

Boards & Commissions Application



I am interested in serving on the following boards/commissions. (Please indicate the order of preference).

1. Planning Commission 2. _____

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss. Dr. (Please type or print clearly)

Name: Armstrong Donna Date: 9-20-21
(Last) (First) (M.I)

Home Address: 1420 Crawford Ave Own Rent?
Harrisonburg VA 22801

Phone Number: 540-433-2537 Alternate Phone: _____

Occupation: Professor Employer/Organization: retired

E-mail: darmstrong@albany.edu Harrisonburg resident for 5 1/2 years.

Were you referred by anyone: Yes No Name of Referring Party: _____

How did you hear about volunteering on a board or commission? Cable Website Council Meeting
Other: _____

Why do you wish to serve on a board or commission?

see attached

What relevant experience or education do you have to this board or commission?

What other interests or concerns do you have regarding the community?

see attached

Please list any past or present community involvement e.g. City Council, Board and Commissions, Citizen Academy, etc. in Harrisonburg or elsewhere:

-Please return completed application to the City Manager's Office-

Applicants are encouraged to attach a resume or other supporting information that may be helpful to Council in considering their application.

409 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Tel:(540)432-7701 Fax:(540)432-7778 E-mail:Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov

Why do you wish to serve on a board or commission?

I have been a resident of Harrisonburg city for 5.5 years. I consider a position on the Planning Commission to be a very important role in helping to build and maintain quality of life in Harrisonburg. The Planning Dept. is a converging point for city management and governance regarding community priorities and anticipating future needs. Planning decisions should be based on community values of inclusion, respect, equity and importantly should be informed by quality information and data. I am aware of the importance and need for balancing the priorities of economic development, land-use/zoning, taxation/budgets, critical city services, and maintaining the community quality of life that makes Harrisonburg such a desirable location. I would value an opportunity to contribute to discussions on the Planning Commission that are thoughtful, respectful, and well-informed.

What relevant experience or education do you have to this board or commission?

As a Professor of Social Epidemiology I have training and extensive experience in evaluating, analyzing, interpreting data and information, including analysis of (longer-term) data trends, which can help predict future city conditions and challenges. City Planning faces the special demand of anticipating and predicting future city needs and challenges, in a world of rapidly changing social and physical environments. Epidemiology is not a clinical practice, it is a population-based science and my academic research expertise was focused on social and built infrastructure that was predictive of a healthier community. I am an avid reader and on a daily basis I read a wide range of news sources. This helps satisfy a deep personal curiosity to understand the profound changes we are currently witnessing and perhaps identify ways I may benefit public well-being and serve my community.

What other interests or concerns do you have regarding the community?

While in graduate school at UNC Chapel Hill, I attended a talk by Dr. John Hatch, a Black Health Education faculty member, who began his career in the Mississippi Delta in the 1960's. He related the living conditions of Black sharecroppers and how this led to issuing medical prescriptions for food to these workers. This talk inspired me later on to lead a grant project on a NW Indian reservation to grow a large food garden (as an alternative to high fat USDA surplus foods) to help prevent diabetes on the reservation. Respect for organic fresh food was immediately embraced by tribal programs that spontaneously distributed the food on the reservation, at the clinic and to elders. This was the first of many community food growing projects that I have lead and assisted. I have observed the deep resonance of food in expressing human community. Conversely, food insecurity is very deleterious to community and effective governance.

I have been researching the influence of sustainability, along with food security, on public health and community well-being for many years. The escalating crisis of climate change is now annually damaging agricultural crops/systems throughout the U.S. and internationally. Climate change related severe weather events is now routinely interfering with fragile national food supply lines, which also threaten our regional food system of Harrisonburg. This is a much overlooked emerging planning issue that is of special interest to me.

Please list any past or present community involvement e.g. City Council, Board and Commissions, Citizen Academy, etc. in Harrisonburg or elsewhere:

- North East Neighborhood Association: helped build an expanded/updated NENA community garden, 2018-2019
- Citizen Academy, completed August 2018
- EPSAC, appointed Jan. 2021
- Community teaching:
 - ‘Sustainability,’ JMU LLI program, Fall 2017
 - ‘Food Growing,’ JMU LLI program, Fall 2018, Spring 2019
- (prior) Albany, NY community volunteer service
 - Member, Board of Directors, Capital District Community Gardens 1999-2005
 - Member, Solidarity Committee 1999-2009
 - Member, Capital District Alliance for Democracy 2000-2005
 - Member, NY Citizen Action 2000-2005
 - Member, Advisory Board, Occupational & Environmental Health Center 2005-2007