



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Roll Call

Present: 5 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Dany Fleming, Council Member Laura Dent, Council Member Nasser Alsaadun and Council Member Monica Robinson

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

2. Invocation

Mayor Reed offered a moment of silence

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance

4. Special Recognition

4.a. Presentation of Walt Disney's High School Musical

Bethany Houff, Music Director Harrisonburg High School, stated the musical this year is Disney's High School Musical, and will be held from February 12, 2025, to February 16, 2025, and the cast is made up of students from both Harrisonburg High School and Rocktown High School. Abby Gibson and Theo Thompson, performed a small portion of the musical.

4.b. Proclamation Celebrating Anniversary

This item was postponed to the next Council meeting

4.c. Presentation of Master Deputy Certificate to Joseph Yutzy

Karen Rose, Commissioner of Revenue, presented Joseph "Jay" Yutzy with his Master Deputy Commissioner of the Revenue Certificate. She reviewed what is required in order to achieve the certificate and Mr. Yutzy's duties within the department.

Mr. Yutzy stated Ms. Rose has been so supportive of continuing education of staff; he is proud to be a part of the department.

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 Fleming, seconded by Council Member Robinson to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Vice-Mayor Fleming, Council Member Dent, Council Member Alsaadun, Council Member Robinson and Reed

No: 0

5.a. Minutes from the January 14, 2025 City Council Meeting

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda

5.b. Consider a request from the City of Harrisonburg to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow the acceptance of cash proffers

This ordinance amendment was approved on second reading.

5.c. Consider a request from Florence LLC to rezone 160 Carpenter Lane

This rezoning request was approved on second reading.

5.d. Consider a request from the City of Harrisonburg to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow data centers as a use permitted by special use permit in M-1

This ordinance amendment was approved on second reading.

6. Public Hearings

6.a. Consider amending and re-enacting Section 4-2-124, Section 4-2-23 and Section 4-2-25 of the City Code of Harrisonburg, in regard to personal property and real estate tax relief

Karen Rose, Commissioner of the Revenue, presented an ordinance amendment request related to tax exemption for residents over 65 or older or permanently and totally disabled. She reviewed the applicants and total tax relief from 2020 to present for both real estate and personal property taxes. She reviewed the considerations that went into the request to increase the exemptions, the proposed amendments, the anticipated financial impacts from the increase, and how these amendments will be advertised.

Mayor Reed asked if there was any thought about other avenues of advertising. Ideas were shared.

Council Member Alsaadun asked for clarification of the adjustment to income. Ms. Rose clarified the process of determination of eligibility.

Vice Mayor Fleming asked about translation of the notices. Ms. Rose stated it currently is only translated in Spanish but they are able to get the information out in other languages through family members of those possibly eligible and the in-person translation services

Further discussion took place about the exemption calculations and possibly reaching more residents that may benefit from this.

At 7:31 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the regular session and called the first public hearing to order. A notice appeared in the Daily News-Record on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, and Monday, January 27, 2025

Jay Yutzy stated this is a way to give relief to those in need.

At 7:32 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the public hearing, and the regular session reconvened.

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

Yes: 5 - Vice-Mayor Fleming, Council Member Dent, Council Member Alsaadun, Council Member Robinson and Reed

No: 0

7. Regular Items

7.a. Presentation on the Community Connectors Program

Amy Snider, deputy city manager, presented information on behalf of the Community Connectors Program team. She reviewed the inception of the Community Connectors Program via a grant program, the purpose and focus of the program, the components of the program, Urban Renewal impacts, outreach events, community feedback received, involvement opportunities other project elements including reconfiguring Mason Street. She stated a historical research team is in place, made up of a group of academics based in New York state and have already done similar research throughout New York.

Council Member Robinson stated the research team has done great work at some of their previous research projects and she is excited to see what they can find out here.

Vice Mayor Fleming stated he appreciates the attention to detail and depth that is being pursued on this project.

Council Member Robinson stated there has been interest for a long time in telling the

Urban Renewal story and will provide a way to educate people on the depth and the harm associated with Urban Renewal not just locally but nationally.

Council Member Alsaadun asked if the Simms Center is considered to be a tourist attraction with the history. Council Member Robinson stated yes, it is and there are exhibits of the Simms history located there. Council Member Alsaadun stated the consideration of Mason Street reconfiguration, related to the intersections, would help with the safety issues there as well. Council Member Robinson stated they will try to make it more bike, pedestrian, and public transit friendly as well.

Mayor Reed asked if this program would include making Old Mason Street a Historic District. Council Member Robinson stated it probably will be discussed but not guaranteed it will be done with the grant funding for the Community Connectors Program. Council Member Fleming stated Virginia Housing offers planning grants that might provide an opportunity to be additional resources for the program.

This Presentation was received and filed.

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 Poti, secretary of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition, spoke on the success of People's Day.

8.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Alsaadun, stated he met with the executive director of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance and is looking to support her as much as possible.

Council Member Dent spoke on the recent MPO meeting; her attendance at the upcoming Virginia Municipal League Government Day; and the upcoming EPSAC meeting;

Council Member Robinson spoke on the recent Community Criminal Justice Board meeting; local events she attended; her recent appointments to National League of Cities (NLC) Community and Economic Development Federal Advocacy Committee and Race, Equity and Leadership Committee; the upcoming International Women's Day March and Gala; and the upcoming Black History of the Arts program at Lucy Simms Center.

Vice Mayor Fleming spoke on his recent appointment to National League of Cities

(NLC) Race, Equity and Leadership Committee; the recent NLC's University Community Council meeting; the recent NLC's Finance Administration Intergovernmental Relations Committee meeting; the recent Virginia Transit Association Advocacy Day; his attendance at the upcoming Virginia Municipal League Government Day; and SmartScale grants;

Mayor Reed spoke on recent local events; the recent Virginia Transit Association Advocacy Day; upcoming speaking events; her recent appointment to NLC's University Community Council; and upcoming On The Road Collaborative 10 year Gala;

Amy Snider, deputy city manager, spoke on President Trump's freeze of federal grants and noted city staff is reviewing what ramifications that may cause to the city.

9. Boards and Commissions

9.a. Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC)

A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Vice Mayor Fleming, to reappoint David Powell and appoint James Hensley to terms to expire January 12, 2028, to the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee. The vote carried with a unanimous voice vote.

10. Closed Session

10.a. Closed Session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A), under:

Subsection 3 for the discussion of the disposition of publicly held real property and;

Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel on specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

At 8:15 p.m., a motion was made by Council Member Dent, to enter into closed session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A), under: Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel on specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Subsection 3 will not be discussed during this closed session. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 5 - Reed, Vice-Mayor Fleming, Council Member Dent, Council Member Alsaadun and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

11. Adjournment

At 8:59 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 8:59 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR