

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

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

'Spyder' Waters, Jessy Gonzalez, and Perry Bellamy share experiences of homelessness and securing housing at the October 30 Housing Summit.
October 2021



In this issue:

2021 Housing Summit Summary.....	2
Executive Director's Corner.....	2
Staff Highlight.....	3
Housing Next Steps: City of Harrisonburg.....	3
Contact & Board of Commissioners.....	4
Giving Tree Update.....	4

Moving Forward Together



It is clear this moment is significant. This community has an incredible array of organizations driving meaningful change to provide housing for our most vulnerable community members. The comprehensive City housing study was released this year. Funding opportunities are increasing. Awareness is growing.

At the same time, the need for affordable housing is at near crisis levels. Here in our community and across the nation more and more households are struggling to find and/or afford housing. There are not enough apartments and homes in our community to meet the need. Many housing insecure individuals and families, and local agencies that work with them, are feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. The need is great.

As HRHA Board Chair Dany Fleming shared at the 2021 Housing Summit, this community has a history of coming together to tackle tough problems. Moving forward together on housing will take collaboration, creativity, and courage. Not just across our community, but across our commonwealth and country as well.

Interested in subscribing? Questions?
Everett Brubaker
HRHA Communications Coordinator
ebrubaker@harrisonburgrha.com

2021 Housing Summit Recap

On October 30, over 100 stakeholders, city representatives, housing non-profits, development representatives, community members experiencing homelessness, and more attended the 2021 Harrisonburg and Rockingham County Housing Summit. A diverse array of sessions and conversations throughout the day explored topics like housing instability, zoning, state-level advocacy, funding opportunities, and development.

The Summit provided an excellent opportunity to get a wide variety of stakeholders together to better understand current challenges and explore opportunities for moving forward. We are incredibly grateful for Summit collaborators and partners for planning and coordinating the event, as well as to those who attended to listen, learn, and share their stories and insights.



Barry Kelley, CEO of Matchbox, and Robert Hill, CEO of Harrisonburg Rockingham Association of Realtors, speak at a breakout session at the October 30 Housing Summit.

Overheard at the 2021 Housing Summit

"11 million low income families pay more than half of their income on rent in the U.S....We must be intentional, aggressive, and proactive in our advocacy in order to build vibrant, strong, and equitable communities."

- *Monica L. Jefferson, Interim Executive Director, HOME*

"Working with local community partners was essential in getting housing. Without connections, you don't have communication. Without communication you have nothing."

- *Jessy Gonzalez, former HRHA resident, current Habit for Humanity Home Owner*

"I spent more than 2 years homeless, rough camping in the city and the county, and one winter I slept at Open Doors...Then Mercy House helped cover the cost of a room in a group house, the Housing Authority has picked up the tab ever since. I'm still housed and now I'm working with OCP in the kitchen."

- *Kevin 'Spyder' Waters, current Our Community Place staff*

"I hear your frustration. But we should direct our frustration to the right place. The problem is this: there is not enough housing."

- *Shannon Porter, Executive Director, Mercy House*

"I have worked in affordable housing for 20 years. This is the first time there has been such significant funding coming through for affordable housing."

- *Erica Sims, Executive Director, Housing Forward Virginia*

"Having housing...It's one less thing to worry about. I have a day to look forward to now."

- *Perry Bellamy, HRHA resident, current Our Community Place staff*

Executive Director's Corner



On October 30th, community members gathered at JMU for our first local Housing Summit. Just over 100 participants attended with recognized experts presenting on housing resources and initiatives. The Summit was designed to provide community members space to discover and learn about our local housing challenges and partnership efforts to address these needs. Several highlights included learning about historic housing investments at the federal, state, and local level and testimonial provided by community members who overcame housing instability.

Summit participants also heard from several community members who are experiencing homelessness. They voiced concern with the lack of urgency in addressing their needs and the challenges of unstable housing. Their statements are a reminder of the crisis situation members in our community are experiencing and the critical need for affordable housing and supportive services.

- Michael Wong

Staff Highlight: Sheila

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 live over at Commerce Village and anytime someone moved out I volunteered in cleaning out the apartments to make it easier on the maintenance. After about the 8th one Sandra, the property manager, recommended me to clean the office and then they hired me. I have been working a year and a half to two years.

2. What is your role with HRHA?

I do housekeeping. I'm at the Main Office four days a week. Wednesdays I am at the Reservoir Street office and then Sunday I clean the common building at Commerce Village.



3. What benefits have come from working at HRHA?

Well I have met so many very fantastic people, at the Reservoir Office and the Main Office.

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

I knit and crochet and I also cross-stich. I read a lot too. Right now I am into murder and mayhem. I am going back to Mr. Lee Child and his unorthodox, quasi hero Jack Reacher.

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

Well there is always help out there and you just have to keep trying to better yourself. HRHA helps by getting people not just into safe and affordable housing, but helping improve their education so they can get a better job in programs like Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS). The FSS program helps people get their lives better. To me what it helps the most with is the next generation of children that are growing up under people who are in the FSS program because they get the Halloween parties, the Christmas parties, they get the chance to meet and deal with problems in a good way.

Housing Next Steps: City of Harrisonburg

Update from Adam Fletcher, Director, Community Development, City of Harrisonburg

Since the completion of the City's housing study in January of this year, several things have occurred including:

- 1) City Council approved funding for a Housing Coordinator position;
- 2) staff drafted the Housing Coordinator job description and plans to advertise for the position before the end of the year;
- 3) staff presented to local groups and organizations to educate them on some of the information contained within the housing study;
- 4) staff evaluated all 17 recommendations and is working on next steps to strategize for their implementation;
- 5) staff assisted with planning the community housing summit;
- 6) City Council held a housing summit specifically for the City;
- 7) staff created a housing technical work group to receive advice on the potential implementation of the recommendations from local individuals involved in different components of housing—this group has been meeting regularly;
- 8) staff continues to work on the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance rewrite project; and
- 9) staff identified multiple City-owned properties that could be used for affordable and mixed-income housing projects and is working on a grant with Virginia Housing to perform a feasibility study for two specific sites.

Overall, tackling the housing issue is very important to the City and we are committed to trying to figure out ways to create opportunities for the entire housing continuum, but especially for affordable options. While we have completed quite a bit over the past year, more work is still needed.



Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

Contact Us

+ *HRHA Main Office*

286 Kelley St

PO Box 1071 (22803)

Harrisonburg VA, 22802

Phone: (540)-434-7386

Fax: (540)-432-1113

+ *HRHA Reservoir Office*

FSS Program, HMIS, COC

143 Reservoir St

Harrisonburg VA, 22801

Phone: (540)-437-9545

Fax: (540)-432-1113

+ *HRHA Commerce Village*

Waiting List & Applications

Phone: (540)-615-5557

Fax: (540)-615-5558

+ *HRHA Lineweaver & Annex*

Phone: (540)-433-0788

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

+ Christine Fasching Maphis - Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Jody Johannessen

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

+ Shonda Green - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2024

Giving Tree on Hold this Season

Given continued transitions with Moving to Work and a major agency-wide software transition, HRHA will NOT be doing the Giving Tree Program this year. We are saddened to not have capacity this year but have directed our families to Holiday programs organized by other agencies.

We invite you to support agencies like Salvation Army who are coordinating Giving Trees this year. If you would like to provide support to our families in other ways like scholarship support or FSS programming, please visit our website at www.harrisonburg.com/donate

