




CITY OF HARRISONBURG CITY MANAGER

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801
OFFICE (540) 432-7701 • FAX (540) 432-7778

TO: Ande Banks, City Manager
FROM: Matthew Tobia, Fire Chief 
DATE: 11/2/2022
RE: Proposed changes to Harrisonburg City Code Sections 5-3-1 and 5-3-2

Summary: The proposed changes will rename the Office of Emergency Services to the Office of Emergency Management, allow the Fire Chief to name a Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, and clarify that the Office of Emergency Management is part of the Fire Department.

Background: In 2004, City Council created an Office of Emergency Services with the enactment of Section 5-3-1 of the Harrisonburg City Code. At the same time, Council also enacted Section 5-3-2, which named individuals holding specific City offices to positions within the Office of Emergency Services. These City Code sections were enacted under the authority of Virginia Code Section 44-146.19, which sets forth the rights and obligations of any locality establishing a local agency for emergency preparedness.

The proposed change to Section 5-3-1 would amend the name of Harrisonburg's Office of Emergency Services to the Office of Emergency Management in order to be consistent with the language used in Va. Code Section 44-146.19.

The proposed changes to Section 5-3-2 maintain the existing status of the City Manager as Director of Emergency Management, the Deputy City Manager as Deputy Director of Emergency Management, and the Fire Chief as Emergency Management Coordinator, all as permitted or required by Va. Code Section 44-146.19. With the proposed change, the Fire Chief will be able to appoint a Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator in consultation with the City Manager. Currently, Fire Administrative Officer Paul Helmuth serves as the City's de facto Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator. With this ordinance amendment, the Fire Chief will be able to formalize that position but retain the flexibility in the future to appoint someone else to the office, again after consultation with the City Manager. Finally, a proposed change to Section 5-3-2 clarifies that the Office of Emergency Management is and will remain part of the Fire Department.

Key Issues: Change the name of the Office of Emergency Services to the Office of Emergency Management and permit the Fire Chief to appoint a Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator.



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Environmental Impact: None

Fiscal Impact: None

Prior Actions: None

Alternatives: (a) Enact one of more of the proposed amendments;
(b) Decline to enact any of the proposed amendments;

Community Engagement: None

Recommendation: Staff recommends that Council enact the proposed amendments.

Attachments: Sections 5-3-1 and 5-3-2 with proposed changes.

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.