



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

Work Session

1. Roll Call

Present: 5 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice Mayor Sal Romero, Council Member Christopher B. Jones, Council Member Laura Dent and Council Member Richard Baugh

Also Present: 4 - Deputy City Manager Ande Banks, City Attorney Chris Brown, Deputy City Clerk Ande Banks. and Police Chief Kelley Warner

2. Regular Items

2.a. Review and Discussion of the ARPA Public Engagement Process Findings

Lori Britt and Rob Alexander, ICAD were in attendance.

Ms. Britt, ICAD, presented a breakdown of the categories in which the community engagement process obtained the needs in the city according to the community.

Vice Mayor Romero stated the process started a while ago, there is information that each of us have from additional conversations with the communities, and the data provided by ICAD doesn't reflect some of those conversations and needs.

2.b. Discussion of Funding Priorities

Council Member Dent stated she proposes to weight the funding by the priorities rather than trying to spread it evenly or put all in one bucket.

Ms. Britt, spoke on the criteria Council would like to be guided by and the time restraints of the ARPA funding.

Vice Mayor Romero stated sustainability of whatever we invest our money in for now and over time, continues to be a resource and support to the community.

Mayor Reed stated she feels it should be what makes the greatest impact on the community, legacy projects that will carry on for generations.

Council Member Dent stated in the spirit of ARPA prioritizing those most adversely impacted by the pandemic. Such as funding towards supporting domestic violence

victims.

Council Member Jones stated he is solely focused on legacy projects, large or small, new and ongoing.

Council Member Baugh stated he feels this is an opportunity to use the funds for things that are needed that we wouldn't likely be able to do in our annual budget. Council Member Jones agrees.

Mayor Reed stated this doesn't have to be a specific project but setting up a funding pot for specific services.

Discussion took place regarding the meaning of legacy projects, spending limitations and timelines, etc. Needs discussed were childcare, black and brown businesses, and after school programs.

Rob Alexander, stated if Council is going to use the public input data, then there are two ways to think of priorities and which priorities showed up in each of those ways. He stated the top priorities are substance abuse and mental healthcare, workers and working families, childcare, and access to healthcare. Discussion took place on the study and the outcomes.

Ms. Britt reviewed the categories and suggested courses of action.

Ideas from Council are as follows:

Projects for addressing "How do we invest in community mental health improvements, especially for youth and homeless?"

Council Member Dent stated mental health for the homeless.

Council Member Jones stated he would like to see funding go to the Police Department having a crisis intervention specialist like the Fire Department to help deescalate situations.

Vice Mayor Romero stated fundamental health and substance abuse education outreach and services targeting all age groups is needed. We have seen how mental health and substance abuse impacted people during the pandemic and these are things we need to find more unique ways to have a greater impact.

Projects for addressing: How do we support Workers and Working Families, especially related to childcare?

Mayor Reed stated creating a funding account for childcare providers for needs they may have in which they can apply for funding from that account.

Council Member Jones stated he would like to see a facility purchased or built for day care with ARPA funding and then put out a bid for operators.

Vice Mayor Romero feels the model of increasing after school care at the schools would be good as well.

Projects for addressing: How do we expand accessible housing?

Council Member Dent stated permanent supportive housing is a key to get people out of homelessness. She stated incentives for more affordable housing would help jump start the process for more the concerns of lack of affordable rental units in the city.

Mayor Reed stated Council has been very focused on housing in general and the homeless shelter is a major project in that area.

Council Member Jones stated the city needs to be cautious in incentivizing developers and make sure that what is being built in the city can be supported by the infrastructure and services by the city.

Vice Mayor Romero stated we have approved a lot of affordable housing projects, but he would like to know the status of those projects and whether the projects are actually happening.

Projects for addressing: K-12 and Students (before and after school programing, summer camps and organized sports)

Mayor Reed stated she would like to see an upgrade to Ralph Sampson Park and a pool for the Northeast Neighborhood

Council Member Jones stated the Kids Castle should be done.

Vice Mayor Romero stated the expansion of Futsal courts in the city

Mr. Alexander stated these projects would fall more under the Public Spaces category that will be discussed at the next Council work session.

Mayor Reed asked for the categories that will be discussed at the next Council work session. Ms. Britt stated the categories are as follows: Transportation, neighborhoods, public spaces and city government. She encouraged Council to look at the entire list as some did not fit in any specific category.

Council Member Jones stated he would like to come to the next work session with ideas for actual projects, budget line items, from all Council Members to start appropriating the funding available.

Luke Morgan reviewed ARPA's expenditure buckets and their eligibility guidelines for each.

Discussion took place as to which bucket(s) potential projects could fall under.

Mayor Reed stated there is so much to process and Council wants to make sure they are doing a thorough job going through all the data and community engagement provided. She stated good leadership takes time, there will be another work session in September in which Council will review the other four categories and hopefully have a better idea as to what direction the funding will be applied to.

14. Recess

At 5:38 p.m. meeting went into recess.