The questions and comments below were submitted prior to the Planning Commission review of the CIP by Commissioner Kettler via email on Friday, January 2, 2026.

1. **Question – Page 3:** The substantial size of traditional American fire trucks dictates the width of city streets and impacts pedestrian safety, as well as the design of parking lots and where housing can be sited. Continuing to procure large trucks is essentially locking Harrisonburg into these design requirements (https://www.independent.org/article/2024/05/01/cities-planned-around-fire-trucks/) in perpetuity. If HFD acquired smaller ladder trucks (https://opticosdesign.com/blog/if-you-want-safe-streets-buy-a-better-fire-engine/) and other vehicles to replace larger ones as they age out, how would this affect the timeline and cost for the Apparatus Replacement Program?

   Response: The size of fire apparatus in the HFD is actually getting smaller every time we make a purchase. In 2024, the Harrisonburg Fire Department took delivery of two new pumper engines that are actually smaller than previously purchased apparatus. Their turning radius is dramatically smaller than older apparatus and they are shorter and more compact, without sacrificing safety or effectiveness. These two engines are serving the city at Station 1 (Maryland Ave) and Station 4 (Rock St). An additional engine planned to be delivered in November 2026 for Station 5, will be identical in the smaller size. We also anticipate taking delivery of a new Ladder Truck in April that will also be smaller in size than the current ladder truck. The delivery timetable for apparatus in the US market has experienced dramatically negative performance in the post-pandemic environment. Fire apparatus, regardless of size, that once could be delivered in 18 months are now being delivered in four years. This is creating a condition in which Fire Chiefs must be far more pro-active in planning for apparatus replacement. European communities have buildings and roadways dating back more than 500+ years with unparalleled restrictions on replacing existing infrastructure. As a result, fire apparatus in Europe is indeed smaller. It is also the reason why European cities have dramatically more aggressive fire prevention and life safety codes that aggressively prevent fires. One of the greatest challenges facing communities in Virginia centers on the issue that Virginia is a Dillon Rule State, which prevents localities from enacting fire codes (and building codes) that are more stringent than those adopted by the Commonwealth. As a result, the Fire Official in Harrisonburg is prevented from advocating for fire prevention codes that could dramatically and permanently improve the life safety of all Harrisonburg residents. Absent more aggressive fire prevention codes (as found in Europe), the most effective way to protect the lives and property of the Harrisonburg community is to ensure a properly equipped and appropriately staffed response agency. The Fire Department would welcome the opportunity to be a stakeholder and participant in any discussion that involves ensuring the long-term health of our community. We should innovate and look for ways to work collaboratively to accomplish our common goals.

2. **Question – Page 17:** What possible changes and alternatives might this project include? E.g.: Would this mean renovation of existing space, or using other properties to supplement the existing space. I'm somewhat concerned about long-term difficulties in capacity that could lead to relocation of GDC or Circuit Court to outside downtown at

great expense, as is occurring with Staunton's courthouses. What options are being examined to maintain long-term capacity?

Response: This project is based on the renovation and/or construction of new spaces to accommodate expanding combined Harrisonburg-Rockingham court services. This can include the renovation of the recently purchased former Rockingham Motors Building, which was vacated when Moseley Architects closed their Harrisonburg offices at this location. There has been no discussion of the courts moving from downtown.

3. **Question – Page 26:** How do existing bike/ped counts detection work outside specific traffic studies?

   Response: Public Works currently utilizes this new detection system at 31 of our 93 traffic signals. At these intersections were do collection 24/7 bike ped data. For intersections that do not have this new camera system we only collect data as needed and we utilize a pole mounted camera and process the data by hand. We do have a trail counters on the Bluestone Trail, Friendly City Trail, and Northend Greenway, and that data can be viewed here https://vdotstatewidebicycleandpedestriancountprogram.eco-counter.com/.

4. **Question – Page 41:** I am very pleased to see Project #1 in particular. To what degree does awareness of desire paths like this one play a role in prioritization of funds?

   Response: The desire paths help influence the bike/ped more than a specific project. Once a new path or alignment is shown on the bike/ped plan, staff will start to look for funding opportunities.

5. **Question – Page 78/79:** What is the estimated total cost per parking spot for new Water Street and Elizabeth Street parking decks, respectively?

   Response: Approximately $30,000 per parking space.

6. **Question – Page 90:** When a school is built in such a location that cannot reasonably be accessed by walking or biking, excessive space for parking and car rider pickup is often required. This, in turn, requires more land for cars and additional lengthy shared use paths, both of which ultimately drive up costs. E.g., comparing Spotswood Elementary and Bluestone Elementary. How are these long-term transportation and parking costs factored into the cost of a new acquisition?

   Response: When we begin the process of securing land for future schools, we will take into consideration the long-term transportation and parking costs as well as other factors including the school type, the effective capacity of the school that we would desire, physical education & playground space needs, vehicle site circulation (buses, parent-drop-off, and service traffic), other transportation changes that have occurred in the last 5 years, and the VA Department of Education guidelines for school site considerations. The VA Department of Education guidelines for school facilities information can be found at

the following link (see information beginning at the bottom of page 15): https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/38810/638064315916330000.

7. **Question – Page 145:** The desirability of the transfer center is well-described in HDPT's Transit Strategic Plan. Please clarify the intended users and purpose of the "park and ride" portion of the proposal. Please also provide a copy, if possible, of the results of the 2022 Harrisonburg Multimodal Transit Center Feasibility Study.

   Response: We are currently on a month-to-month lease at our existing transit and transfer center. The proposed park-and-ride facility is designed to encourage residents and visitors to park their vehicles and use public transit to attend various events citywide. This facility is envisioned as part of a broader network that could eventually accommodate stops for services like the Virginia Breeze or Brite Bus. It will be especially beneficial for event attendees, such as those attending football games and events at the Atlantic Union Bank Center, thereby alleviating traffic congestion on city roads. Park-and-ride lots also promote carpooling. Additionally, establishing such a facility enhances our competitiveness for state and federal grants, which could fund essential amenities such as a building with restrooms, waiting area, and a police post.

   A copy of the 2022 Harrisonburg Multimodal Transit Center Feasibility Study is included with these responses.

8. **Question – Page 146:** Given long intervals for most buses, passengers sometimes have long wait times in poor weather for their ride. Is there an estimate on how ridership is affected by lack of bus shelters and benches?

   Response: We are currently in the process of procuring bus shelters and benches for installation at various stops throughout the city. One challenge is that we are unable to place these structures on private property. Therefore, we collaborate with Public Works to identify areas within the public right-of-way where shelters and benches can be situated. Additionally, we seek to incorporate bus stop and shelter amenities into the site plan approval process for larger developments. Although it is difficult to quantify how ridership is affected by the absence of bus shelters, evidence suggests that ridership is more influenced by frequency of service. Providing a safe, clean, and well-lit waiting area can significantly encourage the use of public transit.

The questions and comments below were submitted prior to the Planning Commission review of the CIP by Commissioner Jezior via email on Sunday, January 4, 2026.

9. **Question – Page #2**: Will there be any overlap in the area that the new station #5 and the existing station #4 cover? $7.5 million for a new station seems like a lot when we are already in the process of building a new station a mile away.

   Response: Each Fire Station has its own response district. The goal in all districts within the city is to accomplish a four-minute travel time performance metric 90% of the time to

all high priority calls. The addition of Station 5 dramatically improves response times in the Park View community. This also ensures that Engine 4 is available for more calls in their own response district, also cutting response times. On multi-company responses (when more than one engine is needed) Engine 4 and Engine 5 work together to ensure service delivery. Fire Station 4 is properly located geographically for the heart of the city and the northeast neighborhood in which it is located.

10. **Question – Page #4**: $1 million for land acquisition, and $8 million for a future station. Is this station going to be larger than what we currently have for station #2. $8 million for a future station when we have $7.5 million budgeted for next year on station #4 seems like a low estimate.

    Response: New station #2 will be smaller than proposed station #4. Current Station #4 is approximately 30,000 sq. ft, where proposed Fire Station #4 is estimated between 22,000-24,000 sq. ft. A replacement Fire Station #2 will be proposed at 14,000 sq. ft., similar to Fire Station #5.

11. **Question – Page #19:** Where / what is $24 million being used on for building renovations? This seems like a lot for this facility.

    Response: The total cost is now estimated to be $25.8 million. This cost estimate was produced by a professional construction cost estimating firm based on the plan set developed by contracted architects and engineers for combined restoration of the historic old Municipal Building and renovation of City Hall to reconfigure City departments within the 2015 structure to accommodate future growth. In 2013 when the new City Hall structure was designed it was the intention for the historic old Municipal Building structure (built in three phases in 1879, 1901 and 1908) to be restored and converted to City office space in the future and for the two structures to operate as one unified City Hall complex. In anticipation of this, the historic structure's interior was demolished in 2018 with exception of historic features (e.g. wood floors, tin ceilings) and walls reflecting the historic building layout from when it operated as a City school. The restoration work is extensive, as the historic structure must be outfitted with entirely new plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems, address 1919 fire damage, meet State-mandated LEED Silver designation, and preserve key historic features.

12. **Question – Page #22**: $4.75 million for a 50-foot bridge is going to come out to roughly $100,000 a foot. This seems excessive. Changing the bridge, as the alternate option suggests, to a pedestrian use only seems like a better use.

    Response: Comment acknowledged.

13. **Question – Page #34:** This is disappointing that the funding for the safe route to schools' path was not included in the original budget for the new high school. I see students walking down the side of rt 11 now because there is no sidewalk, and no other place for them to go. This should be build sooner rather than later as the cost is only increasing.

Response: Comment acknowledged.

14. **Question – Page #48:** For this new addition, a mixed-use path instead of a 5' sidewalk should be included. Cars routinely drive 40+ mph down Erickson as they transition from Stone Spring Road. A painted bike lane at these speeds is not the recommended type of separation per USDOT guidelines. Save the 10' of road space and make these multi-use paths.

    Response: These are proffered conditions associated with the Bluestone Town Center development.

15. **Question – Page #115:** What will the energy offset be for this project? If we are spending $1.2 million for solar panels, will this fully offset energy for the school? What will be the ROI?

    Response: Estimated 94% building energy use offset from 2024 evaluation. Assuming $225,000 annual electricity costs for Rocktown, with zero electricity cost inflation, the payback would be 5.67 years. The 2024 evaluation provided a 110% 25 year ROI using a 1.2% utility inflation rate (system lifetime maintenance was also included in their calculation).

16. **Question – Page #145:** We have land acquisition noted. Would this be acquiring the existing facility or creating a new one? If it's new, wouldn't additional cost need to be included for construction?

    Response: The acquisition of a new property/facility is being considered. Currently, we are operating on a month-to-month lease at our existing transit/transfer center located at the Roses Shopping Center across from the Rockingham County office building. The current owner has listed the property for sale. Although additional construction costs are anticipated, we plan to seek state and federal grants to assist in covering these expenses.