

# **STAGE 2 MEDIA SEARCH**

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## **EXAMPLE REPORT**



## **FINALIST CANDIDATE MEDIA SEARCH RESULTS**

The media search results have been prepared for the exclusive use for the [Client's name here; City of; Town of...].

SGR does not and indeed cannot represent either (1) that all of the information is true, correct, and/or accurate (though SGR makes every effort to obtain all relevant information to provide, including – when appropriate – an explanation or additional detail from a candidate) or (2) that the information is legally appropriate for consideration in the decision whether to hire. For example, information about a person that shows they are in a protected class (race, color, religion, sex and national origin, age, or disability, in addition to others) should not be considered in hiring but may be provided by SGR since it is publicly available and may be discovered and brought to [client's name here] attention by members of the public. The [client's name here] should consult with its own legal counsel and/or human resource professionals for advice in this regard.

You will find in the Table of Contents pertinent information relating to the candidate beginning with the Findings if any. The Findings will provide any negative, questionable, or controversial articles regarding the candidate. It is highly recommended to view these findings in their entirety.

The remainder of the media search provides links to social media resources, google search information, and newspaper articles where the candidate is mentioned. Click and open each article to view the information provided. The type of link is identified in the Table of Contents.

In addition, SGR uses Lexis Diligence, a proprietary platform to perform critical due diligence research for your organization. This can also be found in the table of contents.

It is strongly recommended that each link is opened and read in its entirety.



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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 18, 2017 Tuesday

## Nexus Dismisses Lawsuit Over Rocks In Food At Jail

BYLINE: PETE DeLEA Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 369 words

HARRISONBURG -- Nexus Services dismissed a federal lawsuit claiming staff at Middle River Regional Jail knowingly served rocks and other foreign objects in food to inmates.

Nexus attorneys filed the lawsuit in July 2016 on behalf of nine current and former inmates at the Verona jail, which serves the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton and Waynesboro and Rockingham and Augusta counties.

Despite Monday's voluntary dismissal, Nexus' attorneys could refile the case later.

"This first lawsuit that was filed has been dismissed, however, the issue associated with rocks in food will be litigated," according to a statement released by the company Tuesday. "We continue to stand for the affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of all people, including people incarcerated in our communities."

Nexus, which relocated its corporate headquarters to Verona from Harrisonburg in 2015, primarily provides legal assistance to immigrants and minorities. The company has filed several lawsuits against the jail and local officials in the last year.

The company has also come under fire itself, with several immigrants filing lawsuits claiming they were duped or pressured into signing up for its services.

The federal lawsuit against the jail and its top officials sought at least \$250,000 per inmate.

MRRJ is overseen by a board made up of representatives from the municipalities it serves, and all board members are named in the lawsuit. A judge later dismissed the cases against those that oversee municipalities, including Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] and Rockingham County Administrator Stephen King.

The lawsuit claimed that inmates were served beans containing rocks, spoiled bread and fruit. They also claim that the food is often served on dirty trays.

At a press conference announcing the lawsuit, Nexus attorneys said they believe the beans are brought in from state-maintained farms.

Nexus claims an inmate sorts the beans and is supposed to remove rocks, twigs and other items that might have been mixed in with the food.

The lawsuit claims the inmates sustained damage to their teeth.

"The sanitary condition of the food served is deplorable," attorney LaMichael Combs said when the lawsuit was filed.

LOAD-DATE: July 19, 2017

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



**Example**

**Social Media and Business Resource Links:**

LinkedIn [https://www.linkedin.com/in/\[REDACTED\]icma-cm-76823a5/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/[REDACTED]icma-cm-76823a5/)

Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/\[REDACTED\]](https://www.facebook.com/[REDACTED])

RocketReach [https://rocketreach.co/\[REDACTED\]email\\_18085333](https://rocketreach.co/[REDACTED]email_18085333)

Twitter Mention [https://twitter.com/potter\\_ellie/status/922963726659186690](https://twitter.com/potter_ellie/status/922963726659186690)

Twitter Mention <https://twitter.com/harrisonburgva/status/279255634917093377>

Facebook Mention

[https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=\[REDACTED\]2C%20city%20manager&epa=SEARCH\\_BO](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=[REDACTED]2C%20city%20manager&epa=SEARCH_BO)  
[X](#)

**Example**

**Google Articles and Newspaper Links:**

**August 23, 2017**

[http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/monticelli-announces-plans-to-resign/article\\_3f2131d2-8875-11e7-b22f-c79b4dba118b.html](http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/monticelli-announces-plans-to-resign/article_3f2131d2-8875-11e7-b22f-c79b4dba118b.html)

**May 18, 2017**

[http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/exit-project-gets-state-funding/article\\_a0152df4-3c3f-11e7-924f-fb91de598ab9.html](http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/exit-project-gets-state-funding/article_a0152df4-3c3f-11e7-924f-fb91de598ab9.html)

**February 20, 2017**

[https://www.breezeimu.org/news/city-manager-announces-plans-to-retire-in-october/article\\_a40b8738-f733-11e6-a31f-174b3b000939.html](https://www.breezeimu.org/news/city-manager-announces-plans-to-retire-in-october/article_a40b8738-f733-11e6-a31f-174b3b000939.html)

**January 27, 2017**

[http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/alternative-sentencing-on-agenda/article\\_96ddb76a-e50f-11e6-a0d4-8baa0ee612ac.html](http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/alternative-sentencing-on-agenda/article_96ddb76a-e50f-11e6-a0d4-8baa0ee612ac.html)

**January 27, 2017**

[http://www.dnronline.com/update/new-community-criminal-justice-board-to-present-findings/article\\_7c1fc25c-e4af-11e6-b776-d3d0df61ee0c.html](http://www.dnronline.com/update/new-community-criminal-justice-board-to-present-findings/article_7c1fc25c-e4af-11e6-b776-d3d0df61ee0c.html)

**November 15, 2016**

[http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/city-council-discusses-jail-accreditation/article\\_d9731572-abb0-11e6-8863-c36cd6d5aa5a.html](http://www.dnronline.com/news/harrisonburg/city-council-discusses-jail-accreditation/article_d9731572-abb0-11e6-8863-c36cd6d5aa5a.html)

**June 28, 2016**

<https://www.nbc29.com/story/32327181/city-of-harrisonburg-announces-new-fire-chief>

**April 27, 2014**

[https://www.dailyprogress.com/news/local/salaries-for-municipal-managers-vary-widely/article\\_e924d920-ce4e-11e3-863a-001a4bcf6878.html](https://www.dailyprogress.com/news/local/salaries-for-municipal-managers-vary-widely/article_e924d920-ce4e-11e3-863a-001a4bcf6878.html)

**November 14, 2012**

<https://ncpharrisonburg.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/council-approves-funds-for-greenway/>

**March 09, 2011**

<http://hburgnews.com/2011/03/09/city-council-approves-100-solar-exemption-and-northend-greenway/>

**February 12, 2010**

<https://www.cbs19news.com/home/headlines/84225857.html>

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 30, 2019 Saturday

## Wishing The Best, The Best; City Says Goodbye As Smith Leaves Role

BYLINE: LAINE GRIFFIN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: A; Pg. 02

LENGTH: 793 words

HARRISONBURG It's time to say goodbye, though goodbye is the last thing Janice Suter wants to say to Reggie Smith.

Smith, longtime Harrisonburg Director of Public Transportation has put his career to rest after more than four decades of service, but Suter is finding it hard to think of the transportation department without him.

"When he told me he was retiring, it literally broke my heart," she said while at his retirement party Friday. "I wanted him to stay until I left."

Suter, a city school bus driver who also works in the print room for the department, has worked with Smith for 32 years.

When Suter first began her career as a school bus driver, she took a lot of days off and Smith wouldn't stand for that.

"He straightened you out but also was the most caring person when it came to your career or personal life," she said. "He told me if I continued to work the way I was, I would've been fired."

But 11 years ago when Suter told him she was battling breast cancer, he stepped up to the plate and would bring her dinner and take her to doctor appointments.

"I remember when I first told him. I could barely look him in the eyes, but when I walked into his office to tell him, he already had a box of tissues waiting for me," she said. "He always cared about his employees."

Smith, who retires on March 31, is not only one of the longest tenured directors in city history, but is also the only person to have ever led the department, which was created in 1976.

"There will never be another Reggie here," Suter said.

Michele Tracy feels the same way.

"He just can't be replaced. He started this division; knows it front and back, every aspect, who is who and what is what," Tracy said at his retirement party. "You can never get the knowledge that he has."

Tracy has known Smith for 26 years while she has worked in the Human Resources Department and done payroll.

She said he has created a working team because of his leadership and it is bittersweet to see him go.

As she looked around the room of the retirement party, she began to tear up.



"If you look around, you see all his accomplishments young and old, every race and color he's touched everybody," she said. "We've tried to hold time still, but now it's time to say goodbye."

Smith said he has enjoyed his job immensely, "but you get to a point where you can't just go go go."

He said he wanted to retire while he still had a few "go go go" years so that he could enjoy other parts of life.

"There's a point where you need to move on and let the younger people take over," he said. "I've had young people come work here and they have taught me a lot about communication and the world that keeps advancing technologically."

Smith said now he is going to get up every morning and walk to his mailbox and get the paper, walk his dogs and do some things around the house.

"Eventually I'll get rid of my farm in four or five years and my wife and I are going to go to Memphis, Graceland and the Mississippi cruise," he said. "I'm trying to find a cruise boat that goes to the Rocky's and Yellowstone."

██████████ who served as Harrisonburg's city manager from 2001 to 2017 said Reggie is a story of success.

"He is a story of what hard work and dedication can do for you," he said. "There are people who will be able to come in and operate the system, but there won't be anyone who had the institutional knowledge he had."

If anyone knew he had what it took to start and run a department, it was the man who knew him since he was 10 years old.

Cecil Gilkerson has known Smith for 54 years. He was friends with his family and worked with Smith while he served as the director of parks and recreation for 37 years.

"He started working with me at 8 years old in the parks and rec department," Gilkerson said. "Then I told the city manager at the time, Marvin Milam, that Reggie would be good for the job of starting the department that is today."

To this day he hasn't disappointed anyone, Gilkerson said.

"I really thought he would retire before now, but this place was his baby and he wanted to continue to be here for the department, his employees and the city," he said. "He really did start with nothing and make something."

Employees in his department attended Smith's retirement party, along with past and current City Council members, City Manager Eric Campbell, Deputy City Manager Ande Banks, Harrisonburg Fire Chief Ian Bennett and others.

"I've had a good life, and my job was such a big part of my life, along with the people in this city, even the ones who rode public transit," Smith said. "You don't realize how much you know and have learned until you look back. I learned that you can't take this job so seriously. Sometimes you gotta laugh at yourself and laugh at the job."

LOAD-DATE: April 2, 2019

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

NOTES: Contact Laine Griffin at 574-6286 or lgriffin@dnronline.com

GRAPHIC: Outgoing Harrisonburg Director of Public Transportation Reggie Smith holds a trophy presented to him by Bucky Berry during a retirement party at the HDPT office Friday afternoon. Daniel Lin / DN-R Outgoing Harrisonburg Director of Public Transportation Reggie Smith holds a trophy presented to him by Bucky Berry during a retirement party at the HDPT office Friday afternoon. Daniel Lin / DN-R Outgoing Harrisonburg Director of Public Transportation Reggie Smith, right, talks with retired central garage assistant shop foreman John Davis during a retirement party at the HDPT office Friday afternoon. Daniel Lin / DN-R Outgoing Harri-

sonburg Director of Public Transportation Reggie Smith, right, talks with retired central garage assistant shop foreman John Davis during a retirement party at the HDPT office Friday afternoon. Daniel Lin / DN-R

DOCUMENT-TYPE: article

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 30, 2018 Monday

## City To Announce New Police Chief Today

BYLINE: PETE DeLEA Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: HARRISONBURG

LENGTH: 243 words

HARRISONBURG -- City Manager Eric Campbell plans to unveil his choice for Harrisonburg's next police chief today.

Officials have scheduled a press conference for 1:30 p.m. to announce the choice to fill the post, which has been open for about eight months.

Harrisonburg has been searching for a new chief since Stephen Monticelli resigned Dec. 1 after five years on the job. His resignation came after he was named as a finalist for two police chief jobs in the Midwest.

Monticelli's resignation took effect in December, but he used vacation time for the last month of employment.

Steve Sellers, who retired as police chief of the Albemarle County Police Department in June 2016, has served as interim chief since Nov. 8. His last day is today.

The search for a new chief was delayed because Monticelli's departure came as City Council was in the process of replacing former City Manager ██████████ who retired late last year. Campbell took over as city manager on Jan. 16 and has led the search for Monticelli's replacement.

In March, council voted to pay \$27,000 to The Novak Consulting Group, a Cincinnati-based business management consulting firm, to coordinate the search process.

After meeting with the community, officers and city staff, the group crafted a job posting, which yielded 67 applications by the June 8 deadline.

The person chosen will oversee a department of roughly 110 sworn police officers. The listed salary range was \$115,000 to \$125,000.

LOAD-DATE: August 1, 2018

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper



The Sidelines: Middle Tennessee State University

February 10, 2018 Saturday

## Murfreesboro City Council holds meeting to discuss strategies for hiring new city manager

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 804 words

city council City manager City Manager Rob Lyons Murfreesboro

Photo and story by Hannah Adams / Contributing Writer

On Thursday, the Murfreesboro City Council held a meeting at City Hall to discuss the strategies involved in hiring a new city manager. Since former City Manager Rob Lyons' resignation back in December, the seat has remained open.

City Councilman Rick LaLance, Kirt Wade, Eddie Smotherman and Bill Shacklett were present at the meeting along with Mayor Shane McFarland and Vice Mayor Madelyn Scales Harris.

Murfreesboro has been without a city manager for two months now. Lyons was promoted to city manager in 2009 after successfully leading the city into recovery from the Good Friday tornado that same year. In the years he served in the position, Lyons also helped shape the city's growth with projects, such as the Gateway Business District and conference center in Murfreesboro.

The Strategic Government Resources, a business that partners with local government to help recruit new leaders, is helping the council make this decision.

SGR Senior Vice President of Recruitment Doug Thomas and Senior Vice President Recruiter [REDACTED] led the meeting.

The purpose of the SGR getting involved is to not only help alleviate some of the pressure from the council but also to delegate what the council and community are looking for in their new city manager.

"We want that person to be able to connect with each of you, collectively, as government body members," Thomas said. "The most important thing you can do is appoint the city manager. He or she is going to help you achieve your goals and expectations for the city."

Earlier in the day, Thomas and [REDACTED] talked with individual council members to discuss what their ideal candidate's attributes would be. The council determined they are looking for someone who will possess a high visual role, not only within the council but also within the community. They want someone who is decisive, a strong community manager with strong ethics and morals and who can focus on diversity within the workforce.

Among the aforementioned attributes, the council is also seeking someone who will understand the relationship between Middle Tennessee State University and the community, and the importance of having such a large university at the heart of the city.

"Having a university in your community always adds value," Thomas said. "With downtown relationships, there are also pressures as the campus grows ... and ripple effects on neighborhoods and planning zones. Those are pretty important skills to have as well."

During the meeting, Thomas proposed a 90-day hiring plan, which he broke down by stages. Within the first 30 days of this plan, SGR will go through the motions of creating profile brochures that will describe what "life in Murfreesboro is all about." They will include information on government structure, when elections occur and the general functions and responsibilities of a city manager. These brochures will, essentially, promote the city and entice possible applicants.

After this process, and upon the council's approval to continue, SGR will then announce the position publicly and begin to launch interviews and narrow the search down to between eight and 12 candidates.

The second month will include going back through the applicants and helping the council to select the ones that stand out the most. Through that point, the candidates will go through a number of exercises and material to move them onto the semifinals. This includes a questionnaire that goes through their background, management style, accomplishments, controversies they may have been involved with and specific questions pertaining to the job ahead of them.

Those who pass into the semifinals will have to perform in a prerecorded, interview-based video that will be sent to the councilmen, along with their cover letter, résumé and questionnaire. The council will have 10 days to go through this material to determine which applicants will move on to become finalists.

Typically, the finalists will include three to five candidates. These finalists will go through additional exercises that will include their one-year plan for the city. They will also have an extensive background check run before any decision is made. Since the list of candidates will be narrowed down significantly at this point, this will give the council members a chance to get to know the candidates on a more personal level.

"We're just looking for great leadership," Shacklett said. "I think we've got something here that's very desirable. I will be very disappointed if we don't have a phenomenal batch of candidates."

To contact News Editor Andrew Wigdor, email [newseditor@mtsusidelines.com](mailto:newseditor@mtsusidelines.com)

For more news, follow us at [www.mtsusidelines.com](http://www.mtsusidelines.com), on Facebook at MTSU Sidelines and on Twitter at @Sidelines\_News.

LOAD-DATE: February 11, 2018

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 1, 2017 Friday

## On That New School

BYLINE: Staff Writer

SECTION: OPINION

LENGTH: 404 words

Entering the final month of 2017, the Harrisonburg City Council is certainly not cruising through the holiday season with ease, as many important and timely decisions face the body. One of them was settled earlier this week when the city announced that it has selected Eric Campbell as its new city manager. Mr. Campbell will start early next year, replacing retired manager [REDACTED]

Among the big tasks the new manager will face immediately is choosing a permanent holder of the position of police chief, but we expect that will likely take until the spring of 2018 to become final.

Amid this transition in key staff, City Council is nearing a decision on funding for city schools. Next week, we anticipate the School Board might formally request funding for the construction of a second high school. The problem of overcrowding at the current Harrisonburg High School cannot be debated, and the clock is ticking on taking action to alleviate what school officials call an untenable situation.

That part of the equation is not up for debate, but the community is in some ways sharply divided about the cost of a proposed solution and what that investment will do to already climbing tax rates.

We have said many times before on this page that communication between the City Council and the School Board on this issue is paramount to achieving a resolution. As serious as overcrowding is, taxpayers are not an inexhaustible fountain of money available to pay for a solution.

Next week, the School Board will hear presentations from three architects outlining possible cost scenarios for a second high school. We trust the board has heard the outcry about the potential costs of another school and has made that concern clear to its potential architects.

But, the numbers will speak for themselves, and the School Board hopes to have enough information to make a formal request to City Council at the latter body's meeting on Dec. 12. Whatever the recommendation, we predict, some will cheer it and others oppose it no matter the details or supporting data.

But, as Council seems to have made clear, a detailed total project request that gives the proposed costs and timeline is mandatory before any decisions can be made. We agree, and it looks like that step may happen next week.

All city residents should pay close attention and make their voices heard, as public education and taxes affect every resident of Harrisonburg.

LOAD-DATE: December 1, 2017

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

November 29, 2017 Wednesday

## 'Harrisonburg Is In A Very Good Place'

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 850 words

HARRISONBURG -- Incoming City Manager Eric Campbell said Wednesday he always wanted to return to Virginia, having spent his first 20 years working in local government in the commonwealth.

After earning his bachelor's degree from Hampton University and then his master's in public administration from Syracuse University, the Richmond native began working as an intern for Arlington County, Campbell said in a call with local reporters Wednesday afternoon.

Campbell, 54, went on to work in local government administration in Petersburg and Portsmouth, later serving as assistant city manager in both Charlotte and Dallas.

"I had a strong knowledge of Virginia local government," he said, "and the reputation Virginia has for its strong local government."

On Tuesday evening, City Council announced it had selected Campbell as Harrisonburg's next city manager. Out of 150 applicants for the position, council interviewed six.

Former City Manager ██████████ retired in October, after serving the city for 16 years, 10 in the top spot. Deputy City Manager Ande Banks will continue to serve as interim city manager until Campbell is appointed to and assumes his new role on Jan. 16.

Council will vote to officially choose Campbell for the position and ratify his contract on Dec. 12, City Attorney Chris Brown said Tuesday.

City spokeswoman Mary-Hope Vass said she believes Campbell will be Harrisonburg's first African-American city manager.

### Top City Issues

As city manager, Campbell will be responsible for leading about 600 part- and full-time employees and helping manage Harrisonburg's budget, which is \$243 million for fiscal 2018.

He also will assume office amid debate and possible council action over whether to fund the building of a second high school to alleviate overcrowding in Harrisonburg High School.

Campbell has not been formally briefed on the issue, he said, but is aware of the topic.

He plans to meet with Harrisonburg City Schools Superintendent Scott Kizner and discuss the research that went into proposing a new high school after taking office.

In addition, he will help select the city's next police chief, who will succeed Stephen Monticelli. Monticelli's resignation was effective Dec. 1.

Campbell said he worked closely with public safety and emergency management personnel in his previous roles and wants the next police chief to be a great communicator with the community.

"Particularly nationally, what's going on with the perspectives and views of law enforcement now," Campbell said, "you need someone who's comfortable engaging and can communicate and be open and transparent with the community."

Why Harrisonburg?

Campbell said he was interested in the position because of the city's growth. He thinks his experience working in larger cities can help Harrisonburg continue to grow and develop over the next five to 10 years.

"I think Harrisonburg is in a very good place," Campbell said. "What I hope to do as I arrive as manager is work with council to find ways we can enhance the great things that are going on, the assets that the city has."

People are always concerned that growth will cause the city to lose its identity, he said.

"I know how folks want to maintain the character of their communities," he said. "But by the same token, you want the community to grow and expand and to actually be one of those communities where people look at constantly and want to come visit and want to come live and want to move there."

Most recently, Campbell served as assistant city manager in Dallas, where he served from September 2014 until May.

In February, he said, Dallas hired a new city manager. That manager "decided he wanted his own executive team," Campbell said, and moved out several senior employees over the next 90 days. Only one of the four assistant city managers who worked with the previous manager remains in city hall, he said.

Since then, he has been looking for a new job.

He will earn \$175,000 working for Harrisonburg, a pay cut of nearly \$64,000 from the \$238,703 he made in Dallas, according to the Texas Tribune, a Texas media organization.

"The money itself was never the priority," Campbell said. "In my career, I've always tried to strive for the right fit in communities where I could do the best work, so the salary wasn't the main thing."

Harrisonburg's small size, compared with other cities Campbell has worked in, also was not a factor, he said.

"I want to be in a community where I feel I'm making a difference and a community that I can help grow and develop with the council's guidance," he said, "and I just thought Harrisonburg was a good fit. I don't see myself bouncing to another community unless council decides it has a different direction for me in the long run."

He thinks Harrisonburg will be a great community to move to, noting the city's and James Madison University's growth and the area's diversity.

"I think with the leadership and the strategy and the guidance of the City Council, we could really make a positive impact on the community," Campbell said. "I thought it was a good place to be right now in my career."

LOAD-DATE: November 30, 2017

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

November 6, 2017 Monday

## City Interviews Candidates For Manager Spot

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 335 words

HARRISONBURG -- City staff anticipate Harrisonburg's next manager will be announced later this month. About 150 applicants applied for the city manager's position, according to Mary-Hope Vass, city spokeswoman.

In February, ██████████ 54, announced he would retire from his city manager's post effective Oct. 31, giving council more than eight months to find a replacement. ██████████ was employed by Harrisonburg for more than 16 years, 10 in the top administrative spot.

As city manager, he was responsible for leading about 600 part- and full-time employees, according to the city's website, and played a large role in managing Harrisonburg's \$243 million fiscal 2018 budget.

Deputy City Manager Ande Banks is serving as interim city manager.

City Council hired The Novak Consulting Group, a Cincinnati-based business management consultant firm, to lead the search for ██████████ replacement.

In a public meeting in July, council and Catherine Tuck Parrish, the company's executive search practice leader, agreed that council would interview the top few candidates on Monday and today.

On Monday, Vass confirmed that the schedule has not changed, but the city is not releasing the number of candidates being interviewed this week.

In July, council and Parrish said the top four to six candidates would meet with Harrisonburg department heads, tour the area, interview with the entire council and then interview one-on-one with council members this week.

The position requires a master's degree and 10 years of local government experience, including at least three years of management. The city preferred candidates with credentialed manager certification, strong financial management skills, experience in economic development and redevelopment, and experience working in Virginia or college towns.

The ad says the position pays between \$165,000 and \$195,000. ██████████ was paid \$185,000 a year when he retired and received a vehicle allowance of \$7,800 a year.

Contact Ellie Potter at 574-6286 or epotter@dnronline.com

LOAD-DATE: November 8, 2017

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 30, 2017 Monday

## New Proposals For Downtown City Park

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 599 words

HARRISONBURG -- This time last year, Build Our Park was ready to begin fundraising for a new downtown city park, having developed a proposed plan for the project.

But on Oct. 12, design volunteers with Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance gave the organization three new proposals, after the city sent the group back to the drawing board six months ago.

Build Our Park -- a public-private partnership that includes HDR, the group working to revitalize downtown -- is spearheading the effort to build an urban park. The organization formed after community support for an urban park increased following the first Rocktown Beer and Music Festival in April of 2011, according to the group's website.

The organization plans to convert the Harrisonburg Farmers Market's Turner Pavilion, the green space south of the pavilion along South Liberty Street and the gravel parking lot south of Warren Street into a city park.

Initiatives to build a downtown park have been ongoing since at least 2011.

In May, the organization met with City Manager [REDACTED] Deputy City Manager Ande Banks and Councilmen Richard Baugh and Ted Byrd, said Andrea Dono, secretary of the organization's board of directors. They discussed the proposal: a 4.2-acre, \$5.5 million project.

City Council and staff members asked Build Our Park to develop a new design for a roughly 1.2-acre park, citing parking concerns, said Eddie Bumbaugh, president of Build Our Park's board of directors. Council and staff may later decide to designate more land for the park, Bumbaugh said.

"The city is looking at the existing parking situation, future demand," Bumbaugh said. "That's one of the reasons why they asked us to work with a smaller footprint, so that if parking needs to be addressed in the future, that there's city property that can be considered for future parking resources."

Last year, the organization's proposal included the municipal parking lot to the north of the pavilion. It also included adding a playground, splash pad, tree-lined walking path and grassy lawn for events.

In late August, design volunteers with HDR began working to create new park design proposals, Dono said.

Though a proposal has not been selected, Bumbaugh said, the park will include an extension to the pavilion, a grassy area for events and leisure and some sort of natural play area, using rocks and logs for children to climb rather than a playground.

The organization's board will review the three proposals over the coming months, he said, and likely present its favorite to council in early 2018.

Because the design has not been selected, Bumbaugh said, it is too early to estimate how much the project will cost.

Build Our Park has raised \$380,000 through largely private fundraising efforts, Dono said, and has nearly \$160,000 in pledges. Some of the pledges are multiyear, so the group will collect them annually.

Build Our Park was notified in July 2016 that it would receive \$99,500 in grant funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expand Turner Pavilion, Dono said. The group plans to raise another \$116,020 for the pavilion extension.

The organization is still accepting donations, Bumbaugh said, but will not actively fundraise until council approves a new plan. At that time, it will create a construction timeline as well.

An urban park would improve the community's economy by increasing property values, Bumbaugh said. Those who take advantage of them also tend to benefit both physically and emotionally.

"Most successful downtowns have an urban park," he said.

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PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 29, 2017 Sunday

## A Job Well-Done

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 611 words

HARRISONBURG -- Tuesday marks City Manager [REDACTED] final day working for the city.

[REDACTED] 54, will retire from the city's top post after 10 years, 16 total working for Harrisonburg.

One of his favorite parts of his more than three decades of public service is getting to see the evidence of his efforts all over town, he said, in various infrastructure projects.

"No matter where I go from here," he said, "I can always come back to Harrisonburg and look at something and say, 'Wow, I was able to have a part in that.'"

Ande Banks, deputy city manager, will serve as the interim city manager until City Council hires [REDACTED] replacement, a decision that is expected to be made next month.

[REDACTED] who has been responsible for leading about 600 part- and full-time employees, according to the city's website, and plays a large role in managing Harrisonburg's \$243 million fiscal 2018 budget, announced his plan to retire in February, giving the city more than eight months to find a replacement.

He made \$185,000 a year, in addition to a vehicle allowance totaling \$7,800 a year.

In the summer of 1983, [REDACTED] who majored in public administration and political science at James Madison University, interned in the city's planning office. After graduating in December 1984, he worked for various local governments across the state, including serving as assistant county manager in Botetourt County and town manager in Narrows.

He was promoted from assistant city manager to city manager in 2007, about the time the Great Recession hit. Though the city had to make financial adjustments, revenue did not decline, he said, but the level of growth in new revenue lagged from where it had been the previous six years.

Now, the city has a bright future, he said. While city staff and council will have challenging issues to tackle, especially when deciding whether to build a new high school, he said, there are many encouraging things happening.

For example, Hotel Madison on South Main Street, a \$35 million project rising at the corner of South Main and Grace and set to open in May, will draw tourism and conferences to the area, he said. Also under construction is the Shenandoah Valley Conference Center, situated parallel to MLK Way, is an \$11 million project that will yield 21,000 square feet of meeting and event space.

At last Tuesday's City Council meeting, council members, Banks and City Attorney Chris Brown took a moment to thank [REDACTED]



Councilman Ted Byrd, elected to council in 2006, said he had never dealt with someone "with such a high level of professionalism," integrity and honesty" as ██████████

"Our loss is somebody else's gain," Byrd said, "and more importantly, for the people of the city, the things that you've implemented, the departments that you've built and the staff that you've created and help grow, I'm quite thankful. I appreciate everything you've done."

Banks, who has worked with ██████████ the last eight years, said he was the reason he wanted to work for the city.

"When I started to realize that local government was where I wanted to work," Banks said, "there was only one man I wanted to work with."

██████████ does not have any plans yet for his retirement, he said. He intends to rest through the holiday season and then consider other options in January. The man who took just one two-week vacation in almost 33 years said he knows he'll miss the job.

"Starting Wednesday morning, I will officially just be a regular citizen where I live for the first time in my professional life," he said with a laugh. "I'm looking forward to it, but by the same token my advice won't necessarily need to be considered or accepted ever again."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 26, 2017 Thursday

## City Ponders Illegal Sign Enforcement

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 599 words

HARRISONBURG -- City staff are working on ways to crack down on illegal signage.

At Tuesday's City Council meeting, Councilman Chris Jones asked staff to discuss how they intend to combat signs "littering our highways and byways." People are placing signs in medians and rights of way along Harrisonburg's streets, Jones said, obstructing drivers' view when they make turns.

He is most concerned about recruitment signs for hire and those advertising goods and services, rather than temporary political signs that often pop up this time of year.

"It's unfair to the businesses that aren't doing it for people to be able to aggressively advertise however they wish," Jones said. "It's not authorized."

The city has sign regulations that vary depending on the property's zoning. For example, in areas within a central business district, the business owner may display only one portable freestanding sign that cannot exceed 3 feet in width and 6 feet in height.

If the business puts out other signs, even small yard signs, they are violating the regulations, said Adam Fletcher, Harrisonburg's director of planning and community development.

The problem is business owners see other establishments putting up signs and do so as well, Fletcher said, making it harder to keep up with and enforce.

City Attorney Chris Brown said staff have looked at different penalties for violators, especially for repeat violators. Public works staff and zoning enforcement pull up illegal signs during their day-to-day tasks, he said, and respond to people who complain about signs in violation with the regulations.

"We've been pretty aggressive, I think, on the ones in the right of way," Brown said. "In fact, I think [City Manager █████] █████ in a recent staff meeting ... reiterated to different supervisors that they should instruct their employees that when the sign is obviously in the right of way, stop and remove it."

The Harrisonburg Planning and Community Development departments do not have the staff to constantly pull up signs, he said.

Fletcher's department has a proactive enforcement program that divides the city into 36 sectors, focusing on a sector a month. Staff drive through the sectors looking for "visual violations," he said.

While it's easy to identify illegal signs placed in the median, it's more difficult when the signs are staked near sidewalks, he said, because the line between city and private property is harder to identify.

"It's a matter that kind of ebbs and flows," Fletcher said. "Oftentimes, it's during the political season that we'll get complaints of sight distance concerns at intersections when the signs are too close to the intersection, so people can't see as they're turning onto the street."

In the past, the city has had a hands-off approach when dealing with political signs, he said, unless the sign is clearly illegally placed on city property in a right of way. But that may soon change.

City staff have been working on a draft ordinance to present to the Planning Commission and then council that would crack down on the size, height and placement of all signs -- including political ones, Fletcher said.

Staff began amending the signage regulations after the U.S. Supreme Court determined in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Ariz.*, in 2015 that sign restrictions may not be made based on content.

"For the most part, we have a solid ordinance," Fletcher said. "Our regulations are not content-based. We have one section that is arguably content-based, and we know that. So, we're trying to rectify it."

He expects to present the draft ordinance in February or March.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 12, 2017 Thursday

## Board Supports State Park Proposal

BYLINE: NOLAN STOUT Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 472 words

HARRISONBURG -- Rockingham County officials won't stand in the way of the state's plan to purchase land near Massanutten Resort for a park.

On Wednesday, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution of no opposition to the Virginia Department of Forestry's plans to purchase the 583-acre Boones Run Farm.

Supervisors saw no problem with the purchase and haven't heard any opposition to the proposal.

The property, off Bryant Hollow Road northwest of Elkton, is owned by Boones Run Farm LLC of Albemarle County and borders the George Washington National Forest.

The Department of Forestry wants to preserve the forest, fish and wildlife habitats on the property.

"It puts that land in some protection," said Supervisor Mike Breeden, whose District 5 includes the area in which the property is located.

John Campbell, director of public information for the department, emphasized the purchase is still a proposal. He said if it becomes a state forest, the department would develop short- and long-term management plans, such as sustainable forest management, protection of water resources, public access, restoration of native species, research and educational opportunities.

The farm has been in the Dofflemyer family for "multiple generations," according to a VDOF report provided to the county. The family, which owns and manages the LLC, could not be reached for comment on Thursday.

The property was used as a tree farm until about 20 years ago, when Alfred Dofflemyer died, the department says.

According to the department's report, the closest family members live in Charlottesville, with others living in Florida, Colorado and Ohio.

The land is valued at \$1.03 million, according to county real estate records.

The department says a donation from the Dofflemyers would offset the purchase. Campbell didn't have specifics on the donation, but said similar considerations "have included land-only donations, land accompanied with monetary donations, and a percentage of the land's value as the donation."

County Administrator Stephen King said VDOF wanted a letter of support from the county to include in an application for federal grant funding to purchase the land.

Campbell said the resolution "would be seen as a positive sign if the proposal were to move forward." He said the county would receive 25 percent of all timber sales on the property if it becomes a state forest.

In other business, the board recognized two retiring emergency services personnel and outgoing Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED]

Michael Smith, a fire and rescue technician, is retiring after 19 years. Capt. Jon "Chris" Ritenour has worked in fire and rescue for 27 years.

[REDACTED] will retire at the end of the month after more than 16 years with the city, including 10 in his current job.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

September 22, 2017 Friday

## City, County Skeptical Of Bus Route

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER and NOLAN STOUT Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 660 words

HARRISONBURG -- Harrisonburg and Rockingham County officials are not ready to back proposed bus service from the city to Charlottesville, saying they shouldn't contribute as much as other partners.

Local officials weighed in on the route at Thursday's meeting of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization's policy board and last week's City Council meeting.

The proposed route includes eight stops. West of Afton, it would stop off Interstate 81 at Exit 245 in Harrisonburg, Exit 235 in Weyers Cave and the Staunton Crossing Center off Exit 222, and Exit 94 on Interstate 64 at the Waynesboro Town Center.

East of Afton, its four stops would be in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia, the Greyhound bus and Amtrak train stations and Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital.

"We know it's a feasible project," said Bonnie Riedesel, executive director of the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission. "There's demand for it."

If funding is secured, the service could be running by January 2019.

### Reluctant Partners

The sticky issue for the city and county was cost.

The route would cost about \$500,000 a year, with about 50 percent covered through federal funds and 18 percent from state transit grants. The remaining third would be local contributions.

The Planning District Commission needs commitments from stakeholders to apply for federal and state funding by Feb. 1. Stakeholders would be local governments along the proposed route and institutions it would serve, such as James Madison University, U.Va., Sentara RMH Medical Center and Blue Ridge Community College.

The commission estimates up to 14 potential partners could contribute funding for the service.

If 10 entities share the local costs, each would pay \$7,341 for six months in fiscal 2019, \$14,461 in fiscal 2020, \$13,438 in fiscal 2021 and \$6,719 for six months in fiscal 2022.

However, there's been little movement from any of the potential partners.

Riedesel said Thursday that U.Va. verbally committed. But only three groups attended an August meeting on the route, Reggie Smith, director of the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation, told City Council last week.

"At this point, we need to see who wants to play," Smith said.

City Manager ██████ said starting the bus route knowing it could possibly be discontinued is a tough call because people could become dependent on it.

█████ said localities also need to consider how reliable state and federal grant funding would be past the proposed three-year implementation plan.

Rockingham Supervisor Fred Eberly offered a curt prediction -- "unreliable."

Riedesel admitted that fares wouldn't be enough if other funding sources became unavailable. Passengers would pay \$5 to travel between Charlottesville and Harrisonburg, \$4 from Staunton and Waynesboro to Charlottesville and \$3 within the Valley.

"The system, without the federal and state funding," she said, "it could not sustain itself just off of the fares."

#### Fair Share

Riedesel said U.Va. estimated it has 1,500 employees living in the Valley, and parking at the Charlottesville campus is slim.

"It seems like they should be contributing a larger percentage," County Administrator Stephen King said. "It's to get their employees to work without having to park."

█████ also questioned how much the service would be used. He cited a Planning District Commission study of Valley residents on the frequency and reason for travel between Harrisonburg and Charlottesville with roughly 600 responses.

"We've got a service area of over 400,000 residents," he said. "That seems like a very minute response, not a good response."

Ann Cundy, senior transportation planner for the Planning District Commission, said the study targeted U.Va. employees, not the general population.

Riedesel said the survey was a "very small piece" of a study by consultants, which says the route would serve 44,620 one-way passenger trips per year, or about 175 a day.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 25, 2017 Friday

## Council OKs \$2.6 Million For Radios

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 393 words

HARRISONBURG -- City Council unanimously approved issuing up to \$2.6 million in bonds to pay for new emergency communication radios Tuesday.

In June, council and the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors approved purchasing 3,000 new radios for first responders, governmental agencies, and some private businesses and public institutions, including James Madison University.

Jim Junkins, director of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center, said previously that the 11-year-old radios were set to be replaced in 2018, but upgrades to the communication system would leave the radios useless.

City Manager ██████████ said the money will be repaid over five years at 1.78 percent interest and require about \$495,000 a year in payments. But he said staff expects the loan to be closer to \$2.35 million than \$2.6 million, which would reduce the city's annual payments.

Council also approved a supplemental appropriation of \$8.791 million, which includes the city's cost of the radios, as well as the county's and other entities.

The more than \$6 million balance will be paid by the county and other radio users. Because the city is the fiscal agent for the ECC, it will collect the money and pay the bills, ██████████ said.

Mayor Deanna Reed and Councilmen Richard Baugh, Ted Byrd, George Hirschmann and Chris Jones voted to approve the appropriation.

### Air Guns Update

Council also voted unanimously to amend the city's ordinance regarding guns powered by air or gas pressure. For many years, the city banned the use of air guns, slingshots, gravel shooters and other related devices in the city limits, said City Attorney Chris Brown.

The Virginia General Assembly passed a law requiring cities with regulations on air guns to have some exceptions, Brown said, so staff amended the city's ordinance to comply with the state law.

With council's vote, the ordinance allows BB rifles, paintball guns and pellet rifles to be fired at shooting ranges where firearms can be discharged legally, Brown said, or on private property with the owner's permission. There needs to be some sort of backstop to keep ammunition from crossing the property line.

Council agreed to additional provisions staff recommended related to minors. Children younger than 16 may use the guns while supervised by a parent. Those 16 or older may use the guns with parental consent.

LOAD-DATE: August 27, 2017



The Breeze: James Madison University

August 1, 2017 Tuesday

## Harrisonburg city manager to retire

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 796 words

Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] and former Harrisonburg Mayor Chris Jones look on at a 2015 city council meeting. [REDACTED] last day is set for Oct. 31. Sam Taylor | The Breeze

[REDACTED] still remembers his first day as city manager of Harrisonburg. He was confident, well prepared and ready to serve the city. Even though 10 years have passed, to [REDACTED] it still feels like yesterday. After serving the city for over a decade, he decided to retire, announcing his last day will be Oct. 31.

"From the time I graduated from JMU, my dream job was to become city manager of Harrisonburg," [REDACTED] ('85), said. "I'm one of the fortunate lucky folks that was able to live that dream."

[REDACTED] recalled that his promotion from assistant manager to city manager was rushed but not negligent. In 2007, the former Harrisonburg city manager, Steven Stewart, made a sudden decision on his retirement and needed to find a successor. [REDACTED] 22 years of experience set him apart from other applicants.

"I was very excited, very comfortable and very capable to carry [out] the duties," he said.

While serving as city manager, [REDACTED] has worked on a number of projects, including restoring historical buildings, working toward improving public facilities and overseeing the construction of the new city hall building.

Despite playing an integral role in multiple projects, Hodges credits those around him for great results.

"Any success here has been a result of a lot of good city staff, department heads, employees and good directions I've gotten from the city council," [REDACTED] said.

Beyond the construction projects and engagement within the Harrisonburg community, [REDACTED] also maintained positive relationships with surrounding cities.

"I think it is really important that people need to realize that, that isn't always the case, communities don't always work well with the neighbors," Brian Shull, the city economic development director, said.

He explained that since the relationships between cities are usually competitive, if the leaders of the city don't work well with each other, maintaining a positive relationship would be challenging.

Although [REDACTED] considers himself seasoned in this position, budgeting remains his toughest obstacle.

[REDACTED] said the revenue sources are limited, primarily because the city is only permitted to carry out measures approved by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Larry Propst, Harrisonburg's director of finance, agrees that budgeting has becoming more and more difficult each year.

"I work with [REDACTED] really closely probably from December to May on budget issues every year," Propst said. "We are growing, and we just have a lot of challenges in there to be able to keep up with the budget."



Other challenges that ██████ has been faced are the Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center projects, which are both currently under construction.

According to Shull, the project took ██████ and him four and a half years just negotiating with different parties because the initial plan fell through.

Although the project started off challenging, ██████ feels the process of building Hotel Madison is still rewarding.

"That is a partnership between the private developer, the city and JMU, and it's really exciting to watch that start to come out of the ground," ██████ said. "I can literally watch that, some of that progress, out from my office window every day."

██████ said that while "it sounds cliché", the thing he's going to miss most is the people.

"The city is full of people that are really committed to the city and want to be part of it, want to contribute to the city," ██████ said. "I think I'll miss all of that."

Shull and Propst explained what the city will be losing upon ██████ departure.

"He allows you to be creative, he gives you the support but he's not a micromanager," Shull said.

Being the person who's been working with ██████ since his day one, Shull also expressed how did he feel in a personal level.

"I'll also miss his friendship," Shull added. "I've worked alongside him for 16 years, so I will definitely miss that."

Propst also clarified what sets ██████ apart from the other city managers.

"One of the things I have been impressed by ██████ over the years is he always seems to have the employees of the city in mind first and foremost," Propst said. "And he has a very good sense of humor, I think I'll miss that on a day-to-day basis."

To ██████ even though his term as a city manager is coming to an end, he feels as though another journey is about to begin.

"I just turned 54," ██████ said. "I feel like I have a few more years of being able to contribute something to somebody. And so, I'm just looking forward to rest a little bit and see what the next chapter in life is."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 27, 2017 Thursday

## JMU: Official's Letter On Zoning Issue Not Official

BYLINE: ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 624 words

HARRISONBURG -- It was signed by a James Madison University official, along with her title.

It was on official JMU letterhead.

But a letter about a rezoning request before City Council from Rebecca Carbaugh, coordinator of off-campus life, did not reflect the university's official position on a proposed mixed-use development along South Main Street just south of Port Republic Road, campus officials say.

### Not For College Students

Tabled by council on July 11, the project would replace single-family homes with retail space, restaurants and up to 22 one-bedroom apartments.

In her July 10 letter to council and residents of the Purcell Park neighborhood, Carbaugh said Harrisonburg has no need for more off-campus student housing.

"Additional apartment-based housing is not needed at this point in the community, and might actually be detrimental to current properties who are having difficulty reaching capacity with tenants and profiting," the letter says.

There's at least one problem with Carbaugh's assessment, according to Dick Blackwell, founder of Blackwell Engineering, which is assisting developer Giles Stone.

"These apartments are not designed for college students," Blackwell wrote in a July 18 letter to Mark Warner, senior vice president of student affairs at JMU. "Whereas, students may use the proposed commercial establishments, it seems unlikely many, if any, will choose to occupy the proposed one-bedroom apartments."

Stone owns five parcels in that neighborhood that front South Main Street, East Weaver Avenue and Edgelawn Drive. He requested the properties be rezoned from professional and low-density residential to high-density zoning.

Dozens of nearby property owners objected to the proposal, saying it would negatively affect the neighborhood and would further reduce availability of single-family housing.

In voting to table the request, council members said they wanted to give Stone and neighbors more time to reach a compromise.

On seeing Carbaugh's letter, Harrisonburg officials sought clarification as to whether it reflected JMU's opinion on the development, City Attorney Chris Brown said.

Warner said in a July 18 email to City Manager [REDACTED] that JMU is not taking a stance. The university does not take positions on rezoning requests "that don't directly impact the university," he wrote.

Bill Wyatt, JMU's director of communications, said he does not know why Carbaugh wrote the letter.

"That letter, it is not authorized by the university," Wyatt said Thursday. "The university does not have a position on that project. That is her own personal opinion and does not represent the views of the university."

Carbaugh also wrote a letter dated July 24 to City Council and Stone clarifying her previous letter. She wrote that though she does work at JMU, the letter represented only her opinion and did not speak for the university.

She did not get approval before making the statement and placing it on her JMU office letterhead, she wrote.

"I do apologize for the way in which my own personal and professional opinion was delivered, especially as I have no knowledge of JMU's official position on this re-zoning request," she wrote. "I did not intend to falsely represent the JMU opinion and stance on this project, and hope this letter serves as a way to amend to some degree my poor professional judgment in this matter."

Carbaugh declined to comment Thursday.

Stone also did not want to comment.

Mayor Deanna Reed said Carbaugh's letter was "unfortunate," but she was pleased the council received two apology letters, Carbaugh's and one from Jim McConnel, associate vice president of student life and involvement at JMU.

"We accept the letters," Reed said, "and we're just going to move forward."

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PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 18, 2017 Tuesday

## Nexus Dismisses Lawsuit Over Rocks In Food At Jail

BYLINE: PETE DeLEA Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 369 words

HARRISONBURG -- Nexus Services dismissed a federal lawsuit claiming staff at Middle River Regional Jail knowingly served rocks and other foreign objects in food to inmates.

Nexus attorneys filed the lawsuit in July 2016 on behalf of nine current and former inmates at the Verona jail, which serves the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton and Waynesboro and Rockingham and Augusta counties.

Despite Monday's voluntary dismissal, Nexus' attorneys could refile the case later.

"This first lawsuit that was filed has been dismissed, however, the issue associated with rocks in food will be litigated," according to a statement released by the company Tuesday. "We continue to stand for the affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of all people, including people incarcerated in our communities."

Nexus, which relocated its corporate headquarters to Verona from Harrisonburg in 2015, primarily provides legal assistance to immigrants and minorities. The company has filed several lawsuits against the jail and local officials in the last year.

The company has also come under fire itself, with several immigrants filing lawsuits claiming they were duped or pressured into signing up for its services.

The federal lawsuit against the jail and its top officials sought at least \$250,000 per inmate.

MRRJ is overseen by a board made up of representatives from the municipalities it serves, and all board members are named in the lawsuit. A judge later dismissed the cases against those that oversee municipalities, including Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] and Rockingham County Administrator Stephen King.

The lawsuit claimed that inmates were served beans containing rocks, spoiled bread and fruit. They also claim that the food is often served on dirty trays.

At a press conference announcing the lawsuit, Nexus attorneys said they believe the beans are brought in from state-maintained farms.

Nexus claims an inmate sorts the beans and is supposed to remove rocks, twigs and other items that might have been mixed in with the food.

The lawsuit claims the inmates sustained damage to their teeth.

"The sanitary condition of the food served is deplorable," attorney LaMichael Combs said when the lawsuit was filed.



Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 11, 2017 Tuesday

## Shelter Process Begins

BYLINE: VIC BRADSHAW and ELLIE POTTER Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 528 words

HARRISONBURG -- Some members of City Council might not have been 100 percent clear on the action they took regarding the city's animal-shelter services provider Tuesday night.

But in the end, they started a process that could result in the ouster of the Rockingham-Harrisonburg SPCA from that role.

Though an expected presentation from the leader of Anicura Veterinary Services wasn't held due to a scheduling conflict, council members voted 5-0 Tuesday night to accept the organization's Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act proposal at the conceptual stage to take over sheltering services for the city.

Mayor Deanna Reed and Councilmen Richard Baugh, Ted Byrd, George Hirschmann and Chris Jones voted to accept the proposal.

That action starts a process that provides any other organization 45 days to submit a competing proposal.

It does not mean that Anicura has been selected as the new shelter provider or that the SPCA has been booted from that role. It does mean that the panel is open to seeing whether a different entity can provide services that it thinks are preferable.

Regardless of the final outcome, the SPCA is expected to continue being Harrisonburg's shelter well into 2018. The city's agreement with the organization requires a one-year termination notice.

Jones indicated after the vote that his intention with his motion was to indicate that he was open to the proposal. But he didn't want the 45-day clock to start for the submission of competing proposals until after Cate Lemmond -- Anicura's founder, president and CEO -- made a presentation to council.

"I would like to see the presentation before I'm voting to move something forward," he said.

Jones said Lemmond had told him previously that she'd be available at Tuesday's meeting, but she later informed City Manager [REDACTED] that she had a scheduling conflict. She's expected to pitch Anicura's proposal at either the Aug. 8 or Aug. 22 meeting.

In May, Anicura submitted its

unsolicited proposal to take over Harrisonburg's animal sheltering and adoption services.

Based on 2016 shelter intake data, the proposal said the organization could serve the city for \$266,910 a year to start. That's slightly less than the \$271,879 the city budgeted to pay the SPCA in fiscal 2017 and \$282,379 earmarked for FY18, which began July 1.

If the city were to accept Anicira's proposal, it would sever its shelter partnership with the SPCA and Rockingham County. Anicira's plan does not include serving Rockingham.

What Anicira proposes isn't the same type of service the SPCA provides. It calls for an open-admission, no-kill shelter. The SPCA's operation is open-admission, meaning it must accept any animal brought to it, but it will euthanize animals it has trouble adopting.

That's one of the reasons many animal advocates have called for a change. In early 2016, an independent consultant found that the Rockingham-Harrisonburg SPCA shelter's euthanasia rate was among the highest of any shelter in Virginia.

Anicira was founded as a spay-neuter clinic in 2005, and eventually added veterinary services to its offerings. It received state approval to operate a shelter in May.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 9, 2017 Sunday

## Council To Hear Anicira's Shelter Plan

BYLINE: VIC BRADSHAW Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 543 words

HARRISONBURG -- Local animal welfare activists line up in different camps when it comes to the shelter services the Rockingham-Harrisonburg Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals provides for the city and county.

The leaders of Anicira Veterinary Center, however, think the local nonprofit can handle the city's services for animals that are lost or without a home more effectively and efficiently, and they're requesting a chance to prove it.

At its meeting set for 7 p.m. Tuesday, City Council will hear details about Anicira's unsolicited Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act proposal to take over Harrisonburg's animal sheltering and adoption services.

The SPCA serves the city and Rockingham County from its shelter at 2170 Old Furnace Road.

The presentation begins a process that could last months before any resolution is reached and is expected to include the local

SPCA's input at a future meeting. Any change is at least a year away, as a memo from City Manager [REDACTED] notes that the city's agreement with the SPCA includes a mandatory one-year termination notice.

The action comes two months after the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services licensed Anicira as an animal shelter and 16 months after an independent consultant completed a review of the SPCA that found it had among the highest euthanasia rates of any shelter in Virginia.

Anicira, which also operates in Manassas, was founded as a spay-neuter clinic 12 years ago by Cate Lemmond, who remains as its president and CEO. It added veterinary services to its offerings before being approved as a shelter.

It owns and operates the Anicira Animal Adoption Center at 910 N. Liberty St.

Anicira is proposing moving Harrisonburg toward having an open-admission, no-kill shelter.

"There is a public demand for a new model of animal services in Harrisonburg," the proposal's author wrote. "This is evidenced by ongoing community attention, locally active animal welfare interest groups, significant private sector investment from grant makers and foundations, and recent local news coverage devoted to the issue.

"This project would realize public benefits by maximizing resources to better meet the recent changes in expectations that have occurred not only in Harrisonburg but nationwide."



The Anicura proposal indicates that the nonprofit would operate a shelter for the city for \$266,910, based on 2016 intake data. Its website indicates that amount is 15 percent lower than the amount Harrisonburg pays the SPCA for sheltering services; that figure is not broken out in the city's budget.

In his memo, [REDACTED] notes four actions the council could take: none immediately; revise its SPCA contract; accept the Anicura proposal at the conceptual stage, which would start a 45-day period for competing proposals to be filed; or issue a traditional request for proposals to provide shelter services for the city alone or in conjunction with Rockingham County.

If the city opts to accept Anicura's proposal, it would break ties with both the SPCA and Rockingham County as sheltering partners. Anicura's submission to the city does not include providing shelter services for the county.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 23, 2017 Tuesday

## Council To Wait For Board On School Plan

BYLINE: NOLAN STOUT Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 655 words

HARRISONBURG -- City Council is standing back until the School Board decides how to address overcrowding at Harrisonburg High School.

After a contentious discussion on tax rates and possible solutions, council declined to direct staff Tuesday to determine the cost of land acquisition for a second high school.

More than 115 people waited for council to finish regular business before 21 speakers paraded to the podium over 75 minutes to address the panel. Supporters cheered and council stoically listened as each presented their case.

Councilman Chris Jones attempted to start research into buying land for the school, but it was shot down by the rest of council.

The ongoing issue: the overcapacity school on Garbers Church Road, designed in 2005 for 1,360 students, but with an attendance near 1,800. Enrollment is expected to reach 2,200 in five school years.

The Harrisonburg School Board is considering three options to solve the problem: an addition, estimated between \$45.1 million and \$51.4 million; an annex estimated at \$55.8 million; or a second high school that could cost \$88 million to \$100 million if construction begins soon.

If the division goes with a new school, the cost could jump to between \$99.3 million to \$113.2 million if construction is delayed by as long as three years, according to a report prepared by VMDO Architects of Charlottesville.

The School Board won't make a formal decision until its June 6 meeting, shortly before a joint meeting with council on June 8.

The estimated price tag of a new school doesn't include the cost of purchasing land.

After public comment, when the crowd had thinned, Jones proposed city staff work with the School Board to find land for the building.

"We cannot buy a school if we don't know how much the land costs," he said.

Councilmen Ted Byrd, George Hirschmann, Richard Baugh and Mayor Deanna Reed, however, were hesitant to back his suggestion.

Byrd and Baugh said seeking the land and its cost could be overstepping council's boundaries.

Despite Jones' pleas, no action was taken.

His directive, and discussion, died when City Manager ██████████ reminded council that the city has the ability to condemn and seize any land it might need for the school through its power of eminent domain.

Opponents of the school said the city didn't need a "fancy building" and offered alternatives ranging from trailers to a junior high school, each of which was explored by the School Board's space committee. They raised concerns for fixed and low-income residents and said high rates could deter business.

Mac Nichols, a prominent city Republican, urged council to carefully consider the options.

"There's nothing urgent about your decision, so you shouldn't feel compelled to make a decision in the next couple weeks," Nichols said.

But supporters of a new school said enrollment will continue to grow, making another school necessary. They also argued that students are getting lost in the numbers at HHS, waiting to build would make costs increase and good schools attract business.

"Yes, it's going to cost more money to build a second school than any other options, but that is the best plan for the future," said Zachariah Benevento-Zahner, an HHS senior. "We will have to build a second school eventually as our town continues to grow. We need to spend the money now and not wait for the future when it's going to be more expensive."

Former School Board member Tom Domonoske said there's nothing else for the board to examine.

"Any idea that something is being rushed, that something hasn't been looked at, isn't rooted in what the School Board has done," he told council. "This is an urgent problem."

If a second high school is chosen, a consultant has estimated the city's real estate tax could go up 17.5 cents to \$1.02.5 per \$100 of assessed valuation to repay \$100 million in new debt in 25 to 30 years.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 26, 2017 Wednesday

## NEW: Jail Numbers Still Rising

BYLINE: Nolan Stout

SECTION: UPDATE

LENGTH: 632 words

The number of inmates at the crowded Rockingham County Jail continues to grow.

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Criminal Justice Board received a regular report on the inmate population from the Rockingham County Sheriff's Office at its meeting Monday.

The average number of inmates at the 315-bed Rockingham County Jail has hovered at or above capacity for 12 of 15 months between January 2016 and March 2017, peaking at 339 per day in January 2017, according to the report.

The number continues to rise despite the city and county's \$21.5 million deal in May 2015 to join the Middle River Regional Jail Authority, which guarantees 250 beds at the Verona jail.

When the Middle River deal took effect in July 2015, the average daily population at the county jail was 282 inmates, and 157 inmates were sent to Middle River for a combined average population of 439.

Since then, the number of inmates at the county jail has increased 19 percent, the inmates sent to Middle River has jumped 40 percent and the total number sent to both facilities has increased 26 percent.

The total average daily population has increased 17 of the 21 months since the deal took effect.

For March 2017, the latest data available, 335 inmates were at the county jail and 219 were sent to Middle River -- a total of 554 inmates.

The increase is despite a push from criminal justice advocates to establish substance abuse and mental health treatment programs and other efforts to help former inmates re-enter society.

The board, an advisory panel of city, county, schools, court and law enforcement officials, didn't discuss the increase until Tom Domonoske, a Harrisonburg resident and former School Board member, spoke during the public comment period.

"I was shocked, actually, at the numbers," he said.

Domonoske said the numbers must be broken down to show the number of inmates awaiting trial or sentencing or were booked on parole violations or drug charges, which could help determine the cause of the increase.

"I don't know why those numbers are increasing," he said. "I think that the challenge for your board is to figure out why."

The problem with Domonoske's suggestion is the information isn't readily available.

The city and county are investing in a data information system that will allow officials to determine how many inmates are awaiting trial, are reoffenders, or were booked on parole violations or drug charges. The information will help officials determine what reforms could be used to reduce incarceration.

Harrisonburg City Manager ██████████ said the system should cost around \$4.5 million, which will be split between the city and Rockingham, and a request for proposals will be sought on Monday. ██████████ said the requests should be narrowed to two firms by late July, with one selected in August.

He estimated the program would be running by spring 2018.

Domonoske said the best solution to incarceration is diverting people from the criminal justice system.

"I personally don't think you can build your way out of a problem," he said. "I think that we build more roads, we get more traffic. I think if we get more capacity, the system just defaults to using that capacity.

"I think our dollars are better spent with a different response to most of the people who end up on the wrong side of a criminal conviction other than incarceration."

Rockingham Supervisor Bill Kyger said reducing incarceration calls for re-examining "the way we deal with punishment" and is a "culture change as much as it is anything."

"We're not going to be able to measure our successes in big numbers, Tom, overnight," he said. "That's just not going to happen. ... If we can make one minor improvement month to month, somewhere along the line, then we have something positive that we can build toward."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 30, 2017 Thursday

## Council OKs HCPS' \$2.65M Request For New Schools

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 807 words

HARRISONBURG -- Children can't do the ABC's without the FFE's, City Council learned Tuesday night.

And the furniture, fixtures and equipment costs for two new schools can add up to a lot more than the 1-2-3's.

But the FFE's for the soon-to-be-completed Bluestone Elementary School and Elon Rhodes Early Learning Center won't cost as much do-re-mi as previously expected -- by about a million bucks.

That's the short version of a request by Harrisonburg City Public Schools for \$2.65 million from City Council, which holds all the lunch money strings for projects approved by the School Board.

After a presentation by Tracy Shaver, the school division's executive director of finance -- and after a few questions from Republican Councilman Ted Byrd -- council voted unanimously 5-0 to hand over the money, in two separate chunks, as dictated by state code.

Tuesday's appropriations are over and above the estimated construction costs for the 104,000-square-foot Bluestone, at \$25.9 million, and the 16,000-square-foot Elon Rhodes, at about \$6.2 million. Both facilities are expected to be up and running for the new school year in August.

Like any other commercial or, in this case, institutional buildings, the schools' FFE's can be broadly defined as anything that's not nailed down, stuff that can be carried into or out of a structure. That includes desks, chairs, computers, electronic equipment, tables, bookcases, learning tools and some lab equipment.

For prekindergarten facilities, FFE's also include much of the equipment and many of the appliances used in the "school nutrition program" -- or what used to be called "the cafeteria."

Because school nutrition is separated out from other school expenses by order of the General Assembly, the appropriation required a \$2.17 million transfer from the city's general fund and \$483,000 from the a special school nutrition fund.

That school nutrition appropriation figure could have been higher, according to public documents, because much of the kitchen equipment at Bluestone Elementary is already factored into the construction cost.

Shaver broke the appropriation figures down further for the benefit of the council, but that's the general picture.

The money will be divvied up between the facilities, with Bluestone, which will be off Garbers Church Road, getting \$2.29 million and \$360,000 for the far smaller Elon Rhodes, which will connect with Smithland Elementary School.

Byrd, the council's sharpest-eyed budget hawk, asked a series of questions aimed at determining whether the council had already set aside the money, in effect sequestering it for FFE's.

He was particularly interested in \$767,000 coming from the city's bond capital reserves fund.

"We're not paying interest on that for 25 years, are we?" Byrd wanted to know.

City Manager ██████ assured him it wasn't.

In fact, ██████ went on to say, the city is getting away with saving about \$850,000 on the deal.

"The total project budget initially for FFE's was about 3½ million," ██████ said. "But it looks like we're coming in well under that."

Shortly after that, Byrd seconded Democrat Richard Baugh's motion to approve the FFE appropriations. In addition to them, Mayor Deanna Reed and Councilman Chis Jones, both Democrats, joined independent George Hirschmann in voting yes on the motion.

#### In Other Action

In other action, council unanimously approved two permits for special events that will both be held on April 15, which is generally speaking not a special day for many American taxpayers.

But because April 15 falls on a Saturday, and the official observance of Emancipation Day in the District of Columbia falls on the following Monday, the deadline for federal income tax returns to be in the mail will be April 18, a Tuesday.

Back to April 15; the first vote by City Council greenlighted the second annual Divine Unity Community Prayer Walk, to be held 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. downtown.

According to a report to the council by Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance events coordinator Jeremiah Jenkins, approximately 20 participants will sing and pray as 250 spectators watch and listen. They will walk from City Hall, 409 S. Main St., up Main Street to Court Square.

Although the report did not get into specifics, the event will close Main and some surrounding streets for a to-be-determined time, probably beginning around 10:30 a.m., according to Jenkins' report.

The second vote gave the go-ahead to the seventh annual 5k Walk/Run for Autism beginning at 9:30 a.m. It is scheduled to start on the Eastern Mennonite University campus and continue through the Park View neighborhood.

Some 1,000 participants are expected, Jenkins said. Volunteer traffic marshals, working with the Harrisonburg Police and Public Works departments, will keep the streets open, but motorists can expect short delays at intersections.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 24, 2017 Friday

## Social Services Gets New Director

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: HARRISONBURG

LENGTH: 679 words

HARRISONBURG -- Celest Williams has a giant's shoes to fill as the next director of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Social Services District.

But at least she's gotten to try them on occasionally for the past four years.

Williams, assistant director of the joint city-county agency, will have the "assistant" part stricken from her title as of Wednesday, County Administrator Stephen King announced Thursday.

The 46-year-old Dayton native and 1996 James Madison University graduate will replace Don Driver, who started with the Rockingham County Social Services District 41 years ago, before it merged with the city's in 1995. He has served as the director of the county and then the joint district since 1988.

Driver is scheduled to retire Tuesday.

"Don is the epitome of the humble, caring public servant you would particularly want in the social services field," King said on Friday. "He is a kind, caring, gentle person, but he is no pushover. He fought hard for what he thought was right for the clients of the district, particularly at either end of the spectrum: the children and the seniors."

King also had high praise for the incoming director, who has been with the department for 18 years, the past four as Driver's second in command of the 120-employee district. It served more than 26,000 clients last year, nearly 20 percent of the combined city-county population of 134,000.

"She was clearly the top candidate," King said. "One problem with being an inside applicant is that we know you. One advantage is that we know you. We knew Celest, and we felt completely confident she could do the job -- and do it well. She's instantly up to speed."

King and Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] chose her over 13 other candidates, all of whom would have been outside hires. King and [REDACTED] oversee the district serving as "kind of a board of directors of two," King said.

Williams singled out what she believes is Driver's greatest skill -- listening -- and hopes she can emulate him.

"We have set very high standards, both our own and the community's," Williams said. "That is because Mr. Driver has done a good job listening -- listening to what others have to offer."

Williams said her biggest challenges will be living up to the standards set by Driver and her staff and effectively addressing the complex array of their clientele's needs.

"Almost all of the people who find their way to our doors don't have one need but multiple issues" that have reached a critical mass and overwhelm their lives, Williams said. "Often they stem from one or both underlying causes: lack of housing and substance abuse."

King noted that median household incomes in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, where agricultural and agriculture-processing employment is king, lag significantly behind the state and nation.

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates for 2015, households earned a median income of around \$38,000 in the city and about \$41,000 in the county. The state and national household medians were about \$66,000 and \$54,000, respectively. Nearly a third of the city's population lived at or below the poverty line, the Census Bureau said.

But, King said, the city-county Social Services District fortunately enjoys one of the most respected safety nets in the state, including a network of nonprofit agencies -- ranging from the Free Clinic to the Open Doors homeless shelter -- that work closely together and with the district.

Williams and her husband have three children, one in high school and the other two in college. She will earn \$95,000 annually in her new position.

King said he believes Williams' toughest challenge might turn out to be sustaining the trust of and working relationships with the community at large, which has its own role to play in the city and county's Social Services system.

"The community still needs to do its part, and in her new role, Celest will have to inspire that the way that Don did," King said. "Whether it's the person next to you at church, a neighbor down the street. I'm sure Celest will continue to engage the community in the process."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 14, 2017 Tuesday

██████████ Retiring As Harrisonburg Manager

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: HARRISONBURG

LENGTH: 504 words

HARRISONBURG -- Unassuming, smart and loyal to the city he manages, according to those who have worked with him, ██████████ chose an unassuming, smart and loyal way Tuesday night to leave the job he has held for a decade, effective Oct. 31.

Unassuming because he made the announcement following a closed session at the end of a nearly four-hour marathon Harrisonburg City Council meeting, after everybody -- including the council clerk and the city's TV cameraman -- had already gone home.

No one was in City Hall's Council Chambers to hear it but the five council members, City Attorney Chris Brown, Deputy City Manager Ande Banks and a reporter.

Smart because at only 54, he has 32 years in local public service in Virginia -- 16 of it in Harrisonburg -- making him fully vested in the Virginia Retirement System, with two years to spare.

And loyal to the city because letting the council and staff know about his departure nearly nine months before his exit is "looking out for the citizens of Harrisonburg, as he always has," veteran Republican Councilman Ted Byrd said after the meeting.

██████████ has a calm, professional, comprehensive view, and measures his advice accordingly to the issues the city faces," Byrd said, adding that the announcement, which came first in the closed session, was surprising but not shocking.

"I hope people don't tie it to anything we were discussing here tonight, the issues we now face," ██████████ said. "I've been doing this for 32 years, I am eligible to retire and it is something I have been thinking about for more than a year."

Tuesday evening at City Hall began at 5:30 with council hosting a joint, 90-minute work session with the city School Board aimed at city's top public policy issue: figuring out how to solve the overcrowding problem at Harrisonburg High School without stressing the city's finances.

That was followed at 7 by a regular City Council meeting at which nothing controversial came up, but which lasted -- including the closed session -- until around 9:15.

Government bodies in Virginia can close meetings to the public to discuss personnel issues. The council hires the city manager, and he hires everyone else, making his resignation personnel issue No. 1.

██████████ came to Harrisonburg on Feb. 1, 2001, as assistant to City Manager Roger Baker, making \$72,000 a year. When Baker left six years later, ██████████ moved up from his assistantship as Baker had before him.

██████████ current annual salary is \$185,000. Perks include a vehicle allowance of \$7,800 a year.

A 1984 graduate of James Madison University, [REDACTED] got his first taste of municipal work in Harrisonburg as an intern with the city.

Before returning to the city, he served as town manager of Narrows from 1988 to 1993, and then as assistant county administrator/director of public works for Botetourt County.

"I was one of the lucky ones who got to come back," [REDACTED] said, referring to returning to JMU's home city. "Harrisonburg was always my dream job."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

January 3, 2017 Tuesday

## City Council Organizes For 2017

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: HARRISONBURG

LENGTH: 714 words

HARRISONBURG -- Tuesday morning's conclave of the 2017-18 City Council to select a new mayor is officially called the reorganization meeting. Which assumes council was organized to begin with.

Good-natured jokes -- not that one, but similar -- along with congratulations, well-wishing and applause from the gallery were the hallmarks of the meeting, traditionally held at 10 a.m. on the first day City Hall is open after New Year's Day.

Business was conducted quickly -- the whole thing was over in 25 minutes -- and in a manner befitting the Friendly City; every person nominated was unopposed, and every vote taken was unanimous.

Council reorganization meetings were not always thus. Back when building the Heritage Oaks municipal golf course was one of the hottest political disputes, the 2000 reorganization meeting turned acrimonious, but the project moved forward.

At this year's meeting, the panel selected a new mayor from among its five members, Deanna Reed, who runs an after-school program she helped found. Attorney Richard Baugh kept his previous title of vice mayor.

And council also took the opportunity of a first meeting to change up the order of its meetings, moving the public comment section from the beginning to closer to the end.

Tuesday's meeting, however, had an agenda unto itself.

The gavel was at first held by City Manager [REDACTED] and not by the mayor, because there was no mayor; the mayorship of Councilman Chris Jones ended along with 2016. The city manager is hired by the council, so [REDACTED] jested that he looked forward every two years for the opportunity to lord over the council members for a change.

Rockingham County Circuit Court Clerk Chaz Haywood was there to swear in the three council members elected Nov. 8 -- Reed, incumbent Baugh, and retired WHSV weatherman George Hirschmann.

But before he did, Haywood got in his shot, saying he looked forward to the reorganization meetings because "it's the only time an individual can come in and swear at you all" without being escorted from City Hall by the police.

The two council members whose seats aren't up for election until next year -- Jones and Ted Byrd -- got to watch.

After she was chosen mayor, Reed took over the center seat on the dais as Jones stepped down, showering her with congratulations and praise, and Reed giving him some backatcha.



After reappointing Chris Brown as city attorney and ██████ as city manager, council flew through 19 appointments of council members to various boards, committees and commissions, inside city government and out. Nominate, second, vote. Times 19.

The only respite came in the form of some of the other council members giving Byrd a hard time for being on the Deer Population Task Force.

The agenda change-up proved to be the only item that generated any discussion, and very little at that,

Instead of right after the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of every meeting, the "comments from the public" section of the agenda was moved to the "other matters" section, which comes right before "boards and commissions" and "adjournment."

The problem is that sometimes groups of people protesting against or cheerleading for an issue that might or might not actually fall under the council's jurisdiction "push it," as Baugh said. They sometimes hold up meetings by sending speaker after speaker to the microphone, defeating the five-minute per person time limit on comments.

That, Baugh said, meant that people who had to come to City Hall to handle some business or other had to stay past 10 p.m. some nights to wait until their public hearing came up.

The measure passed by the same 5-0 vote.

No one but Reed took advantage of "other matters" to make a short, heartfelt speech of thanks and commitment that included her wish to inspire others who might not otherwise consider it to run for public office.

Even then, humor prevailed.

When Reed caught herself referring to Jones as "mayor," Jones quipped with a smile that it was still OK because, "once a mayor, always a mayor," just as presidents are always called president even when out of office.

"You would say that," Reed shot back with a laugh. "You're going to hang onto it."

Meeting adjourned. Let the 2017-18 City Council games begin.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 25, 2016 Tuesday

## Council Discusses Cost Of School Plans

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: HARRISONBURG

LENGTH: 408 words

HARRISONBURG -- A new schoolhouse could cost you a lot more in taxes on your house.

That was the gist Tuesday night of a short report with lengthy ramifications from City Manager [REDACTED] to Harrisonburg City Council.

"The past several weeks have brought about a number of media reports about the need for expansion of Harrisonburg High School," which was built for 1,300 students but now houses 1,700, [REDACTED] said in a memo to the council. "Given the costs associated with that project, I felt it would be appropriate to present you with a preliminary report of the financial implications of the possible projects."

Using \$50 million to \$55 million as a ballpark estimate on building an addition to the school, [REDACTED] report shows that if the project were to begin today, the bond debt incurred to pay for it could drive the city's property tax rate up in fiscal 2018 by 8 cents per \$100 of valuation to 86 cents. The fiscal year begins July 1, 2017.

That would mean the annual tax bill on a \$250,000 home would rise to \$2,150 from \$1,950, or by \$200 dollars.

By fiscal 2019, the tax rate might rise another 3 cents to pay for new staff and operations costs of the addition, putting the rate at as much as 99 cents per \$100 of valuation.

That would mean the annual tax bill on a \$250,000 home would rise even further, to \$2,475, a jump of \$525 from the current bill.

Those figures, [REDACTED] told the council, do not reflect any other possible increases in the city budget for nonschool needs.

"It's a static look," he said about his report.

Councilman Abe Shearer, who is the council's leading fiscal hawk, asserted that after a series of past tax hikes, Harrisonburg could be "approaching double" what the property tax rate was five or six years ago.

By adding more debt, Shearer said, the city could see its bond rating drop, which would in turn drive up its loan rates, having even more impact on taxes.

Shearer, an independent who is not seeking re-election this year, also noted that a recent Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development report on the fiscal health of 133 localities rated Harrisonburg the 18th-most stressed jurisdiction in the commonwealth.

Shearer did not say he was against doing something about overcrowding at the school, but that he wanted the city to think carefully about its options.

"We are not flush with cash," he said.

The council took no action on [REDACTED] report, which was intended as an update.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

September 28, 2016 Wednesday

## City Checks Demographics

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: HARRISONBURG

LENGTH: 674 words

HARRISONBURG -- The turnover rate among city employees is relatively low, which is good because it indicates a relatively happy workforce.

But it is also one of the reasons why efforts to make the workforce more multicultural have been slow to produce results.

That was the bottom line of a report to Harrisonburg City Council on Tuesday night by the city Human Resources Department's Marissa Keagy, who gathered the data for the survey.

"We're improving" the city's racial demographic mix, City Manager ██████████ said, adding that he thought the survey's numbers represented "reasonable progress" that he believes will continue.

Including full-time, part-time and seasonal employees, the nonwhite employee population rose from 6.49 percent in February 2014 to 8.21 percent earlier this month.

The percentage of employees who self-identified as black stayed pretty much the same, dropping slightly from 4.93 percent to 4.78 percent, a statistically insignificant change.

Most of the change came among Hispanic employees, who accounted for 1.17 percent of the workforce in 2014 and 2.33 percent this month.

Those statistics are based on 771 employees in 2014 and 816 this month.

The racial makeup of the city, according to 2010 census figures, is about 78 percent white and 22 percent nonwhite. Latinos of any race accounted for 16 percent of the population, nearly double what it was in 2000.

In October 2014, about 20 members and supporters of the Harrisonburg chapter of Virginia Organizing approached City Council to demand a greater effort be made in the hiring of minorities and women.

The following January, council approved changes to its employment policy that say the city "is committed to being a diverse and inclusive place to work."

On Tuesday, Keagy told council that the city has started advertising open positions in international food stores, churches with predominantly minority congregations, job fairs, on television and on the inside of city buses. Future plans, she said, include advertising at bus shelters and on the exteriors of buses.

But it's hard to change the demographics of a workforce in the face of low turnover, ██████████ said.

Among full-time workers, the turnover rate over the past three years was 8.96 percent in 2014, 6.4 percent in 2015 and 8.73 in fiscal 2016, which ended June 30. Those stats are based on a full-time employment figures of 614, 625 and 627 in each of those years.

Keagy compared the Harrisonburg rate to turnover rates last year of 9.9 percent in Staunton, 10 percent to 13 percent in Winchester, and 26 percent in Waynesboro, which has lost 11 percent of its workforce so far in fiscal 2017, Keagy said.

An average of nearly 50 Harrisonburg positions opened up annually over the past three years, Keagy said. The city received an average of nearly 80 applications for each opening.

One of the toughest problems in changing city workforce demographics is that many of the open positions require special training, certifications or specific skill sets. They include bus drivers, who need commercial driver's licenses; police and firefighters; and Emergency Communications Center personnel.

In an interview Wednesday, ECC Director Jim Junkins said it takes about a year for a new employee to be trained in-house to take 911 calls and dispatch emergency services. The training period includes criminal justice academy attendance and shadowing experienced workers.

Workers start at \$14.47 an hour in the probationary period and move up from there to \$18.75 with 10 years of experience. Assistant shift supervisors make \$19.72, and supervisors are paid \$22.20 per hour.

"We start from scratch and train them until they're ready to sit in the hot seat, and it's a very arduous process," Junkins said. "We're absolutely 100 percent without racial, gender or any other kind of bias. We want the best person for the job; that's clearly what we look for. This is a high-stress job, where our employees are literally saving lives over the phone."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 24, 2016 Sunday

## City Council To Get Rid Of Fluoride?

BYLINE: TONY BROWN Daily NewsRecord

SECTION: NEWS

LENGTH: 706 words

HARRISONBURG -- The use of sodium fluoride in public drinking water to prevent tooth decay, hailed by many as a public health breakthrough but decried by others, could be headed down the drain in the city.

Thanks to a leaky tank at the water treatment plant, Harrisonburg City Council on Tuesday will consider repealing, at least temporarily but possibly permanently, the 1973 ordinance requiring the addition of fluoride to the municipal water supply.

City Attorney Chris Brown said in a memo to City Manager [REDACTED] that he doesn't want the city to break its own laws while the fluoridation system is shut down so that the tank that holds the chemical compound can be replaced.

"We have no mechanism by which we can suspend the ordinance," Brown said in an interview Friday. "So, we will have to repeal it."

Meanwhile, Mike Collins, city director of utilities, said he believes the decade-old leaky tank provides a good opportunity to study whether replacing the tank every 10 years, on top of spending \$20,000 a year on supplies to treat the water with fluoride, is a good way to spend taxpayer dollars.

"We need time to scope it out," Collins said. "And we need time to fix it. In addition to replacing the tank, we need to do other improvements."

"There are a significant number of assets needed to fluoridate water. It is introduced to the water using an acid, and there are side effects that affect the life of other assets besides the tank."

Collins said he didn't yet know how much it would cost to replace the tank and make the other improvements.

In his memo, Brown said, "Many localities have determined that there is little benefit of fluoridation of water systems when compared to the significant costs associated with fluoridation."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which calls fluoridation of water one of the greatest health improvements of the 20th century, says it costs an average of \$1.02 per person per year. Public water fluoridation is also endorsed by the American Dental Association and other groups.

About 66 percent of the U.S. population consumes fluoridated water, the CDC says.

But some U.S. municipalities and counties that once fluoridated have decided to stop, saying there are many other ways children and adults get fluoridation treatment, including toothpaste, gels and mouthwashes.

In the Shenandoah Valley, fluoridation of the public water supply divided the town of Timberville for 18 months in 2008-09 before Town Council voted 4-3 to continue the practice.

Amherst County decided to end the practice in 2014. Earlier this year, Albuquerque, N.M., did, too.

In other parts of the industrialized world, fluoridation of water is the exception, not the rule, including Western Europe. Consumers in some countries are offered a choice of buying fluoridated salt and milk. Fluoride is a naturally occurring chemical in many underground water supplies and rivers.

Opposition forces include the Fluoride Action Network and its website, fluoridealert.org. The group questions the use of fluoride in dental cleaning products in addition to opposing its use in water. The group cites health concerns, calling fluoride a poison that can damage teeth, as well as individual rights over what people consume.

Opposition to the practice has been around as long as the practice itself.

Scientific investigation of the use of fluoride to prevent tooth decay has roots in the early 19th century. Using fluoride in public water supplies has been around since 1945 and became widespread in the 1960s.

During and after the Red Scare of the 1950s, some opponents of fluoridation of public water drinking supplies claimed it was a communist plot. Famously, that argument was lampooned in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film comedy "Dr. Strangelove." In the movie, a character named Gen. Jack D. Ripper says he believes that fluoridation threatens the "purity of essence" of his "precious bodily fluids."

But in 2016 in Harrisonburg, the issue is money, Collins said.

"There is a lot of information out there about fluoridation," he said. "A lot of people are for it, and some people are against it. We just need to scope it out and see if it is worth it."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 23, 2016 Monday

## City Council To Hear Water Rate Proposal

BYLINE: RACHEL CISTO

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 470 words

HARRISONBURG -- City Council will take up a proposed increase to water rates Tuesday.

The proposal would raise rates 15 cents per 1,000 gallons of water. It would affect city residents as well as county consumers hooked up to Harrisonburg's system.

The new rate for up to 2,500 gallons a month would be \$2.74 per 1,000 gallons for city users and \$4.67 per 1,000 gallons for county users.

Usage between 2,500 and 25,000 gallons would be \$3.11 per 1,000 gallons for city users and \$4.72 for those in the county.

Usage between 25,000 and 250,000 gallons would be \$2.82 per 1,000 gallons for city users and \$4.72 for county users.

Any water use exceeding 250,000 gallons would cost city users \$2.40 per 1,000 gallons and county users \$3.99 per 1,000 gallons.

Sewer rates will not change under the proposal.

The rate increase, which will fund a new water tank in the Park View neighborhood, is part of the 2017 city budget, which will also be discussed Tuesday.

The \$235.7 million budget proposal represents a \$14.9 million increase from this year's budget. City code requires council pass a balanced budget before May 31.

Last month, City Manager [REDACTED] proposed an 8 cent increase in the real estate tax from 72 cents to 80 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

If approved, the owner of a \$200,000 home would pay \$160 more in real estate taxes, from \$1,440 to \$1,600. [REDACTED] however, has said he expected the tax increase to be 7 or 7.5 cents.

Council will also hold a public hearing on changes to the chicken ordinance.

The Planning Commission has recommended the ordinance be amended to allow any single-family detached home to have up to four hens, provided the property is not located within 500 feet of a poultry farm, hatchery, or processing plant.

The buffer zone was recommended by the Harrisonburg-based Virginia Poultry Federation to lessen concerns about avian influenza.

Some council members also recommended a "neighbor waiver" provision that would require potential chicken raisers get approval from adjoining property owners to get a permit.

The ordinance also would require chicken owners to display the city-issued permit on the pen and pay an annual fee of \$25.

In other business, the Department of Public Works will give a presentation on the stormwater management fund.

According to data from the department, the city has met its five- and 10-year pollutant reduction goals and is on its way to meeting its 15-year goal.

That data caused council members to suggest rolling back the stormwater fee at the last meeting, but public works officials said the fee covers more than the reduction program.

Staff will present a breakdown of program costs and discuss the fee in more detail.

Council meets Tuesday at 7 p.m. in City Hall Council Chambers.

Contact Rachel Cisto at 574-6272 or [rcisto@dnronline.com](mailto:rcisto@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 15, 2016 Friday

## City's Search For Fire Chief A Historic One

BYLINE: PETE DeLEA

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 434 words

HARRISONBURG -- For the first time in three decades, Harrisonburg is searching for a new fire chief.

Larry Shifflett, 69, will retire Aug. 1, creating an opening for the leader of the city's fourth-largest department. The Virginia Retirement System requires retirement by age 70 for public safety employees.

City Manager [REDACTED] will make the hire.

"This will be the first time I have replaced a department head who had held a position for 30 years," said [REDACTED] adding he's had to replace a police chief after 20 years and a finance director after 22. "There will obviously be an adjustment period regardless of who we hire, as no one else is going to have the 30 years of history and perspective that the retiring chief possesses. You only get that through experience."

Shifflett, the city's longest tenured employee, has been with the Harrisonburg Fire Department for 47 years, including the last 33 as chief.

He started as a volunteer with Hose Company No. 4 in 1961, and eight years later was hired as a full-time firefighter. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1978 and captain in 1982 before being appointed to the top spot in 1983.

The fire chief oversees an \$8 million budget, four stations and 83 full-time employees.

The advertised salary range for the new chief is between \$82,534 and \$132,059. Shifflett makes \$125,902 annually.

The application deadline is April 25.

Per policy adopted in January 2015, the position is open to anyone, not just internal candidates first.

But, [REDACTED] said, it's helpful to have people already trained to run a department.

"As a general policy, we always strive to have the next person in line prepared as much as possible to assume the next higher position when it is vacated," he said.

Shifflett said he has his preference on who should be the next chief, but didn't want to disclose it publicly.

"We spend a lot of time training all of our people to grow through the ranks," he said, adding that he didn't know who or how many internal candidates planned on applying. "We have people that are qualified to be fire chief."

[REDACTED] who said he plans to use a team approach that will include other staff when selecting the new chief, doesn't know how many people have applied so far. Applications are first screened by human resources and later passed on to him.

But, he said, he plans on sifting through plenty of resumes.

"I would assume that the position is an attractive one for qualified individuals," he said. "So, while I don't have specific number in mind, I'm sure we'll receive a lot of interest."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 21, 2016 Monday

## City Council To Discuss High School Annex

BYLINE: RACHEL CISTO

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 331 words

HARRISONBURG -- City officials will try to clear up confusion this week over a proposed annex to alleviate overcrowding at Harrisonburg High School.

City Council will take the issue up on Tuesday along with a public hearing on issuing \$50 million in bonds for other school projects necessitated by growth in the division.

The money would be used to pay for construction of the new Bluestone Elementary School and the Elon Rhodes Early Learning Center prekindergarten facility.

Funds would also go to improvements to Garbers Church Road at the elementary school, construction of bicycle and pedestrian paths around Bluestone, and a new HVAC system for Thomas Harrison Middle School.

In a memo to council, City Manager ██████████ said that "there appear to be two trains of thought on what was decided" regarding the HHS project, which is estimated at \$50 million.

According to the memo, the School Board was expecting to hire an architectural firm to "undertake planning and design of the Harrisonburg High School annex ... with subsequent approval to construct the facility within the next couple of years."

██████████ said his understanding was that council wanted to hire an architect to "determine if the existing HHS site can actually support and provide the space needed to build an annex."

██████████ said staff is requesting clarification on which version council supports.

In other business, council will consider amendments to the city's mulch ordinance.

The current ordinance was enacted in April at the urging of the Harrisonburg Fire Department and required any "combustible landscape cover" such as mulch to be at least 18 inches away from a building with flammable siding.

However, the General Assembly approved a bill earlier this year nullifying the ordinance.

Proposed changes would remove the requirement that all existing mulch beds be modified by July 1.

City Council meets Tuesday at 7 p.m. in City Hall Council Chambers.

Contact Rachel Cisto at 574-6272 or rcisto@dnronline.com

LOAD-DATE: March 21, 2016

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 23, 2016 Tuesday

## Council To Mull Eco Standards For Construction

BYLINE: RACHEL CISTO

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 508 words

HARRISONBURG -- City Council will consider establishing a committee to examine Harrisonburg's construction standards at tonight's meeting.

Council received a petition Jan. 12 asking for stricter environmental building regulations.

At that meeting, council voted unanimously to ask city staff for recommendations on moving forward.

In January, City Manager [REDACTED] suggested creating an environmental committee, similar to the city's Stormwater Advisory Committee, to study the issue.

According to the meeting agenda, the new committee would have between seven and 11 members and could include residents, property owners, professional engineers, developers and contractors.

Each committee member would need to be appointed by council, and one council member would serve as a liaison for the committee.

Staff from the city's public works, facilities management or community development departments also would participate in the discussion.

A large group of residents spoke at the January meeting, including members of the Climate Action Alliance of the Valley, the Sierra Club, members of the Harrisonburg High School Young Activists club and students from James Madison and Eastern Mennonite universities.

The petition built off language included in the most recent update of the city's comprehensive plan, written in 2011.

Many in favor of the changes noted the city's current environmental initiatives are the minimum required, and stricter environmental regulations would benefit the city in the long run.

Johann Zimmerman, owner of Harrisonburg-based JZ Engineering, was one of the people who spoke in favor of the petition. Zimmerman told council stricter standards and more efficient buildings would result in savings for the city because the energy bills would be much lower.

Some of the suggested goals in the comprehensive plan include managing light and sound emissions and protection of existing environmental features.

Petitioners would like the regulations to be mandatory for both public and private projects.

However, according to city documents, most other localities have regulations that are only mandatory for public projects, with tax credits or other incentives for private developers that conform to the city's standards.

Recommendations for applying the standards will come from the new committee.



Councilman Richard Baugh noted while the objective is listed in the comprehensive plan, not everything in the document is an immediate goal.

"There are some things in there that might take 25 years to do," he said in January, "but I think it makes sense to start looking proactively at this."

Mayor Chris Jones said he wanted to see community members take part in a discussion on the issue early in the process, saying public involvement would make the plan "come alive."

According to city documents, if approved, the new commission's first task would be comparing Harrisonburg's environmental standards to those of other localities to discover what changes might be needed.

Contact Rachel Cisto at 574-6272 or [rcisto@dnronline.com](mailto:rcisto@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 24, 2015 Thursday

## City Names New Director Of Planning

BYLINE: RACHEL CISTO

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 364 words

HARRISONBURG -- The city has a new director of planning and community development -- sort of.

Adam Fletcher was named the department's director Tuesday afternoon. According to the city, he was selected out of a group of 40 applicants.

Fletcher has been serving as the interim director since Stacy Turner retired in October after more than 20 years with the city.

According to the city, Fletcher joined the staff in 2004 and was named city planner in 2006.

As director, Fletcher oversees 25 employees in three divisions -- building inspections, planning and zoning, and engineering.

The position comes with an \$88,000 annual salary.

Fletcher's appointment came with rave reviews from city officials.

"Adam has done an outstanding job as acting director and we believe he will continue to do so in this new capacity," City Manager [REDACTED] said in a statement.

Councilman Richard Baugh, who serves on the Planning Commission, said he has worked closely with Fletcher since the early 2000s.

"He's great to work with. He's thorough, and we all know him," he said. "Everyone gives him really high marks."

Fletcher said he's grateful for the support he's received from city officials and from the community since taking the helm in September.

"We've got a lot of good people in our department that work very hard to help everyone out," he said.

He said the department plays a big role in the city, since it handles everything from building safety to where businesses can locate.

Fletcher said his staff tries to help everyone get through different processes as quickly and efficiently as possible, while making sure all the bases are covered.

"People just want to come in and get their permits," he said, "but we have to make sure everything abides by the rules. We really don't want to stall you any more than we have to."

Fletcher said staff is looking to move forward with hiring a new city planner "as quickly as possible."

He also said the department is looking for a new deputy building official after Ron Schuett was promoted to building official earlier this month, though neither of the positions are listed on the city's website.

Contact Rachel Cisto at 574-6272 or rcisto@dnronline.com

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 15, 2015 Thursday

## City Planners Talk Chickens

BYLINE: RACHEL CISTO

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 662 words

HARRISONBURG - The Harrisonburg Planning Commission has agreed once again to take up backyard chickens.

The panel decided Wednesday night to study the issue further, though members did not set a timeline on when its recommendation would be sent to City Council.

The issue of backyard fowl was first addressed in 2009, when City Council approved an ordinance allowing no more than four hens at single-family homes on at least 2 acres.

Each bird must have a minimum of 4 square feet of coop space, and the birds must be raised "for domestic purposes" only, meaning owners are not permitted to sell meat or eggs from their birds.

The lot size requirement effectively maintained the city's ban on backyard chickens.

Supporters of backyard chickens sought to lift the ban so residents could get fresh and organic meat and eggs.

The Harrisonburg-based Virginia Poultry Federation opposed the change, saying residential fowl would pose a threat to the industry by making it easier for disease to spread.

City Council brought up the idea of modifying the ordinance during its Sept. 22 meeting, citing increased interest from residents.

At that meeting, City Manager ██████████ said no one had applied for a residential chicken permit since the ordinance was put in place.

But Adam Fletcher, a city planner, said people aren't following the rules.

"We see violations everywhere," he said. "They're still keeping chickens, even if they're not supposed to."

City staff suggested the commission look at four issues - minimum lot size; whether neighbor approval should be required; issuing a small number of trial permits; and anything commission members felt was not addressed in 2009.

Commission member Jefferson Heatwole said he doesn't have any issue with people keeping backyard chickens, but he wants to see data on whether they could make it easier for avian influenza to spread.

"In principle, I think it's a great idea," he said, "but I don't think we should risk hurting the whole industry for a couple of birds."

Avian influenza cost the industry millions of dollars in the Shenandoah Valley in 2002, and growers are once again on edge as they monitor a strain that has already devastated Midwestern states.



Councilman Richard Baugh, council representative on the Planning Commission, said he isn't sure how much of a transmission risk backyard chickens pose. He cited several cities - including Roanoke, Charlottesville, Staunton and Waynesboro - that have relaxed restrictions on domestic chickens.

"I found it hard to find anywhere where A.I. was a problem, and even where it was, it was spreading through big poultry houses," he said. "There is a clear trend that communities are either standing firm with what they have or making the code more permissive."

Commission member Henry Way said he supports the idea of asking for neighbors' permission.

Citing concerns about avian influenza and the Valley's large poultry industry, the commission agreed to re-search the issue further by looking into the original data from 2009 and evaluating possible affects changing the ordinance could have.

The commission also examined the rules regarding downtown parking Wednesday night.

It voted unanimously in favor of allowing businesses within a "specified downtown location" to use parking spaces within a quarter-mile of their location to meet minimum off-street parking requirements.

The ordinance will apply only to businesses or professional offices located within a boundary that includes Gay Street to the north, High Street to the west, Martin Luther King, Jr. Way to the south and Mason Street to the east.

Fletcher previously said the proposal was made after an application to rezone a property on Paul Street from residential to office space was blocked because there was not enough space at the site to accommodate the parking requirement.

The commission's recommendation moves to City Council for final approval.

Contact Rachel Cisto at 574-6272 or rcisto@dnronline.com

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

September 10, 2015 Thursday

## City To Fill Economic Development Position

BYLINE: RACHEL CISTO

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 567 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council voted Tuesday to hire an assistant director for the Economic Development Department.

Director Brian Shull said city officials plan to post the assistant opening on Harrisonburg's website and begin accepting applications for the position within the next 60 days.

Councilman Kai Degner said filling the position was an easy decision.

"Since we want to attract and keep businesses here, it's critically important we add this now," Degner said. Mayor Christopher Jones agreed.

"The city's business sector is thriving, and we want to keep it that way," he said.

Jones brought up the idea of filling several open jobs with the city during council's Aug. 25 meeting.

City Manager ██████████ said filling the assistant director position was "priority one" for the city.

"You can argue this job makes the other ones all happen," ██████████ said.

According to ██████████ the city previously had an economic development assistant.

The position was previously filled using a contract with James Madison University.

Shull said JMU professor of integrated science and technology James Barnes served in the position, helping the city pursue technology development initiatives.

When the contract expired in 2009, Shull said, city officials chose to leave the position vacant due to budget concerns.

According to the city's website, the job would entail both in person and online marketing outreach, maintaining the city's building and sites database, administering the business loan program, and supporting new and existing businesses.

Jones also mentioned he would like to see additional personnel in the city's tourism department and a sustainability coordinator hired "before my term is over."

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Green Network asked council to consider adding a "green coordinator" in 2013 to help manage energy efficiency and reduce the city's carbon footprint.

The city considered adding the position in 2014, but no action was.

Jones made the addition of the sustainability coordinator as a main platform for his 2014 campaign for council.

Also at Tuesday's meeting, council approved three resolutions of support for road projects seeking state and federal funding through the House Bill 2 prioritization program.

HB2 took effect this year and allows the Commonwealth Transportation Board to rank applications for projects for funding.

Part of the HB2 requirements state that localities must receive resolutions for support from local governments.

Because all three projects are located within city limits, the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization needed resolutions from City Council to submit the proposals for consideration.

The three projects being submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation for funding consideration are improvements to Interstate 81 Exit 245, Exit 247, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

Neither the MLK Way nor the Exit 245 projects have suggested timelines, but the Exit 247 project is expected to begin construction in 2021, if funding is awarded.

The Exit 247 project has an estimated price tag of about \$50 million. Early estimates show the Exit 245 project will cost between \$3 million and \$4 million. No estimate has been made for the MLK Jr. Way widening project.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board is expected to announce which projects receive funding in April.

Contact Rachel Cisto at 574-6272 or rcisto@dnronline.com

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The Breeze: James Madison University

September 2, 2015 Wednesday

## City to benefit from new crisis center City to benefit from new crisis center

BYLINE: Mike Dolzer | The Breeze

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 742 words

Sentara RMH's Emergency Department will soon have its own Crisis Intervention Team Assessment Center. Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] and Rockingham County Administrator Joseph Paxton announced the addition in a press release on Aug. 11.

The Assessment Center can function as an alternative to incarceration for those going through an acute or sub-acute mental issue, and allows efficient transfer of custody so that officers can return to their routine law enforcement duties. It will operate Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. until midnight.

While open, Assessment Center personnel will have immediate access to mental health patients for emergency clinical assessments, necessary medical screenings, mental health referrals and linkage to appropriate treatment services, according to the press release.

The center will get \$208,824 of state funding in its first year. Every year thereafter, it will get \$166,108 of state funding and \$71,190 of local government funds.

"This is the type of wonderful community partnership that will help so many local residents," [REDACTED] said in the press release. "It leverages healthcare resources and braids together funding in support of our ongoing efforts to divert individuals from the local criminal justice system when their real need is for mental health treatment."

The goal is for every Assessment Center statewide, such as this one, is to eventually operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"A person who is picked up by law enforcement and has a serious mental illness now has a place to go where a professional assessment can be done," Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board Acute Services Director Ellen Harrison said. "Law enforcement can hand off custody and get back out on the street."

Currently, the assessment process can take up to eight hours by Virginia code, and the arresting officer must be present for the entire assessment. This is one issue that the center will address.

"Eight hours off your shift as a law enforcement officer is the entire shift, so we are now then down a law enforcement officer on the streets," Harrison said. "Historically, the arresting officer had to be there to do the assessment, but now we will have a law enforcement officer in the emergency center to do that and the arresting officer can return to the streets, where they need and want to be."

The hope is that cases involving those with mental illness will be treated with more care.

"It helps the individual who has been picked up by the law enforcement officer to not wind up going to the jail and being charged with a petty crime because the law officer is anxious to turn them over to somebody else



or doesn't know what else to do with them," Executive Director of Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board Lacy Whitmore said. "This way, they can get a professional mental health assessment and we can help them get whatever the right services are at that point in time."

Locally, over 134 officers have completed the extensive 40-hour training program designed to educate and prepare them to interact with individuals in crisis. Training is tailored so that officers can recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness while responding effectively and safely.

But despite its stated benefits, the program isn't tailored to students.

"Because of the vulnerability of young people in terms of that first episode of a major mental illness, anything that we can put into place there is good," Whitmore said. "I think that's an important population that needs more specialized services, but this program will not be that. We hope in the pipeline somewhere that there will be more specialized services for that population."

Despite there being no direct effect on the students, Harrison sees the program to be beneficial in other ways.

"We don't see many students normally, but the average age of onset serious mental illness is 18 to 25, so we do see a few," Harrison said. "If a student is picked up on an emergency order and needs a mental health assessment, [they] can get the services they need as quickly as possible."

With its opening just months away, Whitmore is excited about the Assessment Center's impact on the larger community.

"It's a win-win on many fronts, and one for the community at large," Whitmore said. "People will get the services they need, it'll keep law enforcement personnel out in the field and it's the right thing to do."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 28, 2015 Tuesday

## Hearing On City Budget To Be Held

BYLINE: RYAN CORNELL

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 299 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg's proposed fiscal 2016 budget is the focus of a public hearing tonight at City Council's meeting.

The hearing will be held at 7 p.m. following a presentation in the council chamber, 409 S. Main St.

The proposed \$221.5 million spending plan, which takes effect July 1, is an increase of \$6.6 million, or about 3 percent, from this year's budget.

Featured in the proposal is a 6 cent real estate tax hike. The tax rate would increase from 69 cents to 75 cents per \$100 of assessed value in the new budget.

City Manager [REDACTED] who presented the draft budget to council members earlier this month, said the owner of a \$200,000 house would pay about \$120 more per year in real estate taxes under the new rates.

The budget plan increases the city's water rates by 10 cents per 1,000 gallons and its solid waste management fee by \$3 per month.

Among the expenditures outlined in the budget proposal is \$190,000 in funding for five new positions with the Harrisonburg Police Department, \$121,000 for four new positions in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center, \$1.9 million as the city's share for more space at the Middle River Regional Jail, and \$337,000 as its contribution for a new day reporting program and data analyst position at the Rockingham County Jail.

The draft budget would allocate \$30 million to Harrisonburg City Public Schools, an increase of about \$1.2 million from this year's allocation.

Adoption of the fiscal 2016 budget is required by May 31.

Copies of the proposal are available for review in the Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.; Massanutten Regional Library's Harrisonburg branch, 174 S. Main St.; and on the city's website at [www.harrisonburgva.gov/budget](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/budget).

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LOAD-DATE: April 29, 2015

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 11, 2015 Wednesday

## Council OKs \$30.36M School Projects

BYLINE: BRYAN GILKERSON

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 655 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council approved a \$30.36 million funding recommendation for two new school facilities, though council members and staff say it's not the final figure to be spent on the sites.

"I want to be clear - this is not all of the costs associated with the school," City Manager ██████████ said during council's meeting Tuesday night.

The figure city staff put forward covers construction costs and architectural and engineering fees for a 750-student elementary school on Garbers Church Road and a 250-capacity prekindergarten facility at a location to be determined.

It does not include costs associated with fixtures and equipment such as desks, chairs and computers.

Tuesday's vote is the latest development as officials search for a way to handle overcrowding in Harrisonburg City Public Schools.

City staff's recommendation is substantially less than the \$48.1 million request the School Board submitted at council's Jan. 13 meeting.

City staff developed their own recommendation after resistance from council over the high cost.

The approved figure comes from averaging the costs for the three most recent and comparable elementary schools to be built in the state, as well as reducing the capacity and square footage of the pre-K facility from what the School Board wanted.

Superintendent Scott Kizner spoke passionately in defense of the School Board's original plan at Tuesday's meeting.

"What I'd rather not focus on is the square footage costs," he said, adding he was confident the School Board's numbers were accurate to meet the needs of students.

"What we're really talking about is children, children that will be entering that school in August of 2017," he said.

Kizner brought up the division's high number of free and reduced lunch students and limited English proficiency pupils as evidence of special needs it faces.

"These are your constituents. ... [The parents are] counting on you guys and they're counting the School Board and they're counting on the superintendent to do the right thing for their kids," Kizner said.

He also warned that programs such as art, music and technology could be negatively affected by a lack of space and funding.

Most council members said they were comfortable with the city staff's recommendation, voting 4-1 in support.

Councilman Richard Baugh said he "echoed" many of Kizner's concerns, but he is confident with the figure approved. Baugh also said he expects dialogue on funding to continue.

"This is not a finished product. ... If there are other things we have to do, to come back and revisit, I'm certainly open to that," he said.

Mayor Christopher Jones drew parallels to another recent controversial funding proposal.

In December, City Council and the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors approved submitting plans that included a \$63.26 million jail annex to relieve overcrowding at the Rockingham County Jail.

"We sit here today without that jail," he said, referring to a deal revealed last week for the city and county join the Middle River Regional Jail Authority, axing the annex plans.

"I bring this up to say that there's an ongoing process that we have to go through," he said.

Councilman Kai Degner cast the lone dissenting vote, saying, "I'm convinced we're sacrificing some things at the current recommendation," including space needs and energy efficiency methods.

While several council members said the conversation was about square footage costs and not programs, Kizner insisted the two were interconnected.

"Programs require people and space," he said. "In absence of the space, then programs do get impacted."

Jones also cited the needs of other departments in the city when considering budget costs, saying a lot "were doing more with less."

A final plan is expected to be developed before the end of the year, with the facilities expected to be opened by the fall of 2017.

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LOAD-DATE: February 12, 2015

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 6, 2015 Friday

## It's A Very Good Deal

SECTION: OPINION (EDITORIALS)

LENGTH: 583 words

City and county officials have done a smart thing: They have expanded their ability to incarcerate inmates without building an annex to the county jail, saving the taxpayers a big pile of money in the short and long terms. Those savings, 66 percent of the cost of a new facility here, are nothing to sneeze at.

On Wednesday, as the Daily News-Record's Bryan Gilkerson reported, the city and county reached an agreement with the Middle River Regional Jail Authority to join the other localities that compose the authority - Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County - and begin using beds there.

The deal provides for the county and city to contribute \$21.5 million to MRRJA in exchange for 250 beds, with 10 percent of that total (\$2.15 million) paid by June 30, and the rest (\$19.35 million) over the next 10 years. City and county taxpayers will split the cost evenly. According to county administrator Joe Paxton, who announced the deal at Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport with city chief [REDACTED] the city and county can use 150 beds per day while jail authority officials reckon the final annual cost of using the facility. Eventually, 250 will be available.

Why is the move a good deal for taxpayers? It nixes a proposed 315-bed jail annex that was to be built on 30 acres adjacent to the county landfill. The price tag on construction for that would have been about \$63 million, not counting \$10 million to operate for its opening year in 2020.

The initial savings this deal provides: More than \$50 million, counting that \$10 million in first-year operating costs for our own facility. Comparing the \$21.5 million buy-in to the cost of the new facility alone yields \$41.5 million in savings. Thus, for a much more modest investment of taxpayer money, law enforcement authorities here get well more than half a loaf - 80 percent of the beds they would have with the new facility - for about a third of the cost. Not bad.

Then there's the practical side of the matter. The city and county already spend about \$1 million annually to use beds at MRRJA. We're already halfway down the aisle; we may as well go ahead and exchange vows. This annual expense, by the way, pales in comparison to what a jail annex will cost. Its first year of operation in 2020, recall, will cost \$10 million. The jail authority's fee for beds plus the annual buy-payment won't come close to that. Again, the savings in this deal is 66 percent of the cost of the new facility. So again, not bad.

As well, the regional jail can grow to twice its present capacity. The jail authority has plans for a three-phase expansion when the need arises.

Finally, to the benefit of this locality, officials here will seek alternatives to incarceration, a heavy taxpayer investment of cash, facility and personnel, often to no purpose if an inmate is nonviolent. According to Mr. Gilkerson, those alternatives include electronic surveillance, day reporting and addiction and psychiatric treatment.

Yet it's also a good deal for MRRJA. It will have five instead of three jurisdictions supporting it. The \$21.5 million Harrisonburg and Rockingham will contribute is about a third of regional jail's construction cost of \$60.4 million in 2006. That's a big help.

So the agreement, which all five jurisdictions must and will likely approve, is a win-win for everyone, most importantly the taxpayers who foot the bill for what is a regrettable but unhappy and necessary duty: separating malefactors from the law-abiding rest of us.

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 11, 2014 Thursday

## City OKs New Trash Deal

BYLINE: BRYAN GILKERSON

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 366 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council looked to take out the trash Tuesday night before the end of the year.

With the closure of the Resource Recovery Center at James Madison University - commonly known as the steam plant - Harrisonburg needs another way to dispose of its trash.

The city sold the facility on JMU's campus to the university for \$4.2 million in November. It hadn't accepted fuel since June.

On Tuesday, council unanimously approved recommendations from staff to pursue an agreement with Van der Linde Recycling to dispose of the city's solid waste. If the contract is approved, Van der Linde would receive tipping fees, which Anne Lewis, assistant city manager, said are about \$511,000 annually. The city's total cost for trash collection is \$2.7 million a year.

Previous figures estimated Van der Linde as the cheaper option over dumping trash at the Rockingham County Landfill.

But new estimates attached to the council's say using the landfill would be nearly \$87,000 a year cheaper than an agreement with the Fluvanna County-based company.

Lewis said the previous figures were based on numbers budgeted for fiscal year 2015, while the new totals come from "actual" figures from fiscal 2014, which ended June 30.

Despite the additional cost, staff recommended Van der Linde because city officials estimate that 75 percent of waste could be recycled, more than double the 32 percent the city reported in 2012.

According to the city, Harrisonburg spends about \$800,000 on its recycling program while collecting only about \$100,000 in revenue from the project.

"Our current process is a big money loser," City Manager ██████████ said.

In other business, council approved a supplemental appropriation of \$15,000 to help fund an 18-month pilot program aimed at improving mental health screening and supportive counseling in the Rockingham County Jail.

It also named Tom Mendez to the Harrisonburg Electric Commission. Mendez, vice president of BB&T Insurance Services, will fill out the remainder of a term vacated by Martha Shifflett. Shifflett moved out of the area in October. Her term is set to expire at the end of next year.

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LOAD-DATE: December 13, 2014

The Breeze: James Madison University

November 5, 2014 Wednesday

## JMU acquires Resource Recovery Facility from city

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 840 words

JMU's plan to purchase the Harrisonburg Resource Recovery Facility appears to be picking up steam, in more ways than one.

JMU will purchase the Resource Recovery Facility, which is owned by the city of Harrisonburg and located between the University Recreation Center and Shenandoah Hall on East Campus, for \$4.2 million.

According to Charles King, JMU's senior vice president of Administration and Finance, the RRF is composed of two distinct mechanisms: a garbage-burner, which generates superheated steam for heating, and a chiller, used to provide air conditioning for many of the East Campus buildings. While the chiller plant will continue to produce cooling steam for climate control purposes, the garbage incinerator will be replaced with a satellite location for university maintenance and lawn services.

One way or another, the RRF will become a part of JMU, though its function may change slightly after the acquisition. And, it appears, the university has substantial interest in making further use of it.

The decision to replace the garbage incinerator wasn't only about convenience or the lack of fuel - it was also a financially practical one. Over the next decade, the incinerator portion of the RRF would have required nearly \$10 million in maintenance and upkeep costs for the city, according to King. This, coupled with the dwindling supply and the prospect of creating a new satellite location for maintenance, undoubtedly contributed to the decision to close that portion of the steam plant.

According to King, JMU can afford the full cost of the RRF's acquisition, even if the university's submitted request for state funding is denied. If granted, the state would cover about 60 percent of the cost, or about \$2.5 million of the steam plant's \$4.2 million price tag.

"We have a good case for the plant's acquisition," King said, adding that even in the unlikely case that the request were denied, the plant would be purchased "regardless."

King also indicated that generating steam from burning garbage was something of an unusual arrangement - perhaps one unique to Harrisonburg.

"If there's another [one] in Virginia, I'm not aware of it," King said.

Since its construction in 1982, the RRF has incinerated thousands of tons of solid municipal waste, providing steam used to heat and cool portions of the JMU campus.

A retrofit of the RRF facility in 2004 doubled its daily capacity, helping to respond to increased demand by the university. After the modifications, the RRF was able to process 200 tons of solid waste every day. It operated in conjunction with another plant closer to the west side of campus, providing heating and air conditioning services to many residential and academic buildings.

During colder months especially, the facility could often be seen emitting dense clouds of steam, the overflow of its production process.



As of June 2014, however, the facility has stopped accepting incoming waste - permanently, assuming the deal with JMU goes through.

In recent years, it's become simpler and less expensive for many people to drop off waste at the Harrisonburg landfill, according to Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED]. This, coupled with the high costs of repairing and maintaining the plant over the next 10 years, makes it financially unfeasible for the city to continue the RRF's operation.

"[The RRF] provided heating and cooling for portions of the JMU campus at a rate that was at one time competitive with natural gas," Anne Lewis, Harrisonburg's assistant city manager, said. "The city does not generate enough trash of its own to operate the RRF at the necessary capacity to provide for JMU's heating and cooling needs, and was dependent on additional trash from outside the city. Those other sources of trash went away given the glut of cheap, available landfill space in Virginia and elsewhere."

Additionally, the facility's proximity to JMU makes it nearly impossible to find other customers for its services.

"All the steam lines were built to serve the JMU campus ... The facility was built right in the middle of [it]," [REDACTED] said, also indicating that it would be "cost prohibitive" to attempt to expand the network further.

Before the sale took place, the steam plant served the city as an outlet for much of its garbage disposal needs - reducing landfill waste by more than 65 percent, according to Lewis. However, as incoming resources dwindled and maintenance costs rose, the city began to have difficulties.

Since its completion in 1994, JMU's College of Integrated Science and Technology, located a great distance from the lawn care depot on Bluestone Drive, has always been a chore to properly maintain, according to King. Getting the necessary equipment over to East Campus was often a difficult task for workers.

"It used to be, we had to drive all our lawn mowers over there [from the Bluestone location]," King said. "Now, with that satellite location, we can store all our lawn care vehicles so they can take care of East campus."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 2, 2014 Wednesday

## City Eyes Revenue-Share Switch

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 470 words

HARRISONBURG - City officials hope the Virginia Department of Transportation shares their idea on what would make for better use of revenue-sharing funds.

City Council last week gave staff permission to inquire with VDOT about shifting \$2 million allocated to Harrisonburg for the Erickson Avenue-Stone Spring Road connector toward expanding Reservoir Street instead.

The project was among several that qualified for matching transportation grants announced recently by Gov. Terry McAuliffe. To receive funding, municipal governments must provide funding equal to the state's allocation.

Funding for Reservoir Street's expansion is a more pressing need than the fourth and final part of the connector, mainly because Rockingham County is not focused on completing work along Erickson from the city limits to U.S. 33 west of Harrisonburg, City Manager ██████████ said.

"We feel like we'll end up there at some point anyway," he said of a wider Erickson.

The city plans to expand Reservoir Street to a five-lane road with sidewalks from University Boulevard to Neff Avenue, and a four-lane byway with a bike lane and sidewalks from Neff to the city limits.

The county and VDOT are working to finish the eastern portion of the southeast connector, which will extend Stone Spring Road to U.S. 33 east near Boyers Road. The entire project eventually ties U.S. 33 west at Erickson with U.S. 33 east.

It would provide the only continuous link from east to west other than U.S. 33, which goes right through downtown Harrisonburg and is often heavily congested.

The city's last piece of the project will go from about the entrance to Walmart on Erickson Avenue to the western city limits, widening Erickson to a five-lane roadway with a center turn lane, bicycle lanes and sidewalk.

For that project or Reservoir, Harrisonburg will need to match the state's \$2 million allocation.

In January, ██████████ told council that staff was "leaning against" accepting the expected grant for Erickson-Stone Spring because of concerns over whether the city had funds available to match it.

However, the funding has since been identified among leftover money from the first three phases in the connector project and transfers from public utility projects, ██████████ said.

Reallocating the funds to Reservoir will not hurt Harrisonburg's chances for receiving money for Erickson-Stone Spring in the future, he said.

The Reservoir Street project is estimated between \$16 million and \$17 million, up from \$14 million now budgeted for it. The increase comes from ongoing work to relocate utilities underground, Public Works Director Jim Baker said.

Road construction is expected to begin next summer and finish in 2017.

"[It's] a project that will disrupt normal life for a while," Baker said.

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LOAD-DATE: July 3, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Contractors work on new utility poles along Reservoir Street in Harrisonburg on Monday. The city is looking into shifting \$2 million in state funding from the Stone Spring connector project to the Reservoir expansion. (Photos by Michael Reilly / DN-R) Anthony Smith, an employee at HEC, on Monday checks the depth of a ditch that will carry electrical lines along Reservoir Street. The Reservoir Street project is estimated to cost between \$16 million and \$17 million. IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/53b3941f-f340-4dd3-80b8-5aff0a950c5b/53b39475-e440-49e7-9a95-5afd0a950c5b.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/53b3941f-f340-4dd3-80b8-5aff0a950c5b/53b39475-e440-49e7-9a95-5afd0a950c5b.jpg) p/ > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/53b3941f-f340-4dd3-80b8-5aff0a950c5b/53b394a3-bd74-40ed-beff-55f40a950c5b.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/53b3941f-f340-4dd3-80b8-5aff0a950c5b/53b394a3-bd74-40ed-beff-55f40a950c5b.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 19, 2014 Thursday

## Developer Surprised Hotel Deal Died

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 540 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance offered the sales pitch and developer Paul Gladd thought he had it knocked out of the park.

About two years ago, Gladd said HDR Executive Director Eddie Bumbaugh and the revitalization group's board president, Andy Perrine, gauged his interest of bringing a hotel and conference center to the city. A 1987 James Madison University graduate, Gladd said he was intrigued.

Through his Maryland firm, dpM Partners, Gladd followed with an unsolicited proposal to Harrisonburg City Council in September 2012, asking for \$10 million toward the \$40 million project, with details to be negotiated. The city's commitment would fund the conference center's construction.

A JMU-owned site on South Main Street was later identified as property Gladd would lease for the complex, and the university agreed to provide a parking deck to serve the complex, to be called Hotel Madison.

Heading into last week's council meeting, the last, and biggest, piece - the financing details - appeared lined up, Gladd said. While he would pursue federal New Market Tax Credits for the hotel, the JMU Foundation agreed to build the conference center and would be reimbursed by the city, based on annual revenues the meeting space generated, he said.

A presentation scheduled for council was postponed for a week or two so the foundation's attorney, Jay Litten, and City Attorney Chris Brown could work on "tweaks" to the draft memorandum of understanding, Gladd said.

Yet changes coming from the city were so "dramatic" that the foundation's executive board needed to take additional action, he said. By Tuesday, the deal was off, as the board said it no longer was considering the hotel an active project.

"In my world, having lawyers negotiating the deal versus business people negotiating the deal with lawyers is problematic," Gladd said Wednesday. "The foundation would inherit financial risk if revenues did not cover debt. It was a beautiful situation for the city. ... I'm just still a little bit confused about what happened on the last lap around the track."

Brown said nothing unusual took place. As the city looked more into the details, there were issues that popped up, such as the length of council's obligation to the foundation, he said.

"The devil's in the details," Brown said. "There were just some issues we weren't able to get solved with other parties."



On Tuesday, City Manager ██████████ said it was important that the city not "extend" itself too far financially, minimizing its risk in the project. He and Tom Schaeffer, the foundation's president, didn't divulge details on what separated the two sides to the point of ending talks.

"It got to the point where we went as far as we could go with this," ██████████ said.

Gladd is hopeful that, given time, city officials will reconsider and see that "it was a pretty special deal." Mayor Ted Byrd, an opponent of the project, said he still welcomes Gladd's hotel, but not with the public financing tied to it and the conference center.

Gladd, however, said the private-public partnership is necessary for the project to work.

"It's just such a shame if it doesn't come to fruition," he said.

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LOAD-DATE: June 20, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: A proposed \$40 million hotel and conference center would have been built on JMU-owned property bound by Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and South Main, Grace and Mason streets. The proposal died after the city and JMU Foundation couldn't reach a deal. (Photo by Nikki Fox / DN-R)

IMG>[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/53a26f85-a798-4679-9ac9-7f620a950c5b/53a26fba-ce0c-4400-b80e-04d60a950c5b.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/53a26f85-a798-4679-9ac9-7f620a950c5b/53a26fba-ce0c-4400-b80e-04d60a950c5b.jpg) /IMG>

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 14, 2014 Wednesday

## City OKs 6-Cent Tax Hike

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 708 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council passed a budget Tuesday night that raises the real estate tax rate by 6 cents and provides Harrisonburg City Public Schools with its full request for funding.

The \$214 million spending plan, which takes effect July 1, passed with a 3-2 vote. Mayor Ted Byrd and City Councilman Charles Chenault cast the dissenting votes, each wishing for the city to take a different path with a new salary study.

The budget calls for a 2 percent pay increase for city employees, a recommendation made by City Manager [REDACTED] and lifted from a study council commissioned.

Byrd wants a more comprehensive study, including one that helps close the gap between raises in the total benefit package for school employees and city employees, which he says is higher for the former by about 3 percent.

Chenault had pushed for a more expensive option from the compensation study that offered a minimum half-cent pay increase per years of service and moved employees to a new minimum salary mark.

"It's an effort in equity and equalization," he said.

But Councilman Richard Baugh said it wasn't the right time to "go the extra mile" with what the study offered when the city was looking to raise taxes to keep its budget balanced.

"I do favor and hope ... as soon as we can get it in the fiscal framework, we do take care of this issue," Baugh said.

Otherwise, council was unified in adopting a budget that basically matched what [REDACTED] had proposed last month.

The school funding is a slight change from [REDACTED] draft. The school system sought \$28.7 million from the city as part of its \$62.7 million budget, but the city manager suggested funding only \$28.3 million.

That proposal was still \$1 million above the current year's allocation.

Since [REDACTED] draft was presented, though, Harrisonburg City Schools Superintendent Scott Kizner said the division can receive \$222,000 extra in state dollars if it increases its projected average daily membership for next year by 50, based on former Gov. Bob McDonnell's budget proposal to the General Assembly.

State education funding is based partly on how many students attend school.

That left the school system \$180,000 short. Council will dip into its reserves to pay for that, serving as a loan to be repaid. If the division receives state funding to cover that amount once the General Assembly passes a state budget, the extra allocation will not be necessary.

The real estate increase, which moves the rate from 63 cents to 69 cents per \$100 of assessed value, is only the second increase during the last 20 years. Harrisonburg will still be tied for second lowest among 38 Virginia cities for its real estate tax rate, based on current figures.

The average home sale price in the city for the 12-month period ending April 30 was \$199,175, while the median was \$178,500.

City homeowners with a house assessed at \$199,000 pay \$1,253 in annual real estate taxes now, and would pay \$1,373 with the 6-cent increase.

A house valued at \$178,000 will be taxed at \$1,228, versus \$1,121 now.

Byrd said he looked at ways to reduce the increase to 3 cents, but knew he didn't have the votes to get it to pass. Councilman Abe Shearer had proposed a 5-cent increase, knocking out funding for a new bridge on Rock Street (valued at \$450,000) with it.

His idea didn't pass, though, and he ultimately OK'd the 6-cent increase, calling it a "reasonable request" given the city's comparatively low tax rate. The new bridge also stays in the budget.

Council passed its plan after holding a public hearing in which 14 people spoke, including several retirement-age residents concerned about the tax increase and representatives from organizations hoping to increase the city's allocation in [REDACTED] proposal.

None of them succeeded in persuading the panel.

"We always face the situation of more good things we could spend money on than funds," Baugh said.

Council will officially pass the budget during a second reading on May 27.

The plan is \$7 million above the current budget and includes a 50-cent hike for the personal property tax, which is now \$3 per \$100 of assessed value of a vehicle, and a \$10 increase in the vehicle fee, taking it to \$40.

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LOAD-DATE: May 15, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 13, 2014 Tuesday

## City Budget Ready For Public Input

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 380 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council will receive public input tonight on a proposed fiscal 2015 budget that would include Harrisonburg's second real estate tax rate increase in 20 years.

However, if recent history holds true, homeowners may be relatively silent.

Harrisonburg has raised its tax rate only once since 1994: two years ago, bringing it to 63 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The rate even dropped once in that time, down to 59 cents in fiscal 2008.

Nobody spoke against the increase in 2012, though, so perhaps council can expect more of the same tonight. The hearing is at 7 p.m. in council chambers at 409 S. Main St.

The \$214 million draft budget calls for a 6-cent, or 10.5 percent, increase to the real estate tax rate, which would take it to 69 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

At a work session last week, council members discussed going down to 5 cents. But unlike last year, they didn't discuss avoiding an increase altogether.

Council dipped into the city's reserves to avoid a 4-cent hike last year. To replenish reserves and for other factors - including increased expenses for operating Rockingham County Jail, funding Harrisonburg City Public Schools and moving city employees to a new salary scale - the tax increase has been proposed.

Each penny increase equals about \$386,000 in additional annual revenue.

City Manager [REDACTED] said Harrisonburg has completed numerous capital projects in recent years and has had greater demand on its services, such as trash pickup and emergency personnel, yet only has increased taxes once.

"You look at our level of service," Councilman Charles Chenault said, "I wouldn't trade them for any place in Virginia."

Even with a 6-cent increase, Harrisonburg would be tied for second lowest among 38 Virginia cities for its real estate tax rate, based on current figures.

A city homeowner with a house valued at \$150,000 will pay \$1,035 in real estate taxes, compared to \$945 now. A home valued at \$200,000 will be taxed at \$1,380 next year, while the owner pays \$1,260 now.

The new fiscal year starts July 1. Harrisonburg's charter, however, requires City Council to adopt a budget by June 1.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)



Go Online: To view the proposed 2015 budget, visit [www.harrisonburgva.gov](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov).

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PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 24, 2014 Thursday

## Kizner: Budget Reductions 'Troublesome'

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 851 words

HARRISONBURG - If not number crunching, Harrisonburg City Public Schools has some lobbying left to do. City staff introduced a \$214 million draft budget for the next fiscal year to City Council on Tuesday night and posted it online Wednesday morning. It shows a \$28.3 million allocation to the school system, about \$1 million above the current share from the city.

In a letter to council, City Manager ██████ said the extra \$1 million "essentially" provides for a 2 percent salary increase for school employees.

However, Superintendent Scott Kizner had presented a \$62.7 million budget to council that included a \$28.7 million request from the city, about \$1.4 million above the current allocation.

On Wednesday, he said the \$400,000 reduction was "troublesome," especially when tacked on to news the school system learned Monday that its federal funding for special education was going to take a \$74,000 hit next year.

"My plan will be to work with the [Harrisonburg City] School Board and have conversations with City Council to help them better understand that further reductions [will] really impact the ability of us to meet our students' needs," Kizner said, adding that he also didn't want to jeopardize the pay increases.

The draft city budget for fiscal 2015, which is \$7 million, or 3 percent, above the current year's plan, also calls for city employees to receive raises. It suggests that City Council adopt one of the options that came out of a recent employee classification study, which will cost from \$600,000 to \$1.2 million and could include a 2 percent pay raise.

The city increases would apply July 1, provided the employee received a "satisfactory" performance evaluation in the current year, ██████ said.

Council has scheduled a public hearing for May 13, with adoption of the budget then set for May 27. The panel will likely hold a work session in between those two meetings.

The new fiscal year starts July 1. A wild card that remains for the school division and city budgets is the state fiscal plan, which has yet to be approved and may not be finished for weeks, at best.

### New Taxes

██████ notes in his letter that this was a "very difficult budget to prepare" because several new large expenditures had to be factored in: making up \$1.6 million that was used from reserves last year to balance the current budget; about \$600,000 for increased costs associated with housing inmates at the Rockingham County Jail; \$300,000 extra in health insurance; and \$212,000 for expenses tied with the Community Services Board, Social Services and juvenile detention center.

The pay raises for school and city employees were considerations, too.

Among a series of tax and fee increases in the draft is a 6-cent hike to the real estate tax rate, which will take it from 63 cents to 69 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

Based on the proposed increase, a house valued at \$150,000 will pay \$1,035 in real estate taxes, compared to \$945 now. A home valued at \$200,000 will be taxed at \$1,380 next year, while the owner pays \$1,260 now.

The increase will result in real estate revenues jumping from \$24.2 million to \$26.5 million, according to the draft. Even with the increase, Harrisonburg will be tied for second lowest among 38 Virginia cities for its real estate tax rate, ██████ said.

Also, personal property taxes will bring in \$8 million next year, compared to \$7 million this year, through a proposed 50-cent increase to the tax, according to the draft. It's \$3 per \$100 of assessed value now.

██████ also estimates \$1.3 million more in revenue, without tax increases, from sales, business license and food taxes.

#### New Positions

More than \$14 million in city department requests were cut from the proposed budget, ██████ said, and a "very limited" number of general capital projects and outlays proposed. Topping that list is \$450,000 for improvements to the West Rock Street bridge.

Allocations to outside agencies in which council has discretion were not increased from the current year, and new organizations were not added, either.

The contributions are valued at \$1.34 million, versus the current year's \$1.28 million.

Finance Director Larry Propst said nondiscretionary agencies are government-type organizations, such as the detention center, while City Council can dictate its spending on nonprofits such as the Boys & Girls Clubs and Salvation Army.

One new position is included in the general fund budget: a coordinator for the storm-sewer system permits, commonly called MS4 permits. Also, three part-time administrative positions - two within the Harrisonburg Police Department and one in the city manager/city attorney's office - will be bumped to full time next fiscal year under the proposal.

In the transportation budget, a facilities manager, fleet manager and transit driver are requested, as well as new part-time school and transit drivers that amount to almost five full-time people.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

More Online: A copy of the Harrisonburg draft spending plan for fiscal 2015 is available at [www.harrisonburg.gov/budget](http://www.harrisonburg.gov/budget).

LOAD-DATE: April 28, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 23, 2014 Wednesday

## NEW: City Budget Includes Most Of Schools' Funding Request

BYLINE: Preston Knight

SECTION: NEWS (UPDATES/BREAKING NEWS)

LENGTH: 159 words

HARRISONBURG - The proposed city budget gives Harrisonburg City Public Schools most of its funding request for the next fiscal year.

Harrisonburg's fiscal 2015 budget, which was presented to City Council on Tuesday night, is available to view online here. Featured in the \$214 million proposal, which comes in about \$7 million higher than the original 2013-14 plan, is a \$28.3 million allocation to the school system. That's about \$1 million more than the city currently contributes to the school budget.

Superintendent Scott Kizner had presented a \$62.7 million budget to council that included a \$28.7 million request from the city, about \$1.4 million above the current allocation.

In a letter to council, City Manager [REDACTED] said the new \$1 million to schools "essentially" provides for a 2 percent salary increase for school employees.

A public hearing on the spending plan is set for May 13. Fiscal 2014 starts July 1 and runs through June 30, 2015.

LOAD-DATE: April 28, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 26, 2014 Wednesday

## City Employee Pay Under Review

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 450 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council on Tuesday pushed back for two weeks a vote on a new employee compensation scale, which at a minimum will be about a \$1 million expense.

It will also be Harrisonburg's first update on its pay schedule in more than a decade.

Richmond-based Springsted Inc. completed a compensation and classification study in the fall. The city hired the firm for \$33,000 to evaluate city employee pay, comparing data with 11 different entities, including James Madison University, Sentara RMH Medical Center, Harrisonburg City Public Schools and the cities of Manassas and Blacksburg.

Springsted recommended the adoption of a new salary structure after analyzing job duties and other factors. It found that a quarter of the city government's roughly 600 full-time employees is paid at a rate below the minimum salary of the consultant's suggested pay scale.

The study gives council six options to bring employees to that minimum salary mark. Members were set to choose an option heading into Tuesday night's meeting, but City Manager [REDACTED] informed them that new, "significantly" lower cost figures than previously compiled will be available soon.

He said city staff has gone "back and forth" trying to plug its data into Springsted's system, and those figures should be complete by council's next meeting on April 8 - still plenty of time to take action before the next fiscal year starts July 1.

"We want to make sure you have the right numbers before you do anything," [REDACTED] said.

For example, the lowest cost option for the city, which simply moves full- and part-time employees to the minimum salary on the new pay scale, has been recalculated to \$982,000, he said. That's about \$500,000 lower than what the city had expected.

Other options include providing employees at least a 2 percent pay increase or moving employees to the minimum and tacking on a 0.5 percent pay raise.

The city's current payroll is more than \$24 million for employees, according to the Springsted report. Harrisonburg's general fund budget is \$209 million.

### No New Taxis

Also Tuesday, City Council did not issue a certificate of public necessity and convenience to Majed Mahdi, who sought to run University Taxi Cab.

Reggie Smith, director of the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation, said the city already appears to have a surplus of taxicabs during daytime hours and that the five existing companies are not using their full fleets on nights and weekends.

Mahdi also has not shown knowledge of city landmarks, does not have a vehicle that meets city code for cabs and has not provided a phone number for his business, Smith said.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: March 27, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: FStephanie Wimer, a recreation instructor with the city's Parks and Rec Department, conducts a personal training session with Anne Waltner at the Cecil F. Gilkerson Community Activities Center on Tuesday. City Council on Tuesday pushed back for two weeks a vote on a new employee compensation scale. (Photos by Michael Reilly / DN-R) Scott Erickson, a recreation specialist, watches kids during an exercise period at the Cecil F. Gilkerson Community Activities Center on Tuesday. A firm hired by the city to evaluate employee compensation recommended the adoption of a new salary structure after analyzing job duties and other factors. IMG>[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/533259e2-35bc-4585-9a29-2c120a4431f6/53325a1c-5328-48a4-aefe-2c120a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/533259e2-35bc-4585-9a29-2c120a4431f6/53325a1c-5328-48a4-aefe-2c120a4431f6.jpg) p/> [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/533259e2-35bc-4585-9a29-2c120a4431f6/53325a4b-6044-41a9-8c15-30a60a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/533259e2-35bc-4585-9a29-2c120a4431f6/53325a4b-6044-41a9-8c15-30a60a4431f6.jpg) /IMG>

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 13, 2014 Thursday

## Costs Rise For City Park Trail

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 413 words

HARRISONBURG - Waiting is a two-way street for city officials as they approach a pair of infrastructure projects.

Additional improvements to Main Street downtown are temporarily on hold, while the Bluestone Trail, a proposed path between Ramblewood Park and James Madison University's entrance at Port Republic Road, will move forward thanks to an ability to stay patient on yet another project.

On the downtown streetscape, a single bid for construction came in last week more than \$300,000 above the city's projected \$1.1 million cost, City Manager ██████ told City Council on Tuesday.

The project includes sidewalk reconstruction, replacement of traffic signal poles, landscaping and more on the west side of Main Street from Bruce to Wolfe streets.

Construction was set to begin May 1, but will be delayed because of costs.

All is not lost, however. ██████ said city staff will meet with the lone bidder, Falconer Construction of Charlottesville, to try to reach an agreement and, if unsuccessful, can still either put the project out to bid again or scale it back.

Changing the design may be worth discussing because a smaller project would be easier to maintain and cause less disruption during construction, ██████ said. The city completed the first phase of the streetscape in 2010, bringing upgrades to the east side of Main Street from Bruce to Elizabeth streets.

### Green To Blue

For the Bluestone Trail, the city sought bids for two pieces of the project's first phase: from Butler Street to Port Republic Road, which James Madison University will fund, and from Butler to Stone Spring Road (through Purcell Park).

The lowest apparent bid among three submitted last week for the Butler-Stone Spring portion was \$75,000 above the city's budgeted amount for construction, ██████ said.

The apparent lowest bid of \$1 million came from Hammond-Mitchell Inc. in Covington.

██████ said the city could accept the bid and transfer money allocated to the Northend Greenway, a multi-use path planned to connect the Park View area to downtown.

Council approved that request Tuesday.

Groundbreaking for the greenway is a year away, organizers say, and ██████ said the city will replenish its financial commitment to the project. The city and state have each committed \$600,000 to the greenway.



The Bluestone Trail's initial phase could open by the end of the year, ██████ said. A later piece will take it to Ramblewood.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: March 14, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Harrisonburg continues to work on its downtown streetscape project, which has included adding flower pots on Main Street. (Photos by Nikki Fox / DN-R) At the corner of Water and South Main streets in Harrisonburg, new flowerpots brighten up the sidewalk. The city's downtown streetscape project includes sidewalk reconstruction, curb ramp additions, new lighting, landscaping and replacement of traffic poles.

IMG>[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/53214124-7d14-4b92-a01f-3fba0a4431f6/53214166-bc0c-4afd-8eca-3fbb0a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/53214124-7d14-4b92-a01f-3fba0a4431f6/53214166-bc0c-4afd-8eca-3fbb0a4431f6.jpg) p/> [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/53214124-7d14-4b92-a01f-3fba0a4431f6/5321419a-06a4-462d-99a7-3fba0a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/53214124-7d14-4b92-a01f-3fba0a4431f6/5321419a-06a4-462d-99a7-3fba0a4431f6.jpg) /IMG>

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 13, 2013 Friday

## City To GA: File Revenue Bills Early

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 393 words

HARRISONBURG - Local governments often feel the General Assembly asks too much of them by passing legislation with what are commonly called unfunded mandates - requirements that can end up costing cities and counties millions of dollars.

Their request for the 2014 legislative session addresses the concern of shifting costs. Specifically, local governments want any bills requiring a "net additional expenditure" or "net reduction of revenue" to localities to be filed no later than the first day of the session, Jan. 8.

City Council was the latest jurisdiction to sign onto a resolution asking state lawmakers to introduce legislation in a timely fashion so the Commission on Local Government can analyze it. Until 2010, such a requirement had been in place, according to City Manager [REDACTED]. It's not clear how many localities have signed on to the resolution, authored by the Governor's Task Force for Local Mandate Review.

The Commission on Local Government, a five-member panel appointed by the governor and confirmed by the General Assembly, assists local governments with state matters.

It is required to file a fiscal impact statement for each bill identified by the Division of Legislative Services as likely to impose new expenses or decreased revenues to at least one local government, according to its website.

The statements help legislators as they consider new state mandates. A proper analysis of bills, officials believe, will lead to fewer passing the General Assembly.

Rockingham County supports the resolution, but it hasn't officially signed on and won't meet again until after the session starts, County Administrator Joe Paxton said.

Del. Steve Landes, R-Weyers Cave, said he agrees with what localities like Harrisonburg are doing by endorsing the resolution.

However, "that's easier said than done," he said. "Sometimes we don't know that something has a local impact [at first]."

Landes plans to propose legislation in the 2014 session that makes the review process more "thorough" for the commission, a recommendation by the review task force that Gov. Bob McDonnell created last year.

For example, Landes wants to have the Department of Taxation and Department of Planning and Budget working closely with the commission on bills that may have a local fiscal impact.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: December 15, 2013

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 4, 2013 Wednesday

## City, Committee At Odds Over Park Plan

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 884 words

HARRISONBURG - City officials and a private group interested in a downtown urban park are trying to figure out if an attraction and new Municipal Building can coexist.

A recent meeting led park planners to express dissatisfaction about those chances.

The private group, known as the Plan Our Park committee, has been working with a design team it hired for an attraction around Turner Pavilion on South Liberty Street. Committee member Jay Monger told City Council in October that the process was delayed while council reviewed its options for a new Municipal Building in the same vicinity.

At that October council meeting, the city picked a site just south of the current Municipal Building, at 345 S. Main St., as the location for a new one. That would lead to the demolition of the Community Development Building at 409 S. Main St.

Council also asked architect John Mather to review parking in the grassy lot behind the proposed building to reduce the number of proposed parking spaces and increase green space.

It's that green space that seems to have park planners and the city at odds.

Council heard an update on the park after it voted on the new Municipal Building, and members directed staff to work with park planners on their project. At a Nov. 20 meeting with Mather, city staff invited the park's design team.

At that meeting, team leader Matt Robertson presented a three-phased park plan that included removing all parking near the new Municipal Building and adding a horseshoe-shaped drive lane around the new and old structures, according to a staff summary.

But staff countered that the concept was inappropriate for the handicapped and elderly, and is not "practical" for its many "in/out" customers, the summary says.

The park team "seemed to relent somewhat" when told of the parking issue, the report says.

Monger and fellow committee member Bibb Frazier, however, viewed the meeting differently, calling it "anything but collaborative."

"When the ideas conceived by renowned urban park planner Ken Smith were laid out for discussion, the meeting turned confrontational. Our design team was openly insulted, and our ideas were met with utter dismissiveness," they wrote to City Council in a Nov. 26 letter. "As citizens, Bibb, Jay and Matt were astonished by the shabbiness of their treatment and erroneous linking with those who were involved in the confrontational approach to the City hall project. ...



"POP's vision is for a beautiful Harrisonburg many years from now, which we fear is in danger of being sacrificed over expediency and turf."

#### Plan Coming Next Week

At last week's council meeting, City Manager ██████████ said he took "exception to" the committee's letter, stating his confidence in the employees who were present.

One of them, Ande Banks, said the meeting was "contentious" at times, but that likely was because of a misunderstanding among park planners. They seemed to think council had given them permission to plan a park beyond the scope of what a new Municipal Building would allow, he said.

Staff can't work on such a park concept without council approving a change to the Municipal Building's plan, said Banks, the city's special projects director.

Frazier, Monger and Robertson did not respond to messages for comment.

Regardless, council's newest directive, which it gave park planners last week, is clear: Bring an actual plan for a park to its meeting next Tuesday.

"I can't in good faith even evaluate the feasibility of the project without the details," Councilman Abe Shearer said Monday, adding that cost is most important. "We can all say things are nice and wonderful until we get a cost estimate, and then we can say that maybe this doesn't reflect the priorities of our city."

The city has not committed any funds to the park project. Council has approved a master plan update for the Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Department that calls for a downtown park within the next five years.

According to the Nov. 20 staff summary, Frazier said he supports an additional farmers market to complete a "town square" between the new market and existing Harrisonburg Farmers Market. He compared the new city hall to someone's home, where friends and family would enter through the back door instead of the front.

"The team envisions a grassy knoll in the front of city hall where children will play and there could be Frisbee golf with an unobstructed view of the Town Square," the report says.

Banks said the park design to be presented next week does not necessarily have to account for parking behind the new Municipal Building.

"If they are very much believing this vision is what they want to pursue, they will have to convince council," he said.

As part of the final phase in the plan that Robertson presented to city staff, "much" of the nearby Lindsey Funeral Home parking area is taken away, according to the staff summary. It's unclear whether this phase occurs after a binding lease expires between Lindsey's current landowner, Dr. William H. "Charlie" Lindsey of McLean, and the business owner, Houston-based Service Corporation International.

That lease will transfer with any sale of the property, and park supporters have an option to purchase the land, but not the business.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: December 5, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: A private group is interested in turning the grassy area near Turner Pavilion in downtown Harrisonburg into an urban park. But differing visions for the space has the city and park planners at odds. (Photo by Nikki Fox / DN-R) IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/529ebae3-7db4-49c0-86d-b-37130a4431f6/529ebb0b-74a4-4c8e-862b-37130a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/529ebae3-7db4-49c0-86d-b-37130a4431f6/529ebb0b-74a4-4c8e-862b-37130a4431f6.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 23, 2013 Wednesday

## New Muni Building Site Selected

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 560 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council on Tuesday selected the area just south of the current Municipal Building as the site for a new one, which sets in motion the final stages of conceptual plans for a downtown park on the property's back side. (Click here for a look at the plans.)

The panel voted 3-2 to construct a new Municipal Building next to the current one - choosing the southern location over five alternatives. An atrium will connect the new structure to the existing one, and the Community Development Building next door at 409 S. Main St. will be torn down for parking.

City staff and council say the existing Municipal Building, a former school at 345 S. Main St., is inefficient and needs a modern replacement. More than 80 comments from the public came into council about the six site options in the past week.

Councilmen Richard Baugh and Kai Degner voted against the site selection, partly concerned with not having enough separation between the new and current buildings. Baugh preferred a structure slightly off South Main at the site of the Community Development Building.

The city hired Harrisonburg architect John Mather to design a new Municipal Building, and the site that included the atrium was one of his original concepts. Several residents then shared concerns about preserving the current building's historic significance.

Yet most of the council favored the atrium option, although Councilman Charles Chenault said that he does so while "disappointing" people he considers friends. He is optimistic that the new building will provide a "summer heat buffer" to the current structure, keeping electrical costs down.

Councilman Abe Shearer said another positive is that city staff will not have to move during construction of the new building, a drawback to other site possibilities that, at most, could cost nearly \$1 million.

"When you're talking about government, that money could be used elsewhere," Shearer said.

Also, Campbell Street will be realigned to tie in to City Hall's entrance, while the eastern section of Warren Street will close.

The city plans to advertise for construction bids in the spring and complete work by summer 2015. City Manager [REDACTED] has estimated the cost of construction to approach \$7 million.

A new use for the current Municipal Building has not been determined.

Park Within Five Years



With the Municipal Building site selected, plans can move forward for a downtown park. A private group, the Plan Our Park Committee, has been studying the potential for a park in an area basically around Turner Pavilion on South Liberty Street.

Committee member Jay Monger told City Council on Tuesday that the planning process has been delayed until the Municipal Building decision was made. [REDACTED] and city staff will now work with the committee to compile a detailed report to present to council.

The city has not committed any funds to the park project. Also, as Mayor Ted Byrd noted, the grassy lot next to the pavilion will be needed for a construction staging area for the Municipal Building, ensuring that park development will have to wait, if and when a specific plan is approved.

Council did approve a master plan update for the Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Department on Tuesday that calls for a downtown park within the next five years.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: October 25, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: An architect's drawing shows the existing municipal building on the right and the planned addition on the left. (Photo by City of Harrisonburg / Courtesy) IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/52675101-fa8c-46e5-ac6e-4ee10a4431f6/52681c11-f590-495a-a09b-5b3c0a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/52675101-fa8c-46e5-ac6e-4ee10a4431f6/52681c11-f590-495a-a09b-5b3c0a4431f6.jpg)  
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PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 10, 2013 Thursday

## Aid Sought To Wrap Connector

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 410 words

HARRISONBURG - City officials can see the light at the end of the connector.

City Council on Tuesday approved a resolution to apply for Virginia Department of Transportation revenue-sharing funds for the fourth and final phase of the Erickson Avenue-Stone Spring Road connector. The city will seek \$2 million from VDOT - it would need a \$2 million city match - to complete the connector by widening Erickson from just west of South High Street to Garbers Church Road.

The resolution also includes asking for \$950,000 - requiring a city match of the same value - for Harrisonburg's annual paving program.

Council could amend its resolution when it meets Oct. 22 because applications for the grants are due Nov. 1. City Manager ██████████ said he "absolutely wants to proceed" with seeking the paving funds, while the connector project is a bit trickier: The city does not have a funding source yet for the \$2 million it would be obligated for, if the application is successful.

Still, the same funding concern would be true for any other project the city would replace the connector with in its application, ██████████ said. Also, Harrisonburg already has paid for an environmental study and is almost finished with the design for the fourth phase, meaning it's invested in the completion of the project.

Councilman Richard Baugh adds that the city doesn't want to get in the habit of repeatedly pushing back the project. Also, the recent market has been friendly to Harrisonburg: The ongoing third phase of the project costs \$2 million less than what staff had projected.

That phase, which runs from South Main Street to Pear Street, is scheduled to open the first week of November, city spokeswoman Mary-Hope Vass said. The work costs \$5.1 million from Perry Engineering Co. of Winchester, which also handled the first two phases.

The second phase opened in December, taking the road from South Main to the original Stone Spring Road, near Beery Road. The first part, finished in August 2010, realigned the intersection of Pear Street and Erickson.

Rockingham County hopes to finish its last section of the project by late 2014. That final segment, east of the city, will extend Stone Spring from Reservoir Street near Rockingham Memorial Hospital to U.S. 33 near Boyers Road.

The end result will give motorists a faster east-west route through the city. Market Street is the only east-west thoroughfare now.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: October 11, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: A view looking east toward South High Street from Erickson Avenue where the road will be widened near the north entrance to Walmart on John Wayland Highway. On Tuesday, City Council voted to seek revenue-sharing funds from the Virginia Department of Transportation, including \$2 million for the final phase of the Erickson Avenue-Stone Spring connection. (Photos by Michael Reilly / DN-R) A view looking toward South High Street from Erickson Avenue. The city needs about \$4 million for the fourth and final phase of the Erickson-Stone Spring Road connector. IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/52563487-3de0-4571-81f6-139f0a4431f6/525634bc-3900-4d50-b823-139e0a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/52563487-3de0-4571-81f6-139f0a4431f6/525634bc-3900-4d50-b823-139e0a4431f6.jpg) p/ > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/52563487-3de0-4571-81f6-139f0a4431f6/525634e2-8588-406d-a71c-13a90a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/52563487-3de0-4571-81f6-139f0a4431f6/525634e2-8588-406d-a71c-13a90a4431f6.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 9, 2013 Wednesday

## Country Club Fix Faces Hurdles

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 377 words

HARRISONBURG - With an Interstate 81 overpass and Norfolk Southern railroad to deal with, bicycle and pedestrian improvements along the full stretch of Country Club Road will be hard to come by.

City Council members know this, but they now have a better grasp of how much their options will cost.

City Manager [REDACTED] presented a pair of possibilities, plus preliminary cost estimates, on Tuesday for adding sidewalks on the south side of Country Club Road from Blue Ridge Drive west to the Spotswood Trailer Park.

Katrina Gerald, who lives in the nearby Reherd Acres neighborhood, urged the city in August to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety along Country Club, especially underneath the overpass. She said the lack of sidewalks or a path leads pedestrians - in many cases, children heading to schools on Linda Lane - to walk along the train tracks.

In one sidewalk option, Country Club is fully built out just as the city has outlined in its capital improvement plan, adding a multiuse path while converting the road into three lanes, including a center-turn lane.

The plan, referred to as the CIP, is a wish list of capital projects that are funded as money becomes available. The Country Club Road expansion has been assigned the lowest of three priority levels in the plan.

The full buildout would cost \$12.1 million, but is full of contingencies, including coordination with the Virginia Department of Transportation on working around the I-81 bridge piers and Norfolk Southern for railroad right of way, [REDACTED] said.

An alternative would construct only a temporary concrete sidewalk, for \$1.6 million. But staff does not recommend it because Country Club Road handles 11,000 vehicles a day, including many large service trucks, making such a walkway dangerous, especially at the overpass.

"There really is no way to convey folks safely from one side of the bridge to the other," [REDACTED] said.

Funding is also a question mark, but in the case of the sidewalk, a revenue-sharing grant through VDOT could be applied for and split costs between the city and state.

Council appears heading to review the priority assigned to improving Country Club when the next CIP update is conducted in December.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: October 10, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Cars travel past the railroad crossing along with a bicyclist on Country Club Road during the summer. Harrisonburg City Council heard a report Tuesday that making safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists along the street would be costly and difficult. (Photo by Michael Reilly / DN-R) IMG >  
[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/5254e797-4e6c-4e65-9ba5-58210a4431f6/5254eb12-955c-4bce-a794-58290a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/5254e797-4e6c-4e65-9ba5-58210a4431f6/5254eb12-955c-4bce-a794-58290a4431f6.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 30, 2013 Friday

## Want To Buy An Old School Office?

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 283 words

HARRISONBURG - The city is almost ready to see its former school headquarters graduate to a new life.

The city is preparing a request for proposals for parties interested in either leasing or purchasing the building at 317 S. Main St., spokeswoman Mary-Hope Vass said Thursday. It has been empty since Harrisonburg City Public Schools left in early 2012 for a larger, more modern home at One Court Square.

The structure, which is next to the Municipal Building, once was a private home. It is part of the central business district, zoned for a number of commercial- and office-type uses.

"We would like to get it back into use," Councilman Charles Chenault said. "One thought is, if we could find somebody willing to lease it, we might be able to do some type of deal, reduce the rent for them to do some improvements to it. In its current condition it's not, I don't think, inhabitable."

Chenault said local charities have expressed interest in using the building in the past.

The city's request will come as council mulls constructing a new Municipal Building next door, including an option to construct a building on the south side of the existing one to meet space needs. John Mather, the architect working on that project, will give an update to City Council on Sept. 10.

At one time, city staff had the idea of demolishing the vacated school office and constructing an annex as part of the new municipal complex. That is no longer a consideration.

City Manager [REDACTED] also has said "several different parties" have expressed interest in the former Harrisonburg School Board office.

The request could be out by next week, Vass said.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: August 31, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper



Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 20, 2013 Saturday

## Staff Outlines Bruce Street Garage Limits

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 369 words

HARRISONBURG - City planning staff has recommended a set of four conditions, including height restrictions, a parking garage proposed on West Bruce Street should meet before it's developed.

City Council is scheduled to vote on the proposal Tuesday night. On July 9, it tabled developer Barry Kelley's request for a special-use permit to build a parking deck on the property at West Bruce and Old South High streets in hopes that he, staff and concerned neighbors could work on a compromise.

Council did approve a 151-space parking lot, though Kelley says he needs more parking to eventually serve the Ice House, his ongoing project to renovate the former Cassco Inc. ice plant nearby into a multiuse facility.

Based on zoning regulations, he could have built a 104-space lot without needing city approval. The West Bruce site already is used for private parking on a smaller scale.

Stacy Turner, Harrisonburg's director of planning and community development, wrote a memo Thursday to City Manager [REDACTED] for Tuesday's council meeting. It outlines the city's preferences based on its own review and conditions suggested by neighbors.

The recommendations include a height restriction of 30 feet along the structure's frontage to West Water Street, and no more than 40 feet along West Bruce Street.

Also, city staff asks for vegetative screening of the deck from residential properties on Old South High, the planting of trees adjacent to public street rights of way and at least a 5-foot-wide walkway for pedestrian access between West Bruce and West Water streets.

Kelley told council - and concerned neighbors - at the July 9 meeting that he wants to "build the best parking deck." He said he knows a sidewalk is needed and touts the idea of a "green" wall on the garage.

"The point is trying to get some visual break between a monolithic structure and a view shed," he said Friday.

Kelley said he could support the staff's recommendations, adding that with the height requirements, a three- or four-level garage could be built.

"I think we're heading in the right direction," he said.

Council meets at 7 p.m. Tuesday in its chambers, at 409 S. Main St.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: July 22, 2013

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 16, 2013 Tuesday

## Downtown Parking: Real Problem Or Not?

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 671 words

HARRISONBURG - City residents fall into one of two distinct groups, according to City Councilman Richard Baugh.

For one half of the city, Harrisonburg seems to be the largest place they've ever lived, he said. For the other half, it's the smallest.

That breakdown leads to contrasting opinions on the availability of parking downtown, Baugh suggests.

"If it's the largest [place you've lived], you see [parking] as inconvenient, that you ought to be able to park within sight of where you're going," he said. "Otherwise, people say, 'What parking problem?' ... A lot of it is where you are from."

The topic, which has been an on-again, off-again debate among residents over the years, has come to the fore once again with developer Barry Kelley's proposal to rezone a parcel on West Bruce Street for a private parking garage. He says he needs more spaces than the deck's alternative, a parking lot, would provide to serve the future Ice House development, a mixed-use project at the former Cassco ice plant on South Liberty Street.

City Council should vote on it next week.

Dave Miller, who announced Monday that he was closing Dave's Downtown Taverna, understands the concerns developers and business owners have with parking. Although he didn't blame parking for the restaurant's fate, he has stated that a lack of parking negatively affected business.

Kelley's proposal and the restaurant's closure follow the razing late last year of the former Harrisonburg Children's Museum on North Main Street for a small private parking lot. Local investor David Lee, who owns the property, said people don't consider parking convenient unless their destination is within sight.

Around the same time, the city changed its regulations to require a special-use permit for the development of a parking lot or garage in the downtown business district. That gives the city the opportunity to control how many parking areas are built, and where they are located. As for the immediate need for parking, council members say it doesn't seem to exist.

"It's certainly an issue [to discuss]," Baugh said. "I'm in the group that thinks if I need to walk two or three downtown blocks to get where I'm going ... I think it's convenient."

Councilman Abe Shearer is also unmoved by downtown parking critics

"I have never had a circumstance where I just couldn't find parking," he said. "It might have meant I had to go to a different parking lot. That's just the reality of being downtown. You might have to walk a couple of blocks."

## A History Of Parking

In 2006, the city removed meters from public parking spots downtown to boost visitation. Free parking is now available for different durations, from 30 minutes up to 10 hours, in lots and garages.

In 2009, the city paid \$29,000 to John D. Edwards of Atlanta-based Transportation Consultant Inc. for a parking study. It found that downtown had 1,368 off-street public spaces, including more than 730 in decks on Water and Elizabeth streets; more than 3,000 off-street private spaces; and 320 on-street spaces.

Yet the conclusion was that Harrisonburg needed 450 to 500 more spaces in the next four years if it wanted to see continued economic growth.

However, the city has no immediate plans to build more parking.

City Manager [REDACTED] has told council to keep the issue in mind as a future capital expense. The Water Street parking deck is aging, officials say, but a new structure to replace it would cost an estimated \$9.5 million.

A class at James Madison University conducted a parking study this spring. It hasn't been presented to council, but Mayor Ted Byrd said the preliminary finding was that the city had sufficient space.

That leaves him comfortable with downtown's parking situation.

"They'll be times when maybe the Water Street deck is full," Byrd said, "but does that mean there's no parking?"

The report is still considered in draft form, awaiting a final presentation to council, city spokeswoman Mary-Hope Vass said.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: July 17, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Opinions vary on whether downtown Harrisonburg has enough parking. A parking garage has been pitched for West Bruce Street. (Photo by Michelle Mitchell / DN-R) IMG >  
[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/51e4ca69-f8c8-49d2-b05a-03f10a4431f6/51e4ca9d-7598-4d06-a3bd-03f10a4431f6.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/51e4ca69-f8c8-49d2-b05a-03f10a4431f6/51e4ca9d-7598-4d06-a3bd-03f10a4431f6.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 20, 2013 Thursday

## Other Divisions Weighing In On School Building

BYLINE: EMILY SHARRER

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 583 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg City School Board members received guidance on the division's newest building project Wednesday from representatives of other school systems.

In the last decade, Harrisonburg City Public Schools has built three schools, but the division wanted to hear from others that have experienced more construction in recent years.

During the special meeting, which also was attended by members of City Council, the board heard from representatives of school divisions in Roanoke, Montgomery, Prince William and Henrico counties.

Among those four divisions, the building program in Roanoke County has been especially busy, with 10 new schools having been completed during the last 10 years. Montgomery County, meanwhile, is wrapping up work on three schools, according to officials.

"It isn't a normal process for us," said Harrisonburg board member Dany Fleming. "I think [these divisions] are a good place to look for this type of advice."

The division is in the beginning stages of planning for a new middle school. By 2016, the division's enrollment will outgrow both Skyline and Thomas Harrison middle schools.

The new school will replace THMS, which will be converted into an elementary school. The middle school project is expected to cost between \$30 million and \$40 million.

Building the facility on Garbers Church Road leaves the board the option of having overflow or sharing programs, such as curriculum for the science, technology, engineering and math academies, at the middle and nearby high school.

Topics discussed during Wednesday's meeting included options for hiring a construction company and making the new school energy-efficient.

Representatives from the other districts cautioned Harrisonburg about rising contractor prices and advised board members to plan ahead, involve all stakeholders and be deliberate to avoid excess spending.

"You need to know what you want," said Patrick Murphy, superintendent of Henrico County Schools.

Harrisonburg school officials said they found the information given helpful.

"[This] will help guide us going forward so we can make smart decisions and avoid pitfalls," Chairman Steve Barranco said. "We really need to make sure we get it right the first time."

Following the meeting with the other division representatives, the board voted to create a design review committee that will evaluate architectural proposals and make suggestions to the full board, which would then vote before any architect is hired.

The committee will consist of school board and City Council representatives, Superintendent Scott Kizner and Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED]

Board members Sallie Strickler, Barranco and Fleming voted in favor of the design committee's creation and makeup, while Polly Fravel cast the sole dissenting vote. Fravel said she did not want to vote without members Kerri Wilson and Nick Swayne present, and also voiced concerns about the whole board not being a part of the design review committee.

Wilson voiced similar concerns at a prior meeting.

But Strickler said designating board members as representatives on the committee would ensure easier scheduling. She also said taking a vote Wednesday was important so that hiring an architect would not be delayed.

"If we don't move forward now we've lost another six to eight weeks because we don't meet in July," she said. "I think that time is critical and we need to go ahead and get the ball rolling."

Contact Emily Sharrer at 574-6286 or [esharrer@dnronline.com](mailto:esharrer@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: June 21, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: LEFT TO RIGHT: Scott Kizner, Harrisonburg City Schools superintendent, and School Board members Steve Barranco, Kerri Wilson and Dany Fleming listen to other school district representatives on Wednesday. (Photos by Nikki Fox / DN-R) The Harrisonburg City School Board, at their meeting Wednesday, had guests from other school districts discussing the process of building new schools. IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/51c27d3b-4530-42d3-a25d-11fa0af01f50/51c27d73-c204-4932-ba4e-11fa0af01f50.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/51c27d3b-4530-42d3-a25d-11fa0af01f50/51c27d73-c204-4932-ba4e-11fa0af01f50.jpg) / > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/51c27d3b-4530-42d3-a25d-11fa0af01f50/51c27d9d-5468-4f50-9a8f-15410af01f50.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/51c27d3b-4530-42d3-a25d-11fa0af01f50/51c27d9d-5468-4f50-9a8f-15410af01f50.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 19, 2013 Wednesday

## 2016 Opening Firm For New City School

BYLINE: EMILY SHARRER

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 402 words

HARRISONBURG - Although city officials say financing a middle school in 2017-18 might keep the city's debt down, planners are still looking to open the new building a year earlier.

Harrisonburg City Council and the City School Board already voted in support of having a new middle school standing by fall 2016. City Manager ██████ said that is unlikely to change, despite his announcement at a council meeting last week that because of other projects, building the school in 2017 "lines up better for [the city] financially."

"We would have more of our debt paid down at that point in time," ██████ said. "The [school division] at this point [feels] like 2016 is when they need to open and that was the end of it."

██████ said the city typically finances projects over a 20-year period and that the current debt portfolio exceeds \$160 million.

"If it's possible, we try to structure a new debt issue around the time another project's coming off the books," he said. "We've got a little more coming off the books in '17-'18 than we do in '16-'17."

But having the building ready by fall 2016 is important, school Superintendent Scott Kizner said. By then, the division anticipates running out of space for middle-schoolers if nothing is done.

The new school on Garbers Church Road would prevent that from happening and would leave Thomas Harrison Middle School open to be converted into an elementary school with a prekindergarten area.

The middle school is expected to cost between \$30 million and \$40 million, including all the finishing touches, such as furniture.

"We're building a new school strictly because our enrollment is exceeding the capacity of the current eight schools," Kizner said.

Now, ██████ Kizner and the rest of the school liaison committee, which includes two members of council and two members of the School Board, continue to plan around the 2016 opening date.

During a work session Tuesday, the board reviewed the request for architectural proposals for the new school. The request should be sent out in the coming weeks, according to a division official.

After the division selects an architect, it will ask council to approve funding to pay that company and then will go to bid on the project.

"The ... board will come up with the process for the competitive bidding, then we'll know what the real cost will be," Kizner said.

Contact Emily Sharrer at 574-6286 or [esharrer@dnronline.com](mailto:esharrer@dnronline.com)



Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 24, 2013 Wednesday

## Beefing Up The `Blue'

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 448 words

HARRISONBURG - As the Harrisonburg Police Department grows, so will law enforcement's presence in city neighborhoods.

In the city's draft budget for fiscal 2014, which begins July 1, five new full-time positions are created for HPD: four patrol officers and an investigator.

Also, a 25-hour-per-week secretary would be hired if City Council approves the budget request.

The positions cost about \$370,000, Police Chief Steve Monticelli said.

City Council held a public hearing on the budget Tuesday night, and then scheduled a work session on it for May 1.

Nobody spoke at the hearing about HPD's request.

Monticelli said adding four patrol officers will give the department six for each 12-hour shift. One of the department's "pretty blatant" issues is that the five officers it has patrolling on shifts now is too low a number, he said.

"If there were two large parties [getting out of hand], that could literally take the entire five officers off the street until that incident is rectified," the chief said before Tuesday's hearing. "It was getting to the point where it was hard to get backup."

Monticelli, who took over as chief at HPD last summer, wants to increase the time patrol officers spend on "geographic policing" - driving through neighborhoods, attending neighborhood watch meetings, watching traffic and more.

He abides by a rule of thirds: an officer should spend one-third of the time handling calls; one-third on administrative duties, such as going to court; and one-third geographic policing.

The goal, Monticelli said, is to find the cause of a recurring issue.

"We're actively going through a whole mindset change in the officers' minds," he said. "With modern policing, we want to deal with the problem. ... The large parties [for example], every weekend I could send troops out there and arrest the underage drinkers. But is that really fixing the problem? The problem is where are they getting the alcohol."

He adds that police can often be incorrect to think it's the "big stuff," such as burglaries, that plague neighborhoods.

"It's the quality-of-life issues, the loud music or people driving through the street being loud at 2 a.m.," Monticelli said. "We're really trying to give us more leverage to better protect the community and the citizens."

The investigator position, meanwhile, will give HPD its sixth in such a role. It will focus on general investigations and push another investigator back onto focusing solely on computer crimes.

Monticelli said he requested three more investigators, but he is "very appreciative" City Manager [REDACTED] could fund one, for about \$73,000, in the budget.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: April 25, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Harrisonburg Police Department Cpl. Chris Terrell, a veteran of 15 years on patrol, works his beat in the city on Tuesday. City Council held a public hearing Tuesday night on its proposed budget, which includes funding for 5.5 more police positions: four patrol officers, an investigator and a part-time secretary. (Photos by Nikki Fox / DN-R) Harrisonburg Police Department Cpl. Chris Terrell assists a fellow officer on a traffic stop on Tuesday. The city's new draft budget includes an enhanced police presence. IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/517759c8-8f60-4a66-88c1-626a0af01f50/51775a01-eb18-4f06-ba69-626f0af01f50.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/517759c8-8f60-4a66-88c1-626a0af01f50/51775a01-eb18-4f06-ba69-626f0af01f50.jpg) p/ > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/517759c8-8f60-4a66-88c1-626a0af01f50/51775a3c-5550-4662-9182-62830af01f50.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/517759c8-8f60-4a66-88c1-626a0af01f50/51775a3c-5550-4662-9182-62830af01f50.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 22, 2013 Friday

## City Builds A New Permitting Process

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 610 words

HARRISONBURG - As they say, Rome's permitting process wasn't built in a day.

The city has finished work on a detailed questionnaire that building permit applicants must fill out at the start of the process. Several city departments were involved in creating the document, which City Council endorsed last week.

In recent years, projects have stalled after construction started because of unforeseen issues, said Stacy Turner, Harrisonburg's director of planning and community development. For example, a water-meter upgrade is required or a plumbing concern may come up after a building permit is granted.

That situation results in unanticipated expenses and delays, not to mention stress, for the project owner and city, Turner said.

The checklist, which targets fire suppression, entrance configuration, trash service and plumbing, should resolve those concerns, officials say. If "yes" is answered to any question, the document directs applicants to the proper city department to provide more information.

If all answers are "no," the permit will move to the review stage.

City Manager ██████████ said the building permit process is a "work in progress," but the questionnaire reduces the possibilities of "gotchas."

"It'll give staff a quick way ... to pull this out and eyeball some things," Councilman Richard Baugh said.

The questionnaire will be integrated into the review process "fairly soon," Turner said Wednesday.

Aaron Yoder, president of the Shenandoah Valley Builders Association, said his organization welcomes any effort to shorten the time it takes to build.

"If the spirit of the changes is achieved and wait times for permits ... reduced, I think the building community will support them, despite the increased burden of preparation ... under the new process," he said.

If that burden increases, though, the building community will work with the city to find an improved process, Yoder adds.

Harrisonburg developer Bruce Forbes was the only member of the association to respond to the city after the questionnaire was introduced in the fall. In a Nov. 21 letter, he was concerned that the questionnaire could be a way to "postpone the inevitable."

"Why not take the building permit and push it through the departments with one day review per department?" Forbes wrote. "I, as a developer, would rather see assistance in expediting my permit versus resistance."



Forbes declined further comment Wednesday.

For Mayor Ted Byrd, the checklist - which he supports - does not resolve an issue he brought up in late 2011: lag time from when someone applies for a permit until he or she gets one.

The matters are separate, Turner said, and city staff already had started to assess the problems that were creating unanticipated delays during construction when Byrd first aired his concern about review time.

"The question remains, are we measuring the length it takes from the application to the time it's issued?" Byrd said. "If not, why not? ... I'm just trying to keep light on it, especially as the economy turns. I just want to make sure we have an efficient and customer-friendly process.

"Our citizens are the customers. I think sometimes government forgets that."

Turner said her office is addressing Byrd's concern by having two more staff members review permits, among other measures.

"I feel like it's better," she said, adding that the average time for the city to review an application is about 13 days.

While the questionnaire is unrelated to permit review, it will streamline the entire construction process, Turner said.

"It will help make a holistic approach," Byrd said.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: March 23, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Work continues at the Overlook at Stone Spring development Wednesday. City Council has endorsed what it hopes will be a speedier process for obtaining building permits. (Photo by Nikki Fox / DN-R)  
IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/514bda05-7b84-4e4f-aded-04390af01f50/514bda2c-f494-4436-b417-043a0af01f50.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/514bda05-7b84-4e4f-aded-04390af01f50/514bda2c-f494-4436-b417-043a0af01f50.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 27, 2013 Wednesday

## No More 'Band-Aids' For City Offices?

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 365 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council directed staff Tuesday night to issue a request for proposals for architectural and engineering services to renovate city offices downtown.

A space-needs study of the Municipal Building and Community Development Building just south of it on South Main Street included a proposal to add a second floor to the community development office.

All departments in the Municipal Building would move into the two-story structure. A future use of the Municipal Building has not been determined.

Architectural and engineering costs are expected to reach about \$400,000. Those services should be finished in November.

If council proceeds with seeking bids for construction, the project could cost another \$7.5 million. Construction would begin next year.

The city has used the Municipal Building for offices since 1956. It's no longer in suitable condition for government needs, however; lacks appropriate security features; and has several structural, electrical and mechanical problems, City Manager ██████████ said.

"We've applied Band-Aids for many, many years," he said. "It's probably in the worst condition of any building the city owns."

The Municipal and Community Development buildings are basically neighbors, with only a narrow cut-through linking South Main and South Liberty streets between them. The former is 27,600 square feet, but almost half of it is unusable or does not meet current code, ██████████ said.

The two-story building would contain 30,000 square feet - 19,300 of it on the second floor - and include almost 4,000 square feet of extra space for future expansion and classrooms.

Departments to vacate the Municipal Building include information technology, the Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue, Registrar's Office and Treasurer's Office, which would have two drive-through lanes for the public in the renovated building.

The Community Development Building already holds offices for planning and zoning officials and contains council's chambers.

Councilman Charles Chenault said he is "excited" that the space needs can be addressed without the city purchasing more land to build on.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 4, 2013 Monday

## City Council Mulls Public Alley Plan

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 534 words

HARRISONBURG - Improving the Northeast neighborhood now includes addressing a large concentration of the city's more than 400 public alleys.

In late 2011, the Northeast Neighborhood Association expressed concerns to the city that alleys in the area were becoming increasingly overgrown and accumulating garbage, including large items such as broken refrigerators.

Members wanted to know who was responsible for the upkeep of the properties, many of which serve no public use.

"Back in the day, kids used to ride through the alleys," said Karen Thomas, NENA's president. "Now they can't even do that."

The group's inquiry prompted a citywide study of alleys and a staff effort to get City Council to determine what to do with them. Officials found that Harrisonburg has 402 alleys, with a high concentration in the Northeast section of the city.

Last week, City Council tabled a decision so the Harrisonburg bicycle and pedestrian committee could review a map of the alleys in case some may connect to plans currently in the works for several bike and walking paths in the city.

"We aren't even close to determining which ones to close or not," Councilman Charles Chenault said. "We do know which ones we don't need for public utility purposes. We want to know if we need some for other uses."

Some alleys are open to vehicles or used for refuse collection. Many are also known as "paper alleys" - designated roads platted on the city land map that aren't planned for development.

According to Harrisonburg's 1993 public alley maintenance plan, if the city uses an alley for trash collection, it is responsible for maintenance of it.

If the alley is just open to vehicles, abutting property owners share the costs for upkeep with the city. But, if an alley is not open to traffic, abutting landowners must maintain it, the plan says.

City Council expects to decide which alleys the city does not need - closing and handing them over to property owners, in that case - by the end of March.

### Blight Action Taken

While reviewing alleys, the city also has looked at adopting a blight ordinance, also based on concerns from the Northeast neighborhood.



Residents view blight as harming property values and increasing criminal activity, which has been a growing problem in the Northeast section of the city. State law defines blight as a property that endangers the public's health, safety or welfare because a structure is dilapidated, deteriorated or violates minimum health and safety standards.

The council accepted city staff's recommendation last week to adopt the state's policy. That allows City Manager [REDACTED] or a designee, to notify a landowner of a possible blighted property that a problem needs rectifying.

The owner will have 30 days to respond. If he or she does not, [REDACTED] can ask City Council to deem the property as blighted.

If the owner again fails to respond with a plan for the property, Harrisonburg can repair it - and would be entitled to a lien on the parcel - or even acquire it through eminent domain.

Chenault said the state ordinance is more efficient and will lead to faster solutions than what the city has in its code.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: February 5, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: An alley along Myrtle Street is among other alleyways in Harrisonburg's Northeast neighborhood that are becoming increasingly overgrown. (Photo by Michael Reilly) IMG >  
[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/510f6807-5e5c-4df6-b605-69c20af01f50/510f6926-af10-4f5f-8bbd-6d360af01f50.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/510f6807-5e5c-4df6-b605-69c20af01f50/510f6926-af10-4f5f-8bbd-6d360af01f50.jpg) /IMG >

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

January 9, 2013 Wednesday

## City Seeks Details On Complex

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 421 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council asked the company pitching a downtown hotel and conference center Tuesday night to supply more information that would entice Harrisonburg into partnering in the \$40 million complex.

The panel unanimously requested that dpM Partners of Gaithersburg, Md., return with more details of its concept, including a complete financial feasibility analysis.

"This is about getting more information," Councilman Kai Degner said.

The project, according to the plan submitted to the city last fall, would require \$9.5 million in public funding. That amount would go toward the construction of an 18,180-square-foot conference center.

Developers would foot the bill on the rest of the \$39.9 million endeavor, including a 205-room hotel and restaurant. They plan for the complex to be in or near downtown, though a location has not been revealed.

When dpM submits additional information, the location must be included.

DpM approached the city unsolicited through the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act, which encourages public-private partnerships on a variety of projects, such as schools and civic centers.

The act requires that municipalities seek competing offers. No additional bids were submitted for the hotel and conference center, which City Manager [REDACTED] has hinted might indicate Harrisonburg does not need the development.

But, because further study from the lone bidder costs the city nothing except staff time to review dpM's information, officials feel they have nothing to lose by at least knowing more.

The information to be submitted includes a map of the proposed location; a strategy for securing all necessary property; total life cycle cost of the project; and the financial feasibility analysis.

DpM will be required to pay a \$20,000 deposit, which the city would likely use toward funding its own independent financial study of the plan, if the process goes that far.

Council can reject dpM's proposal at any time.

[REDACTED] said about \$10,000 in additional funds would still be needed, and shifted from the Economic Development Department's budget, for the city's independent study.

Councilman Charles Chenault advised dpM to conduct a third-party financial study - and not one "in house" or through a company with close ties to it - so the city could "go further" with the deposit.

"I don't see how we can possibly evaluate this in the best interest of the city without a further detailed study," he said.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: January 10, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 4, 2012 Tuesday

## Challenging Budget Ahead

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: NEWS (LOCAL)

LENGTH: 828 words

HARRISONBURG - At the risk of sounding like a broken record, City Manager [REDACTED] asks department leaders to "hold the line" on spending next fiscal year and plan for a 5 percent budget reduction as a "contingency."

Those requests, made in a letter sent to agency heads Friday, echo what he asked this time last year.

"It feels like it," [REDACTED] said of a broken record. "There's still enough uncertainty [above us]."

The federal "fiscal cliff" could impact state revenues, which would then negatively affect local government, he said. Gov. Bob McDonnell already asked state agencies to prepare for 4 percent budget reductions.

In Harrisonburg, department leaders must submit a regular budget proposal to [REDACTED] by Jan. 17 and the 5 percent contingency plan by Feb. 15.

"Departments should not propose any new or expanded programs unless they are fully offset by spending reductions elsewhere in your budget," he said in his letter. "Ask for only what you need based on what you can reasonably expect to accomplish in the next fiscal year."

Health insurance rates are expected to jump 15 percent for the city in fiscal 2014, which begins July 1. [REDACTED] hasn't calculated what the extra cost would be to government, but rates have not increased in at least five years, he said.

"Our program performance has not been good this year," [REDACTED] said. "We've been paying a little more than we've been taking in."

What could further compound the city's financial challenge is the recent real estate assessment, which found that overall values were down by 1 percent. That could slightly lower local tax revenue, [REDACTED] said.

### Reasons For Optimism

The city has seen growth in some revenue line items, he adds. Taxes on hotel rooms, for example, already brought in almost 50 percent of the projected \$1.9 million in the fiscal 2013 budget through the first four months.

Also, additions such as the New Leaf Pastry Kitchen help the city's bottom line, albeit only slightly. The shop is inside the city-owned Hardesty-Higgins House on South Main Street.

Harrisonburg Tourism and Visitor Services also operates there.

New Leaf pays \$500 a month as rent, but it also serves as a tourist draw into the visitors center. The kitchen's area was vacant for almost all fiscal 2012.



City officials can also be optimistic because the current \$199.2 million budget withstood fiscal uncertainty as it was developed.

The General Assembly convened a special session to finish its work earlier this year, approving a budget several weeks later than scheduled.

City Council then adopted its budget, maintaining the level of services provided by the government.

Still, [REDACTED] wants department leaders to view their 5 percent contingency budget for fiscal 2014 as if the cuts will be permanent.

"While everyone did a great job of identifying target areas for reductions in their budgets last year, many of these reductions would have only realistically worked for one year," he said in the letter.

#### Long-Term Backup

Fire Chief Larry Shifflett said sustaining a flat budget has long-term implications on local government.

"The limitation for most all departments is when you have capital projects that cost thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars," Shifflett said. "It's not so much the everyday budget."

For the Harrisonburg Fire Department, those stalled projects include the addition of the city's fifth fire station - to be built in the Park View area - and outfitting the most-traveled intersections with a traffic intervention system.

The technology, already in place in about 20 intersections, allows emergency vehicles to control traffic lights. Shifflett said the department needs \$320,000 to finish the project.

Lee Foerster, director of the Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Department, said balancing his budget has required reallocating small amounts of funding. For example, park benches and grills are used longer before getting replaced.

But the effort to just stay afloat does lead to long-term setbacks, Foerster said.

"We're falling behind," he said. "We have a tremendous demand right now for playing fields. ... We're about four or five years behind building soccer fields."

#### Salaries Stay Put

[REDACTED] asks city officials not to include salary increases in their budget requests.

By the summer, the city should finish a comprehensive pay scale study. A request for proposals from interested companies to conduct the study has been made.

[REDACTED] said a decision from City Council on employee pay may not come until after members have the study. The report, estimated to cost \$100,000, will provide officials with information on how Harrisonburg is positioned in the labor market.

[REDACTED] also advises city departments not to add any positions in their budget proposals, unless required by law or to meet a health or safety need.

According to a draft budget schedule, council will review a proposed spending plan March 26.

Contact Preston Knight at 574-6272 or [pknight@dnronline.com](mailto:pknight@dnronline.com)

LOAD-DATE: December 5, 2012

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Don Layman, a visitor from Portland, Ore., gets information from Ann Marie Leonard, travel specialist with the Hardesty-Higgins House Visitor Center on South Main Street in Harrisonburg, on Monday. City agencies have been told to prepare for possible budget cuts next year. (Photo by Michael Reilly / DN-R) IMG > [http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/50bd87e8-dc64-4064-95bd-70210a041b1c/50bd8831-6f10-465c-8059-69030a041b1c.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/50bd87e8-dc64-4064-95bd-70210a041b1c/50bd8831-6f10-465c-8059-69030a041b1c.jpg) /IMG >

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 10, 2011 Saturday

## City Reviewing Long Road To Permitting

BYLINE: PRESTON KNIGHT

SECTION: Pg. A1

LENGTH: 393 words

HARRISONBURG - The city has turned back the clock when it comes to development.

The building-permit process is just as protracted as it was during the development spree of about five years ago, Harrisonburg Councilman Ted Byrd said.

After he raised the issue at a meeting this fall, city staff began studying how to streamline a process that involved 25 steps within the community development department alone.

"We've got more people employed [than five years ago] to make this work efficiently, and we're back to delays," Byrd said. "The question is, 'Why?'"

City Manager [REDACTED] provided City Council with a brief report last month and plans to offer more details after the first of the year.

### Permits Up

The number of building permits issued this year is actually up by more than 100 from last year. It's still a far cry from the boom years between 2003 and 2009, when an annual average of 1,270 permits came through.

Assistant City Manager Anne Lewis said city staff recognizes that while the economy is in a downturn, now is a good time to look at the permit process.

Harrisonburg contracted with a firm that mapped out all the parts of the process and helped identify where technology could assist, Lewis said. The goal is to be as customer-friendly as possible, while still abiding by state regulations, she said.

"There are a lot of moving parts, a number of departments involved in development review," Lewis said. "It's not just a building permit. It's water and sewer, the fire marshal. If it's a streets issue, public works. ... Sometimes, folks don't realize there [are] so many other departments involved."

[REDACTED] said after all departments are factored in, some applicants could have as many as 60 to 80 steps to go through.

### Options Weighed

One option for the city is to offer the Department of Planning and Community Development as a "one-stop shop" for building-permit needs, Lewis said.

Another idea is to assign a staffer to serve as the go-to source for questions on a project. Lewis said that could involve hiring a new employee or shifting responsibilities around among current staff.

Byrd said he was waiting to hear what the permit review team suggests.

"We have this lag time while no action is going on. [People's] question was why," he said, "and it was a fair question."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 1, 2011 Friday

## City Mulls 'Bulking Up'; Harrisonburg Considers More Frequent Yard, Bulk Items Collections

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: Pg. B1

LENGTH: 517 words

HARRISONBURG - A pilot trash collection project that increased residential bulk and yard debris pickups from once to twice a month in Harrisonburg is likely to become formal policy this month.

Last week, City Council tentatively approved an ordinance increasing the change in collections.

Council is expected to give final approval to the plan at its April 12 meeting.

The change is designed to make trash removal more convenient for customers and increase the collection system's efficiency, said Harsit Patel, the city's solid waste superintendent.

The \$10 monthly residential rate charged by the city is not expected to increase, Patel said.

While the change in collection would be effective following a final OK by council, City Manager [REDACTED] expects implementation of the new system to occur in the weeks following the vote.

Council would make the decision on whether to raise rates when it adopts its 2012 fiscal budget later this spring. The fiscal year begins July 1.

Under the proposed ordinance, residents could set out five bulk items twice a month instead of just once, as is the policy now.

And residents would be able to increase the number of bags or bundles of yard debris they set out for pickup from five once a month to 10 twice a month.

The regular weekly trash schedule will not change.

### Schedule

As part of the change, Harrisonburg will reorganize its collection system.

Currently, trucks cruise the entire city each week between April and November, seeking yard debris and bulk items.

Under the new system, city officials will divide Harrisonburg into two collection zones. Trash crews will patrol each of them twice a month for both bulk and yard debris.

Bulk items include furniture and appliances, among other large or especially heavy items not picked up with the usual trash collection.

According to the change, Harrisonburg will pick up items on the first and third Wednesdays of the month for residents who normally put their trash out on either Monday or Thursday.

The city pickup will be on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month for residents whose pickup is either Tuesday or Friday.

More information about the change can be found at the city's website at [www.ci.harrisonburg.va.us](http://www.ci.harrisonburg.va.us).

#### City Expects Some Savings

The city expects to realize some savings as the trucks would be making fewer trips. How much money would be saved is not yet clear, Patel said.

"It's very hard to determine until we run the program in the summertime," he said of the costs.

The trial period for the new collection system was held from January through March 2010 and for the first three months of this year.

More frequent pickups will be more convenient for residents, Patel said, and will allow the city to keep up with trash from off-campus students moving in and out of the city.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

\*Correction: A story in the April 1 edition of the Daily News-Record incorrectly reported the number of times the city previously picked up yard debris each month ( "City Mulls 'Bulking Up' "). The city picked up yard debris every Wednesday.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

January 22, 2011 Saturday

## 2nd Time The Charm For 1 Court Square?; New Bids For Vacant Building City Schools Wants For Division Offices

BYLINE: JOSHUA BROWN

SECTION: Pg. B1

LENGTH: 555 words

HARRISONBURG - The bids are in for the renovation of One Court Square, and the prospects seem a little better for Harrisonburg City Schools to get a new division office.

On Friday, the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority opened contractors' bids for renovating the building, located on the northeast of Court Square.

Architect John Mather said they came in lower than the ones from 2007, which ranged from about \$2.2 million to \$2.5 million, despite several additions to the designs since then.

The lowest bid this time came from Broadway-based Lantz Construction at \$2.07 million, while the highest bid came from Mathers Construction of Waynesboro at nearly \$2.3 million.

Other bids came from Harman Construction in Harrisonburg, at \$2.26 million; R.E. Lee & Sons in Charlottesville, at \$2.25 million; Harrisonburg Construction in Dayton at \$2.22 million; and Nielsen Builders in Harrisonburg, at \$2.08 million.

Contractors also included estimates for some small changes the Harrisonburg School Board may want to make and how they would affect the total project's cost.

### First Considered In 2007

Harrisonburg City Schools first considered using the building for its offices in 2007 but abandoned the effort when board members felt the bids came in too high.

In December, the board decided to take another look at renovating the building. Officials said at the time that with the economy's downturn it might be possible to find better rates for the project.

Constructed in 1951, the building served as a department store until the 1970s but has been vacant since late 2005. The HRHA bought the building in 2004 for \$1 million.

Currently, office space for the school division's administrative staff is split between the School Board office at 317 S. Main St. and the Public Safety Building.

The School Board office at 317 S. Main St. has 6,720 square feet of available space, while One Court Square has about 27,000 square feet, school officials have said.

The school division has looked at several other ideas for offices, including a 13,000-square-foot renovation to its current building that was rejected because of the \$1.2 million price tag.



Another idea included constructing a building behind Spotswood Elementary School, but that plan fell through because of public opposition and because the lot was once a landfill.

#### Near Expectations

Harrisonburg Superintendent Scott Kizner said the bids are close to what he expected, but pointed out that the project is contingent upon the support of city leaders.

"The city understands the importance of this project that has been discussed for many years," he said. "I believe all of us are in agreement of the importance of having one location for the School Board in a building that is much more functional than the one we are in now."

HRHA Executive Director Michael Wong expressed optimism after the bids were opened that the project would move forward.

"I'm hoping we will have a project," he said.

Because the city, through the housing authority, owns the property, it would have to approve the renovations or transfer ownership of the building to the School Board to give control of the process to the school division.

City Manager [REDACTED] did not return a voice message Friday seeking comment on the bids.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 4, 2010 Saturday

## Council Mulls Emergency Water Powers For Director; Change In Harrisonburg's Ordinance Could Take Effect On Dec. 14

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: Pg. B1

LENGTH: 261 words

HARRISONBURG - When there's a drought, Harrisonburg Public Utilities Director Mike Collins can only make a request of large customers to reduce the amount of water they use.

But City Council is on the verge of giving Collins the power to order conservation.

Council has tentatively approved a change in the city's ordinance that would give the public utilities director the emergency ability to force large users to cut back on water. The order would still require a review by council.

Council is expected to take a final vote on the ordinance change Dec. 14.

If approved, Collins' new authority would go into effect immediately.

The new authority would roughly parallel what City Manager [REDACTED] is authorized to do under Harrisonburg's emergency plan, [REDACTED] said.

The city manager can make emergency decisions subject to later council review and approval.

Collins' actions would be reported at the next regularly scheduled council meeting.

The proposed ordinance change, however, does not spell out specific deadlines for formally notifying the council.

The emergency's severity and the availability of council members would likely dictate the speed of formal notification, [REDACTED] said.

The public would be notified through the news media immediately, he said.

"This lets [Collins] do what he thinks is prudent," [REDACTED] said.

The rapid response is necessary, officials said.

In the event water stopped flowing to the city or could not be treated, Harrisonburg has a three-day supply, city officials said.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 18, 2010 Wednesday

## City Government Fills No. 2 Post; Winchester Assistant City Manager Takes Same Position Here

BYLINE: JEREMY HUNT

SECTION: Pg. B1

LENGTH: 404 words

HARRISONBURG - A Winchester government employee will keep her job title but switch cities when she becomes the No. 2 administrator for the Friendly City next month.

Anne Lewis, 40, assistant city manager of Winchester, was named Harrisonburg's assistant city manager Tuesday.

Lewis assumes the post Sept. 14 with an annual salary of \$82,000. She succeeds Evan Vass, who returned to his old job as New Market town manager in mid-July.

"We're excited to have her on board," City Manager [REDACTED] said. "We think she's going to be a great asset to the city."

Originally from Wisconsin, Lewis has lived in the northern Shenandoah Valley since 1987. She holds an undergraduate degree in business administration from Shenandoah University in Winchester, where she is pursuing a master's in public administration.

[REDACTED] said Lewis' breadth of experience set her apart from the other 123 applicants for the job.

She has 10 years' experience in Winchester, including four as assistant city manager. Her responsibilities consist of overseeing a range of departments, including information technology, finance, human resources, parks and recreation, social services and transit.

On an interim basis, Lewis also has worked as director of transit, redevelopment and housing, the Winchester-Frederick Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Winchester Parking Authority.

Lewis said she is honored to join the staff of Harrisonburg, a locality she says is well-established and highly regarded throughout the state.

Serving the public, she says, is what she enjoys about her line of work.

"I like community problem solving," she said. "We provide services to meet the needs of citizens and visitors and business owners. It's working together to make where we each live, work and play a better community. I like being a part of that."

Lewis' new job requires that she live in Harrisonburg, [REDACTED] said, but there's no deadline for making the move.

Lewis said Harrisonburg's proximity to outdoor activities and vibrant downtown appeal to her and her family. Lewis and her husband, Gene, have a 15-year-old daughter, Madison.

Getting to know the community, Harrisonburg City Council and her co-workers will be the first order of business, she said.

"I'm very much hands-on," Lewis said. "I like to be out and about, and I think developing those relationships will be a high priority for me."

Contact Jeremy Hunt at 574-6273 or [jhunt@dnronline.com](mailto:jhunt@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 7, 2010 Saturday

## Still In The Rough; Wiens Wants Study Of Persistent Deficit At City Golf Course

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: Pg. A1

LENGTH: 1033 words

HARRISONBURG - Councilman David Wiens plans to propose that a study be undertaken of Heritage Oaks, the city-owned golf course, to find ways of cutting its financial losses.

In fiscal 2010, which ended June 30, the golf course lost \$408,603. That was up slightly - less than 1 percent - from the previous year, when the course lost \$405,041.

Still, the red ink has dropped considerably compared to fiscal 2008, when the course lost \$551,453, or about 26 percent more than last year.

When combined with the annual debt payment Harrisonburg pays on money borrowed to help build and support the golf course about 10 years ago and capital investment, the cost in fiscal 2010 was \$838,931. That was less than the previous year, when the total was \$892,032, according to the city.

While Harrisonburg has generally been reducing its financial losses at the golf course, Wiens said Wednesday that losing more than \$400,000 annually on operations is still too much.

"I feel sure the golf course can be doing a whole lot better than it does," he said.

### Controversial Course

Wiens wants council to appoint a committee this month to objectively analyze the parks and recreation amenity, which was born 11 years ago in political turbulence.

Wiens opposed building the 18-hole, par-70 golf course on Garbers Church Road because, he said, of the way city leaders handled the issue.

With little warning, council approved the course's construction on city-owned land in April 1999.

Some council members argued that the golf course could make money and help support other parks and recreation programs. But critics said the public did not have adequate input into the decision to build the course.

Residents organized opposition as the city began building Heritage Oaks.

During the yearlong debate that followed, some supporters began to argue that park amenities, such as a municipal golf course, were a benefit to the community regardless of whether they made money. Still, after the 2000 council election, supporters maintained that the course would break even after five years.

A golf course could help attract businesses and build character among youth, they said.

Critics tended to argue that the golf course would never be profitable and was best left for a private business to develop.

But some supporters believe Heritage Oaks should be held to the same standard as Westover Pool, for example, which consistently loses money.

From fiscal 2008 through fiscal 2010, the pool lost about \$300,000 a year.

The cost of running the pool rose from about \$367,500 in fiscal 2008 to \$397,500 in fiscal 2009 before dropping back to roughly \$388,100 in fiscal 2010.

But at the same time, pool revenues increased from nearly \$65,800 in fiscal 2008 to about \$80,100 in fiscal 2010.

"They are not money-making operations," Wiens said of parks and recreation amenities. "They are to serve the people. Unfortunately, that is not what the golf course was sold to us as."

In the May 2000 council election, a slate of candidates running on a position of stopping the golf course swept the three seats up for election on the five-member council.

They defeated two incumbents who voted for the golf course. A third councilman who voted to build the golf course retired from his seat.

The anti-golf course candidates included Carolyn Frank, a current council member, and Joe Fitzgerald, who is seeking a return to the council this fall.

After being sworn in, Fitzgerald decided the project had gone too far to be stopped and voted to keep it alive.

The council borrowed \$6.41 million in loan anticipation notes in December of that year to help pay for Heritage Oaks and its operations during the first few years after it opened.

The borrowing agreement required Harrisonburg to retain ownership for 10 years.

#### Politics

By seeking the report from the proposed committee after January, Wiens said, he hopes to keep politics out of the analysis.

"Politics is what got this thing in a mess that it is in now," he said.

Asked how the committee's work would affect his bid for election, Fitzgerald said he did not make his decision on the golf course 10 years ago based on political considerations.

"There's no reason I am going to start now," he said Friday.

Frank said she supported forming a committee to evaluate the course's operations.

"We always want to look for ways to improve our revenues and cut costs. We help taxpayers when we do that," she said.

Wiens, who has spent the last year studying the issue, has found some common ground between critics and supporters.

"A lot of people really love that golf course because of the quality," he said.

Wiens said he does not hold the people who run Heritage Oaks responsible for their financial problems.

"They are stretched really thinly," he said. "They can't possibly do the work they are charged to do."

Parks and Recreation Department Director Lee Foerster attributed the increased loss in fiscal 2010 to a drop in rounds played and merchandise sold because of the poor economy.

Given last winter's weather, City Manager ██████████ said the losses at the golf course were significant but could have been much worse.

"We were almost completely shut down for over a month," he said.

#### Discussion Not New

Council has had ongoing discussions about making Heritage Oaks financially viable. Last fall, for example, council members discussed the possibility of adding beer sales and increasing food service to boost revenues.

But these changes, if implemented, would not recoup all the golf course's losses, Wiens said.

Available funds have been limited in recent budget years, ██████ said.

"Some of the things we were considering doing take a little more investment," he said. "It would be hard to justify more investment in the golf course at that point when we are cutting other things."

No decision has been made on beer sales at Heritage Oaks, ██████ said. Introducing beer sales, he estimated, would take at least a \$100,000 investment to expand the food service area, find a new place for cart storage and hire people to sell the alcohol and burgers.

"It's not off the table. But times have to improve a little bit," he said.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 7, 2010 Saturday

## Two City Workers Injured; Receive Second-Degree Burns At Steam Plant

BYLINE: JEREMY HUNT

SECTION: Pg. B1

LENGTH: 219 words

HARRISONBURG - Two city workers were recovering Friday from second-degree burns they received the day before while performing routine maintenance at a steam plant.

The Harrisonburg Public Works employees, whose names were not released, were working at the Resource Recovery Facility at James Madison University when the incident happened Thursday morning, officials said.

Trash is burned at the facility to produce steam, which provides heating and cooling for the university, City Manager ██████ said.

It had not been determined Friday afternoon how the employees were splashed with scalding hot water on their torsos, ██████ said, although it's possible that a valve failed.

"All the right people, engineers and so forth, are trying to figure out what happened and what can be done to make sure it doesn't happen again," he said.

One employee was treated and released from Rockingham Memorial Hospital. The other was transported to the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville and remained there Friday, ██████ said.

It was unclear how long it would be until the employees returned to work.

These are the first such injuries at the plant since operations began in the late 1970s or early 1980s, ██████ said. The facility was rebuilt in 2004.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 28, 2010 Wednesday

## Springfest Riot Inspires Trespass Law; Police Could Be Cleared To Break Up Crowds On Private Property

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: Pg. A1

LENGTH: 628 words

HARRISONBURG - Landowners and renters are one step away from being able to give officers permission to act on their behalf to quell crowds that police judge to have the potential to become unruly or riotous.

On Tuesday, Harrisonburg City Council tentatively approved an ordinance change that allows property owners to sign agreements with police to allow officers to remove someone from their private property. All ordinance approvals take two council votes.

Commonwealth's Attorney Marsha Garst said on Tuesday that she requested the change to help prevent the type of disturbance that occurred at the Springfest block party on April 10.

### Riot Reaction

Council could give final approval to the ordinance change at its next meeting on Aug. 10.

Then, landowners would be able to have the agreements in place before James Madison University students begin arriving for the fall semester next month. Classes start Aug. 30, according to JMU's online academic calendar.

Parties involving alcohol that attract large crowds ritually precede the start of classes.

The riot that spurred Garst to request the ordinance change involved about 8,000 people, according to police estimates. The crowd had gathered for an end-of-semester block party near the JMU campus that attracted students and nonstudents from around the state and elsewhere.

After police asked the crowd to disperse, some partygoers refused and a few responded by throwing bottles and other projectiles. Several officers were injured during the incident.

Police arrested about two dozen people, most for misdemeanors, including public intoxication and failing to leave an unlawful assembly. Some at the riot were charged with more serious offenses, including assaulting a police officer.

Most people at the scene were college age, said Harrisonburg Police Chief Donald Harper on Tuesday. Fewer than half of those charged were JMU students, he said.

Police initially were summoned to the Springfest scene by a landowner seeking assistance in dispersing the crowd.

While officers had the authority to act on public property, they needed permission to proceed in the area where a large portion of the crowd had assembled, said Garst, who did not attend the council's meeting.

Also, police could only make a trespassing arrest in the presence of the property owner or renter who made a complaint, Harper said.

With the revised ordinance and an agreement from the landowner or renter, police would be able to move onto private property and enforce the city and state's trespassing laws without the signatory's presence, Harper said.

According to the proposed agreement, police would be "lawfully in charge" of the signatory's property for the "purposes of forbidding another to remain on the lands, buildings or premises" as specified.

Police would still have to issue a warning before making an arrest, Harper said.

Anyone refusing to disperse could be charged with misdemeanor trespassing and receive up to 12 months in jail and a \$2,500 fine, Garst said.

"It's a service," she said of the proposed agreement, "so that rioters don't destroy property and hurt people."

#### Setting Limits

The proposed agreement is not the only ordinance city officials are considering to prevent another riot.

City Manager ██████████ said administrative staff is studying ways to limit the number of people at outside events before requiring a permit. ██████████ said a draft ordinance could be brought to council next month.

Limiting the number of people at outside events "gives us another tool to control the parties that get out of hand," Harper said.

██████████ said it would be difficult for council to consider and approve that ordinance before students return for the fall semester.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 22, 2010 Thursday

## City Looks Into 'Gategate' Report; Off-Road Enthusiasts Apparently Intruding On Watershed, Witness Says

BYLINE: JEREMY HUNT

SECTION: Pg. A1

LENGTH: 395 words

HARRISONBURG - Efforts to keep unauthorized vehicles from accessing property in the city's watershed appear to have been compromised.

Over the last year and a half, the city has posted signs and blocked off trails and rural access roads to keep four-wheelers from driving up and down streams. The vehicles damaged banks and mucked up water on city-owned property off U.S. 33 near Switzer Dam.

Boulders were placed in some areas to block access, while a few gates with locks were put up so authorized vehicles could get in.

But a fisherman recently reported seeing what seemed to be two off-road enthusiasts on a joy ride on Dry Run Road, and they used keys to enter and exit the off-limits area.

They admitted to knowing the rules to the fisherman and acknowledged breaking them, said Colby Trow, co-owner of Mossy Creek Fly Shop in Harrisonburg.

Harrisonburg officials are taking the purported breach seriously.

In addition to city staff, the U.S. Forest Service and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries have keys to the gates, Harrisonburg City Manager ██████ said.

City staff is trying to compile a list of everyone who has a key, ██████ said, but in the meantime, the locks will be changed and more signs posted.

"We are assuming it was somebody that was in there that shouldn't have been or wasn't authorized to be," he said.

Whoever was seen in the area could have gotten access in a number of ways, such as picking the lock, stealing a key or simply having "gotten lucky" and had a key that fit, ██████ said.

██████ cautioned that unauthorized vehicles using the property will be an ongoing issue, because it's such a large area that there's bound to be many ways to get in, especially for the determined.

"We're not naive enough to believe that the gate and some of our signage is going to keep people out of there completely," he said. "There was a lot of activity up there for years and years."

Concerns have been raised that traffic around the city's water supply could lead to contamination, but ██████ said that's not really a concern.

"Anything that gets into the water-treatment plant, we run through a treatment process," he said. "Short of a major oil spill up there like a tanker truck or something along those lines, there wouldn't be a significant impact on the city's water supply."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 5, 2010 Saturday

## 26th Candidates Ordered To Remove Signs; If Not, City Workers Will Do So Monday

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: Pg. B1

LENGTH: 298 words

HARRISONBURG - City officials have warned candidates running in the June 15 special election for the 26th House District to remove their signs from the public right of way by 8 a.m. Monday.

Signs erected in the right of way violate the city's ordinance, Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] said Friday.

While the city generally has had a permissive attitude about candidate signs, their proliferation and the number of complaints they've generated in this election contributed to the warning, [REDACTED] said.

[REDACTED] said he began receiving complaints about the signs this week.

Harrisonburg Mayor Kai Degner, a Democrat, Republican Tony Wilt and Harrisonburg City Councilwoman Carolyn Frank, an independent, are vying for the seat vacated by former Del. Matt Lohr.

On Thursday, city officials contacted the three candidates about the signs.

### Perception

Signs in the median of major streets such as East Market are clearly on city right of way, [REDACTED] said.

Generally, the signs do not pose a safety risk, he said, but he hopes that removing them will end any false perceptions that they have been allowed in the public right of way because the mayor is one of the candidates.

"It's completely not the case," he said.

In an e-mail to the candidates, [REDACTED] wrote that a citation wouldn't be issued unless someone was actually seen placing the sign in the right of way.

Beginning Monday morning, Public Works Department employees "will begin removing any signs remaining in the median strips or between sidewalks and streets," according to the e-mail to candidates.

The candidates, [REDACTED] said, will be able to pick up their signs at the Public Works Department.

Any signs not picked up will be thrown away after the election, he said.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 26, 2010 Monday

## Decal Increase Proposal Withdrawn; Treasurer Follows City Manager's Lead

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: Pg. A3

LENGTH: 191 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg Treasurer Jeff Shafer says he won't re-submit a request that City Council add 50 cents to the price of city-issued vehicle decals. The move would have raised the cost of the annual stickers to \$30. City residents are required to purchase a decal for each vehicle they own and affix it to the front windshield.

Shafer said he had floated the idea of raising the price of the decal as a way to make the office run more efficiently. Rounding the cost to \$30, he said, would reduce the amount of change his staff would have to make for such transactions. That in turn would reduce the need for constant trips to the bank for rolls of quarters.

But Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] made the decision last week not to include the increase in his fiscal 2011 budget recommendation. Adding 50 cents to the decal cost also had little apparent support among City Council members.

"This was just an idea I had, and I have no problem following council's lead in the decision they made," he said. "We will certainly continue to operate just fine in this office without it."

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Rocktown Weekly (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 16, 2010

## Riot ends decade of peace

SECTION: ROCKTOWN

LENGTH: 547 words

Story by Jeff Mellott / [feedback@rocktownmail.com](mailto:feedback@rocktownmail.com)

Saturday 's riot put a violent end to almost 10 years of relative quiet when it comes to James Madison University-linked block parties.

James Madison University President Linwood Rose watched the last major disturbance take place, an annual back-to-school party in August 2000 on Village Lane that, like this weekend's Springfest, turned into an alcohol-fueled confrontation between college students and police.

But this weekend's disturbance was much larger than the one in 2000.

Police estimated that 8,000 people attended Springfest. About 2,500 were on hand at the August 2000 back-to-school party.

Along with having more people involved, this weekend's party differed from the earlier event in another way, Rose said.

Online social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, have turned a local party into a regional event, he said.

"That's a new dynamic that we will have to deal with," Rose said. "In the next few weeks, we'll figure out how we are going to do that."

### 2000 Study Ordered

As in 2000, the Springfest riot is forcing university officials to re-examine what they can do to prevent another recurrence.

In 1999, the university created The Community Coalition, which included JMU faculty, staff and students, as well as area law enforcement officials and other community members. The coalition grew out of the work of a campus alcohol management team, whose members recognized alcohol-related problems extended beyond the university's boundaries.

After the 2000 riot, Rose directed The Community Coalition to develop recommendations to prevent similar incidents.

The Harrisonburg police chief, Rockingham County sheriff and Rockingham County commonwealth's attorney were part of the coalition.

The coalition developed a series of recommendations, among them having a greater police presence on Village Lane before the August block party.

City and JMU police have since gone door-to-door in Village Lane and in other neighborhoods where a large number of students live, explaining state law and city ordinances to them.

"We do that every year," said Lt. [REDACTED] Boshart of the Harrisonburg Police Department.

But many of the partygoers who caused trouble this weekend came from out of town, Boshart said.

"We talk to students but we do not talk to all the outsiders coming in," he said.

Boshart said it was too early to assess whether the steps taken since 2000 made a difference in what happened Saturday.

Rose would not evaluate the coalition's work based on one event, but said he's convinced the group's work has led to a better relationship between students and police.

What's Next?

JMU will formally review the Springfest disturbance and has begun the process of determining who will be part of the group to assess the incident, said Mark Warner, JMU vice president for Student Affairs and University Planning.

Warner said Monday that he is developing an invitation list that will include representatives of the city police and Rockingham County Sheriff's Office.

Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] and Rockingham County Administrator Joe Paxton are also on the list. Others, Warner said, would likely include apartment-complex owners.

Warner plans to convene the group and establish goals before establishing a deadline to complete the review.

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The Shenandoah Journal (Dayton, Virginia)

July 28, 2009

## Dayton workshop addresses; public comment protocol

BYLINE: Lauren Jefferson

SECTION: ROCKTOWN

LENGTH: 790 words

Dayton officials held the first of a series of workshops last night, and among the topics of discussion was a new protocol for answering inquiries posed by citizens to council during Open Forum at council meetings.

The meeting concluded after press time.

The Open Forum has been the site of heated exchanges between citizens, council members and Mayor L.J. Purcell. In recent meetings, Purcell has declined to answer questions posed by citizens. He did not respond to requests for an interview for this article.

Vice Mayor Donna McCormick said that personal attacks and legal issues are two reasons why the format is under discussion.

'Reasonable Questions'

Council was warned "several months ago" by former town attorney Jay Litten that individual council members who addressed citizen concerns during Open Forum could be construed as speaking for the entire council, according to McCormick.

"We do need to answer people's questions, but legally we need to be careful what we say," McCormick said.

Although they understand the legal issues involved, council members Steve Dean, Donna Bodkin, Lisa Halterman and McCormick have expressed frustration at the delay in providing answers.

"If there are concerns or questions that can be answered during the Open Forum, I'm a firm believer that it should be done," Halterman said. "If the answer isn't readily available, it should be made available to the citizens as soon as possible afterwards."

The four council members made a distinction between "legitimate" and "reasonable" questions and those that include personal attacks or ask individual council members for their opinions.

"I don't believe the questions delivered as personal attacks or merely as a means of embarrassment warrant the same courtesy and should continue to be treated just like they have been," Halterman said.

Council members will discuss imposing a set of rules on citizen-council interaction, said town attorney Lynn Suter.

Such protocol is "not unusual," she said. "Public meetings need to be conducted with principles of good governance and decorum in practice so that the meeting does not turn into a free-for-all."

The town has no legal obligation to provide a forum for citizens to speak, she added.

### Guidelines Vary

Other municipalities offer opportunities for public comment, but their format for answering questions varies from council to council.

Harrisonburg city council members "generally avoid back and forth dialogue" during the public comment period, said City Manager [REDACTED]

Citizens use the period to raise issues or make statements, he said, adding that most do not expect a response from council. "If the issue needs a response, it is generally directed to appropriate staff to respond."

The decision to respond is "the council's prerogative," he said.

Timberville Town Manager Austin Garber characterizes the town's council meetings as a "relaxed" group discussion.

There is usually a clear distinction when a council member is offering an opinion rather than speaking on behalf of the council, he said.

"If it's something that's an easy response, we'll do it right then," he said. "If it's something that's questionable, we like to do our research and we'll get back to them at the next council meeting. People are usually understanding."

### Informing Citizens

One purpose of Dayton's workshop is to inform citizens about proper protocol, said Bodkin.

Before winning a council seat last year, Bodkin spoke in many Open Forum sessions as a representative of the Dayton Citizens for Change group. The group, which included current council members McCormick and Halterman, often challenged former Mayor Judy Way's administration to meet citizen's questions with better transparency and more open dialogue.

Now that she is on the "other side," Bodkin has been "surprised" by the legal constraints governing citizen-council communication.

"I was not aware of all the constraints, of which there are many," she said. "When you're on this side, you realize you cannot always say what's on your mind."

Information provided to the public by town officials is governed by the Freedom of Information Act, Bodkin said, which precludes answering any questions having to do with closed sessions or personnel issues.

"I do think that citizens need clarification on that process," she said.

Although public comment will not be allowed, the workshops will offer citizens the opportunity to educate themselves about the process as well as see their local government at work, she said.

"They'll know what we're discussing, what we understand and the consensus we reach," Bodkin said. "When I was on the other side, I attended committee meetings and workshops. I took responsibility on myself and encourage citizens with concerns to do that as well."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 9, 2008 Tuesday

## City Ponders Garage, School Office; Unsolicited \$16.5 Million Proposal Leads To Bidding

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 434 words

HARRISONBURG - City officials are pondering a \$16.5 million proposal to build new school division offices and a garage with hundreds of parking spaces on an existing lot along Elizabeth and Wolfe streets between North Main and Liberty streets.

Because Donley's LLC of Richmond offered the unsolicited concept, the city has set a deadline of Jan. 9 for additional proposals.

Acceptance of the proposal or a similar one would finally establish the location of new city school division offices.

### \$16.5 Million

Last month, Donley's made the unsolicited proposal under the 1995 Public Private Facilities and Infrastructure Education Act, which protects some project details to ensure fair bidding.

What is known is that Donley's has proposed a 600-space parking garage and a 30,000-square-foot building for school division offices, according to the proposal filed with the city.

Based on construction market prices, City Manager [REDACTED] on Monday estimated the project would cost about \$16.5 million. [REDACTED] based his estimate on \$15,000 per parking space and \$150 per square foot for the office building space.

[REDACTED] said the city could reject any or all proposals. It could also modify the concept to reduce the cost, he said.

Donley's has construction experience in Harrisonburg.

The company built the Patterson Street parking garage for James Madison University. Donley's work also includes the dining hall at JMU's College of Integrated Science and Technology.

### School Offices

The proposed square footage for the school board offices would be 3,000 to 4,000 square feet more than what had been available at One Court Square, [REDACTED] said.

The Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority offered the building to the school division, but school officials considered the site unsuitable.

The City School Board then considered other locations, including the grass lot between Reservoir Street and Spotswood Elementary School.



The board has said the new offices are warranted because of the limited space now available. New offices also would allow the school division to bring all its offices together in one building.

To finance the Donley's proposal, [REDACTED] said, private businesses and others directly benefiting from the additional parking could be asked to pay a share of the construction cost.

In addition, [REDACTED] said the city could put the more than \$2 million the City Council promised to the School Board for office construction toward the project.

Also, the city could ask the division to contribute \$1 million toward the cost, he said.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 9, 2008 Tuesday

## City Could Lose \$3.2 Million; Manager Says Projected State Aid Cuts Mount Up

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 286 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg could face a cut in state aid of \$3.2 million in fiscal 2010 if a projection by the Virginia Municipal League proves correct, according to City Manager [REDACTED] on Monday.

VML, an association representing municipalities, has told its members that Gov. Timothy M. Kaine could be calling for a 10 percent reduction in aid to local governments, including kindergarten through 12th-grade education, [REDACTED] said.

A 10 percent cut would mean city schools would lose about \$2.5 million and the general fund about \$700,000, [REDACTED] said.

These cuts would be in addition to the \$214,000 the state reduced its aid to the city's general fund in the current fiscal year, [REDACTED] said.

The \$3.2 million cut is equivalent to about 9 cents per \$100 on the real estate tax rate, [REDACTED] said.

News reports indicate the state could face a shortfall in projected revenues of about \$3 billion.

Kaine is expected to issue an update on the state's fiscal situation next week.

[REDACTED] told members of the Harrisonburg Rotary Club on Monday that the city's three new council members would have a short time to prepare before acting on the budget.

City voters elected Richard Baugh, Kai Degner and David Wiens - all Democrats - to the five-member council Nov. 4. Baugh and Wiens served on the Harrisonburg Planning Commission, and Degner had been a member of the city Board of Zoning Appeals.

All three have resigned those posts in preparation to be sworn in on Jan. 2.

The General Assembly will begin working on the state's budget when it convenes next month.

The city usually takes action on its budget in April or May. The new fiscal year begins July 1.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 2, 2008 Tuesday

## Council's Rookies Must Get It Quickly

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 720 words

HARRISONBURG - A promise of keeping a closer eye on growth and development, while also opening government up to greater public participation were key features of a campaign that led to the election of three new city councilmen.

But the biggest issue facing Harrisonburg city government for the first few months of their four-year term could be the national recession and its impact on state and local revenues, which support government operations such as schools.

Councilmen-elect Richard Baugh, Kai Degner and David Wiens could be spending most of their early months on council getting up to speed on the city's proposed fiscal 2009 budget.

Reorganization Jan. 2

Baugh, Degner and Wiens - all Democrats - join the five-member council on Jan. 2. They are the first council members to be elected since the city moved municipal elections from May to November.

The move was designed to increase voter turnout for council elections and to give newly elected councilmen greater input on the budget.

Previously, council members were sworn in on July 1, which is the beginning of the fiscal year. They had nearly a year in office before voting on a city budget.

Now, with council members coming on board in January, they have four to five months before a new budget must be approved.

Getting Ready

The short period between taking office and acting on a budget is comparable to General Assembly members who take office in January and make budget decisions almost immediately, Baugh said.

"You are going to roll up your sleeves and do the best that you can," he said.

The relatively short preparation time makes it even more important for the council-elect to work hard for a smooth transition, Degner said.

"We have a responsibility to be in communication with both current and former council members and the city manager to get ourselves up to speed as quickly as possible," Degner said.

The orientation of the councilmen-elect is expected to begin in earnest this month with a tour of the city departments.

Next month, they are scheduled for training held by the Virginia Municipal League in Richmond.

### Budget Work Already Begun

Preliminary work on the fiscal 2009 budget has begun, City Manager ██████ said last week.

█████ predicted a "relatively lean year" for construction projects.

Projects already under way, such as the first phase of improvements to Erickson Avenue and the street's connection to Stone Spring Road, would not be impacted, he said.

█████ also has instructed departments to leave vacancies open until after the holiday season, which extends into January.

"There is some uncertainty with the economy and what's going to happen when the General Assembly gets back together [in January]," ██████ said.

The economic downturn is reflected in city revenue collections, which are relatively flat.

The latest figures available show that general fund revenues of about \$20.9 million have dipped through October by about \$16,000 compared to the previous year, ██████ said.

Also through October, the lodging tax revenue of more than \$700,000 is off by about \$30,000 compared with 2007 figures.

But meals tax revenues of about \$2.6 million was up by \$8,000 through October.

The city collects these taxes while the state collects the sales tax and returns a portion of them to the locality.

Compared to 2007, the city's share of the revenue from the state sales tax of about \$3.9 million is down nearly \$28,000 through August, which is the latest figure available.

█████ noted the sales tax figures do not include the city's largest months of September and October, when students go back to school.

### Fiscal Philosophy

The councilmen-elect shared ██████ caution toward spending.

Baugh considers his fiscal philosophy "pay-as-you-go." The community's orientation toward low taxes, he said, is part of the city's culture and is at least partly responsible for Harrisonburg's accomplishments.

"I am not anxious to give them up," he said.

Wiens also considers his fiscal philosophy to be conservative.

"I tend to want to spend as little money as I can get away with spending. At the same time, you have to maintain your services," he said.

Degner said he hoped that decisions made for the short-term would not sacrifice any long potential long-term gains.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

November 21, 2008 Friday

## Uncertain Fate For Reading Service; Funding Woes May Doom Local Services

BYLINE: JENNY JONES

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 696 words

HARRISONBURG - An agency that provides free library services for people with visual and hearing disabilities may be forced to shut down in the city and county if it does not get additional funding.

The Talking Book Center, which provides books and magazines on tape, cassette players and Braille materials to the disabled, needs more funding to continue serving the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area, said Oakley Pearson, director of the TBC.

The center has petitioned the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors and Harrisonburg City Council for help. The service is requesting \$14,000 from each locality to cover the costs of serving the 350 clients in the city and county, Pearson said.

"Forty percent of our circulation is in this area," said Pearson, whose agency also serves eight other cities and counties in the region. "If we don't get money to support that activity, we're in big trouble."

The TBC is a United Way agency, meaning it receives funding from the nonprofit organization. But the United Way has decreased its contribution to the center in recent years, Pearson said.

To make up for the loss in United Way dollars, the center has relied more heavily on government funding and individual donations.

Harrisonburg has contributed \$2,000 and Rockingham County has given \$6,000 annually to the center each of the past few years. But that's not enough, Pearson said. Rising costs, coupled with a reduction in United Way funding and individual donations, have put the TBC in danger of having to shutter its operation in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.

### About The Center

The TBC is an independent regional program that was founded in 1981 in Staunton. It operates out of the Staunton Public Library.

In addition to Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, it serves residents in the cities of Staunton, Lexington, Waynesboro and Buena Vista, and the counties of Augusta, Bath, Highland and Rockbridge.

In all, The TBC serves about 1,000 people, mostly senior citizens with visual impairments, and distributes about 25,000 audio books and magazines a year, Pearson said.

"[Our patrons] can't drive, they don't get out much ... reading is a primary activity for them," he said. So the book center is "an amazing and wonderful thing. There isn't, unfortunately, an equivalent service available."



If the TBC does not receive enough money to cover its growing expenses, it will likely have to refer its Harrisonburg and Rockingham County patrons to the state talking book center in Richmond.

Those patrons will continue to have access to materials, but the quality of the service will diminish because the state center does not have the resources to handle so many customers, Pearson said.

"We're the local library. We're the people's hands and eyes in the library," he said. "We're very much connected to our patrons. That's the kind of service that's not going to be easy to replace at the state level."

#### Part Of The Library System?

Deputy County Administrator Stephen King said the county considers the TBC to be part of Massanutten Regional Library, which gets more than \$700,000 in county money each year.

If the center needs more county funds, the library must take it out of its annual allocation, he said.

"Our approach really has been that it's part of the library system," King said. "We're putting it on the library to handle the library-type needs."

However, while the city and county help fund the library, the TBC is an independent entity and does not receive funds out of the library's budget unless local governments earmark it for the center, said Phil Hearne, MRL director.

"TBC is actually an independent service," he said. "We have no administrative control or connection to the center. ... [Pearson] will have to make his own pitch" for TBC funding.

Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] said the city supports the TBC by contributing more than \$400,000 to Massanutten Regional each year. He doubts that the City Council would approve additional funds for the center.

"Given the current [economic] environment," [REDACTED] said, "I wouldn't be real optimistic that anything would happen this year."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

November 14, 2008 Friday

## Emergency Shelter For Children Closes; The Homeplace Calls It Quits After 2 Months

BYLINE: JENNY JONES

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 849 words

HARRISONBURG - An emergency residential shelter for young children that opened in September with thousands of dollars in local funds has closed.

The Homeplace, a short-term shelter and diagnostic center for boys and girls 5 to 11 years old, shut down Thursday because the number of area children in need of such services has declined, officials say.

Kaleidoscope Child & Family Services Inc. operated The Homeplace with 15 full-time employees on Media Lane. Camp Kaleidoscope, a camp for foster children that also operates under Kaleidoscope Child & Family Services Inc., is not closing.

Don Driver, executive director of the local Department of Social Services, said the premise behind the shelter is solid, but the community doesn't have enough young children who need such care at this time to support it.

"You never know what type of children are going to need care," Driver said. "We may find shortly that we'll need something like this. ... [But] a business can't sit and wait for something that might happen."

Lee Van Orden, executive director of Kaleidoscope Child & Family Services, declined to comment on the shelter's closure.

### Shelter Got \$75,000 In Local Funds

The idea for the emergency shelter came about more than a year ago, when the Community Policy and Management Team began looking for ways to serve children locally under the Comprehensive Services Act for At-Risk Youth.

The CPMT is a state-mandated group that combines the heads of such agencies as Social Services, local schools, the health department and juvenile court to coordinate services for trouble children and their families.

CSA is a state law that pools state, federal and local money to provide comprehensive services for at-risk youth. Such services include therapeutic, mental health and out-of-home care.

That's when Charlotte McNulty, chairwoman of the CPMT, spoke with the directors of Camp Kaleidoscope, who agreed to start the emergency shelter. She then asked the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors and Harrisonburg City Council to fund the program's startup costs.

At the time, nearly 70 children in the area were receiving out-of-community residential care, which costs local governments thousands of dollars each year, Driver said.

Interested in treating at-risk youth locally for less, local governments agreed to provide a combined \$75,000 to get the shelter going, said Rockingham County Administrator Joe Paxton.

"The expectation was that because this service would be less costly [than sending kids out of the area for care], we would more than save the \$75,000 in the long run," he said.

But, by the time the shelter actually opened, the number of children 5 to 11 years old in need of services decrease substantially and the shelter couldn't get the CSA funding it needed to stay in operation, Paxton said.

To qualify for CSA funds, the shelter needed to have four children in its care every day for a month. Since opening in September, however, it's served only one child.

#### Continued Funding Not Justifiable

Without CSA funding, The Homeplace needed an estimated \$45,000 a month from local governments to stay in operation. It's an expenditure local officials simply can't justify, Paxton said.

"Neither the city nor the county felt like we could front the funding until a clientele base was established," said City Manager ██████████. "We really need to spend those hundreds of thousands of dollars on actual cases and kids."

While officials know the shelter has been open only a short time and that its services may be necessary down the road, it's a gamble they can't take, especially with the state of the economy, ██████████ said.

"A month or two from now, we could have four or five kids pop up on the screen [who need such a program]," ██████████ said. "We just didn't feel like we could continue to provide funding ... and not know that in the near future that there would be kids in there."

#### 'A Real Loss To Our Community'

Rockingham Supervisor Mike Breeden said he hates to see the shelter close, but he understands if it's not serving enough children.

"What I got from county staff is there's not enough children going through [the shelter] to justify the expense involved," he said. "It's disappointing to me that it's not going OK."

Breeden said that if the community doesn't have children who need an emergency shelter, that's a good thing. But if it does and the children just aren't getting to the shelter for whatever reason, that's a problem, he said.

"Any time we can do something that makes the system better for those kids in peril ... we should be doing that," Breeden said. "I thought [The Homeplace] was a program that was going to be a big benefit to us."

Harrisonburg Councilwoman Carolyn Frank said the program had a lot of potential, but it needed to be more of a regional shelter to be successful.

"The direction they were going in I think was the right direction," Frank said. "Their heart and focus was to be a service to the young. ... It's a real loss to our community."

McNulty could not be reached for comment.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

November 7, 2008 Friday

## Focused On The Family; Summit To Address Comprehensive Services For At-Risk Youth

BYLINE: JENNY JONES

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 608 words

HARRISONBURG - For the first time, local social services officials will hold a community summit in an effort to identify area resources to help at-risk youth.

The Harrisonburg/Rockingham County Community Summit on Strengthening Children and Families will be held from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 18 at the James Madison University Festival and Conference Center. Lunch will be provided to those who pre-register.

The Harrisonburg/Rockingham County Comprehensive Services Act Office and the James Madison University Institute for Innovation for Health and Human Services are hosting the event.

Karl Dennis, former executive director of Kaleidoscope Inc. of Chicago and one of the nation's leading experts on community-based care for children and families, will serve as keynote speaker. Virginia first lady Anne Holton will give closing remarks.

The summit is open to community leaders, private providers, school officials and individuals working in social services, juvenile justice or the faith-based community, according to a press release.

### Keeping Kids In The Community

Christine Thompson, a Comprehensive Services Act coordinator with the local CSA Office, said the purpose of the event is to find ways to better serve at-risk youth in the community.

The goal is to figure out "what is out there in our community for these children and families," Thompson said. "How can we build on that and how can we make our community stronger?"

Each year, more than 300 area children are placed into foster care and many are in need of comprehensive services from residential facilities, therapeutic and diagnostic centers and psychiatric hospitals, Thompson said.

But because the local community doesn't offer many of these resources, children are sent out of the area for services, making it difficult for social service officials to help the families.

"When you send a child out of the area, you can't strengthen the family because the family doesn't see them," Thompson said. "We are trying to figure out how our community can keep [those children here]."

### High Cost To Governments

In addition to better addressing the needs of children and families, serving at-risk youth locally would be a relief to the pocketbooks of local governments.



In fiscal 2006-07, the county spent just under \$5 million on comprehensive services. Of that, about \$1.7 million were county funds and \$3.3 million were state dollars, records show.

That same year, the city spent about \$3.8 million on such services. About \$1.5 million of that came from the city and \$2.3 million came from the state, records show.

This year, the local CSA Office's budget is about \$8 million.

Local governments could pay even more for out-of-area comprehensive services come Jan. 1. At that time, the state will reduce its contribution to localities that do not serve at-risk children locally, said Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED]

"There is a cost factor involved," he said. "If you don't keep your kids locally, the reimbursement rate goes down."

Rockingham County Administrator Joe Paxton said he hopes the summit generates ideas for developing more local resources that not only reduce costs but also more effectively serve families.

"We need to focus our community's responsibility on how we help children at-risk to make sure that we are providing opportunities to build families," he said. "[We want] to stimulate interest in developing those services that may be needed in our community and to refocus those who are involved in the process."

For more information about the summit or to make a reservation, call the CSA Office at 438-5935.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 10, 2008 Friday

## Colleges Take A Hit; State's Cutbacks Felt At JMU, BRCC

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 555 words

HARRISONBURG - State budget cuts announced by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine on Thursday will result in reductions of 7 percent, or \$5.4 million, at James Madison University and 5 percent, or \$495,000, at Blue Ridge Community College.

JMU plans to continue a hiring freeze already in place, as well as reductions in equipment and travel, while discussing what other adjustments are needed, said Don Egle, campus spokesman. Blue Ridge is taking similar steps, according to BRCC President Jim Perkins.

Egle said JMU would need to come up with its final plan on cuts in the next few weeks.

### Revenue Forecast

According to a statement issued by the governor's office, Kaine plans to reduce government spending but protect kindergarten-through-12th-grade education and other government functions, such as public safety.

The cuts include reductions in the governor's office and residence budgets, previously announced.

"Since October of last year, the continuing uncertainty and downturn in the national economy has required us to adjust the revenue forecast downward twice, and, thus far, we've reduced the state budget by over \$1.7 billion, not including the reductions we're making today," Kaine said in the prepared statement.

JMU already established the hiring freeze and limits on travel and purchasing equipment after an earlier Kaine announcement of an expected reduction in state revenues.

Egle had no other details to offer.

Discussions by JMU officials, he said, would include whether to adjust the earlier steps to curb spending.

### Printed Guide Canceled

At BRCC, Perkins said the college would take the additional step of cutting \$40,000 for printing and mailing 100,000 copies of the spring class schedule to the community.

The college will rely on advertising, e-mail contacts and posting the schedule on its Web site to reach the public, he said.

Perkins said it is likely the college would no longer mail out the schedules because of the other ways to reach the public.

This is the second year that the college has reduced spending by 5 percent as the number of students increased, Perkins said.

Preliminarily, local government officials in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County do not expect their localities to be directly affected by the state cuts.

However, the cuts do include state agencies, such as the Health Department, which deliver services to the area, they said.

In anticipation of state funding cuts and a slowing economy that could reduce sales tax revenues, Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] had departments prepare a plan to reduce spending by 5 percent, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass said Thursday.

Rockingham County government officials have begun meeting to prepare contingency plans to cut spending by 10 percent, said Rockingham County Administrator Joe Paxton.

While the officials had the potential for state cuts in mind in their planning, Paxton said they also were considering the impact of the downturn in the economy on sales tax revenue.

The state cuts do not affect Rockingham County and other school divisions, according to the governor's office.

But Rockingham County Director of Finance Cheryl Mast said the county has received information from the state that K-12 funding could be affected in the 2010 fiscal year, which starts July 1, 2009.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

September 13, 2008 Saturday

## Police: Fake Inspection Scheme Involved Cabs; City Taxi License May Depend On Court Case

BYLINE: PETE DeLEA

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 486 words

HARRISONBURG - Police say a cab company owner and a former auto repair shop employee have been charged with the illegal buying and selling of state inspection stickers.

The stickers, according to the Virginia State Police, were sold to the cab company without the vehicles having been inspected.

Musa Abbas Syed, 41, owner of the ABC Cab Co. of Harrisonburg, and Dorsey Collett, 69, a former employee at Hussey's Automotive in Bridgewater, have both been charged with a misdemeanor count of improper use of an inspection sticker.

Police say Syed purchased 16 inspection stickers from Collett for more than the normal \$16 fee.

First Sgt. Bryan Hutcheson of the Virginia State Police said the scheme could have put people in harm's way.

"It could be very dangerous," Hutcheson said. "It's a business that transports people. They're transporting people in vehicles that have not been properly certified. You're talking about brakes and other parts of the vehicles that weren't inspected."

Syed and Collett, both of Harrisonburg, could not be reached for comment.

The case came to light when managers at Hussey's Automotive noticed that 11 cabs were assigned stickers, but they didn't recall seeing any cabs in their shop come in for inspection.

"They saw some discrepancies, so they called us," Hutcheson said. "It speaks to their credibility. It was one of their inspectors who was in the wrong."

Both men, who were arrested Aug. 25, are scheduled to appear in Rockingham County General District Court on Oct. 30 to face the misdemeanor charges.

Hutcheson said the stickers issued in this case had an August 2009 expiration.

"As soon as we found out, we went and removed them," said Hutcheson. "We scraped all 16 off the cabs."

Hutcheson said if the company wanted to put the cabs back on the road, it would have to get them inspected "the right way."

City officials said Friday they believe that the cabs have since been properly inspected and are safe. Harrisonburg Director of Transportation Reggie Smith said he has visited ABC's location to check on the cabs and he found they now have the proper stickers.



Although the vehicle inspection system comes under the jurisdiction of the state police, the license to operate a taxi company comes under the purview of the city.

City Manager ██████ said that the company could still face a revocation of its license to operate cabs in Harrisonburg, depending on what happens in court.

Should the cab company be convicted, ██████ said, he would likely ask council if it wanted to proceed to revoke or suspend the license.

Revoking or suspending the license involves written notification to the cab company of the council's pending action.

The owners would then have the chance to argue to the council why the action should not be taken, ██████ said.

- Daily News-Record Writer Jeff Mellott contributed to this report.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 19, 2008 Tuesday

## State Budget Cuts To Hit Home; City And County Wait For Reductions

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 528 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg and Rockingham County government officials said they can do nothing but wait and see how a "reforecast" of state revenues would affect money the localities receive in state aid.

With a slow economy eating deeply into state tax collections, Gov. Timothy M. Kaine warned Monday of deep but still unspecified cuts to Virginia's budget just seven weeks after it took effect, The Associated Press reported.

Kaine said even spending priorities historically immune from cuts - such as public education and health care services for the elderly, indigent and disabled - are subject to review for reductions targeted by early October, according to the AP.

### Bracing For 'Hits'

Reacting to the governor's remarks, Harrisonburg City Manager ██████████ said it is too early to determine how cuts would affect city services.

"I didn't read anything that made me feel good," ██████████ said.

But the red flags he saw included remarks that indicated that aid to schools would be considered for possible budget cuts.

The city, if necessary, could dip into its budget reserve of \$15 million, or about 14 percent of the general fund balance.

The money is held in reserve to convince bond-rating groups of the city's financial soundness, which could result in lower interest rates on borrowing money.

"We could take a couple of hits," said Vice Mayor George Pace.

The council recently voted to return more than \$200,000 aid to the state, while the county returned more than \$500,000.

Rockingham County Administrator Joe Paxton said Monday that the governor is starting a process that usually occurs later in the fall.

"I suspect there will be shared pain," Paxton said.

### Dire News

According to the AP, Kaine offered no clues to where he might cut, or the magnitude of the projected shortfall. Legislators suspect it will top \$1 billion.

Dire revenue reports from the final quarter of the fiscal year that ended June 30 provide a glimpse at state government's worst money problem since it struggled with shortfalls totaling \$6 billion from 2001 through 2003.

For example, receipts from income taxes paid by wage earners - nearly 60 percent of the general fund - grew by 8 percent from May through June of last year, but only 1 percent for the same period this year. Sales tax collections that had grown by 7.5 percent in the final fiscal quarter of 2007 flatlined at 0.4 percent during the same period this year.

Hardships Near?

But state finance experts don't know how much worse it will get, Kaine told reporters after his speech.

"We have four weeks of data, so how are we going to adjust a 24-month budget?" he said. "That would not be smart."

Kaine's decision to examine all areas of spending, including those that had once been off-limits, shows the problem is serious. Such cuts could create hardships for public schools, public safety and law enforcement at the state and local level, and aid to local governments.

All those are areas where Virginians could feel the crunch firsthand.

"As we go into this round (of cuts), we're really just going to have to look at everything," Kaine said, the AP reported.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

August 6, 2008 Wednesday

## Seize The Night; Three Valley Localities Defy Crime, Have Fun

BYLINE: EMILY SHARRER

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 897 words

HARRISONBURG - Though Elkton, Harrisonburg and New Market held separate soirees for the 25th annual National Night Out, all three localities seemed to have the same idea about what the event should be about: a time to kick back with a hot dog and hobnob with neighbors, as well as with local officials.

On Tuesday night, hundreds across the Valley attended celebrations for National Night Out, an event that raises public awareness of crime and gives locals a chance to rub elbows with police.

"I think this is a great opportunity to get together, spend time with family and have some good old-fashioned USA hot dogs," said Elkton's Mayor Wayne Printz.

Printz, along with members of the Elkton Police Department, Neighborhood Watch volunteers, Rockingham County Sheriff Don Farley and other sheriff's office officials, gathered on the town's Municipal Building lawn to listen to the sounds of Greg Lam and Friends, a band of local residents.

Night Out first-timers and Elkton residents Dewey Taylor and his wife, Joyce, pulled up lawn chairs to check out the event, which has been celebrated in Elkton for 12 years.

"It brings the community together," said Dewey Taylor.

"It's good interaction for us with the community," added Elkton Police Chief James Morris, who says that it's good for police to meet with residents while not on duty. "It's great to get together on friendly terms."

Elkton's Night Out festivities lasted from 7 to 10 p.m. and were hosted by the local neighborhood watch program, which is coordinated by area resident Haze Crider.

"We want the community to join us in helping fight crime," said Crider, who has been helping plan the event since July.

### Trek Through Harrisonburg

Meanwhile, over in Harrisonburg, a large group of officials boarded a trolley and visited eight locations throughout the city to sample the Friendly City's finest collection of cookout foods and get up close and personal with residents.

Police officials, members of the Public Works Department, interim City Treasurer Jeff Shafer, Rockingham County Commonwealth's Attorney Marsha Garst, members of the Harrisonburg Fire Department and Harrisonburg Electric Commission, City Manager [REDACTED] and members of the Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation made 15-minute stops around the city.



Officials began their trek through the city at 5:15, making stops at Clay Street, Harris Gardens, the Simms School, Collicello Street, Kimberly Court, Mosby Court and Purcell Park.

"It's not really for us," said Lt. [REDACTED] Boshart, the Harrisonburg Police Department's spokesman. "It's for the neighborhoods. We try to get the city dignitaries to help encourage community interaction."

"It's a celebration basically of residents being proactive and involved," said Miriam Dickler, spokeswoman for city government. "It's a valuable opportunity for us to get out of the office. We have a lot of fun, and we hope that everyone that comes out does, too."

Harrisonburg has been participating in the national program for more than a decade, according to Dickler, who added that it just keeps getting better each year.

This year, Smokin' Pig, Chanello's and Midtowne Market provided food at the tour's first stop on Court Square - but the food is just an added bonus to the event's real message, say organizers.

"The whole idea is to say no to crime," Boshart said. "We want neighborhoods to get out and be seen and get involved, not just tonight, but 365 days of the year. When citizens get involved in crime prevention, it helps everybody."

Added Harrisonburg resident, Ralph Geddes, "We need more of this. ... It's time we all got involved."

#### New Market Knows Prevention

For New Market residents Ginny King, her husband, Bill, and their neighbors, Mary and Ben Sisler, being involved in crime prevention is old hat.

The foursome can be seen at nearly every meeting of the neighborhood watch and the wildlife crime watch program.

"These folks really care about their community," said Sgt. Mitchell Vernazza with the Shenandoah County Sheriff's Department. "They put forth that special effort."

The Kings and Sislers were just four of many who came out to New Market's first-ever National Night Out festivities to check out several displays and try their hand at riding a golf cart wearing "fatal vision" goggles that simulated driving while intoxicated.

"We really wanted to do something for the community," said Officer Chris Rinker. "The turnout is great and we're excited that so many people came out."

Residents who attended were treated to hot dogs and cold drinks as they learned about DWIs, seat belt safety and gangs from members of the Shenandoah County Sheriff's Department; New Market Police Department; and Dave Mason, an investigator with the Northwest Regional Gang Task Force.

"I think it's important because a lot of people don't realize what's going on [with gang-related activity in New Market] since it's not as prevalent as in the big cities," said Mason.

People across the Valley are already looking forward to learning more at next year's National Night Out, one of the few - if not the only - times that they are delighted to have a cop walk up and start a conversation with them.

"We have the finest police department in the Valley and in Shenandoah County we have the finest sheriff's department," said Bill King. "We are very fortunate."

Contact Emily Sharrer at 574-6293

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 16, 2008 Wednesday

## City Rules Out Offices Behind Spotswood; ██████████ Says Council Still Considering Other Properties

BYLINE: JENNY JONES

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 624 words

HARRISONBURG - The city school division will eventually get a new central office, but it will not be located behind Spotswood Elementary School, said City Manager ██████████

Earlier this year, the Harrisonburg City School Board proposed plans to build a new multimillion-dollar administrative office and welcome center behind the school, near the corner of Reservoir and Carlton streets.

But after hearing opposition from dozens of residents who live near the school, City Council began looking at other locations for the office, ██████████ said. Council serves as the school division's funding agent, and therefore has the final say about whether to move forward with such projects.

While he declined to name the specific properties council is considering, ██████████ said the options are located downtown and include existing buildings for possible renovation and vacant properties suitable for new construction.

Council "was not satisfied at all with the location by Spotswood," ██████████ said. "We have a couple [other] possibilities that we think are very strong candidates."

### History Of The Project

The school division needs a new central office and welcome center to replace its existing offices, which are overcrowded and spread throughout Harrisonburg, said City Schools Superintendent Donald Ford.

"We need to do something to consolidate our central office staff," Ford said. "The building which we are currently located is simply inadequate for our needs."

The division's administrative offices are split between a remodeled house at 317 S. Main St. and the city's public safety building at 101 N. Main St. The welcome center is located at Thomas Harrison Middle School.

After much consideration about whether to construct a building or buy one to house the offices, the School Board voted in February to build a new office on land the city owns behind Spotswood Elementary.

At that time, the board said it planned to build a 28,000-square-foot building to house about 70 employees and a lot with 143 parking spaces on the property. The project was expected to cost about \$3.5 million.

Council agreed to give the division \$2.5 million for the project. The remaining \$1 million was slated to come from unspent funds from the school division's other building projects and budget reserves.

### City Council Remains Committed

Then, in April, the board held a community meeting with residents who live near Spotswood Elementary.



At that time, more than a dozen people, including Councilwoman Carolyn Frank, spoke in opposition to the proposal, citing concerns with traffic, safety and the loss of green space.

"There was a lot of public opposition to that site," ██████ said, "and enough council members listened."

During a telephone interview Tuesday, Frank said that even though City Council is looking at alternative sites, it has not forgotten about the school division's needs.

"I know the School Board is anxious, but the City Council is still committed," she said.

██████ echoed that sentiment, saying city officials are well aware that the school division is squeezed for space.

"We want to make sure they have what they need," he said. "We hope within the next several months to know a specific focus."

While he said he hasn't received official notification that the Spotswood property is off the table, Ford said the school division is open to any suggestions City Council may present regarding the office's location.

"I don't have a strong feeling one way or the other where the central office is located," he said. "My concern really has more to do with the structure itself and the fact that we need a certain amount of space. We need to be in a facility that's conducive to quality work."

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North Fork Journal (Broadway, Virginia)

July 2, 2008

Mayor: 'The town is going to miss him';  
NEW MARKET - Leaving New Market is difficult, Town Manager Evan Vass said.

BYLINE: Florence Barrett; STAFF WRITER

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 801 words

NEW MARKET - Leaving New Market is difficult, Town Manager Evan Vass said.

Vass, 27, will start his new position as Harrisonburg's assistant city manager beginning July 14.

"Bittersweet is a very descriptive word for how I feel," he said, noting he didn't realize how difficult it would be to leave the community, "because it's been a good experience with the council and employees."

Vass met with Mayor Tom Constable before officially meeting with the council.

"I literally had a hard time getting the words out of my mouth," he said. "It was a character building experience.... I would have liked to have sat down with all of the council members individually before the meeting. One of them was Vice Mayor John Blosser. He and I have gotten to be friends because we had been developing a close working relationship."

Breaking the News

Vass met with council in closed session after an hour-long work session Friday, June 13.

"I was so nervous I could barely sit still," Vass said. He asked the council, "'Are any of you superstitious? I am.' It's a date I won't forget."

Constable and Blosser support Vass in his decision, they said, recognizing it's a good career move.

"Evan has been an excellent town manager - outstanding performance," Constable said. "The town is going to miss him."

"I'm happy for him, but I'm very sad to have him leave" said Blosser, who will act as interim town manager. "We worked closely together. He did a tremendous job here."

During Vass' five-year tenure in New Market, the town was awarded a T-21 grant for the downtown, beginning in the fall of '04.

"It's ours. It's a matter of meeting federal and state criteria," he said. "We'll be doing some really neat things downtown."

In addition, the town developed a good 40-year growth plan, Vass said, and a friendly annexation agreement area plan with Shenandoah County.



"Everybody's happy," he said. "It makes Shenandoah County's planning easier to see how fast New Market will grow."

Vass complimented the town staff, council and New Market's attorney, Jason Ham.

"The projects are going to continue. Nothing is going to stop. The staff are all capable, they all know their job," he said. "I've never made a decision in a vacuum. I've always bounced ideas off others."

#### Up for the Challenge

Vass said he is looking forward to working for Harrisonburg and with City Manager [REDACTED]

"To go from a small town to that environment is humbling. I know it's going to be a significant challenge," he said. "[REDACTED] is a genuinely nice person. This is a person I would

enjoy working with."

[REDACTED] said via e-mail that Vass' work experiences, particularly as New Market's town manager, gave him a great foundation for the position in the city.

"Experience in managing a full-service community is something I was looking for in an assistant city manager as he will need to be the "go to" guy in the event of my absence or incapacitation," he said. "While obviously on a smaller scale, he has dealt with many of the same types of operational issues and challenges in New Market as he will be involved with in Harrisonburg. He also has a great reputation in terms of Town Council and citizen relations."

#### Ties to the Valley

Vass, who is originally from Augusta County, has ties to Bridgewater where he was an intern before being employed by the town as director of public works at the age of 22.

Bridgewater Town Manager Bob Holton said he has known Vass for seven years, first as a student at James Madison University where Vass received a bachelor's degree in public administration.

"Watching him at New Market," Holton said, "I had come to the conclusion that Evan and Kyle O'Brien were probably the two best young administrators in the state of Virginia. The fact that the city of Harrisonburg hired him to be assistant manager just confirms my belief."

"Bob got me started in all this, God bless him," Vass said, noting that he often turned to Holton for support and advice. "Bob has been a huge inspiration. He's kept me going."

Vass plans to keep in contact with the town managers of Rockingham and Shenandoah counties, he said, "and I will make myself available to New Market's new town manager and council."

A graduate of Buffalo Gap High School, Vass will complete his master's in public administration in the fall. He is a member of the International City Managers Association and the Virginia Local Government Management Association.

The objective of New Market's council is to fill the town manager position as soon as it can, Vass said, but making a good match is important.

"There're a lot of positive things happening in New Market right now," he said, noting he will miss being a part of the town. "That's a heartfelt statement. It's been my home. As town manager, it's your universe."

"He's had the town's best interest at heart 24-7," Constable said.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 25, 2008 Wednesday

Harrisonburg City Council Extends ██████████ Contract

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 191 words

HARRISONBURG - City Council extended City Manager ██████████ contract Tuesday to Jan. 3, 2011. Effective July 1, ██████████ will receive a salary of \$141,627.

The council took a similar action on City Attorney Earl Thumma's contract. Thumma received an extension of six months to Jan. 2, 2009. The city attorney is limited to two-year contracts by the city's code.

The extensions coincide with the installation of council members following this fall's election. New members are installed in January.

Earlier, the council shifted the May municipal election to the fall. The act extended the terms of sitting council and Harrisonburg School Board members by six months because of the change in the election schedule.

The council made the change to the election schedule to save money, by holding one less election, and with the intention of increasing voter turnout for council elections.

The council elections now coincide with the November election.

This year, council and School Board elections will be on the same ballot as the races for president, U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, and a special election for city treasurer.

- Jeff Mellott

LOAD-DATE: August 23, 2014

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 17, 2008 Tuesday

## 4-Day Workweeks Eyed; Shift Would Shave Commuting Costs

BYLINE: KATE PRAHLAD

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 793 words

HARRISONBURG - Some area employers are considering saving workers more than 100 commutes a year by switching to a four-day workweek.

"It's something we're considering, as long as it doesn't affect the offices that need to be covered and open to the public," said Bridget Baylor, spokeswoman for Blue Ridge Community College.

The college has previously implemented a kind of "flex schedule" during the summer, where employees had the option of working longer hours Monday through Thursday, but rising gas prices have fueled more people to take advantage of working four 10-hour days, Baylor said.

A flex policy has just been distributed to employees, and she said she's sure that quite a few will take advantage of it, adding that the process would probably involve a probationary period to make sure operations are still running just as well as they would with a five-day workweek.

"A lot of people are excited about it," Baylor said. "As long as the work gets done, if we can help people out by offering it, we will."

### Under Consideration

Pilgrim's Pride is also "looking into something along those lines to help our employees with fuel costs, and help us operate more efficiently," said Ray Atkinson, the company's public relations manager. "We are contemplating some extended shifts on four days a week."

Harrisonburg City Manager ██████████ said the city's department heads are looking into the possibility of converting to a four-day workweek, but officials would have to be selective about which types of operations could and could not change without interrupting service.

"I would put us in the info gathering stage to see where it makes the most sense," he said. "If we do, we don't want the general public to notice a difference."

While there are some advantages to a four-day workweek, the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors' "concern with that was from an office perspective, that we would be less available for the public," said Joe Paxton, Rockingham County administrator. "So, at this point we don't think we would do that, at least as it pertains to office operations."

But a number of field crews are currently working four 10-hour days, Paxton said, something that has been done before especially during the summer months. Those include water and sewer and maintenance crews, but they have been split up to cover 50 hours a week, so no operations have been cut, Paxton said.

## Changing Our Ways

The seemingly endless surge in gas prices has caused U.S. employees to change commuting habits in many ways, a survey released this month showed.

About 44 percent of respondents said they have changed their drive, sharing rides or driving a more fuel-efficient vehicle, according to staffing services company Robert Half International. The report also showed around 30 percent are attempting to work from home, and another 30 percent are looking for a job closer to home.

But with places that depend on daily shipments or regulated schedules - like the poultry plant - the change could present a planning predicament.

"You might not be able to [switch] as easily because of customer demands and a plant's schedule," Atkinson said of the Broadway poultry plant, which supplies places such as Kentucky Fried Chicken or Kroger, but also other Pilgrim's Pride plants around the country.

For example, the plant would also have to take into account U.S. Department of Agriculture requirements for production and sanitation shifts, he said.

Another option commuters are taking advantage of is mass transit: System ridership is at its highest point in 50 years, according to research by the American Public Transportation Association.

### A Growing Trend

While rural areas are at a clear disadvantage when it comes to mass transportation options, some area employees are using other methods to cut gas costs.

Paxton said the county encourages employees to carpool, and many already do.

"We have folks from West Virginia that carpool, and some from down in Augusta [County] and northern Rockingham," Paxton said. "That's been going on over the last couple of years."

The college's rural location and the scattered base of students makes it difficult for employees or students to carpool, Baylor said, but BRCC's shuttle service has seen a large increase in ridership, she said.

"More students are taking advantage of that, but employees are now looking at it as an option," Baylor said.

And it's not just rural areas that are experiencing the gas price crunch either, ██████ said.

"I think [gas prices] are affecting people across the board," ██████ said. "The federal government is looking at the same thing, and even in Northern Virginia, where they've got the Metro, they're still looking at it."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 16, 2008 Monday

## Delay Ahead For Road; Vote Thursday Could Hold Up Port Republic Project

BYLINE: CHRISTIAN K. FINKBEINER

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 639 words

HARRISONBURG - A crucial project to widen Port Republic Road will be held up if the Commonwealth Transportation Board approves a list of statewide cuts and delays in road funding.

The multimillion-dollar widening project is among several projects slated for delay or elimination, according to a list released by the Virginia Department of Transportation on Friday.

The transportation board is scheduled to vote on the state's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program, which includes the proposed delays and cuts, at its meeting Thursday in Richmond.

The Port Republic Road project, which would widen the road 6.1 miles from the city limits east to Boyers Road, will help alleviate the expected increase in traffic associated with Rockingham Memorial Hospital's new campus. The new RMH is under construction at the intersection of Port Republic and Reservoir Street.

### Budget Shortfall

In a letter to Harrisonburg Mayor Rodney Eagle and the heads of other localities, Staunton District Administrator Garrett W. Moore of VDOT said the number of projects on the agency's Six-Year Improvement Program had to be reduced due to a \$1.1 billion dip in transportation revenues.

Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] confirmed Sunday that the city had secured funding for the expansion of its portion of Port Republic, with work set to begin in about two weeks. But the county is not so fortunate.

"We already knew the funding had come up short," said Rockingham County Administrator Joe Paxton. "There had been enough money in [VDOT's Six-Year] Plan for the expansion, but we ended up with only about \$5 million."

The Board of Supervisors is asking the General Assembly and Gov. Timothy M. Kaine to consider additional funding for transportation in the central Valley, Paxton said.

At their June 11 meeting, county supervisors passed a resolution calling for Kaine and the legislature to "work together to enact a significant transportation funding package," to address the state's long-term transportation needs.

### Playing Politics?

One area lawmaker said there was no reason for alarm regarding the Port Republic Road project.

"We'll find some funding for that," said Del. Chris Saxman, R-Staunton, who represents a section of Rockingham County.

Saxman claims the governor's projections have more to do with politics than finance.

"The governor decided to decree that the budget for these transportation projects is \$1.1 billion short," the delegate said. "He made recession-based revenue assumptions, and I think he made incorrect assumptions."

Kaine is trying to convince state residents that the "economic outlook is worse than it really is," Saxman said.

"The governor is looking for a reason for a tax increase. He's doing that, in my opinion, for his legacy, to make himself seem more popular than he really was," he added.

Looking For Excuses?

Kaine's press secretary, Gordon Hickey, scoffed at Saxman's comments.

"That sounds to me like someone who's looking for an excuse not to do the job," Hickey said. "We have a real shortfall of \$1.1 billion, and the only political maneuvering is being done by people who don't want to do what the taxpayers want them to do, which is take care of business."

Other area projects slated for delay or elimination include:

- \* Southeast connector study in Rockingham County for a new location from Va. 726 near Harrisonburg city limits to U.S. 33. (delay);

- \* Interstate 81 Rockingham County interchange reconstruction at Mauzy (Exit 257) at U.S. 11 (elimination);

- \* I-81 Shenandoah County bridge replacement over the north fork of the Shenandoah River south of Exit 269 at Va. 730 (elimination);

- \* On Va. 340, the replacement of a bridge over a tributary of the south fork of the Shenandoah River, near the Rockingham County line in Page County (elimination).

Contact Christian K. Finkbeiner at 574-6274

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 20, 2008 Tuesday

## Treasurer In Transition; Shafer Works To Restore Public's Trust In City Office

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 723 words

HARRISONBURG - Since he took the job two weeks ago, acting Treasurer Jeff Shafer has been busy learning the office and trying to ease employee stress while restoring public trust.

Shafer believes some progress has been made in each of those areas. But, speaking on Thursday, he said much remains to be done.

City officials concurred that the transition, so far, appears to be going smoothly.

Acting Treasurer

Shafer, 40, the former city Deputy Commissioner of the Revenue, received Rockingham County Circuit Court Judge James Lane's appointment as acting treasurer after the judge suspended former City Treasurer Rebecca Neal pending a hearing on her removal from office.

On May 9, Neal resigned and pleaded guilty to a felony count of misusing public funds. Her sentence did not include jail time.

The plea bargain was reached after a police investigation into Neal's office resulted in a 20-count indictment in February, including eight felonies, from a Rockingham County grand jury.

Facing a trial in August, Neal remained in charge of day-to-day operations of her office.

City residents, eventually led by Councilwoman Carolyn Frank, signed a petition to remove Neal from office.

Special Election

Neal's resignation created a vacancy in the office, which will be filled with a special election.

City Council passed a resolution last week asking the circuit court to hold the election during the scheduled balloting for other offices on Nov. 4.

Frank said she is supporting Shafer's bid for election.

So far, two other candidates have expressed an interest in running.

Businesswoman Penny Paul Imeson is seeking the Republican nomination. Former businessman Bill Ney is considering seeking the Democratic nomination for the election.

Mayor Rodney Eagle has frequented the office since Shafer took over on May 2.

"Everything seemed to be in order," Eagle said Thursday.

Otherwise, Eagle said he has heard very little comment about Shafer and his new duties.

"That is surprising," he said of hearing little comment on the transition.

On Thursday, Frank said she has heard nothing but good things about Shafer's administration of the office.

"From what I hear, the employees are happy and more relaxed," Frank said.

City Manager ██████ said Shafer has opened a line of communication with the city, particularly with the finance department.

"So far, so good," ██████ said of the transition.

#### Stress Test

Shafer's former job brought him into close working contact with the treasurer's employees.

The stress of a treasurer under indictment and Neal's actions to demote one employee and fire another took its toll on the staff, he said.

"They were unsure of the future," he said. "It was just a big disruption."

"I noticed the tension," he said. "No one knew how it would play out."

"It's hard to work that way and be very pleasant and be helpful and have a good presence when you have all of that happening behind you. It's all kind of cleared up now."

One of Shafer's first acts was to reinstate the demoted employee. A few days later he rehired the fired employee.

Shafer also has been reviewing policies and procedures in the office. He has made changes but declined to comment on specifics because of security issues.

"They are not drastic changes," he said.

Shafer said he anticipates other changes as he learns more about the office's operations.

#### Cashing Checks

Among the changes, Shafer is continuing the office's no-check cashing policy.

According to court records, as treasurer Neal cashed checks in the office. Some of them came back for insufficient funds. Court records also indicate that no money was missing from the office.

Shafer called cashing anyone's checks for any amount too risky. In addition to the risk, Shafer said taxpayers also stand to lose bank interest that would have otherwise accumulated.

"We're talking pennies here, but it adds up," he said.

Shafer hopes that the changes will bring back the public's trust in the office.

The police investigation cast a shadow over the whole office, Shafer said.

Residents, he said, would ask treasurer's office employees if the money would be going to get where it was supposed to go.

"There is a lot of trust out there that I want to gain back," Shafer said. "[Taxpayers] deserve to know that their money is safe."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 16, 2008 Friday

## City Reassigns School Bus Driver; Man Involved In March Wreck Acquitted Of Running Light

BYLINE: PETE DeLEA

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 356 words

HARRISONBURG - A city school bus driver acquitted of running a traffic light - an incident police say caused a wreck that sent about two dozen students to the hospital - hasn't been allowed back behind the wheel.

Harold Long, 70, was found not guilty April 2 on a charge stemming from a March bus wreck. However, the city transportation department's accident review board made a determination that the accident was avoidable, according to Long's attorney, Brad Moyers.

Long has since been reassigned to another position with the transportation department, said City Manager

██████████. "He is not driving a bus but he remains employed by the city," ██████████ said. "We just haven't assigned him back to the bus driving duty."

### The Wreck

On March 4, Long, of Harrisonburg, was driving city Bus 32 north on South Dogwood Drive, while Bus 23 and a car were westbound on West Market Street, police said. Police said Bus 32 ran a red light and was hit by the other bus and car around 7 a.m.

Harrisonburg police cited Long with failing to obey a traffic signal.

The bus was taking students to Thomas Harrison Middle School and Harrisonburg High School.

The wreck injured 24 students, according to a city report following an evaluation of the city's emergency response. All the injuries were minor, with the most severe being a broken collarbone.

### City Investigation

Following the accident review board's determination that the accident was avoidable, Long had 10 days to appeal the decision.

Long appealed and faced the board on April 28.

In court, Moyers successfully argued that the traffic light malfunctioned, showing either a conflicting green light or having a quick cycle leading up to the wreck. He was found not guilty in Rockingham County General District Court.

Moyers said he presented similar information to the review board.

In early May, Long received a letter stating his appeal was denied. Effective May 5, he was reassigned to the position of school bus aide.

"He's disappointed," said Moyers. "He's been driving for 15 years. He does it because he likes to help the community."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 8, 2008 Thursday

## Crash Brings City Traffic To A Halt

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 187 words

HARRISONBURG - A portion of South Main Street was closed to traffic for several hours after a driver struck a utility pole between South Avenue and Rocco Drive on Wednesday morning.

The crash split a utility pole owned by the Harrisonburg Electric Commission, according to HEC General Manager Michael York.

HEC workers replaced the pole, which was split about 15 to 20 feet off the ground, York said.

"It's a big job," he said of replacing it. The work included making sure that digging at the site did not disturb any underground utilities, he said.

Electric service to some Miller Circle residents was interrupted for a few hours, York said.

Police initially blocked off both northbound lanes of South Main from South Avenue to Rocco Drive following the crash, which occurred about 9 a.m.

The lanes were reopened by 3 p.m., according to City Manager [REDACTED]

Information about the driver and the cause of the crash was unavailable as of press time Wednesday night. A Harrisonburg police evening supervisor said that the report of the incident was incomplete.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 26, 2008 Saturday

## Campaign Cancels Street-Closure Plan

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 232 words

HARRISONBURG - Former Gov. Mark Warner's announcement for U.S. Senate in Harrisonburg on May 6 will not require the closure of a portion of the city's Court Square.

The campaign has withdrawn its request to close two sides of Court Square for the 5 p.m. event, according to Warner spokesman Kevin Hall.

"We decided that we can configure it so there will be no need for a street closing," Hall said Friday.

City Manager ██████████ said he was notified Friday about the change in plans.

Warner's visit to Harrisonburg would be on the last day of a three-day state tour by Warner to formally announce his candidacy for U.S. Senate. In January, Warner said he would seek the Senate seat now held by U.S. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., who is retiring at the end of the year.

On Tuesday, the City Council approved closing a portion of Court Square for the event. But some members raised concerns about the Warner campaign request to close up to three sides of the square from 3 p.m. until 7 p.m. on a weekday.

In their street closure request, campaign officials cited public safety needs and time to set up and break down a platform for television cameras.

The city and Warner's campaign amended the request and agreed to close two sides of the square for three hours beginning at 4 p.m.

But, on Friday, the Warner campaign canceled those plans.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 22, 2008 Tuesday

## Old Building Seeks New Life; With Bridge Open, Access Comes To Former Spanky's

BYLINE: DAN WRIGHT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 527 words

HARRISONBURG - Randall See is back to where he was two years ago with the former Spanky's building. See purchased the building two years ago, just before the city condemned the pedestrian bridge that links Water Street and Court Square. Harrisonburg officials closed the walkway in May 2006 and reopened it last week after repairs.

"It took longer than expected," See said. "But we're happy with the end result and how the bridge looks."

With the walkway refurbished and open to pedestrians, See has turned his attention to finding a tenant for the building, which has been empty since late 2004 when the restaurant Spanky's shut down.

"I'm open to other uses but it seems like a natural spot for a restaurant," See said.

Marketing the property at a time when it could not be occupied was difficult, said John Elledge, See's attorney.

"Much of the building rested on the same girders that supported the bridge," Elledge said. "So that portion of the building was inaccessible."

### Rehab Tab

Rehabilitating the bridge cost a little more than \$335,000, according to City Manager [REDACTED]

The contractor, Connecticut-based Lane Construction Corp. started work in November, he said.

"We spent a year-and-a-half prior to that planning and figuring out what needed to be done," [REDACTED] said.

The planning included an engineering study that recommended replacing nine of the 10 steel beams supporting the bridge.

"The result looks so much better than what was there before," [REDACTED] said. "Even if the support beams hadn't gone bad, the top side was ready for refurbishing."

The city also transferred overhead power lines underground, making the walkway more inviting, said Donna Finnigan, owner of Finnigan's Cove Seafood Bar & Grill.

Finnigan's was "very busy" over the weekend, she said.

"We're open until 2 a.m.," she said. "And we have people coming in after the other places close."

### Cleaner Look

Business people in the downtown area agree that the refurbished bridge has eye appeal; however, any increase in traffic in their businesses is hard to quantify, said Mike Comfort, co-owner of Cally's on Court Square.

"My opinion is we're seeing more people, but we don't have any way of measuring that," Comfort said. "But it was a pain when the walkway was closed."

It took pedestrians a day or two to realize the walkway was open, said Randy Shank, owner of Shank's Bakery LLC.

"I can't tell if we have any more foot traffic," he said. "But I've heard customers comment that it's easier to get around."

For See, reopening the walkway gives him a green light to lease the Spanky's property, where he has quite an investment.

Two years ago, he purchased the building for \$260,000. And his share of fixing the walkway was \$100,500, the city said.

He's also spending up to \$50,000 to upgrade the building's plumbing and electrical systems.

Built in 1938, the building qualifies for historic tax credits that will neutralize some of the renovation expense, See said, and possibly attract a tenant.

"We have two showings this week and a third next week," See said. "I expect to have an agreement signed in the next month."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

April 10, 2008 Thursday

## Attention, It's Budget Time

SECTION: EDITORIAL

LENGTH: 291 words

Rockingham County held a public hearing on its proposed fiscal 2008-2009 budget last night, and Harrisonburg will hold a public hearing on its proposed budget on May 13. As citizens have their chance to be heard on how government spends their tax dollars, we thought it might be interesting to compare the proposed gross expenditures for both localities with those proposed 10 years ago for fiscal 1998-1999.

The April 15, 1998, edition of the Daily News-Record reported on the proposed 1998-1999 budget of then City Manager Steve Stewart, which suggested gross expenditures of \$100.6 million. On Tuesday, City Manager [REDACTED] proposed a budget with gross expenditures of \$211.7 million.

On April 16, 1998, the Daily News-Record reported on Rockingham County's approved budget for 1998-1999, which had gross expenditures of \$133.9 million. By contrast, the county's budget proposal for fiscal 2008-2009 offers gross expenditures of \$359.5 million.

A significant increase in population, increased demand for services, and the rising costs to build and operate new schools to meet the needs of that growing population have certainly driven up budgets in the city and the county. Revenue from increased housing starts and rising real estate values over the past decade has helped to fund these increased costs.

Each year, it gets harder for local officials to match revenues and expenditures, and the economic slow-down that affects the state must cause some unease. Luckily, this region is more stable economically than other parts of the state, but problems at the state level often trickle down to the localities.

Great time and effort have been put into drafting these budgets. Citizens would be well advised to add their voices to the process.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

March 26, 2008 Wednesday

## Wrong Turns?; City Self-Critical About Response To School Bus Collision, Maps Changes

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 755 words

HARRISONBURG - A lot did not go right in the city's response to a three-vehicle crash on March 4 that involved two school buses, according to an interdepartmental report.

As a result of the confusion at the scene of the early-morning incident at Dogwood Drive and West Market Street, bus drivers took students to school before emergency response crews could examine them.

Some of those students at Thomas Harrison Middle School and Harrisonburg High School were later transported to Rockingham Memorial Hospital.

Three students, one bus driver and the driver of the car involved in the crash were transported to the hospital from the scene, the report said.

In all, the report said 24 children in the two buses carrying as many as 80 students were injured.

Preliminary police reports at the time of the crash gave different numbers. Police reported then that a total of 28 people were injured, including the bus driver and the driver of the car, with seven students being taken to the hospital from the scene.

All the injuries were considered minor, with the most severe being a broken collarbone.

Harrisonburg police charged one of the bus drivers, Harold Long, with running the light at the intersection where the crash occurred.

### Poor Start

The interdepartmental report, compiled by Harrisonburg Fire Chief Larry Shifflett and completed Friday, listed problems with the response and recommendations for correcting those deficiencies.

The problems, according to the report, began from the start.

School bus drivers, who work for the city and not the school division, initially reported the crash on their radios to the city's Transportation Department and did not call 911.

When a response came, the Emergency Communications Center did not realize the extent of the injuries and sent one engine instead of two and a ladder truck, as Harrisonburg Fire Department policy dictates.

Firefighters manage the scene of an emergency and police control the traffic, the report said. But, for a time, the report said, a person identified as a civilian directed traffic.

But police took 13 minutes to arrive at the scene because the officers were having a morning meeting and were not disturbed, the report said.



"It took too long," said Police Chief Donald Harper on Tuesday of the response. The average emergency police response is two minutes, he said.

A system of overlapping shifts has been implemented so a patrol officer can respond at once, Harper said.

The report said the injury to one of the bus drivers also complicated the response because that person was unable to render assistance.

Other bus drivers arrived, taking students to school before they could be examined. That resulted in more rescue squads being needed to transport students from the schools to the hospital rather than from the scene of the crash, report said.

And, students who got off the bus did not receive any instructions on what to do, the report said. As a result, the school system was unable to immediately identify who had been injured, the report said.

#### Corrections

The report listed a number of corrective responses.

The Harrisonburg Transportation Department has begun developing policies advising bus drivers of what they should do in a similar situation, the report said.

The school system and the city will work on bus evacuation drills, the report said. Also, changes are coming to fire department policies for monitoring students at accidents.

The policy of two engines and a ladder truck responding to school bus accidents will be maintained regardless of whether injuries are reported, the report said.

And the report called for school officials to tell students what they should do in case of an emergency.

City and school officials said that they already have taken action to correct the problems and emphasize the roles of their staffs.

Schools Superintendent Donald Ford said Tuesday night that his staff is writing out the responsibilities of each staff member.

City Manager ██████████ said that he has taken action to make sure such problems do not arise again.

"Everyone responded with good intentions," ██████████ said. "Sometimes good intentions are not the right response."

The report, Shifflett stressed, does not blame anyone for the problems.

Mayor Rodney Eagle said the incident should be used as a learning experience.

"I am sure there are some things that should have been done differently," Eagle said. "This will give us a heads-up that we need to look at these things."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

February 5, 2008 Tuesday

## The ARC Pays City Its Share Of Simms

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 260 words

HARRISONBURG - The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County on Monday paid the city \$262,850 toward its obligation for the former Simms school, according to City Manager [REDACTED]

The money appears to satisfy The Arc's obligation to the city. Last month, Harrisonburg City Council indicated a willingness to limit The Arc's repayment to about half the group's initial \$500,000 obligation.

Council members have expressed gratitude to the group for working diligently to raise what money they could toward the debt.

The Arc uses the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center as its headquarters and for the occupational training or Op Shop program for the mentally handicapped.

The Arc shares space in the center with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Together, the two groups agreed in 2003 to pay the city \$2 million of the total cost for improving the Simms building, which at the time was estimated to be more than \$5 million.

According to its Web site, The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, serves people with developmental disabilities regardless of age.

The Op Shop, which is The Arc's largest program, started in 1983 as a day program for adults whose age and functioning levels prevented them from qualifying for other services.

Op Shop participants can earn a paycheck by making craft items, preparing bulk mailings and doing small assembly jobs, while also sharpening skills for possible future employment, said the Web site.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

January 24, 2008 Thursday

## Gapping The Bridge; Long-Condemned Pedestrian Span Taken Out To Prepare For Replacement

BYLINE: DAN WRIGHT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 501 words

HARRISONBURG - Almost two years after it was closed, construction crews this week removed the pedestrian bridge from the alley between Water Street and Court Square.

A popular thoroughfare for pedestrians who used it as a shortcut between Water Street and Court Square, the bridge has been closed to foot traffic since it was condemned by the city in May 2006.

The bridge's supporting beams, which were also hauled away this week, were rusted away and the concrete walkway was beginning to crack, according to Bob Turner, job superintendent with Lane Construction Corp. of Northern Virginia.

"I've done this for 40 years and I've never seen anything in as bad a shape as that little bridge," Turner said. "The only thing holding it together is that it was [one piece.]"

Turner's crew finished removing the beams Tuesday.

Because part of the former Spanky's restaurant building rested on the beams, the job became even more complicated, he explained.

"So we had to add support to the building from underneath to get the beams out," Turner said. "Once we put the new beams in, we'll have to remove our support system."

### \$300,000 Project

Turner estimates that it will take about five weeks to finish the work on the beams, which are being fabricated by Rockingham Steel.

The beams should be ready in about two weeks. Placing them will take another week, and removing the building's temporary support will take another two weeks, Turner said. Then the alley will be resurfaced.

When the walkway will actually be reopened to pedestrian traffic is unclear, said Richard McDonough, Lane's assistant district manager.

Work on the project didn't begin as soon as expected and engineers didn't know that the Spanky's building rested on the beams, he explained.

"When we might finish, I'd rather not say," McDonough said. "We keep running into new issues and new conditions."

The city's contract with Lane is a time-and-materials agreement, which bills for labor hours and cost of materials.

City Manager ██████████ estimates the project will cost around \$300,000.

#### Proven Property

When the bridge was closed, the city also condemned the eastern portion of the Spanky's building.

Randall See, president of the Resource Network, had purchased the building about a month before the city's action.

See's plan is to lease the building, said Mike Hendrickson, commercial associate and analyst with Coldwell Banker Commercial Funkhouser Realtors.

Hendrickson is marketing the building for See.

"We have had interest from a number of parties," Hendrickson said. "We feel that the delay in getting this leased has partially been due to the status of the bridge."

The building is a proven restaurant/retail location, he added. Spanky's closed three years ago after three decades in business.

"Once the bridge is completed and we can clean the space up a bit, it will show much better," Hendrickson said. "We are confident we will have a solid tenant within just a few months."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

January 8, 2008 Tuesday

## Agency Remains Indebted To City; Council Due Report On Boys & Girls Clubs

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 481 words

HARRISONBURG - Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] expects the Boys & Girls Clubs of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County will come up with just \$33,000 of the group's \$1.5 million obligation to the city by the end of January.

The deadline is when the entire loan for the renovations and expansion of the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center comes due, according to city officials.

[REDACTED] on Monday based the amount anticipated from the Boys & Girls Clubs on information the nonprofit agency submitted in preparation for its report at tonight's City Council meeting, which starts at 7 p.m.

In a telephone message on Monday, Heather Denman, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs, said she would not comment on the forthcoming report before speaking to the council.

It was unclear on Monday what action the council would take after hearing her report.

### Bottom Line

According to figures cited by [REDACTED] the Boys & Girls Clubs raised \$295,067 but spent \$261,703 in fundraising costs.

The remaining \$33,334 is about 2.26 percent of the clubs' \$1.5 million obligation to the city.

Three months ago, Denman said \$750,000 had been pledged over the next three to five years.

But [REDACTED] said on Monday that the club does not expect to be able to collect \$454,000 of the pledges.

Before hearing Denman's report, the council plans to hold a public hearing to consider a transfer of \$2 million from the city's budget reserve to cover the Boys and Girls Clubs' debt, along with that of The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.

The Arc owes \$500,000. Both the Arc and Boys & Girls Clubs pledged to help the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority pay back a loan to renovate the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center. The center serves as headquarters for both nonprofit agencies.

"If there is a shortfall," said City Councilman Charles Chenault on Monday, "we are going to try to find out why and what needs to be done about it."

The city is stepping in to make sure the loan is paid when it comes due at the end of the month, Chenault said.

In mid-December, The Arc Executive Director Mary Ellen Chewing reported that her organization had raised \$257,667 toward the group's \$500,000 debt.

The Boys & Girls Clubs was expected to make a report last month on its fundraising efforts. But the club delayed it until tonight.

Waiting For The Report

Mayor Rodney Eagle withheld comment on the figures until after the tonight's meeting.

Along with the numbers, Eagle said he also wanted to know more about the club's programs and who participates in them.

If the council opts to cover The Arc's and Boys & Girls Clubs' debt, the city could still require future reimbursement from the agencies, Eagle said.

"It's going to be a hard call either way," he said. "Until I get that report, there is not much I can say about it."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

December 14, 2007 Friday

## Price Tags Inch Up On City Projects

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 544 words

HARRISONBURG - City department spending requests for fiscal 2008-09 include street projects, a firehouse expansion and a system that will allow emergency vehicles to proceed more quickly through the city.

The plan, called the Capital Improvement Program, lists projects with a total estimated cost of about \$25 million, compared to slightly more than \$24 million last December.

But City Manager [REDACTED] said the city has about \$15 million available in the General Fund to pay for the projects.

The General Fund includes money for departments such as fire, police, and parks and recreation. The projects do not include other departments such as water and sewer that primarily rely on fees to raise revenue for operations and capital projects.

Harrisonburg City Council will use the Capital Improvement Program to make funding decisions when developing the fiscal 2008-09 budget, he said.

### Stone Spring/Erickson

The spending requests include \$14.8 million for Stone Spring Road/Erickson Avenue in the coming fiscal year.

City officials report that the cost of the 3.2-mile project is now estimated at \$62.3 million. The city expects funding help from the state and federal governments.

City officials are considering borrowing about \$26 million in early 2009 to pay for the project.

The city plans to widen the existing streets to five lanes and add additional sections of road that will link the streets at South Main Street.

The improvements include bicycle lanes and sidewalks.

The first part of the project involves relocating Pear Street to allow removal of the train trestle underpass that limits access to one vehicle at a time.

City officials hope to start work on relocating Pear Street late next year at an estimated cost of \$13.4 million.

### Reservoir Street

The Capital Improvements Program also lists \$1.6 million next fiscal year for improvements to Reservoir Street.

The CIP lists the total project cost at \$9.4 million.

City officials plan to widen Reservoir Street from two lanes to five lanes, and are considering adding a center turn lane initially before adding a lane to each side later.

#### Fire And Rescue

Another request is designed to improve the response time of emergency vehicles, the report said.

The \$360,000 system would allow emergency personnel to turn signals green to clear a way for them.

The system consists of transmitters for emergency vehicles and receivers on traffic signals.

"This system will help reduce response times of all emergency vehicles," the report said.

Also among the requests is \$375,000 for a single-story 4,000-square-foot addition to Engine Company 4 on Rock Street.

The space would be for training and storage, and a place to repair gear when responding to an emergency.

#### East Market Street

Also, the plan includes a request for \$290,000 for East Market Street improvements from Linda Lane to Country Club Road.

The plan calls for sidewalks, crosswalks and signals, lengthening turn lanes and adding an eastbound right-turn lane at University Boulevard.

"Due to increased traffic and development in this area improvements must be made to accommodate traffic and pedestrians," the report said. Traffic in this area is equal to Interstate 81, the report said.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

November 1, 2007 Thursday

## Valley Fares Best During Drought; Kaine Urges Wise Use Of Water Statewide

BYLINE: KATE PRAHLAD

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 354 words

HARRISONBURG - Drought conditions that have plagued the state have been least damaging in the central Shenandoah Valley, officials said.

"You've been really lucky," said Terry Wagner, director of the water resource division at the state Department of Environmental Quality. "The pattern of precipitation has really favored the Shenandoah Valley."

Of the regions experiencing the dry spells, the "[Shenandoah] Valley of Virginia is in the best state," said Wagner, who is also chairman of the Drought Monitoring Task Force.

Statewide, Gov. Timothy M. Kaine on Tuesday urged localities to enact water conservation measures and to update drought contingency plans. This announcement comes on the heels of his Oct. 18 executive order declaring a state of emergency in Virginia and his request for federal disaster assistance.

The extent of a drought's impacts is often apparent in an area's water supply, Wagner said.

"Our water supply has actually increased during the drought, so we're in good shape to provide citizens with the water they need," said Joseph S. Paxton, Rockingham County administrator.

He credited a large aquifer on the eastern side of the county for the strong and consistent water supply.

"Many places rely on surface water, but we rely on groundwater," Paxton said. "It's more reliable."

In the past, the city has never declared anything more than voluntary water conservation measures, said City Manager [REDACTED]

"There are certain benchmarks we observe when we start the voluntary conservation," [REDACTED] said. "We've always been fortunate."

The governor's message was broad, but "the real take-home message is wise water use," Wagner said.

"Assure that there are no water leaks in your home; limit showers to periods of less than five minutes; turn off the water when you brush your teeth; and only operate dishwashers and clothes washers with full loads," Kaine suggested through a press release.

Even with the area's better conditions, Paxton said the county still encourages people to conserve all the time.

"Use common sense," he said. "Water is a scarce resource even though our supply is strong."

LOAD-DATE: August 23, 2014

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

October 25, 2007 Thursday

## Court Square Deal Fizzles; Bids To Create School Offices All Rejected

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 630 words

HARRISONBURG - The future of the city's building at Court Square One became less certain after government officials rejected four bids to renovate it for school office space.

The city set a limit of \$1.6 million for the renovations but the lowest bid came in at \$2 million, according to city officials. The high bid was nearly \$2.25 million, they said.

Now, the building is back on the market and Harrisonburg School Board and City Council members will likely discuss school division office space when they meet next week.

This is the second time Harrisonburg has had to drop public plans for the building.

The city purchased the building in 2004 with the hope that it could become a downtown technology center. When those plans fell through last year, city and school officials raised the possibility that the building could become school offices.

But those hopes dimmed earlier this month, when the city rejected the four contractors' bids to do the work.

CMS Inc. of Charlottesville submitted the apparent low bid of nearly \$2.02 million, while Harrisonburg Construction Co. Inc. submitted the next highest one at \$2.07 million.

Other bids came from Lantz Construction Co. of Broadway for \$2.2 million, and Taft Construction Inc. of Culpeper, whose bid of nearly \$2.25 million was the highest one submitted.

The Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority, which owns the building, rejected the bids after school officials said they did not meet the division's needs.

City Manager [REDACTED] said the council had offered to provide an additional \$300,000 to make the project work, if the school division also provided the same amount for a total of \$600,000.

But School Board member Tom Mendez said the additional money would not have been enough to finish the building as needed.

"We were clearly trying to work with City Council on that," Mendez said.

Already A Big Investment

To date, the city has about \$1.3 million invested in the property, said Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority Executive Director Michael Wong.

The city spent \$1 million for the property, then spent \$200,000 for asbestos removal, Wong said. In addition, he said, the city paid for architectural plans for the technology center and for School Board offices.



Plans for the school offices came out of two full days of meetings with architects and school administrative staff, said Schools Superintendent Donald Ford.

But, Ford said, some critical items were left out of the basic bids, which exceeded the City Council's spending limit.

Items left out of the bidding to be completed later included a training area with space for 25 to 30 people and a new elevator to the center of the building, Ford said.

But the items were included as optional work that would have increased the cost of the project when completed, according to Wong.

"The bids that were returned," Ford said, "did not include work essential to us in order to have appropriate central office space."

#### Running Out of Room

School officials over the years have sought new and additional space for the superintendent and other central office administrators.

Currently, Ford and 20 others in the division work in a converted house at 317 S. Main St.

In addition, Ford estimated the division had another 32 people in the Harrisonburg Public Safety Building on North Main Street. The offices at that location are primarily for special education, Ford said.

"There was certainly an attractiveness to our school central office staff being in the downtown area," Ford said.

But the bottom line is that the cost of renovating Court Square One has become too expensive, ██████ said.

"It became more cost-efficient to build a new building or try to find a new site," ██████ said.

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The Daily News Leader (Stanton, Virginia)

October 2, 2007 Tuesday

## Waynesboro, Harrisonburg respond to payday issues

BYLINE: Lauren Fulbright lfulbright@newsleader.com

SECTION: LOCAL; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 366 words

By Lauren Fulbright/staff

STAUNTON -- Copies of Staunton's payday loan resolution have been sent to localities across the state, and some city councils have started to respond.

Last week, Harrisonburg City Council passed a payday resolution very similar to Staunton's.

On Sept. 14, Staunton City Council unanimously passed a resolution that asked the state legislature to cap interest rates for all consumer loans at 36 percent.

In Waynesboro, Councilwoman Nancy Dowdy has asked the city attorney to draft an ordinance for council's consideration. But not all council members agree that it is the city's role to try to influence the legislature.

"This has been a concern of mine for a long time," said Dowdy.

Dowdy said that in her former role as the executive director of the Greater-Augusta United Way, she became very familiar with the population that payday loans serve.

"I think folks don't understand when they start getting into this cycle what the ramifications can be for them," she said.

Once people enter the cycle, it's difficult for them to get out, she said.

Dowdy said it is never her intent to put anyone out of business, including payday lenders. However, she would favor a rate cap.

"The banks certainly survive on a reasonable interest rate," she said.

Councilman Frank Lucente said he does not like to see anyone being taken advantage of, but he thinks payday loans are a legislative issue.

"It shouldn't be taken up by the city, because we don't legislate it," he said.

If people are concerned about payday lending, they should contact their legislators individually, he said. "It's not for the city council to dictate what the legislature should do," he said.

In Harrisonburg, the payday resolution passed unanimously. City Manager [REDACTED] said council members were concerned that payday loans could cause trouble for the families who can least afford it. Members also were concerned that the loans might negatively affect military families, he said.

Councilman Bruce Elder helped draft Staunton's resolution.



"I am very pleased," he said about Harrisonburg's decision.

Elder said that he has received inquiries from six city councils, and heard that Winchester is also considering the issue.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

September 1, 2007 Saturday

## Citizen Academy Gives City Residents Scoop On Harrisonburg

BYLINE: HANNAH NORTHEY

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 509 words

HARRISONBURG - Sometimes it's more than word-of-mouth that makes something popular. Sometimes it's how intelligently those words are stated.

When John Marr, who's lived in Harrisonburg for eight years, saw his friends could speak about city issues, departments and rules with confidence, he got interested.

After that, he got involved.

Marr is one of 12 pupils at Harrisonburg's second Citizen Academy, a 12-week program that allows city residents to learn about departments and services.

"One of the reasons I joined was because my friends were able to explain things a lot better," he said. "It's nice to have something to back up what you're saying."

### Past To Future

At the academy's first meeting on Thursday in the City Council Chambers, participants learned about the city's past and its political future.

City Manager Emeritus Roger Baker spoke of the year 1779, when Thomas Harrison deeded 2 1/2 acres of his land to the public good, creating the city of Harrisonburg.

Baker spoke of Confederate and Union soldiers passing through the streets of Harrisonburg between 1861 and 1864.

Throughout his speech, he explained how the city grew through annexations, gained universities and a hospital, and eventually developed into an independent city that now has 42,780 people.

What's more, Baker observed, the independent city is run by a council-manager form of government, a representative system where all power is concentrated in the elected council. The council then hires a manager to oversee the delivery of public services, he explained.

"This is truly a city run by the citizens," he said.

### Newcomers, New Questions

For participants new to the area, the Citizen Academy offered a way to learn about the city and make connections.

Greta Ann Herin, a biology professor at Eastern Mennonite University who moved to the city two years ago, said she wanted to learn about her new home.

"I appreciate that Harrisonburg is the size where I can make a difference," she said.

But even for residents who lived in the city for years, there was more to learn. [REDACTED] the city manager, taught the room about the roles of the City Council, mayor and manager.

[REDACTED] said he is happy the academy is meeting again because more residents should be knowledgeable about city politics.

"A lot of people don't understand [the government's] structure here," he said to the crowd.

The night ended with a presentation by Earl Thumma, the city's attorney. He explained that the city operates under "Dillon Rule," which maintains that a political subdivision of a state is connected to the state as a child is connected to a parent.

"In other words, you can only do what the state allows you to do," he said.

Another point Thumma made, was that the city is entitled to sovereign immunity, a doctrine that states the government cannot commit a legal wrong and is immune from civil suit or criminal prosecution.

"A king can do no wrong," he said. "This is a very interesting and often misunderstood area of law."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 12, 2007 Thursday

## No Wireless For City Yet; Harrisonburg Search For Provider Continues

BYLINE: DAN WRIGHT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 752 words

HARRISONBURG - City officials are negotiating with several providers for a broadband wireless network now that the franchise with a Winchester firm has been revoked.

On Tuesday, Harrisonburg City Council voted to accept an offer by Mark Bayliss, chief executive officer of World AirWaves LLC, to terminate the franchise agreement, said City Manager [REDACTED]

Last August, the city had awarded World AirWaves the franchise to set up a citywide wireless broadband network using the latest Internet protocol, IPv6.

"We had to pull the plug on it," said Mayor Rodney Eagle. "The city is looking at other suppliers, but we were in no position to do anything until we cleared the decks with World AirWaves."

Under the agreement, World AirWaves was to install and operate the broadband wireless system and pay for it with subscriptions. The city would have had no capital expenditures, according to [REDACTED]. The city incurred some expense in staff time on the project.

"By the end of 2006, we expected citywide wireless to be available," [REDACTED] said. "It was supposed to be phased in, starting in downtown and moving in concentric circles to cover the city."

### Multiple Providers

Several companies are interested in picking up where World AirWaves left off, according to Jim Barnes, assistant economic development director for technology.

The franchise is "an open agreement," Barnes added, so the city could have multiple providers.

"They would have to be [technologically] compatible with each other," Barnes said. "But more than one provider puts us in a better supply-and-demand situation, due to competition between the companies."

### Deadline Looming

This is not fantasyland technology, Barnes added.

"This technology is being used now," he said. "It's on the ground in Iraq and on [U.S. Navy] ships."

Businesses and municipalities that want to interface with the federal government will have to be using IPv6 by 2008.

"A lot of companies have that federal mandate looming," Barnes said. "And they are moving very fast in this direction."



About 175 U.S. cities or regions have citywide or partial wireless broadband systems; a similar number are being planned in others, according to MuniWireless, an industry Web site that monitors municipal wireless projects.

The MuniWireless State of the Market Report projects that \$460 million will be spent on municipal wireless projects this year.

Rhode Island has proposed a statewide network and California plans a wireless network that would span dozens of Silicon Valley municipalities, the report said.

#### Technical Difficulties

A number of those projects have hit speed bumps, the reports says. Many cities and providers underestimated the number of antennas required. Others had trouble with signal penetration through metal walls. Reliability has been a common issue, the report said.

Cities create a buzz, make promises and fail to deliver, said Justin Creasy, chief technology officer and senior programmer of Immerge Technologies Inc. in Harrisonburg.

"I think World AirWaves overpromised on what they could deliver," Creasy said. "When you're trying to do wireless and the new IPv6, it's twice the complications."

The new technology along with the wireless network compounds the level of difficulty.

#### Businesses Draw

When Harrisonburg officials began discussing a broadband wireless network, Creasy was intrigued.

"There are other things we love about the city," he said. "But a wireless network is a big draw."

But it has to be a good network.

Immerge is a small business, with less than 10 employees, and it has its own network, he added.

"Why would a business leave its own network for a city network unless it's better, cheaper or more reliable," Creasy asked.

#### Public Safety

A wireless umbrella covering the city is not only a marketing tool to attract technology companies but also a service to the public, Barnes said.

Public safety is the top application of municipal wireless systems, the MuniWireless report said.

Police, fire and rescue departments would have a higher level of communication with broadband wireless, Barnes explained.

For example, a rescue worker at a crash site could set up a video stream to communicate with an emergency room physician, Barnes explained. And police or firefighters on the way to an emergency could control traffic lights from the fire truck or police vehicle, he added.

"That could save lives," Barnes said. "And that's a significant reason to put this technology in."

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 9, 2007 Monday

## New Manager Knows City's Needs; ██████████ An Experienced Hand

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 694 words

HARRISONBURG - On his third day on the job, City Manager ██████████ took a hammer and a few scraps of wood with him on a downtown inspection tour.

He used the wedges to straighten the flags for the Fourth of July observance.

Adjusting the flags was a small task compared to the others ██████████ faces as Harrisonburg's new city manager.

"It's just a continuation of things that already have been in progress," Mayor Rodney Eagle said.

### Transition

██████████ 44, who had been assistant city manager for six years, takes the reins from Roger Baker, who will retire from the city on Nov. 2. Baker's role in the meantime will be, in part, to help with the transition.

██████████ knowledge of Harrisonburg made him an immediate front-runner to succeed Baker. Last month, the council hired ██████████ to a two-year contract at \$137,500 a year.

"He's pretty much on top of things," said Councilwoman Carolyn Frank. "He knows our strengths. He knows our challenges. He knows our opportunities."

During the next three months, Baker will take the lead for the city on downtown improvements under the Streetscape program, developing amenities for the framers' market and repairing the alley bridge connecting Water Street with Court Square.

Council members expect that Baker's attention to these projects will give ██████████ time to make the transition from assistant to city manager and deal with other issues facing the city.

"The fact that ██████████ is familiar with them is a big plus," Eagle said.

### Street Work

Road projects will continue to be at or near the top of the council's priorities, said Councilman Charles Chenault.

Work to extend Linda Lane between Country Club and Smithland roads is under way. The street extension will provide access to the new Skyline Middle School and Smithland Elementary School complex, which is scheduled to open next summer.

The city also is moving toward widening Port Republic Road to the city limits, and starting the first phase of a connection between Erickson Avenue and Stone Spring Road.

Rockingham Memorial Hospital's move to Port Republic Road has given these projects added urgency.

#### Public Relations

Beyond the bricks and mortar, the council wants ██████ who considers himself a facilitator, to improve communication between the city and residents.

"He relates well to people," Eagle said. "He communicates well, and he follows through."

██████ said Frank, is able to diffuse situations. "He seems to command the respect of people when you have to disagree," she said.

██████ said Chenault, relates well to the public. "He is extremely consumer oriented," he said.

#### Administrative Role

The new city manager has work ahead of him in reviewing the city's departments and streamlining operations, Chenault said.

He also wants ██████ to keep Harrisonburg's pay scale competitive to retain its employees. Personnel turnover has been issue in the city, particularly in the police department.

Earlier this spring, the council, on Baker's recommendation, took steps to raise the pay of police patrol officers in addition to a citywide pay increase.

#### ██████ Goals

In his own "vision" outline, ██████ said his desire is to create the city the council desires, as expressed by residents.

But his personal vision, ██████ said, includes continuing to improve relations with colleges and universities, with Rockingham County and the general public.

"We do a lot now," said ██████ a 1985 alum of James Madison University.

██████ also said in his vision statement that the city must meet the demands of Harrisonburg's growth while controlling costs.

Also, ██████ wants to develop the "next generation" of leaders in the city's departments. Many current managers, he said, are approaching retirement age.

#### Business Acumen

Meeting the city's needs, Chenault said, will require careful management of Harrisonburg's resources.

From a local government standpoint, Chenault said ██████ has a "very good" business perspective.

"Money and finances are the name of the game," Chenault said.

The city can expect results from ██████ Eagle said.

"The bottom line is that he gets things done," Eagle said.

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

July 6, 2007 Friday

## Sewer Revamp Costs Mount

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: FRONT PAGE

LENGTH: 520 words

**MOUNT CRAWFORD** - The cost of planned improvements to the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Regional Sewer Authority plant has grown again, as the estimate now stands at \$85 million, government officials said Thursday.

The new estimate is 15.5 percent more than one reported in May. And, with Harrisonburg the biggest customer of the sewer system, city residents also may see their rates rise even more than previously thought.

The newest price tag comes before the authority is scheduled to open contract bids Aug. 2. The authority's board is expected to approve a contract in September.

The planned improvements, which are mandated as part of an effort to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, will expand the plant's sewage capacity from 16 million gallons per day to 22 mgpd.

In addition to Harrisonburg, the sewer plant also serves Bridgewater, Dayton, Mount Crawford and a portion of Rockingham County.

### Market Forces

The driving force behind the higher estimate is the construction market, said Authority Executive Director Curtis Poe. Relatively few contractors, Poe said, specialize in the work required to complete the improvements.

Engineers reported, he said, that 64 projects similar to the improvements at the Mount Crawford plant are expected to take place in Virginia during the next five years.

"You pay a premium for their services," Poe said.

An estimate of \$73.6 million given by the authority in May, he said, was prepared for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality before the project's planning was completed.

The most recent estimate is based on final plans for bidding, Poe said.

Harrisonburg City Manager [REDACTED] hopes the engineers' latest estimate is high.

"The market is still open," [REDACTED] said.

### State Help

The \$85 million estimate is the second revision for the project. The \$73.6 million figure released in late May was \$13.6 million more than the project's first estimate, which was reported last fall.

As the price has risen, so has the state's obligation to help pay for the project, Poe said.



A state grant that would help pay for the work would be based on a percentage of the cost, he said, and the authority plans to use low-interest loans from the state to cover the remaining expense of the project.

Localities are borrowing the money and anticipate paying the debt service over 20 years with higher sewer rates.

#### Sewer Rates

The amount city residents would pay based on the latest estimate was not available Thursday.

Harrisonburg Water and Sewer Director Mike Collins, however, previously stated that sewer rates could go up 48 percent from current levels by 2010, based on the earlier estimate.

Collins said that customers using 5,000 gallons a month could see their bill increase from \$15.96 now to \$23.61 by 2010 if the project were to cost \$73.6 million.

The money raised from the rate increase would go to cover the city's share of the improvements, Collins has said.

To pay back its share of the state loan, Harrisonburg would have to pay an annual debt service of \$1.9 million, Collins has said of the \$73.6 million estimate.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 27, 2007 Wednesday

## ██████████ To Take City Manager Job

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 345 words

HARRISONBURG - ██████████ after six years as assistant city manager, was promoted Tuesday by City Council to become Harrisonburg's new city manager.

██████████ will succeed City Manager Roger Baker, who plans to retire this fall.

██████████ takes over the job on July 1 with a two-year contract at \$137,500 a year. Baker will work on special projects until he retires.

### Experienced Candidate

██████████ experience in the city was a critical factor in his selection, said Mayor Rodney Eagle.

"He's a natural to step in and hit the ground running," Eagle said.

██████████ 44, said he looked forward to the city's possibilities.

"I am extremely optimistic," he said. "The city is moving in a good direction."

### Career Path

██████████ a 1985 James Madison University graduate, grew up at Clifton Forge.

He came back to Harrisonburg after eight years as assistant county administrator in Botetourt County. Before that, ██████████ was town manager of Narrows.

"I had always hoped for the opportunity to come back," ██████████ said of Harrisonburg.

██████████ hopes the city is the last stop for he and Shelly, his wife. They have three children: Ryan, 22, at Wheaton College in Illinois; Whitney, 19, at James Madison University; and Heather, 16, at Harrisonburg High School.

"I give him the credit," ██████████ said of Baker, "of putting me in the position where I am tonight."

### New Roles

██████████ succeeds Baker, 60, who will retire on Nov. 2, completing 31 years of public service, 20 of those years with Harrisonburg.

On Sunday, Baker will assume the title of city manager emeritus, with full pay until he retires.

He will take on special capital projects, especially those in downtown, Eagle said.

"Roger has served the city well," Eagle said. "He has done a great job, and, hopefully, he will continue to serve on some of the boards and committees."

With their roles reversed, ██████ and Baker will work together on the transition over the next several months.

"I appreciate the time we are going to have over the next several months," ██████ said.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 6, 2007 Wednesday

## City Manager To Retire; Baker Announces His Plan To Step Down In November

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 646 words

HARRISONBURG - As anticipated, City Manager Roger Baker announced his retirement Tuesday.

Mayor Rodney Eagle said the City Council will consider the process for hiring a new city manager beginning with its next meeting on June 12.

"We'll make an announcement as quickly as we possibly can," Eagle said.

At least one councilman, Charles Chenault, supports promoting Assistant City Manager [REDACTED] to the position.

### Contract Extension

At a press conference in front of the Municipal Building, Baker, 60, said he would retire Nov. 2, completing 31 years of public service, 20 of those years with Harrisonburg.

Although his contract expires at the end of the month, Eagle said the council and Baker have a gentleman's agreement to allow him to stay until then.

If formal action is needed, Eagle said he expected no opposition.

The council had put off formal discussions on how to find a successor until Baker made his announcement. Baker said the council could conduct a job search or name someone already on staff.

[REDACTED] would be considered for the job, Eagle said.

### Possible Successor

The council, the mayor added, has not yet asked [REDACTED] 44, if he is interested in the job.

A 1985 graduate of James Madison University, [REDACTED] has been with the city for six years, all of them as Baker's deputy.

[REDACTED] declined to comment on the job or if he intended to apply for it.

Chenault said [REDACTED] should get the promotion because he has proven himself more than capable.

Promoting him, Chenault said, would send a message to city employees that those who learn on the job can get first crack at promotions.

### City Career

Chenault and Eagle both attended Baker's press conference.



"Roger has been a friend of the city of Harrisonburg ever since he's been here," Eagle said.

Baker holds a master's degree in public administration from Murray State University in Murray, Ky. Baker, an Air Force veteran, has worked in Virginia local government since 1975, including stops in Covington and Clifton Forge.

Baker arrived in Harrisonburg in 1987. He served as assistant city manager, and then acting city manager during a transition period between Marvin Milam and Steve Stewart.

On Sept. 2, 2000 - his birthday - Baker started his job as city manager.

"I am going to miss some of the day-to-day challenges that we have," Baker said.

Baker pointed with pride to street projects, including the construction of Mount Clinton Pike between North Main Street and Virginia Avenue, among his accomplishments.

#### Golf Controversy

He also included the construction of municipal golf course Heritage Oaks among the list of the city's accomplishments during his tenure.

The golf course stirred great controversy in 2000, when the debate over whether to build it divided the city. The course was eventually built and opened in 2002.

Baker was assistant city manager at the time.

"I hope people can get over their feelings for that and go out and look at [the course]," Baker said on Tuesday. "It's a beautiful facility. It teaches children a lot of things they need for life and for living and can carry with them forever."

#### More To Do

Baker's wife, Linda, was among his well-wishers on Tuesday.

She said she is pleased that her husband of 31 years would soon retire.

"I am happy to have him to myself," she said.

But Eagle told the audience that he hoped Baker's service to the city would not end after his retirement.

Council members have talked informally to Baker about carrying on some of his duties, including representing the city at the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Regional Sewer Authority.

The authority is involved with improvements to the sewer treatment plant, which by the latest estimate would cost more than \$73 million and take three years to complete.

"We certainly don't want to waste your experience and expertise," Eagle said to Baker.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

June 2, 2007 Saturday

## Water St. Walkway: Anyone Want This Project?; City Can't Find Bidder To Fix Alley

BYLINE: DAN WRIGHT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 397 words

HARRISONBURG - The alley between Water Street and Court Square, closed for more than a year now, may remain closed awhile longer.

Engineers have determined that the walkway, which crosses Blacks Run, is unsafe for pedestrian traffic.

But no one has submitted a bid to repair the walkway, said Assistant City Manager [REDACTED]

"We had four or five [contractors] at a pre-bid conference," [REDACTED] said. "But none of them submitted bids."

Repairing the walkway is a complex project, he added.

An engineering study by Roanoke-based Mattern & Craig recommended replacing nine of 10 steel beams that support the walkway.

That would require shoring up the walkway while the old beams are cut out and new ones are placed, the study said.

Mattern & Craig estimated the cost of the project at \$201,700.

The city had to get approval from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission for the project, [REDACTED] added.

"The work was designed so that there wouldn't be any equipment in [Blacks Run]," [REDACTED] said. "That makes the project even more difficult."

Frustrating

The alley connecting the southwest corner of Court Square with Water Street, a major pedestrian thoroughfare in downtown, closed in late April 2006.

In recent months, it has been a regular topic at Harrisonburg City Council meetings, said Mayor Rodney Eagle.

Council has decided that having the walkway open is crucial to downtown, he added.

"No matter who does it, and at almost any expense, we need to get it done," Eagle said. "We hope to get someone soon."

Downtown merchants had to deal with the closed walkway at the same time the Water Street parking garage was being renovated, said Donna Finnigan, owner of Finnigans Cove Seafood Bar & Grill.

"I can't really put a number on how much business we lost," Finnigan said. "People on the Court Square side can't walk over here and people that drive here have no place to park.

"I get the feeling that nobody wants this project."

The city may accept a proposal on a time-and-materials basis, ██████ said. Under a time-and-materials agreement, the contractor is paid for the materials used and the time required to do the work.

Such a contract would include a not-to-exceed amount, he added.

"It has more flexibility and eliminates the waiting time for taking bids," ██████ said. "It allows the engineer to expedite the work."

Contact Dan Wright at 574-6293 or [dwright@dnronline.com](mailto:dwright@dnronline.com)

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Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)

May 23, 2007 Wednesday

## City OKs Work On Linda Lane; Street Extension To Give Access To Schools

BYLINE: JEFF MELLOTT

SECTION: VALLEY VIRGINIA

LENGTH: 194 words

HARRISONBURG - The city plans to sign a contract with Perry Engineering Co. Inc. of Winchester to build an extension of Linda Lane, said Harrisonburg City Manager Roger Baker on Tuesday.

Perry Engineering submitted the low bid of nearly \$5.3 million on Friday. DLB Inc. of Hillsville submitted a bid of about \$5.8 million.

The contract is to build a four-lane road that will connect Country Club Road with Smithland Road. The extension also will provide access to the new Skyline Middle School and Smithland Elementary School.

The street extension includes plans for sidewalks and accommodations for bicyclists.

The project is to be completed by June 15, 2008, Baker said.

If the work is delayed, teachers and staff members moving into the schools would have access, if needed, to the schools from the construction road off Smithland Road, Assistant City Manager [REDACTED] said.

The schools are being built to alleviate crowding conditions and anticipated growth in Harrisonburg City Schools.

The opening of the schools will be accompanied by moving fifth-graders systemwide to the city's two middle schools.

Contact Jeff Mellott at 574-6290 or [jmellott@dnronline.com](mailto:jmellott@dnronline.com)

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The Roanoke Times (VA)

July 26, 1998

**A GUIDE TO LIVING IN BOTETOURT COUNTY;  
DISCOVER ROANOKE VALLEY**

SECTION: Pg. 39

LENGTH: 1420 words

Following is basic information about setting up a household, services, government, education and recreation in Botetourt County.

**BASICS**

Utilities

American Electric Power: (800) 956-4237

Craig-Botetourt Electrical Co-op (serves rural areas): (540) 864-5121

Natural gas

Highland Propane Co: 343-7928

Roanoke Gas Co: 983-3800

Telephone

The R & B Telephone Co.: 992-2211

Cable

Blue Ridge Cablecom: 992-4144, Troutville, (800) 847-2241

Buchanan CableVision: (800) 564-8079

R & B Cable of the Roanoke Valley (wireless): 966-3300

Neighborhood groups

Cloverdale Community Civic League: Includes the Botetourt County subdivisions of Apple Tree Village, Apple Tree West, Orchard Hill, Steeplechase, Botetourt East, Botetourt South, Runaway Village, Rosamae Gardens, British Woods, Highland Manor and Hunters Green, and the community of Cloverdale. Meets fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Read Mountain Fire Station. Executive board meeting is the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m., same location. Contact J. Randolph Richardson, 992-1916.

**GOVERNMENT**

Local officials

County Administrator

Gerald A. Burgess: 473-8223

Board of Supervisors

Chairman Terry L. Austin: 254-1285

Vice Chairman Bonnie Barger Mayo: 884-2710

William G. Loope: 977-5777

Dr. David G. Mankin: 473-2682

Wanda Wingo: 977-1167

Sheriff

B. Reed Kelly: 473-8230

Treasurer

C. Benton Bolton: 473-8254

Commissioner of Revenue

John L. Etzler V: 473-8270

Circuit Court Clerk

Tommy Moore: 473-8274

Commonwealth's Attorney

Joel Branscom: 473-8227

Government services

General information: 473-8220

Adult Probation and Parole: 473-2056

Building Inspection and Permits: 473-8248

Commissioner of Revenue: 473-8270

Chamber of Commerce: 473-8280

Commonwealth's Attorney: 473-8227

Department of Public Works and Recreation: 473-8316.

Developmental Services: 473-8239

General District Court clerk (traffic, misdemeanor, small claims, etc.): 473-8244

Government offices: Buchanan, 254-1212; Iron Gate: 862-5002; Oriskany: 884-2120

Health Department: 473-8240

Juvenile and Domestic Relations: 473-8250

Juvenile Probation: 473-8250

Library: Main office in Blue Ridge: 977-3433; Fincastle: 473-8339

Magistrate: 473-8234

Marriage Licenses: 473-8274

Parks and Recreation: 473-8326

Planning and Zoning: 473-8320

Sanitation: 473-8243

Schools: 473-8263

School Board office: 473-8263

Social Services: 473-8210

Treasurer: 473-8254

Va. Cooperative Extension: 473-8260

Voter registration: 473-8235

Water/Sewer: Troutville water: 992-4401; Fincastle water/sewer 473-2200; Buchanan water/sewer:254-1212

Zoning: 473-8320

## EDUCATION

### Public schools

#### High schools

James River High School: Route 1 Box 317-AA, Buchanan, 992-3610 or 254-1121. Principal: Larry E. Journell.

Lord Botetourt High School: 755 Roanoke Road, Daleville, 992-1261. Principal: TBA

#### Intermediate schools

William Clark Middle School: Route 2 Box 41, Fincastle, 473-8333. Principal: Chester Adams.

Read Mountain Middle School: 3900 Orchard Hill Drive, Cloverdale, 966-8655.

Principal: Diana M. Dixon.

#### Elementary schools

Breckinridge Elementary School: P.O. Box 175, Fincastle, 473-8386 or 473-8203. Principal: Lois Faddis.

Buchanan Elementary School: P.O. Box 639, Buchanan, 254-2084. Principal: Carol Wickersham.

Cloverdale Elementary School: 3425 Sanderson Drive, Cloverdale. Mailing address: General delivery, Cloverdale; 992-1086. Principal: Bill Watson.

Colonial Elementary School: 420 Webster Road, Blue Ridge, 977-6773. Principal: Lois O. Trent.

Eagle Rock Elementary School: Route 2 Box 10, Eagle Rock, 884-2421. Principal: Sandra Thomas.

Troutville Elementary School: 2045 Stony Battery Road, Troutville, 992-1871. Principal: Weldon L. Martin.

#### Other

Botetourt Technical Education Center: P.O. Box 97, Fincastle, 473-8216. Principal: J.P. Jenkins.

### School officials

#### Superintendent

Dr. Jack Thomas: office: 473-8263

#### School Board

Michael Beahm (Valley District), home: 992-5464

Harry Barriebunn (Amsterdam District), home: 992-3914, work 254-2011

James Ruhland (Blue Ridge District), office: 380-1537, home: 977-4039

Sally A. Eads (Fincastle District), office: 857-6236, home: 473-2943

Kathy Graham Sullivan (Buchanan District), office: 254-2430, cell phone.: 309-3117

## School calendar

AUG. 31: Schools open for students

SEPT. 4: One-hour early dismissal

SEPT. 7: Schools closed (Labor Day)

OCT. 9: End first six-weeks grading period

OCT. 12: Schools closed for students (teacher work day)

OCT. 19: Report cards sent home

NOV. 3: School closed for students; parent-teacher conferences, 12:30-6:30 p.m.

NOV. 25: End second six-weeks grading period; one-hour early dismissal

NOV. 26-27: Schools closed (Thanksgiving holiday)

DEC. 7: Report cards sent home

DEC. 21-JAN. 1: Schools closed (Winter break)

JAN. 5: Schools reopen

JAN. 19-21: One-hour early dismissal

JAN. 21: End third six-weeks grading period

JAN. 22: School closed for students; teacher work day

JAN. 25: School closed for students; teacher work day (make-up snow day if needed)

JAN. 28: Report cards sent home

FEB. 11: Schools closed for students; teacher work day

MARCH 9: End fourth six-weeks grading period

MARCH 16: Report cards sent home

APRIL 5-9: Schools closed (Spring break)

APRIL 20: Schools reopen

APRIL 27: End fifth six-weeks grading period

APRIL 29: End fifth six weeks

MAY 4: Report cards sent home

JUNE 7-9: Exams; one-hour early dismissal

JUNE 9: Last day for students; end sixth six-weeks grading period

JUNE 10-16: Makeup day if needed, otherwise no school

## Libraries

Fincastle Branch: 11 Academy St., Fincastle, (540) 473-8339. Monday and Thursday noon-9 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Buchanan Branch: Lowe Street, (540) 254-1117. Monday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Blue Ridge Branch: 2220 Blue Ridge Blvd., Roanoke, 977-3433. Monday and Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 9 a.m. -6 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

## SERVICES



#### Retirement, nursing facilities

Following is a list of some retirement and nursing facilities in Botetourt County:

Cave Creek Residential Care and Assisted Living: 2140 Lee Highway, Troutville 24175, 992-4599

#### Recycling

Some curbside pickup available through licensed private haulers. Call [REDACTED] assistant county administrator, 473-8316 for more information.

County Landfill: Virginia 779. Open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and Saturday, 8 a.m.-noon. Accepts newspaper, aluminum, glass, tires and appliances (PETE and HDPE).

Schools: Breckinridge, Buchanan, Cloverdale, Colonial, Eagle Rock and Troutville elementary schools; James River and Lord Botetourt high schools. Accepts mixed paper, aluminum, glass and plastics (PETE and HDPE) 24 hours a day. For more information, call 473-8316.

#### Child care

Following are some of the child care centers available in Botetourt County:

Little People Learning Center: 2565 Cloverdale Road, Roanoke 24175, and 4320 Laymantown Road, Blue Ridge 24175, 977-4806.

Prince and Princess Day School: 915 Roanoke Road, Daleville 24083, 992-1070.

#### RECREATION

##### Parks and recreation

The following is a partial list of activities offered through Botetourt County Parks and Recreation. The phone number is 473-8326

Community activities: Folk art programs, beginner quilting classes, trips.

Outdoor programs: White water rafting trips, canoe trips and more.

##### Recreation league sports

The following is a list of sports offered by the parks and rec department and the deadlines to register. The phone number is 473-8360.

##### Softball, T-ball and baseball

Botetourt County T-ball (boys and girls ages 5-8), baseball (boys and girls 5-19) and softball (boys and girls ages 7-19) sign-ups are in February.

Adult softball co-ed and church league sign-ups are in June.

##### Football

Botetourt County youth football (ages 6-12) sign-ups are in May.

##### Soccer

Botetourt County youth soccer (ages 5-17) sign-ups are in May.

##### Basketball

Botetourt County youth basketball (boys/girls ages 7-8, girls ages 9-12) sign-ups are in September.

##### Swimming pools

Following is a partial list of the private and public swimming pools in Botetourt County:

Botetourt Country Club: 4444 Country Club Road, Fincastle 24090, 992-3034.

Read Mountain Swim Club: 3939 Downing Street, Cloverdale 24019, 992-9456.

Tinkerview Swim and Recreation Club Inc.: 1965 Catawba Road, Daleville 24083, 992-4583.

Golf courses

Following is a partial list of golf courses in Botetourt County:

Public courses

Botetourt Country Club: Semiprivate. 4444 Country Club Road, Daleville 24090, 992-1451.

Health clubs

Botetourt Fitness: Route 11 North, Hollins, 966-3381.

Tennis courts

The first figure indicates the number of courts at a site; the second is the number of lighted courts.

The Blue Ridge Park, 2-2

Totals: One site, two courts, two lighted.

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ASAP

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The Roanoke Times (VA)

March 23, 1997

**TOILETS WILL KEEP FLUSHING IN DALEVILLE\SAGA OF A SEWAGE LAGOON;  
VIRGINIA**

BYLINE: Chittum, Matt

SECTION: Pg. B-1

LENGTH: 1012 words

Byline: MATT CHITTUM THE ROANOKE TIMES

It took two local governments, a state agency, several years and much patience to arrive at a solution for a delinquent sewage treatment pond.

A little sewage treatment lagoon in Botetourt County has been causing a lot of people a headache for about five years - especially 33 families in a Daleville subdivision who until recently feared they might one day be unable to flush their toilets.

It was 1992 when the nearly 30-year-old lagoon on Tinker Creek was switched from state health department operating standards, which it met, to state Department of Environmental Quality standards, which it has never met.

Since then, it's been a nagging worry for the residents of Williamsburg Court and a surprising number of other people.

There's lagoon owner Bill Hopkins, who has threatened on several occasions to shut it down.

And the county government, which recognized Williamsburg Court's problem would eventually become a county problem.

Don't forget the DEQ, which has been citing the lagoon for violations every month for nearly five years but allowing it to continue to operate because, as one DEQ official put it, "all of the options were just horrible."

And, finally, there's the city of Roanoke, which has been watching the situation carefully because at the other end of Tinker Creek is the city's water supply at Carvins Cove.

On Tuesday, though, the county Board of Supervisors took a big step toward relieving everyone's headache. It awarded a contract to build a \$1.391 million sewer that will run up Tinker Creek to the county's showplace business, office and recreational park, Botetourt Center at Greenfield.

Happily for everyone, the sewer runs right by the problematic sewage lagoon. The county says they can all tap into it.

"Anything else pales compared to the joy of a gravity sewer line running right down the middle of the property," said Jim Smith, a water specialist with the DEQ.



All the parties involved were able to reach an agreement that, Smith said, reflects "a level of cooperation that was really pretty remarkable."

Everybody is giving something in return for making the headache goaway, Smith said.

The county is hooking the Williamsburg Court customers up to the sewer. Roanoke's water department is testing the lagoon's discharge as a free service to Hopkins.

Hopkins is upgrading the sewer system before the county takes it over, and his customers are paying for it with a \$13-a-month sewer rate increase. Hopkins has also agreed to fill in the lagoon. And the DEQ is allowing the lagoon to operate in violation until the new sewer line is completed in late 1998.

All this, however, was not easily achieved.

Hopkins took over management of the lagoon from his ailing father in 1990. At that time, it was under a permit issued by the health department.

But everything changed in 1992 when the DEQ began overseeing the lagoon. The lagoon was the same, but the standards it had to meet were a good bit higher.

Hopkins contends the DEQ issued a permit for a lagoon the agency knew would never meet its standards.

Smith said the lagoon began violating its permit almost immediately. The violations stemmed from Hopkins' refusal to have the lagoon monitored for monthly reports because the \$25 monthly fee the customers paid wouldn't cover the cost of the testing. No sewage ever leaked into the creek, Smith said.

Hopkins said he looked into putting in a mechanical treatment system, but it was too expensive. Estimates ranged from \$250,000 to \$700,000.

The state has a revolving loan fund to fix problems like the one at Williamsburg Court, but it requires local governments to act as the banker for the loans. County Administrator Jerry Burgess said Botetourt had no interest in that.

All that seemed left was to connect the homes to a county sewer line.

██████████ head of public works for Botetourt County, said ever since he came to work there four years ago, he'd heard about the Williamsburg Court lagoon and that it would probably "end up getting dropped in the county's lap."

But Hopkins didn't feel the county was moving fast enough to help. Two years ago, he began telling the residents he was going to shut down the lagoon, hoping to force the county's hand by creating a health hazard.

"I got pretty worked up about it," said Bob Wills, a resident of Williamsburg Court. "I could see some real financial outlays ahead," not to mention the health risk.

Homeowners could put in their own septic systems, but many of their lots wouldn't accommodate them.

"The legal situation was very uncertain," Smith of the DEQ said. If Hopkins abandoned the lagoon, it wasn't clear whether the county, the health department or the DEQ could do anything about it.

Contractor and county planning commission member Bill Christenbury, who also depends on the sewer, said he wasn't going to be intimidated. He saw Hopkins' threat for what it was and told the other residents as much. That settled everyone down.

Once the county announced plans to buy and develop the 922-acre Greenfield farm in mid-1995, the probable solution for the problem became clear. Greenfield would need sewer service, and the logical place for it was along Tinker Creek.

But Hopkins said he wanted a commitment that the county would allow his customers to hook up to the Greenfield sewer.

In August, County Administrator Burgess wrote to the DEQ that the county would hook up the Williamsburg Court customers to the Greenfield sewer. That allowed the DEQ to write an order allowing Hopkins to operate the lagoon without a permit until the end of 1998, when the new sewer should be in place.



Hopkins is relieved, but there's still no love lost between him and county officials.

"It's just a shame the county didn't (put in this sewer) for its residents, it did it for an industrial park," Hopkins said.

Either way, the residents are happy.

Their sewer rate will drop from \$38 a month to \$18.50 once the county takes control.

"We just feel like we can rely on the county a little bit more than Bill Hopkins," said Sheila Lancaster of Williamsburg Court.

CAPTION(S): GRAPHIC:Map by RT.

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The Roanoke Times (Virginia)

December 13, 1991 Friday  
METRO Edition

## THEY DON'T LET HOLIDAY GO TO WASTE

BYLINE: Ed Shamy

SECTION: VIRGINIA; Pg. B1

LENGTH: 507 words

DATELINE: NARROWS

The scum pit is what separates this little river town, its backbone practically brushing the West Virginia line, from all the pretenders.

While lesser communities wring their hands and whine about their foiled and underfinanced efforts to lure tourists' wallets, progressive Narrows is stepping boldly into the void with a holiday weekend most towns can only dream of.

Last night it was the annual Christmas parade.

Tomorrow the scum pit takes center stage. It's an open house at Narrows' new sewage treatment plant!

You ever heard of a more innovative way of celebrating the holiday season? You can't get a room in Narrows this weekend. The place is booked up.

No one knows how many people to expect at the open house. It'll begin at 9 a.m., end at 3 p.m. Visitors are welcome to linger as long as they want, and Sterling Greever, who works at the plant, will be offering guided tours and answering questions, providing his bad back holds out.

M.L. Wilkinson, who runs the plant, is on vacation this week. He's not sure if he'll be at the tour. He hadn't planned to vacation that close to the sludge.

With him or without him, the stench of 2,000 people and 1,000 toilets will be there, mostly at the scum pit. Greever says engineers are trying to figure out how to eliminate that problem.

It's the least they can do. The secondary treatment plant cost \$2 million to build and has about doubled the average household's sewer and water bill over the past four years. When the new plant received its first gush of sewage in June, the mysterious greenish plume that used to stain the New downriver disappeared. Narrows rejoiced.

██████████ the spunky town's manager, knows that many people are curious how anyone could spend 2 million bucks to clean dirty dishwater. That's why he figured an open house would be a good idea. He's not decided yet whether to serve refreshments.

He's not sure, to be candid, how many people care enough about a sewage plant to visit.

But as holiday celebrations go, this is the only one that incorporates the often-overlooked aerobic digesters. From the safety of a narrow steel-grated catwalk, visitors will be able to peer straight beneath their feet into a vat, 14 feet deep, full of bubbling, churning chocolate-colored waste culled from their own water.

Sterling Greever points out that anyone who falls into the vat would be sucked screaming into its depths, swallowing and flailing at the millions of gallons of - well, he cautions you not to lean over too far.

Staring into the brown morass, who could help but feel warmed by the very spirit of the holidays?

That's tourism. Thrill 'em, teach 'em, and take their money.

Let others have Santas and marching bands and tree-lightings and sales.

In Narrows, where a gallon of sewage spends about eight hours traveling between toilet bowl and New River, it'll be a holiday gala to remember.

A parade. Open house down at the sewage plant, possibly with refreshments. A scum pit. The undoctored aroma of steamy sewage. Life gets no better.

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The Roanoke Times (Virginia)

September 19, 1990 Wednesday  
New River Valley Edition

## GILES COUNTY COMMUNITIES LOOK FOR RESIDENTS MISSED BY CENSUS

BYLINE: KATHY LOAN NEW RIVER VALLEY BUREAU

SECTION: CURRENT; Pg. NRV14

LENGTH: 483 words

DATELINE: RICH CREEK

In the small Giles County town of Rich Creek, everybody counts. So when preliminary census results showed that the town had lost 80 people since 1980, Mayor Gary Eaton set out to find them. The mayor found most of them at the Riverview Nursing Home at 120 Virginia Ave.

The 1980 census showed the town with a population of 750. The latest count was 670. Eaton said census results he received showed a zero under group housing. After learning that a nursing home fit the definition, he knew where to look. Eaton also found 10 houses that were not counted - four in one block. Across the New River Valley, several government officials are filing challenges to the 1990 census preliminary results. But perhaps no county is more eager to prove that its figures were wrong than Giles, which posted an 8.7 percent drop in population - from 17,810 in 1980 to 16,249 in April, a decline of 1,561. Like Rich Creek, Pearisburg is finding some residences that weren't counted in the census. The 1990 Pearisburg estimate of 2,025 is 103 fewer than the 1980 census. Pearisburg Town Manager Ken Vittum found 32 dwellings that weren't counted. With an average of 2.1 people per dwelling, that's about 65 missed in the census. But Vittum said he found no major discrepancies in the census count. "There were only two blocks where they were more than two houses off," he said. Vittum attributes Pearisburg's and the county's population loss to an older population left behind by high school graduates migrating to the "lure of the big city." While there may be more houses going up in the town and the county, there are fewer people living in them. "Ten years ago, there were a lot more kids in the county," he said. But Vittum sees a recent increase in the number of housing starts - a mini-boom of sorts - as reason for hope for the town's future growth. Five houses have been built since April 1, and three apartment projects totaling about 45 units are being planned. "We feel kind of upbeat compared to other towns in the area," Vittum said. "We're optimistic here in Pearisburg. The census didn't get us down." Narrows Town Manager [REDACTED] said the town expected to lose about 200 people. But when the preliminary census figures showed a decline of 466 and listed 75 vacant dwellings, the numbers begged for an investigation. A challenge was filed after [REDACTED] found 24 dwellings - representing an estimated 60 people. Pembroke lost about 248 residents, according to the census, and Mayor Donald Martin said a canvassing by the town supported those figures. The population has dropped about 19 percent, from 1,312 to an estimated 1,064. Like officials in other Giles County towns, Martin attributes the decline to deaths, fewer school-age children and high school graduates leaving the county for jobs and housing. "We felt like we'd held our own. We didn't realize we'd decreased that much," Martin said.

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