

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 5:24 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 - 5:24am

**Name:** Lee Good

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Wed, 01/27/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** Middle River Jail Expansion

**Comment:**

As a resident, I am opposed to expansion of the Middle River Jail before all other avenues are exhausted. We already incarcerate at a rate that far exceeds the national average. This comes at a great cost to us as a city, both economically, and morally. I urge you to vote NO on the expansion

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 11:14 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 - 11:14am

**Name:** H Dennis Showalter

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** Building more jail space

**Comment:**

Our country has 5% of the world's population but 25% of the world's prisoners. Is the local community contributing to that problem? We added more space in 2015 and now think we need to add more space in 2021 to put even more people in jail. It isn't working; we need to try other methods that may be more successful. Why do we keep prisoners in jail until trial (except the wealthy can post bail), especially those accused of non-violent crimes? If someone is arrested for drugs, can't we seek treatment instead of jail? We have some of the best authorities on restorative justice in the country; maybe we need to use them more to deal with certain crimes. Let's say "NO" to more jail space, and maybe that we force us to be more creative about other methods of justice.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:** sdshowalt@gmail.com

## **Pamela S. Ulmer**

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 7:05 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 7:04am

**Name:** NO Middle River Jail expansion  
**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council  
**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021  
**Agenda Item Number:** # 4 ? (regarding MRRJ)  
**Comment:**

To the Harrisonburg City Council,

Alternatives to incarceration must be used to address overcrowding. Given that alternatives to incarceration are less expensive than incarceration, our communities would then be able to use our scarce public funds for the things our people, our families, and our communities really NEED. In this time of pandemic, economic recession/depression, and crises of all sorts, we must pursue alternatives to incarceration to protect everyone and all of our families!

Please vote NO on any and all proposals to expand incarceration. To expand MRRJ would be an enormous mis-use of money which would only cause more harm to accused persons, to convicted persons, to children who desperately need their parents, and to all of us!

According to the authorities, one third of persons currently being held prisoner in MRRJ are merely awaiting trial and about half of the persons being held prisoner there are there for "minimum security" offenses (either accused or convicted). Therefore, we can assume that about half of the MRRJ population are no "danger to the public" and can be released immediately. Supervision can be provided, if needed or desired.

If the jail were to be reserved only for convicted offenders who present some sort of danger to society, it would not be crowded! It is crowded only because alternatives to incarceration have not been used.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Kathleen Temple (Rockingham, Virginia 22802)

**Contact:** Yes  
**Contact Info:** Kathleen Temple, 540-574-4311 (text is preferred)

**Sally Burger  
June Frinks  
116 N. Madison St.  
Staunton, VA 24401  
540.448.5840  
brgfrk@lumos.net**

January 31, 2021

Staunton City Council  
Waynesboro City Council  
Augusta County Board of Supervisors  
Harrisonburg City Council  
Rockingham County Board of Supervisors  
Middle River Regional Jail Authority Board

**RE: Proposed Expansion of Middle River Regional Jail (MRRJ)**

Dear Sirs/Madams:

MRRJ officials, the MRRJ Authority Board and their agent, Moseley Architects, have made a case for expanding the jail based primarily upon overcrowding of the inmate population there. This overcrowding presents problems across-the-board, including prevention of some in-house programs and services that might otherwise help allay the problem.

There are seemingly two solutions. One solution is to build a larger facility that could satisfactorily accommodate the increasing numbers of inmates. The second solution is to consider alternatives to incarceration wherever possible, thereby reducing operational capacity to more align with rated capacity.

The Community-Based Corrections Plan (CBCP) completed by Moseley Architects lays the foundation for the MRRJ expansion with generous information on site, facility, inmate population demographics and area crime statistics, as required. It reported on programs and services offered *generally* in Virginia as alternatives/diversions to incarceration, and also on the limited such services provided in this area including electronic monitoring, probation services, and Adult Drug Court which are all provided by Court Services Units and probation/parole offices. Some alternative/diversion programs that are not available in this area include Home Incarceration, Halfway House Programs and Services, and Law Enforcement Diversion-Detox Center Programs.

As stated in the CBCP, "Recognizing the high cost of secure confinement and the potential cost effectiveness of alternatives, the 1994 Special Session of the Virginia General Assembly enacted the Pretrial Services Act, and the Comprehensive Community Corrections Act for Local Responsible Offenders. Each of these Acts provide the statutory framework and funding pipeline for local development of 'alternatives to incarceration' programs. Program options can be implemented that target both pre- and post-trial populations."

Virginia Code Section 53.1-82.1 provides that a CBCP request for expansion or renovation is to include a "plan for development and implementation of pre-trial detention alternatives and post-disposition punishment alternatives on a systematic local and regional basis..."

Alternative detention and diversion programs can provide more cost-effective relief to jail overcrowding than expending millions of local tax-payer dollars on expanding jails that will logically require additional expansion (and funding) at relatively predictable future points in time.


The MRRJ Authority Board and city and county officials have been inundated with information making the case for jail expansion. Prior to making such a huge financial commitment for jail expansion now (and additional ones at somewhat predictable future points), the Board and area governing bodies must also consider important information regarding potential alternatives and diversions to incarceration.

We should call upon distinguished professionals, experts who can provide studied information on alternative solutions to jail overcrowding and efficient use of tax-payer dollars. Please read the attached article, "Community Perspective: A bigger jail will not solve the problem."

We therefore respectfully implore that you make no decision regarding the expansion of the MRRJ until *every* solution is thoroughly weighed.

Sincerely,

  
Sally Burger and June Frinks





# THE Citizen TAKES ON HARRISONBURG

---

JANUARY 29, 2021

## Community Perspective: A bigger jail will not solve the problem

By hburgcitizen

Posted in Perspectives

**A contributed perspectives piece with multiple authors listed below**

The Middle River Regional Jail is one of the most expensive publicly funded facilities ever built in our region. Now, citing overcrowding, jail authorities want our communities to commit to one of three expensive expansion options.

These proposals should be tabled while we answer some basic questions. What problem or problems are we trying to solve? Who is in the jail and why? Will an expanded facility solve the real problems?

The five jurisdictions that use Middle River — Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, Rockingham County and Augusta County — have a combined population of 257,000. Middle River and the Rockingham/Harrisonburg Regional Jail provide 1,227 jail beds. If they are full, we are incarcerating 477 people per 100,000 residents. The national average incarceration rate is 226 people per 100,000 residents for local jails. How is this justified when Virginia has among the lowest crime rates in the country and Harrisonburg, as one regional example, has among the lowest crime rates in Virginia?

In a region where 6% of the population is Black, 22% of the residents at Middle River are Black. Michelle Alexander's research on the contemporary prison system concluded

that nationwide our jails and prisons and the systems that feed them should be considered the new Jim Crow. We are clearly a part of that system. We need to examine our local system thoroughly and honestly before we fund any jail expansion.

An estimated 80% of inmates at Middle River have some degree of substance abuse or mental health disorder. The MRRJ authority board says that part of the money for expansion will go towards treating this group. But research shows that people with substance use disorders and mental illness are much better served by receiving treatment outside of a jail setting. The American Psychological Association states that imprisonment can exacerbate or even create mental health conditions. The recent history of inmates dying by suicide, allegations of improper medical treatment leading to inmates' deaths, and an egregious failure to contain the spread of covid-19 demonstrate that Middle River is not the best place for treatment.

Rather than expand the facility, we urge local leaders to fund a racial equity study followed by development of a plan to end racial disparities in our court practices and our jails. We also urge officials in the region to implement proven best practices for supporting mental health and substance abuse services that have worked in other small towns and rural areas like ours. With the lowest cost option — \$40 million, plus undisclosed continuing operating expenses and debt costs — we can build more effective mental health and substance abuse services and more just alternatives to incarceration.

Many other communities have said “no” to jail expansion and found effective solutions to reduce incarceration. We can do the same. Please urge the elected leaders in your city or county to vote no for now, and invest in creative problem solving instead.

*Dr. Jayne Seminare Docherty, Executive Director of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University*

*Dr. Linda Plitt Donaldson, Associate Dean, College of Health and Behavioral Studies at James Madison University*

*Rev. Costella L. Forney, Pastor of John Wesley United Methodist Church*

*Art Stoltzfus, Member of Faith in Action*

*Mr. Robert (Bob) Robinson, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Mary Baldwin University*

*Rev. Dr. Edward A. Scott, Pastor of Allen Chapel AME Church, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Mary Baldwin University*

*Dr. Abby Wightman, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Mary Baldwin University*

*Dr. Beth Easterling, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, Mary Baldwin University*

*Dr. Amy Tillerson-Brown, Professor of History & History Department Chair, Mary Baldwin University*

*The authors' views are their own and do not necessarily reflect the positions of their institutions.*

*Have something to say that you'd like to see published in The Citizen? Check out the [guidelines](#) and send us your thoughts.*



DONATE



### Article Tags

**MIDDLE RIVER REGIONAL JAIL** **PERSPECTIVE PIECE**

**READ NEXT** →



**Pamela S. Ulmer**

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:23 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 - 11:22am

**Name:** Harrison Jarrett

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 4.a

**Comment:**

I am opposed to jail expansion until further discussion in alternatives to jail expansion.

**Contact:** Yes

**Contact Info:** Harrisonwj3@gmail.com

**Pamela S. Ulmer**

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:38 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 - 11:37am

**Name:** Sarah Campbell

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Thu, 01/26/2023

**Agenda Item Number:** 4

**Comment:**

Please do not approve expansion of jail. We need better programs for recidivism. We need a second HHS with mentors for our youth and to stop the pipeline to prison. Our youth deserve better so we don't need jails.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:48 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 - 2:47pm

**Name:** Alexander James Stewart Pellegrino

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 4 Middle River Regional Jail-Opposition

**Comment:**

I am submitting my strong opposition to the proposed MRRJ expansion. Approving this expansion would run counter to the desires and priorities of Harrisonburg City residents. Many of us marched, shared stories and submitted comments to build an equitable community that prioritizes equity over incarceration and police brutality. We can build new systems of community care and justice together—if we stand together will not need this jail.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:07 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 - 10:07am

**Name:** Tiba Fatli

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 4.a.

**Comment:**

City Council has to oppose and vote no to the expansion of the Middle River Regional Jail. The presentation by the jail says that they need to accommodate inmates in in 2029. It is absolutely outrageous that the goal is to anticipate and fill in beds almost a decade from now. That means that the police will focus on filling in these beds to increase their budget even more in the future. These strategies are similarly utilized across the united states by law enforcement to increase their budgets. Instead of spending money on jailing people, mostly black and brown and non-violent offenders, we have to build a community that has compassion and resources for people. That supports them to build a better community where people are not behind bars being treated like animals but instead thriving and helping the economy by engaging in their community. Jails expansions are not only counter-productive for the community but they are also racist. What will occur is that more black and brown folks will be behind bars instead of having a meal with their families. They will be stripped of their rights and if they leave, and not just held up on bail, they will have a hard time finding employment, shelter and some will not even vote. This money, for example, can go to supporting recently incarcerated folks and supporting them so that they don't go back to jail when they don't find support anywhere in Harrisonburg. I live downtown and I walk by and see a line of homeless folks outside of a church waiting for housing. How about we provide housing instead? How about we funnel that money to provide better education for our children? Before your vote, I want you to consider two futures by 2029: one where we lock up our community and they live behind bars and come out with more problems, two a future in which we provide resources, support and funding to our communities to help not only survive but also thrive. Choose the better future. Vote AGAINST the expansion

**Contact:** Yes

**Contact Info:** tiba.fatli@gmail.com



## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 16, 2021 5:15 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Saturday, January 16, 2021 - 5:14pm

**Name:** john sallah

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 90 n main st leased spaces

**Comment:**

The fact that Longacre Investment Properties wants to sign a lease indicates that there is not enough parking in that area. The City should not be deciding which nearby business are granted these (or any) spaces in a public lot of this size. I understand that the City leases spots in other large double decker garages, but those lots have hundreds of spaces. In this case, it seems like the 9 spots up for lease account for almost half of the spots available in that lot? It benefits one building owner to the detriment of all other local businesses, who also may depend on those spaces for their clientele. Public, city-owned lots should, by and large, be available to anyone.

This also sets a dangerous precedent. Will the City begin leasing public spaces to the first nearby entity to ask? To the highest bidder? How will council decide which businesses are able to lease spaces and which will not?

The entity seeking the lease bought the building on N Main knowing full well that it had no guaranteed parking. It should remain so.

If memory serves, the last parking survey commissioned by the City concluded that there was no shortage of parking. The fact that City council is discussing this would seem to dispute that conclusion. Why would Longacre be willing to pay good money for something that is plentiful?

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 9:01 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, January 25, 2021 - 9:01pm

**Name:** Micah Jost

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 4

**Comment:**

I am writing to urge City Council to ensure that Harrisonburg's representatives on the Middle River Regional Jail Authority Board vote NO on any proposed expansion. I want none of my tax dollars to go to expanding a jail that is already too large and holds too many people.

We don't need a bigger jail. Instead, Harrisonburg and the other communities who use Middle River must reduce the number of people we lock up. Harrisonburg has among the lowest crime rates in Virginia, which in turn has one of the lowest crime rates in the country. Especially in that context, our incarceration rates are shamefully high.

The resources proposed for jail expansion would be better used for drug addiction treatment and mental health services outside the jail setting in particular.

I ask City Council to take the courageous and common sense path of cutting incarceration rates and rejecting a cowardly and morally indefensible choice to expand.

**Contact:** Yes

**Contact Info:** 540.421.8957

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 5:22 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, January 25, 2021 - 5:21pm

**Name:** Janet Trettner

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 4. Special Recognition: 4a) Presentation From Middle River Regional Jail

**Comment:**

Dear Members of the Harrisonburg City Council:

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to expansion of the Middle River Regional Jail. I am convinced the proposed expansion is a premature reaction to a very real problem.

Our jail is overcrowded, and people who might pose a danger to themselves or to society should be incarcerated. It is my understanding however that most of the people who are incarcerated locally are non-violent offenders. They are in jail for reasons unrelated to their crimes such as not being able to pay bail. Why should someone be put in jail because they are poor? Doesn't that violate the 8th amendment of the US Constitution that prohibits excessive bail? How on earth can we justify warehousing people who have not been charged or are awaiting trial? Isn't that a violation of due process and the right to a speedy trial, the 5th and 6th amendments, respectively? Why should someone who needs drug treatment and rehabilitation or mental health treatment be put in jail?

Our jail is overcrowded. This is true. As a result, Mr. Frank Sotticeti, a criminal justice planner, was hired last year to determine why overcrowding has occurred, and to identify ineffective or out-dated methods in the system that may be contributing to this problem. Before we expand the jail, we need to thoroughly examine his findings to know if there are any changes that could be made to the current system that would remedy the situation. An additional resource is the Prison Policy Initiative:

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/jailexpansion.html>

If alternatives to the current system are not seriously reviewed and put into practice as appropriate, new beds will certainly be needed. To expand the current jail without thoroughly evaluating the current system and giving changes an opportunity to take effect, is to thoughtlessly preserve and reinforce the status quo, because it is based on the status quo.

As guardians of the public purse, the City Council is obligated to use tax payer monies wisely. According to the DNR, it has already reduced spending by \$11.2 million because of the pandemic. It makes sense to look for further cost-saving measures by re-evaluating our jail system and being open to fresh ideas. It is quite possible that by re-evaluating the way in which we process those who have been arrested, we can make our current system more efficient and effective with less incarceration.

Before I can support spending millions of taxpayer dollars to expand the jail system, I need to know that alternatives to the current system and their impact on overcrowding have been thoroughly vetted. This takes time. Implementing new

programs takes time. Approving the expansion of the jail without allowing vetting and implementation to take place is premature. I urge you to oppose expansion of the MRRJ, and to direct City Manager Eric Campbell, Finance Director Larry Propst, and Harrisonburg Interim Chief of Police Gabriel Camacho, as members of the MRRJ Authority Board, to vote to oppose expansion of the jail at MRRJ Board meeting on February 2, 2021.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this matter.

Very truly yours,  
Janet I. Trettner  
Keezletown, Virginia

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**



## **Pamela S. Ulmer**

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 4:43 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, January 25, 2021 - 4:43pm

**Name:** Laura Sider Jost

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/26/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** 4.a.

**Comment:**

I work in public health and community-based justice for sexual harms and I'm calling on City Council to stop the expansion of Middle River jail. The evidence seems clear that expanding jails does not help our communities and the evidence seems clear that our region is doing especially poorly:

Our region has space to put over twice as many people in local jails as the national average!

--Many of the inmates at Middle River have not yet gone to trial or are locked up for violating probation. In July 2020, for example, Harrisonburg and Rockingham had 198 people in Middle River. 60 of them had not yet faced trial. 100 of them were in for a probation violation.

--Middle River repeatedly locks up the same people at a shocking rate. In 2017, the Staunton News Leader found that 70% of the inmates there on a given day had been there before. That 70% recidivism rate is three times larger than the state's average of 23%.

--In 2019, over a third of people detained at Middle River had a "serious mental illness," but Middle River officials have resisted requests for inmate medical records from the State Inspector General. Other communities have drastically reduced how many people they lock up by setting up emergency mental health and substance use treatment, among other interventions.

We must invest the millions of dollars that stopping this expansion would save into proven solutions that reduce incarceration.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 2, 2021 12:09 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Tuesday, February 2, 2021 - 12:08am

**Name:** Ida Abhari

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** N/A

**Comment:**

I write in opposition to expansion of Middle River jail and urge the Harrisonburg City Council to oppose expansion. In this time of belt-tightening due to COVID, alternatives to jail and prison are needed more urgently than ever. Not only do more populated jails pose health risks to the community, but they are ineffective and wasteful. If history is any indication, municipalities across the country will soon face budget crises. Cities must be dynamic and vibrant enough to look for new solutions that do not continue costing taxpayers money and people their lives, wasting away in jails usually due to being too poor to afford bail and increasing the risks of recidivism. Please oppose Middle River expansion and explore and invest in alternatives!

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 11:32 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 11:31pm

**Name:** Noreen

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** n/a

**Comment:**

Hello - I'm writing to share my opposition to the plan to expand Middle River Regional jail. We know first-hand that the jail is filled with people who should not be there, and during COVID there could not be a worse idea that putting more people in jail. Many people are being held pretrial because they cannot pay relatively low bail amounts, not because they pose a danger to the community. The authorities have not made sufficient efforts at reducing the population before proposing the expansion. Please vote no on the expansion until these alternatives and reforms have been exhausted. Many people in detention have mental health and substance abuse issues. Invest taxpayer dollars to address those issues (often the root causes of incarceration) instead of making it possible for us to incarcerate more people.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 8:43 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 8:42pm

**Name:** Douglas Graebner

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** Middle River regional jail

**Comment:**

Hello - I'm writing to share my opposition to the plan to expand Middle River Regional jail. People who are involved with a bail fund that assists people who have been jailed here can tell you that the jail is filled with people who should not be there. They are being held pretrial because they cannot pay relatively low bail amounts, which they can and should be helped with. It is clear that the relevant authorities have not exhausted all of their options. They have not made sufficient efforts at reducing the population before proposing the expansion. Please vote no on the expansion until these alternatives and reforms such as waiving cash bail for the indigent or even eliminating it have been exhausted. Many inmates have mental health and substance abuse issues. Invest taxpayer dollars to address those issues (often the root causes of incarceration) instead of making it possible for us to incarcerate more people. We all know that if there are more beds, they will be filled. Don't give them this option.

**Contact:** Yes

**Contact Info:** dg4mk@virginia.edu



## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 8:30 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 8:30pm

**Name:** Taylor Renee Fatherree

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** MRRJ Expansion

**Comment:**

Please do not approve MRRJ expansion when not all options have been exhausted for incarcerating less people, especially pretrial.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:** trf9gn@virginia.edu

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 8:27 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 8:27pm

**Name:** Lareta H Finger

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** Middle River Jail Expansion

**Comment:**

I am opposed to expanding the jail. We incarcerate a higher percentage of people per population in the Harrisonburg area than we did 25 years ago. Why?

That money could be spent much more effectively by finding alternate ways to help non-violent offenders:

Restorative Justice

Drug Court

Community Service

Mental Health counseling

Other work opportunities or learning a skill

Get rid of the practice of paying bail and use other options such as ankle bracelets.

It is not helpful to anyone to incarcerate people who are too poor to make bail and are still legally innocent.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:** laretafinger@gmail.com

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 8:20 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 8:19pm

**Name:** Eliza Schultz

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** I don't know

**Comment:**

Hello - I'm writing to share my opposition to the plan to expand Middle River Regional jail. I am involved with a community bail fund that bails people out of the jail. We know first-hand that the jail is filled with people who should not be there. They are being held pretrial because they cannot pay relatively low bail amounts, which we help them out with. My experience volunteering with the bail fund has made clear that the relevant authorities have not exhausted all of their options. They have not made sufficient efforts at reducing the population before proposing the expansion. Please vote no on the expansion until these alternatives and reforms have been exhausted. Many of our clients have mental health and substance abuse issues. Invest taxpayer dollars to address those issues (often the root causes of incarceration) instead of making it possible for us to incarcerate more people. We all know that if there are more beds, they will be filled. Don't give them this option.

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 8:09 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.**

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 8:09pm

**Name:** Warren Griffiths  
**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council  
**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021  
**Agenda Item Number:** Unknown  
**Comment:**

Dear Harrisonburg City Council,

As a law student at UVA, I care a lot about what happens to court-involved members of my community. I implore you to vote against the expansion of the Middle River Regional Jail. The jail is well beyond capacity—but expanding that capacity does not address the root of the problem, it just pushes it back. The only change will be increased incarceration and increased disruption in the lives of our community members.

I urge you to consider alternatives to funding an expansion of the jail that can address the same problem: too many people behind bars. Consider alternative pathways to justice, like drug and mental health treatment programs, community programs for young people involved in the criminal system, and restorative justice. All of these can be funded by the same dollars that would be used to put more and more people behind bars.

Sincerely,  
Warren Griffiths

**Contact:** No  
**Contact Info:**

## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 7:30 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Monday, February 1, 2021 - 7:29pm

**Name:** Emily Hockett

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** NO TO MIDDLE RIVER EXPANSION

**Comment:**

Hello - I'm writing to share my opposition to the plan to expand Middle River Regional jail. I am involved with a community bail fund that bails people out of the jail. We know first-hand that the jail is filled with people who should not be there. They are being held pretrial because they cannot pay relatively low bail amounts, which the bail fund pays for them. My experience volunteering with the bail fund has made clear that the relevant authorities have not exhausted all of their options. They have not made sufficient efforts at reducing the population before proposing the expansion. Please vote no on the expansion until these alternatives and reforms have been exhausted! We know that jail doesn't rehabilitate people. It often makes them worse. Many of our clients have mental health and substance abuse issues. Invest our taxpayer dollars to address those issues (often the root causes of incarceration) instead of making it possible for us to incarcerate more people. We all know that if there are more beds, they will be filled. Don't give them this option.

**Contact:** Yes

**Contact Info:** Emily Hockett, ehockett@gmail.com



## Pamela S. Ulmer

---

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 2, 2021 9:56 AM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

**WARNING:** This email was sent from outside of your organization.

**Submitted on:** Tuesday, February 2, 2021 - 9:55am

**Name:** Jane

**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council

**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 02/02/2021

**Agenda Item Number:** ?

**Comment:**

Please vote against expanding the Middle River Jail!

Let's invest in drug treatment and mental health services!!!!

**Contact:** No

**Contact Info:**