



# City of Harrisonburg

City Hall  
409 South Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Final Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission

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Wednesday, October 13, 2021

8:30 AM

Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center

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### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was attended by the Commission members Kyle Lawrence, John Scherpereel, Marian Lebherz, William Blessing, Chance Ebersold, Erin Yancey and Sgt. Wayne Westfall of Harrisonburg Police Department. Additional City staff in attendance were Chief Matt Tobia from Harrisonburg Fire Department, and Tom Hartman, Jakob, zumFelde, Kelly Adams, and Timothy Mason from Harrisonburg Department of Public Works.

### 2. Liberty St between Rock St and Gay St

Public Works staff said that the change to one way traffic on Liberty Street will not be further changed. The decision was made due to the lack of a legal right turn onto Liberty Street from Rock Street due to the one-way direction of Noll Drive.

Kyle Lawrence asked about the lack of opportunity for public input regarding the decision, as residents have noted that the corridor had been a preferred northbound bike route. He also noted that not having a bike route here would divert people to busier roads or onto sidewalks. Tom Hartman reiterated the safety considerations, considering the nature of the intersection having five legs. He noted that infrastructure improvements proposed by the STARS study would improve safety on alternate bike routes. Kyle Lawrence reiterated concerns about the removal of a route with a safer perception for riders, asking if there were any planned changes to replace the bike route. Tom Hartman answered that there was not anything currently planned, but that there would be potential changes to Gay St, just north of the intersection in question, that would create dedicated bike lanes. Kyle Lawrence asked whether safety improvements and signage could be added to make the route on Rock St clearer for all road and sidewalk users. It was discussed that this segment, Rock Street west of Liberty Street, is

narrow and the hill is steep for those biking. Sgt. Westfall said that the bicycle users who would make the turn onto Liberty St or its sidewalk would also have to conflict with the Southbound traffic on Noll St, making it an illegal contraflow movement.

Jakob zumFelde invited any members of the public to comment. One member of the public, Matt Hassman, commented that as someone who had routinely used the previous configuration to transport their child to school via bicycle, they felt as though the northbound bike route was their safest option. They disagreed with using the legal definition of right-of-way given the negative impact on their ability to safely use the road.

### **3. Shared Use Path Naming**

An update was made on the naming process for the construction of the shared use path to Garbers Church Road. There was an online public survey where citizens were able to rank the seven selected potential names. The survey was open until 10/24/2021, and the name will be announced prior to the opening of the path, which will be in mid to late November.

Commission member John Scherpereel asked about the impact of the survey on the final decision of the name. Tom Hartman responded that the final decision will be made by City Council, who will be given the results of the public survey to help them with their decision. Kyle Lawrence asked whether the segment of path currently referred to as the "Cale Trail" will be renamed with the new trail, or whether the name "Cale Trail" is under consideration. Jakob zumFelde answered that in accordance with City's naming standards, the new trail will not be named after a living person, so it will be given the same name as the other segments of path being constructed.

### **4. S. Main St pedestrian safety concerns near South Ave**

A current resident along the S. Main Street corridor between South Ave and E Weaver Ave has raised concerns about pedestrian movements. The concern has to do with the number of pedestrians crossing S Main St in an unsafe manner. According to the concerned citizen, the issue tends to happen in concurrence with parties at houses nearby, usually after 11 PM on weekends. The Public Works Dept, along with HPD, are working on potential solutions, including outreach to students about the importance of

using crosswalks and reaching out to some of the Greek houses along the corridor for potential volunteer help during those hours.

Chief Tobia clarified that an incident 2 years ago involving a pedestrian fatality along the corridor occurred at the crosswalk, although not during the given walk phase.

Sgt. Westfall suggested that pedestrian requests should take priority at the signal during the times at which there are concerns, in order to encourage pedestrians to use the crosswalk. He also wanted to clarify that he considered this to be an ongoing issue that should be treated with a long-term solution. John Scherpereel asked whether the crosswalks were lit better than other parts of the street. Tom Hartman answered that the amount of lighting that is used along the corridor is for awareness.

## **5. Mason St speeding concerns**

Residents of the area have raised concerns about vehicle speeds along the S Mason corridor. Sgt. Westfall will install a radar system to track the speeds along the corridor. John Scherpereel, who noted that he lives near the segment of Mason Street in question, indicated that the concerning portion of Mason is probably primarily between E Market St and Campbell. John Scherpereel also asked whether the radar system will also detect bikes. Sgt. Westfall noted that the radar may be able to measure a bike's speed, however it doesn't differentiate between bike and car.

## **6. Northeast Neighborhood Intersection Safety improvements**

Public Works staff presented the planned improvements for intersections and roadways in the Northeast Neighborhood. At Gay St and Hill St, the stop sign controlled directions will be reversed, giving the free movement to Gay St. At Gay St and Sterling St, the planned raised intersection was not deemed feasible, as problems regarding the required drainage made it a significant problem. So the City is now planning on adding crosswalks and stop bars at the intersection for visibility, as well as restricting parking adjacent to the intersection for sight distance concerns, and adding speed humps on both blocks of Gay Street leading to this intersection. The intersection of Wolfe St and Sterling St is a good geometric and traffic fit for a raised intersection, which will be installed there.

Sgt. Westfall then asked why No Parking Zones along Gay St and Sterling St would be on only two of the four corners. Tom Hartman answered that the City ordinance that restricts parking within 20 ft of the intersection is adequate for some corners and the additional restrictions are proposed because there are insufficient sight distances.

Chief Tobia asked whether a 4-way stop would be an option at the Gay St and Sterling St intersection. Tom Hartman said that there are safety concerns with placing 4-way stops at places where the traffic patterns aren't appropriate for all-way stop, as drivers can begin to ignore stops when there is little conflicting traffic.

There was additional discussion about the proposed changes. Kyle Lawrence said that due to the number of crashes involving parked cars on Gay St, fewer people are using on street parking, which could cause drivers to go faster through the neighborhood.

Jakob zumFelde invited any members of the public to comment. Matthew Bucher introduced himself as Pastor of Immanuel Mennonite Church and a resident of the Northeast Neighborhood, but said that he was primarily attending to speak on behalf of the residents of two houses at the corner of Gay St and Sterling St. He said that they are concerned with the number of drivers who roll through the stop signs already and have observed many crashes at the intersection. He indicated their strong desire for adequate measures to improve safety at this intersection. He also encouraged the City staff to get in contact with the residents before decisions are made that would affect them.

## **7. Updates on Previous Agenda Items**

There were brief updates and discussion about the provided updates.

## **8. Previous Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee agenda**

Marian Lebherz asked about the sidewalk improvement process and at what part of the process residents are notified or given the opportunity to give input. Tom Hartman answered that it would happen during the design phase, as that is when enough details have been identified that it is valuable to share with stakeholders and the public for their feedback.

Marian Lebherz asked about the reason for the sidewalk between Emerson

Ln and Washington St without a crosswalk across Vine Street. Jakob answered that there were not enough pedestrians to warrant a crosswalk for Vine.

## **9. Other Business/Announcements**

Kyle Lawrence announced that the Mayoral bike ride will take place downtown on October 30th. They will meet at 10 AM at City Hall and there is an open invitation for residents.

## **Adjournment**