



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
OFFICE OF THE
CITY MANAGER

ALEXANDER "ANDE" BANKS, VI, CITY MANAGER
409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801
OFFICE (540) 432-7701 • FAX (540) 432-7778

TO: Ande Banks, City Manager
FROM: Amy Snider, Deputy City Manager
DATE: July 19, 2024
RE: Public Hearing and 30-Day Comment Period Naming of New City Facility at 1111 N. Main Street

Summary:

This public hearing and 30-day public comment period is required by the City of Harrisonburg's Naming Policy to receive citizen comments on the proposed name of "The Navigation Center" for the under-construction City facility presently referred to as the "Homeless Services Center" located at 1111 N. Main Street, Harrisonburg.

Staff will make a short presentation, to be followed by a public hearing and a 30-day public comment period. There is no action needed on this item at this time.

Background:

A dynamic public-private partnership, this facility will be a place of transition for our community's unhoused, and a center for critical health and human services for the entire community. The City of Harrisonburg has selected through a competitive procurement process local nonprofit Open Doors to serve as the operator of the overnight emergency shelter for adults without children, a hypothermia program that will provide extra sleeping space during extreme cold temperatures, and a drop-in center during the day

The emergency shelter, open every day from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. once in operation, will contain space for up to 88 beds year-round, with other support facilities such as showers and a laundry room. Open Doors expects to operate the drop-in center Monday to Friday, except for major holidays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open Doors will partner with other local agencies, including Sentara RMH, the Suitcase Clinic for the Homeless, Strength in Peers, Mercy House, First Step, the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board and the City of Harrisonburg Community Paramedicine Program, to provide on-site services. Open Doors continues to work on potential partnerships to advance on-site access.

The facility will be low-barrier, meaning the facility and its operations must:

- a. Maintain ADA accessibility;
- b. Accommodate service animals;
- c. Not discriminate based on protected classes;
- d. Not mandate sobriety or treatment;
- e. Not exclude people with criminal convictions, poor credit, or eviction histories;
- f. Not require documentation of citizenship; and
- g. Not turn away clients because of a lack of income or the appearance of an unwillingness to participate in services or employment.

The operations must be Housing First, meaning:

- a. Access to a program is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, lack of a criminal record, completion of treatment, participation in services, or other conditions except as set forth in this RFP or approved by the City.



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- b. Support services are available but are voluntary, client-driven, individualized, and flexible.
- c. Services are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy that recognizes that drug and alcohol use are a part of some client's lives and must be offered non-judgmental support regarding ways to minimize risky behaviors and engage in safer practices.

Although the program is low-barrier, possession and use of drugs, alcohol, and weapons in facility and on the premises is prohibited.

The City's Naming Policy ensures that given names to city spaces and facilities are consistent with the values and characters of the community. The Policy promotes approaching naming with care, forethought, and deliberation, and in a manner that engages with and solicits input from the community. City Council must hold at least one public hearing on the naming of any new city space or facility prior to adopting a resolution selecting a name.

When selecting a name for a city space or facility, the Naming Policy encourages City Council to give due consideration to the following factors:

1. Geographic locations, natural features, associated places of historical or cultural significance, and features particularly identified with the land or structure of a city space or facility are all appropriate considerations for names of city spaces and facilities.
2. Naming city spaces and facilities after individuals who are still living or who have been deceased less than three years is discouraged, although Council has the discretion to name a city space or facility after a living person who Council finds meets one or more of the criteria set forth in Section 3 below.
3. When naming City spaces and facilities after individuals, preference ordinarily should be given to individuals only if there is a longstanding affiliation with Harrisonburg and if the individual:
 - a. Enhanced the quality of life or wellbeing of Harrisonburg residents,
 - b. Contributed to the preservation of Harrisonburg's history and culture,
 - c. Made exemplary or meritorious contributions to Harrisonburg or its residents, or
 - d. Contributed to the acquisition, development, or conveyance of land, buildings, structures, or other amenities for the community.
4. Names that could be construed as advertising a particular business should be avoided.
5. Names that could be considered discriminatory or derogatory from the point of view of race, sex, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, or social group will be avoided.
6. In order to minimize confusion, names that are similar to existing city spaces and facilities should be avoided. Potential names will be reviewed by Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center for comment on potential confusing with existing street names.

Key Issues:

On behalf of the City Manager's Office, Mallory Lenz, a recent graduate of James Madison University, offered interviews to partner agencies in the City/County Homelessness Coalition to hear their input on potential names. Four agencies provided input. Below is a table with summaries of the agencies' responses to Ms. Lenz's questions regarding naming of the facility.



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Question	Responses
(1) Given the goals you have of serving the unhoused population, how important is the name of these facilities to those goals? To the larger community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicates resource for the community, serving the unhoused but in a way benefit the whole community• Trauma informed language, gentler message, communicate the end goal → end homeless in the community• Shaping perception of the facility is, convey the purpose of center• Very important, didn't realize how important the name is to welcome everyone
(2) Do you have any suggestions regarding an appropriate name for this facility?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Something that is broad, community oriented• Neutral Name [Geographic], Specifying homeless, health and human services crisis... you don't have to be homeless to use the center (Follow models from VA beach)• Harrisonburg Residential Resource Center → "resource center" not just a shelter facility but the services to become off the streets; narrowly named• I like the idea of resource center, without narrowing its function, "Blue Ridge" "Rock Town" "Rock Town Community Resource Center"
(3) What names/terms should be avoided, knowing the history of Harrisonburg?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Naming it after people• Belongs to the Community not just a name, "you are not the crisis but you are experiencing it", historically nothing off• "Homeless" "Unhoused" The idea is to leave the shelter and become stable• People's names should be avoided

Ms. Lenz additionally researched and compiled a list of names of facilities with similar missions on the East Coast of the United States. She identified the following names in use by other facilities: The Lamb Center (Fairfax, VA); United Community Corporation (Newark, NJ); Bethesda Center for the Homeless (Winston Salem, NC); The Nest (Baltimore, MD); Bartlett Housing Solutions (Monongalia County, WV); Out Of The Cold (Centre County, PA); The Bangor Area Homeless Shelter (Bangor, ME); Daybreak Shelter (Lawrence, MA); Bethel Shelters (Rock Hill, SC); Eleanor U. Kennedy Shelter (Fort Belvoir/Fairfax County, VA); and the Housing Resource Center (Virginia Beach, VA)

City staff conducted additional research on names in use across the United States for facilities with similar missions. This research produced the name "Navigation Center" proposed for the facility as part of this public hearing. Navigation Center is a name commonly used for facilities with a similar purpose in the States of California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. A navigation center is defined in State of California Code as a "Housing First, low-barrier, service-enriched shelter focused on moving people into permanent housing that provides temporary living facilities while case managers connect individuals experiencing homelessness to income, public benefits, health services, shelter, and housing." Using this definition, the name "Navigation Center" aligns with the planned service delivery approach for the City of Harrisonburg's facility.



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Environmental Impact: N/A

Fiscal Impact: N/A

Prior Actions: N/A

Community Engagement: A media release was sent regarding the public hearing and an email communication was sent to the City/County Homelessness Coalition. Additional community engagement is anticipated during the 30-day public comment period.

Recommendation: Staff recommends opening a public hearing and 30-day public comment period

Alternatives: Do not open a public hearing and 30-day public comment period

Attachments: PowerPoint Presentation

Review:

The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.



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Attachment A.

Ralph Sampson Park Mobile Clinic Location (Outlined in red)



Homeless Services Center Mobile Clinic Location (Spaces highlighted with red)

