



# City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

## Office of the City Manager

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Kurt D. Hodgen  
City Manager

TO: Mayor Jones and Members of Harrisonburg City Council  
FROM: Kurt Hodgen, City Manager  
DATE: November 8, 2016  
RE: MRRJ Accreditation

**Summary:** At a recent Council meeting further information on accreditation programs for jails, as it pertains to the Middle River Regional Jail, was requested from staff.

**Background:** There are two types of accreditation applicable and available to jails: 1) Accreditation of the jail and operations in their entirety; and, 2) Accreditation of the jails medical facilities and operations only. The agencies that convey the designations are the American Correction Association (ACA), and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), respectively.

**Key Issues:** Prior to Harrisonburg and Rockingham becoming members of the Middle River Regional Jail Authority (MRRJ), its Board of Directors had given some consideration to seeking accreditation. At that time, the Board decided not to do so. Since Harrisonburg and Rockingham became members in 2015, certain allegations about treatment of inmates at the jail, both in terms of general operations and relative to medical issues, have come to light and a lawsuit has subsequently been filed.

MRRJ, like all other jails operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia, is required to be certified by the Department of Corrections in order to operate. Some jails choose to go a step further and seek accreditation by an "outside agency" to supplement their Department of Corrections certification. The attached pages summarize the accreditation options available to MRRJ and include information about the benefits and costs of pursuing accreditation as well as other resource information.

Currently, fourteen of the 62 local or regional jails in Virginia are ACA accredited. At the time of this report, information was not available as to the number of those jails that are NCCHC accredited.

**Environmental Impact:** N/A

**Fiscal Impact:** To be determined. Jail accreditation will cost at least \$15,000 initially, plus expenses for ACA Auditors. Re-accreditation takes place every three years. Medical facilities accreditation cost information was not available at the time of this report.

**Prior Actions:** No prior action has been taken on this issue by the Harrisonburg City Council.

**Alternatives:** (a) Council could formally request MRRJ to reconsider pursuing accreditation  
(b) Council could seek further information from those Virginia jails or regional jails that are currently accredited to ascertain their views and opinions on accreditation; or  
(c) Take no action at this time

**Community Engagement:** Those members of the community who have been the most active and engaged in jail issues have spoken out in support of seeking accreditation.

**Recommendation:** Staff is seeking further direction from Council and has no recommendation at this time.

**Attachments:** Information summary on Jail and Jail Medical Facilities accreditation programs.

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