



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Roll Call

Present: 5 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Laura Dent, Council Member Christopher B. Jones, Council Member Dany Fleming and Council Member Monica Robinson

Also Present: 5 - City Manager Ande Banks, City Attorney Chris Brown, City Clerk Pam Ulmer, Police Chief Kelley Warner and Chief Matthew Tobia

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 recognizing March 2024 as Youth Art Month

Mayor Reed presented a proclamation recognizing March as Youth Art Month to Andrew Stavers.

Mr. Stavers thanked Council and recommended they go to the Valley Mall to see all the art the students have done.

4.b. Proclamation recognizing March 2024 as Brain Injury Awareness Month

Mayor Reed read the Proclamation recognizing March as Brain Injury Awareness Month to Anne Taetzsch Fitzgerald, executive director of Brain Injury Connections of the Shenandoah Valley (BISCV). Ms. Byrd introduced John Norman, board member for BISCV, who stated he was a former client of BISCV and now on the board. He shared his experiences and the challenges of those with brain injuries.

4.c. Proclamation recognizing Governmental Purchasing Month 2024

Mayor Reed presented the proclamation to Nicole Robertson, Procurement Specialist, Sr., and Shane Smith, Procurement Manager, Department of Finance. Ms. Robertson thanked Council and city staff for all they do to help the procurement department.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

5.a. Minutes from the February 13, 2024 City Council meeting

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda

5.b. Consider a request from Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority to rezone 715 North Main Street

This rezoning request was approved on second reading.

5.c. Consider a supplemental appropriation for the purchase of real estate

This supplemental was approved on second reading

5.d. Consider the special event application request for the United Way's Day of Action Post Event Celebration on Friday, May 31 from 3-5pm.

This special event application was approved on the consent agenda.

5.e. Consider the special event application request for the Shenandoah Valley Pride Celebration on Saturday, September 21, 2024.

This special event application was approved on the consent agenda.

6. Public Hearings

6.a. Public Hearing on the VDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant for the Country Club Road Sidewalk Project

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, presented information on the VDOT TAP grant for the Country Club Road Sidewalk Project, noting that funding was awarded two years ago. He reviewed the funding, the schedule, and schematic of the sidewalk construction.

At 7:22 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 Daily News-Record on Wednesday, January 24, 2024, and Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Jessica Pyle, spoke in favor of the project.

At 7:24 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the public hearing and the regular session reconvened.

This item was received and filed.

6.b. Consider granting a Gas Pipeline Easement across public lands of the City of Harrisonburg

Chris Brown, city attorney, presented a request for an easement to Columbia Gas for a pipeline across the South Main Street parking lot. He stated Sentara is now the owner of the former Free Clinic downtown and needs to replace its gas service line. He stated the work will be done mainly at night and should minimally affect downtown business and traffic.

At 7:26 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the regular session and called the second public hearing to order. A notice appeared in the Daily News-Record on Daily News-Record on Friday, February 16, 2024.

There being no one desiring to be heard, Mayor Reed closed the public hearing at 7:27 p.m., and the regular session reconvened.

Vice Mayor Dent stated she is not in theory a fan of more fossil fuel infrastructure, but in practice we need it.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7. Regular Items

7.a. Consider adopting a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and Israel

Mayor Reed stated there have been several conversations throughout the community on a resolution and she shared that she takes her position on City Council seriously to elevate voices to be heard, serve the community and make an impact. She spoke on listening to both communities and establishing discussions, and what she plans to do further on this issue.

Vice Mayor Dent read the resolution and reviewed the process and purpose that went into the writing of the resolution with Council Member Robinson.

Council Member Robinson reviewed her thoughts and her process in the shared writing of the resolution. She recommended one word be added to the resolution. Discussion took place amongst Council regarding the recommendation.

Council Member Fleming shared his thoughts on the resolution and stated those in power at the State and Federal level need to hear from constituents.

Council Member Jones stated this subject matter is beyond the scope of City Council, we need to see this type of participation for local level discussions with the same passion and take more active roles.

A motion was made by Council Member Robinson, seconded by Vice Mayor Dent, to adopt the resolution as originally presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

RECESS

At 7:55 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting into recess.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting back into session.

7.b. Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) Update on Downtown Banner Designs

Andrea Dono, executive director of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, presented an update on the Downtown Banners Project. She reviewed the project summary, what has been done to date, the general design concept, samples of the banners, the Downtown Ducks artist call to students, and the partnerships of the project.

Council was pleased with the banners and the project.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7.c. Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance Out of the Box Traffic Cabinet Art Project

Andrea Dono, executive director of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), presented the Traffic Cabinet Art Wrap Project. She reviewed photos of examples of the art wraps in other localities throughout the nation, the project proposal, reasons why this project would be good for the city, how this project would be implemented, locations of the traffic cabinets, and the timeline of the project. She stated there will be a virtual information session for artists on March 12, 2024, and information can be found on the Arts Council of the Valley's (ACV) website and noted that the ACV and other partnerships made this possible.

Council thanked Ms. Dono and how much HDR is doing for the city, how it would be nice to see these all throughout the city and possibly reflect the history of the many

different industries and neighborhoods throughout the city.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7.d. Presentation from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

Michael McKee, director of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank (BRAFB), provided an overview of the needs in the area, the mission and vision of BRAFB, the strategic direction, impacts to the communities they serve, partnerships with local non-profit organizations, and the difficulties in sustaining the food bank. He stated BRAFB is in need of everyone to convince Congress to strengthen the Farm Bill and the nation's safety net for food security.

Council thanked Mr. McKee and his staff for the wonderful work they do, how surprised they were of the needs of the BRAFB, and the need for more conversations with Mr. McKee and Council Members.

This Presentation was received and filed.

7.e. Consider approving a donation to the Parks and Recreation Department from the Swim for Sadie Fund managed by the Deeble Family.

Brian Mancini, director of Parks and Recreation, presented a request to accept a \$50,000 legacy donation from the Swim for Sadie Memorial Fund managed by the Deeble Family to the Parks and Recreation Department for a Swim by Second program providing free swimming lessons to Harrisonburg City School children in Kindergarten through 2nd grade. He stated on October 25, 2022, Sadie Deeble passed away at the age of 13 years old, she was an avid swimmer and spent a lot of time at Westover Pool, she was on the swim team and the Valley Swim League, and shared photographs of Sadie. He shared personal memories of Sadie.

Paul Deeble and Jenni Visger, parents of Sadie, stated the Sadie Memorial Fund was established by over 235 individual donations from friends and family of Sadie. They shared stories of her passion for swimming and for people in general and hopes this donation compliments who she was as a person and her continued memory that lives within so many people. They shared stories of the compassion Sadie had for anything she did and anyone she came in contact with.

Council thanked everyone who donated to the Sadie Memorial Fund and thanked the family for entrusting us to honor Sadie and for her memory and life to live on. This program will help so many children. They thanked the family for sharing their stories of Sadie.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7.f. Consider approving a donation to the Parks and Recreation Department from the Harrisonburg Little League Association

Brian Mancini, director of Parks and Recreation, presented a request to accept a legacy donation from the Harrisonburg Little League Association (HLLA) in the amount of \$33,364 for multiple score board installations and a storage shed at Purcell Park. He stated the logistics will be done through the Parks and Recreation Department according to city guidelines.

Council Member Fleming stated Dean Warlitner, President of Harrisonburg Little League has worked tirelessly for this program.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Fleming, to approve the request as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows.

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7.g. Consider adopting a resolution to form a local Virginia America 250 Committee

Jennifer Bell, Tourism Manager, stated she is always looking for ways to highlight and promote the city, she presented a resolution to create a VA250 Committee in order to become eligible for promotional opportunities, access to resources, and eligibility for grant funds. She stated several community partners have started planning for the 250th anniversary of the 1776 Declaration of Independence commemorating Virginia's role in American Independence. She stated this resolution shows our support of the VA250 Program, our willingness to be part of their website and promote our events, as well as forming a local VA250 Committee.

Council Member Robinson shared her concerns regarding a statement found on the VA250 website and was not comfortable approving the resolution. Further discussion took place regarding the concerns and the benefits of the committee.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Dent, seconded by Council Member Jones, to adopt the resolution as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 1 - Council Member Robinson

7.h. Consider Projects for Using Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Funds

Keith Thomas, sustainability and environment manager, Department of Public Works,

stated Luke Morgan, grants and programs analyst, Department of Finance, will present information on grant funds received and potential projects. Mr. Morgan reviewed the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program summary, eligibility for formula funding, eligible activities, and program structure. Mr. Thomas reviewed the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) priorities and ranking, potential projects summary, EPSAC's recommendations and how they align with other city plans and the next steps.

Vice Mayor Dent stated the solar on the Turner Pavilion has been a dream project for several years and has the highest greenhouse gas emissions reduction. She asked about the community solar and if it was worked out with Harrisonburg Electric Commission as to where the excess energy goes. Mr. Thomas stated the excess energy would be given back to the grid not community share. Further discussion took place regarding the excess energy. Discussion took place regarding programmable thermostat rebates and how the city could help those in need and coordinating with the Community Housing Partners Weatherization Program.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Dent, seconded by Council Member Jones, to approve the EECBG grant funds for the Turner Pavilion Roof Top Solar project as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7.i. Consideration staff's recommendations regarding collective bargaining

Chris Brown, city attorney, reviewed staff's recommendations related to the Collective Bargaining request. He stated staff's recommendation is not in favor of an ordinance allowing Collective Bargaining and shared the reasons why.

Discussion took place amongst Council regarding the helpful research that was done by staff, officer retention, crime rate, recent increase in salary, positive relationships and the benefits study.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Dent, seconded by Council Member Robinson, to deny the request for an ordinance for Collective Bargaining and request city manager to come up with a proposal at the next meeting for an ongoing committee to serve a similar purpose. The motion carried with a roll call vote as files.

No: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

7.j. Presentation of City Parcels and Affordable Housing

Liz Webb, housing coordinator, presented development scenarios for affordable housing on two city owned properties. She reviewed the Housing Study's recommendation to identify suitable city-owned parcels and the two parcels were identified: Central Avenue parcel and Neff Avenue parcel. She reviewed the \$50,000 Community Impact Grant received from Virginia Housing for a consultant to do a

preliminary site assessment, site plan and engineering and a financial feasibility study. She reviewed both parcels' assessments, types of housing that would work on each parcel, public transportation routes, site value estimates, and development cost estimates. Ms. Webb stated the next steps for staff would be to research the different ways that publicly owned land might become housing.

Discussion amongst Council took place about interest from local developers, tiny houses, mixed development options, first time homeownership, and they thanked Ms. Webb and the city manager for keeping this moving forward.

This Presentation was received and filed.

7.k. Presentation on FY 2024 General Fund revenue and update on the local economy

Larry Propst, director of Finance, stated we are in the middle of budget processing and as a prelude to the city manager's budget presentation to Council he will be providing information on General Fund revenue. He reviewed the comparisons of revenues for both 2024 budgeted vs 2024 projected and 2023 actual vs 2024 projected. He stated all major revenue sources are tracking to meet or exceed budget estimates and there is continued growth in sales, meals and lodging taxes. However, growth is slowing compared to past two fiscal years. He stated there is an increase in state payments for highway maintenance funding, there is continued growth in real estate assessed values, (growth for next fiscal year projected to be approximately 5.5% compared to 13.5% in current fiscal year), and there is a potential for continued decrease in vehicle assessed values after the substantial post-COVID increases and may necessitate an increase in the personal property tax rate.

Discussion amongst Council took place about future impacts of reassessments.

Brian Shull, director of Economic Development, stated over the past few weeks a lot of new data sets have come out. He reviewed labor statistics comparisons from 2022 to 2023, unemployment rate from 2018-2023, employment trends from 2018-2023, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) growth (which is the city and Rockingham County combined), new business licenses from 2018-2023, and building permits and value of the building permits 2022 vs 2023. He reviewed three major projects in 2023: Farmer Focus expansion, Montibello Packaging growth, and Lauf. He reviewed the new retail and restaurants in 2023, and stated it was a really strong 2023 and 2024 is off to a good start.

Discussion amongst Council took place about housing and economic engine that drives the growth, multi-generational homes in the city, and being cautious of growing the economy but not having the housing available.

This Presentation was received and filed.

8. Supplementals

8.a. Consider a supplemental appropriation for the General Fund and School and Water Capital Projects Funds

Larry Propst, director of Finance, presented a Supplemental Appropriation request in the amount of \$2,982,833.46 in interest earnings from the September 2021 bond issuance for the construction of Rocktown High School and the waterline to the Shenandoah River.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

9. Reallocations

9.a. Consider a reallocation of ARPA funds in the General Capital Projects Fund

Larry Propst, director of Finance, presented a reallocation of ARPA Funds from the Sterling Street Project to the projects approved at the February 13, 2024, Council meeting.

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

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Dent, Council Member Jones, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

10. Other Matters

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

Earnest Liberatore, County resident, spoke on erosion mitigation, protection of food sources, and provided a gift for the Public Works Department.

Virginia Haverty, 458 W Wolfe Street, spoke on Black History Month, Central Africa, Rwanda, the Congo War, and the mineral supply chain.

Unknown speaker, thanked Council for taking the time to listen to the community.

10.b. City Council and Staff

Vice Mayor Dent reminded everyone that the March 12, 2024, City Council Meeting has been cancelled so that Council can attend the National League of Cities conference in Washington DC.

Council Member Robinson invited everyone to the International Woman's Day march on Saturday March 9, 2024, starting at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall and marching to Court Square and the program begins at 11:00 am.

Council Member Fleming stated he was in DC as part of NLC's economic mobility work, we were the smallest locality, and the discussion was on child savings accounts, and over the next few weeks he would like to share with Council how this benefited many localities nationwide already.

Mayor Reed stated Council Member Jones, Council Member Robinson, and herself were featured in an article with WHSV which was surrounded by a newspaper called the Rockingham Register, that was found dating back to 1863 with headlines that read "Negroes for Hire", and "Sale of a Negro Man", to name a few. She said it was a very sad beginning but look at us now.

11. Boards and Commissions

11.a. Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)

A motion was made by Council Member Fleming, seconded by Vice Mayor Dent, to appoint Morgan Maskell to the Board of Zoning Appeals, to a 1st term to expire on March 20, 2029. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

11.b. Consider the request from Harrisonburg Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) for council to re-appoint Gerald Gatobu as a voting member of the board

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Dent, seconded by Council Member Fleming, to reappoint Gerald Gatobu as a voting member of the Harrisonburg Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO). The motion carried with an unanimous voice vote.

11.c. Board of Equalization (BOE)

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Fleming to appoint Craig Anders to the Board of Equalization to an unexpired term to expire on December 31, 2024. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

12. Adjournment

At 11:27 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR