City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft
City Council

Tuesday, June 24, 2025 | **7:00 PM** | **Council Chambers**

1. Roll Call

Present: 4 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Dany Fleming, Council Member Laura Dent and Council Member Monica Robinson

Absent: 1 - Council Member Nasser Alsaadun

Also Present: 5 - City Manager Ande Banks, City Clerk Pam Ulmer, Deputy Police Chief Rod Pollard, Chief Matthew Tobia and Deputy City Attorney Wesley Russ

2. Moment of Silence

Mayor Reed offered a moment of silence.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Special Recognition

4.a. Proclamation recognizing June 20, 2025 as World Refugee Day

Mayor Reed read the Proclamation recognizing World Refugee Day on June 20, 2025.

The following individuals accepted the proclamation and spoke on the challenges and concerns refugees and immigrants have in this country and on their accomplishments and contributions to the community. They thanked City Council for all their efforts.

Nadia Dames, Valley Muslim Community Foundation member,
Susannah Lepley, Virginia Director, Church World Service
Rodrigue Makelele, Senior Community Organizer, Church World Service

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 Robinson, seconded by Vice-Mayor Fleming, that this be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Alsaadun

5.a. Minutes from June 10, 2025 City Council meeting

These minutes were approved on the consent agenda

5.b. Consider approving an ordinance amendment to Section 7-4-1(a)(b) of the Harrisonburg City Code increasing water, sewer/authority, and 7-1-16 Same-Amount - Deposit pre-requisite to utility service

This ordinance amendment was approved on second reading

5.c. Consider a request from Paul C. Riner to rezone 302 West Bruce Street

This rezoning request was approved on second reading

5.d. Consider approving a request from 865 East LLC to rezone (proffer amendment) 865 Port Republic Road

This rezoning request was approved on second reading

5.e. Consider approving an ordinance amendment to Section 6-5-4 - Stormwater Utility Fee, of the City Code of Harrisonburg, Virginia

This ordinance amendment was approved on second reading

5.f. Consider a supplemental appropriation for the Harrisonburg City School Board (HCPS)

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

5.g. Consider a supplemental appropriation for the General Capital Projects Fund

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

5.h. Consider a supplemental appropriation for lease agreements

This supplemental appropriation was approved on second reading

5.i. Consider the special event application request for the African American Festival on Saturday, September 13, 2025.

This special event was approved on the consent agenda

5.j. Consider the special event application request for the Shenandoah Valley Pride Celebration on Sunday, September 21, 2025.

This special event was approved on the consent agenda

5.k. Consider the special event application request for the Block Party in the Burg on

Saturday, August 23, 2025.

This special event was approved on the consent agenda

6. Public Hearings

6.a. Consider approving a request from Newtown Cemetery to close an undeveloped public alley located between the Newtown Cemetery and parcels fronting along Hill Street and Gay Street

Adam Fletcher, director of Community Development, presented a request to close an alley adjacent to Newtown Cemetery. He reviewed the location, the surrounding zoning designation, the long-term use for the area, the history of how alleys were created in the city, photographs of the alley, the reasons for the request, and the potential unmarked graves in or near the alley.

He stated staff recommended denial and provided four options. Planning Commission (4-2) recommended approval of the request.

Discussion took place regarding the expansion of the Cemetery, if any buffer would be required, and whether to keep pedestrian access to the public.

At 7:33 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 Wednesday, June 11, 2025, and Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Quinton Callahan, Clark and Bradshaw, representative for the applicant, stated that they have completed a title search on the property. He spoke on obtaining a survey of the potential gravesites; the request not to allow vehicular traffic but possibly allow pedestrian access; and that the Trustees prefer Option 1 offered by staff.

Dr. Carole Nash, professor at James Madison University, spoke on the unmarked graves and sources used to locate them as well asthe history of the land obtained by Newtown Cemetery.

Joan Minnick, 54 E Gay Street, stated she is concerned about how she and other property owners would access the rear of the abutting properties.

At 7:43 p.m., Mayor Reed closed the public hearing and the regular session reconvened.

Discussion took place regarding respecting sacred property of any gravesites; access to the back yards of the abutting properties; preserving the property if there are gravesites located in this alley; and thanking Dr. Nash for her work on this project.

A motion was made by Council Member Robinson, seconded by Council Member Dent, to

approve the request as presented. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Alsaadun

6.b. Consider approving real estate tax exemption and personal property tax exemption status for Strength in Peers, Inc.; personal property tax exemption status for Virginia Clean Cities; and personal property tax exemption status for Village to Village Inc and Hope4Villages LLC

Karen Rose, Commissioner of the Revenue, presented requests for real estate and personal property tax exemptions for FY 25/26. She provided the history of tax exemptions, the process to apply for tax exemption, and the current statistics of tax exempt organizations. She reviewed the following exemption requests:

Strength in Peers, Inc. - real estate tax exemption in the amount of $ 4,709 and Personal Property Tax exemption in the amount of $1,056;

Virginia Clean Cities - personal property tax exemption in the amount of $2,023;

Village to Village, Inc - personal property tax exemption in the amount of $176.70, $175.81, and $116.62.

She stated the committee recommended denial of the Strength in Peers, Inc. real estate tax exemption but to approve the personal property tax exemptions. She stated the committee recommended approval of the personal property tax exemptions for Virginia Clean Cities and Village to Village Inc.

At 8:00 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 Wednesday, June 18, 2025.

There being no one desiring to be heard, Mayor Reed closed the public hearing at 8:00 p.m., and the regular session reconvened.

A motion was made by Council Member Robinson, seconded by Vice Mayor Fleming, to approve the tax exemptions as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Alsaadun

7. Regular Items

7.a. Consider approving amendments to Title 4 Chapter 2, Article 5, Sections 4-2-76.1 through 4-2-80, related Transient Occupancy Tax, of the Code of Ordinances, City of Harrisonburg

Karen Rose, Commissioner of the Revenue, presented ordinance amendments to match State Code. She shared the history of the Code of Virginia for transient tax and sales tax related to short-term rentals. She reviewed the amendments that will affect all intermediaries, including AirBnB, such as requiring Annual Host Attestation from short term rental providers.

A motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Vice Mayor Fleming, to approve the ordinance amendments as presented. The motion carried with unanimous voice vote.

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Alsaadun

7.b. Consider a request to grant Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) permission to use the Turner Pavilion and adjacent lawn to host the Levitt AMP Harrisonburg concert series from June to September in 2026, 2027, 2028

Andrea Dono, director of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), stated HDR is applying again for the Levitt Amp Series grant to continue with music for another three years and one of the requirements is to obtain approval by Council to use the Turner Pavilion and the grassy lot. She reviewed the last grant process in which they received for the first 3-year program; She reviewed the following:

- Diversity and Inclusion efforts;
- Community Partners;
- 2025 music schedule;
- Sponsors;

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

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Council Member Alsaadun

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)

Javier Calleja, 257 Fairway, stated that Council works for the public and should represent everyone in the community; Council should be able to comment back to public comments made; previous comments made by a resident concerning Harrisonburg Department of Public Transit (HDPT) warrant action; and he would like to see a plan on how to fix the accessibility issues with HDPT;

Marco Rossi, 382 Tanzanite Drive, spoke on artificial intelligence.

Matthew Wade, 636 Wyndham Wood Circle, shared information on vehicles provided by Virginia Clean Cities to localities.

8.b. City Council and Staff

Vice Mayor Fleming spoke on a webinar he joined on data center impacts; the recent Chamber of Commerce report on the state of the economy; a recent GovTech conference; NLC's upcoming AI launch; developing a city AI policy; upcoming NLC Universities Council meeting; VML Legislative meeting; concerns on federal cutbacks; and Senator Warner's visit where a discussion on childcare was had.

Council Member Robinson spoke on cuts on water quality federal funding; upcoming NLC REAL Council meeting; upcoming CCJB meeting; ice cream social at Silver Lake;

Council Member Dent spoke on the webinar regarding data center impacts; recent CSPDC meeting; and a NLC EENR meeting;

Mayor Reed spoke on a meeting with the candidate for Governor of Virginia; Juneteenth celebrations; the upcoming ribbon cutting of the Spray Grounds on July 1, 2025, at 10:00 am; and new presidents at JMU and EMU starting July 1, 2025;

Ande Banks, city manager, stated staff have been working on AI policies and will plan on a future presentation to Council, and spoke on locations that are open to the public should anyone need respite from the heat.

9. Boards and Commissions

9.a. Shenandoah Valley Partnership

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Fleming, seconded by Council Member Dent, to reappoint Peirce Macgill to Shenandoah Valley Partnership for a fifth term to expire on June

30, 2028. The motion carried with unanimous voice vote.

9.b. Blue Ridge Community College Board of Trustees

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Fleming, seconded by Council Member Robinson, to reappoint Sandra Hernandez to the Blue Ridge Community College Board of Trustees for a second term to expire on June 30, 2029. The motion carried with unanimous voice vote.

10. Closed Session

11. Adjournment

At 8:43 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY CLERK MAYOR