



City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Final City Council

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

7:00 PM

Council Chambers/Virtual

1. Roll Call

Note: All Council Members were present via virtual Go-To Meeting.

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

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

2. Invocation

Council Member Hirschmann offered the invocation

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Special Recognition

4.a. Presentation of Accreditation Certificate

Chief Gabriel Camacho, Harrisonburg Police Chief, stated after countless hours of hard work and in true Harrisonburg Police Department team effort we are now a Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) accredited agency. He thanked Accreditation Manager Mays and the entire VLEPSC Board for this recognition for demonstrating compliance in 190 accepted standards and holding us to those standards. He stated accreditation enhances our agencies ability to prevent controlled crime through effective and efficient delivery of services to our amazing community of Harrisonburg. He stated it provides helpful framework to ensure accountability by the department as well as protect our officers by reducing liability. It sculpts policy and procedures that best serve the agency and the entire Harrisonburg community. He gave special recognition to the accreditation Team: Lt. Pete Ritchie and Erin Miller. He stated it has been a long time coming and they do not take this accreditation lightly and department will continue to improve to better serve the community.

Derrick Mays, accreditation manager for the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), and program manager for VLEPSC, stated accreditation has become even more important with all the new laws and crimes, he remembers working with the city in the very beginning, and stated accreditation standards need to be maintained. He stated being accredited brings professionalism to the agency and

was an all community effort. He presented the accreditation certificate to Chief Camacho.

Mayor Reed thanked Mr. Mays and Chief Camacho, and stated Council is proud of the Police Department.

Presentation of Accreditation Certificate to the Harrisonburg Police Department by Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission's Accreditation Manager, Derrick Mays and two (2) VLEPSC commissioners.

4.b. Presentation from the City of Harrisonburg / Rockingham County Criminal Justice Planner

S. Frank Sottaceti, City of Harrisonburg / Rockingham County Criminal Justice Planner, presented a report on the accomplishments of the city/county in criminal justice and the challenges that are faced. He stated he began to collecting data and average daily populations (ADP) for Middle River Regional Jail (MRRJ) and Rockingham Harrisonburg Regional Jail (RHRJ) in April 2020 and gained access through the KARPEL system which allows access to data prior to incarceration and the ability to see why people are in jail. He reviewed the following:

- Challenges in data gathering and analysis
- RHRJ ADP
- MRRJ ADP
- Rate of incarceration for Virginia jails
- Rate of incarceration for RHRJ and MRRJ
- Obligation of proper care for those incarcerated and what that involves
- Existing Programs and Services offered by City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
- Required probation conditions
- Prevention versus Reaction model
- Future jail diversion opportunities - Mental Health Docket / Court

He noted Harrisonburg/Rockingham are the only jurisdictions in the partnership of MRRJ that have another jail. He also noted that not all people in custody at RHRJ are Harrisonburg or Rockingham County residents but are included in the count as they are convicted in those jurisdictions.

Mayor Reed thanked Mr. Sottaceti for his presentation, the Council wants to look at alternative options instead of just automatically expanding MRRJ. She stated she feels we do not do a good job at promoting what is being done well, and the programs offered are being done very well. She stated she would rather put money into programs, people and community and asked Mr. Sottaceti to highlight a few of the programs that are offered.

Mr. Sottaceti stated the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) does not get enough credit and

noted that from October 2020 to today the staff of CIT responded to 155 critical incidents that helped people get appropriate care. He stated the police departments in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County deserve credit for those trained in CIT. He stated Drug Court is another program that deserves mentioning. Even though our Drug Court is not a first opportunity drug court we have had a lot of individuals graduate from Drug Court and have helped them from being incarcerated.

Mayor Reed asked if COVID-19 is playing a factor in the over crowding at MRRJ. Mr. Sottaceti stated the only thing COVID-19 has impacted is the movement of incarcerated individuals throughout the system. He stated there are 179 people at MRRJ from the county and 44 from the City of Harrisonburg, however, that can change but everyone is locked in place.

Council Member Jones stated he would like to have Mr. Sottaceti send a list to Council of things that could be implemented in the city to reach the desired goal. He stated he would like to see programming for rehabilitation, mental health, work programs, and perhaps changes for on non-violent offenses.

Council Member Hirschmann stated the programs are great in helping people who are incarcerated and asked if the individuals are grateful for the programs or are just seeing them as a better alternative to being incarcerated. Mr. Sottaceti stated CSB, DSS or the Drug Court coordinator could probably answer that question better and would be willing to perhaps have them involved in another presentation to Council. Council Member Hirschmann stated he thought it would be a benefit to have those that have gone through these programs speak to other incarcerated individuals about their positive experiences going through the programs. Mr. Sottaceti stated there are peer support groups and good influences available.

Council Member Dent thanked Mr. Sottaceti for his voice of sanity and objectivity on this topic, she stated the Housing Study Council just received is a document that is making a difference in the community and she asked what does he need to create a plan. Mr. Sottaceti stated there is a moratorium on interns he can use and has a mounding amount of data that could be used but he is just one person. He stated he would like to have the data tell us what the plan should be rather than coming up with a theory to solve. Council Member Dent thanked him for that explanation and noted she really liked his paradigm shift of reaction versus prevention. She stated she spoke with Chief Camacho and asked him if there was a place for pre-charge revisions so that we are arresting fewer people. She stated his response was that his department already has the approach of more warnings than citations and not just arrest by default. She asked if Mr. Sottaceti had thought about approaches like that as well as work release alternatives having a home in our community. Mr. Sottaceti stated work release is more than just a job, it's supposed to lead to a vocation, and will take some work to have the inmates doing the actual work release in our community rather than

another jurisdiction could lead to a job that continues after the work release has been satisfied. Council Member Dent stated she would like to see the city manager and city staff work with Mr. Sottaceti on getting the resources he needs to analyze the data to provide a plan and to explore opportunities for investment in the community to help transform peoples lives.

Vice Mayor Romero stated data availability has been a problem in our community and he looks forward to seeing up to date data, he has shared Mr. Sottaceti's website with several people in the community, and the availability of this data helps instill trust from our community. He stated the only way to improve programs and services is by knowing how they are performing and asked if any evaluations are being done on the programs offered and how often they are being done. Mr. Sottaceti stated part of the evaluation of the programs occurs in the Community Criminal Justice Board (CCJB) where other agencies report on their metrics and he will make sure Council gets that data. Vice Mayor Romero stated Mr. Sottaceti works for both the city and the county and asked him what challenges he anticipates in assuring that he has all he needs and the time to do what he needs to do. Mr. Sottaceti stated he has had no resistance from data systems, contacts, access to what he needs on the corrections side of things. He reviewed the numbers of incarcerated by city and by county. Mayor Reed stated the numbers prove our programs are working. Council Member Jones agreed. Further discussion took place about how the programs are working, what additional programs could do to the numbers of incarcerated and how the expansion of MRRJ may not really be necessary for the low numbers we have in the city.

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 Vice Mayor Romero, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann to approve the consent agenda as amended. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

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

No: 0

5.a. Minutes from January 26, 2021 City Council Meeting

5a these minutes were approved on the consent agenda.

6. Public Hearings

6.a. Consider a request from Martha E. Grover, Trustee and MG Harrisonburg LLC with representatives Bluestone Land LLC to rezone two parcels at 161 and 241 Blue Ridge Drive.

Agenda Item 6a and 6b were presented and voted on together:

Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development, stated the applicant's representative and attorney stated the rezoning and special use requests must be approved together or the development will not work.

He presented the request to rezone two parcels from R-1 to R-5C and a special use permit for property located at 161 and 241 Blue Ridge Drive. He reviewed the property, the surrounding properties and their zoning designations, the land use for the area, and the proffers offered. He noted out of 107 of the 142 would be two-bedroom units or less. He explained the proffer for the 5% affordable housing units.

He reviewed Section 10-3-55.6(e) regarding the conditions that Council must review and find whether or not the project meets the required conditions. He reviewed those conditions and noted staff does not believe all of the conditions have been met and explained why.

He stated that a Traffic Impact Analysis was not required and although staff recognized that there would be an increase in traffic regardless of what is build on this parcel the level of service should not be impacted.

He stated staff and Planning Commission (4-2) recommend denial of the rezoning and special use permit requests and the reasoning behind that decision.

At 8:57 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 Monday, January 25, 2021 and Monday, February 1, 2021

Mayor Reed had a question regarding the affordable housing units. Mr. Fletcher stated Mr. Park would be able to address the questions she has.

William N. Park, Pinnacle Construction & Development Corp, representative for applicant stated there will not be any specific sized units set aside for affordable housing so that the people have choices.

Vice Mayor Romero asked what the arguments and defenses were by the Planning Commission member on this request. Mr. Fletcher stated he doesn't recall off the top of his head he would have to review the minutes.

Council Member Dent recalled a conversation she had with Mr. Fletcher, about the prospect of building a road connecting to Market Street and now understands the complexity but still wonders if a small road could be created to alleviate some of the traffic impact to the neighborhood. Mr. Fletcher it would be an increase in construction costs for the developer which could negate the project all together. Further discussion took place regarding the street improvements.

Council Member Jones asked if Council removed Sections 10-3-55.6(e)(1) and (3)

would staff be able to support the project. Mr. Fletcher stated it would make it easier for staff to step away from the technicalities of the zoning ordinance and with the new Housing Study it could make it easier to determine what the special circumstances are so that a multi-use family development could be built in this area. Council Member Jones stated it is difficult to say this is a bad project considering staff provided 8 reasons why this is a good project. Further discussion took place regarding the parking spaces for this project and the impact of traffic to the neighborhood. Council Member Jones asked about the height of the buildings proposed versus the overpass and overhead utility lines. Mr. Park stated the buildings will be either at or just below the overhead powerlines. He stated the closest residential building is at least 80 feet from the proposed development.

At 8:57 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 Monday, January 25, 2021 and Monday, February 1, 2021.

Mr. Parks, Pinnacle Construction, developer, reviewed the project overview and noted the special use permit is to allow more than twelve units per building, it has nothing to do with density. He reviewed the amenities that will be provided, parking, streetscapes, site constraints, stormwater quality, site plan, affordable housing units, transportation and pedestrian improvements, National Green Building Standards, positive traffic impacts, and fiscal impact summary.

Mayor Reed stated she would like to see the developer offer 10% of the units as affordable housing.

Council Member Dent stated she was pleased to hear that there will be one building with an elevator, which would be good for empty-nesters downsizing. She stated we need to find a way to build inward and upward or people will end up moving to the outskirts and the city losing the revenue and thanked Mr. Parks for that insight.

Vice Mayor Romero stated several comments have been received from residents of the surrounding neighborhood, and asked Mr. Parks if they have reached out to the neighborhood to address some of their concerns and received any input on the proposed development. Mr. Park stated even though it wasn't a requirement there were mailers sent to over 300 residents in the area about a meeting in August of 2020 as well as made the presentation available online. He stated the majority of the questions received were regarding traffic, stormwater, and flooding issues. He stated there were a few that just didn't want the development in that location. He stated they responded to any questions the residents had.

Pamayotis "Poti" Giannakaouros, stated he has not looked at this project as closely as others but wanted to know what impact this development would have on surrounding property values in the sense of gentrification and will this make the housing less affordable for the people who already live there.

Andrew Jackson, 190 Blue Ridge Drive, stated he sent letters of his views to Council on this project and if you look at the other projects that will be presented this evening there are huge differences i.e. Green space. He stated this proposed development will be an open building parking lot, paved surface, and large structures. He stated many of the houses around the proposed development will lose sunlight exposure, traffic would be impacted for many, it won't address our housing needs, zero green space for children and impact on school populations.

Richard Benty, 910 Spotswood Drive, state he did receive the information in the mail from the developer but was not able to attend the meeting. He stated his concerns are that the neighborhood is not a neighborhood with gargantuan buildings, this is a neighborhood where young families walk, kids riding their bikes but to put this type of density in such a small space it just doesn't fit the neighborhood. He stated if this must happen then he hopes the City works on the Martin Luther King, Jr Way extension first to alleviate the possible traffic impacts to the neighborhood.

Theresa Jackson, 190 Blue Ridge Drive, stated one of her big concerns is that it is being built right up against a neighborhood with very low traffic. She stated there will be safety issues with the cut through traffic in this area. She stated another concern is the lack of green space for children to play in.

Anton Blann stated he thinks the building idea is good but feels in the future there will be different building strategies to make them more eco efficient. He agrees with the previous caller on the green space, nature helps with the mental state of mind, if we can reduce stress, we can reduce crime and help the community.

At 9:42 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the public hearing and the regular session reconvened.

Council Member Jones stated one of our goals is to have the highest of use possible and going from a truck terminal to anything housing related would be a much much higher use. He stated he would like to return this request back to the Planning Commission to review the new Housing Study and the new proffers added since this project was presented to them. He stated Council should also look into eliminating or amending Section 10-35-55.6(e) of the city code.

Vice Mayor Romero stated it didn't seem right to him to vote on this project this evening since a lot has changed since the Planning Commission has reviewed this item. He stated hopefully the residents of the neighborhood will have the opportunity to think more about what the project is going to look like and may reassure them. He stated he agrees about the concern of lack of green space and places for kids to play as well as the request from the Mayor to increase the affordable housing units.

Mr. Fletcher asked if the request was to eliminate the specific conditions in Section 10-3-55.6(e)(1) and (3) or was it to evaluate them to see if they should be removed

from the ordinance. Council Member Jones stated he would like to see them removed but directed Mr. Fletcher to draft an amendment removing them from the ordinance and also draft an amendment editing the language as staff feels appropriate and then Council can vote after reviewing both.

Council Member Jones applauded the builder for diving into the affordable housing piece. He stated in regard to the green space concerns, we live inside a city, we need density and affordable housing, there is a limited amount of green space because we have a limited amount of land, we can't have it everything all the time. He stated when we look at projects like this, we need to look at it from a grander scale on how it will affect the city as a whole.

Mayor Reed stated she appreciates the fact that affordable housing was added, but she would like to see more units in that category.

Council Member Dent asked for clarification on amending the ordinance and having the Planning Commission review along with the Rezoning and Special Use Permit requests. Chris Brown, city attorney, stated they will try to get it done on a parallel track to each other. She stated green space would be nice, but we must consider the tradeoffs and this builder has done a great job at optimizing the space.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero to refer the rezoning request and the special use permit request back to the Planning Commission for review and recommendations. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

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

No: 0

- 6.b.** Consider a request from Martha E. Grover, Trustee and MG Harrisonburg LLC with representatives Bluestone Land LLC for a special use permit to allow multi-family dwellings of more than twelve units per building at 161 and 241 Blue Ridge Drive.

Presented and voted on with Agenda item 6a

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Vice Mayor Romero to refer the rezoning request and the special use permit request back to the Planning Commission for review and recommendations. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

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

No: 0

- 6.c.** Consider a request from Bluestone of Harrisonburg LLC to rezone parcels addressed as 3485, 3491, 3585, and 3611 South Main Street

Agenda item 6c and 6d were presented and voted on together.

Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development, presented the request to amend the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Guide a 5.54 acre tract from Commercial designation to Medium Density Residential, rezone the 5.54 acre tract from B-2 to R-5C and rezone a 20.76 acre tract B-2 to B-2C for property located at 3485, 3491, 3585, and 3611 South Main Street. He noted this is in conjunction with Rockingham County property. He reviewed the property, the surrounding properties and their zoning designations, the land use for the area, the proffers offered, and the mitigations and improvements recommended by the traffic impact analysis.

He stated staff and Planning Commission (7-0) recommended approval of the rezoning requests and amendment to the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide.

At 10:12 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 Monday, January 25, 2021 and Monday, February 1, 2021.

Seth Roderick, Monteverde Engineering and Design Studio, representative for applicant, thanked Mr. Fletcher for his excellent description of the project. He shared the history of the development in Rockingham County, it has since been reviewed and changed to meet more current needs for housing. He stated by changing the purpose of the site the traffic impact is much less, and noted he is available for any questions.

At 10:18 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the public hearing and the regular session reconvened.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Dent, to approve the amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Guide and the rezoning request as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

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

No: 0

- 6.d.** Consider a request from Bluestone of Harrisonburg LLC to amend the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide map for portions of parcels addressed as 3485, 3491, 3585, and 3611 South Main Street

Presented and voted on with Agenda item 6c

This PH-Action Item was approved.

Recess

At 10:21 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting into recess.

At 10:24 p.m., Mayor Reed called the meeting back into session.

7. Regular Items

- 7.a.** Consider a request from Harrisonburg Cohousing LLC to preliminarily subdivide a +/- 5.26-acre parcel at 650 Keezletown Road

Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development, presented the request for approval of the preliminary plat with variances for property located at 650 Keezletown Road from Juniper Hill Commons / Harrisonburg Co-Housing. He reviewed the property, the surrounding properties, their zoning designations, the land use for the area, the preliminary plat, water and utility easements, and the proposed purpose of this tract. He reviewed the variances requests from the Subdivision Ordinance.

He stated staff and Planning Commission (7-0) recommended approval of the preliminary plat with variances.

Council Member Dent stated she loves the co-housing concept, it is a great combination of private property and community, it is laid out wonderfully and has green space galore.

A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to approve the requests with stated variances as presented. The motion carried with a recorded vote as follows:

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

No: 0

- 7.b.** Consider a request from Orange Sky Investments LLC for a special use permit to allow a short-term rental at 165 New York Avenue. A public hearing for this item was previously heard at the October 13, 2020 City Council meeting; however, no decision on the SUP was made.

Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development, stated this item is presented to Council for a second time at the request of Vice Mayor Romero. He stated this item was originally presented as a public hearing in October 2020 and Council took no action. He stated it is a special use request for short term rental on property located at 165 New York Avenue.

He reviewed the long-term planning for the area, the surrounding properties, and their zoning districts. He stated the special use permit request was recommended for denial by staff and Planning Commission in August 2019, the applicant revised the request in September 2019, staff recommended approval, but Planning Commission maintained its recommended denial in October of 2019 and City Council denied the request November 2019. He stated this application has once again been revised, stating the property the applicant's primary residence, and was presented to Council in October 2020 but no action was taken. He stated since October 2020, the

applicant has received their Homestay permit.

He stated staff and Planning Commission recommended approval (4-2) with the suggested conditions:

1. All STR accommodations shall be within the principal structure.
2. There shall be no more than five STR guest rooms or accommodation spaces.
3. The number of STR guests at one time shall be limited to eight.
4. Prior to operation, the operator shall submit to City staff a completed Short-Term Rental Pre-Operation Form. Furthermore, the operator shall maintain compliance with the items identified in the Pre-Operation Form when short-term rental guests are present.
5. Minimum off-street parking spaces do not need to be delineated and can be accommodated utilizing the driveway or other areas on the property.
6. If in the opinion of Planning Commission or City Council, the short-term rental becomes a nuisance, the special use permit can be recalled for further review, which could lead to the need for additional conditions, restrictions, or the revocation of the permit.

Mayor Reed asked for some clarification on Homestays versus Short Term Rentals. Mr. Fletcher stated the applicant has the opportunity, by-right, to rent the unit for transient accommodations up to a maximum of four tenants at one time and no more than 90 nights per calendar year. He stated the short-term rental would allow him to increase the tenant ability to eight individuals and they would not have a threshold of number of nights unless made a condition by Council.

Vice Mayor Romero stated he requested this be brought back to Council to take final action and he felt that is not good practice.

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

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

No: 0

7.c. Consider an ordinance regarding late fees charged for late payments of utility bills (water, sewer and solid waste disposal)

Chris Brown, city attorney, presented an ordinance to address the potential waiver of late fees of water, sewer and solid waste collection and disposal. He stated normally a 10% penalty is assessed if payment is late. He stated in April of 2020 when the pandemic hit, Council passed an emergency ordinance that stated any businesses, employees or individuals that had been effected by the COVID-19 pandemic, could apply to the director of Public Utilities for a waiver of the late fees. He stated not very

many people took advantage of that and by the end of 2020 the late fees waived were only about \$2,870. He stated the amount of delinquent accounts hasn't increased substantially which may indicate those that were delinquent before the pandemic continue to be so. He stated the guiding principles in creating the four draft ordinances are to help people in need due to the pandemic but without getting them deeper in debt. He stated there are actual financial resources out there to help individuals with their utility bills, rent, etc. from CARES Act funding through certain organizations. He stated the Public Utilities department has over \$93,000 available to help those and have been actively trying to get people to take advantage of the available funds, even calling delinquent account holders. He stated we also want to protect the city's financial position, and at this point waiving late fees is not a huge burden but the fact is these late fees figure into the budget. He stated staff continues to reach out through social media, phone calls, etc., but it seems as if some people refuse the help. He reviewed the four options of ordinances to choose from. He stated staff supports option three which states the late fee stays in place, the fee can be waived if the individual or business contacts the Public Utilities department and state the delay in payment is due to COVID-19. He stated this will also provide the opportunity for the staff to share the information of funding available for assistance through other organizations.

Council Member Jones stated he thinks Option three would be the best choice.

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann to approve Ordinance Option 3. The motion carried with a recorded roll call as follows:

8. Other Matters

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

Karen Thomas stated she is calling to give her support to interim police chief Camacho to fill the position for chief of Police, as he has done a great job while filling in and very much qualified. She stated he is a good fit for all the communities in the city and a motivating community leader. She stated there is no need to look further and congratulated the Police Department on their accreditation.

Bucky Berry, 30 W Washington Street, stated the topic of defunding the police has been going around, we won't get anyone to stay in our Police Department if we defund our police. He stated there will be a friendly competition between all Police and Fire departments in the area to collect food, the Food Drive will be in Bridgewater March 5 through March 14, 2021. He stated he would like to see City Council nominate Brent Berry to the Governor for a service award for all he has done with the food drives for the city.

Pamayotis "Poti" Giannakaouros, referenced a story from Kathleen Shaw that appeared in the Daily News Record January 21, 2021 titled "Returning to the Roots -

Farming for, by and with the land". He spoke on the cutting down of the city's pollinator garden, FOIA requests, Community Development inspections, the city's tall grass and weeds ordinance, honeybees, and stated staff is overreacting to non-violent offenses. He stated if Council can take a look at how Council is investing city funds, maybe Council will get a better rate of return. He stated the zoning enforcement abusing our rights is stoking harm and lack of trust to our community. He spoke on the vacancy of a zoning inspector and hopes that goes unfulfilled.

Anton Blann, spoke on probation, labor max, vocation, and prevention. He stated many people have a hard time because they are not educated enough. He spoke on counseling, treatment plans, law enforcement, homelessness, and public health.

Electronic Public Comment

8.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Jones strongly encouraged residents to contact the water department about ways and means to take advantage of the funds that are available to assist with paying utility bills. He stated HEC also has opportunities to assist individuals. He stated this assistance may not be available in the future.

Council Member Dent stated climate change is going on, she attended her first EPSAC meeting and they are now grappling with how to expand EPSAC's roll as an advisory commission given that Council has passed the Renewable Energy resolution. She thanked former Council Member Richard Baugh for crafting the resolution and it now gives us a guide. She stated the first focus area has been called Buildings and Energy and she will be meeting with Brian O'Dell with HEC to start the conversation about how can the city and the Public Utilities department work together to meet the renewable energy obligation.

Vice Mayor Romero stated he has received emails and phone calls from people who are still dealing with the late fees on Real Estate taxes. He stated many of them were from business owners who have never been late paying their taxes and misunderstood the extension to pay was only for Personal Property taxes. He stated he has asked the Treasurer to see if a report could be provided to see to what extent people have been impacted. He stated there are still a lot of community members who are hesitant of the COVID-19 vaccine due to the lack of availability of reliable information. He stated we need to think about how to provide the residents of the city the opportunity to hear from reliable local doctors and health experts on the facts on the vaccine and how do we continue to share communications as the vaccine becomes more available.

Mayor Reed stated Sylvia Romero at RMH/Sentara, the Central Shenandoah Health District, Vice Mayor Romero, and the team she and Council Member Jones formed, for helping get the seniors in the black and Hispanic communities to the fairgrounds to obtain the vaccine. She stated as we continue to work through COVID-19 the current

count of positive cases in Harrisonburg is 5,485 and Rockingham County 5,765, so we still need to do what is follow CDC guidelines. She stated there was a testing at Hillandale Park this morning, but testing is not as frequent as before. She urged residents to check the city's Facebook page and website for updates and information. She stated Magpie restaurant is celebrating Black History Month by featuring a meal dedicated to women of the community each week.

Eric Campbell, city manager, stated the Middle River Regional Jail Authority (MRRJ) met last week and took no action regarding the renovation/expansion, potential budget numbers were presented based on relocating inmates which is a significant increase to our budget, they talked about the impact and costs of transporting officers to outside facilities, and Davenport spoke to review potential financing options regarding a potential expansion. He stated this will have financial implications via expansion or not given the current population. He stated the city budget process has started, the departments have submitted their budget requests, and he is scheduling meetings with each of the directors. He stated the city has significant revenue shortfalls specifically when it comes to meals and lodging. He stated he has heard of a lot of ideas for potential projects, but we have reduced the current budget by several million without being equal to where we were pre-pandemic in revenues. He asks Council to keep that in mind. He stated an email was sent with a request to sign up for slots to speak with Novak Consulting regarding the chief of police recruitment.

Appoint Council Member Laura Dent to the Ordinance Advisory Committee

Chris Brown, city attorney, stated last year Council established a committee to assist in the rewrite of the zoning and subdivision ordinances, Vice Mayor Romero was appointed to that committee known as Ordinance Advisory Committee by Council because he was council's representative on the Planning Commission. However, now that Council Member Dent is the Council's representative to the Planning Commission staff believes it would make sense to appoint her to the committee of the zoning and subdivision ordinance rewrite.

Vice Mayor Romero made a motion, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to appoint Council Member Laura Dent to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance rewrite committee. The following motion passed on unanimous voice vote.

9. Boards and Commissions

9.a. Harrisonburg Redevelopment Housing Authority

A motion was made by Council Member Jones, seconded by Council Member Hirschmann, to appoint Gil Colman to the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

11. Adjournment

At 11:31 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR