



# City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

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Tuesday, October 19, 2021

3:00 PM

Lucy F. Simms Center

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### Worksession

#### 1. Roll Call

At 3:10 pm Mayor Reed called the work session to order. All Council Members were present as well as Eric Campbell, city manager, Chris Brown, city attorney, Pamela Ulmer, city clerk, Ande Banks, deputy city manager, Amy Snider, assistant to the city manager, Wesley Russ, assistant city attorney, Michael Parks, director of Communications, and Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development.

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

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

#### 2. Welcome / Session Overview

Eric Campbell, city manager, introduced Erica Simms, Co-Executive Director of Housing Forward Virginia, and Andrew Friedman, Principal, Progressive Housing.

Ms. Simms stated the Housing Forward Virginia organization is a broad based, statewide nonprofit partnership of public and private organizations and committed individuals. She stated they believe that all Virginians should have access to high quality, affordable housing in suitable locations. She asked each Council Member to share their housing story.

#### 3. Housing Policy Fundamentals

The City Council's Vision was reviewed in specific to housing and the direction of what Housing Forward Virginia hoped to accomplish at this Housing Summit.

Council Members were asked to answer questions regarding the following:

- What housing are you hearing is most in need?
- What constituents need better housing?
- What do you wish was in your community?

Responses were as follows:

- Mayor Reed: family homes, starter homes, better quality homes
- Council Member Jones: price point of homes needed should be between \$225,000 to \$325,000; more lower rent properties and newer high-end homes

and incentives to move out of midrange housing;

- Vice Mayor Romero: loans for those without social security numbers, loans expanded and ITN purchases and affordable large family homes;
- Council Member Dent: transitional housing with support to move up, more housing voucher properties
- Council Member Hirschmann: affordable housing purchases and rentals for the elderly

Discussion took place regarding the mismatch of housing versus income.

#### **4. Housing Efforts Across the Commonwealth**

Ms. Simms and Mr. Friedman reviewed what “affordable housing” is, and noted affordable housing isn’t a type of housing, but really means housing that is affordable to the household living in it. They shared photos of affordable housing units throughout the Commonwealth.

Council Members were asked the following questions:

- What makes a good affordable housing project?
- What have you seen that you like?
- What is important avoid in an affordable housing project?

Council Members responded as follows:

- Mayor Reed: Council needs to begin to be intentional in housing needs as the city moves forward with new developers;
- Vice Mayor Romero: Continue to help connect neighborhoods to create ownership and pride;
- Council Member Jones: Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority does not match the housing needs, the maintenance of the properties or the neighborhoods their properties are in. He noted we must be careful to not bankrupt the city in the process;
- Council Member Hirschmann: developers must start including affordable housing options or may not get approved;
- Council Member Dent: new buildings should have solar and electric vehicle charges yet affordable.

#### **Recess**

At 4:50 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting into recess.

At 5:05 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting back into session.

#### **5. Harrisonburg Housing Efforts**

Vice Mayor Romero excused himself from meeting for another obligation at 5:16pm

Ms. Simms and Mr. Friedman reviewed city data on housing, median income, median sales and rent of properties, and planned changes and noted the rewrite of the city's zoning ordinances will have an impact on future plans.

## **6. Discussion**

Amy Snider, assistant to the city manager, and Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development, spoke on the current and ongoing efforts of the implementation progress on the Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study recommendations.

Ms. Simms and Mr. Friedman reviewed new funding trajectory and funding opportunities and why a housing study is important. They reviewed why housing is expensive, who builds affordable housing, talking points to developers, and the plan for the next work session.

## **7. Recess**

At 6:38 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting into recess.