



# City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

## Office of the City Manager

409 South Main Street  
Post Office Box 20031  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
(540) 432-7701 / FAX (540) 432-7778

Ande Banks  
Acting Deputy City Manager

TO: Kurt Hodgen, City Manager  
FROM: Ande Banks, Acting Deputy City Manager  
DATE: July 11, 2016  
RE: Environmental Performance Standards

**Summary:** At the January 12, 2016 City Council meeting, Council affirmed its prior adoption of Objective 8.3 of the Comprehensive Plan. At that time, Council requested staff address the following items in a report:

1. Recommendations on how to implement Objective 8.3 of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The merits of creating an advisory committee.
3. How best to engage stakeholders in the process.

**Background:** The City's Comprehensive Plan Objective 8.3 states:

Objective 8.3 To create a set of environmental performance standards for public and private development and redevelopment projects.

Strategy 8.3.1 Using state standards where applicable, to prepare a set of environmental performance standards for all development which may include such issues as:

- Pollutant discharges into water resources
- Air emissions
- Erosion and sediment control
- Noise exposure limits
- Excessive light emissions
- Energy use and efficiency
- Protection of environmental features: floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, sinkholes, tree cover

Sufficient funding will need to be secured to establish this new program.

Strategy 8.3.2 To ensure coordination with state agencies on project compliance with state environmental standards.

Strategy 8.3.3 To consider adoption of local environmental performance standards as either policies or regulations after public input.

Staff's consideration of creating a set of environmental performance standards began with a comprehensive review of regulations that already exist. Currently development and redevelopment projects within the City must already comply with rules and regulations that reflect federal, state and local mandates. These are reviewed in the attached Excel Spreadsheet entitled "Existing Standards – Master".

Following compilation of existing environmental performance standards, staff also reviewed and amended the by-laws used in the creation of the Stormwater Advisory Council (SWAC) as a model for considering creating a similar body for environmental performance standards development and implementation recommendations. Those draft by-laws are also attached to this agenda item.

**Key Issues:** Staff believes that development and redevelopment projects in Harrisonburg must already abide by numerous standards that touch on protection of water resources, air emissions, erosion and sediment controls, noise, lighting, energy use and efficiency, and the protection of environmental features.

Staff also believes that creating additional environmental performance standards requires the establishment of an agreed upon level of standards above and beyond existing federal, state and local standards.

Finally, the creation and implementation of environmental performance standards, in addition to those already being enforced, will require consideration of a system of measurement. To establish such a system is to also quantify attainment of its objectives.

**Environmental Impact:** At this point it is difficult to identify how additional environmental standards will impact the community. It is reasonable to assume that any additional standards will mean greater protection of water or air resources or that planting more trees would be beneficial, but these will add costs to development/redevelopment projects that may have a negative effect on such projects.

**Fiscal Impact:** At this point it is nearly impossible to estimate fiscal impacts that this consideration may incur. Depending on the outcome, staff envisions the possibility of this endeavor greatly increasing the cost for both city oversight as well as potential development/redevelopment costs for projects within the city.

**Prior Actions:** None.

**Alternatives:**

- (a) Create an advisory commission empowered to further review and research the establishment of additional environmental performance standards;
- (b) Direct staff to conduct further research and report back to Council; or
- (c) Do nothing at this time.

**Community Engagement:** Any consideration of additional environmental performance standards must involve community engagement, to receive input and suggestions on potential new standards, and to receive input on the potential financial and operational impacts of new standards. If a commission or advisory group is created to conduct this work, it could also be an important mechanism for inclusion of the public and important stakeholders. The commission could also be tasked with creating a schedule for facilitated meetings, informational sessions, surveys, etc.

**Recommendation:** If Council wishes to create additional standards for measuring performance than an advisory committee is recommended. As with the creation and utilization of the SWAC, a working group, representative of the community, might review existing standards and make recommendations to Council on additional environmental performance measures and community engagement.

**Attachments:** (a) Existing Environmental Performance Standards  
(b) Draft By-Laws

**Review:** *The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.*