



CITY OF HARRISONBURG  
**PUBLIC  
WORKS**

320 EAST MOSBY ROAD, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

OFFICE (540) 434-5928 • FAX (540) 434-2695

---

To: Eric Campbell, City Manager  
From: Thomas Hartman, PE, Director of Public Works;  
Thanh Dang, AICP, Assistant Director of Community Development  
Rebecca Stimson, Environmental Compliance Manager  
Date: January 14, 2020

**Summary:**

Consider adoption of the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1.

**Background:**

On October 23, 2018, the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) presented, among other things, an outline of an Environmental Action Plan (EAP) that included seven focus areas. At that same meeting, City Council and City Manager Campbell discussed directing city staff to take the lead on writing the EAP with assistance from the EPSAC. Since that time, staff primarily from the Departments of Public Works, Community Development, Public Utilities, Public Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and the City Manager's Office with support from Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) and Harrisonburg Electric Commission (HEC) have worked together and in collaboration with the EPSAC on the EAP Phase 1.

**Key Issues:**

The EAP is a guide for city leaders, staff, and members of the community to implement sustainability visions and principles. To-date, the City of Harrisonburg has taken steps to address the quality and care of our natural resources; however, the latest science indicates that more ambitious actions are required to mitigate the impacts of environmental degradation and the changing climate that will affect our community's health, economy, and well-being. Adopting and implementing the EAP helps the City support global targets for a stable climate and a resilient community. The plan includes recommended policy changes in the public sector and incentives in the private sector, as well as, recommended actions for both the public and private sectors.

The development of the EAP will be completed in three phases (1, 2, and 3). This document represents Phase 1 and describes goals, co-benefits, and strategies, and identifies tasks and responsible parties (such as a city department, private businesses, community organizations, or individuals). This document is intended to lay the groundwork for future phases of EAP development and implementation of strategies towards environmental sustainability.

The EAP Phase 1 is organized into six *focus areas*, areas in which action can be taken to improve the environment and sustainability (Buildings and Energy, Land Use and Green Space, Regional Food Systems, Sustainable Transportation, Waste Reduction and Recycling, and Water Resources). Each focus area has *goal statements*, which are overarching statements describing the direction the community wants to go. Goal statements describe a desired end state for each focus area and reflect the values of the community. Goal statements are qualitative in nature. Each goal has a section that answers the question: *Where are we now?* The City has already taken steps to achieve some goals. When relevant, those actions and initiatives are summarized under each goal statement. This section does not include actions or initiatives by private businesses or community organizations. Each *strategy* within the goal describe *possible* approaches and methods for attaining the goal. The *tasks* listed for each strategy are *possible* actionable items that are steps towards meeting each strategy. Strategies and tasks may be implemented by city departments, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Harrisonburg Electric Commission, private businesses, community organizations, or individuals.

Adoption of the EAP does not immediately establish new regulations, policies, or budgets to implement the plan. As previously stated, the EAP is a guide for city leaders, staff, and community members to implement sustainability visions and principles. As the City considers implementation of strategies and tasks, cost-benefit analyses will be conducted as part of decision-making. Additionally, implementation of any specific strategy or task is dependent on City Council's approval and appropriation of funding.

The City and the community are also not limited to implementing only the strategies and tasks described in the EAP nor must specific strategies and tasks described in the EAP be utilized. There will be instances when new, unforeseen opportunities arise that would support particular goals, but the opportunity was not identified as a potential strategy or task in the EAP. Likewise, the City and the community might also find that an identified strategy or task is not feasible or no longer appropriate.

The EAP also includes incentives and suggestions for making changes in the private sector. Since Virginia is a Dillon Rule state, the City can only regulate the private sector on matters where the State General Assembly has expressly granted the ability for the City to do so by statute, private act, or charter. For example, the EAP can outline ways to encourage and incentivize private citizens to reduce plastic consumption, but it cannot suggest the City adopt a regulation to ban plastic shopping bags in the City because the General Assembly has not authorized the City to do so. It is the City's hope that community members and community organizations will use the EAP to identify tasks where they can take a leadership or supporting role. Community members and community organizations can look at the responsible parties identified as "individuals" and "community organizations" for various strategies and tasks described in the EAP.

After EAP Phase 1 is adopted by City Council, Phase 2 will involve inventorying (gathering data and studying) municipal and community activities to develop baselines to be later used for measuring progress towards achieving goals. For example, Goal 1 includes a strategy to complete municipal and community-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventories. The inventories will provide a snapshot in time of greenhouse gas emissions coming from different sources.

During Phase 3, the City will consider baseline data gathered and all learned information, establish targets with statements that define a percentage reduction or increase by a specific year. For example, during Phase 2, for *Goal 3 of Focus Area 2 – Maintain and Increase a Healthy Tree Canopy*, the City might choose to inventory tree canopy cover using available aerial photography and planimetric surveys from 2015. The baseline could be represented as either the total acreage of tree canopy cover in the City or a percentage of the City covered by tree canopy. Then during Phase 3, a target might be developed to state “Maintain an overall tree canopy of at least 40 percent by the year 2030.”

It is likely that Phase 2 and Phase 3 will occur at the same time as different baselines and targets may take longer than others to determine. Additional updates to the EAP, particularly with goals and strategy statements may also occur at this time. The updated EAP will be presented to City Council for consideration to adopt.

**Environmental Impact:**

The EAP is a guide for city leaders, staff, and members of the community to implement sustainability visions and principles. Adopting and implementing the EAP helps the City support global targets for a stable climate and a resilient community.

**Fiscal Impact:**

As the City considers implementation of strategies and tasks, cost-benefit analyses will be conducted as part of decision-making. Additionally, implementation of any specific strategy or task is dependent on City Council’s approval and appropriation of funding.

**Prior Actions:**

N/A

**Alternatives:**

- (a) Approval of the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1 as submitted;
- (b) Approval of the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1 with amendments; or
- (c) Table the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1 for further amendments.

**Community Engagement:**

A draft EAP was presented to the public at an Open House meeting on June 5, 2019. Approximately 50 members of the public attended to learn more about the process and the plan. Comments were solicited in writing from June 5 through June 26 and then reviewed by city staff and EPSAC members and the EAP was revised. Over 40 community members and community groups submitted written comments.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends alternative (a) to approve the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1.

**Attachments:**

- 1. Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1
- 2. Summary of Focus Areas and Goal Statements
- 3. Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) Recommendations (Votes) and Comments on the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1

**Review:**

The Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) recommended alternative (a) to approve the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Phase 1 (12-1). A summary of EPSAC member recommendations (votes) and individual's comments are provided as an attachment to this memorandum.