City of Harrisonburg

409 S. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Draft
City Council

Tuesday, July 22, 2025 | **7:00 PM** | **Council Chambers**

1. Roll Call

Present: 5 - Mayor Deanna R. Reed, Vice-Mayor Dany Fleming, Council Member Laura Dent, Council Member Nasser Alsaadun and Council Member Monica Robinson

Also Present: 5 - City Attorney Chris Brown, Deputy City Manager Amy Snider, City Clerk Pam Ulmer, Deputy Police Chief Rod Pollard and Chief Matthew Tobia

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

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 Dent, seconded by Council Member Alsaadun, that the consent agenda be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Fleming, Council Member Dent, Council Member Alsaadun and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

5.a. Minutes from the July 8, 2025 City Council meeting

These minutes were approved on the Consent agenda

5.b. Consider a request to rezone 310 West View Street

This rezoning request was approved on second reading

5.c. Consider a request to rezone 810 Port Republic Road (The Vista at Forest Hills)

This rezoning request was approved on second reading

5.d. Consider adopting an ordinance granting a lease of certain real property of the City of

Harrisonburg located at 2230 Ramblelwood Road.

This ordinance amendment request was approved on second reading

6. Public Hearings

7. Regular Items

7.a. Presentation on the Community Connectors Program

Amy Snider, deputy city manager, presented information on the Community Connectors Program and Project; the Mason Street temporary reconfiguration, and the Block Party that took place on Mason Street related to this project. She reviewed the following:

- The history;
- The teams involved;
- Program Components;
- The mission statement;
- Community Engagement and public, small area plan input meetings;
- Complete Streets Leadership Academy
- N. Mason Street Demonstration Project
- N. Mason Street Block(s) party;
- Facilitated dialogue;
- Historical research

Mike Foreman, special projects manager for Weldon Cooper Center, thanked Ms. Snider and Council Member Robinson for all of the support and discussions related to this project. He spoke on the work he did regarding reconciliation in Charlottesville, VA. He stated the progress of the healing of past trauma work in Harrisonburg has been great, and he looks forward to continuing to work with the city.

This Presentation was received and filed.

7.b. Presentation of Urban Renewal Historical Research

Amy Snider, deputy city manager, introduced the historical research team: Ann Pfau, David Hochfelder, and Stacy Sewell. Mr. Hochfelder reviewed the research findings as follows:

- What happened in Harrisonburg happened around the Country (more than 1200 municipalities participated in the Urban Renewal Program);
- Legislative history of Urban Renewal;
- Federal Grant and Loan Programs offered by the Housing Act of 1949 and 1954
- The two projects impacted by Urban Renewal - Northeast and Wolfe Street;
- Definition of substandard housing;

- Preliminary plan from 1959;
- Statistics on the buildings demolished and households displaced;
- Where former residents moved to;
- How Urban renewal helped Harrisonburg;
- The immediate aftermath of Urban Renewal;
- Unanswered questions due to lack of surviving documentation:
  - Cannot identify all of the people displaced by urban renewal. (Nor do we know where some of them moved.);
  - Cannot assess whether individual owners were financially harmed by seizure of their property.;
  - Cannot know whether relocation translated into higher housing or transportation costs for tenants;
  - Did urban renewal play a role in the decline of Harrisonburg's Black population between 1960 and 1970;
- Recommendation:
  - A thorough search of Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) document holdings to determine whether additional urban renewal or public housing documentation still exists.
  - Community outreach focused on filling in the blanks.

Discussions took place regarding how the HRHA and the city worked together to make Urban Renewal happen; the Redevelopment Authority director at the time of urban renewal from 1955 to 1965 was also the Planning Engineer for the city; the lack of recovery of the African American population growth in the city; Possible missing records from HRHA; the community stopping further urban renewal plans; voting rights during that time; independent audit of records with HRHA and the city; the incredible work the historical research team did; Council thanked the research team and staff for all the hard work.

This Presentation was received and filed.

7.c. Consider Adoption of New Cost Basis for Bond Estimates

Matthew Huston, city engineer, Community Development, presented a request to approve a new cost basis for bond estimates. He stated the city requires that private developers post bonds to assure the timely construction and completion of public infrastructure and erosion and stormwater management practices in accordance with approved plans and noted that with the increase of costs associated with construction there is a need to update the spreadsheet tool created by Community Development determining the bond amounts required. He stated the last update to this spreadsheet tool was in 2014.

Vice Mayor Fleming stated the need to update these bonds amount is a must. He asked if other localities have already adjusted their bond rates. Mr. Huston stated he

did not know. Vice Mayor Fleming stated he suggests research be done on what other localities bond rates are these increases will impact local development.

Council Member Alsaadun asked how often these bond rates are updated. Mr. Huston stated there hasn't been a regular update for many years but should be done every few years.

Vice Mayor Fleming made a motion to table this item until the August 26, 2025 City Council meeting to allow staff time to research other localities bond rates. Council Member Alsaadun seconded the motion. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Fleming, Council Member Dent, Council Member Alsaadun and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

7.d. Consider Amendment to the Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance

Matthew Huston, city engineer, Community Development, presented an ordinance amendment to address an issue raised by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). He stated in the summer of 2024 Council approved an ordinance amendment related to treating a duplex residential structure the same as a single family detached residential structure. He reviewed those amendments. He stated the DEQ notified the city that the amendment was less stringent than Virginia State Law and localities cannot have an ordinance that is less stringent than State Law. He reviewed the new amendment to correct the issue.

Vice Mayor Fleming stated Council and staff should make a push with state legislation to change their language in State Code.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Fleming, seconded by Council Member Dent, that this Action Item be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Yes: 5 - Mayor Reed, Vice-Mayor Fleming, Council Member Dent, Council Member Alsaadun and Council Member Robinson

No: 0

9. Other Matters

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

Katherine Barrens, spoke on traffic safety issues on Stone Spring Road, the need for an updated traffic study in the area, the increase in traffic and speeding, and the upcoming improvements planned for that road. She stated she had been in contact with the Department of Public Works and was assured they would look into the

issues.

Wayne B Wenger, spoke against the development planned for the Lindsay Funeral Home parcel.

James “Bucky” Berry, (call was cutting out) spoke on Harrisonburg Police and the Brent Barry Food Drive.

9.b. City Council and Staff

Council Member Alsaadun spoke on meeting the JMU President at an event held by the city; and the recent HDR Board meeting he attended;

Council Member Dent spoke on meeting the JMU President at an event held by the city; recent NLC Summer Leadership conference her and Vice Mayor Fleming attended; and upcoming Resilient Virginia conference in Harrisonburg;

Council Member Robinson spoke on the recent Block(s) party on Mason Street; upcoming HRHA meeting; upcoming Social Services Advisory Board meeting; and recent meeting of the new JMU president;

Vice Mayor Fleming spoke on the Southern Cities Economic Initiative Grant project in process; recent NLC Summer Leadership conference; federal funding cuts; and upcoming virtual meeting on VML’s Legislative agenda;

Mayor Reed spoke on a meeting she had with the new JMU president; her advocating of afterschool programs and funding cuts; Way 2 Go celebrating 20th anniversary; Mercy House had a ribbon cutting of their new playground; and upcoming Valley keynote.

10. Closed Session

10.a. Closed Session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A), under: under Subsection 5 for the discussion of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.

At 9:01 p.m., a motion was made by Council Member Dent, seconded by Vice Mayor Fleming, to enter into closed session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A), under: Subsection 5 for the discussion of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

11. Adjournment

At 9:11 p.m. the closed session ended and the regular session reconvened. City Attorney Brown read the following statement, which was agreed to with a unanimous recorded vote of Council: I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Chapter 37 of Title 2.2 of the Code, of Virginia, 1950, as amended, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting by the City Council.

At 9:11 p.m., there being no further business and on motion adopted, the meeting was adjourned.

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CITY CLERK MAYOR