



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

SUBJECT: Consider review of the Planning Commission's findings on the Park View Water Tank.

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON:** August 13, 2014.

Chair Fitzgerald read the request and asked staff to review.

Mrs. Banks said Mr. Mike Collins, Director of Public Utilities will speak first providing a description and specific details of the project; after which, I will follow with the regular staff report.

Mr. Mike Collins introduced himself and said it has been quite a while since I have been before this body. What you received in your package was a presentation that was given to the Park View neighborhood in January of this year. Tonight I have a slightly trimmed down version of that presentation. If there is anything within the information that was provided and you would like to discuss that as well, please just ask me I would be glad to discuss it.

The first question is "why do we need these projects." Basically, what we are going to do is construct a water tank and a pump station in the Park View area. There are really two drivers for this project – the first being asset management; it is not something that lasts forever and at some point you need a plan to get rid of the old and update with a new. Both the existing water tank and pump station were constructed in early 1960. If taken care of, a water tank probably has a useful life of about 75 years and a pump station has about 50 years. So you realize we are a bit past the decision on the pump station and nearing time on the water tank; the tank is a bit more of a difficult issue than the pump station. The second driver with this really goes back to the 1990s when the City adopted its current Design and Construction Standards Manual. As part of that process, the Fire Department was very adamant about curtailing development in the City where the needed fire flow exceeded the available fire flow. On a side note, if you are not aware of this, the City's Fire Department just got ranked as a Class 2, which is tremendous for them and us as well. This effects insurance rates throughout the City and is quite a "feather in their cap." Much of this comes with the ability of us to provide available fire flow where it is needed.

So, with that being said, fire flow is determined by two things – meeting an available fire flow and duration of fire flow in order to comply with Insurance Services Office (ISO) standards. In the Park View area we are looking at normal residential fire flow needing 750 gpm for two hours, commercial can get to 1,500 gpm for two hours, and in this area we have Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) which has dorms, classrooms, and other high occupancy buildings, which are in the neighborhood of 3,000 gpm. Some of those standards are not met in this area. There are existing structures that were

built before the standards recommended that fire flow be taken into consideration. We also have curtailment and restrictions on buildings in the area because we cannot meet the ISO requirements.

Those are the two real drivers for this project. There are also some core requirements that absolutely have to be part of this project and then there are some non-core things that are just preferences. Let me discuss the core requirements for a project. The tank has to be at a certain elevation, it cannot be buried, it has to be at a specific elevation and there are only a few possible available sites in the Park View area to construct. The elevation requires it to be on the hill and there is only so much vacant land along the hillside. The second requirement is there has to be connectivity with the pump station in the demand area; you do not want to have to run a lot of new infrastructure to get water from the tank to wherever the biggest demand is. Third, there is a certain volume that has to be provided. When you look at 3,000 gpm over a three hour period you need to establish a minimum size tank. The fourth requirement is the City needs to be able to afford the project and we need to be able to operate and maintain it. It cannot violate any of the risk management issues with the City's insurance. And, we must be able to sustain it and deliver what we intended to deliver. Those are the core requirements of what we can, and cannot do.

What we currently have in the Park View area is a tank that is 65 feet tall, to reach an elevation of 1,645. We have got to be at an elevation of 1,645 and we may go five to ten feet taller; but you cannot go lower. The existing tank holds 75,000 gallons of water; we are looking at needing a 500,000 gallon tank. The existing tank was built by Park View Sanitary District in the early 1960s and a lot of residential development grew around the tank. I would think that we do not want that to happen with a future tank. The residential growth has made that site unusable to us. The City cannot build a new tank on site while still operating the old one from there; along with the fact that the tank is in close proximity to the housing. That leads the City to fulfilling the core requirements at a new location.

The proposed tank site is on the southern boundary of a parcel that is owned by EMU. The elevation is 1,650, which makes the overall tank about 90 feet in height. The decision on what type of tank has not been made yet, and we are still open to any area along this hilltop.

Once we get past the needed core requirements there are numerous things that are available for community input that we will need to deal with. For instance, the type of water tank; we have already been receiving input on the tank, color and style, graphics, lettering, landscaping, access, lighting, and ancillary uses to name a few. There is no commitment to anything so far; I am currently working with EMU on their preferences, because it is their property.

We are probably looking at a four million dollar project, without any of the amenities. That will be our task when we go back to City Council with all of our comments. That is all I have for you tonight and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chair Fitzgerald said as a person who has been through several Comprehensive Plan updates and a number of Capital Improvement Projects, we know this item comes up often. We are happy to see this one coming true. She then asked if there were any questions from Planning Commission.

Mr. Collins said there are some folks from EMU if you would like to speak with them as well.

Mrs. Turner said I have one question. Is there any consideration being given to having communications facilities on the tower?

Mr. Collins said we have put those on the tank at Tower Street and if that fits the need here we would do the same after conversation with EMU. We would need to make that decision sometime between

now and when City Council would give us the approval to go with the water tank, because you need to build those tanks to support the antenna.

Mr. Collins continued saying I just want to be clear that this is a combination tank and pump station. The pump station is being planned in coordination with the round-a-bout and proposed road project at Chicago Avenue; we are attempting to integrate the pump station along Mt. Clinton Pike on EMU property in combination with the round-a-bout work. The City Attorney has said that this work does not need to be referred under the State Statute, but I did want to share that information with you.

Hearing no further questions Chair Fitzgerald asked staff for their 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: Eastern Mennonite University Seminary, Discipleship Center building, and parking lot, zoned R-3/I-1
- North: Single family dwellings, zoned R-2; and Eastern Mennonite University campus, zoned R-3/I-1
- East: Eastern Mennonite University campus, zoned R-3/I-1
- South: Single family dwellings and townhouses, zoned R-3
- West: Across City/County boundary, single family homes, zoned R-2 (County)

Per Section 10-1-6 of the City Code, the proposed Park View Water Tank Project is under review. This section stipulates that “if a public facility subject to Section 15.2-2232 of the Code of Virginia is not already shown on the comprehensive plan, the planning commission shall determine whether the location, character and extent of such public facility is in substantial accord with the comprehensive plan as provided by Section 15.2-2232 of the Code of Virginia and the terms and conditions set forth therein, as may be amended from time to time.”

Section 15.2-2232 states that when a locality has adopted a comprehensive plan, “it shall control the general or approximate location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan.” The code section then lists items, citing among others, public buildings and public structures, and stating that unless features are already shown on the plan, they “shall not be constructed, established, or authorized, unless and until the general location or approximate location, character, and extent thereof has been submitted to and approved by the commission as being substantially in accord with the adopted comprehensive plan or part thereof.” Under Section 15.2-2232, a public hearing is not required unless directed by City Council. On June 24, 2014 City Council referred this item to be reviewed by Planning Commission; this directive did not include holding a public hearing.

Staff believes the proposed project and site are substantially conforming to the Comprehensive Plan per the following goal, objective, and strategy:

- Goal 11: To support a vital city with community facilities, infrastructure, and services, which are efficient, cost-effective and conserving of resources.
 - Objective 11.1: To continue to provide high quality public water service.

- Strategy 11.1.1: To construct needed water supply, treatment, storage, and pressure improvements, including: Storage tank and upgrade of booster pump station in the Parkview Pressure Zone.

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan identified that the Park View Sector of the City had areas with low water volume. The Public Utilities Department has known for many years that the water tank would best serve the area if it were located on the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) hill and in 1996 had an engineer study the Park View Sector. This study also identified the EMU hill as the best location for tank placement.

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan noted that proposed improvements to the water distribution system were needed in the Park View area to upgrade existing fire service delivery. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan, more or less, had the same goal, objective, and strategy as in the 2011 Plan. Both the 2004 and 2011 Comprehensive Plans specifically note that the Parkview Pressure Zone is an area of concern in the current storage and distribution center and that this area is in need of upgrade for the booster pump station and the storage tank.

The application of Goal 16 within the 2011 Comprehensive Plan, which includes coordinating and collaborating with EMU, is also employed, as EMU recently accepted the idea of placing the water tank on their property and is working with the City on the project. In addition to working with EMU, the City has also solicited input from the Park View area and the City residents generally, both through meetings and on-line.

Staff believes the general and approximate location, character, and extent of this facility is substantially in accord with the Comprehensive Plan. As noted by the existing and past Comprehensive Plans, this public facility has been needed and has been planned for some time.

Staff recommends the Commission communicate the same findings to City Council that the Park View Water Tank project conforms to the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there were questions for staff. Hearing none, she said this is not a public hearing; however, we do invite anyone wishing to speak to come forward at this time.

Eldon Kurtz, Director of the Physical Plant at EMU, said you are correct; this has been a long standing issue that has needed to be addressed. It has taken the university quite some time to get comfortable with the idea. In the 1990s the suggestion was made that this hill was probably the best site for a water tank; yet EMU continued to look at many, many other places or alternate locations. It does not seem that anyone wants a water tank in their back yard.

EMU does want to cooperate with the City, we have worked with Mike Collins and his team for quite some time on this and I think we are at a point where we are ready to move ahead. We want to try and do this in a way that respects our neighbors as well as continues to value what we have in terms of that view we have from the hill. We are working at ways we can add some value to the tank that is planned to go in there and we are looking forward to moving ahead.

Chair Fitzgerald asked if there was anyone else wishing to speak regarding this item. Hearing none, she asked if there were additional questions for staff. Hearing none, she asked for a motion or further discussion.

Mr. Baugh said I just want to amplify Mr. Kurtz's comments. To say there has been a long standing recognition in that part of the City of a need for this is an understatement; until you begin discussing where you are going to put the water tank. I can confirm that other sites were explored, both publicly and privately, and this certainly has all the appearance of reflecting a consensus that many people have

spent a lot of time on and making as much peace as they can that this really is the best site in the area for the tank.

Mr. Heatwole moved that Planning Commission communicate to City Council that we find the Park View Water Tank project substantially conforms to the Comprehensive Plan.

Dr. Dilts seconded the motion.

Mr. Fletcher asked if the motion included the stated goals eleven and sixteen.

Mr. Heatwole said I do believe it is in substantial accord with all the listed goals.

Dr. Dilts again seconded the motion.

Chair Fitzgerald called for a voice vote on the motion.

All voted in favor of the motion (5-0 with Mr. Colman abstaining for reasons unknown).

Chair Fitzgerald said this will move forward to City Council.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Banks
Senior Planner