



# City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

---

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

---

### Work Session

#### 1. Roll Call

All Council Members and staff present via virtual GoTo Meeting.

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

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

#### 2. Regular Items

##### 2.a. Discussion of the CARES Act funding distribution

Eric Campbell, city manager, provided an overview of the CARES Act pending plan recommended by staff which follows guidelines and direction set forth by the Northam Administration and guidance by Secretary of Finance, Aubrey Layne, which establishes that this funding must be used for expenses directly related to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and only for expenses incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30 2020. He stated in putting the spending plan together staff took into consideration the established and adopted City Council Vision to guide funding recommendations. He stated staff worked with valley partners and communities to ensure a consistent understanding of what the funds could and could not be used for. He reviewed the focus of the CARES Act proposal, the CARES Act parameters, the primary expenditure categories and a breakdown of each. He stated he has been notified of an additional \$4.6M in CARES Act funding will be provided to the city but will have the same parameters and time frame as the initial funding.

Mayor Reed stated she would like to see childcare included in the community assistance funding and recommend that it be given to the Community Foundation and United Way's joint response fund. Mr. Campbell stated one of the big issues of this funding is that it must be able to be audited and tracked, mixing these funds into another fund will make it difficult to track properly. He stated they are checking into adding childcare into the funding recommendations but waiting to hear on the parameters associated with that through the auditors. She asked about the additional funding. Mr. Campbell stated the additional funds may have different parameters and are waiting on guidance from Washington on how the funds can be

used.

Council Member Jones asked if the funding going to utility assistance is an option or a requirement. Mr. Campbell stated it is an option. Council Member Jones stated funding is available Social Services to take care of cooling and heating costs for members that qualify. He stated if funding is available from other sources, we should not be paying for programs that already are in existence. Mr. Campbell stated if it is Councils desire to remove utility assistance, he can direct the Community Foundation to no distribute for that category. Mr. Larry Propst stated these funds would be used for those individuals who are behind on their utility bills. Council Member Jones stated he believed Social Services is covering the heating and cooling needs and we should only cover water and sewer utility assistance. Further discussion took place regarding the parameters and staff was asked to check on what assistance is already being offered by other organizations prior to the appropriations ordinance public hearing on August 11, 2020. Council Member Jones stated he supports the Mayor's request to add childcare and requests to remove utility assistance for heating and cooling.

Council Member Jones asked if the CARES Act funding for the school is for expenses already incurred by the schools and since the schools have declared they will not physically hold classes why do they need funding for facility modifications, cleaning/disinfectant/laundry services, among a few other things. He asked how much is going to these items, how much are they using of it, etc. Mr. Propst stated the majority of funding is for costs already incurred. Further discussion took place regarding how the funding was used for costs incurred and it was noted that less than \$10,000 was used for facility modifications such as plexiglass etc.

Vice Mayor Romero stated he wants to make sure the access ease to the business assistance funding is available, specifically with those where language may be a barrier. He stated he would be happy to promote this information to the immigrant and Latino community. He asked if the additional PPE funding is for the operations of the city or does it include PPE for the broader community. Mr. Campbell stated the bulk of the funding for PPE's are for city employees and first responders, as well as for opening of facilities to the public.

Vice Mayor Romero stated there is a lot of need for the community assistance funding and the fact that the organizations are not receiving enough applicants from those in need for assistance is due to lack of access to resources. He stated we have a very diverse community, many of which lack proper documentation and with policies and practices in place may eliminate them from applying or being eligible. He stated it is critical to look at how we can ensure assistance is available to everyone in the city, regardless of their documentation status.

Council Member Jones stated he is aware that the Economic Development department is working hard at getting the information out in all languages. Vice Mayor Romero stated he would like to see the detailed plan on how all this information will be getting out to everyone in the city. Mayor Reed stated the one thing that concerns her is that it is critical for United Way to be involved as they work with the vulnerable people in the community and are usually contacted first.

Mr. Campbell stated even if we work in partnership with community organizations, they still must meet the requirements of the CARES Act funding parameters and still need to be able to be audited.

Council Member Jones stated points are well taken about United Way knowing about the needs of the residents and he is aware that United Way has worked with the Community Foundation on joint efforts, however, he feels the United Way may not be set up ideally for this type of funding disbursement as they usually only handle an annual fund raising push and grant review, Community Foundation handles these types of funding on a more regular basis throughout the year.

Council Member Jones asked if Council would agree to put the community funds into the United Way fund account through the Community Foundation. Mayor Reed stated United Way should be involved in some way with helping the distribution of funds. Mr. Propst stated United Way could work with the Community Foundation. Council Member Jones asked if we can designate the funds to the United Way through the Community Foundation or make it a requirement that United Way have input as to how the funds are spent. Mr. Propst stated it would be best to make it a requirement for United Way input. Council Member Baugh stated it would be cleaner that way. Further discussion took place and decision was made to include United Way in the decision-making process of disbursement of CARES Act funds given to the Community Foundation.

Vice Mayor Romero asked if there is any language in the parameters of the CARES Act funding that specify who is and isn't allowed to receive funding in regard to documented status. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Propst stated there isn't anything in the requirements to disqualify recipients.

Mr. Campbell asked for Council's approval to fund the categories as presented with the changes requested by Council, in order to move forward to the public hearing on the appropriations ordinance at the August 11, 2020 City Council meeting. Council Member Jones asked if we could get more detail on the schools funding for the next \$4.6M and if they are getting their own CARES Act funding why are we giving them \$700,000 of ours. Mr. Propst stated most of the funding categories under the school funding has been for monies already spent and they cannot use their CARES Act funding for those expenditures.

Vice Mayor Romero stated since the pandemic began we have recognized on a much deeper level how access to technology is needed in our city and asked if some of the CARES Act funding could be used to take care of the infrastructure needs as many of our students and families don't have the connectivity they need to connect with schools and individuals. He stated perhaps funds from the second round could be used. Mr. Campbell stated there are some restrictive guidelines in regard to infrastructure expenses but staff has been working with the schools and the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation to make sure we use the vehicles to boost the WIFI capabilities in underserved neighborhoods and will continue to work in that capacity to expand. He stated he spoke with Dr. Richards, superintendent of Harrisonburg City Public Schools and will work jointly to expand that net and strengthen the WIFI throughout the city. Mr. Propst stated part of the schools CARES Act funding distribution is to operate Smart Bus WIFI. Mr. Ande Banks, deputy city manager, stated some of that funding was also used to purchase hundreds of Chrome Books for middle school students and above.

Mayor Reed stated she is concerned about the additional funding coming and we as Council need to start discussing the fund disbursement for that as soon as possible. She asked if there is anything particular that they want from staff as far as breakdowns or specific funding needs that can be discussed during a work session next week. Council Member Jones stated this shouldn't be a double dip, we should give funding to others instead of the same categories as the first funding is being sent. Mr. Campbell stated one thing is that with JMU opening and schools opening there is still a question mark of the unknown of where the additional funding may need to be used. Mr. Campbell stated any funds not spent must be sent back, but he does hope they will have more flexibility on how to use the funds compared to the first round. Further discussion took place regarding the additional funding. Council Member Hirschmann stated we should get insight on how the first funding is disbursed which will help make a decision on who the second disbursements should go to.

Council agreed to schedule a work session for next week, date and time to be determined.

Council Member Jones reiterated he wanted the utility piece to reflect water and sewer only, childcare added, and add that United Way has oversight of the disbursement of the community assistance funding. Council Member Baugh asked what it means to say that United Way must be involved in the oversight of the disbursement, does this give them a level of control that is beyond what is required for the situation. Further conversation took place on how United Way should be involved.

Vice Mayor Romero asked if the process to obtain funds under certain criteria would

be via an application process which would be reviewed by the Community Foundation. He stated he thinks the collaboration of organizations at that point would be key. Mr. Campbell stated a Memorandum of Agreement with the Community Foundation would be created outlining how the funds would be distributed based on the current guidance from the state. Council Member Hirschmann stated in the agreement it could be stated if United Way is used in an advisory capacity it would be sufficient. Further discussion took place and Council asked that the United Way has advisory capacity on distributions of funds in the Memorandum of Agreement.

**A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann to approve the CARES Act funding with amendments requested by Council. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:**

**Yes:** 5 - Mayor Reed, Romero, Council Member Baugh, Council Member Jones and Council Member Hirschmann

**No:** 0

**3. Adjournment**

At 6:17 pm, there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY CLERK

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR