



VIRGINIA POLICE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

A Division of Southern States Police Benevolent Association

2155 Highway 42 S

McDonough, GA 30252-7636

(770) 389-5391 • (800) 233-3506

Fax: (770) 389-4572 • (866) 337-7722

www.sspba.org

December 15, 2023

Ande Banks
Harrisonburg City Manager
409 S Main St.
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
ande.banks@harrisonburgva.gov

Dear City Manager Banks

Our firm represents the Harrisonburg members of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association (SSPBA) as it does many other SSPBA chapters and members throughout the state and beyond. The SSPBA is dedicated to serving the needs of law enforcement employees as law enforcement personnel, in turn, supports and protects citizens. We have been working closely with local officers and department personnel, led by JD Weaver, to initiate the collective bargaining process in the City of Harrisonburg pursuant to Virginia law.

As you may know, Virginia Code Section 40.1-57.2 was amended in 2020 to allow collective bargaining by municipal employees. Since that time, many jurisdictions have now implemented collective bargaining by adopting collective bargaining ordinances or resolutions, and several have even completed the process to establish their first collective bargaining agreements. Collective bargaining is a crucial tool to address the problems facing municipalities and their law enforcement officers right now as well as aid in recruitment and retention in a difficult time.

The Harrisonburg members of the SSPBA reached out to our firm for assistance in initiating collective bargaining and drafting a proposed Collective Bargaining Ordinance to submit to the City Council. See the signature sheet attached indicating the support of a supermajority of what the local members feel is the appropriate bargaining unit (sworn personnel below the rank of lieutenant). The members also believe that civilian employees of the department should be a part of the bargaining unit. See proposed ordinance for the complete definition of the police bargaining unit. As § 40.1-57.2(C) provides, now that the Harrisonburg members of SSPBA have submitted their petition, the Council has 120 days to consider and vote on an ordinance on the topic.

This draft reflects ordinances composed by the City of Alexandria and the City of Fairfax with the assistance of their own counsel as well as taking into consideration other ordinances passed by Virginia municipalities for collective bargaining.

Harrisonburg City Council

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We invite the City of Harrisonburg to review this Proposed Ordinance as it considers the needs of the city and its law enforcement officers. We understand different stakeholders and others will certainly hold an opinion on this draft. As such, we would like this process to be a participatory experience for all involved. Our firm and the local membership would also like to be a resource and involved in this process as well, as our experiences will be valuable.

Where the SSPBA has been involved (including Charlottesville, Fairfax County, and Alexandria), collective bargaining has been a collaborative and positive process. We look forward to working with the City of Harrisonburg in this process.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or concerns at (703) 771-4671 or you can email me at wrt@simmsshowerslaw.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Thetford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

William R. Thetford Jr.
Caleb A. Kershner
Melissa L. Ruby
Simms Showers LLP
Counsel to Harrisonburg Members of the SSPBA

WT:cr