



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Agenda

Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

5:00 PM

Public Works Building

1. Call To Order

2. Approval of Virtual Participation (if needed)

3. Approval of Meeting Summary

2025-10 - Harrisonburg EPSAC - Meeting Summary

Attachments: [2025-10 - Harrisonburg EPSAC - Meeting Summary](#)

4. Public Comment

Carl Larsson- Public Comment on Private Development Environmental Standards

Attachments: [Carl Larsson- Public Comment on Private Development Environmental Standards](#)

5. New Business

5a. Focus Area Updates

5b. EAP Community Goals Updates

Special Presentation: EN-ROADS by Climate Interactive and MIT

5c. Updates from Sustainability Manager

Physical copies will be provided at the meeting for the Update on Current City of Harrisonburg Environmental Initiatives

5d. Harrisonburg Community Event

6. Other Committee Topics

6a. EPSAC CMO Request - EAP Rubric for Development

CMO Request - EAP Rubric for Proposed Development - 12-31-2025

Attachments: [CMO Request - EAP Rubric for Proposed Development - 12-31-2025](#)

6b. Report on Recent Meetings

6c. Member Check-In: Sharing Emerging Issues (Informational Only)

7. Meeting Dates for 2026

April 29, 2026

July 29, 2026

October 28, 2026

8. Adjournment

Notice to Public

Residents/Media will be able to attend the meeting. The Public can also view the meeting live on the "Harrisonburg Public Works" Facebook page.

Residents also may provide comment by 12:00 noon the day prior to the meeting by e-mail to keith.thomas@harrisonburgva.gov and indicating that it is a Public Comment for the EPSAC meeting.



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409 South Main Street
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Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-004, **Version:** 1

Subject:

2025-10 - Harrisonburg EPSAC - Meeting Summary

Presented By: [Click or tap here to enter Presenter.](#)

[Click here to enter the action/summary \(insert the summary from the memo here\)](#)



City of Harrisonburg Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

October 29, 2025 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Public Works

Members in attendance: Laura Dent, City Council Representative; Andy Kohen, School Board Representative; Bill Howe (arrived 6:00pm); Dave Powell (virtual); Doug Hendren; Ferwerdin Barzanji; Joy Loving; Rob Alexander

Staff in attendance: Keith Thomas, Shayna Carter, Maya Waid

Others in attendance: Brian O'Dell, General Manager of HEC; Zach Nyce, Manager of Engineering HEC; Harsit Patel, PW Support Services Manager

Call to Order

Rob Alexander called the meeting to order.

Approval of Virtual Participation

Rob Alexander advised the Committee that David Powell requested to participate in the meeting virtually as allowed in the Bylaws and in accordance with § 2.2-3708.3 Appendix A of the Code of Virginia. David Powell noted an illness prevented him from physically attending tonight's EPSAC meeting. Rob Alexander called for a motion to allow for his participation. Joy Loving motioned to approve David Powell's virtual participation. Doug Hendren seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Per § 2.2-3708.3 Appendix A of the Code of Virginia, David Powell may make motions, vote, join in closed meetings, and otherwise participate fully as if he or she was physically present.

Review and Adopt Meeting Summary

Joy Loving moved to approve the July 30, 2025 EPSAC Meeting Summary. Andy Kohen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Carl Larsson addressed the Committee to express concerns about the proposed Link development project. He questioned what role the Committee has in environmental performance standards and how development projects are evaluated against the Environmental Action Plan (EAP). The Committee asked Carl Larsson to submit his comments by email to the Sustainability and Environmental Manager so they could be included in the next meeting.

The Committee then discussed EPSAC's role in evaluating potential development projects. Doug Hendren noted that during his time on the Committee, he was not sure the group had ever formally considered its role in development review. Laura Dent provided a brief overview of the process developers go through with the Planning Commission and City Council. Rob Alexander suggested that the Committee develop a request to the City Manager outlining how EPSAC could play a role in proposed development. He also proposed setting aside time at the January meeting to further discuss the topic.

Focus Area Updates

Keith Thomas directed the Committee's attention to an attachment in the agenda under Focus Area 2 that included responses to several questions raised at the previous meeting.

Keith Thomas then reviewed the Focus Area 4 target data document, noting that it summarized all data available to date and showed progress toward the 2025 targets. He asked what process the Committee wanted to use to evaluate targets for 2030 and beyond, as well as how to set targets that currently have “TBD” benchmarks. Keith Thomas briefly reviewed the process the Committee previously used to establish the 2025 targets. The Committee agreed that using the same format would be appropriate. Doug Hendren, Dave Powell, Rob Alexander, and Laura Dent all expressed interest in participating in the Focus Area 4 working group.

Tom Hartman provided an update on the Liberty Street project, noting that the 30 percent design phase had been completed. He also shared that a public meeting is planned to gather additional community input. The next step in the project will be to begin the right-of-way process.

Harsit Patel introduced himself to the Committee and gave an overview of the City’s recycling program. He noted that recycling tonnage has increased in recent years. The City currently operates a cardboard pickup service for businesses, and beginning in 2026, the service will expand to residential pickup through an online or call-in reservation system that uses route management technology to create the most efficient collection routes. Harsit Patel explained that this technology has helped reduce fuel use in sanitation collection and lower the City’s carbon footprint.

Rob Alexander asked whether reduced fuel usage would be reflected in the City’s greenhouse gas inventory. Keith Thomas responded that changes in fuel consumption would appear in the inventory, as fleet fuel usage is included in the data. Joy Loving asked whether the new cardboard collection process would affect users of the Recycling Center or the mobile recycling unit. Harsit Patel said he did not anticipate any impacts. Ferwerdin Barzanji asked why bulk items could not be collected using trash trucks. Harsit Patel explained that bulk items cause increased wear on sanitation compactors. Ferwerdin Barzanji then asked how staff would help residents learn to use the new system. Harsit Patel said staff have held several public events to assist residents to navigate the online system. He also noted that residents can always call in or come to our office for help. Andy Kohen asked whether the changes would affect staffing levels. Harsit Patel responded that there would be no staffing impacts. Tom Hartman added that schedules have been adjusted to accommodate the changes.

Community Goals Updates

Keith Thomas reported that staff are still waiting for Dr. McGinnis to complete the 2024 greenhouse gas inventory. Keith Thomas noted that Dr. McGinnis has had to change his workload to adjust to new timelines on several federal grants he is working on.

Updates from Sustainability & Environmental Manager

Keith Thomas provided an update on the Turner Pavilion solar project, noting that staff have completed the procurement process and selected AEC, the same contractor that installed the solar system at Bluestone Elementary. He explained that the project will include a 35.2 kW system, which is smaller than originally anticipated due to building code requirements. Keith Thomas added that AEC is currently conducting a structural assessment of the facility and that some additional repairs will be required to meet code. Doug Hendren asked for clarification on why the system size was reduced. Keith Thomas explained that staff received an initial set of designs that were reviewed by the Building Official, who provided comments that resulted in a smaller system. Brian O’Dell added that fire code setback requirements also contributed to the reduction. Keith Thomas further clarified that the initial design had been based on the residential building code, which was not appropriate for Turner Pavilion.

Bill Howe expressed interest in making the City's solar production data publicly available through a website or dashboard. Doug Hendren agreed, noting that public education about solar is part of the Committee's mission and that sharing solar data could support that goal.

Keith Thomas then reminded Committee members of expiring terms and to reapply if they were interested in continuing to serve.

Joy Loving asked about the Solarize numbers in the updates document and why they are so low. Brian O'Dell cautioned the Committee against using Solarize participation rates as a proxy for overall solar adoption in the City, noting that HEC had 24 new solar connections this year.

Harrisonburg Community Town Hall Updates

Rob Alexander reviewed the draft plan for the proposed event. Dave Powell shared that he has begun reaching out to several industrial and large energy users in the City to describe the event and gauge interest. He reported that approximately 25 organizations have expressed some level of interest in attending.

Rob Alexander asked the Committee for input on the best time of year to hold the event. Dave Powell noted that a summer timeframe would not be ideal. Rob Alexander then conducted a straw poll on holding the event in the spring or fall. The Committee was split between the two options, so Rob Alexander suggested that the subcommittee planning the event further discuss and refine the timeline.

Rob Alexander also noted that Keith Thomas, Dave Powell, and he would meet soon to organize and prepare ahead of the next subgroup meeting.

Other Committee Topics

Laura Dent announced that she would be attending the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 30) which will take place in November in Belém, Brazil. She advised she would give an update on the conference at the January meeting.

Next Meeting Dates

2026 Dates

- January 28, 2026
- April 29, 2026
- July 29, 2026
- October 28, 2026



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Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-005, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Carl Larsson- Public Comment on Private Development Environmental Standards

Presented By: [Click or tap here to enter Presenter.](#)

[Click here to enter the action/summary \(insert the summary from the memo here](#)

From: [Carl Larsson](#)
To: [Keith R. Thomas](#)
Subject: EPSAC Public Comment on Private Development Environmental Standards
Date: Monday, November 3, 2025 4:41:54 PM

WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Dear Keith,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak during the public comment period at the EPSAC meeting last Wednesday. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak, as well as for the helpful discussion by members of the committee.

As requested by the committee, I finally had an opportunity to type up a summary of my comments and concerns (below). When you have an opportunity, could you please forward this email to the rest of the committee?

I'd also be happy to connect with anyone who's interested in discussing this topic further, and can be reached by email at ProfCarlLarsson@gmail.com.

Thank you again for everything, and hope you have a great evening!

Best,

Carl Larsson
487 S Mason St

Encouraging Private Sector Environmental Performance Standards - The "Link" Apartments

This public comment concerns the negative environmental impacts of the proposal to build [the "Link" apartments at 473 S Main St](#) (site of the current Lindsey Funeral Home property, immediately adjacent to City Hall, Build Our Park, and the Farmer's Market). The goal of raising these concerns is to seek ways for our city to work constructively towards ensuring that the developer is committed to meeting or exceeding the environmental standards that we require for our own public buildings in the City of Harrisonburg.

The development proposal would bring needed housing to downtown, and its high density in a walkable, downtown area offers environmental and economic benefits. Density alone, however, isn't enough. A large, 265 unit development (with proffers that would allow for up to ~760 bedrooms) must also be designed with many other important considerations in mind (e.g., size and massing relative to its surroundings, impact on the Downtown Historic District, design, affordability, traffic, and downtown parking spillovers, among other issues). Another significant concern is the environmental impact of the proposed development. Some obvious, negative environmental impacts of the proposal include the following:

- **Loss of mature tree canopy**—as noted in the EPSAC July '25 minutes, our citywide canopy already fell 5.5% from 2014–2024 and remains well below the 40% target. The property currently has a number of mature trees, which all appear to be slated for removal under the developer's July rezoning application. Newly planted replacement trees would take decades to mature, and in the meantime the city will lose the public benefits of the mature trees (e.g., carbon sequestration, shade/cooling, mitigation of stormwater runoff). Could the developer preserve and build around some of the mature trees, especially with regard to the largest tree at the southwest corner of the property? This would be in the spirit of the Bryant Heights development that is profiled by Biophilic Cities: <https://www.biophiliccities.org/bcfilms>
- **Exacerbated urban heat island effect** - For example, the 5-6 story parking deck is slated to be built immediately adjacent to the planned Build Our Park space. How will this impact the temperatures and overall experience of visitors to the park, especially during hotter summer months when our city hosts summer concerts? How can the developer mitigate these impacts either by preserving existing, mature trees, or allowing additional set-backs from the property line to plant larger species of trees?
- **Increase in impervious surfaces and stormwater run-off.** Current plans show a drastic increase in impervious surfaces spanning the 2.7 acre property. How will this impact stormwater run-off in the area? How will its very close proximity to Black's Run, almost immediately across the street, impact flooding risk for land and neighborhoods further downstream?
- **Minimal commitment to sustainability features:** For example, the developer in its July Planning Commission application only committed to rough-in for solar (but not to install any panels), only 10 EV chargers in a large, 400+ space garage, and interior bike parking far below the potential cap of ~760 bedrooms (90 interior bike parking spots, and only 8 exterior spots).

To proceed, the developer is requesting a rezoning of the property from R-3 to B-1C. It's my understanding that they are currently gathering further input on the project, and it's my hope that they can strengthen the proposal to better serve the common good of our city. **Rezoning is a discretionary privilege that City Council can vote to approve or deny. It is therefore my hope that City Council will only grant rezoning if the project meets the highest standards for commercial real estate development, including in its environmental performance.** For example, could the developer be asked to commit to LEED certification (or equivalent) as part of any rezoning approval?

I understand EPSAC's stated purpose includes encouraging private projects to follow our city's environmental standards, and I wanted to learn more about how that might work in the case of the Link. Would EPSAC perhaps consider drafting a recommendation to Planning Commission and City Council that any rezoning, if approved, be conditioned on legally binding proffers that meet or exceed our municipal environmental standards, and/or that the developer commit to a recognized building standard such as LEED (or equivalent)? While Planning Commission has expertise in land use and zoning, EPSAC's input on environmental impact could be very helpful to them as they consider whether to recommend approval of the rezoning (I also understand from speaking with a former member of Planning Commission that there's a precedent for members of Planning Commission to consult with other city committees on the various impacts of proposed developments). Or are there other avenues that members of EPSAC could follow to pursue the committee's goal of encouraging private

projects to follow our city's environmental performance standards?

The Link is a high-profile project, with the developer claiming that it's the largest investment in the history of Downtown Harrisonburg. The standards our city holds the developer to on this project could end up setting a precedent for other future development in the city. For that reason, I'd be extremely grateful for any input that the committee may have on recommending high standards for both this project, as well as others that may follow in the future.



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Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-006, **Version:** 1

Subject:

CMO Request - EAP Rubric for Proposed Development - 12-31-2025

Presented By: [Click or tap here to enter Presenter.](#)

[Click here to enter the action/summary \(insert the summary from the memo here\)](#)

Request for Consideration – EPSAC Role in Reviewing Development Projects for Alignment to Environmental Action Plan

Background

The Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) serves as an advisory body to City Council and staff on matters related to municipal environmental performance, sustainability, and stewardship of resources. The Committee's purpose, as outlined in its bylaws, is to "advise City Council and city staff on matters pertaining to the development and implementation of the Environmental Action Plan".

While much of recent EPSAC work has focused on municipal operations, there are several portions of the EAP that draw attention to the City's role in influencing environmental and sustainability behaviors of residents and non-governmental entities (Guiding Goal 1, Focus Area 1: Goal 6, Focus Area 2: Goals 1, 3 and 4, Focus Area 4: Goal 6, Focus Area 6: Goals 2 and 4, and the Community Goals).

At a recent EPSAC meeting, a member of the public expressed interest in having development projects evaluated for their alignment with the City's sustainability goals and Environmental Action Plan. Committee members agreed that there could be value in providing an objective framework for understanding how proposed developments support or detract from the City's adopted environmental goals.

This framework would be presented as a means to promote, encourage, and prioritize climate resiliency, household financial stability, and environmental quality beyond municipal operations as is consistent with the EAP.

Purpose of Request

EPSAC respectfully requests that the City Manager consider authorizing the development of a process that would allow the Committee to provide a useful tool for city staff, Planning Commission, and City Council on the environmental performance of proposed development projects, based on alignment with the City's Environmental Action Plan and other adopted community goals.

The intent is not to create an additional layer in the formal development review process, but rather to:

- Continue to educate developers, property owners, Planning Commission members, etc. about the EAP and its contents.
- Encourage developers to consider sustainability elements early in project design.
- Provide objective, transparent information about how proposed projects align with environmental priorities outlined in the EAP
- Support Planning Commission and City Council decision-making by offering a consistent evaluation framework.

Proposed Framework

If this request is approved, EPSAC would assist in developing an Environmental Performance Scoring Rubric that enables evaluation of proposed developments as against the relevant EAP goals and strategies:

- FA 1 Goal 6: Encourage Efforts to Improve Energy Efficiency and Increase Renewable Energy and Sustainable Energy Sources
- FA 2 Goal 1: Modernize and Establish Enduring Land Use and Development Patterns
- FA 2 Goal 3: Maintain and Increase a Healthy Tree Canopy
- FA 3 Goal 4: Evaluate Opportunities for Underutilized Public and Private Lands and Consider Opportunities to Rehabilitate and Create New Natural Habitats
- FA 4 Goal 6: Continue to Coordinate Land Use Planning and Regulations with Transportation Planning
- FA 6 Goal 2: Implement the Water Use and Water Loss Management Plans
- FA 6 Goal 4: Protect and Enhance Water Quality of Surface Water and Stormwater Runoff

Proposed developments would be scored according to these goals, producing an overall “EAP Alignment Rating.”

Two Options for Implementation

Option 1 – Standard Review:

EPSAC would meet monthly (or as needed) to review staff-prepared environmental performance scores prepared by the Sustainability and Environmental Manager for all proposed developments scheduled for Planning Commission review. The Committee would have the opportunity to confirm or adjust the score before it is included in the Planning Commission and City Council packets. This option ensures consistency across

development proposals and visibility of sustainability practices for every development project.

Option 2 – Review Upon Request:

EPSAC would provide environmental performance scoring only when specifically requested by the Planning Commission or City Council for a particular project. This option provides flexibility and limits workload for both EPSAC and City staff, while still making the resource available for priority or high-impact projects.

Next Steps

If this proposal is acceptable in concept, EPSAC requests direction from the City Manager on:

1. Whether the Committee should proceed with developing the scoring rubric framework in coordination with staff.
2. Which review option, if any, would best align with the City's development review process and administrative capacity.

EPSAC is prepared to draft an initial rubric and bring it back for review and input before implementation.

Conclusion

The Committee believes this process could add value by promoting transparency, consistency, and accountability in how development projects advance the City's environmental and sustainability goals—without adding procedural delays or duplicating existing reviews.