

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	November 16, 2020
Action Required:	None. For Discussion
Presenter:	John Blair, Acting City Manager
Staff Contacts:	John Blair Acting City Manager Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council Lisa Robertson, Acting City Attorney
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Origins of the City Logo; Process for Changing</b>

**Background:**

Recently City Councilors inquired as to how they might initiate a process to change the City’s logo, sometimes casually referred to as the City “seal”. Mr. Blair recommended that a report be provided to Council regarding the nature and history of the logo/seal.

Technically, the official City seal (a/k/a “corporate seal”) is a type of stamp that the Clerk of Council uses to authenticate official documents requiring that a formal signature of an authorized official of the City. That stamp creates a raised surface on a paper document, which allows the original signed version of that document to be distinguished from photo or digital copies. The Clerk of Council is the custodian of the corporate seal, pursuant to City Code §2-2, and a number of state statutes require specific documents to contain the corporate seal. The official, corporate seal does not contain any images.

Separately, there is a City “logo” (often referred to casually as the City “Seal”), which was originally approved by City Council to serve as an “identifying device” for use other than within official documents. Sometime in 1971, the City Council (“Council”) formed a City Seal Selection Committee (“Committee”) whereby a City Seal Contest was held. At the June 6, 1971 Council meeting, the Chairman of the Committee presented the winning entry of the contest. The winning entry was submitted by Mr. R.W. Vanderberry. The City Manager recommended that Council adopt the winning entry as the identifying logo of the City. A proposed ordinance entitled “An Ordinance to Amend and Reordain Section 1-9 of the Charlottesville City Code to Permit the Use for Other Than Official Documents, of an Identifying Device” was offered and carried over to the July 19, 1971 meeting whereby it was adopted. The image that we now refer to as the City logo is the design approved by Council in that 1971 meeting:



The logo has been used over the years on letterhead, forms, painted on the side of City-owned vehicles, etc. We do not know if there exists an original design document depicting the logo. If such a document exists, it has not been found in the Clerk's office or the City Attorney's office. Currently, the logo is reproduced primarily digitally. There exists no written policy that we have found, thus far, identifying when and how a City official or employee may utilize the logo; anyone with a computer can copy the logo and insert it into email communications, memos, draft documents, etc. (The General Assembly, by statute, protects the "seal" of the Commonwealth, and regulates official use; also, the legislature allows the Governor to authorize commercial use of the state "seal" under certain circumstances. *See, e.g.*, Va. Code §1-505 and §2-122).

### **Discussion:**

Within §15.2-1402 of the Virginia Code, the General Assembly provides that "Every locality of this Commonwealth is hereby declared to be a body politic of the Commonwealth and may have a seal and alter the same at its pleasure." The City Council has established two "seals" within City Code §2-1, one for use as its official "corporate seal" (authenticating official, legal documents) and the second to be used as the City's seal for purposes *other than* on official, legal documents.

#### Sec. 2-1. - Corporate seal—Generally.



The corporate seal of the city shall be a design within a circle, one and three-quarter (1¾) inches in diameter, with the word "VIRGINIA" across the face; in the exergue this inscription "CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE," and all of such words shall be raised letters; the design being the same as that heretofore in use as the seal of the city. No other seal shall be used for the city and no paper issued by municipal authority, which requires the seal of the city, shall be valid unless the seal prescribed above be duly affixed thereto; provided, however, that an identifying device, the design of which was approved by the council of the city on July 6, 1971, shall be used as the seal of the city for all purposes except those where the corporate seal is required by law to be affixed to any document.

(Code 1976, § 1-8)

By majority vote to approve an amended ordinance, City Council may amend §2-1 at any time. If Council desires to change/ update the logo, only the provisions relating to the "identifying device" would need to be amended to reflect the date of Council's approval of a new logo as the official seal of the City for purposes *other than* official documents.

There is no prescribed legal process for designing a new City logo. As noted above, the 1971 Council chose to announce a contest, and appointed a Committee to select a winning design.

We recommend that, before going forward, the City Manager's Office should conduct an inter-departmental survey, asking each department to identify how it actually uses the City logo for official identification purposes, and what costs would be necessary to replace the current logo with an updated one. The costs should be minimal as to internal correspondence (such as City letterhead or business cards), but repainting vehicles, reprinting brochures, etc. may involve additional costs.

**Alignment with Council Vision Areas and Strategic Plan:** N/A at this time

**Community Engagement:** N/A at this time

**Budgetary Impact:** Cannot be determined at this time.

**Recommendation:** At some point in time City Code §2-1 should be updated, as to the corporate seal, to reflect new means of executing official documents where authorized by statute. So, for example, some statutes may authorize digital/electronic “seals”, or may allow a facsimile of the corporate seal to be imprinted on an official document without having to be physically impressed on a paper copy of the document. The authorizing provisions for the corporate seal that can be impressed on paper copies should be retained, but language should be included to authorize other ways to affix the corporate seal, as may be authorized by law.

**Alternatives:** N/A at this time

**Attachments:** N/A at this time