



# CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801  
OFFICE (540) 432-7700 • FAX (540) 432-7777

June 3, 2024

**TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

**SUBJECT: *Consider a request from Trustees Chicago Avenue Mennonite Church for a special use permit to allow a child day care center at 1552 South High Street***

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING  
COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON: May 8, 2024**

Chair Finnegan read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Rupkey said the applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-40 (1) of the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) to allow for a child day care center to be located within the Harrisonburg Mennonite Church located at 1552 South High Street. The church is not the operator of the day care but is leasing space to a day care provider. Note that if the church was the operator of the day care, then the SUP would not be required because in such situations the day care is considered an extension of the church and an allowable use.

The day care center is planning to provide care for around 45 children from the ages of two and a half years old to five years old. The applicant plans to convert three of the existing classrooms to space to operate the day care center. The applicant is working with an architect to make modifications required by the Building Code. The church property currently has sufficient parking to support both the church and the day care facility.

#### *Land Use*

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

These areas consist of single-family detached dwellings in and around well-established neighborhoods with a target density of around 4 dwelling units per acre. The low density residential areas are designed to maintain the character of existing neighborhoods. It should be understood that established neighborhoods in this designation could already be above 4 dwelling units per acre.

Staff does not have concerns that the proposed use will have adverse affects to the surrounding area.

#### *Transportation and Traffic*

The Determination of Need for a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) form (“TIA determination form”) for the proposed SUP is attached. The TIA determination form indicated that the project would not generate 100 or more new peak hour trips, which is the threshold for staff to require a TIA. Therefore, a TIA was not required for the SUP request.

*Public Water and Sanitary Sewer*

Staff has no concerns regarding water and sanitary sewer service availability for the proposed child day care center.

*Recommendation*

Staff recommends approval with the following condition:

1. If in the opinion of Planning Commission or City Council, the use becomes a nuisance, the special use permit can be recalled for further review, which could lead to the need for additional conditions, restrictions, or the revocation of the permit.

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

Debra Pardini, applicant’s representative, came forward to speak to the request. She said I will take your questions or I will find someone who can answer them.

Chair Finnegan asked it is a large property, is any of it going to need to be fenced off if that part becomes a daycare?

Ms. Pardini said I do not believe so.

Chair Finnegan said is most of the daycare activity happening inside of the building?

Ms. Pardini said most of it will be. We do have a large green space for them to be outside as well.

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.

Vice Chair Byrd said based on the layout of the parking, I thought it would not be an issue of children being dropped off and picked up. Therefore, I would be in favor of this.

Chair Finnegan said it is quite a large parking lot so I do not think that [parking] would be an issue. There are two access points to this, one from Emery [Street] and then South High [Street]. I would assume, unless something is being fenced off or ballers are being placed there, traffic can flow either way.

Vice Chair Byrd said I would also like to comment that the added condition that staff recommended is more perfunctory just in case any special use permit has an issue, they tend to tack that on.

Commissioner Baugh said I would be supporting this regardless. As somebody that is familiar with the neighborhood, for those of you that do not know, for most of the time that church has existed is probably the bane of its existence was the fact that a whole lot of people in that neighborhood just routinely use it as a cut-through. Including some things that I thought were sad, not because of the church but because of the public. There was one time where they did a proactive thing of trying to put markers on the grass to keep people from driving over and then you can just see that people have driven over them and stuff. They solved the problem the way problems get solved sometimes, they eventually just did an expansion of the building and made it more inconvenient since you have to get in and then kind of drive around. Now people do not use it as a cut-through. I think to the extent that there might even be safety concerns with the kids there, there is a whole lot less of that then there use to be. With that, I will go ahead and move approval of the special use permit request as presented.

Vice Chair Byrd seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan said I will just add that I know in the ALICE Report they talked about the need for childcare in the City, the shortage of childcare, and then anecdotally the number of parents that I have talked to that are really trying to find anywhere that is affordable that will care for their children during the day. I am in favor of this.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Nardi	Aye
Commissioner Baugh	Aye
Vice Chair Byrd	Aye
Commissioner Alsindi	Aye
Commissioner Washington	Aye
Chair Finnegan	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the special use permit passed (6-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on June 11, 2024.