemental appropriation on second reading as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows

6. Public Hearings

7. Regular Items

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)

Panayotis "Poti" Giannakouros, congratulated Vice Mayor Romero and Council in contributing to long lasting, structural change in the city. He stated he was saddened to see one of the Council Members resist the structural change that will put people in our community in a better position to do for oneself and create a more resilient community. He spoke on difficulties with the Department of Community Development as mentioned by members of the business community

and the need to realign that department. He congratulated Vice Mayor Romero.

8.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Jones and Council Member Dent thanked Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Romero thanked Chief Tobia and the Harrisonburg Fire Department staff for coming to his house to inspect and install fire alarms. He stated he know this is done for anyone in the city and he has participated in the Free Pizza Night with HFD which is a wonderful service. He thanked everyone for helping him become a better Council Member and supporting him.

9. Adjournment

At 7:48 p.m. there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR