



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

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. Invocation

Council Member Jones offered the invocation

3. Special Recognition

3.a. Proclamation recognizing June 2020 as Men's Health Month

Mayor Reed read a proclamation recognizing June 2020 as Men's Health Month.

4. 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 Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the consent Agenda as presented.

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

No: 0

4.a. Minutes from the June 9, 2020 City Council meeting

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda

4.b. Consider a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$2.3 million for the General Capital Projects Fund

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

4.c. Consider amendments to the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget

The amendment to the FY 20/21 budget was approved on second reading.

5. Public Hearings

6. Regular Items

6.a. Report from the Harrisonburg Chief of Police

Eric English, chief of police, Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD), stated upon arriving in the city he wanted to model the police department after 21st century policing, which include six pillars of policing: Build Trust and Legitimacy; Policy and Oversight; Technology and Social Media; Community Policing and Crime Reduction; Training and Education; and Officer Wellness and Safety. He stated Community Policing had already been taking place such as Coffee with a Cop, Shop with a Cop, Secret Santa, etc., and he wanted to improve upon that. He stated they started doing community walks and merchant checkbooks to get to know the people in the neighborhoods and the business owners on a more personal level, and the Back-Pack Giveaway. He stated they are always looking for ways to engage with both adults and youths. He stated a race was held last year, but it was more than just a race, it was a way to show what the different police units do and what the Police Department was all about.

He stated in order to work on Trust and Legitimacy we had to be transparent. He stated technology has been updated, data is more readily available, and the department will continue to provide data as the technology is learned and put to its full capabilities.

He stated one of the first things he did when he became Chief was to review the policies, many were removed, revamped and created. He stated many organizations and individuals were included when policies were reviewed, helping with the Immigration Policy and Use of Force policy, just to name a few.

He stated he created a Recruitment Unit and although staffing is not quite where he wants it to be efforts to go out to recruit and attract individuals are being done. He stated since he started as Chief he created a Force Investigation Team, a Peer Support Team, a Use of Force Review Board and a Community Relations Board, he revamped the Discipline Policy, made it mandatory for every officer to go through Crisis Intervention Training, the department has become more data driven, and he is pursuing accreditation before the end of 2020.

He stated the Community Relations Board was created recently and has been very effective in providing the direction of the needs of the community. He stated due to the meetings the HPD will be more active on social media, as many do not know what the HPD does or can do and a Frequently Asked Questions page was posted on social media. He stated training of officers on Autism will be done and situational training based on situations that arise throughout the United States so the HPD is prepared in advance.

He stated he is always trying to get better, to be better prepared for future incidents and protests, and prevent any harm.

Council Member Jones thanked Chief English for coming to Harrisonburg and fulfilling the position, he as heard nothing but good comments on his work with the department and his transparency. He asked how much manpower and time is spent in regard to non-traditional police work such as mental health issues and other things that should fall under the Community Services Board (CSB). Chief English stated the department has been doing the non-traditional type of work so long it has become traditional and it is a

national issue. He stated it is surprising at how much time is spent locally with mental health calls and issues, and it has been discussed amongst staff, as the Police should not be involved in most mental health calls as it can escalate the situation and make it even more dangerous. He stated officers are spending so much time on those calls whether its accompanying someone in the hospital waiting for a bed or transporting to another hospital, which removes the officers from their normal duties. He stated there needs to be more funding to be used in the mental health field that could allow other people or organizations to respond without the police being involved. Council Member Jones suggested Council and staff consider options in which, in cooperation with CSB and other organizations, another department could be formed, mental health professionals hired, or other resources found to help with these instances where calls and referrals can be taken care of. He stated he feels HPD shouldn't necessarily be in the line of mental health. He stated if we cannot find another locality doing something like this already, perhaps we can be a trailblazer as we have a lot of great minds and open hearts in the city.

Chief English stated a community conversation is needed regarding what the HPD's role should be in the mental health cause. He stated in California the police don't respond to suicide calls, those calls go to other resources.

Vice Mayor Romero asked how the Community Relations Board was created and the demographics of the board. Chief English shared the demographics and stated the board was created from contacts made after the George Floyd incident. The individuals were people who had passion to make a change and very informed on police reform and he felt they would be a positive influence on the board. Vice Mayor Romero asked if there is anything in the works on training officers of unconscious bias. Chief English stated it is required that all officers go through that type of training but feels there needs to be more, and it is in the plans to provide more.

Council Member Baugh stated he appreciates the information and perspective provided by Chief English, and felt the information provided was what was needed. He stated Council is available if he needs anything.

Council Member Hirschmann stated the Chief is doing a good job and thanked him.

Mayor Reed stated she was glad the Chief presented as HPD does not brand themselves very well, there are a lot of things the HPD is doing that people are not aware of. She stated the Chief is very transparent and everyone is very satisfied with him being the Chief of Police. She asked Chief English what his biggest challenge is in recruiting black and brown officers. Chief English stated it is something we need to continue to try to push forward, but there are a few things that come into play; sometimes it's hard to come to an agency where people don't look like you; the agency hasn't been sold as well as it should, the city is a hidden gem; and the competition with other agencies that are much larger and pay is higher. He stated the Recruitment Board is pushing forward to bring a more diverse group of individuals into the organization. Council Member Jones stated we should all work together with public schools and universities on this matter. Chief English stated there was a conversation during the Public Relations Board meeting and is now one of their goals to communicate with different groups and try to recruit as well.

This Report was received and filed.

- 6.b.** Consider a request to advertise delinquent real estate taxes for tax years 2017/2018

& 2018/2019

Jeff Shafer, Treasurer City of Harrisonburg, presented a request to advertise delinquent real estate taxes for the years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. He stated this is a collection measure.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschman, to approve the request as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

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

No: 0

6.c. Consider removal of delinquent real estate taxes for years 1999/2000 and personal property taxes for year 2014

Jeff Shafer, Treasurer City of Harrisonburg, stated per Virginia Code the statute of limitations for Personal Property and Real Estate Taxes is five years and 20 years respectfully, and this request is to write off Personal Property taxes for 2014 in the amount of \$113,939.23 (99.1% collection rate) and Real Estate taxes for 1999 and 2000 in the amount of \$2,788.45 (99.9% collection rate). He stated these figures do not include any accounts that the Treasurer has received judgments on.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the request as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 0

6.d. Consider adopting and enacting Title 5, Chapter 1, Article C Section 5-1-30 through Section 5-1-48, Law Enforcement-Requested Towing of the Code of Ordinances, City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Chris Brown, city attorney, stated the ordinance enactment presented was tabled during a Council meeting last year because a Tow Board needed to be in place before the ordinance could be approved. He stated the Tow Board is now completely appointed and the ordinance enactment can move forward. He stated this ordinance modernizes and brings into compliance of State Code our towing regulations. He stated it will allow for fair rotation of police officer called towing companies and protect individuals who must deal with the tow companies in being treated fairly as well as appeal to the towing board.

Council Member Baugh stated this is a great improvement and will help many who call about towing company issues.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the ordinance enactment as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 0

6.e. Consider adopting a resolution for the use of CARES Act funds to forgive Disaster Impact Loans

Chris Brown, City Attorney, stated in March 2020 the Economic Development Department launched the Disaster Impact Loan Program to help the small businesses impacted by the Pandemic. He stated the program loaned out \$105,000 to 22 different recipients, interest free and those loan repayments begin on July 1, 2020. He stated the city was notified it was receiving funding through the CARES Act and part of the funding can be used for economic development and small businesses affected by the pandemic. He stated the city hopes to start a business grant program and staff feels it would only be fair to use \$105,000 of the CARES Act funding to forgive the loans provided through the Disaster Impact Loan Program.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the ordinance enactment as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 0

7. Reallocations

7.a. Consider a reallocation of budgeted funds for the Harrisonburg City School division in the amount of \$500,000

Larry Propst, director of Finance, presented a reallocation request from the Harrisonburg City School Board for an annual reallocation in the amount of \$500,000.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the reallocation request as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 0

7.b. Consider a reallocation of funds from a direct bank loan related to the new high school construction project

Larry Propst, director of Finance, stated funds are being borrowed for the Panos property purchase and part of the bank loan is to reimburse ourselves for reserves we have used over the past 18 months related to the new high school construction project.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the reallocation request as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 0

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)

James "Bucky" Berry, 30 West Washington Street, stated we have lost many police officers to other localities offering higher salaries. He stated over the last few weeks Georges Chicken has stepped up and offered frozen chicken to the Salvation Army. He stated we need shelter for our homeless and get them off the streets during the daytime as well as at night.

Pamayotis "Poti" Giannakaouros, stated the calls to defund the police throughout the nation do not really apply to Harrisonburg, we have a deeper understanding, as our crime and incarceration rates in the city are plummeting as we build better communities. He feels this is due to the sitting Council now because they have given voice to those in the community that didn't have a voice before. He stated he feels the city should abolish the department of Community Development; it is wrong that we think of our city as an entity that needs to be kept under control. He stated we should follow the lead of other localities that have trouble with segregation, he listed a few, who do not have tall grass and weed ordinances.

Bruce Lundeen, 279 Newman Avenue, congratulated Council and thanked Vice Mayor Romero for adopting a resolution in regard to Poultry Workers Safety and sending it to the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board.

Eric Olsen-Getty, 376 E Gay Street, thanked Council for their unanimous support in the resolution that was sent to the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board.

Michael Snell-Feikema, 1174 Westmoreland Drive, stated on behalf of the Rockingham County Chapter of Virginia Organizing, he expressed his deep appreciation to the City Council, for passing a resolution urging the Virginia Safety Health Codes Board to approve an emergency regulations and standards for all workers during the Covid-19 Pandemic. He stated after the abolition of slavery neither racism nor slavery was abolished. He reviewed the history of Virginia during that time and his experience in a class offered by Community Mennonite Church on How to Become an Anti-Racist. He stated the thing that will end racism is the cross racial solidarity. He thanked Council for taking a step in the right direction.

8.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Jones stated as a Council Member and parent, he feels we need to strike a good balance when it comes to school policing. He stated he understands protecting our children is upmost priority, but he firmly believes that HPD shouldn't be physically in the schools, perhaps in the parking lot or at transition points at the beginning and end of school, HPD should patrol the building and monitor entrances just as they would any other business, but not physically in the building. He stated HPD should not be participating in the process of the discipline of children, nor should the presence of HPD be used as an

intimidating, threatening or coercing way. He stated he also feels that the Harrisonburg City Public Schools should have more career fairs and provide an opportunity for other members of the community to interact with the children.

Council Member Baugh stated people are getting lax about wearing masks, wear them for others, wear your masks. Council Member Hirschmann seconded what Council Member Baugh stated.

Vice Mayor Romero stated he feels he is ready for in-person Council meetings again and he asked the rest of Council when they think they may be ready. He prefers meeting, deliberating and discussing in person. Mayor Reed asked the city manager what needs to be done in order for the building to be ready for in-person Council meetings. Eric Campbell, city manager, stated there are no physical plans to change the current Council Chambers, the ability for distancing would still be provided and seating would still be somewhat limited based on Phase III requirements. He stated he is just waiting for Council to let him know when they are ready. Council Member Jones stated he is completely uncomfortable with the current set up in Council Chambers and will not come back to in-person meetings in July. Council Member Hirschmann stated there are a few localities meeting in-person now and wonders how that is working out. Mayor Reed stated if we decide to go forward with in-person meetings, it will still be an option for each Council Member to attend how they feel the most comfortable, whether it is virtually or in-person. More discussion took place regarding in-person meetings.

Mayor Reed stated she has masks available as part of her Mask drive.

Eric Campbell, city manager, stated the Harrisonburg Rockingham Community Remembrance Project Committee applied to the Department of Historic Resources for a historic marker memorializing Charlotte Harris has been approved. He stated it will take approximately two months to produce and will be installed on a sidewalk near Court Square at a date to be determined. He stated more information will be provided as it progresses. He stated the Economic Development team was honored by the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) with the 2020 Economic Development Award for our Brick and Clicks Program. He described what the Bricks and Clicks Program is and its partnerships. He congratulated Brian Shull and Peirce Macgill for their accomplishments and hard work.

Mr. Campbell announced that Matthew Tobia has been appointed as the new Fire Chief for the Harrisonburg Fire Department effective June 28, 2020. He stated he has been with the city for the past 16 months and brings a lot of experience to the community. He thanked Deputy Chief Steven Morris for his great work as Interim Fire Chief for handling things and moving smoothly forward, especially during the pandemic.

Mayor Reed stated great work with the historical marker, many have worked hard to get that acknowledgement.

9. Adjournment

At 8:25 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR