

REGULAR MEETING

APRIL 11, 2000

At a regular meeting of Council held this evening at 7:30 p.m., there were present: Mayor Rodney Eagle; City Manager Steven E. Stewart; Assistant City Manager Roger Baker; City Attorney Earl Q. Thumma, Jr., Vice-Mayor Hugh J. Lantz, Council Member John H. Byrd, Jr., Walter F. Green, III, and Larry M. Rogers; City Clerk Yvonne "Bonnie" Ryan, CMC/AAE, and Chief of Police Donald Harper.

Council Member Byrd delivered the invocation and Mayor Eagle led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Member Green offered a motion to approve the consent agenda, including approval of the minutes, and second reading transferring funds for a new fire truck and transferring funds from the Central Garage Fund and Sewer Fund to the Central Stores Fund. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rogers, and approved with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Vote: Yes - Council Member Rogers

Council Member Byrd

Vice-Mayor Lantz

Council Member Green

Mayor Eagle

Absent - None

City Manager Stewart presented an overview of the proposed 2000-2001 budget to the City Council. A public hearing will be held on April 25 with final approval suggested on May 9th. There are no tax rates or fee increases in the proposed 2000-2001 budget. This is the seventh straight year with the same real estate and personal property tax rates. The City currently enjoys the second lowest real estate rate among all independent cities in Virginia. Also, a 1% unemployment rate is the second lowest in the entire state. For the fourth consecutive year the City has received the "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" presented by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. The City continues to be a growth situation indicating a 13.3% population increase since the 1990 census. The proposed 2000-2001 budget in total net expenditures is approximately \$83 million. The General Fund revenues has increased by nearly \$2.5 million. The primary increases (based on growth, not rate increases) will occur in property taxes, sales tax, lodging taxes, meal taxes and an additional contribution from the Harrisonburg Electric Commission. No increases in tax rates or fees are proposed to balance the General Fund budget. City Manager Stewart explained that in terms of expenditures the budget focuses on three primary functions, which include education, public safety and infrastructure. He said that since 1996-1997 through proposed 2000-2001 local funding for the school system will total approximately \$93 million. In addition, bonds issued for renovations during this time period equals \$7,105,000. The proposed appropriation to the School's operating budget is \$19,761,902 in local funds which is a 4.2 % increase. This recommended appropriation represents 100% of the School Division's budget request! For the City to again grant 100% funding increase speaks loudly as to the priority placed on schools. It also reflects the School Division's cooperative spirit in working

with Council to insure adequate funds for a quality educational experience for every student. In addition, the City has already approved the issuance of \$5,100,000 in bonds for the Spotswood and Waterman renovations, and air conditioning of the High School fieldhouse. With Council agreeing to fund both school renovation projects at one time, rather than one a year as previously agreed to, the School Division has done its part in the reasonableness of its request for new operating funds. The City's total projected 2000-2001 revenue from all property taxes (real estate and personal), including penalties and interest is \$16,524,580. The City's proposed 2000-2001 appropriation to the Schools is \$19,761,902. In addition, another \$290,000 is proposed in the Public Transportation budget for the purchase of four (4) new school buses. He pointed out that the increase in student population from 1996-1997 projected through 2000-2001 school year is an increase of approximately 28 students or 0.7%. Also, during that same time period the local funding from the City based on the average daily membership has increased from \$4,609 per student to \$5,520 per student while adding approximately 73 new teachers and teachers' assistants positions to the school division budget. The Police Department's proposed budget has increased by 48.6% when compared to the 1996-1997 budget. In addition, the \$4,471,870 includes hiring two (2) additional investigators, one assigned specifically to narcotics investigations and the other to general investigations, and other civilian support positions. The Fire Department budget has increased by 51% since 1996-1997 primarily due to additional personnel. Six new firefighter positions are proposed in order to complete the City's commitment to the OSHA requirement of the "Two-In-Two-Out" rule. Since 1996-1997 through 2000-2001, 18 new firefighters have been added to the Fire Department. Maintaining the City's infrastructure includes an on going bridge replacement including the Chesapeake Avenue Bridge, Port Republic Road improvement, resurfacing nearly 11 miles of City streets, replacing deteriorated sidewalks, replacing various construction equipment, steam plant renovations, feasibility study for the material recovery facility (MRF), renovating and improving the resource recovery facility, sanitation equipment replacement, closing and monitoring the City's existing landfill, upgrading the recycling building, and the City's share of developing the County landfill. The Parks and Recreation's budget includes tennis and basketball court renovations, playground equipment replacement, softball field renovations, railroad crossing safety improvement program, school and transit buses. The Water Fund budget includes development of an eastern water supply, next phase of water treatment plant expansion, and water tank repairs. Mr. Stewart said the Sewer Fund includes an on going Blacks Run sewer interceptor, replacing aging water lines, and infiltration and inflow abatement in various sections of the City. Council Member Rogers questioned how much had the Police Department salaries increased during the last four years. City Manager Stewart answered approximately 30%. Council Member Green questioned if the General Fund supplemented the Sanitation Fund. Mr. Stewart said that the City supplemented the Sanitation Fund by \$2.5 million because the refuse collection fee only recovered a small percentage of what it cost to pick up and dispose of residential and commercial garbage. Vice-Mayor Lantz commented that the Shenandoah River project was an on going project and he didn't want anyone to get a false impression that the City was low on water. City Manager Stewart noted that the Shenandoah River project is a long term planning project. The City has been very successful in planning a water supply for the residents of the City. A successful plan has existed since the late 1800's when the Rawley Springs line was installed by pick and shovel. The Shenandoah River project will allow the City to meet build out demands and land use planning and will allow the City to lessen the dependency on the North River. A good water supply requires long term planning.

Chad Layman, representing the Chamber of Commerce, issued an invitation to City Council to participate in "Spring Cleanup Week." He explained that the chamber has set Wednesday, April 19th as the day for its spring clean up. This year businesses in the community are encouraged to clean an area around or near their business on that day between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. He also challenged the Council to participate on Wednesday, April 19th to pick up trash.

Brenda Spencer, Court Service Unit Supervisor, presented a Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act Plan. She explained that the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act was developed to ensure sanctions and services to juvenile offenders to deter crime and reduce repeat juvenile offenders before the court. Harrisonburg and Rockingham County will receive a total of \$246,822 for each year of each biennium.

The plan calls for the two jurisdictions to collaborate under this act, with the City serving as the fiscal agent. She briefly reviewed the plan. Council Member Rogers offered a motion to approve the plan as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Lantz, and approved with a unanimous vote of Council.

Economic Development Director Shull presented a request to authorize the City Manager or his designee to have approval and signatory power in Workforce Investment Act matters. He explained that effective July 1st, the Shenandoah Valley Work Force Investment Board will replace the Private Industry Council. This board will meet annually. Council Member Green offered a motion to authorize the City Manager or his designee to have approval and signatory power for this board. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rogers, and approved with a unanimous vote of Council.

City Manager Stewart reviewed a letter received from the Sheriff, Clerk of Circuit Court, Commonwealth's Attorney, Brenda Spencer and other people. He explained that these people are concerned about security at the District Court and Circuit Court buildings primarily at the building entrances. They have suggested that a metal detector should be installed and a court security officer placed at the main entrance of each building. Mr. Stewart suggested that since these buildings involve state offices our local delegation should be invited to a meeting to discuss these issues with the City and County to determine if there is any state funding available to address some of these concerns. Council Member Green offered a motion authorizing the City Manager to work with the Rockingham County Administrator to schedule a meeting to discuss these issues. The motion was seconded by Council Member Byrd, and approved with a unanimous vote of Council.

City Manager Stewart presented a request from the library for additional funding. He explained that the City has already committed \$1.1 million to the library expansion in addition to creating a parking lot directly across from the library as a contribution to the project. The library has been looking at a potential short-range shortfall in completing its building project. They have approached the City and County about a loan as opposed to going through banking institutions. Rockingham County has approved a loan to the library up to a maximum of \$375,000. Mr. Stewart requested that City Council provide a loan up to an additional \$375,000 for a total between the City and County of \$750,000. This is a very important project to the library and a key part to the continued work and renovation of downtown Harrisonburg and will be a major anchor in downtown. Council Member Rogers offered a motion to approve this request as presented. The motion was seconded by Council Member Green, and approved with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:

Vote: Yes - Council Member Rogers

Council Member Byrd

Vice-Mayor Lantz

Council Member Green

Mayor Eagle

Absent - None

George Rontopoulos

commented that as taxpayer and business owner in Harrisonburg, he has been concerned about some articles appearing in the Daily News-Record. He said that he had researched some information on golf on the Internet. He said "I am not a golfer, but I do pay taxes and I am very interested in the way people treat other people." He reviewed information that he had researched disputing information provided about public golf courses in Virginia. He said that the State of Virginia has 319 to 325 golf courses which include private courses,

semi-private courses, military courses, and resorts. Virginia has approximately 100 public golf courses averaging between 25,000 and 60,000 rounds of golf depending on the area. He noted that Front Royal has two 18 holes municipal golf courses and one 9-hole public golf course giving the public a lot of fun and golfing experience. The two golf courses in Front Royal average 40,000 rounds of golf per year. Mr. Rontopoulos said that when City Council decided to build a golf course, it was a very good decision, because Harrisonburg is a good community with good people and golf will be good for the City.

At 8:25 p.m., Council Member Rogers offered a motion that Council enter a closed session for discussion and consideration of personnel and prospective candidates to be appointed to the Social Services Advisory Board, Commission on Children and Youth, Harrisonburg Parking Authority, Board of Zoning Appeals, Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board, and the Industrial Development Authority, and the evaluation of a City department, exempt from public meeting requirements pursuant to Section 2.1-344(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia, 1950, amended. Consultation with the City Attorney and briefings by staff members pertaining to contractual matters, exempt from public meeting requirements pursuant to Section 2.1-344(A)(7) of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended. Discussion concerning a prospective business locating within the City, exempt from public meeting requirements pursuant to Section 2.1-344(A)(5) of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Lantz, and approved with a unanimous vote of Council.

At 10:45 p.m., the closed session was declared closed and the regular session reconvened. The following statement was agreed to with a unanimous recorded vote of the Council: I hereby certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that (1) only public matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements pursuant to Chapter 21 of Title 2.1 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, and (2) only such public matters as were identified in the motion by which the executive or closed meeting was convened, were heard, discussed or considered in the closed session by the City Council.

Council Member Byrd offered a motion for the following people to be appointed to Commissions and Boards: Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board; Bonnie Keppel, 3330 Willow Spring Road, to a two year term to expire in 2002, David Holsinger, 210 Stone Spring Road, to a three year term to expire in 2003, Industrial Development Authority; Stanley H. Gray, 924 Mockingbird Drive, to a first term to expire on April 24, 2004, and Douglas Andersen, 871 College Avenue, to a term on the Commission on Children and Youth. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rogers, and approved with a unanimous vote of Council.

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

CLERK MAYOR

