



September 8, 2025 City Council Meeting

Title

Consider approval of the proposed mosaic design by Scott Supraner for the pumphouse at the Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park — Chris and Steve Carpenter

Summary

The 6,000-square-foot Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park opened July 1, 2025, with 36 spray features and interactive elements designed for various ages. Harrisonburg residents Steve and Chris Carpenter wish to privately fund the design and installation of three public artworks at the Spraygrounds. On January 13, 2026 City Council approved for the Carpenters to issue three calls for artists. The Carpenters seek City Council permission to proceed with commissioning artist Scott Supraner to produce his proposed mosaic design on the side of the pumphouse at the Spraygrounds.

Recommendation

Option 1- Approve the proposed mosaic design by Scott Supraner for the pumphouse at the Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact—100% donor funded

Context & Analysis

Steve and Chris Carpenter have lived in Harrisonburg for 23 years, actively attending church on the 400 Kelley Street site of the City's historic segregated pool; and learning of the trauma the Northeast Neighborhood community experienced during 1950s-1960s Urban Renewal.

Their exuberant experience of public art during their travels led the Carpenters to propose a collaboration designed to add an extra touch of creativity and joy to the new Spraygrounds, while also recognizing the neighborhood's history.

A public meeting was held on November 20, 2025 to introduce the project to community members, generating ideas for the new works of art and preferred locations. The project committee (the Carpenters, with representatives from the City, Arts Council of the Valley, and the

Northeast Neighborhood) used feedback from the meeting to select the three locations and develop content themes.

On January 13, 2026 City Council approved for the Carpenters to issue three calls for artists. The Arts Council of the Valley then released these calls for artists on behalf of the Carpenters. The Call of Art for the mosaic sought original, non-AI-generated artistic designs inspired by the historic photograph by Howard Curry of Harris Pool featuring Alfred Howard, Jr. diving with other community members looking on, including Charles Byrd, Sr., James Brown, Ardell Curry, Ronald Madden, and others we seek to identify. Artist responses were returned in March 2026 and reviewed by an evaluation committee selected by the Carpenters. The committee recommended the mosaic opportunity be awarded to artist Scott Supraner based on the concept design he submitted.

Mr. Supraner was born in Brooklyn, NY and received his BFA in Sculpture from SUNY, College at Purchase. He relocated to the Shenandoah Valley in 1989 and later to Charlottesville. His mosaic work is different than traditional mosaics in that he hand makes tiles that fit together like a puzzle rather than working with broken tiles. The finished works look like a painting, with detailed drawing and vibrant color. In his application he shared that his art often explores themes of social justice, education, unity, and cultural heritage while engaging local communities throughout the creative process. His work is in both public and private collections throughout the United States.

Community listening was of particular priority for the finalization of the proposed design due to the historic and deeply personal nature of its featured subject, Harris Pool, and the many community members who fondly remember socializing at the pool, learning to swim, and experiencing a safe, welcoming space in a time when people of color were segregated from accessing other public and private spaces. Community feedback on the concept mosaic design influenced changes incorporated into the final mosaic design. The donors and the evaluation committee held two Northeast Neighborhood Association meetings about the art and a small group meeting between the artist and community members who spent time at Harris Pool. Additional feedback was gathered by Karen Thomas, President of NENA, with individuals who were users of Harris Pool.

Upon completion, ownership of the artwork will be conveyed to the City of Harrisonburg. The City Council previously approved content for signage to be placed next to the mosaic displaying the historic photo of Harris Pool by Howard Curry, identifying the known people in the photo, and describing the pool's history and community significance.

This donation aligns with the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan. The plan highlights that “while some public art exists—mainly along the western edge near N. Mason Street—there is an opportunity to strengthen Neighborhood identity and sense of place through the expansion and strategic placement of public art and public realm improvements.” In the Focus Area of History and Culture, Strategy 1.3 calls for incorporation of public art that raises awareness about what

was lost during the Urban Renewal process and celebrates the Neighborhood's diversity of languages and ethnic backgrounds today through a variety of public art media (e.g., sculpture, performances, festivals).

Options

Option 1- Approve the proposed mosaic design by Scott Supraner for the pumphouse at the Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park

Option 2- Deny the proposed mosaic design by Scott Supraner for the pumphouse at the Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park