



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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July 1, 2026

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

SUBJECT: Consider a request from Honest Meats LLC for a special use permit to allow a meat processing and storage facility at 256 Charles Street

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING
COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON: June 10, 2026**

Vice Chair Porter read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Soffel said the applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) to allow a meat processing and storage facility in the M-1, General Industrial District. The +/- 1.5-acre property is addressed as 256 Charles Street and is identified as tax map parcel 45-A-3. If approved, the applicant plans to continue operating the currently nonconforming meat processing and storage facility.

T&E Meats currently operates on this property, where a portion of their use is a nonconforming meat processing facility (slaughterhouse) for domesticated livestock. As part of the meat processing facility, the livestock is processed onsite to produce fresh meat or value-added cured, cooked, or smoked products and then shipped to other markets or facilities. The remainder of the facility includes storage of processed products.

In 2025, the applicant expressed interest in finding a way to permit the slaughterhouse use in the M-1 General Industrial District to remove the nonconforming status, provide a route for future improvements, and to avoid the restrictions of Article E, Nonconforming Structures and Uses.

On February 10, 2026, City Council approved a Zoning Ordinance (ZO) amendment to add a new definition for “meat processing and storage facility” and to allow such facilities by SUP in the M-1 General Industrial District. If the applicant’s request for an SUP to operate a meat processing and storage facility is granted, the currently nonconforming use would become conforming under the ZO. While the applicant has stated that they do not intend to expand operations at this time, conformance with the ZO means that the applicant could expand in the future, so long as they comply with applicable codes and standards.

Special Use Permit Conditions

The applicant has offered the following self-imposed SUP conditions:

1. Semi-opaque fencing along the rear property lines and portions of the side property lines surrounding the livestock barn structure and livestock unloading area shall be provided and maintained with a 6- foot tall, semi-opaque screen consistent with existing installed screening in the screening area shown in orange on the attached Figure 1. Any torn or damaged screening will be repaired or replaced and maintained on the property. The screened perimeter area would be expanded should the outdoor livestock unloading, movement and penning area described below in condition 2 be expanded.
2. No outdoor, open-air livestock pens will be maintained or placed on the property. Livestock penned in the current livestock unloading barn will not be stored on site for more than 48 hours absent a regulatory order delaying operations. All livestock unloading, movement and penning area(s) shall be located behind or to the side of the principal building in the area shown in purple hashing on the attached Figure 1.
3. Within six (6) months of Special Use Permit approval, the applicant will delineate required parking spaces on the property per City Zoning and DCSM requirements.
4. A grease trap will be permitted and installed at the property within six (6) months after Special Use Permit approval with design and specifications subject to approval by City Public Utilities Department.

Conditions #1 and #2 require livestock to be kept within screened, designated areas, in a manner that would not be readily visible from outside the property. Condition #3 requires the delineation of required parking spaces. Condition #4 addresses a concern from Harrisonburg Public Utilities regarding discharge to the City's sanitary sewer system by requiring the installation of a grease trap.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Commercial and states:

Commercial uses include retail, office, professional service functions, restaurants, and lodging uses. Commercial areas should offer connecting streets, biking and walking facilities, and public transit services. Interparcel access and connections are essential to maintaining traffic safety and flow along arterials. Parking should be located to the sides or rear of buildings.

The SUP would not change the property's existing industrial use and therefore would not advance the Commercial land use designation; however, approval would make a long-standing nonconforming use conforming under the ZO.

Transportation and Traffic

The Determination of Need for a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) form ("TIA determination form") for the proposed SUP is attached. The TIA determination form indicated that the project would not generate 100 or more new peak hour trips, which is the threshold for staff to require a TIA. Therefore, a TIA was not required for the SUP request.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

With condition #4 requiring a grease trap, staff has no concerns with the requested special use permit regarding water and sewer matters.

Conclusion

Approval of the SUP would allow the existing use to become conforming under the ZO, and the proposed conditions address concerns regarding screening, livestock areas, parking, and the installation of a grease trap. Staff recommends approval of the SUP with conditions, as submitted by the applicant.

Commissioner Jezior said the facility there right now is being used to house the livestock as they are going into the slaughterhouse. Would it be under the same use?

Ms. Soffel said very temporarily. The livestock is delivered and I believed the applicant said a maximum of 48 hours in the processing of the livestock.

Councilmember Dent said I am remembering, when we passed this as City Council, the definition of livestock. Am I remembering correctly that we also defined poultry at the same time to make sure there is a distinction?

Ms. Soffel said I believe with adding the definition for the meat processing then it raised the question about the poultry processing and we did not want to risk it being interpreted as not allowed.

Commissioner Seitz said I did have one clarifying question on the Figure One Diagram provided where the screening is shown in orange. That is existing screening that will be maintained, correct?

Ms. Soffel said correct.

Commissioner Seitz said there is no screening being added.

Ms. Soffel said not at this time.

Councilmember Dent said when I went over there today, I was looking at the blue hatched area identified as “animal unloading/movement and pinning area” and sure enough there were trucks backing up and a pen that encloses all of the animals. It is already there.

Vice Chair asked if there were any more questions for staff. Hearing none, he invited the applicant or applicant’s representative to speak to their request.

Todd Rhea, the applicant’s representative, came forward to speak to the request. He said Ms. Soffel gave a great summary of the history of this request primarily to move a grandfathered nonconforming use into conforming status that helps with things from financing to insurance and related activities. The meat processing operations have been ongoing at this site for almost 90 years beginning in the 1930s. This is not a new operation and this request merely gives permission for

what has gone on there historically. It is in an industrial district. Industrial uses primarily surround it. There have been no histories of complaints with the operations there. Staff has been really good to work with Honest Meats, Mr. Russ, Ms. Soffel and Mr. Blanks, to address concerns and technical considerations as we worked through the process to number one, amend the City's ordinance to allow us to make this request and then to make the request for what we believe are appropriate conditions. Mr. Heavener is here. He runs the operations. They process a little less than 100 animals a month, so it is not a super intensive operation. They serve almost exclusively local organic farmers here in the Shenandoah Valley. It is a valuable business use in the City of Harrisonburg. We will respectfully request the Commission recommend approval to Council for the permit as requested with conditions.

Vice Chair Porter asked if there were any questions for the applicant's representative. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone in the room or on the phone wishing to speak to the request. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Commissioner Jezior said I think my main concern with this one is that as our residential district expands into this space how is that going to conflict in the future if this is approved and there is an option to expand in the future? There is just more potential for conflict moving forward. They have been there for a very long time so it is an interesting situation to be in as the City turns to expand in this space and potentially have houses across the street in the future. That is my biggest concern with this.

Commissioner Kettler made a motion to recommend approval of the special use permit request as submitted by the applicant.

Commissioner Seitz seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Porter called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Commissioner Jezior	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Vice Chair Porter	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the special use permit request passed (5-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on July 14, 2026.

At this time the Commission took a 5-minute recess.