



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Roll Call

All Council Members except for Vice Mayor Romero were present via virtual Go-To Meeting.

Present: 4 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Council Member Richard Baugh, Council Member Christopher B. Jones and Council Member George Hirschmann

Absent: 1 - Vice-Mayor Sal Romero

Also Present: 3 - City Manager Eric Campbell, City Clerk Pam Ulmer and City Attorney Chris Brown

2. Invocation

Council Member Baugh offered the invocation

3. Special Recognition

3.a. Official introduction of new Harrisonburg Fire Chief

Eric Campbell, city manager, stated one month ago he appointed Mr. Matthew Tobia as the new fire chief, he is a 30-year veteran of the fire service and brings a lot of diverse leadership experience. He has been a deputy fire chief with the Harrisonburg Fire Department for the past year and a half, he has a commitment to the community, dedicated to the men and women of the Harrisonburg Fire Department and he looks forward to working with him. He will be sworn in on August 7th, 2020 at 11:00 am at the city Council Chambers.

Matthew Tobia stated it is truly an honor, this is an outstanding city, he is thrilled to be here and be a part of the community, the city has the single best fire department without exception, the men and women are unbelievably dedicated to providing tremendous service, to prevent harm when possible and always be prepared to place themselves between harm and the citizens they swore an oath to protect. He stated throughout the course of the unprecedented times staff has done a tremendous job of not only responding to COVID-19 related emergencies but also ensuring all aspects of the city are safe. He stated the Community Risk Reduction team has continued to reach out to children remotely, so they continue to feel connected to the prevention messages. He recognized Paul Helmuth for his tremendous leadership in the emergency management front, he has been a wealth of knowledge to every single leader in the city and has provided steady, calm, professional, science-based guidance as we work through this pandemic. He looks forward to meeting with all the Council Members, he thanked Mr. Campbell for the opportunity. Mayor Reed welcomed Chief Tobia for accepting the challenge and looks forward to working with him. Council Member Hirschmann, Council Member Baugh and

Council Member Jones both thanked him for accepting the position and they look forward to working with him.

4. Consent Agenda (any item placed on the consent agenda shall be removed and taken up as a separate matter, if so requested by any member of Council, otherwise all items will be voted on with one (1) motion)

A Motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the consent Agenda as presented.

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Council Member Baugh, Council Member Jones and Council Member Hirschmann

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Romero

4.a. Minutes from the July 14, 2020 City Council meeting

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda

4.b. Consider an ordinance amendment to Section 10-3-48(c), 10-3-48.6 and 10-3-54(c) - Other Regulations, of the Harrisonburg City Code

This ordinance amendment was approved on second reading

4.c. Consider a request from Robert D. and Gretchen M. Maust and representative Matchbox Realty to rezone 151 West Wolfe Street.

This rezoning request was approved on second reading

4.d. Consider a supplemental appropriation for the Harrisonburg City Public School division in the amount of \$411,320

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

5. Public Hearings

6. Regular Items

6.a. Presentation from City Staff and Virginia Department of Health on the Covid-19 response

Paul Helmuth, Harrisonburg Fire Department administrative officer and Harrisonburg deputy emergency coordinator, stated it has been 90 days since the last presentation to Council and this presentation represents data updated on July 27, 2020. He reviewed the following:

- Covid-19 cases in Virginia
- Comparison of statistics from June 30 to present for the Central Shenandoah Health District

- Breakdown by age group
- Breakdown by race and ethnicity
- Harrisonburg/Rockingham County daily new cases
- Harrisonburg/Rockingham County accumulative cases
- Harrisonburg weekly case count
- Nationwide ranking April 24, 2020 versus July 27, 2020
- City responses

Michael Parks, director of communications, stated staff has been working through a public relation, communications, COVID related crisis messaging since early March 2020. He stated it has been focused on crisis communication because we wanted to make sure we were getting vital, life saving information as quickly and as often as possible. He stated the focus was on two different campaigns:

1. The Six Simple Steps to Stop the Spread campaign, which is focused on staying home, social distancing, washing hands, wearing masks and the telephone number for the Virginia Department of Health. He stated though this message is simple and has been heard many times it is the most important thing that we can remind our residents to do to help stop the spread in the community.
2. One Friendly City Many Different Communities campaign which is focused on reminding everyone across the city they are all a part of working together to control the spread in the city and it relies on every single one of us to do all we can.

Mr. Parks stated we have put a lot of focus into the multi-media communications as it is very important to get the messaging out to people that may not be receiving it through our traditional means. He stated staff has been working with the Welcoming Harrisonburg Council to translate messages in a number of different languages, and have been able to put out vital life saving messaging in English, Spanish, Arabic, Kurdish, Swahili and Russian since the very beginning of the process. He stated these messages have been viewed over 80,000 times. He thanked Jessica Newman, web master and social media guru who is always on top of things and getting out messaging at a moments notice, as well as members of the Police and Fire Departments for delivering messaging door to door to make sure everyone in the community gets the messages.

Mr. Helmuth stated now that we know where we have been and what we have done it is time to figure out where we want to go from here and what to expect. He reviewed the following:

- The curve from April 1, 2020 for the city compared to another locality similar to our size.
- Recent articles of increases in numbers at different localities.
- What can increase positive cases.
- The need to continue education, evaluation, monitoring and refining/modifying

as needed.

- Facility outbreaks in the districts.
- Influx of population in the city.
- Continued testing but limited to those showing symptoms to speed up results so that contact tracing works better.

Dr. Laura Kornegay, health director for Central Shenandoah Health District, stated there have been some things learned and changed over the past three months. She reviewed the following:

- How contagious is Covid-19
- SARS-CoV-2 Transmission
- SARS-CoV-2 Environmental stability
- COVID -19 Incubation period
- Pre-symptomatic and Asymptomatic COVID-19 infection
- Symptoms
- Risk factors
- High-risk exposures
- Isolation and Quarantine
- Global information of COVID-19 cases by country
- Global fatality rates
- Global and Unites States confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths as of July 21, 2020
- United States case counts by state
- Unites States deaths by state
- Recent key COVID-19 events in Virginia
- Virginia cases
- Virginia cases by age group
- Virginia cases by race and ethnicity
- Virginia cases by facility outbreaks
- Virginia hospital statistics
- Harrisonburg statistics
- Aggregate poultry related cases
- Focus areas
- Pandemic Metrics Dashboard information
- Virginia Department of Health response
- Prevention messages

Mayor Reed stated she is concerned about gradually opening the nursing facilities and asked if VDH is working with the facilities in regard to letting visitors in, etc. Dr. Kornegay stated there will be a three-phase process and described the steps for each phase.

Mayor Reed stated she was very concerned about the testing, she doesn't want to lose them, as the more testing that can be done the more we capture those that have

the virus. She stated on August 12 we will have three universities coming back at the same time and she is concerned about the students coming back. She stated she believes VDH is working with the universities as well and we need to make sure we are on top of the influx of people, testing and education of safety protocols. Dr. Kornegay stated a lot of higher education is doing a hybrid model of both online and in person classes and are taking matters seriously.

Mayor Reed thanked Paul Helmuth for all the work he has done in leading the city during the pandemic, he has done a fantastic job and his work is appreciated. She thanked Dr. Kornegay for the update.

This Presentation was received and filed.

6.b. Consider adopting a resolution of Support for Rockingham County Smart Scale Applications

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, presented a resolution for the VDOT Smart Scale Grant for the Smithland Road widening project. This widening will be between US 11 and Old Furnace Road and will add 4-foot shoulders where possible.

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the resolution as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Council Member Baugh, Council Member Jones and Council Member Hirschmann

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Romero

7. Other Matters

7.a. Comments from the public, limited to five minutes, on matters not on the regular agenda. (Name and address are required)

The following individuals spoke on the horrid conditions, bug infestation, discrimination, safety concerns, lack of maintenance, poor management and lack of concern from the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) at Lineweaver Apartments:

Bernadette Lark, Legal Advocate and Emotional Support

Brenda Cole, president of the National Action Network, Richmond Chapter

Mr. McQueen, former resident of Lineweaver Apartments

Reverend Stephanie Stotts, resident of Lineweaver Apartments

Mr. Lark, husband of Bernadette Lark

Mayor Reed asked Ms. Lark to send all the documentation on these issues she has as and encouraged the speakers to reach out to the Board of the HRHA who need to hear the issues as well and it should be done as soon as possible.

Pamayotis "Poti" Giannakaouros, called but Council was not able to hear what he was

saying.

7.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Jones stated in regard to the public comments he will reach back out the individuals in Richmond, Virginia (Doug Seese, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Sharon Downes and Robert Dagget). He stated for four or five years he has received complaints regarding HRHA and the current director and he believes the director position is governed by the HRHA Board. City Attorney Brown confirmed. Council Member Jones stated the Board can dictate who serves as executive director. City Attorney Brown confirmed. Council Member Jones stated City Council is an extension of the city, we appoint the members to the HRHA Board, and at this point, if this level of complaints keep rising to Council and the Board isn't doing anything to change them we need to speak with the Board and make sure that people are being taken care of. He stated we need to make sure we exhaust our full authority.

Mayor Reed stated Council Member Jones and herself have had the most interaction with tenants from Lineweaver Apartments because they have been the ones the tenants come to. She stated we have been respecting the protocol of the HRHA Board, Mr. Wong, the HRHA director does not report to Council, these complaints have been heard for over a year and have been directed back to HRHA, but now it's too much. She stated any documents that are available of all of the attempts to rectify the issues from tenants should be sent to her and they will review and support anyway possible. Further discussion took place regarding the HRHA Board and it was requested the HRHA Board members contact Council and the City Manager to get someone to inspect the property. City Manager Campbell stated he will see if there are records of inspections and ask another inspection to be done.

Council Member Hirschmann stated he is appalled at what he has heard and feels bad that something hadn't been done before, something needs to be done now. He stated we need to move forward, even if it is not our responsibility to push it. Council Member Baugh agreed to proceed.

Council Member Jones stated if there are things these tenants need, if there does need to be removal of bed bugs, they should reach out to Council who can then reach out to some of the many non-profit organizations in the city for help. Council Member Hirschmann suggested we look at other buildings maintained/owned by HRHA for similar issues.

Council Member Baugh stated everyone should wear a mask, no matter if you have it or not.

Council Member Hirschmann stated on July 30, 2020 at 11:00 am at the Salvation Army there will be a truck load of chicken delivered by George's, HPD, HFD, and the media will be there, and it has been coordinated by Bucky Berry. He suggests

Council make an appearance and he will be attending.

Eric Campbell, City Manager, stated City Hall, Mosby Public Works Complex, Harrisonburg Department of Transportation, the Hardesty Higgins House, and Westover Skate Park will be open to the public beginning August 3, 2020. He stated all precautionary and safety concerns have been addressed to open these facilities to the public. He stated also effective on August 3, 2020 the following facilities will be expanding services: Westover Pool and Heritage Oaks Golf Course will expand hours of operations. He listed the facilities that will remain closed.

Mr. Campbell stated the CARES Act funding is still pending as Council requested additional detail to discuss during a Work Session. He stated we have very strict rules as to what does and doesn't qualify as a use of funds, he has had several meetings with other localities to align the spending for potential audits and reviews and the funds must be spent by December 31, 2020. He stated the categories provided to Council previously were the categories that could get the funding out into the community the quickest. He stated the theory behind it is that we would utilize infrastructure that already exists to get the funding disbursed. He stated this all needs to be documented, city expenses are ongoing including from March 2020 to present and beyond. He asked if the desire for a work session is still needed, how quickly can it be done, and how quickly can they approve the spending. He stated another segment of CARES Act funding has been released, and the city will be receiving additional funding, however, this funding will have the same restrictions.

Mayor Reed asked the Council Members if the proposed spending can be approved or if a work session is still needed.

Further discussion took place on the categories of the CARES Act funding recommendations and scheduling a work session.

8. Boards and Commissions

8.a. Harrisonburg Redevelopment Housing Authority

Discussion took place regarding tabling any new appointments to the HRHA Board.

This item was tabled

This Boards and Commissions was tabled.

8.b. Community Services Board

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Jones to reappoint Cheryl Mast to the Community Services Board for a term to expire July 28, 2023. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

8.c. Stormwater Advisory Committee (SWAC)

A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Jones, to reappoint Rob Alexander to the Stormwater Advisory Committee for a term to expire April 28, 2023. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

8.d. Planning Commission

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Baugh to appoint to the Planning Commission Adriel Byrd to an unexpired term to expire on December 31, 2023 and Deb Fitzgerald to an unexpired term to expire on December 31, 2020. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

9. Adjournment

At 9:52 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR