



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Department of Planning & Community Development

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Building Inspections

Engineering

Planning & Zoning

June 3, 2019

TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

SUBJECT: Public hearing to modify Section 10-3-25(14) of the Zoning Ordinance, which currently specifies that community centers, libraries, museums, and other similar facilities are to provide one parking space for each 250 square feet of building gross floor area.

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON: May 8, 2019

Chair Way read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Banks said that Article G of the Zoning Ordinance – Off-Street Vehicle and Bicycle Parking, Section 10-3-25 (14) addresses minimum off-street parking requirements for community centers, libraries, museums, and similar uses. This subsection reads as follows:

“Community centers, libraries, museums and similar facilities not dependent on public assembly or seating: One (1) parking space for each two hundred and fifty (250) square feet of gross floor area.”

When calculating minimum off-street parking requirements for community centers, libraries, museums and similar facilities, staff takes the gross floor area of the entire building (restrooms, foyers, hallways, etc.) and divides by 250 square feet. All totals are rounded up to the nearest whole number. This number is the total number of off-street parking spaces that are required for the use.

Staff proposes to amend Section 10-3-25 (14) with the following language (new text is underlined):

Community centers not associated with a housing development, libraries, museums and similar facilities not dependent on public assembly or seating: One (1) parking space for each two hundred and fifty (250) square feet of gross floor area. Community centers associated with housing developments, where the use of such space is primarily for the use of residents of the housing development, have no minimum off-street parking requirements.

Community centers within housing developments can provide many different amenities for the residents of the community it serves; including, but not limited to, open space for classes or gathering, exercise rooms, computer areas, laundry facilities, office space, and game rooms. Currently, when a housing development (townhouse, apartment, duplex, or single-family detached development) has an associated community center they are required to provide off-street parking for the associated center based on one parking space for every 250 square feet of gross floor area of the structure. Off-street parking requirements are calculated the same for a community center contained within the same building as residential dwellings and for a community center within a separate structure.

When housing developments are constructed, the parking requirements for dwelling units, Section 10-3-25(7) of the ZO, must be met for each individual dwelling unit on site; and therefore, would meet the parking needs for the residents of the community. The residents are the same individuals who will primarily use the housing development's community center. Having to provide additional parking for an area to be utilized by the residents, whom already have parking, creates excessive parking, reduces available green space for residents, increases stormwater runoff, and increases the cost of development.

Staff believes that the proposed amendment to Section 10-3-25(14) of the off-street parking requirements is supported by Objective 4.4 of the Comprehensive Plan: "To provide off-street parking to adequately meet demand and provide access to key destinations, businesses, and services, without creating oversupply that increases the costs for development, and impacts the community character, natural environment, and economic vitality."

Staff recommends in favor of the Zoning Ordinance amendment as presented.

Chair Way asked if there were any questions for staff.

Commissioner Colman said that he is in support of reducing parking in this manner. Does it include any consideration for handicap parking? I do not know if it is need, but I was wondering if it was considered.

Ms. Banks said that we had many conversations regarding accessible parking. As it is now with these facilities, there is no guarantee that accessible parking would be placed in front of the facility. In most cases, if it a separate building or in an apartment complex, all the parking is added in together and dispersed on property. There was no ability to say that an accessible space should be in that location. Having said that, staff has discussed this, and it is something that we will look at when comprehensive site plans are in review for larger housing developments that may have these community centers. We will look at where they have placed the accessible parking spaces and make suggestions, if needed.

Mr. Fletcher said that we had a lot of conversations about this with the Building Official. The amount of handicap parking is based on the amount of parking that is provided. If you provide one parking space, you have to provide one handicap space. It is one for spaces up to 25, then it goes two up to 50, and so on. It is not until you get to 100 that the percentage decreases. In early versions of this, we tried to establish handicap parking at the facility, but were unable to effectively do so.

Ms. Banks said that the problem was that you would not get an additional handicap parking space for the facility.

Mr. Fletcher said that the requirement is not location specific. There has to be an accessible way to get to the facility. That is why you might see gravel parking lots with a paved path to the handicap space.

Commissioner Whitten said that it seems that if you are providing that service, a community center, then you would want to have it be accessible.

Mr. Fletcher said that it has to be the most direct path, which is up to interpretation. For the most part, designers are trying to provide the accessibility.

Chair Way asked if there any more questions for staff. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone wanting to speak. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Commissioner Finnegan said that he is in favor of reducing mandatory parking in the City wherever possible. This seems like a good place to start.

Commissioner Finnegan moved to recommend approval of the zoning ordinance amendment.

Commissioner Finks seconded the motion.

All members voted in favor of recommending approval of the zoning ordinance amendment.

Chair Way said that the recommendation for approval will move forward to City Council on June 11, 2019.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Banks

Alison Banks
Senior Planner