



# City of Harrisonburg

City Hall  
409 South Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

## Meeting Minutes - Final Planning Commission

---

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

---

### 1. Call To Order

The Harrisonburg Planning Commission held a second meeting on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 409 South Main Street

**Present** 7 - Brent Finnegan, Adriel Byrd, Donna Armstrong, Valerie Washington, Richard Baugh, Vice-Mayor Laura Dent, and Heja Alsindi

### 2. Roll Call/Determination of Quorum

Members present: Chair Brent Finnegan; Vice Mayor Dent; Heja Alsindi; Dr. Donna Armstrong; Richard Baugh; Valerie Washington. Vice Chair Byrd arrived late.

Also present: Adam Fletcher, Director of Community Development; Thanh Dang, Deputy Director of Community Development; Wesley Russ, Deputy City Attorney; Meg Rupkey, Planner; and Anastasia Auguste, Administrative Specialist/Secretary.

Chair Finnegan called the meeting to order and said that there was a quorum with six members present.

### 3. New Business - Public Hearings

- 3.a.** Consider a request from Cobblers Valley Development LLC to rezone 585 Pear Street

*Please refer to attachment 9 for the complete minutes extract.*

**A motion was made by Byrd, seconded by Baugh, that this PH-Rezoning be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:**

**Yes:** 7 - Finnegan, Byrd, Armstrong, Washington, Baugh, Vice-Mayor Dent and Alsindi

**No:** 0

- 3.b.** Consider a request from Cobblers Valley Development LLC for a special use permit to allow attached townhomes at 585 Pear Street

Vice Chair Byrd said I will make a motion to approve the special use permit.

Vice Mayor Dent seconded the motion.

Ms. Dang said may I ask for clarification that it will include the recommendation to extend to 48 months?

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

- Commissioner Armstrong Aye
- Commissioner Baugh Aye
- Vice Chair Byrd Aye
- Vice Mayor Dent Aye
- Commissioner Alsindi Aye
- Commissioner Washington Aye
- Chair Finnegan Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the special use permit passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on January 23, 2024.

**A motion was made by Byrd, seconded by Vice-Mayor Dent, that this PH-Special Use Permit be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:**

**Yes:** 7 - Finnegan, Byrd, Armstrong, Washington, Baugh, Vice-Mayor Dent and Alsindi

**No:** 0

**3.c. Consider a request from J&D Group LLC to rezone two parcels at 465 Pear Street and Pear Street**

Chair Finnegan read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Rupkey said in September 2022 Rockingham County Board of Supervisors approved a rezoning to R-5, Planned Neighborhood District for +/- 6.77 acres adjacent to the subject site for this report. The 2022 County rezoning request included a Master Plan that illustrated 55 townhomes and provide access to the parcels within the City. Although no proffers were submitted with the County rezoning, the County’s R-5 regulations required that a Master Plan is submitted and only uses shown on the plan are permissible.

The applicant is requesting to rezone two parcels totaling +/- 3.51-acres from R-1, Single Family Residential District to R-8C, Small Lot Residential District Conditional while simultaneously requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-59.4 (1) of the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) to allow attached townhomes of not more than eight (8) units in the R-8 district.

Note that the neighboring property owner of the parcel addressed as 585 Pear Street and identified as tax map parcel 8-E-2A is also requesting to rezone from R-1 to R-8C and for a SUP to allow townhomes. Those requests for that site are discussed in a separate staff report.

*Proffers*

The applicant has offered the following proffers (written verbatim):

1. Density of the development shall not exceed 41 units.
2. Developer shall provide a vehicular connection/road stub to parcel# 008 E 2A (located in city of Harrisonburg) to allow for future connectivity.
3. A 5' wide sidewalk along the north side of the private drive 1 & west side of private drive 2 extending through the development as generally depicted on the concept plan.
4. Developer shall provide a continuation of road widening along with the addition of curb and gutter along Pear Street as generally depicted on the concept plan.
5. The Developer shall provide an easement for a bus shelter at a location acceptable to Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) and will construct a concrete pad to HDPT's specifications provided adequate sight distance can be achieved along Pear Street.
6. Developer shall plant and maintain a 20' landscape buffer adjacent to the existing Single Family Residence as depicted and described on the Concept Plan. A detail depicting the buffer and spatial relations has been added to the concept plan.
7. Developer shall install and maintain posted speed limit signage not to exceed 15 miles per hour to serve as a traffic calming measure as generally depicted on the concept plan.
8. Developer shall install and maintain a raised crosswalk to serve as a traffic calming measure as generally depicted on the concept plan. The raised crosswalk design requires approval by the department of public works.
9. Developer shall provide a public access easement encompassing the 5' wide sidewalk, extending from Shoeshine Avenue to Pear Street and along Private Drive 2, as generally depicted on the concept plan.

The conceptual site layout is not proffered.

While the statements of proffers 1 through 6 might be easily understood, staff provides further explanation of proffers 7 through 9 within the Transportation and Traffic section of this report.

*Land Use*

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Medium Density Mixed Residential and states:

These areas have been developed or are planned for small-lot single-family detached and single-family attached (duplexes and townhomes) neighborhoods, where commercial and service uses might be finely mixed within residential uses or located nearby along collector and arterial streets. Mixed-use buildings containing residential and non-residential uses and multi-family dwellings could be appropriate under special circumstances. Attractive green and open spaces are important for these areas and should be incorporated. Open space development (also known as cluster development) is encouraged, which provides for grouping of residential properties on a development site to use the extra land for open space or recreation. Like the Low Density Mixed Residential designation, the intent is to have innovative residential building types and allow creative subdivision designs that promote neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street

grids, community green spaces, and the protection of environmental resources or sensitive areas (i.e. trees and floodplains). Residential building types such as zero lot-line development should be considered as well as other new single-family residential forms. The gross density of development in these areas could be around 20 dwelling units per acre. Commercial uses would be expected to have an intensity equivalent to a Floor Area Ratio of at least 0.4, although the City does not measure commercial intensity in that way.

The conceptual layout demonstrates the proffered maximum 41 dwelling units. At a proffered density of 11.17 units per acre and with the planned townhomes, the requested rezoning and SUP is supported by the Comprehensive Plan. The construction of townhomes would also be consistent with the townhomes under construction on surrounding properties in the City and County.

#### *Transportation and Traffic*

The attached letter from the Department of Public Works dated November 29, 2023 states:

“The land use and number of units described in the rezoning application, when combined with the number of units proffered for the portion of the development located in Rockingham County are consistent with the number of trips analyzed in the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) accepted by the Department of Public Works in February of 2018 and updated in August of 2022. Therefore, Public Works does not require a TIA Determination Form to be completed for the current rezoning application.”

Proffer 2 would require the developer to provide a vehicular connection/road stub into portions of the development on the adjacent property identified as tax map parcels 8-E-3 & 8-E-5, which is for the project known as Cobblers Valley that is also being reviewed for a rezoning and SUP this month.

Proffers 3 and 9 commits the developer to construct sidewalks and dedicate public access easements for sidewalk along the private streets. (Public access easements are privately owned and maintained sidewalks that are open for the public to use.) While staff would prefer sidewalks on both sides of the private streets, the applicant is only proffering to construct sidewalk on one side of the private streets.

Proffer #4 commits the applicant to the continuation of road widening with the addition of curb and gutter along Pear Street as generally depicted on the concept plan. When the project is developed, the developer will be required to extend the existing sidewalk along Pear Street.

Proffer #5 requires the developer to provide an easement for a bus shelter and build a concrete pad in a location that is acceptable to the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT). The proffer allows for flexibility that if an adequate sight distance cannot be achieved at a location acceptable by HDPT, the easement and concrete pad will not be required.

During review of the requests, staff suggested that the applicant add traffic calming measures such as raised crosswalks to help reduce the speed along the private drive. The applicant has provided

proffers 7 and 8 to help with that regard.

*Public Water and Sanitary Sewer*

Staff have no concerns regarding water and sanitary sewer service availability for the proposed development.

*Housing Study*

The City's Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject site within Market Type B, which has "neighborhoods [that] are characterized by high income earning households, large volumes of housing sales and lower population growth." The Housing Study further notes that houses in these markets are quick to sell and that "[p]riorities and policies that are appropriate to Market Type B areas include the preservation of existing affordable housing while at the same time working to increase access to amenities."

*Public Schools*

The student generation attributed to the proposed 41 residential units is estimated to be 15 students. Based on the School Board's current adopted attendance boundaries, Bluestone Elementary School, Thomas Harrison Middle School, and Harrisonburg High School would serve the students residing in this development. Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) staff noted that schools are over capacity in many of the schools.

*Recommendation*

Staff recommends approval for both the rezoning and SUP. Furthermore, staff is comfortable recommending an extension of approval from 12 months to 48 months as requested by the applicant. As identified by Section 10-3-130 (c) of the ZO, unless City Council specifically grants a time period for which the SUP must be established, the default time period is 12 months. Staff believes the additional time is appropriate for this project.

Chair Finnegan asked if there any questions for staff.

Vice Chair Byrd said Public Transportation has not determined where bus stops could be placed on Pear?

Chair Finnegan said it has to do with the sight distance for traffic impact.

Vice Chair Byrd said so that would happen after someone tried to build something that they would determine that?

Ms. Dang said yeah, that will be determined during site plan engineering design. Keep in mind, if I may also add, that we had also recognized that there is already, probably not constructed yet, but a proffered for the first Cobblers Valley for a bus stop along the Pearl Street frontage there. So, it is not much further that a second one here with this site in front of Zephyr Hill would be offered if the sight distance was adequate.

Chair Finnegan said so, if in the opinion...Is it Public Works that makes that determination?

Ms. Dang said for sight distance, the engineers would all work together to make that determination.

Chair Finnegan said if in the opinion of City staff, you cannot safely put a bus stop where they are talking about. Where is the next closest bus stop?

Ms. Dang said in front of the first phase of Cobbler Valley.

Ms. Rupkey said [referring to the image on the screen] the purple.

Mr. Fletcher said on the image where the BMP is in the top left corner of the purple area, it is roughly in there.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any more questions for staff. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and invited the applicant or applicant's representative to speak to their request.

Mr. Rhea came forward to speak to the request. He said we worked with this developer. I am not going to repeat what we talked about with Cobblers Valley. I will say that in the County portion of both Cobblers and Zephyr Hill, all the infrastructure, including street stubs and water and sewer connections are already largely installed there, so it is a pretty well development ready. The 48 months is just a measure of caution, but the work has begun to make it a reality quicker than that. I appreciated Mr. Fletcher's comments. It is hard. We go through all of these meetings outside of planning, there is a lot of work with City staff and Public Works that goes into these discussions, even on small projects like this about the interconnectivity, about the bike-ped plans. One thing about this small area study that is now contemplated to be funded both out of the Mosby Road development, which is just right around the corner from this and that is really going to piece this together. It is Todd's personal goal to the Friendly City Trail as it terminates at Bluestone Town Center continued over to Erickson. It is not that far up Erickson to this property to go up over the Brubaker property over to Mosby Road, which puts you right down pretty close to where the Bluestone Trail comes in and down by where the Public Works building is. So, it is not that far from a reality that people in the Belmont area of Rockingham County can be connected pretty conveniently bike-ped to Rocktown High School. That is... we have all been looking at and that is what we have been talking about. So, it is not just random developer here and random developer there, we are integrating that into a plan. Another point, I was at the Rockingham County Comprehensive Plan work session on transportation the first Tuesday of December. In that meeting, I spoke up, which was technically out of turn since I was a member of the public, and made them very aware that the City was planning this small area plan which impacts adjacent areas of the County, Cobblers Valley, the Route 42 corridor, Mosby Road just to the south of here and they indicated an eagerness to integrate with and participate in with the City with that plan. I think, again, this is a multi-jurisdictional area and the plan that is coming out

of these various developments is a sound one that I think can be a model for cooperation between the City and the County and the developers in the area to improve things. We all know Pear Street is not a long-term solution, it is not upgradable in its current configuration. But staff, both in Community Development and Public Works, have shared good ideas. We have talked about it and there is an eye toward proper planning in place, but this just is not the right forum to share all of that detail, but I want to share with the Commission the confidence that those things are actively being thought about as a knitted together regional solution.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any questions for the applicant's representative. Hearing none, he asked if there was anyone in the room or on the phone wishing to speak to the request. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Chair Finnegan said again, I do appreciate staff pushing for sidewalks on both sides. In the staff report it was talking about wanting sidewalks on both sides and it is just kind of maybe not a compromise but a nod towards pedestrian safety. [Referring to the image on the screen] Which streets are those?

Mr. Fletcher said this would really be an extension of Craftsman Drive most likely. Shoeshine is the one going page up and then is Craftsman Drive that starts way out in the County and circles around.

Ms. Rupkey said to make a clarification, it is only one raised crosswalk and I accidentally marked two.

Mr. Fletcher said they are private streets too.

Mr. Snyder said [referring to the image on the screen] so the first crosswalk is right here.

Chair Finnegan said right on the City/County line.

Mr. Snyder continued yes, because there is an intersection right here and then the next one that you are seeing is at this intersection and that is where the sidewalk went, we will call it page north, out to Pear Street and then the one that you saw in the previous request was down here at the loop.

Ms. Dang said if I may clarify that second location closest to the intersection is just a regular crosswalk not a raised crosswalk.

Chair Finnegan said raised crosswalks are another way to calm traffic and make places more walkable, so I do appreciate that.

Vice Chair Byrd said since everyone is so enthusiastic about this application, I will make a motion to approve the rezoning with proper proffers.

Vice Mayor Dent seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Armstrong   Aye  
 Commissioner Baugh       Aye  
 Vice Chair Byrd            Aye  
 Vice Mayor Dent            Aye  
 Commissioner Alsindi      Aye  
 Commissioner Washington   Aye  
 Chair Finnegan             Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the rezoning passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on January 23, 2024.

**A motion was made by Byrd, seconded by Vice-Mayor Dent, that this PH-Rezoning be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:**

**Yes:** 7 - Finnegan, Byrd, Armstrong, Washington, Baugh, Vice-Mayor Dent and Alsindi

**No:** 0

**3.d.** Consider a request from J&D Group LLC for a special use permit to allow attached townhomes at 465 Pear Street and Pear Street

Vice Chair Byrd said I would like to make a motion to approve the special use permit with the 48 month extension.

Vice Mayor Dent seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Armstrong   Aye  
 Commissioner Baugh       Aye  
 Vice Chair Byrd            Aye  
 Vice Mayor Dent            Aye  
 Commissioner Alsindi      Aye  
 Commissioner Washington   Aye  
 Chair Finnegan             Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the special use permit passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on January 23, 2024.

**This PH-Special Use Permit was approved.**



#### 4. New Business - Other Items

##### 4.a. Discussion on Comprehensive Plan Update and Update on Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances Update

Ms. Dang said thank you. Within your packet there was a one-page memorandum that described our recommendation for the Comprehensive Plan Update and also providing you all with an update on the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance update. If I may, I am going to speak of them in reverse order to start with the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances update. We are gearing up on that. We are working on reviewing sections of the modules and you have an opportunity before you leave today... Evan Winkler, our Zoning Administrator, is in the phone booth today but he is one of our team members who has joined Adam, Wesley and I as the core project team reviewing the modules. Of course, other City departments and other City staff within the Community Development Department are involved. We are beginning to reach out to the Ordinance Advisory Committee members also to ask them if they are still interested, are they still available, do they have time to continue this work over the next 12 months or so that we anticipate that we will taking with this. Our hope is that after the winter holidays we will work more to formally announce and have a more formal project schedule that we can share with you all of what we anticipate some of the major milestones will be through the end of next year in 2024. Anticipating then that in early 2025 we will do the public hearings to Planning Commission and City Council as necessary, whatever it takes to get it to the finish line. So, that is the update on the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance project, do you have any questions for me at this time before I talk about the Comprehensive Plan update?

Chair Finnegan said I did have a question about the advisory committee, would they still be eligible to be on the committee if someone has moved during that time?

Ms. Dang said if this was a committee that was not chartered like did not have bylaws it was a committee to help support this project and members that were selected or appointed by City Council a couple of years ago, not all of them lived in the City, so I would think that we would maintain the thing that is like community members with whatever their ties or experience here that they could offer their perspective to participate on the committee.

Vice Mayor Dent said just to follow up on that, are there openings for new people to apply if perhaps someone rotated off?

Ms. Dang said we do not know yet and that is why we are reaching out to the original folks that were appointed to ask them if they are still available and interested and if some of them are no longer available or interested, this is not set in stone, but if we modeled after what we did previously...what we did previously was between staff, Planning Commission and City Council members, recommendations were made to staff to then compile a list of a diverse group of individuals with different experiences and then staff presented that list to City Council and City Council either adopted or approved the recommendation that staff made. So, we could do that again or we could do something a little different but let us see who is available and if we have vacancies that we want to add more people to.

Vice Mayor Dent said could someone go ahead and apply and see if there is an opening?

Ms. Dang said we did not have an application process last time.

Mr. Fletcher said sort of remind me, the folks that were on the Ordinance Advisory Committee they may not have resided in the City but was there a connection that own property or owned a business, was that the connection?

Ms. Dang said or they were apart of some nonprofit group that maybe had interest in something.

Mr. Fletcher said I want to leave the door open to make sure that, like if for some reason, the person Brent might have communication with was a resident and that was their connection and they moved out, I do not know if that disqualifies them in some way.

Ms. Dang said I am going off of memory of who the individuals were on the list, I think most of them were professionals or part of an organization or something that was tied with the City somehow. We can look at that and evaluate.

Chair Finnegan said it is also a possibility that if someone was the director of a nonprofit and has since moved on and is no longer connected with that nonprofit. Or if they have moved to somewhere out of state.

Ms. Dang said the next update which I would like to ask you all to take action on is a decision about the Comprehensive Plan. So, as you are aware state code requires that the Planning Commission once every five years review the Comprehensive Plan and determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan. The last time we did the major update was in November of 2018, so we are now at that five-year mark. While there have been some amendments, staff’s recommendation and the temperature that I sense from conversations with you all is that we should go through with another Comprehensive Plan update. If you were all to take that vote and decide that we move forward with the Comprehensive Plan update then we will work on budgeting for that in the 2025-2026 budget preparation. Which means that the earliest the project would begin is in fall of 2025, so after the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance update.

Commissioner Baugh said I move that we accept staff’s recommendation and move forward with the Comprehensive Plan update.

Vice Chair Byrd seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

- Commissioner Armstrong     Aye
- Commissioner Baugh         Aye
- Vice Chair Byrd             Aye
- Vice Mayor Dent            Aye
- Commissioner Alsindi       Aye
- Commissioner Washington   Aye
- Chair Finnegan              Aye

The motion to recommend approval of a Comprehensive Plan update passed (7-0).

Chair Finnegan asked what are the next steps for that? Does it just go into the CIP?

Mr. Fletcher said typically it would not go into the CIP, it is sort of a routine thing, it is not really a capital project per say. I think it really now is sort of a waiting game for us to sort of put priorities

on the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance rewrite. I would point out that what we are recommending is that it is a thorough and complete rewrite. The last two iterations were building off of a foundation of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan and we just think it time to almost basically start from scratch. I think Mr. Baugh was around for the 2004 update and he updates what that means.

Commissioner Baugh said you and I were around, I am not sure anybody else was.

Mr. Fletcher said actually, I started right after it got adopted so I missed the process but you know it well.

Commissioner Alsindi said I am not sure if this is the right timing for it but as long as it has been mentioned, is the need for the Comprehensive Plan merely because of the timing or the impact. Just a rough [unintelligible] of the impact of the previous or the current one that is in effect. Is it just because it is not meeting the time conditions anymore? Or do you think that impact...

Mr. Fletcher said in this particular case it is definitely both. First and foremost, legally we are to look at it every five years and make that determination, but we have had quite a bit happen in the past five years. From a socio-economic perspective, housing demands, we completed our first ever Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market study, I mean a lot has happened. It is needed.

Commissioner Alsindi said that is a healthy indicator for the need of...

Commissioner Baugh said I think it is reminiscent of part of the discussion earlier in that the 2003, adopted early until 2004, as staff saying, a consultant was hired, and it was a totally different process and literally a brand-new document was created. Since then, the last two updates have really been tweaking of that document. The thing it reminded me of was my sense in that 2003/2004 process was at the time there was sort of a level of outreach to the Community to get input and everything that was sort of unprecedented at the time. I think if we try to duplicate now everybody would say why are you not getting enough good public input, so I think that is part of it as well. We have attempted this every time, but I think that is another element of it as well that you typically may involve hiring a consultant. Really again just doing a deep dive and the document itself...we are probably looking at creating a new one, not updating the one that been placed.

Mr. Fletcher said if you get bored one day over the holidays you can look back at the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. The plan is really a reflection of the ideas of the community. Your eyes might be opened. You go back and look at the 2004 Comprehensive Plan... because we were coming out of a period in which there was a big push for no apartment units, restrictions on occupancy, more single family, only single family, a lot of it needs to be this kind of community. In fact, you know the Urban Residential Zoning District was relatively new, it was adopted in 2001. So, a lot of the sentiment and the ideas of the public have really changed dramatically as a City as we continue to evolve, and we will always evolve. But you will just see a very different sentiment if you look at 2004 and then you hear the way we talk today, very, very different.

Commissioner Baugh said I do not think we had five items that went to a vote, but that was one thing that actually went to a vote. The vote was between the group that lost that wanted to support a total ban, and the other group it was one of these things, whether you want to call them liberal or conversative, it was on the spectrum it was the people here versus the people here. The

majority was no we do not think there should be a total ban we just should circumspect about that, almost everybody was in two groups. That in and of itself, orientation has changed considerably.

Mr. Fletcher said please remember too, that a lot of the recommendations that come out of plans takes time to implement. That 2004 document was created was in that sort brainstormed in the 2002/2003 time period, some of the recommendations that came out of that was to put more restrictions on being able to build apartment units. That is why we ended up with now you have to apply for a special use permit to build apartments in R-3, that is why we have two R-3s which is a whole different story. The time period in which we wanted regulations to be adopted immediately and council granted three-year time periods, there are so many different things we could talk for a couple more hours about that. Things cannot happen fast enough for people, and you really have to take an appreciation for when we do these plans, these are like legacy things because it takes so long to implement them. We hold ourselves to high standards and put a lot of work into it.

Commissioner Baugh said in my mind there has been stuff on the bike side but that was the first big affirmation, that plan is loaded with affirmation of pedestrian accidents. That was a tipping point then. It would seem strange now, but that was kind of the point where suddenly people...I remember going back through the public input sessions that we had and the one thing that came up every public input session was the place is not pedestrian friendly enough, I would walk to more places if I could and a lot of these things that we talk about tonight, here we are almost 20 years later in some respects talking about our frustrations about some of these things that move at a little bit of a glacier pace. But the other point was there is an arc to it. In fact, that 2004 plan had a lot to do with the arc of a lot of these things we are actually taking for granted now on bike-ped connectivity, especially pedestrians.

Vice Chair Byrd said Commissioner Armstrong mentioned earlier about us not having siloed thinking and the Comprehensive Plan is supposed to make sure that we have thought more broadly about how all of these things in the City connect and the community is giving feedback on those thoughts for those adjustments to be made. I have been very curious about it since I have had multiple trainings that have emphasized that we are supposed to do this when it was going to occur.

Commissioner Armstrong said you said that in 2003/2004 it was a major conceptual product, and it generated some zoning. This is something I have been curious about in completing the Zoning Subdivision Ordinances prior to this, how will that then come back and impact the Zoning and Subdivision [Ordinance] if it has just been done?

Chair Finnegan said chicken or the egg?

Ms. Dang said we will continue to make more amendments. I mean, it is a continual process, a cyclical process that we will continue to do.

Mr. Fletcher said I think if you had a magic wand you would say "hey we are going to just do the Comprehensive Plan first and then you do the Zoning Ordinance after." That would probably take you seven or eight years. And I do not think our community wants to wait that long.

Chair Finnegan said I mean, Commissioner Baugh talked about a lot of the things that changed. I will say I am hopeful that some of the things that we would consider, not that the current

Comprehensive Plan does not mention this, but really look at what is the carbon footprint of different types of development and how we build. We knew what global warming was in 2004. We are breathing in smoke and it is here, that is something I hope that we will also consider.

Vice Mayor Dent said you have actually already raised my comment about the chicken or the egg aspect of the Zoning [and Subdivision Ordinance] and Comprehensive Plan. Given that we have to choose one to do first, we just go with the zoning first and I wonder what effects, benefits, disadvantages that might have. I mean, in a way, it might be easier going into the Comprehensive Plan to have just low, medium, and high density zoning in mind rather than have to think about R-5, R-8, R-7, or whatever anymore. So, that is the advantage, I suppose. The disadvantage I think as I think Commissioner Armstrong said we might have to then after the Comprehensive Plan, go back and reamend some of the zoning that we come up with because the Zoning Ordinance also includes maps, is that correct? So, those maps could very well change as we go through the Comprehensive Plan update.

Ms. Dang said that is correct.

Commissioner Washington said I would just like to say that while we are looking at this and I know that we are touching on people who have already been through this process, I really do hope that there are fresher faces that resemble the community that we live in. Harrisonburg is very diverse and prides itself on being inclusive. So, hopefully that process becomes more inclusive. I am the nerd who read the whole Comprehensive Plan and it was, to say the least, boring and very technically written. I think now as we get more folks from our community involved in things like this, it can be done well and resemble the community that we live in. Whether that it is language, race, religion, all of the different aspects of what it makes to make Harrisonburg that friendly city.

**A motion was made by Baugh, seconded by Byrd, that this Action Item be approved. The motion carried with a recorded roll call vote taken as follows:**

**Yes:** 7 - Finnegan, Byrd, Armstrong, Washington, Baugh, Vice-Mayor Dent and Alsindi

**No:** 0

## 5. Public Comment

None.

Chair Finnegan said so this was not something that we did prior to COVID, the phone call.

Mr. Fletcher said no we did not.

Chair Finnegan said at some point, I think we are going to need to evaluate what of the COVID practices, including calling in, do we keep and what do we go back to.

Ms. Dang said may I ask what your concern is?

Chair Finnegan said we have had some technical issues with the call like in months past there has been we cannot hear anything, no one calls during public comment, I do not know. It is something that I think we should at least be intentional about it.

Mr. Fletcher said I guess I am not sure I understand.

Ms. Dang said I look at this as an opportunity for people to make the meetings more accessible for people to watch it from home and to call in. The majority of the time we do not technical issues.

Mr. Fletcher said we are definitely still where there is a volume issue that we do not have control over on the television. If you stream, it sounds better than if you were watching on television, our IT department has definitely known. We have at least made some improvements. Now when the calls come in, they are coming over the loudspeakers and we all hear them and you do not have to bend the speaker down to the phone. I think we continue to progress but I agree with Ms. Dang.

Vice Chair Byrd said speaking on communication aspect, I do not know if it is still the case, but when I lived in Liberty Square because the cable provider was based out of Waynesboro our public channel was Waynesboro. Which is hilarious because my jurisdiction is Harrisonburg. I do not know if there is anything...

Mr. Fletcher said I do not know. There are some, many different, ways now that you can get local television, you know, different providers without naming all of them about how you can....

Vice Chair Byrd said I was just looking at it specifically because in that area they are the only cable provider unless someone went with satellite. Do jurisdictions know how people see their public television?

Mr. Russ said part of any company's franchise agreement with cable service typically includes a provision of a PEG [public, education, and government access] channel. If your cable is playing the Waynesboro PEG channel...I do not know enough about the technical aspects. It is probably not coming through cable lines to you. That is interesting, but I do not know that there is anything that the City can do about it.

Mr. Fletcher said you did say satellite did you not?

Vice Chair Byrd said the options were the satellite or cable, but there was only one cable provider.

Chair Finnegan said this is a conversation we could have offline. Okay, so it sounds like we want to keep the public comment, that is fine. I am not saying get rid of it, I am just saying be intentional when keeping certain things.

Commissioner Armstrong said I mean, you are right that the COVID epidemic introduced the necessity for distance communication, but it never has substitutes for convening public meetings, at work or anywhere. So, to some extent, I miss, you know, you are talking about engagement Commissioner Washington but people have to show up for that. They are encouraged to speak more when they are in the same room because there is energy that is engaging. I think not to stop it, but to somehow move past that epidemic and say this is not an adequate substitute and this needs to be reintroduced. I am not getting much energy here, present company accepted.

Chair Finnegan said I was in a band for a while and there were shows like this where there were a lot more people on stage.

Commissioner Washington said quick clarification, when I said boring, I meant like lack of creativity, and we need creative thought processes to get out the lack of housing that we have in housing folks. We need more creativity when we talk about the environmental issues that we are having and right now I do not think we are seeing that. While there are cute developments being

built, I have not seen any creative ones in regard to how they are environmentally designed or how they are housing folks that need to be housed or creating opportunities for folks in Harrisonburg. Commissioner Alsindi said with regards to the communication and the physical or in person attendance, coincidentally it was planned I attended the Planning Commission meeting in Arkansas, Springdale, as part of my assignment for the Certified Planning Commissioner Program. The auditorium was packed to the end of the door where I stood and it was an ordinary meeting, there was nothing. So, I was interested in looking into the population for Springdale, Arkansas, it is 87,000. But that level of attendance does not match with the extra 30,000 that they had as compared to Harrisonburg. It triggered a thought inside my head, what is the role of the Planning Commission in increasing the engagement? What is the level of interaction that is happening here and transmitted outside of the walls? The dynamics that would motivate people and trigger the curiosity inside of them, what I call sometimes, healthy fear. Let me go there and see what they are talking about, my City. That could also be some food for thought for us in the future.

## 6. Report of Secretary & Committees

### 6.a. Rockingham County Planning Commission 2024 Schedule

Ms. Dang said I need you all to volunteer for the Rockingham County Planning Commission schedule. If I can get dates for folks to sign up, at least through June or July, then I will revisit it again when it gets closer.

Chair Finnegan said we are looking for a volunteer for March.

Ms. Dang said April 2, May 7, June 4, and maybe July 9.

Commissioner Baugh said I will do May.

Commissioner Armstrong said June.

Chair Finnegan said looking for March and April.

Commissioner Washington said I can look at the later times in the year, past May. So, I can take July.

Commissioner Alsindi said August.

Vice Chair Byrd said everyone's busy in March? I will take March then.

Chair Finnegan said is April the missing link? I will take April.

Ms. Dang said Mr. Fletcher has the CIP.

Mr. Fletcher said I will make it quick. The documents, all projects that will be reviewed are here. They are numbered for you to easily say page, whatever and make whatever comment you wish. The short memo describes your responsibilities. Just to point out, when I was writing the memo, I was very pleased to recognize that last year I wrote this memo in February. Although it does not feel like we are making a lot of progress on my end, we are two months ahead, which is fantastic. One thing that is sort of out of the ordinary, at least in the way that we look at these, there is always the opportunity that costs and schedules might change between when you start looking at projects and when they actually end up in the final document. I just identified there are six projects. I know for certain that they are still conversations ongoing and I just wanted to make note of them. So, I identified the page numbers and what the projects are. As an example, the

very first one, Fire Station Number 4 placement. The schedule is sort of up for debate still about where it might fall in the horizon. I did not want you to be caught off guard when changes might be made and I just knew those projects specifically were still being discussed.

Vice Mayor Dent said that one in particular, the plan is to have that follow the new Fire Station 5 construction and so it would depend on that schedule.

Mr. Fletcher said it is part of that. It is also part of financing and where it falls in the budget. Please take a look at this. I have identified that we will not get to the final document until at least February, but I always accept early comments because that will help me on my end as I continue to round up folks internally within our staff team. So, whenever you can get to it, I appreciate it and I will just kind of keep at you to remind you. Thank you.

## 7. Other Matters

## 9 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:36PM

### NOTE TO THE PUBLIC

Staff will be available at 4:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the next Planning Commission meeting for those interested in going on a field trip to view the sites on the next agenda.

### INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Language interpretation service in Spanish, Arabic and Kurdish is available for Planning Commission meetings. To ensure that interpreters are available at the meeting, interested persons must request the accommodation at least four (4) calendar days in advance of the meeting by contacting the City Clerk at (540) 432-7701 or by submitting a request online at: [www.harrisonburgva.gov/interpreter-request-form](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/interpreter-request-form)

El servicio de intérpretes inglés-español está disponible para las reuniones públicas de la Comisión de Planificación. Para asegurar la disponibilidad de intérpretes, cualquier interesado deberá solicitar la presencia de un intérprete al menos cuatro (4) días calendarios antes de la reunión comunicándose con la Secretaría Municipal al (540) 432-7701 o por medio de la página por internet al:

<https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/interpreter-request-form>

### NOTE TO THE PUBLIC



Residents/Media will be able to attend the meeting.

The Public can also view the meeting live on:

- The City's website, <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
- Public Education Government Channel 3

A phone line will also be live where residents will be allowed to call in and speak with Planning Commission during the Public Hearings and the Public Comments portion of the night's meeting. We ask those that wish to speak during the public comment period to not call in until after all the public hearings and public comment on those have been heard. This will avoid anyone calling on any other item from holding up the queue and then being asked to call back at a later time.

The telephone number to call in is: (540) 437-2687

Residents also may provide comment prior to the meeting by visiting this page:  
[www.harrisonburgva.gov/agenda-comments](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/agenda-comments)