



# City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Final City Council

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Tuesday, September 22, 2020

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### 1. Roll Call

All Council Members and staff were present via virtual Go-To Meeting

**Present:** 4 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice Mayor Sal Romero, 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. Invocation

Council Member Hirschmann offered the invocation.

### 3. Special Recognition / Presentations

#### 3.a. Proclamation recognizing October 5 - 10, 2020 as Midwifery Week

Mayor Reed read the proclamation recognizing October 5-10, 2020 as Midwifery Week. She presented it to Melody Mast, CNM, Tammie McDonald, CNM, Misty Ward, CPM DNP, and Elanor Colmenares, CNM DNP. Ms. Mast thanked the Mayor for the recognition.

#### 3.b. Ribbon cutting for the Charlotte Harris memorial

Mayor Reed stated the dedication and unveiling of the Charlotte Harris historical marker which will be Saturday, September 26, 2020 at 10:00 am. She stated the dedication will be live streamed on the city's Facebook page. She stated this dedication is so well deserved for the committee who worked hard on this project, the Harrisonburg Community Remembrance Project committee, members consist of Amy Snider, Vice Mayor Romero, Susan Zurbrigg, Bradford Dyjak and Dr. de Fazio and Steven Thomas. She stated they have worked tirelessly on this project, with special recognition to Dr. de Fazio of James Madison University (JMU) and Steven Thomas of the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA). She provided the history of how the project and committee formed and stated the committee has given Charlotte Harris dignity and a voice that was taken away from her on March 6, 1978. She stated it is respectfully asked that the dedication be watched via live stream to ensure a large group doesn't gather.

Vice Mayor Romero stated it will be a historical day and acknowledged the people involved in this project and extends Council's gratitude to Mr. Thomas, JMU,

Rockingham County and the city for their support. He stated it will be a day that will be remembered, and he will be in attendance.

Council Member Jones stated looks forward to attending and stated since 2012 there have been a lot of historical markers and historically significant findings that have happened in Harrisonburg. He stated he believes that due to the social unrest and social reckoning that has been happening this uniquely is the best time to recognize Ms. Harris who was brutally murdered. He stated we need to make sure we move far away from those things that happened and remember the humanity. He thanked everyone who was involved.

Council Member Baugh stated he echoes and endorses all the comments made and thanked everyone that was involved in making this happen.

**3.c. EMU and JMU update on COVID-19 response**

President Susan Huxman, Eastern Mennonite University, thanked Council for inviting her and provided updates as to where EMU is with the Coronavirus, faculty, and students. She highlighted the following:

- EMU is involved in the Council of Independent Colleges of Virginia, of which there are 28 colleges involved, who regularly share what is being done, why is it being done, what is working and what isn't working.
- EMU has been involved in Be Vigilant for the Valley that brings people together from City Council and Profit and Non-profit sectors.
- Classes were started on-line on August 25, 2020 due to positive testing amongst some staff.
- In-person classes started on September 3, 2020 under the High-Flex modality - on-line and in-person at the same time for options to the students.
- 2 active cases and 7 students quarantined currently.
- Things learned: Testing should have happened before students arrived,
- Additional protocols: revised eating and dining patterns, with grab and go meals, outside places to sit and eat, and tents, which all discourages large group gatherings without masks.
- 25 off-site quarantine beds, 26 on-site isolation beds, and 40% of residential students are in single rooms.
- Daily symptom tracker for all students to complete
- Would like to see a fast-tests available

Council Member Jones thanked President Huxman for the update and the great support that she has always put behind diversity.

Mayor Reed asked about the home-coming activities. President Huxman stated there are home-coming activities starting on October 16, which will all be virtual but fun. Mayor Reed stated Council wanted to make sure the community is updated on

what is going on at both universities and appreciates President Huxman's leadership and all they are doing to keep everyone safe.

President Jon Alger, James Madison University, thanked Council for their time, and stated we all want to be good partners to the city and community every step of the way. He stated JMU is guided by two overarching principals: maintaining public health first while maintaining the academic progress for the students. He shared some of the things JMU has done for the local community during the pandemic. He highlighted what JMU has been doing as follows:

- Daily briefings with medical team
- Constant communications with public health officials
- On-line classes for 4 weeks
- De-densified the campus temporarily
- Public Dashboard updated daily
- Daily student self-screenings
- Protocols of number of students allowed to gather, must wear masks and social distance.
- 600 isolation beds and 1400 quarantine in place beds
- Surveillance testing
- Landlord outreach
- Enhancements to dining facility and additional robot deliveries

Dr. Alger stated the medical system is working well, the vast majority of student cases have been either asymptomatic or very mild. He stated after the initial spike in cases the numbers are decreasing significantly with over 1300 students in the recovered category. He stated he is not aware of community spread beyond the student body.

Dr. Tim Miller, JMU, stated he is aware student behavior is a concern, but the vast majority of students have listened and have been doing the right things. He stated there have been 290 students with violations so far this semester who will be handled through due process. He thanked the Harrisonburg Police Department for their communications and assistance and for allowing him to ride along with an officer.

Dr. Blyer, JMU, stated students are fairing well medically, and did not affect the hospital. She stated the health center is increasing their hours of availability and increasing testing availability.

Mayor Reed asked for additional information on the surveillance testing. Dr. Miller stated it will be a random selection of students and will be mandatory. Mayor Reed asked about the challenges for those living off campus. Dr. Miller stated he is waiting for feedback from the landlords and on his ride along with HPD he had never seen such a quiet night in a college town. He stated Dr. Alger had sent a strong letter to students that day and a strong social media post about gatherings and have seen

very few large events. Further discussion took place regarding gatherings of students and case numbers.

Vice Mayor Romero asked about the health safety for staff. Dr. Blyer stated JMU has spent a lot of time on this and addressed all the concerns of staff and provided staff with all the equipment they needed for both on-line and in-person classes.

Council Member Jones stated from an economic standpoint the students are important to the city, and leaders are still allowing and encouraging students to contribute to the greater community. He stated he appreciates the open lines of communications and partnership with the city.

Mayor Reed stated in order for us to get through this we must all work together and we must all be responsible.

**4. 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 Baugh, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero, to approve the consent Agenda as presented.

No: 0

**4.a. Minutes from the September 8, 2020 City Council Meeting**

**These minutes were approved on the consent agenda**

**4.b. Consider a request from C-Side LC to rezone 225 and 245 Old South High Street**

**This rezoning request was approved on the second reading**

**4.c. Consider confirming, readopting, and continuing the Emergency Ordinance adopted on April 6, 2020 and the associated temporary changes in deadlines and modifications to public meeting and public hearing practices and procedures to address continuity of operations associated with COVID-19.**

**This ordinance was approved on the second reading**

**5. Public Hearings**

**6. Regular Items**

**6.a. Presentation on the naming processes of the Garbers Church Road Shared Use Path**

Tom Hartman, director of Public Works, presented the options on naming the share use path along Garbers Church Road. He stated there are two reasons to name a shared used path: public safety aspect and for branding and marketing. He

reviewed an aerial view of the trail, the options presented to Council and the next steps. He stated staff recommends Option 1 - Enhanced Public Involvement.

Vice Mayor Romero stated with Option 1 the challenge would be trying to reach out to everyone for greater accessibility.

Consensus of Council is to move forward with Option 1. No action needed.

**This Presentation was received and filed.**

**6.b.** Consider appointment of Ordinance Advisory Committee members for the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances Update Project.

Thanh Dang, assistant director of Community Development presented 13 names of individuals who were recommended by Council or city staff and have all agreed to participate on the Ordinance Advisory Committee for Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances if appointed. She stated there is also a list of stakeholders that have been invited to participate in one of 8 1-hour long meetings with the consultants, but additional stakeholders can be added at the recommendation of Council.

**A motion was made by Vice Mayor Romero, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the appointments as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:**

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

**No:** 0

**6.c.** Consider a draft funding plan on the needs identified and prioritized by the CARES Act Advisory Task Force.

Ande Banks, deputy city manager, stated he has been working with the CARES Act Advisory Task Force and Council Members to work through the process of identifying needs in the community and work through the eligibility of those for CARES Act funding distribution. He reviewed the timeline of the CARES Act Advisory Task Force and the members involved. He reviewed the community needs and the specific priorities under each category. He reviewed the draft recommendation for funding.

Council Member Jones thanked Mr. Banks and Ms. Snider for their guidance, leadership and follow through. He stated the final recommendations reflect exactly what was discussed and agreed upon by the task force.

Council Member Baugh stated he agrees with the recommendations and knows the funds need to be distributed as soon as possible.

Council Member Hirschmann stated there is an urgency to get the funds into circulation and we are at that point so let's move forward.

Vice Mayor Romero stated we all had some indirect input of some of the members of the task force, the discussions were rich and broad and has no reason to not move forward.

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

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

**No:** 0

- 6.d.** Consider enacting Title 15 Chapter 7 Section 4 - An Emergency Ordinance to suppress the spread of the Novel Coronavirus, SARS-COV-2, and the disease it causes, commonly referred to as COVID-19, among those experiencing homelessness, of the Code Of Ordinances City of Harrisonburg, Va

Chris Brown, city attorney, stated this is the time of year Open Doors begins its program to shelter those experiencing homelessness and normally rotates its shelter among various churches in the city and county. He stated due to the pandemic that is no longer possible, but First Church of the Brethren located at 315 S. Dogwood Drive, which has agreed to allow Open Doors to operate a shelter from October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. He stated this is not a permitted use by the property, but there is a section in the City Charter, Section 55, that permits the City Council to take action necessary to secure the inhabitants of the city from contagious, infectious or other dangerous diseases, and according to CDC guidance those that are experiencing homelessness are particularly at danger this time of year during the COVID-19 pandemic. He presented an emergency ordinance to allow for this for approval.

**A motion was made by Council Member Baugh, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the emergency ordinance as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:**

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

**No:** 0

## 7. Other Matters

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

James "Bucky" Berry, 30 W. Washington Street, stated the Black Lives Matter signs are everywhere, but it is tied into Antifa, and his mother taught him all lives matter. Antifa is involved in police officers killed and injured. He stated in regard to the mask ordinance, forcing someone to do something against their rights, would not stand up in court.

Stephanie Stotts, 265 North Main Street, Apt 310, stated she attended the board meeting at the Harrisonburg Housing Authority on September 19, 2020 and was told to use the chain of command in regard to complaints about maintenance. She stated she has done that for five years and was very offended by that statement. She spoke about WIFI surveillance, missing mail, immediate access for inspections, and questions on how the condition of the housing at Lineweaver hasn't been taken care of.

#### **7.b. City Council and Staff**

Council Member Hirschmann stated he has received complaints of individuals not taking care of their yards and wanted to know if there is proactive enforcement for violations of City Code. Council Member Baugh stated it takes 2 plus years to comb the entire city in the proactive enforcement, so unless this is seen by chance from an employee or complaint driven it wouldn't normally get taken care of. Eric Campbell, city manager, asked Council Member Hirschmann to provide him with the address and he will have staff take a look.

Council Member Baugh stated there are all sorts of debates going on but if anything is clear it's that you can have COVID-19 and be very contagious without knowing it but wearing a mask drastically reduces your ability to infect others. Wear your darn masks.

Eric Campbell, city manager, stated there will be free COVID-19 testing on Friday September 25, 2020 from 7:30 am to 10:30 am at Hillandale Park, it will be by appointment only and to schedule an appointment please call the Harrisonburg Rockingham Health Department at (540) 574-5102 by 2:00 pm on September 24, 2020. Those wishing to be tested must either be symptomatic and/or be in close contact with a COVID-19 case.

Mayor Reed stated we have been doing COVID testing several times a month.

## **8. Boards and Commissions**

### **8.a. Harrisonburg Redevelopment Housing Authority**

Mayor Reed stated we have the ability to add members to the board, right now it is set at five, but we can go up to nine. Council Member Baugh thinks the terms need to be staggered. Chris Brown, city attorney, stated according to the By-laws, there must be a minimum of five and a maximum of nine, and he suggests a resolution be created establishing the number at 7 with the proper term staggered.

**A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero, to appoint Christine Fasching Maphis, Kevin Coffman and Luciano Benjamin to the Harrisonburg Redevelopment Housing Authority. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:**

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

No: 0

**10. Adjournment**

At 9:15 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR