

The questions and comments below were submitted prior to the Planning Commission review of the CIP by Commissioner Finnegan via email on Sunday, February 26, 2023. The page numbers have been changed to reflect the current page numbers.

1. **Page 7: HFD apparatus replacement:** How long are these new trucks expected to be in service? This would seem to be locking the city into building around the size and turn radius of the newer trucks for the next few decades. [Some truck manufacturers](#) offer electric trucks with a smaller turn radius, [which affects building and parking lot designs](#). Has HFD explored purchasing more nimble trucks for the updated fleet?

**Response:** The HFD is constantly scanning the horizon for technology that would improve our ability to reduce the size, and environmental impact, of fire apparatus. Coincidentally, staff evaluated the EV fire engine offered by Rosenbauer at a conference last week in Virginia Beach. Because the vehicle is extremely new, it is still in prototype delivery and the cost of the vehicle is approximately \$1 million **more** than traditional fire apparatus. As the technology around EV's continues to evolve and improve, we expect the price to come down to a market competitive level. Until that time, we continue to evaluate strategies to reduce the overall size of fire apparatus.

2. **Page 9: Fire station #5.** Is this planned to be located on Mount Clinton Pike near EMU? I have concerns about the location of the new station in an area that is not currently well-suited for frequent fire truck access (as opposed to wider roads near industrial buildings like on Acorn Drive). Has the location been selected and finalized?

**Response:** The preferred location for the new fire station has been selected and the City is in negotiations with a landowner to purchase land on Mt Clinton Pike near EMU. The decision to pursue land in this area of the City is based on an identified need related to reducing response times and improving service delivery. Extensive research was conducted in cooperation with the Mathematics Department at JMU in which more than 15 locations throughout the Parkview section of the city were evaluated. As counterintuitive as it may seem, a ½ mile difference in location adversely changes the desired impact of the station dramatically. A fire station on Acorn Drive would serve fewer community members than one on Mt. Clinton Pike. In addition, available sites on Acorn Drive are east of the railroad, potentially delaying the response of an engine to calls in the Parkview section. The new station is expected to handle an average of three to four calls per day.

3. **Page 22: Harrison House Renovations.** Why is the city spending \$1,565,000 on this Priority 3 project (scheduled expenditure in 2024) after it was determined that this was not Thomas Harrison's house? How much of that cost is/has been covered by grants? Is this expected to be a tourist attraction? Is this property expected to generate revenue for the city?

**Response:** While there was a determination made that Thomas Harrison likely did not reside within the building, the structure is still a historic building that was positioned on property likely owned by his family. At this time, \$500,000 is expected from the

Margaret Grattan Weaver Foundation. It is in the City's best interest to preserve this historic structure in the heart of our Downtown central business district. A public-private partnership is envisioned as the avenue to make these improvements a reality. The renovated structure is anticipated to enhance the attractiveness of Downtown Harrisonburg, which in turn will lead to increased tourism activity and revenue for Harrisonburg. Preservation of historic properties makes our downtown more attractive to tourists as it promotes an authentic history and pride in community that cannot be manufactured. Well maintained historic sites are a marketable amenity. The "Harrison House" is part of the identity of Harrisonburg from its name and origin story to its role in historic walking trails. One in five visitors to the region list visiting historic sites as the primary reason of their trip and top activity they do when they are here. Once they are here, they impact our local economy in numerous ways from eating meals to shopping at our stores. The Virginia Tourism Corporation statewide plan listed History and Heritage site product development as a high priority in their most recent plan.

4. **Page 23: Courts Building Project.** Is this an expansion into new buildings?

**Response:** The description of this project within the City's CIP Project Request Form essentially follows the description of the County's Lower Courts Building Additions project as shown on page 38 of their CIP document. As currently presented in the County CIP, the project would be an addition to the Old Courthouse and provide courtrooms for potential use by both Circuit and General District.

5. **Page 24: HVAC upgrades.** What is the state of the current HVAC systems in the jail itself? Is that also in need of an upgrade?

**Response:** The jail's HVAC system was upgraded in 2020.

6. **Page 25: Country Club Rd. Bridges.** Currently Country Club Rd. has diagonal bike path crossings over the railroad tracks, but no bike infrastructure elsewhere on the road. Does the design of these two bridges allow for future bike lane infrastructure on the road?

**Response:** Yes.

7. **Page 28: Annual street paving program.** Is the local tax revenue from the neighborhoods/areas where the streets will be repaved enough to pay for this program (\$2.1 million per year)? If not, where is that revenue coming from?

**Response:** The City receives maintenance funds from the state through the Virginia Department of Transportation. These maintenance funds are used for all aspects of maintenance related to our transportation system. The City does provide some general fund dollars to assist with maintenance operations.

8. **Page 34: Traffic Detection Cameras.** I've noticed that many of the old cameras don't detect cyclists. Is PW prioritizing the new bell-shaped cameras on identified bike routes (e.g. Dogwood crossing West Market)?

**Response:** Detection systems are upgraded based on the age of the system, other improvement planned at the intersection, or from recommendations from staff. We are aware of the limitations of older detection systems and will work to provide improvements as we are able.

9. **Page 36: Enhanced Signage Equipment.** Several [studies](#) have shown the [relative ineffectiveness](#) of RFPBs in preventing pedestrian crashes, compared with traffic-calming features such as raised [crosswalks, bulb-outs, and traffic refuge islands](#). Is there a plan to implement more effective traffic engineering solutions, as opposed to the less effective RFPBs at pedestrian crossings in Harrisonburg?

**Response:** VDOT has recently updated their recommended guidance as it relates to pedestrian crossings. These recommendations are based on roadway configuration, speed limit, and presence of pedestrian crossings. These recommendations still include RRFB's as a recommended solution, but also recommends other enhancements be placed at the crossing as well.

10. **Page 46: Bluestone Trail.** What comprises the majority of the projected \$15 million price tag for this? Is that mostly land acquisition or construction?

**Response:** The largest contributor to cost is the required bridge that will need to span Blacks Run and the railroad. This structure is expected to be approximately 450 feet in length.

11. **Page 60: Central Ave. sidewalk.** If school bus service is not being offered to children in this neighborhood, it would seem that this should be a more immediate priority to provide a safe route to Keister. Why is this not a higher priority? Do these students have a safe route to school without the sidewalk?

**Response:** Improving sidewalks around schools is a priority of Public Works, and we had recommended ARPA funds for a segment of the Central Avenue sidewalks. As we are able to apply for and receive grant funding, we will pursue improvements in these areas of the City.

12. **Pages 120 - 143: water & sewer projects.** I added up all the projected total costs for these Public Utilities projects (pages 120 - 143) and came up with a grand total of \$183 million. This may be a question for the City Treasurer or Commissioner of the Revenue (rather than Public Utilities) -- Has Harrisonburg undertaken an analysis of projected revenue similar to [this analysis done in Eugene Oregon](#), which would show how future tax revenues may (or may not) cover these expenditures? If not, what is the plan to pay for those significant projected expenses?

**Response:** Water and sewer are enterprise funds; there is no tax money used for this. The City generates its own revenue and therefore we plan our own strategy through our Long Term Financial Model. There is a rate increase plan to cover all costs including CIP, which is certainly a major driver. The Director of Public Utilities has given a

presentation to City Council each of the last few years as our annual budget is the first year in each revised strategy.