



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, June 25, 2024

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Roll Call

Present: 4 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Laura Dent, Council Member Dany Fleming and Council Member Monica Robinson

Absent: 1 - Council Member Christopher B. Jones

Also Present: 5 - City Manager Ande Banks, City Clerk Pam Ulmer, Chief Matthew Tobia, Deputy City Attorney Wesley Russ and Deputy Police Chief Rod Pollard

2. Invocation

Council Member Robinson offered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance

4. Special Recognition

4.a. Proclamation Declaring July 2024 as Parks and Recreation Month

Mayor Reed presented a proclamation recognizing July 2024 as Parks and Recreation Month to a group of children from the Parks and Recreation Summer Camp program.

5. 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 Robinson, seconded by Council Member Fleming, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

5.a. Minutes from the June 11, 2024 City Council meeting.

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda

- 5.b.** Consider a request from Mehre Tu Zeray Tekle and Rahel Yosief Hailu for a rezoning to amend the Brookside Park Master Plan to create exceptions for 979 Roberts Court

This rezoning was approved on second reading

- 5.c.** Consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to further regulate the location of tobacco, smoke, or vape shops

This ordinance amendment was approved on second reading

- 5.d.** Consider enacting Section 10-8-1 - Affordable Housing Fee Waiver Program to the City Code of Ordinances

This ordinance enactment was approved on second reading

- 5.e.** Consider a supplemental appropriation for the General Capital Projects Fund

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

- 5.f.** Consider a supplemental appropriation for lease and subscription-based IT agreements

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

6. Public Hearings

- 6.a.** Consider approving real estate tax exemption and personal property tax exemption status for Strength in Peers, Inc.; real estate tax exemption and personal property tax exemption status for Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project, Inc.; and personal property tax exemption status for Our Community Place

Karen Rose, Commission of the Revenue, reviewed the requirements to apply for real estate and personal property tax exemptions and presented three requests for exemptions as follows:

Strength in Peers applied for real estate tax exemption in the amount of \$4,255.13 and personal property tax exemption in the amount of \$503.42. She reviewed the services offered by Strength in Peers.

Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project Inc., (SVBHP) applied for real estate tax exemption in the amount of \$1,122.11 and personal property tax exemption in the amount of \$169.96. She reviewed the services offered by SVBHP.

Our Community Place, applied for personal property tax exemption in the amount of \$1,214.41. She reviewed the services offered by the organization.

Mrs. Rose stated the review committee recommended approval of all three applicant requests.

Council Member Fleming spoke on the importance of this option to organizations that provide critical services in the community, it allows funds to be freed up and used for the work they are doing.

At 7:16 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the regular session and called the first public hearing to order. A notice appeared in the Daily News-Record on Tuesday, June 18, 2024.

Nickey Fadely, executive director of Strength in Peers, stated the organization is grateful for the City Council's consideration of the tax exemption request, every dollar is needed for the services they provide.

At 7:18 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the public hearing and the regular session reconvened.

Council Member Robinson stated the Virginia State and Local Conflict Of Interest Act requires that she make the following disclosure to be recorded in the city records on any matter from which he is prohibited by law from participating:

1. The transaction involved is a request for tax exemption from the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project.
2. Her personal interest in the transaction is that she is an employee of Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project.
3. She affirms she will not vote or any manner act on behalf of city council on this matter

A motion was made by Council Member Fleming, seconded by Council Member Robinson, to approve the request for Strength and Peers as presented. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Dent, seconded by Council Member Fleming, to approve the request for Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project Inc., as presented. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 3 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent and Council Member Fleming

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

Abstain: 1 - Council Member Robinson

A motion was made by Council Member Robinson, seconded by Council Member Fleming, to approve the request for Our Community Place, as presented. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

7. Regular Items

7.a. Consider approving the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation's Transit Strategic Plan

Gerald Gatobu, director of Public Transportation, stated the Transit Strategic Plan is a ten-year plan and is required by the State in order to receive funding.

Ms. Danielle McCray, transportation planner with Kimley Horn, provided the following on the Transit Strategic Plan (TSP):

- What the TSP is;
- What the TSP provides;
- The project schedule;
- Outreach and Engagement;
- Public Survey Findings;
- Draft Strategic Plan Document;
- Proposed changes - overview;
- Proposed changes - short term (FY25);
- Proposed changes - long-term (FY33);
- Implementation considerations; and
- Financial Considerations;

Mayor Reed asked for a breakdown of the financial projections for 2-years and 10-years. Ms. McCray, stated on page nine of the executive summary the breakdowns are provided.

Council Member Fleming stated we are so lucky to have such a professional and qualified team to bring a transportation system that exceeds what we might expect otherwise. He stated it's important to have a system that provides the ability for people to get to and from work, doctors, groceries etc. He stated the amount of data collected was immense, and the TSP helps increase efficiency and adds service where needed. He is grateful for the work that went into this.

Council Member Robinson stated we live in an area with a high Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) population, and transportation is one of the big barriers for employment and the TSP addresses that and she is very thankful for that and all the work that was done on this plan.

Mayor Reed asked about the funding needed for this plan on Table 8 of the plan. Mr. Gatobu stated they are trying to make sure the service is provided, and even

now the services have already been extended by 2 hours. He spoke on staffing, upfront costs, and the Virginia Transit Authority conference. He stated Council will be updated on a regular basis regarding funding needs.

Vice Mayor Dent stated she appreciated all the hard work in this plan, she is a huge proponent of public transportation. She stated it is good to know that this plan is geared more towards the working population and the bi-directional piece of this plan will help with the needs there. Mr. Gatobu spoke on the slow implementation of the bi-directional plan and what the needs are. Vice Mayor Dent asked about the potential for electric buses for public transportation. Mr. Gatobu stated a comprehensive study will need to be done to identify the needs for facilities and will continue to look into what is needed. He spoke on the EPA Grant for the electric school buses. Vice Mayor Dent asked where does the micro-transit system feasibility study stand. Mr. Gatobu stated they received a demonstration grant and hopefully be able to do a pilot program next year.

Further discussion took place amongst Council and Mr. Gatobu regarding the services and bus stop work needed.

A motion was made by Council Member Fleming, seconded by Vice Mayor Dent, to approve the Transportation Strategic Plan as presented. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

7.b. Presentation on Asset Limited Income Restrained Employed (ALICE) population

Jo Benjamin, director of Community Impact for United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, presented an update on the Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) population. She reviewed the following:

- What ALICE is and the income threshold;
- Virginia ALICE statistics and demographics in 2024;
- ALICE statistics and demographics in the city;
- ALICE families with children;
- RockBurg CARES Network;
 - Information & Referral,
 - ALICE Assistance Fund
 - Financial Education Services;
- Civic and Community Organizations Grant expenditures for FY 23-24:
 - RockBurg CARES inquiries FY23-24;
 - ALICE Assistance Fund payments for city residents;

Mayor Reed asked if the numbers served increased in the County. Ms. Benjamin stated there has been an increase in the County.

Ms. Benjamin shared some of the stories of how RockBurg Cares Network helped individuals.

Discussion took place regarding the Financial Education Services offered and the possible future involvement of the city with those services with grants etc.

Ms. Benjamin shared some of the upcoming activities that United Way will be hosting.

No action required

This Presentation was received and filed.

7.c. Presentation of the proposed Sentara Community Care Mobile Clinic

Amy Snider, deputy city manager, proposed a partnership with Sentara's Community Care Clinic for a mobile clinic that is proposed to operate at two city properties.

Onesimo Baltazaar Corona, Director of Operations for Sentara Community Care, stated Community Care is a new model to bring neighborhood-level health and wellness services to historically marginalized and under-resourced communities and to improve total health. He reviewed the following:

- Partnering on the path to total health and well-being;
- Addressing root causes;
- Sentara Community Care: Care Model mission;
- Partnerships;
- Uniquely designed Care Team;
- Uniquely designed Care Services;
- Social drivers of health model: link to community services;
- Sentara Community Care in Harrisonburg;
- Heat maps for prioritizing areas;
- Map of Virginia Regional Plan;
- Sentara Community Care locations and growth;

Mayra Gavia Molina, Practice Manager Registered Nurse for Sentara Community Care, shared a story of a family and how they, among many, would benefit from the mobile clinic, she stated over 700 people have been serviced by the mobile clinic and provided about 1700 vaccines at the schools.

Mayor Reed stated she remembers the mobile clinic last year during a community health event. Mr. Corona stated that bus is in Richmond currently, but there is another one being serviced to be used in the city.

Council Member Fleming spoke on preventative care and how this could translate to lower costs for insurance companies.

Mr. Corona stated the preventative care is crucial and insurance companies are supporting the program. Ms. Molina stated financial assistance is available for care for those that need it.

Mayor Reed stated the community engagement of Sentara Community Care is amazing, they are everywhere, and this mobile unit will only increase that.

Council Member Robinson stated Sentara Community Care takes healthcare to the streets, the need is there, she spoke on the elderly needs, and what a wonderful program this is.

Further discussion took place regarding the services rendered, the future of the program, and the great things being done by Sentara.

Ms. Snider stated the ask to Council is to approve a partnership with Sentara and a Space License Agreement so the Mobile Care Unit could be placed on two city properties: Ralph Sampson Park and the Homeless Services Center when it opens. Ms. Snider stated the other component is that there is a financial component to partially cover the expense to upgrade the parking lot and add a power station for the mobile unit at the Homeless Services Center in the amount of \$15,000 cost to the city. She stated we received a grant for partial coverage of this project from a Sentara Cares Grant. She stated the mobile unit will still be open to everyone no matter of the location.

Mayor Reed stated the Homeless Services Center will have access to the mobile unit, the JMU Suitcase Clinic and the Paramedic program on site. Further discussion took place on the types of services that will be available.

Council Member Fleming asked if additional locations in the city will be added at some point. Mr. Corona stated the plan is to go where the needs are both on public property and private property.

A motion was made by Council Member Fleming, seconded by Council Member Robinson, to approve the request as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

8. Reallocations

- 8.a.** Consider a reallocation of funds in the General Capital Projects Fund for the Mt Clinton Pike project.

Ande Banks, city manager, presented a reallocation for funds from three closed and completed capital projects to the Northend Greenway extension along Mt.

Clinton Pike, in the amount of \$236,000.

Vice Mayor Dent stated she is impressed that three projects were completed under budget, it reflects good city management.

A motion was made by Council Member Robinson, seconded by Vice Mayor Dent, to approve the reallocation as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

Yes: 4 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jones

9. Other Matters

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

James August Worsing, Jr., stated he is interested in gifting the city with a granite memorial at the at the I-81 exit 247B, to honor all the nations that have come to the city. He stated he is fundraising for the memorial, and needed to know what has to be done to determine the owner of the property, easements etc. Mayor Reed asked him to stay till after the meeting so his information can be obtained by the city manager.

9.b. City Council and Staff

Vice Mayor Dent spoke on the National League of Cities Summit Leadership meeting in California, as the Vice-Chair for the Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources (EENR) Committee and some of the topics discussed; the solar installation at the new Public Works building;

Council Member Robinson spoke on the Gay Street Reconfiguration meeting and the Review Your Splash Pad public meeting; Chief Warner's send-off; the NAACP Juneteenth Celebration in Bridgewater; and a retreat she attended with the Chesapeake Bay Trust;

Council Member Fleming asked Council to consider giving Mr. Banks direction related to obtaining a population study through Weldon Cooper to see where the city is growing. Mr. Banks stated he sees the benefit of doing a deeper dive into a population analysis as well as trend data. He stated Council makes policy decisions all the time such as affordable housing, capital projects such as new schools, and a whole host of programmatic and service delivery considerations that would benefit from a better understanding of the demographics of our community. He stated he could present to Council at the July 9, 2024, Council meeting with costs associated with this request. Council members approved the request.

Council Member Fleming spoke on the June 2, 2024 Harrisonburg Fire

Department Promotion Ceremony; the National Town and Gown Association conference; the National League of Cities Summit Leadership meeting in California as part of the Administration and Intergovernmental Relations committee; the Urban Institute Policies to Expand Equitable (Affordable) Housing virtual summit; the recent Harrisonburg Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) meeting; and the JMU Regional Summit on October 15, 2024;

Vice Mayor Dent spoke on the Smart Scale grants through the HRMPO;

Mayor Reed spoke on the Juneteenth Celebration on June 16, 2024; the Virginia Historic and Landmark Register Committee meeting; the dedication ceremony for the new mural on the side of Magnolia's called "Release" in honor of a professor from JMU that passed; and her invite to an upcoming summit called "Engage Every Student" in Washington DC;

10. Closed Session

11. Adjournment

At 9:49 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR