

**MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**MARCH 11, 2015**

The Harrisonburg Planning Commission held a special meeting to review the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 409 South Main Street.

Members present: Richard Baugh, Gil Colman, MuAwia Da'Mes, Deb Fitzgerald, Jefferson Heatwole, and Henry Way.

Members absent: Judith Dilts.

Also present: Stacy Turner, Director of Planning and Community Development; Adam Fletcher, City Planner; and Alison Banks, Senior Planner/Secretary.

Chair Fitzgerald called the meeting to order and determined there was a quorum with six members in attendance. She then said Planning Commissioners did not have any questions for City Department Heads regarding the CIP; however, there are several questions for Harrisonburg City Public Schools and asked their representative to come forward to speak.

Craig Mackail, Executive Director of Operations and School Safety for Harrisonburg City Public Schools, said he is here tonight to answer questions along with Dr. Kizner, Superintendent of Schools. This is the first year we have incorporated our CIP into the City CIP and we decided to do so about eight months ago; this will make it easier for the City and Schools to be on the same page. Our CIP was a bit different from this CIP; therefore, we are about a year behind. Previously the school system would do a separate CIP that was approved by the School Board and then we would just send a one page copy of our CIP to Mrs. Turner to include in the City's CIP.

This CIP is rather typical, other than the new school construction and some of the land acquisition. As you are probably aware school enrollment is growing at about four percent a year, so you will also see that within the CIP. Along with that you will see the general maintenance type items, such as air handler replacements and some chiller replacements. This is for facilities that are just due for maintenance, they are still operating; but they are reaching their lifespan.

What you have before you is basically a phased plan that the School Board adopted for school construction over the next few years based on our enrollment growth. I will be happy to answer your questions if you have any about specific projects or other items. I will tell you that we met today, Dr. Kizner and the planning group, with the architect. We are at the initial planning phases for the new elementary school on Garbers Church Road and the pre-K center.

Chair Fitzgerald said given that the school system is working on the next CIP now, is there anything here that really is out-of-date at this time? I have a concern of going forward and approving something that we know is going to be substantively changed.

Mr. Mackail replied no, this is the most up-to-date CIP. We will start again on this process in the next several months. As a matter of fact, I am presenting to the School Board next week in order to start that process and get those dates.

Chair Fitzgerald said part of the confusion I had with this was aligning of some projects with some of the things I had been reading in the press. For example, the idea that we were going to build one larger pre-K facility and, as we now know, two are still planned for projected growth.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were questions for Mr. Mackail.

Mr. Da'Mes asked at what stage are you at – you have received the go ahead for the pre-K and the elementary school at Garbers Church Road.

Mr. Mackail replied that is correct.

Mr. Da'Mes said perhaps you can clarify another thing that has been in the news lately – how does the school system establish the dollar amount of expenditures that you are anticipating. We heard that it is not based on square footage of a building. What is it based on; perhaps there are architectural renderings?

Mr. Mackail said we are not at the point of renderings; however, we know what is appropriate for a certain capacity school by square footage. An architect who builds schools all the time uses the current value for square footage based on the number of children in the school and what is needed within the school. Then, they are able to provide us with a figure based on that.

What I will say is that you do not know exactly what the school is going to be priced at until it is put out to bid. Sometimes you may come in lower, other times that cost may be higher. These figures are more than just estimates; but you will never know until you bid the project.

Mr. Colman said what is the school systems current schedule for the different schools that will be built? I see here there are at least three schools planned.

Mr. Mackail said right now we are focusing on the initial project that the City Council has approved – the elementary school on Garbers Church Road. We are still vetting the location for the pre-K location between Thomas Harrison Middle School and Skyline/Smithland Schools; the School Board still needs to have some conversation regarding that. Those are the two projects we are focusing on currently, to get them opened in 2017.

Mr. Colman said you have listed Objective 5.2 from the Comprehensive Plan and I was thinking Objective 5.3 may need to be listed. This project will be coming back to Planning Commission for review and we would be looking at both objectives.

Chair Fitzgerald said Mr. Colman is referring to the 2232 review and hearing before Planning Commission.

Mr. Mackail said we are in the process of getting information to Planning staff regarding that so you will also have that information soon.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any further questions. Hearing none, she thanked Mr. Mackail for his attendance.

Mrs. Turner thanked Mr. Mackail and Dr. Kizner for working so diligently to get the information into the City's CIP format.

Dr. Kizner said we appreciate what this will do for us, and moving forward we will do a much better job. You are right, we are in the process of building projects – the new elementary school, set to open in 2017, and the pre-K center, which we initially wanted for 350 students, is now set for 175. Starting next month the School Board will go back and do the Capital Improvement Plan over again knowing that phase one of both projects is already established and we will update our CIP as such. Next year when you get this you will get a real concrete plan based on actions that were taken by City Council and the School Board a month ago. I am not saying that this information is inaccurate, but it is not as updated as we can make it now that we know what plans have been approved by the School Board and City Council.

Chair Fitzgerald said in next years' CIP all the alignment and timing of all the other departments will be matched with the schools.

Dr. Kizner said that is correct.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any other comments or questions. The steam plant section is out of the CIP this year and stormwater management section is in. The school section has grown by about 25 pages from last year. Are there any comments?

Mrs. Turner said if you will notice on page 21, regarding the regional jail expansion or alternative project, we are anticipating that further information concerning the jail matters will be on City Council's agenda soon.

Kurt Hodgen, City Manager, said I am expecting that it will be the first meeting in April.

Mrs. Turner said should Planning Commission see fit to take some action on the CIP, if you could, include in the motion that the regional jail expansion or alternative project be updated in the CIP, if the CIP is approved prior to or after the City Council action on the jail matter.

Chair Fitzgerald said there is also an email from George Pace that went to Planning members about some issues, along with a letter staff received. Would staff like to speak regarding that?

Mr. Fletcher said Mr. Pace's email was referring to a letter he had provided to me the day before, which will go into your packet for the 2232 hearing for the actual school site itself. In the email from Mr. Pace he had CIP comments referring to the need for additional buses, I believe. In his letter he is referring to more site specific things associated to the Garbers Church Road site itself; such as stormwater management, water pressure, along with the need for additional buses. They are really two totally separate comments, but he refers to the letter which none of you have seen at this point.

Chair Fitzgerald said the point being that it is less applicable to this and more applicable to the 2232 hearing in April.

Mr. Fletcher said yes.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any further questions. Hearing none, she asked if there was a motion to forward to City Council.

Mr. Colman moved to approve the CIP as presented with the future changes to be done to page 21, regarding the regional jail expansion or alternatives.

Mr. Heatwole seconded the motion.

Chair Fitzgerald said we have a motion and a second; she then called for a voice vote.

All voted in favor (6-0) of the motion to recommend approval of the CIP as presented with the future changes regarding the regional jail.

Chair Fitzgerald said this will move forward to City Council on April 14<sup>th</sup>. She then closed the CIP special meeting at 6:45 p.m.

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Chair Deb Fitzgerald

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Secretary, Alison Banks