



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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October 2, 2014

TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

SUBJECT: Public hearing to consider a request from Eastern Mennonite University to rezone 26.6 +/- acres of property zoned R-3, Medium Density Residential District and I-1, Institutional Overlay District by amending their master plan. The property is located along Park Road, West Dogwood Drive, and Hillcrest Drive, with short frontages along College Avenue and Smith Avenue. The property is identified as tax map parcel 51-A-1.

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON:** September 10, 2014

Chair Fitzgerald read the request and asked staff to review.

Mrs. Banks said the Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Institutional. This designation states that these areas are for development by certain nonprofit and public institutional uses such as private colleges and universities, hospitals, offices of nonprofit organizations, community assembly uses and institutions that provide for the shelter and care of people.

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

Site: Academic, recreational and residential buildings, parking lots, and common area associated with the University, zoned R-3/I-1

North: Across West Dogwood Drive, residential dwellings, zoned R-2

East: Across Park Road, academic and residential buildings, athletic fields, parking lots, and common area associated with the University, zoned R-3/I-1

South: Single family homes and buildings associated with the University, zoned R-3

West: Academic buildings and common area associated with the University, zoned R-3/I-1

The applicant is requesting to amend a portion of the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) Institutional Overlay Master Plan. The Institutional Overlay District provides for distinctive development of certain nonprofit institutional uses, such as colleges and universities, where upon approval of a master plan, development may deviate from the requirements of the underlying zoning district. Every request for an institutional overlay requires the submission of an accompanying master plan showing how development will occur. Subsequent changes to the approved plan are accomplished by the same procedure – via a rezoning application approval.

EMU's Institutional Overlay Master Plan was originally approved in 1998. This plan provided a layout for existing and proposed buildings, the number of stories and overall heights of those buildings, as well as the proposed parking layout throughout the campus. In 2010, EMU amended the plan by adding a parcel, enlarging the Suter Science Center, and introducing green technology in the form of solar panels, to the overall plan. Although allowed by right, the design of the solar panels did not meet all the setback and height requirements of the Zoning Ordinance; therefore, they were included within the 2010 master plan amendment. The panels were proposed for roof top locations on the Hartzler Library and Hillside Dormitory buildings and on structures for the University Commons and turf field parking lots. At this time, the applicants are requesting a minor amendment for particular solar panel heights and locations.

The previously approved parking lot panels were proposed to be attached to carport style support structures and were to vary in height from 8 ½ to 16 feet with support columns spaced 18 feet on center; allowing for vehicles to park underneath the structures. The applicants are requesting to increase the height of the overall structures within the University Commons parking lot to 20 feet, with support columns spaced 18 to 27 feet on center. Along with the requested height adjustment, the applicants are proposing to remove the single row of panels previously planned along the West Dogwood Drive boundary that could have been located up to five feet from the property line. All other rows would remain as shown. The removal of the one row of panels within the parking lot actually reduces the visual impact to residents along West Dogwood Drive even with the height increase.

The second proposed change is in the location of roof top panels. The applicant desires to place panels on the University Commons building instead of on the Hillside Dormitory. As previously noted solar panels are permitted by right; however, because the height of the University Commons building is 50 feet, which is above the maximum height regulations of the R-3 district and approved as part of the 1998 master plan, staff wanted the proposed location change shown within the amendment. The panels would be about two to six inches tall and will not increase the overall height of the building.

The Hartzler Library solar panels have been installed and EMU desires to move forward with these proposed changes. If approved, staff has informed the applicants that they would need to supply a revised and updated copy of the master plan to be kept on file, in addition to the red lined changes provided with the rezoning application. The requested changes are in keeping with the intentions of the I-1 district and staff does not foresee negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of the master plan amendment.

The applicant is not in attendance at the meeting tonight; however, there is a representative in the audience if Planning Commission has specific questions regarding the panels.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were any questions for staff at this time. Hearing none, she opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone wishing to speak in favor of the request. Hearing none, she asked if there was anyone wishing to speak in opposition of the request. Hearing none, she closed the public hearing and asked Planning Commission if there was any discussion or comments on the master plan request.

Mr. Way made a motion to recommend approval of the request as presented.

Dr. Dilts seconded the motion.

Chair Fitzgerald called for a voice vote on the motion.

All voted in favor of the motion to recommend approval (6-0).

Chair Fitzgerald said this request will move forward to City Council on October 14th with a favorable recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Banks

Planner