

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

News, announcements, and more from the
Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority



Members with the Central Shenandoah Chapter of the Master Gardener Association discuss garden ideas with HRHA's Michael Wong and Duane Bontrager.
February 2021.

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Welcoming Spring



A long winter, an extended vaccine rollout, and continued local challenges have many of us feeling exhausted. Safe and affordable housing continues to be unpredictable or unavailable. Extended eviction moratoriums and federal, state, and local funding has assisted many in maintaining safe, secure housing. Yet we know others in our community feel unsupported or left behind. These continue to be challenging times.

Spring is a season of change, and we are working through much of our own. We continue working to expand housing services to the most vulnerable in our community through Moving to Work (MtW) and other agency initiatives. Projects like the Kelley Street garden and efforts to expand home ownership keep us excited for spring. We have welcomed five new members to our board of commissioners in the last few months and we remain grateful for our staff who has worked with focus and commitment through this pandemic. This month we also say farewell to two of our staff who have served the mission of HRHA for a combined 12+ years.

We welcome longer days and warmer weather, and the renewed spirit that comes with the spring season.

The Kelley Street Garden

After delays due to the pandemic, we are excited to finally launch the Kelley Street Garden this spring. In partnership with residents and community groups, the Kelley Street Garden will be a space for growing, learning, and safe outdoor activity. We are incredibly grateful to the many individuals and groups who are helping make this garden a reality for our residents. Special thanks to Jones Garden Inc., the Master Gardeners, and JMU Dining!

Follow our progress on [Facebook](#) or on our website at www.harrisonburgrha.com/garden



"We are honored to take on the responsibility of constructing raised beds for HRHA's Kelley Street garden. Supporting our local community in any effort to increase fresh food access is our deepest pleasure.

We are so excited to see this project happen!"

- Naomi Jones, JonesGarden Inc.

"We are excited to bring hands on learning experiences to the garden site, sharing information on topics like soil testing, composting, vegetables and flowers that grow well in our area and of course pest management. Mostly however, we want to be available on a regular basis to provide information and answer questions that residents have about their gardening experience."

- Karen Thomsen, Central Shenandoah Master Gardeners



"Through Aramark Building Communities and Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, JMU Dining was able to provide financial assistance with this incredible project. Fresh food is a crucial piece of everyone's diet and we were glad to aid in a project that provides families with direct access. We are extremely eager to see the outcome!"

- Ben Rosenberger, JMU Dining

Moving to Work (MtW) Processes Take Shape

HRHA received notice of approval for the Moving to Work (MtW) designation from HUD in January 2021. Since that notice, HRHA teams began to outline proposed changes, processes for gathering feedback from community agencies, residents, and participants, as well as timelines for next steps. The goals for our agency-wide MtW changes remain the same: to increase participant self-sufficiency, expand housing choice, and improve program cost effectiveness & administrative burden.

We will continue to provide opportunities throughout the coming months for community members, residents, and participants to help guide our proposed program and policy changes. Follow along at: www.harrisonburgrha.com.

Executive Director's Corner



With spring upon us, we are excited and extremely busy with developing and implementing the different initiatives the agency has establish for this year. These include a community garden at Kelley Street for Franklin Heights residents and upgrade of the security camera systems at Franklin Heights and Lineweaver Apartments. We are exploring how we can improve our landlord outreach program to increase access and housing opportunities for our HCV residents as well as expansion plans of our current homeownership program to include development of a homeownership center. We continue work in partnership with our community stakeholders to develop and implement Moving to Work activities by late summer.

All of these goals are critical due to their focus on improving resident outcomes, expanding housing opportunities and improving the efficiencies and effectiveness of the services provided. Our success in achieving these many goals are due directly to all our partnerships with our community stakeholders and the outstanding work and service by the HRHA staff.

We are saddened to receive notice of the resignation of Emily McCarty and Laura Black. Their service and commitment to high quality work has resulted in a significant increase in the availability of resources and improved the successful outcomes of those we serve. Please join me in thanking Emily and Laura for their service to HRHA. We wish them the best in their future endeavors.

- Michael Wong

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Staff Highlight: Kimberly

HRHA manages a variety of programs, grants, and initiatives. We serve hundreds of families through housing vouchers, programs like Family Self-Sufficiency, and city-wide campaigns. Through 2021, we plan to highlight members of the HRHA team who make this work possible.

1. When did you start at HRHA and what brought you to the Housing Authority?

I began employment with HRHA on July 2, 2018. I previously worked for Mercy House, an agency that was and still is, affiliated with HRHA through the Continuum of Care (CoC). When a position opened in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) department at HRHA, I was instantly interested and applied for the position.

2. What is your role with HRHA?

I am an HCV Specialist. An HCV specialist calculates rent subsidy, responds to inquiries from landlords/property owners, conducts briefings with clients/tenants and performs interim and annual reexaminations to determine continued eligibility for the HCV program. We act as a client's case manager/case worker.



3. What project or partnership have you been most proud of during your time with HRHA?

I have enjoyed partnering with landlords and other agencies to meet the needs of my clients in regards to locating affordable housing.

4. What do you love to do outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy exercise (running, gym, hiking), reading, spending time with my family and furbaby, and watching movies.

5. Are there any upcoming projects or partnerships that you are excited about?

I am excited about the upcoming Moving to Work program that our agency is in the process of implementing and to help move our clients to self-sufficiency.

6. What do you wish more people in our community knew about affordable housing, our families, or the voucher program?

I wish our community was more knowledgeable about the need for affordable housing. I wish there were more housing options for our clients (i.e. tax credit housing, low-income housing).

Farewell Emily and Laura!

Emily McCarty has served as the Community Development and Grants Coordinator for HRHA for the past four years. She has ensured funding is appropriately requested and distributed for multiple HRHA and community initiatives. She even served informally as the executive editor for this newsletter and lead on numerous projects.

Laura Black has served as the Homeless Management Information Systems Administrator since 2014. She has been behind the collection, training, compliance and reporting of homeless data for the region and coordinated the yearly homeless census for HUD.

We wish both Emily and Laura the best in their next steps. They will be missed!

"I've worked with Emily for a number of years with the goal of using federal funding to make affordable housing more accessible in Harrisonburg. Emily has always been a pleasure to work with. She is thorough in her work, and has a genuine interest in helping those she works with and for. I'll miss getting to work with her and I wish her all the best as she moves on from the HRHA."

-Kristin McCombe, Community Development Block Grant Coordinator, City of Harrisonburg

"When the Winchester Rescue Mission first got involved with the CoC, Laura Black was there every step of the way with guidance and understanding with all my questions; and I had a lot. Her heart for assisting others is evident to all of those who interact with her. I have come to know Laura as a friend and know that she is going to bless the lives of those she will be helping in her next adventure."

- Vicki Culbreth, Winchester Rescue Mission



Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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Website



www.harrisonburgrha.com

Facebook



[@harrisonburgrha](https://www.facebook.com/harrisonburgrha)

HRHA Board of Commissioners

HRHA is governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Harrisonburg City Council. The Board establishes the Authority's policies and procedures and appoints the Executive Director.

Board of Commissioner meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00PM.

Meeting location/access will be posted prior to meetings and in line with local health guidelines.

+ Michael Wong, (Not a commissioner)

Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer

+ Dany Fleming - Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Costella Forney – Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Scott Gallagher – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2020

+ Christine Fasching Maphis - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Kevin Coffman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Luciano Benjamin - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2024

+ Gil Colman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

Support Housing and Self-Sufficiency

In addition to providing housing and housing assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher program, HRHA oversees a number of initiatives that support area residents and participants. These include a scholarship fund for children of parents receiving housing assistance, a homeless veterans fund, programming and support through the Family Self-Sufficiency program, a literacy initiative, and more.

Community members may support any of these projects by visiting our website at www.harrisonburgrha.com/donate. Donations are submitted to the non-profit branch of HRHA, Shenandoah Housing Corporation (501 c3), and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Thank you for your support!