



CITY OF HARRISONBURG CITY MANAGER

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

OFFICE (540) 432-7701 • FAX (540) 432-7778

TO: Eric Campbell, City Manager
FROM: G. Chris Brown
DATE: 8/5/2020
RE: Emergency Ordinance to Suppress the Spread of COVID-19 by Limiting Gatherings to Fifty Persons

Summary: This ordinance would limit the number of persons at private or public events to 50. The ordinance is an emergency ordinance which would be in effect for 60 days unless extended by Council. The ordinance exempts religious activities, weddings, and expressive activities. The ordinance provides penalties for violations, specifically the owner or tenant of the property could be charged with a Class 3 misdemeanor and subject to a fine of up to \$500.00, and attendees would be subject to a fine of up to \$250.00 as a class 4 misdemeanor. Charges would not be placed unless an individual receives a warning from a law enforcement officer and refuses to disperse.

Background: The World Health Organization, U.S. Center for Disease Control, and the Virginia Department of Health all have identified large gatherings as a significant risk in the spreading of the COVID-19 virus. Currently the City has a Mass Outdoor Social Gathering Ordinance which requires a permit for gatherings of more than 100 persons and which will include the amplification of music or other sound. The City currently is not issuing permits for such gatherings, but a violation of the ordinance targets the party hosts, not attendees. The Mass Outdoor Social Gathering Ordinance will be ineffective at requiring the immediate dispersal of party attendees and is not applicable if there is no amplification of music. The proposed ordinance will be more effective in allowing HPD to immediately require that a party be dispersed by subjecting both the hosts and attendees to fines, and in limiting the size of gatherings, and therefore will help reduce the potential for the spread of COVID-19 in Harrisonburg.

Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Blacksburg and Radford all have either enacted ordinances limiting the number of persons attending public and private gatherings or are considering such ordinances.

Key Issues: Limiting the number of persons attending public and private gatherings to 50 for a period of 60 days.

Environmental Impact: None



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Fiscal Impact: None

Prior Actions: None

Alternatives: (a) Enact the Emergency ordinance to suppress the spread of COVID-19
(b); or decline to enact the ordinance.
(c)

Community Engagement: None

Recommendation:

Attachments: Draft Ordinance

Review:

The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.

