



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Department of Planning & Community Development

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Building Inspections
Engineering
Planning & Zoning

To: Eric Campbell, City Manager
From: Adam Fletcher, Director – Department of Planning and Community Development; and
Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date: January 8, 2019
Re: 701 Port Republic Road (Section 10-3-91 (2), Warehousing in B-2)

Summary:

Public hearing to consider a request from Harrisonburg Port Road Station, LLC for a special use permit per section 10-3-91 (2) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow warehousing and other storage facilities within the B-2, General Business District. The +/- 36,590 sq. ft. property is located at 701 Port Republic Road and is identified as tax map parcel 12-M-2.

Background:

In March 2018, an engineered comprehensive site plan (ECSP) was approved for redevelopment of the subject site. Building plans were approved in April 2018 and a demolition permit issued in October 2018. The previously existing convenience store and gas pumps have been demolished and redevelopment of the property is underway with a new convenience store and gas pumps being built in new locations on the site.

The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Commercial. Commercial uses include retail, office, professional service functions, restaurants, and lodging uses. Commercial areas should offer connecting streets, biking and walking facilities, and public transit services. Interparcel access and connections are essential to maintaining traffic safety and flow along arterials. Parking should be located to the sides or rear of buildings.

The following land uses are located on and adjacent to the property:

- Site:** Construction of a new gas station and convenience store, zoned B-2
- North:** Parking lot owned by James Madison University, zoned B-2
- East:** Across Port Republic Road, gas stations and convenience stores, zoned B-2
- South:** Coffee shop, zoned B-2C
- West:** Parking lot owned by James Madison University, zoned B-2

Key Issues:

The applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-91 (2) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow warehousing and other storage facilities within the B-2, General Business District. If approved, the applicant intends to lease a 520 sq. ft. basement area within the newly constructed building for storage and warehousing to tenants that would not operate a use on site. Leasing any area for storage and warehousing to a tenant that would not operate on site is not permitted by right in the B-2 district, but is allowable with an approved SUP.

During the ECSP review for the redevelopment of the convenience store and gas station, the site plan did not indicate a basement level within the building, and thus the site layout was designed with only the main floor square footage of the building in mind (4,743 square feet), which per the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) requires 24 off-street parking spaces.

During the building permit review of the project, the building plans indicated that there would be a basement level with a 200 sq. ft. office space. The building plans were approved, and a building permit issued for a 4,743 sq. ft. convenience store and a 200 sq. ft. office space. However, as indicated in the first paragraph of this section, the applicant intends to construct an approximately 520 sq. ft. basement area for storage. With this new plan, the applicant has been informed that the building plans must be updated and approved by the Building Inspections Division to increase the size of the basement space from 200 to 520 sq. ft. and to change the (building) use group from an office to storage space.

If the requested SUP for storage and warehousing is approved, Section 10-3-25 (18) of the ZO would apply and off-street parking spaces would not be required for the 520 sq. ft. basement storage area. Section 10-3-25 (18) requires warehouses or similar facilities to provide one parking space for each two persons working on the premises on a maximum shift, plus a parking space for every truck or other vehicle used in connection with the use. The applicant has stated that the tenant will be using the area for offsite records storage and storage of supplemental building materials and that there will be no staff working from the basement storage area nor any trucks stored on site associated with the storage space. The site would likely be visited by small delivery trucks for pick up and drop off about two to three times per month.

It should be understood that if the SUP for storage and warehousing is not approved and the approximately 5,263 sq. ft. building constructed, then the applicant must provide for 27 total parking spaces for this site. If another use that is not the storage and warehousing for an offsite tenant occupies the basement space, including the convenience store, the change is likely to require additional parking spaces. The applicant should further be aware that enlargement of the building could also require additional parking spaces. The property owner could address additional off-street parking requirements by redesigning the site to provide more off-street parking spaces or establishing a shared parking agreement with an adjacent property owner to meet the ZO's minimum off-street parking requirements.

To gain access to the basement level from the front of the building, one must walk around the northwest side of the building and down a set of stairs. The basement is not accessible from inside the main floor of the building.

Although the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide designates the site as Commercial, in consideration of the small size of the area that is proposed to be used for storage and warehousing, and in understanding how the storage area is to be used, which does not require additional off-street parking spaces for the site, staff believes the use will have no more adverse effect on the health, safety or comfort of persons living or working in the area and will be no more injurious, economically or otherwise, to property or improvements in the surrounding area than would any use generally permitted in the district.

Staff recommends approval of the special use permit with the following condition:

- Storage and warehousing operations for a tenant not operating on site shall only occur within the existing structure's basement and shall be limited to 520 square feet or less.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Approve the special use permit request as submitted by the applicant;
- (b) Approve the special use permit request with the following condition:
 - Storage and warehousing operations for a tenant not operating on site shall only occur within the existing structure’s basement and shall be limited to 520 square feet or less.
- (c) Approve the special use permit request with other conditions;
- (d) Deny the special use permit request.

Community Engagement:

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for Planning Commission’s public hearing and twice advertising for City Council’s public hearing. The advertisement was published as shown below:

701 Port Republic Road (Section 10-3-91 (2), Warehousing in B-2)

Public hearing to consider a request from Harrisonburg Port Road Station, LLC for a special use permit per section 10-3-91 (2) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow warehousing and other storage facilities within the B-2, General Business District. The +/- 36,590 sq. ft. property is located at 701 Port Republic Road and is identified as tax map parcel 12-M-2.

In addition, adjoining property owners were notified of the public hearing; the property was posted with signage advertising the request; and a notice was provided on the City’s website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

Recommendation:

- (a) Staff recommends alternative (b) to approve the special use permit request with the following condition:
 - Storage and warehousing operations for a tenant not operating on site shall only occur within the existing structure’s basement and shall be limited to 250 square feet or less.

Attachments:

- 1. Extract (3 pages)
- 2. Site maps (2 pages)
- 3. Application, applicant letter, and supporting documents (10 pages)

Review:

Planning Commission recommended alternative (b) to approve the special permit request with the following condition:

- Storage and warehousing operations for a tenant not operating on site shall only occur within the existing structure’s basement and shall be limited to 250 square feet or less.