



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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To: Eric Campbell, City Manager
From: Department of Community Development and Department of Public Works
Date: July 14, 2020
Re: Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Chapter 12, Transportation

Summary:

Public hearing to consider amendments to Chapter 12, Transportation of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan adopted on November 13, 2018. Chapter 12 will be updated to add projects that have been recommended by various studies that have been completed since adoption of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. These include the East Market Street Corridor (Route 33) Improvement Study; the South Main Street Corridor Improvement Study and Erickson Avenue/Pear Street Intersection Study; the Port Republic Road Safety and Operations Study; and the Downtown Harrisonburg Operations Study. The update removes completed projects and identifies projects that have been awarded funding since the 2018 Plan was adopted.

Staff recommended approval and Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval (7-0) of the Comprehensive Plan amendments as presented.

Background:

The City of Harrisonburg Comprehensive Plan presents a vision of what kind of community the City would like to be in the future and identifies steps to move toward that vision. The Plan is the central organizing umbrella under which other plans, regulations, and initiatives exist. The Plan establishes the preferred overall long-term vision for our community. The Plan is not a regulatory document but serves as a guide for Harrisonburg and it helps City and community leaders with setting policies and decision-making.

Virginia Code Section 15.2-2223 requires the City to have a Comprehensive Plan. Comprehensive plans deal fundamentally with the physical characteristics of a community. Hence, land use is the core element of a comprehensive plan. However, in order to arrive at an appropriate plan for the use of land, other physical aspects must be addressed, such as environmental features, transportation, water and wastewater facilities, and other public facilities.

Chapter 12 includes the Street Improvement Plan, which contains project descriptions and a map that identifies transportation infrastructure improvements that the City may pursue to address safety, congestion, bicycle and pedestrian needs, and new development. Projects are not prioritized in the Street

Improvement Plan. Instead, the City will utilize the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan to represent prioritized projects.

Key Issues:

Amendments to Chapter 12, Transportation of the Comprehensive Plan are proposed to add projects that have been recommended by various transportation studies that have been completed since the adoption of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. Studies include the East Market Street (Route 33) Corridor Improvement Study; the South Main Street Corridor Improvement Study and Erickson Avenue/Pear Street Intersection Study; the Port Republic Safety and Operations Study; and the Downtown Harrisonburg Operations Study. (Information on the studies can be found online at: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/transportation-planning>.) The studies were conducted to identify solutions for facilities that have a high number of crashes and/or congestion. Some of the study recommendations were, or are planned to be, implemented with City funds.

The Department of Public Works will pursue grants to implement larger, more expensive recommendations. The amendments to Chapter 12, Transportation of the Comprehensive Plan are being made so that the City's transportation funding (Smart Scale) applications can obtain higher scores, by meeting the criterion of the projects' inclusion in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The projects' inclusion in the plan will also allow City staff to work with developers to plan for implementation of the improvements as adjacent properties develop.

The proposed amendments also remove completed projects and identifies those that have been awarded funding since the 2018 Plan was adopted. Awarded projects have implementation schedules spanning approximately the next eight years.

No changes to the planning assumptions were made. However, the Planning Process section of the chapter was updated to include traffic studies as a method of identifying projects to include in the Street Improvement Plan. The Planning Process section of the chapter describes the methods used in developing the Street Improvement Plan.

Additionally, since the 2018 Comprehensive Plan was adopted, VTRANS2040 has been updated and is now called VTRANS 2045 Mid-Term Needs. Proposed amendments to Chapter 12 reflect this change. VTRANS 2045 Mid-Term Needs is Virginia's statewide long-range, multimodal transportation plan. Led by the Commonwealth's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, it is a policy document that focuses on the needs of the Commonwealth's Corridors of Statewide Significance, the multimodal regional networks that support travel within metropolitan regions, and improvements to promote Urban Development Areas (UDAs).

Lastly, there are a few minor text amendments proposed throughout the document. Such amendments are not substantial and include matters such as appropriately identifying the Department of Community Development and correcting an acronym associated with the Design and Construction Standards Manual.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Approve the Comprehensive Plan amendments as presented;
- (b) Recommend approval of the Comprehensive Plan with modifications or additional amendments;
or
- (c) Deny the Comprehensive Plan amendments.

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:

Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Chapter 12, Transportation

Public hearing to consider amendments to Chapter 12, Transportation of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan adopted on November 13, 2018. Virginia Code Section 15.2-2223 requires the City to have a Comprehensive Plan. Comprehensive plans deal fundamentally with the physical characteristics of a community. Hence, land use is the core element of a comprehensive plan. However, in order to arrive at an appropriate plan for the use of land, other physical aspects must be addressed, such as environmental features, transportation, water and wastewater facilities, and other public facilities. Chapter 12 includes the Street Improvement Plan, which contains project descriptions and a map that identifies transportation infrastructure improvements that the City may pursue to address safety, congestion, bicycle and pedestrian needs, and new development. Projects are not prioritized in the Street Improvement Plan. Instead, the City will utilize the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Long Range Transportation Plan to represent prioritized projects. Chapter 12 will be updated to add projects that have been recommended by various studies that have been completed since the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. These include the East Market Street STARS Study, the South Main Street and Erickson/Pear Intersection STARS study, the Port Republic Road Small Area Study, and the Downtown Harrisonburg Operations Study. The update removes completed projects, and identifies projects that have been awarded funding since the 2018 Plan was adopted. Information related to the Comprehensive Plan and the proposed amendments is available to review on the Comprehensive Plan website at www.harrisonburgva.gov/yourplan.

In addition, a notice was provided on the City’s website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends (a) approval of the Comprehensive Plan amendments as presented.

Attachments:

- Planning Commission Extract
- Proposed Amendments to Chapter 12 Transportation – Chapter Text

- Proposed Amendments to Chapter 12 Transportation - Street Improvement Plan Map
- May 22, 2020 Letter from the Virginia Department of Transportation

Review:

Planning Commission recommended approve the Comprehensive Plan amendments as presented (7-0).