



September 9, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider requests to (1) approve required number of off-street parking spaces relating to school uses and (2) rezone (master plan amendment) 701 and 801 Parkwood Drive and 1251 Virginia Avenue (Eastern Mennonite School) — Meg Rupkey, Community Development

Summary

Project name	Eastern Mennonite School
Address/Location	701 and 801 Parkwood Drive and 1251 Virginia Avenue
Tax Map Parcels	47-N-7
Total Land Area	+/- 26.30 acres
Property Owner	Eastern Mennonite School
Owner's Representative	Colman Engineering
Present Zoning	R-3/I-1, Medium Density Residential District with an Institutional Overlay and B-2/I-1, General Business District with an Institutional Overlay
Proposed Zoning	R-3/I-1 and B-2/I-1 (Master Plan Amendment)
Planning Commission	September 9, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated October 13, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated October 27 (Second Reading)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend approval of (1) the proposed number of minimum off-street parking spaces relating to school uses and (2) the rezoning/master plan amendment for Eastern Mennonite School.

Context & Analysis

The following land uses are located on and adjacent to the property:

Site: Eastern Mennonite School, zoned R-3/I-1 and B-2/I-1

North: Across Parkwood Drive, Eastern Mennonite University, zoned R-3/I-1 and single-family dwellings, zoned R-3

East: Across Virginia Avenue, non-conforming manufactured home park, non-conforming dwellings and commercial uses, zoned B-2

South: Across Mount Clinton Pike, commercial uses, zoned B-2

West: Eastern Mennonite University, zoned R-3/I-1

Eastern Mennonite School (EMS) is requesting approval of the proposed number of minimum off-street parking spaces relating to school uses and to amend the master plan for a +/- 26.3-acre property zoned R-3/I-1 and B-2/I-1. The property is addressed as 701 and 801 Parkwood Drive and 1251 Virginia Avenue and is identified as tax map parcel 47-N-7.

EMS's first I-1, Institutional Overlay District (I-1) Master Plan was approved in September 2002. The master plan provided for the planned development of the campus, including building expansions, parking areas, and athletic fields. It also approved limited relief from zoning requirements for a baseball dugout along Mount Clinton Pike that encroached five feet into the required 30-foot setback and for required parking separation along the western property line adjoining Eastern Mennonite University.

In 2016, EMS, Virginia Mennonite Missions, and Mennomedia, Inc. requested an amendment to the 2002 Master Plan and an expansion of the I-1 overlay to include three additional parcels totaling +/- 2.08 acres. The amendment supported conversion of the former Mennomedia office building at 1251 Virginia Avenue to the elementary school and established a campus with zero-foot setbacks from internal property lines and a 10-foot perimeter building setback. In 2019, a plat was recorded to vacate the internal property lines and dedicate public right-of-way along Parkwood Road creating the lot as it is today.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Institutional and Limited Commercial and states:

Institutional

These areas are planned for development by certain institutional uses, like private colleges and universities, hospitals, and retirement communities that operate on large land areas and may function in a campus-like environment.

Limited Commercial

These areas are suitable for commercial and professional office development but in a less intensive approach than the Commercial designation. These areas need careful controls to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses. The maintenance of functional and aesthetic integrity should be emphasized in review of applications for development and redevelopment and should address such matters as: control of access; landscaping and buffering; parking; setback; signage; and building mass, height, and orientation. It is important that development within Limited Commercial areas does not incrementally increase in intensity to become similar to the Commercial designation. Efforts should be made to maintain the intent as described above.

Updated 2026 Master Plan Narrative and Map

If approved, the proposed 2026 Master Plan will supersede the previously approved EMS Master Plan to reflect the current single-parcel campus and to allow additional campus buildings, site improvements, and parking modifications, which are described in the master plan narrative and illustrated in the map.

The proposed plan maintains the minimum 10-foot setback along the exterior campus boundary that was established through the 2016 Master Plan amendment. This flexibility is intended to accommodate the existing dugout and the proposed athletic concessions building.

Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements

EMS is requesting an expansion in parking areas for the EMS campus. Zoning Ordinance Section 10-3-25 (12) specifies the minimum off-street parking requirements for “Elementary schools, junior or senior high schools, or equivalent facilities” and states:

Proposed off-street parking spaces shall be programmed by the applicable school authorities as necessary to meet state standards for use and consideration of site locations, then submitted to the planning commission for comprehensive site plan review.

The applicant used the Virginia Department of Education’s Guidelines for School Facilities in Virginia’s Public Schools (2021)¹ to calculate the needs of the EMS campus. These guidelines recommend enough parking for staff, an additional 10 to 20 percent of spaces for visitors, and student parking equal to one-third of enrollment. Based on Virginia Department of Education guidance and using a 10 percent visitor rate, the applicant calculates a need for 200 spaces for staff, visitors, and students. The applicant is requesting Planning Commission’s approval that the minimum number off-street parking spaces for school uses for this site be set at 200.

Master Plan Parking, Landscaping, and Access

In addition to the parking required for school uses, EMS proposes 235 additional spaces to accommodate recurring church services, athletic events, and special events. The master plan proposes a maximum of 435 off-street parking spaces campus-wide, including the minimum 200 spaces required for school uses.

The proposed parking lot landscaping modification would allow required landscaping islands to be located either within a parking lot or within 15 feet of the parking lot. This approach would still require parking lot landscaping within the campus while providing flexibility for the proposed parking configuration and drive aisle patterns. At this time the parking lots are not in final design, thus the applicant would like to keep the flexibility for the whole site to have the option to deviate from ZO Sections 10-3-30.1 (5) and (6) of the Zoning Ordinance and has indicated that all parking

¹ “School Buildings Guidelines,” <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/facility-construction-maintenance/school-building-regulations-guidelines>

areas have the ability to deviate from the landscaping requirement and may be provide landscaping within 15-feet of the parking lot if Sections 10-3-30.1 (5) and (6) in the areas shown on the Master Plan Map.

The applicant is additionally requesting to deviate from ZO Section 10-3-25 (4) a. The deviation would allow a reduction in the required five-foot separation between nonresidential parking and adjoining residential property and allow the parking area to exceed 50 percent of the area between the building setback and public street frontage.

The 2026 Master Plan narrative also identifies existing and future access agreements with adjacent properties. The master plan narrative identifies an existing private access easement serving Virginia Mennonite Missions/Anabaptist Mission Partners (VMM/AMP) from Virginia Avenue to their property, proposes that EMS obtain an easement to address an existing access encroachment onto the VMM/AMP property, and provides a location for a future access easement to Parkwood Drive from 1194 Park Road and/or a shared-parking agreement with Eastern Mennonite University upon EMU's request.

Master Plan Open Space

The 2026 Master Plan Map identifies reserved open space along the drainage channel in the east-southeast portion of the site. In the previous version of the master plan map, the property had identified the athletic fields as open space. While these fields provide additional open areas and educational/recreational space on campus, they are considered developed and cannot be considered open spaces in the context of a master plan.

Transportation and Traffic

A traffic impact analysis (TIA) was not required for the requested rezoning/master plan amendment.

The Master Plan Map shows a future vehicular access drive to Mount Clinton Pike that would provide an additional connection to the campus and access to Parking Lot 3. As shown on the Master Plan Map, the driveway connecting to Mount Clinton Pike does not meet access management requirements. Staff has requested that the proposed access align with the existing driveway across Mount Clinton Pike used by Christian Light Publications. The applicant has indicated with a notation on the Master Plan Map that the final design and location of the Mount Clinton Pike entrance would be determined at a later date and would be subject to applicable City approval.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

Staff has no concerns with the requested rezoning/master plan amendment regarding water and sanitary sewer matters.

Conclusion

The applicant is requesting approval of the minimum off-street parking plan for the school use per Zoning Ordinance Section 10-3-25 (12). Based on the *Guidelines for School Facilities in Virginia's*

Public Schools (2021), the applicant identifies a need for 200 parking spaces to serve school staff, visitors, and students. Staff recommends approval of a required minimum 200 off-street parking spaces for the school use.

The applicant is also requesting approval of the 2026 Master Plan amendment, which reflects current single-parcel configuration and guides future development, including additional educational and support buildings, athletic facilities, parking modifications, and circulation improvements. The proposed uses are consistent with the purpose of the I-1 district and the Comprehensive Plan's institutional designation. Staff recommends approval of the Master Plan amendment.

Options

1. Recommend approval of (1) the proposed number of minimum off-street parking spaces relating to the school uses and (2) the rezoning/master plan amendment for Eastern Mennonite School.
2. Recommend denial of (1) the proposed number of minimum off-street parking spaces relating to the school uses and (2) the rezoning/master plan amendment for Eastern Mennonite School.

Attachments

- Site maps
- Applicant's supporting documentation