



# City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Department of Planning & Community Development  
409 South Main Street  
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801  
[www.harrisonburgva.gov/community-development](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/community-development)

Building Inspections: (540) 432-7700  
Engineering: (540) 432-7700

Planning and Zoning: (540) 432-7700  
Department Fax: (540) 432-7777

To: Kurt Hodgen, City Manager  
From: Planning Commission and  
Adam Fletcher, Director of Planning and Community Development  
Date: September 13, 2016 City Council Meeting  
Re: Rezoning – Eastern Mennonite School Master Plan Amendment 2016

## **Summary:**

Public hearing to consider a request from Eastern Mennonite School, Virginia Mennonite Missions, and Mennomedia, Inc. with representative Eastern Mennonite School to rezone 26.88 acres of property by amending Eastern Mennonite School's existing Master Plan. The current Master Plan includes properties zoned B-2, General Business and R-3, Medium Density Residential, and are addressed as 801 Parkwood Drive and identified on tax map parcels 47-N-7. The properties to be added to the Master Plan are zoned B-2, General Business and addressed as 901 Parkwood Drive and 1251 Virginia Avenue, and identified as tax map parcels 47-N 8, 10 & 11.

## **Background:**

The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Institutional and Professional. The Institutional 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 Professional designation states that these areas are for professional service oriented uses with consideration to the character of the area. These uses are found in the residential areas along major thoroughfares and adjacent to the Central Business District. Conversion of houses in these areas to office and professional service uses is permitted with appropriate attention to maintaining compatibility with adjacent residential areas in the same manner as described for Planned Business areas.

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

- Site:** Facilities of Eastern Mennonite School, zoned R-3/I-1 and B-2/I-1; Virginia Mennonite Missions and Mennomedia, Inc. offices, zoned B-2
- North:** Across Parkwood Drive, single-family dwellings, zoned R-3; facilities of Eastern Mennonite University; and facilities of Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, zoned R-3/I-1
- East:** Across Virginia Avenue, non-conforming manufactured home park, non-conforming dwellings and convenience store, zoned B-2
- South:** Across Mt. Clinton Pike, commercial shopping centers, zoned B-2
- West:** Facilities of Eastern Mennonite University, zoned R-3/I-1

### **Key Issues:**

Eastern Mennonite School (EMS) is requesting to amend their approved master plan and to incorporate three new parcels, totaling 2.08+/- acres, into the plan. The site is located in the northern area of the City and is bounded by three streets, Parkwood Drive, Virginia Avenue, and Mt. Clinton Pike. If approved, the master plan would include a total of 26.88+/- acres.

The City's Zoning Ordinance, Section 10-3-103 (1), Uses permitted by right in the I-1, Institutional Overlay District allows for "[c]ivic, educational, charitable, scientific, religious, and philanthropic uses for a public or nonprofit institutional organization." EMS fits within this classification and is an allowed use. Additionally, under Section 10-3-106 (a) of the I-1 District, a master plan process allows an applicant to request approval of a master plan for development that may include uses which do not meet the dimensional requirements – such as setbacks and building height – or parking minimum off-street parking requirements.

The original master plan for EMS was approved in September 2002 and had two specific areas that did not meet all necessary requirements – a dugout planned to be located parallel to Mt. Clinton Pike would encroach into the 30-foot setback requirement by five feet, and relief to the required parking separation located along the western property line that adjoins Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) was approved as part of the master plan. The remainder of the 2002 approved master plan provided for the orderly development of the EMS campus, which included building expansions, parking lots, and athletic fields.

As described within the Master Plan Narrative dated August 3, 2016, EMS is requesting that the 2002 master plan be replaced with the proposed 2016 plan in order to include the additional acreage within the Institutional Overlay and to accommodate a proposed elementary school, which is currently located offsite. If approved, EMS would vacate all interior lot lines, creating one campus. In addition to the incorporation of the new land and elementary school, EMS desires a 10-foot building setback be applied to the entire campus perimeter to allow for flexibility with future building expansions and additions. Currently, a 30-foot setback from public streets would be required. As indicated on the proposed master plan site drawing, the existing MennoMedia office building would be updated and renovated to become the new elementary school. Future additions and expansions, which may or may not need setback relief, are proposed for both the high/middle school building and the elementary school building. The 10-foot building setback would also allow the dugout along Mt. Clinton Pike that received relief in the 2002 master plan to continue to be conforming to setback regulations.

Additionally, the site drawing shows where parking areas will be located on the grounds. A large portion of the parking currently exists; however, any new parking area or any redevelopment of existing parking area would be required to meet regulations per Section 10-3-30.1 Parking Lot Landscaping. EMS is asking to deviate from the required parking lot landscaping ordinance for the new parking areas, provided that landscaping as shown on the proposed master plan will be installed near the perimeter of the parking lots rather than at otherwise required internal landscaping islands. The master plan also notes that access easements and/or shared parking agreements will be provided for Virginia Mennonite Missions and Eastern Mennonite University to allow them access to their parking areas via EMS property.

Lastly, EMS has stated within the master plan narrative (and as shown on the attached "Exhibit A" drawings), they will dedicate the needed right-of-way and easements to the City for the future widening of Mt. Clinton Pike. This would include stormwater facilities, public utilities, and a shared-use path, all to be constructed by the City, along with necessary slope maintenance and temporary construction easements.

Along with their request for master plan approval, EMS also requested approval of their parking plan per the requirements of Section 10-3-25 (12) of the Zoning Ordinance. Planning Commission reviewed and approved the proposed off-street parking plans. City Council does not need to review the parking plan as approval authority is granted to Planning Commission as described in the Zoning Ordinance. Regardless,

the traffic and parking study that was conducted by EMS is included as part of the packet. The study indicates a total of 135 parking spaces being sufficient to meet the needs of the school campus. The study took into consideration traffic flow and drop-off/pick-up areas for students. A total of 410 parking spaces are proposed for the campus. Staff believes the projected number of 135 parking spaces is adequate for the proposed uses and also understands their desire for additional spaces due to extra-curricular activities and functions.

Staff has reviewed the master plan and finds that the development as shown is in compliance with the requirements of the I-1, Institutional Overlay District. The relief and flexibility in building setbacks allows for the cohesive development of the structures, parking, and athletic fields within the campus. In addition, the development is not detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood and is not in conflict with the policies and principles of the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, staff recommends that the amended master plan, as submitted, be approved.

**Environmental Impact:**

N/A

**Fiscal Impact:**

N/A

**Prior Actions:**

N/A

**Alternatives:**

Rather than approving the 2016 master plan amendment as submitted, the application could be denied and Eastern Mennonite School would continue to operate under the existing 2002 master plan. The elementary school could relocate to the MennoMedia building at 1251 Virginia Avenue as a use permitted by right; however, it would not be considered part of the EMS Institutional Overlay and would be required to meet all regulations within the Zoning Ordinance.

**Community Engagement:**

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

Public hearing to consider a request from Eastern Mennonite School, Virginia Mennonite Missions, and Mennomedia, Inc. with representative Eastern Mennonite School to rezone 26.88 acres of property by amending Eastern Mennonite School's existing Master Plan. The request would extend the Institutional Overlay District to several lots that will be added to campus property. The Master Plan approval would allow for a 10-foot building setback to be applied to the entire campus outside boundary, a zero setback to all interior lot lines, and to particular offstreet parking requirements. The current Master Plan includes properties zoned B-2, General Business and R-3, Medium Density Residential, and are addressed as 801 Parkwood Drive and identified on tax map parcels 47-N-7. The properties to be added to the Master Plan are zoned B-2, General Business and addressed as 601 Parkwood Drive and 1251 Virginia Avenue, and identified as tax map parcels 47-N 8, 10 & 11. The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Institutional and Professional. The Institutional 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 Professional designation states that these areas are for professional service oriented uses with consideration to the character of the area. These uses are found in the

residential areas along major thoroughfares and adjacent to the Central Business District. Conversion of houses in these areas to office and professional service uses is permitted with appropriate attention to maintaining compatibility with adjacent residential areas in the same manner as described for Planned Business areas. The Zoning Ordinance describes I-1, B-2, and R-3 as follows: the I-1, Institutional Overlay District is intended to provide for orderly development of certain nonprofit institutional uses and is created as a special overlay district to be superimposed on base districts by approval of City Council. Dimensional and density regulations are intended to supplement those permitted in the underlying zoning classification; an approved I-1 Master Plan may allow for development to deviate from dimensional requirements. B-2, General Business District is intended to provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a wide variety of retail shopping, commercial, automotive, miscellaneous recreational, and service activities. No minimum lot size restrictions exist in the B-2, General Business District; and R-3, Medium Density Residential District is intended for medium density residential development and other uses intended to respect the residential character, which are aesthetically compatible within the district by means of architectural expression, landscaping, and restrained traffic flow. The residential density ranges for R-3 are single-family, 6,000 sq. ft. minimum; duplex, 4,000 sq. ft./unit; townhouses, 2,000 sq. ft. minimum per unit; other uses, 6,000 sq. ft. minimum and by special use permit multi-family, 3,000 sq. ft. minimum per unit.

In addition, adjoining property owners were notified before the Planning Commission public hearing as well as before the City Council public hearing. The property was also posted with signage advertising the request, and a notice was provided on the City's website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Eastern Mennonite School Master Plan Amendment 2016 be approved as submitted. Staff also supported the provided parking layouts for the facilities.

**Attachments:**

1. Extract (4 pages)
2. Site Maps (2 pages)
3. Application and applicant letter (2 pages)
4. Eastern Mennonite School Master Plan Narrative (4 pages)
5. Eastern Mennonite School Traffic and Parking Study (1 page)
6. Eastern Mennonite School Master Plan Site Plan Drawing (1 page)
7. "Exhibit A" drawings (3 pages)

**Review:**

Planning Commission recommended approval (4-0, Commissioner Colman recused himself) to rezone 26.88 acres of property by amending Eastern Mennonite School's existing Master Plan.