



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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March 1, 2021

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

SUBJECT:

Public hearing to consider a request from Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Inc. (VMRC) to rezone +/- 0.67 acres by amending the existing master plan area known as Park Village by adding two parcels. If approved, the two parcels would be rezoned from R-2, Residential District to R-2C, Residential District Conditional/I-1, Institutional Overlay. The Zoning Ordinance states the R-2, Residential District is intended for medium-density, single-family and duplex residential development. The residential density ranges for R-2 are single-family, 7,000 sq. ft. minimum and duplex, 5,500 sq. ft./unit. 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 in the I-1 district are intended to supplement those permitted in the underlying zoning classification. If this request is approved, the lots would be permitted to have reduced front, side, and rear yard setbacks than what is typically regulated by the R-2 district. The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential. These areas are typically older residential neighborhoods, which contain a mixture of densities and a mixture of housing types, but should have more single-family detached homes than other types of housing. This type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development. Infill development and redevelopment must be designed so as to be compatible with the desired character of the neighborhood. The two parcels are addressed as 1543 Park Road, and 1550 and 1552 College Avenue and are identified as tax map parcels 51-D-9 and 52-G-1, respectively.

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING HELD ON: February 10, 2021**

Chair Finnegan read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Banks said that VMRC is a +/- 46.2-acre property comprised of three subsidiaries; Park Village, Inc., Heritage Haven Inc., and Virginia Mennonite Home, Inc. An institutional overlay master plan for the original +/- 45-acre tract of VMRC was approved in March 1997. This master plan described all uses within the campus, but primarily focused on the Virginia Mennonite Home subsidiary and the construction of the five-story Park Gable retirement housing and fitness center.

VMRC took advantage of reduced setbacks and greater height for the Park Gable building, as well as relief in parking requirements for the campus. In June 2004, an addition was made to the 1997 master plan when +/- 1.2 acres along Park Road was added to the Park Village, Inc. section of VMRC. In July 2009, the master plan was amended to add a child day care center as one of the allowable uses for the Woodland Facility, located on a +/- 3.5-acre portion of the Virginia Mennonite Home, Inc. portion of VMRC. The child day care center never moved into the Woodland Facility and in December of 2009 VMRC again amended the master plan to demolish the Woodland Facility and surrounding cottages in order to construct the Green House Homes, which provides skilled nursing care for up to ten occupants in each building. The homes were to be constructed along a loop road within the Woodland area and relief from the required parking was approved as part of the master plan amendment. In July 2011, VMRC once again amended the Woodland area to allow for a reduction in setback requirements for the Green House Homes after right-of-way was dedicated along Parkwood Road and Virginia Avenue for the public streets. The most recent update to the master plan occurred in 2017 when VMRC recast the vision for the Park Village, Inc. subsidiary to allow for the replacement of existing buildings and increasing walkability and connectivity, both internally and to other neighboring places surrounding the VMRC campus. Additionally, +/- 124,700 square feet of former maintained and improved public street right-of-way was added into the Park Village area's total acreage and are now private streets.

Included within this packet is a map that illustrates the boundaries of the VMRC Master Plan and a breakdown of the associated “umbrella” subsidiaries.

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

- Site: Detached single family dwellings, zoned R-2
- North: Detached single family dwellings, zoned R-2; and duplex dwelling associated with VMRC – Park Village, zoned R-2 / I-1
- East: Duplex dwelling associated with VMRC – Park Village, zoned R-2 / I-1; and quadplexes associated with VMRC – Park Village, zoned R-3C / I-1
- South: Detached single family dwellings, zoned R-2
- West: Detached single family dwellings, zoned R-2

Park Village, Inc., a subsidiary of VMRC, would like to modify their previously approved master plan to include two parcels, which are located across Park Road from the main campus, into their institutional overlay. If approved for inclusion, the entire institutional overlay area for the VMRC complex would total +/- 46.9 acres. The subject parcels border the institutional overlay district;

however, they are zoned R-2, Residential District. The properties currently have detached single family dwellings and the applicant has stated that, if their request is approved, the properties will be redeveloped for single family detached or duplex units, both of which are allowed by right within the R-2, Residential District.

If the rezoning and associated master plan amendment is approved as requested, it would allow for a reduction in the front yard setback from 30-feet to 10-feet along Park Road, College Avenue, and Shank Drive. There would also be a reduction in the side yard setback from ten-feet to five-feet in the Park Village area as shown on the master plan site drawings. This will allow for flexibility in the future with the redevelopment of these parcels. It should be understood that this particular setback reduction is only for the two parcels located on tax map parcels 51-D-9 and 52-G-1; the remainder of the Park Village neighborhood will continue to follow the previously approved master plan from July 2017.

The proposed master plan amendment describes that only single family detached or duplex dwelling units will be on the two subject parcels. Required off-street parking will be provided by garage or driveway space, and VMRC has proffered that garages will not be permitted to be converted into living space. Additionally, because they are proposing only single family and duplex dwelling units, there are no parking lot landscaping requirements that must be met as single family and duplex dwelling development is exempt from parking lot landscaping regulations. Staff has no concerns with the request and supports the rezoning and associated master plan amendment for these parcels into the Park Village, Inc. subsidiary within the VMRC campus as presented.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any questions for staff.

Commissioner Byrd said that he wanted to offer clarification for those concerned regarding the project. The sides of College Avenue that are not paved are dirt and gravel. It currently does not have sidewalks, correct?

Ms. Banks said correct.

Commissioner Byrd asked if the setbacks start after that.

Ms. Banks said that the setbacks start from the property line. Referencing a site drawing within the Power Point presentation, Ms. Banks identified the actual property line and the existing edge of the pavement on the site right now. Ms. Banks continued saying that the surveyor has been out there, and this has been identified by the surveyor as the actual edge of pavement and the property line. All setbacks are measured from the property line.

Commissioner Whitten said that drawing is very helpful. Thank you for that.

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

Scott Kleist, Vice President of Facilities for VMRC, 1501 Virginia Avenue, spoke in support of the request. I do not have further comments. What was explained by staff was very clear and expressed what we are trying to accomplish on that space. I am open for questions.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any questions for the applicant's representative. Hearing none, he asked if there were any callers. As there were no more callers, he closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Chair Finnegan said that reducing the setbacks sounds good to him. I also understand that the reduction in setbacks does not result in more housing, but I do think that reducing setbacks potentially sets a precedent that could allow for more housing to be built on the same amount of land in the future.

Councilmember Dent said that she read the letters that raised concerns about the small size of the setback, but from the diagram, it looks like the actual distance from the street is further than ten feet. Is that correct?

Ms. Banks said that the distance from the pavement to the property line is confirmed at ten feet, maybe more.

Commissioner Byrd said that when he goes jogging in that neighborhood, a lot of people walk along the gravel side, if cars are not there. I can understand someone thinking that the setback would begin from the pavement and not after the gravel area. When I saw those letters of concern, I wanted to clarify that anyone observing understood where the measurement begins.

Chair Finnegan said that the speed limit in that neighborhood is 25, so that is a close residential neighborhood with a low speed limit. The reduced setbacks might make less sense if the speed limit was higher in that neighborhood.

Commissioner Whitten said that there has been good discussion and the plan seems to be well thought out. I am comfortable that staff has explained the reasoning and the logistics of the setback and that they are only applicable to those two parcels. I move to recommend approval of the rezoning request.

Commissioner Byrd seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Baugh	Aye
Commissioner Byrd	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Commissioner Hull	Aye
Commissioner Orndoff	Aye
Commissioner Whitten	Aye
Chair Finnegan	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the rezoning request and master plan amendment passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on March 9, 2021.