

CITY EYES ‘GREEN’ KEEPER

Sustainability Position Would Help Track Carbon Footprint

Posted: February 10, 2014

By **PRESTON KNIGHT**

HARRISONBURG — The Harrisonburg Rockingham Green Network’s request for the city to add a sustainability coordinator may be granted a year after the fact.

City Council on Saturday held a three-hour work session covering a wide range of topics, including brief discussion of City Manager Kurt Hodgen’s proposal to add a facilities manager/sustainability coordinator to Harrisonburg staff.

The person would initially work for the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation at its soon-to-open complex on Washington Street to learn operations there and then assist with the proposed new city hall on South Main Street, Hodgen said.

The manager/coordinator’s duties would then expand to other city departments to collect a “bigger picture” of what infrastructure improvements could be made and when equipment should be replaced, he said.

“It’s an evolving position,” Hodgen said.

And, as the 17-item list for the work session shows, there’s no shortage of places for where the person’s expertise could be used: from new schools, including a proposed middle school on Garbers Church Road, to what will be the former Municipal Building on South Main Street (next to the proposed new one) to ensuring city projects meet new stormwater runoff regulations.

The city hasn’t developed a cost for the sustainability position yet, or a final job description for that matter. Officials with the green network have said it may cost about \$60,000.

Last April, the network lobbied for the position in hopes of a systematic reduction of Harrisonburg’s carbon footprint. The group exists primarily to inform the public and government about energy conservation and its long- and short-term benefits.

Its plea, though, came late in the city’s budget-planning process in 2013 and was not included in the current year’s budget.

Timing is less of an issue this year. Hodgen is hopeful council will add the position by July 1, when the next fiscal year begins. Councilmen Richard Baugh and Kai Degner have talked about a sustainability staff member for years, and the topic was mentioned at a panel work session last year as well.

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