MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION

October 14, 2026

The Harrisonburg Planning Commission held its regular meeting on October 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 409 South Main Street.

Members present: Richard Baugh, Chair; Shannon Porter, Vice-Chair; KC Kettler; Rob Jezior; Randy Seitz; Heja Alsindi; and Laura Dent, Councilmember.

Also present: Adam Fletcher, Director of Community Development; Thanh Dang, Deputy Director of Community Development; Nyrma Soffel, Planner; Meg Rupkey, Planner; and Wesley Russ, Deputy City Attorney.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any corrections, comments or a motion regarding the September 9, 2026, Planning Commission minutes.

Commissioner Porter moved to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Kettler seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the September 9, 2026, Planning Commission minutes passed (7-0).

Chair Baugh asked if there were any corrections, comments or a motion regarding the September 15, 2026, Planning Commission minutes.

Commissioner Kettler moved to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Jezior seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the September 15, 2026, Planning Commission minutes passed (7-0).

New Business - Public Hearings

Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to amend the definition of "shopping center" and to provide a parking calculation for shopping centers

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to present.

Ms. Soffel said the proposed Zoning Ordinance (ZO) amendment would amend the definition of "shopping center" in Section 10-3-24 and add "shopping centers" to Section 10-3-25 (17). The intent is to codify a standing interpretation for applying the minimum off-street parking regulations for retail establishments to developments that qualify as a shopping center.

The ZO currently defines a shopping center as follows:

> Commercial development of more than one (1) retail sales or service establishment on a single parcel of common ownership attached by common walls or if located in separate buildings are interconnected by walkways and/or access ways, providing common parking facilities for all establishments, having multiple tenancy of a single or several large common structures, and otherwise present the appearance of one continuous commercial area.

The proposed amendment would revise the definition of "shopping center" to clarify the types of businesses allowed within a shopping center and establish a minimum combined floor area of at least 10,000 square feet. The definition of shopping center is proposed to be amended as follows:

> ***Shopping center:*** ~~Commercial~~ A development of more than one (1) ~~retail sales or service establishment~~ mercantile establishment; personal service establishment; restaurant; office; place of assembly for the purpose of entertainment or education; or house of worship. The uses must be located on a single parcel of common ownership attached by common walls, or if located in separate buildings, are interconnected by walkways, ~~and/or~~ access ways, or both, providing common parking facilities for all establishments, having multiple tenancy of a single or several large common structures, having a combined floor area of at least 10,000 square feet, and otherwise present the appearance of one continuous commercial area.

The ZO does not currently include a minimum parking requirement for shopping centers. When the uses of a proposed shopping center are unknown at the time of site plan or building permit review, staff has applied the parking requirement for retail stores, sales rooms, and similar mercantile establishments when the shopping center has a combined floor area of at least 10,000 square feet. When the proposed uses are known, parking has been calculated based on the parking requirements for the individual uses. In addition, because uses within a shopping center may change over time, calculating parking based on individual uses could require parking to be recalculated when a new business occupies a tenant space under staff interpretation of the existing definition.

All of the existing developments currently identified as shopping centers have a combined total floor area of more than 10,000 square feet. Existing shopping centers include uses such as, but are not limited to, restaurants, offices, and houses of worship, not just retail sales or service establishments. Although the minimum floor area and range of uses were not included in ZO, staff has consistently applied the shopping center interpretation to these developments. The proposed amendment would codify this longstanding practice without expanding the types of developments currently identified as shopping centers or changing applicable parking ratios.

The proposed amendment would also add the use of "shopping centers" to Section 10-3-25(17), which establishes the parking calculation for retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments, as follows:

> (17) Retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments, shopping centers, and tobacco, smoke, or vape shops (applicable where no other specific retail standard is set forth): If ten thousand (10,000) square feet or less of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred (200) square feet of gross floor area; if over ten thousand (10,000) square feet of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred and fifty (250) square feet of gross floor area.

Developments that meet the definition of "shopping center" would have a parking calculation based on one (1) parking space for each 250 square feet of gross floor area.

The amendment would establish a consistent parking calculation for shopping centers and allow changes in tenancy within an existing shopping center without requiring parking to be recalculated. If a shopping center is redeveloped in a manner that no longer meets the definition of a shopping center, the associated parking requirements would be calculated at the time of redevelopment.

Staff recommends approval of the ZO amendment.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any questions for staff.

Commissioner Seitz said I think we discussed this in terms of the proposed Zoning Ordinance as well, but there is no provision for nonconcurrent uses, correct? For instance, a house of worship might only be used on Saturday or Sunday, depending on who is there. Other places may not be open those days. Is there any opportunity to consider a reduction in parking because uses may be nonconcurrent in the space?

Ms. Soffel said the proposed zoning ordinance rewrite would address those parking considerations. We acknowledge that is a concern, but we want to allow the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite to go through the public engagement process and get feedback on those parking matters. For this specific amendment, we are not changing parking calculations.

Ms. Dang said actually, in the proposed Zoning Ordinance update, we have removed provisions about those ratios because we found in practice that people are not using them. There has only been one instance, that I am aware of, on Neff Avenue, where that provision had been used.

Mr. Fletcher said currently, it is Section 10-3-26(b), and there is a table in the [current] zoning ordinance for shared parking. It gives times of the day and different uses. What Ms. Dang is referring to is that we found in practice there were many instances where staff tried to apply it, but it resulted in the 100 percent rule every time when considering different uses at different times of day.

Commissioner Seitz said yes, and I remember discussing that in one of the work sessions. Thank you.

Councilmember Dent said I am curious. We had a definition of shopping center, but where was that used if it was not in the parking requirement?

Ms. Dang said that it was not used in the ordinance. It was just a term that was there. It may have been a relic from something in the past. I do not know the history of how that term came to be in the definitions section.

Councilmember Dent said but now it is useful.

Ms. Dang said yes.

Vice-Chair Porter said I had a question about the 10,000 square feet... Why that number? I am curious where that line of demarcation came from or how that was selected.

Ms. Soffel said (Section 10-3-25) subsection 17, it already has retail stores, sales rooms, and similar mercantile establishments. If it was under 10,000 square feet, it was one space per 200 square feet, and if it was over 10,000 square feet, it would be one space per 250 square feet. As

we reviewed the various shopping centers that have been approved, the shopping centers where staff applied this interpretation, have all been over 10,000 square feet.

Vice-Chair Porter said thank you.

Commissioner Kettler said where do the 200 square feet of area per parking spot or 250 square feet per parking space… where do those numbers come from?

Ms. Soffel said those are the parking ratios in the current ordinance.

Commissioner Kettler said do we know where those come from?

Ms. Soffel said I do not know.

Mr. Fletcher said the one per 200 square feet is often found in a lot of different places. It might be stated mathematically in a different way, but the ratios end up being one per 200 square feet, or five per thousand square feet. There are different ways to express it.

Commissioner Kettler said what I am getting at is that a lot of times when I am at any shopping center, there are a lot of empty parking spaces, not as a rule, but in practice every time I have been in a shopping center, there are a lot of empty parking spaces, no matter how busy it is. I am wondering, as common as it is across different municipalities and jurisdictions, whether there is some rational basis for that. There may not be an answer for that right now.

Mr. Fletcher said there probably is, and I will not have an answer right now. I also want to remind everyone that when you see those shopping centers, it does not necessarily mean they are meeting only the minimum. Oftentimes, they are providing much more than the minimum because there is no cap. You would have to know how big the building is, what the use is, and count the parking spaces to determine whether that was because of a government code or a private desire to have that many parking spaces.

Ms. Soffel said in the shopping centers reviewed, all but one had more than the minimum.

Commissioner Jezior said will this change increase the minimum for many of the existing shopping centers if they were built now, or would it decrease it?

Ms. Soffel said if a shopping center were predominantly restaurants, for example, which has a higher minimum, it could see a reduction. But for retail stores, the minimums are based on whether the store is over 10,000 square feet of gross floor area, so it would be the same. It maintains that same ratio.

Commissioner Jezior said okay. So that would be the same unless it was all restaurants.

Commissioner Alsindi said I am not sure how substantial my question is, but from reading the text and the order of shopping center in the text, it is my impression that shopping is more generic. Why does it not come first in the text, when the others are more precise and defined? That is how I see it. Why is it here precisely in this order?

Ms. Soffel said there was no specific order.

Commissioner Alsindi said do you think the order is somehow necessary here? I know it could be secondary or cosmetic.

Ms. Soffel said it could have been first.

Commissioner Alsindi said I see that in the future, shopping will need more definition. That is my prediction. I see the word shopping as encompassing others generally. At this point, it is good, but that is my personal perspective. I can forecast that in the future there will be a need to shape it more and define it more. From the text-writing point of view, I think it would be proper for it to be at the beginning.

Ms. Dang said assuming that the proposed zoning ordinance is adopted in a similar fashion to what staff has proposed, the term shopping center will not exist in that new ordinance either. We have reduced the parking ratios for uses such as restaurants to one per 250 square feet, for example, so it equalizes and staff does not have to define shopping center and have that category. My point is that, if you want to recommend moving the order, the Commission could consider that at this point. If it does not matter, it will only be for a short period of time.

Commissioner Alsindi said as long as there was some back-and-forth discussion, I will be very specific about what pushed me to say what I said. I hope that tobacco, smoke, and vape do not come with shopping. It psychologically incentivizes people to shop. I would not prefer to put the rest with shopping. Put shopping at the beginning, and then maybe it is secondary. It is from a future customer satisfaction and behavior perspective that pushes me to say what I say. Thank you.

Commissioner Kettler said I really like this change. I think it simplifies it, which is the direction we all want to go with a lot of this. I think the question Commissioner Seitz asked about concurrent uses also reflects the need for more flexibility in parking requirements.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any more questions for staff. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and invited anyone in the room or on the phone wishing to speak to the request.

Seth Roderick, Monteverde Engineer, said this is a very important code change and a step in the right direction. I know there is a lot more text coming. I want to emphasize the practical matter on our side as we develop properties. Shopping centers are often built with known tenants at the beginning, and that can be reviewed by staff easily as it pertains to individual uses that are segregated out. Sometimes that can have an impact and create more parking if there is a restaurant use mixed in with retail spaces that do not drive a lot traffic. When the project moves forward to construction, sometimes those tenancies drop out or get replaced. Maybe 10, 15, or 20 years later, a lease ends, other leases become available, and a restaurant user wants to backfill a site that was previously retail and now wants to open a restaurant. It is a good space otherwise for a small independent business owner trying to open a sandwich shop, but they do not have enough parking to meet the requirement because everything was based on a retail basis and now there is a restaurant use. This is a practical application. I think it is a worthwhile change. I recommend approval. I appreciate your consideration of this, and I appreciate staff's willingness to tackle an issue that has been present for a while in advance of the full rewrite. We can either put everything off until the full rewrite is done or tackle these issues as they become available. This is a good one. I appreciate it.

Chair Baugh closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Commissioner Jezior said I think it is a good change. I think it simplifies everything for future tenants in shopping centers, and I think it is good.

Councilmember Dent said I appreciate the real-world comment about the complexities that could arise before the simplification. I like it.

Commissioner Seitz said I move to approve the zoning ordinance amendment as presented.

Vice-Chair Porter seconded the motion.

Chair Baugh called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Vice-Chair Porter	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Commissioner Alsindi	Aye
Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Commissioner Jezior	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the zoning ordinance amendment passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on November 10, 2026.

New Business – Other Items

Consider a request from Trenton Inc. and Bernard LC for variations/exceptions from the Subdivision Ordinance related to public street design standards at South Main Street, South Liberty Street, and future Paul Street extended (The Lindsey)

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Rupkey, Planner, said the property at 435, 445, 457, 473, 483, and 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294, and 298 South Liberty Street consists of approximately 2.75 acres. The property was rezoned to B-1C, Central Business District Conditional, on September 22, 2026, to allow a four-story multi-family building consisting of up to 180 dwelling units, between 2,500 to 5,000 square feet of non-residential space, and a five-level parking garage consisting of a minimum of 320 off-street parking spaces.

Requested Variations and Exceptions

The applicant proposes to extend Paul Street between South Main Street and South Liberty Street. The extension is intended to continue the existing Paul Street alignment, improve connectivity within the downtown street network, and provide pedestrian and vehicular circulation associated with the adjacent development. As presented, the new Paul Street extension would require variations and exceptions to the Subdivision Ordinance (SO) and Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM).

South Main Street and South Liberty Street are one-way streets classified as Minor Arterials. The proposed Paul Street extension would be a two-way street connecting the two one-way minor arterial streets. The applicant states that the existing Paul Street alignment, established property boundaries, adjoining development, and the surrounding downtown street network create the circumstances necessitating variations and exceptions to the following SO and DCSM sections:

- SO Section 10-2-41(a) – Street Design Standards
- DCSM Section 3.6.1.4 – Street Intersection Curb Radius
- DCSM Sections 3.1.8.1 and 3.1.8.2 — Access management and entrance spacing
- DCSM Section 3.6.4.1 – Typical Street Sections
- DCSM Section 3.10.2.3 — Entrance spacing from intersection curb returns
- DCSM Appendix F – Typical Street Cross Sections

Street and Right-of-Way Width Request

The applicant requests a variation or exception from SO Section 10-2-41(a), DCSM Section 3.6.4.1, and DCSM Appendix F to permit a 24-foot-wide street within a 44-foot-wide public right-of-way, rather than the standard 34-foot-wide street within a 50-foot-wide public right-of-way. Street width is measured curb face to curb face.

The applicant states that the reduced street and right-of-way dimensions are necessary to continue the existing Paul Street alignment within the existing property boundaries. The proposed 24-foot street section would provide two 12-foot travel lanes. No on-street parking is proposed along the extension, however, a pull off area is proposed for deliveries and ride share. The 44-foot public right-of-way would be widened to 48.5 feet at the planned pull off to accommodate required sidewalk elements on both sides of the extension.

The applicant has confirmed that the proposed street design will be compliant with applicable VDOT Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements (SSAR). The applicant notes that narrow street sections are common in downtown Harrisonburg and that the proposed section is designed for the anticipated operational context.

Intersection Curb Radii Request

The applicant is requesting a variation and exception from SO Section 10-2-41(a) and DCSM Section 3.6.1.4 to permit 12.5-foot intersection curb radii, where a 25-foot minimum radius is required per the DCSM.

The applicant states that reducing the curb radii to 12.5 feet is appropriate at this location because the smaller radii would support slower turning speeds and shorter pedestrian crossing distances at the new intersections. Since South Main Street and South Liberty Street are one-way streets, the intersection movements are constrained primarily to left turns between the arterial streets and the proposed two-way Paul Street extension, reducing the need for larger radii associated with conventional right-turn movements. The applicant also notes that curb radii on the existing Paul Street leg opposite South Main Street are approximately 10 feet. Staff is comfortable with the reduced radii of 12.5 feet.

Access Management

The applicant requests variations or exceptions from SO Section 10-2-41(a), DCSM Sections 3.1.8.1 and 3.1.8.2, and DCSM Section 3.10.2.3 for the following items:

- To allow one parking-deck entrance on South Liberty Street and one parking-deck entrance on South Main Street. The DCSM restricts direct arterial access when reasonable access can be provided from a lower-classification street.
- To allow reduced entrance spacing for the proposed parking-deck entrances. The requested spacing is 95 feet between the proposed South Liberty Street garage entrance and Lewis Street; and 40 feet between the proposed South Main Street garage entrance and existing Atlantic Union Bank entrance. The applicable minimum spacing is 355 feet for Type 3 access classifications per access management standards (VDOT Road Design Manual, Appendix F). Three-leg unsignalized accesses on two-lane roads where turning movements are not restricted are considered by to be a Type 3 access.
- To allow reduced spacing between the proposed Paul Street intersection and the existing Harrisonburg Baptist Church parking-lot entrance along South Liberty Street. The requested spacing is approximately 55 feet on South Liberty Street, rather than 355 feet that is required for Type 3 access. Note that the proposed intersection at Paul Street and South Main Street would form the fourth leg of an existing intersection, which is allowable by VDOT's access management standards and therefore does not require a variation or exception for entrance spacing and access management standards.
- If Harrisonburg Baptist Church elects to relocate its parking-lot entrances to the Paul Street extension as shown on the Concept Plan, the applicant is requesting a reduction from the required 125 feet distance between an intersection and an entrance to a minimum of 25 feet. Note that there is not a minimum distance required between entrances on a local street.

The applicant states that directing all parking-deck traffic to Paul Street would conflict with the proffered Concept Plan and the accepted traffic impact analysis. The applicant further states that concentrating parking-deck traffic on Paul Street could increase conflicts near the planned rideshare/drop-off area and pedestrian facilities, and increase traffic volumes on the Paul Street extension. Providing separate garage entrances on South Main Street and South Liberty Street would distribute site traffic between the two arterial frontages.

The applicant also states that the existing City Hall entrance, the existing Harrisonburg Baptist Church entrances, and the Paul Street extension constrain the site's ability to meet standard entrance- and intersection-spacing requirements based on existing conditions. The applicant notes that closely spaced entrances and intersections are common in downtown Harrisonburg.

Conclusion

Staff supports the requested variations and exceptions as presented by the applicant in their exhibits identified as Figures 1 and 2. These variations and exceptions would allow for the extension of Paul Street to continue within the established street alignment and would be similar to other locations in the downtown street network. The reduced curb radii, narrower street and right-of-way widths, and modified access arrangement are appropriate given the existing operation of the adjoining streets.

The final street design and any necessary transportation improvements would be reviewed through the City's engineering and construction plan review processes.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any questions for staff.

Commissioner Kettler said I have a few questions, but if any of them are best answered later by Public Works staff, please let me know.

Ms. Rupkey said Public Works staff is available to answer technical questions that may need guidance.

Commissioner Kettler said with the curb radius variance, does that effectively make any difference in the turn for any vehicle other than a tractor-trailer making that turn?

Ms. Rupkey said not in this context.

Mr. Hartman said because it is a one-way street and there will be left turns, the narrower radii will not be impactful to the traveling public.

Commissioner Kettler said the entrance spacing requirement is substantially different from the usual one. My question is less about the variance request and more about why that rule exists in the first place.

Mr. Hartman said Main Street and Liberty Street are arterial roadways. A few years ago, the DCSM was changed so that arterial streets would follow Appendix F of the VDOT Road Design Manual. Appendix F is intended for rural localities where there is a lot of space between entrances. It is not built for dense, urban downtown areas where Main Street pass through. Staff receives this type of variance request frequently in denser areas because staff wants to follow Appendix F outside of denser areas to control access, such as on South Main Street, North Main Street, and East Market Street. But because Main Street is an arterial roadway that passes through downtown, that standard applies and staff is more willing to accept a variance to allow closer spacing. This is something staff will be working on through the Complete Streets work associated with Safe Streets Harrisonburg. Staff hopes to be more nuanced with standards in tighter, urban, dense areas so these types of developments can be addressed through the standards rather than through a variance process.

Commissioner Kettler said I am sure I will be excited about many of those changes. I wonder whether, in areas outside downtown, existing rules may make sense for controlling other issues that may arise. In some cases, the City may not want low-density, car-dependent areas to remain that way forever. But to change those areas, applicants would have to come before the Commission and go through a significant process. That is not really a question. I wonder if you have thoughts on that.

Mr. Hartman said staff will learn over the next year how to subdivide those changing areas and build standards that can accommodate changing demographics or changing areas within the City without having to apply context to a rule and seek a variance. VDOT has another appendix, Appendix B-2, with different areas already established. Within those groups, there are different access rules. That could be a model for building local standards as conditions change on certain corridors. There will always be corridors where, because of their location relative to the interstate or surrounding jurisdictions, the priority will be vehicle movements in and out of certain areas.

Commissioner Kettler said is the 34-foot street width a standard requirement because of the arterial classification?

Mr. Hartman said no. It is because the standards have not been updated to current practice. The current DCSM requires a 34-foot-wide roadway as a local street, which is not current practice. Staff knows there are traffic-calming challenges associated with larger roadways. Staff has allowed narrower pavement widths and narrower rights-of-way where possible because the code section that dictates which streets can receive VDOT maintenance payments allows use of different sections of the VDOT Road Design Manual that permit narrower streets. That is the test that any variance request for a public street would have to meet to ensure it meets the minimum standard VDOT would allow while still receiving maintenance payments.

Commissioner Kettler said the new streets issue does not come up very often. If an applicant wanted to build a new street anywhere in the City and wanted it to be narrower, would that have to go through this process?

Mr. Hartman said yes, until we are able to get the Complete Streets Guide completed and the DCSM updated to bring those new typical sections in. Twenty-four feet face-to-face is the minimum. It goes to 29 feet if you want parking on one side and gets wider if you want parking is desired on both sides. Knowing that we can allow a minimum width, the developer is going to have to do some hard thinking about how valuable is the on-street parking versus the cost to build it. We would rather maintain a 24-foot-wide roadway, than a 36-foot-wide roadway. That is an extra lane that we do not have to manage.

Mr. Fletcher said we have done this recently with Franklin Street Extended at The Edge. There were variance requests to allow a narrower street in particular sections of that roadway.

Councilmember Dent said a commenter asked whether the proposed new Paul Street Extension would be able to accommodate a bike lane. I think the answer is clearly no because it is the minimum width for two lanes, right?

Mr. Hartman said correct. It is considered a local street, we think the bike would feel comfortable taking the lane.

Vice-Chair Porter said I noticed a slight inconsistency between the applicant's request and what staff had. For the South Liberty Street garage entrance, the applicant is requesting 90 feet in its letter, but staff has it listed as 95 feet in the summary. I am curious which is the proper request. I also found another inconsistency; it may just be a typo. In the text, the applicant states the minimum requirement is 335 feet, but later in a graphic it is listed as 355 feet, and staff also has it listed as 355 feet. That is probably a typographical error, but the difference between 90 feet and 95 feet needs clarification.

Ms. Rupkey said the applicant is requesting 90 feet. It is also listed as 90 feet in the letter. The 95 feet shown on the screen was a typographical error. I apologize.

Vice-Chair Porter said in the applicant's letter, it mentions that the VDOT Road Design Manual requires 335 feet for spacing, but a later graphic refers to 355 feet. Staff also has 355 feet. I assume that is the standard.

Mr. Fletcher and Ms. Rupkey said 355 feet is the standard.

Vice-Chair Porter said I just wanted to make sure I understood.

Commissioner Jezior said is there any concern if the church does not relocate the parking entrances and they remain at their existing entrance locations? How would that affect the design?

Mr. Hartman said there is no concern. Staff would prefer that the church coordinate to move its entrances onto Paul Street because that is a better use and helps preserve Main Street and Liberty Street with one less connection. But because the church use is heavier on Sundays, when street volumes are lower, there will not be a significant amount of conflict. Staff would prefer coordination to move the entrances to Paul Street, but if that does not occur, the existing arrangement is suitable.

Vice-Chair Porter said was there any consideration of making this a one-way street? Traffic would flow up into the neighborhood on Paul Street, which gets very tight at various points as you drive up Paul Street. I am curious whether there was thought given to controlling traffic by having it flow one way, especially based on the reduced, everything is much smaller than normal.

Mr. Hartman said there was some consideration. But knowing that many streets north of this area are also one-way streets, we are limited in that connectivity that we want in a downtown area. If Paul Street can be two-way, it would provide better connectivity from Paul Street to Liberty Street and from Liberty Street into the neighborhood. Right now, if you are heading north, you have to go all the way to Water Street to Liberty Street.

We also know that the crossing at Grattan Street near the statue is tough sometimes. If Paul Street is two-way, it gives us some flexibility with what we can do with that crossing at Grattan to remove that potential safety concern there because we have the two-way street a block away. If we do anything at Grattan Street now, we are going to put any of that traffic that wants to go south all the way into downtown to Water Street to make the loop to get back. If not, they will start cutting through City Hall, which causes safety problems with pedestrians moving in and out of the parking lot. We have that now. That is why we have speed bumps.

Councilmember Dent said that will not be possible once the Build Our Park closes Warren Street.

Mr. Hartman said correct. That connectivity would be broken.

Vice-Chair Porter said this may not win me a lot of friends on Paul Street, but I am trying to look out for them. Has there been any thought of reducing parking on Paul Street? At various points, it is down to one lane. You have traffic coming down the hill, and often you have to pull into a parking space to allow someone to pass because it is so narrow. I would be concerned about increased traffic flow on that street.

Mr. Hartman said staff will have to evaluate that once the project is built and opens. Staff can take calls on. We can study. We can put cameras up to monitor traffic on specific days of the week. We can react as needed in the future. We have not thought that far ahead to be proactive in that manner. That would be a reactive decision.

Vice-Chair Porter said what does that process look like when staff conducts final engineering review? If you do find conflicts or problems, what does that look like, and how do we untangle things that have already been put into place?

Mr. Hartman said if we see a safety concern with traffic, either having crashes because the street is too narrow. It would have to be a crash problem. We would have to see an uptick in crashes on that section of Paul Street. If we could tie it to the narrowness of the street because of parking on both sides, then we would conduct a review to determine which side of the street should we take parking away from to remedy it and would that work. We would take it to our Transportation Safety Advisory Commission to review what we are proposing. Have them recommend it. At that point, we would make the change. And working with the Police Department, as well, because they control the parking enforcement.

Vice-Chair Porter said we will not know until all the cars from The Link or The Lindsey are there and the new set of conditions exist.

Mr. Hartman said correct. It would have to be a reactive solution.

Vice-Chair Porter said thank you.

Councilmember Dent said to that point, are the proffers still in effect for traffic calming within five years?

Ms. Rupkey said the proffers would still be in effect. This does not negate the proffers.

Mr. Hartman said the process I just spoke about would be outside of the traffic-calming proffers. With new traffic calming, we have one mechanism where staff can take direct action to solve a safety problem. If the Paul Street neighborhood submits a traffic-calming request and we evaluate it, that is how we would access traffic-calming funds. If it went through the formal traffic-calming program. To Vice-Chair Porter's question, staff would have to address the issue from a safety perspective outside of the traffic-calming program.

Councilmember Dent said thanks.

Commissioner Kettler said I have a question tangential to the bike lane comment that we got. With traffic calming that you need to do on existing streets, are there common themes in those streets that you have seen?

Mr. Hartman said speeding, cut-through traffic, and talking with the neighborhood, the near misses are not documented but they share those stories. Such as they backed out and almost got hit because someone was driving too fast behind them.

Commissioner Kettler said I mean features of the streets where you tend to see commonalities.

Mr. Hartman said it is all over the place. We are working on Central Avenue, which is a less-dense, single-family area, but it has a 36-foot-wide roadway that is straight as an arrow.

Commissioner Seitz said a drag strip.

Mr. Hartman said it is a drag strip. It makes people want to go fast. Staff is also working in the Reheard Acres area, where there is some topography but it is denser. Some people who are you

younger who may feel more comfortable driving faster in a denser area. I do not think there is a common trait.

Commissioner Kettler said it sounds like big, long, straight streets.

Mr. Hartman said or higher density that makes people feel they need to get home faster, or more traffic on the roadway. If there were a common theme, staff could address it immediately. But there is not, so it is more difficult.

Councilmember Dent said in my neighborhood, there was a sign installed that tells you how fast you are going, and that typically has a calming effect. But I think in some cases it backfired because people wanted to see how fast they could go.

Mr. Hartman said we see a benefit when people recognize their speed, and it does lower the speed a little. Unless you want to get out and run to see how fast you can run by.

Councilmember Dent said on my bike.

Vice-Chair Porter said this is not directly related to the Paul Street Extension, but I have a question about the garage entrances on Main Street and Liberty Street. Depending on what type of access-control apparatus is in place, whether it is a drop arm, swipe key, or other access mechanism, do you have concerns about garage queuing? Two or three students may arrive at similar times because the population will largely be students with similar schedules. Are there concerns about multiple cars backed up for garage queueing on major arterial streets?

Mr. Hartman said that is a great question. We do have concerns but do not know how it will be addressed until we get to site plan is reviewed. The Liberty Street entrance appears to be further removed from Liberty Street, providing more queuing space off Liberty Street. For Main Street, we will need to discuss with the engineer as they think about what the control mechanism will be and what the spacing distance should be. For drive-throughs, there is a minimum queuing requirement that must be kept on-site and not within the public roadway. I do not think we have a standard for parking decks. That is a good question and something we will need to work into our comments as we review the site plan.

Vice-Chair Porter said because there is not much room on either street.

Mr. Hartman said right. They are providing more room on their property off Liberty Street than off Main Street. That should help. It is a great question that I had not considered that yet.

Councilmember Dent said another comment about the Liberty Street entrance is that it connects behind the stage at the new park. Larger vehicles, such as vans or semitrailers carrying stage equipment, could use that area. Has the turning radius been considered?

Mr. Hartman said it will be a left turn in They will be moving away from the radii. If it were a right turn, vehicles would be hugging the radii as they came in. But with a left turn, they will be more in the center of the intersection. It should not be a concern.

Commissioner Jezior said for the garage entrances, does it have to be two-way traffic at both entrances? Could one be entrance-only and the other exit-only to avoid conflicts between cars coming in and out?

Mr. Hartman said it could be, but I do not know how much ability to regulate that in the developer's site layout.

Mr. Fletcher said there could be code considerations regarding traffic maneuverability and destinations. If access is controlled at only one entrance or exit, then everyone is forced to exit and circle back around.

Mr. Hartman said that would be increasing the volume of traffic, even if in a smaller sense.

Commissioner Seitz said I suspect a lot of it has to do with where the actual access control ends up being. Maybe the engineers can address that.

Vice-Chair Porter said hopefully it will sit back a little further.

Mr. Hartman said usually, it is inside the parking facility, so it is covered.

Commissioner Seitz said in that case, there could be five or six stacking spaces off Main Street, and more off Liberty Street, which is quite good for an urban parking garage.

Mr. Hartman said there could also be a double entry with a single lane and two gates to allow additional queuing.

Commissioner Seitz said perhaps we will hear more about that from the applicant.

Chair Baugh said is there anything else from staff at this time? This is not a public hearing matter, but the Commission may concern itself with public comments. If the room were full of people, it might be different. Does the applicant or the applicant's representative wish to speak?

Mr. Roderick said yes, good evening. Seth Roderick, Monteverde Engineering and Design Studio, representing the applicant. Ms. Rupkey and Mr. Hartman did a good job addressing a lot of the minutia and technical matters and the Commissioners' questions. On a high level, I want to reemphasize that this is the same design and same plan that was presented before as part of the rezoning schematic and is part of the proffered conditions. We are not trying to change anything from what has already been reviewed. This is particular to a downtown setting, where context matters. Much of the design criteria has been in place for as long as I have been practicing for 25 years. The wider roadways are intended to accommodate potential on-street parking or higher traffic movements. We referenced VDOT's priority levels for arterials. Their priority is throughput, not access, and VDOT explicitly states that within their design criteria. They also have an access-management exception process. It is a standard process. State code is written for that very specifically as an outlier, that when you are in historical central business districts, those areas are appropriate for access management exceptions because users are already used to other access conflicts. People are more aware and drive differently when entering a downtown setting than when driving down Route 42 north of the City lines. You can drive a little bit faster. When you get into downtown or enter any commercial centers, you have to be more alert, you slow down. The traffic volume is a little tighter. The benefit of narrower pavement widths and tighter radii is that pedestrian crossing distances are much shorter, almost half compared with standard conditions. There are many benefits, but it also fits better in the context of downtown. This is a step in the process to enact and conform to the proffered schematic that was part of the rezoning process. I am happy to answer additional questions. Regarding access management into the parking garages, we have not gotten to that level of

design. The architect is still being engaged to start that process. On the Liberty Street side, there is a decent chance that access management will be at the garage itself because there is a long throat approach and a turnaround area that is built in due to the access behind the stage at the Build Our Park area. On Main Street, there is also a long throat, but if a turnaround maneuver is required, that must be accommodated. We have not gotten into that design. It could potentially push the gate closer to Main Street. Main Street has two lanes. These facilities are designed to get at least one vehicle in so that someone working at the gate trying to figure out the key or realizing it is not a public garage is out of the travel lane and out of conflict. Based on the trip-generation volumes, I do not anticipate needing more than that. However, there are opportunities to explore that issue during site plan review.

Commissioner Seitz said I had one more question. I fully support the contextual design of Paul Street, but I am thinking about Water Street and conditions when there are many delivery trucks. If the commercial space is food service or something that needs to be stocked every day, is there a discussion or preference about where delivery vehicles would park while unloading?

Mr. Roderick said they would park inside the pull-off area.

Commissioner Seitz said is that off Paul Street as opposed to reserving an unloading zone on Main Street.

Mr. Roderick said correct. There would not be a loading zone on Main Street. Main Street is public, and that section has been identified for additional on-street parking. I believe the proffer conditions directly state that the bump-outs would protect those on-street parking spaces. There is no plan for public delivery spaces on that side.

Commissioner Seitz said okay. Thank you.

Vice-Chair Porter said could you tell me about the interaction with the church right now? That is a major factor in this. their drops your minimum intersection spacing from 125 feet to 25 feet, based on what I am reading. Their decision makes a huge difference in this design. What does that process look like, how is that engagement going, and when do you think you will have an answer?

Mr. Roderick said that is not something I have actively been engaged with as the engineer. Other members of the team are involved. The proffer conditions were structured so that the project can accommodate the church if it chooses to move in that direction. During the early stages, about a year ago or more, I created the schematic and analyzed how many parking spaces the church could gain by using perpendicular, two-way access. Currently, access is one-way because vehicles are coming off one-way streets. We were able to show a benefit in parking spaces if the church chose to move in that direction, although I do not remember the exact number. The church was not ready to commit at that time. Ultimately, it is the church's decision whether it wishes to move in that direction. The proffer conditions state that the project accommodates that possibility through the street design and access management. The variations and exceptions before the Commission allow for either scenario. If the church chooses to maintain the entrances on its property, that would not prohibit the Paul Street

Extension. If they choose to move the entrances, we would not need to return for another exception.

Councilmember Dent said I have a question about how people get from the garage into the building. I see what appear to be doorways, stairways, entrances, elevators, and similar features.

Mr. Roderick said there are direct access points contemplated where the building massing abuts the garage. There are also stairwells and an elevator.

Councilmember Dent said there is also a sidewalk that goes out to the park from the garage, right?

Mr. Roderick said there is connectivity there. It is shown more clearly on the colored zoning schematic. Those connections are specifically identified there.

Chair Baugh said thank you. I will mention the phone number again, (540) 437-2687, in case anyone watching elsewhere wants to call in and comment. Is there anyone else here who wishes to speak?

Laura Cammaroto, 270 Paul Street, said I have been here a number of times. I appreciate you [referring to Vice-Chair Porter] having our back. It is very challenging living on Paul Street with the traffic as it is. Having it turned into a one-way street is preferable to freeway traffic, from my perspective. How this reads to me is that they are still trying to put a massive student complex onto a small place and maximize it. While that may be what current City planning is pushing for, it does not make for a happier place to live, from my perspective. That is just my perspective. I have had my car totaled on Paul Street. At least three of my direct neighbors have also had their cars totaled on Paul Street, and that is without this complex. I would hope the approach would be proactive, not reactive. This feels like we are going to wait until it is a problem. It does not make me want to live here. It makes me want to move. Thank you.

Chair Baugh said is there anyone else? How are we doing on the phone lines? Hearing none he said this is not really a public hearing, so we move on. Before the Commission is discussion and consideration, I will mention one thing because of Ms. Cammaroto's comment. In my time with this Commission, I once read a book on traffic engineering. It hardly makes me an expert, but I picked up a few things. I have two conflicting thoughts, so let me back up. Here is the point I want to make. I understand the general principle of I like proactive better than reactive. I can think of at least two specific locations in the City where changes were made. One of the most dangerous things you can do in any traffic management system is make a change of any kind because people get used to existing roadways and existing rules. You can put up all the signage and communications you have, but when roadways exist and are used a certain way under certain rules, any change alters people's expectations. You should not be surprised if problems arise, even when you can crunch the numbers and know that ultimately this is going to be vastly superior to what we had. In both examples I can think of, changes were made and there was outrage and many problems. In both instances, Public Works advised that the City should give it at least 30 days to see how the change works. In both cases, by the end of 30 days, there was no real need to do anything. It was all the near-term noise from the change, but once people accommodated the change, it looked bad during the first week and was fine by the

fourth or fifth week. I am not making predictions, but that is why we have to wait and see. Our best guesses about what to do proactively are not going to be as good as having actual data to review. Any change can cause issues. Enough from me. What does everyone else think?

Commissioner Kettler said I appreciate your comment. This is a comment that we hear a lot, and for good reason. When more cars come through a neighborhood, there are many effects. It means more noise, streets are less safe, children effectively cannot play in the street because cars are traveling through at 30 miles per hour, and the neighborhood becomes more disconnected. For those who went on the site visit yesterday, standing across the street at 4:00 p.m., there were 100 cars going by at 30 miles per hour, and you could sort of each other. And that was a relatively light day at 4:00 o'clock. The question for me is how we get cars off the road and how we slow them down. I asked Mr. Hartman at a meeting whether there was something the City could do proactively. If I am paraphrasing incorrectly, he can correct me, but the response was that there are many neighborhoods with substantial traffic-calming issues right now, and many have been waiting for years. There are issues across the City that need to be changed. A lot of the issues that you expect may come, are happening all over the City. I would like proactive change, but it is difficult to evaluate what that change needs to be until you have those factors are in place. For one thing, the project may never be built. Regarding the street design itself and the way it is proposed, I think it does an excellent job. I am not talking about the larger project, but about the design of the street. It shows positive intent in creating a design that is safer for everyone involved and builds a street which discourages high speeds. Another comment was about a bike lane. I think we often forget that bike lanes are not bike infrastructure. Bike lanes are car infrastructure. The reason they are car infrastructure is that if the street were safe, you would not need the bike lane. Streets are not safe because of cars. If you design a narrower street, make it virtually impossible to build up speed on a street this short. In addition, at the edges of the street, where the bump-outs extend outward, if you are a pedestrian and you are crossing the street... It is one thing to hear it, it is another thing to cross the street with it because it is a signal to drivers to slow down and signals that this is a space for pedestrians. Drivers are guests in a pedestrian area; they do not own that area. When I am walking around, that makes me feel much safer. I am glad to see that design incorporated here.

Councilmember Dent said you are talking about the bump-outs?

Commissioner Kettler said yes, the bump-outs. Thank you. We see those design elements incorporated. We see a design that is more oriented toward people walking and biking. That is how you get cars off the street. You make it easier for people to walk and a little less comfortable for them to drive.

Commissioner Jezior said I agree with Commissioner Kettler. The Paul Street Extension is a good design. It helps slow cars down. The narrow roadways are beneficial and reduce crossing distances. I could go on a tangent about Paul Street being one-way. I feel like we need more friction in that area. Make it a modal filter. Do not let cars go through. Put friction into the system. More students will walk and travel to campus in other ways. I think that would address concerns with the community and surrounding neighborhoods and promote fewer cars on campus. There is a lot of discussion about designing this to make driving as comfortable as

possible. I think we need to design it in a way that promotes walking and other modes of transportation. But as far as this proposal goes, I agree. I think it looks good.

Councilmember Dent said speaking of other modes of transportation, will there be a bus nearby, or what are the current bus lines for students to travel to JMU?

Ms. Dang said it will be served on Main Street and Liberty Street at the existing location, I assume.

Vice-Chair Porter said I am not sure how constructive this is. It is probably more editorializing, but I think it is extremely important that we get this right. I recognize there will need to be a measure of reactivity because there are so many variables. I think about the recent improvements on East Market Street. I have watched several people try to take a left in front of the left-turn lanes because they are not used to the change. They may think they used to get to Lowe's one way when coming off the interstate, and now they cannot go that way, but they continue to cross in front of two lanes of traffic. That will hopefully sort itself out over time. I am in favor of the extension. There are many positive things about putting this road through. I encourage the City to look at conditions on Paul Street very closely. I do not know whether that means taking away some on-street parking, allowing two-way traffic up to Mason Street and making it one-way from that point, or something else. I hope there will be a high level of engagement with the neighborhood because this will have a profound impact on residents' lives. Paul Street already has significant issues. Drive up Paul Street and see how many times you have to swerve, move over, or get into a parking space to allow someone coming in the other direction to pass. It is a very tight street. I have concerns about traffic conditions on Liberty Street and Main Street as well. However, the design is consistent with what the Commission saw before, and I think a lot of thought has gone into mitigating these issues as much as possible. It will have to play out over time. I hope we are thoughtful and take all these other factors into consideration because there could be negative unintended consequences.

Chair Baugh said I have one question. I do not know whether this is a question for staff, the applicant's representative, or someone else. It has come up already. I met with the pastor of Harrisonburg Baptist earlier today and explained what we are looking at here. There has been some back-and-forth on this. I think the pastor was talking about conversations that first started about three years ago, which were much more informal than where we are now. Now we have a project that has been rezoned and approved. I think we have gotten this right because conflicting things were said earlier when people were honestly just working through it. We had not had to focus on this piece of it yet. Since the proposed road does not go on property other than The Lindsey's property, the church is free to keep its existing configurations if it wants to. If it does not, we are proactively discussing how, if the church decides it wants to use Paul Street, this is how we can make it easier for them to do that. The question I do not know the answer to is whether someone will reach out to the church because the road is entirely on The Lindsey's property, or whether the church needs to be proactive about it. The church has not formally looked at this yet. There were people hoping that the project would get voted on and go away. The church has not reached the point of considering what happens with this. Is this something the church should proactively be thinking about, or will communication naturally occur with an adjoining landowner that might consider access onto Paul Street?

Ms. Rupkey said I would encourage the applicant to start talking with the church now, early in the design process. It is better to have that figured out sooner rather than later.

Mr. Fletcher said they will likely have to have some type of communication. It will be difficult to build a street through there without accommodations from the church. I suspect construction easements will probably be needed along that section of roadway. It is theoretically possible to do it without those easements, but it would be much easier if there were communication between the church and applicant to make some friendly accommodations to allow the project to be the best it can be.

Vice-Chair Porter said the way you phrased that makes me want to ask whether this will be a public street at some point. This is not going to be a private street, correct?

Ms. Rupkey said it would be built and then dedicated as a public street.

Vice-Chair Porter said it will be accepted by the City based on compliance with the plan.

Ms. Rupkey said correct.

Vice-Chair Porter said that is germane to the issue because at some point, it will be City property and not The Lindsey's property.

Chair Baugh said yes. We have a ways to go. In a way, I feel like my question has been answered. To the extent there is a formal process for this, there really is not one. There is a good chance it will come up, and that is probably enough to cover it. I will look to the applicant's representatives to let them know that proactive outreach from the developer will be appreciated. The church does not know. I am their translator, for practical purposes.

Ms. Rupkey said I have one thing.

Chair Baugh said please.

Ms. Rupkey said Mr. Hartman brought up a good point. The proffer regarding the church entrances and Paul Street requires communication between the parties to determine whether the entrances will be moved. In theory, the proffers require them to discuss it, but there is not a formal process around it.

Chair Baugh said again, I agree with staff. If I had to look into a crystal ball, I would say the chances of this not happening through a natural evolution of the project are slim enough that I am not going to put much energy into worrying about it yet. Nonetheless, I know that question is going to be asked. It is already starting to be asked. There has been concern from people asking whether we are doing this in a way that will be roughshod relative to the church. I am affirming that concern, and Mr. Roderick is nodding his head, so I feel decent about that. Do not underestimate the church's ability to sit here wondering why somebody has not come to talk to them about it.

Vice-Chair Porter said you should probably disclose that you are a member of the congregation, so you are very familiar with that level of deliberation.

Chair Baugh said yes, that is true.

Vice-Chair Porter said I wanted to ask Mr. Fletcher whether it would be inappropriate for the City to broker that conversation or be part of it. I think it would be beneficial to have Public Works staff and people who understand the design elements and why they are designed that way participate in the discussion. I do not know whether that would be appropriate.

Mr. Fletcher said what this project is dealing with is not atypical of other developments where public streets are built and eventually dedicated to the City. The scenarios they will work through are routine. I presume Mr. Roderick, his team, and those connected with them have standard procedures for how and when they make these connections. If they would like multiple City staff members to meet with them, staff can pull together what would be referred to as a pre-application meeting when they go through the engineered comprehensive site plan process. There is always a pre-construction meeting, but that occurs very late in the process. There are many discussions at that time because the City Engineer will be looking for opportunities to obtain private easements and private construction easements. There will be discussions among many different parties.

Vice-Chair Porter said thank you.

Mr. Fletcher said if they want staff to pull a meeting together, staff can try to do that, but it is not standard practice.

Vice-Chair Porter said this may be Pollyanna of me, but I know there was a lot of concern in the Old Town neighborhood about this development. I think it would be beneficial for the developer to bring representatives of Paul Street residents who are concerned about the issue into the discussion. This will affect them. I hope there will be more thought and discussion about it because I see it as a potential problem. These residents will be impacted and feel they should have a voice in the process, especially when we are looking at public streets.

Commissioner Kettler said I am trying to figure out how to say it. I move to recommend approval of the request for variations and exceptions from the Subdivision Ordinance related to public street design standards at South Main Street, South Liberty Street, and future Paul Street Extended as presented by staff.

Councilmember Dent said second.

Chair Baugh called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Vice-Chair Porter	Aye
Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Commissioner Jezior	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Commissioner Alsindi	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the request for variations and exceptions from the Subdivision Ordinance related to public street design standards at South Main Street, South Liberty Street, and future Paul Street Extended, as presented by staff, passed (7-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on November 10, 2026.

Discuss draft amendments to the Planning Commission Bylaws

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Dang said Staff have proposed several amendments to the Planning Commission Bylaws:

- Within Article IV, currently, the Planning Commission appoints the secretary to the Commission. Historically, a member of city staff has served as secretary. The proposed amendments would give authority to the Director of Community Development to designate an employee of the City of Harrisonburg as secretary.
- Within Article X. Section 10-4, the proposed amendments reflect the current practice for public hearings.

Section 11-1 of the Bylaws states:

> These Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the entire membership after twenty-eight days prior notice to the Commission members.

The Commission could consider adopting the amendments at its Thursday, November 12, 2026, meeting.

Chair Baugh said I will mention two things that Ms. Dang and I discussed. I do not have strong feelings about this. I am okay with it, but as I was looking at the proposed new Section 10-4, it occurred to me that it does not institutionalize the applicant's opportunity for rebuttal or a final statement during public hearings. It is left more to playing it by ear and going with the flow, which is what the Commission does most of the time anyway. But it has been treated as a formal matter. I wanted to make sure the Commission had an opportunity to talk about it. If you think this is fine, then it is fine. I am okay with it.

Councilmember Dent said I think the last provision covers that, with questions from the Commission and an applicant or staff response.

Chair Baugh said that is where we are covering it. That is right.

Councilmember Dent said that makes sense.

Chair Baugh said the point is that there is not a right for the applicant to come back and say it wants to address a number of things they heard. It is up to the Commission to decide whether it wants to allow that, which is really what the practice has been.

Commissioner Seitz said I think that is important. The last thing you want is to create a procedure that opens up a back-and-forth between the public and the applicant. This leaves it under the discretion of the Commission and the Chair.

Mr. Russ said in most localities, the applicant has an opportunity to speak at the end so it can say, for example, that it would like to return at the next meeting with alternative proffers. It provides an opportunity to tell the Commission not to vote on the package in front of it because the applicant might have a replacement based on the comments heard.

Councilmember Dent said essentially, that takes the applicant outside the public hearing, and that makes sense to me.

Chair Baugh said I think that is already true. This codifies what has been done anyway. Frankly, an applicant that wants to do that is not likely to be ignored. If an applicant has a reason to say it would like more time or thinks the matter should be tabled, the Commission will discuss that. It leaves it to the Commission because many questions for an applicant are technical matters. They are not really part of the public hearing, other than being questions that help the Commission be better informed about what the applicant is doing. I am fine with this. I just wanted to call some attention to it.

Vice-Chair Porter said I like that the Chair has a fair amount of latitude to work around these issues. There have been a couple of times when it has been awkward because the Commission has tripped over procedure when a good question was raised during public comment. I think about times when people have been lined up to speak and I wanted to know the answer to something they raised. The Commission does not always get the answer, or enough time passes that the thought, question, or idea slips away. Being able to reopen the process and have the applicant come back to address those issues is helpful, especially if I can make notes as I go. I appreciate that the Chair would have that latitude.

Chair Baugh said at least in my mind, that includes the ability to limit it to that purpose. There have been times when an applicant wants to speak because they want to be argumentative or repeat arguments. I like having the ability to say that the public hearing has been held and the Commission has already heard the applicant on that matter.

Ms. Dang said Mr. Russ, you may not know the answer off the top of your head, but do you have any concern that there is a statutory reason why the applicant must be given an opportunity to speak at the end? You said other localities typically do that.

Mr. Russ said no.

Chair Baugh said Mr. Russ is paid to know that more than I am, but I think that is right. A public hearing is intended to give people adequate opportunity. The applicant speaks before the public hearing is opened, so they have every opportunity to tell the Commission what it needs to hear. Things come up, and sometimes you spend a lot of time preparing for a discussion and what ends up getting talked about was something that they did not think was going to be a point of emphasis. That happens. But generally speaking, that is why the applicant goes first. The applicant should tell the Commission what it needs to hear and should not wait to see whether someone asks a question before addressing a matter. I do not like that. The same applies to the public. As long as they have their opportunity, and it is clear when the public hearing opens and closes, that is sufficient. I missed one thing earlier. I did not ask about this, but I am curious. In Article 5, Section 5-1-4, I glossed over it, and then I looked at the Chair's responsibilities. It says to report official communications at the next regular Commission meeting. Does that mean, for example, if the Commission received a letter from the County Planning Commission? I am not sure what that means.

Ms. Dang said I will be honest. I do not know either.

Chair Baugh said I can recall something that may have occurred before I was Chair. The Commission received a letter from the School Board that was written to the Chair in an official capacity or something similar.

Commissioner Kettler said which section are you looking at?

Chair Baugh said Article 5. There is a note about a change to Section 5-1-4.

Ms. Dang said I think the change may have been punctuation, spacing, or something minor.

Chair Baugh said it was not substantive.

Ms. Dang said when an official communication comes up, the Chair needs to make sure it is reported to the Commission.

Chair Baugh said to be consistent, should we open the phone line on this? I did not write that down. I hate making you do this.

Commissioner Seitz said it is not a public hearing.

Chair Baugh said I am happy to go with the sentiment of the group.

Commissioner Seitz said public comment is coming up, if someone wants to call in and address it.

Chair Baugh said that occurred to me as well. We can do that. That is fine with me, but I did not want to adjust the process.

Commissioner Seitz said I would request, particularly for some of us who are not as new, that the Commission be very clear about what is a public hearing and what is a public comment period, and navigate accordingly. We should not let demonstrations of emotion or interest in the room necessitate discussions that are not anticipated or allowed for.

Chair Baugh said was staff hoping that the Commission would take action on this tonight?

Ms. Dang said no. We will bring it back next month.

Chair Baugh said all right. We will be clear on that.

Commissioner Kettler said that is because of the 28-day period.

Chair Baugh said that is right. Expect this on next month's agenda.

Public Comment

Chair Baugh invited anybody to come forward who wants to speak on a matter not on the agenda. Hearing none, he closed the public comment period.

Report of Secretary & Committees

Rockingham County Planning Commission Liaison Report

Commissioner Seitz reported on the October 6, 2026, Rockingham County Planning Commission meeting. The following items were on the agenda, and all were unanimously recommended for approval:

- REZ26-1316 Gail and Kevin Dovel request to rezone 1.54 acres from R-2 (Medium Density Residential) to RV-C (Rural Village with Conditions). Tax Map # 142A1-4-2A. Election District 5.

- OA26-1153 Staff generated ordinance amendment to Section 17-201, Definitions, Table 17-606, Land Use and Zoning table, and Table 17-702.05, Parking Requirements by Use, to add land use permissions for the use "public service facility".
- OA26-1521 Staff generated ordinance to amend the Rockingham County Code, Chapter 16, Subdivision of Land, to require a waiting period for family and grantor-to-self divisions, and treat divisions in RR-1 the same as A-2.

A staff member, Kelly Getz, is retiring after long service.

City Council Report

Councilmember Dent reported on the September 22, 2026 City Council Meeting. The following Planning Commission-related items were approved as part of the consent agenda:

- Consider a request from Trenton Inc. and Bernard LC to rezone 435, 445, 457, 473, 483, and 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294, and 298 South Liberty Street (The Lindsey Apartments) — Approved.
- Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to create a new term and definition for "poultry hatchery" — Approved.

At the October 13, 2026 City Council Meeting:

- Consider a request to amend the definition of "Dwelling, single-family" within the Zoning Ordinance to include qualifying manufactured homes — Approved.
- Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the minimum lot width for single-family detached dwellings in the R-8 district — Approved.
- Consider a request from Eastern Mennonite School to amend the master plan at 701 and 801 Parkwood Drive and 1251 Virginia Avenue — Approved.
- Consider adopting a resolution requesting that the Harrisonburg Planning Commission consider and make recommendations concerning proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and related amendments to provide local zoning and land use requirements for businesses licensed by the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority — Approved.

Other Matters

Chair Baugh said all right. Are there any other matters before we ask staff? Does any Commissioner have something they particularly want to discuss before we wind down?

Commissioner Alsindi stated that upcoming international travel and spring teaching responsibilities may affect his availability and that he would notify the Commission in advance if he determines he should step aside for a more consistently available member.

Chair Baugh said we all hope it works out so that you can stay.

Commissioner Alsindi said thank you.

Chair Baugh said I understand. Is there anything else? I know staff has the next meeting and a couple of other items to mention. I will turn it over to Ms. Dang.

Ms. Dang said I have four items, including follow-up items, announcements, and a question about November logistics. I will also share the agenda items.

At last month's Planning Commission meeting, I believe Commissioner Kettler asked for an update on the housing fund. I followed up with the Housing Coordinator and spoke with the City Manager's Office. Housing Coordinator Liz Webb and Housing Forward Virginia are leading the financial incentive study. The study is a feasibility study of a housing trust fund and development incentives to provide affordable housing. The plan is for Ms. Webb to provide the Planning Commission an update around the same time she provides one to City Council, which is anticipated in early 2027. I will check in with Ms. Webb as that gets closer and place her on the agenda to share information with the Commission.

The next item is a plug for the Parks and Recreation Department. It will host Parks and Recreation Master Plan public meetings on Monday, October 19; Tuesday, October 20; and Thursday, October 22, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at different locations in the City. Information was included in the announcement sent to those receiving the Planning Commission agenda.

The event scheduled tomorrow at Kids Castle has been canceled due to weather.

The City also has open houses for the Zoning Ordinance Update Project. Those meetings are Wednesday, October 21, and Monday, October 26, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The first will be at the Public Works Department, and the second will be at the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center. As of this evening, the project website includes most of the proposed Zoning Ordinance. Staff will post the sign ordinance before the end of the week. The website also includes a link to the proposed zoning map and handouts staff created to explain highlights of the ordinance. The handouts include information about new zoning districts and permitted uses, off-street parking requirements, setbacks, lot area requirements, and other subjects. I encourage the Commission to visit the website and review the draft ordinance. Staff will post the sign regulations before the end of the week, along with a survey and a document called *Proposed Changes at a Glance*. That document will be a longer list of items within each article that staff wants to highlight as changing. While this is not a major reform for many items, it is a significant cleanup, and staff wants to make sure people are aware of it.As you talk with people, they are welcome to complete the survey, but they may also submit written comments. Staff will accept comments submitted through letters or emails to Community Development staff. Staff will process all comments, whether submitted through surveys or other methods. Staff anticipates that the comment period will remain open at least through November 15, so people will have at least a month to review the materials. Staff will then review the comments. Commissioner Jezior asked before the meeting about expectations for Commissioners at the open houses.

Ms. Dang said I hope you can attend. My request is that you attend and review the materials. You may talk with people if you want to, but you are not assigned to any stations or tables. Staff will be there to speak with community members and answer questions.

Chair Baugh said I will add that, for newer members, historically some public sessions were more structured, particularly during Comprehensive Plan review, and Commissioners were

encouraged to attend and participate more actively. Everything else tends to be like this. Staff is available and has presentations and materials. It is helpful for Commissioners to be there and have conversations with people. Typically, the only time Commissioners have been asked to be more active at these meetings has been during public input for the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Dang said yes. Please help staff by telling your friends, neighbors, family, and other community members about the Zoning Ordinance Update Project and the upcoming open houses. I have flyers available for anyone who wants to take a stack and leave them in a workplace break room or distribute them elsewhere. I also have yard signs available if you want to put one in front of your home or place of business. Other community members can contact me to request the same materials.

Commissioner Kettler said for the open house at the Public Works Building, will the back gate be open for cyclists to come in?

Ms. Dang said let me ask about that. I do not know how the gate is secured or locked.

Ms. Dang said do you have any other questions about the Zoning Ordinance Update at this point, regarding what is coming up? The other item is that there will not be a Planning Commission work session next week because staff hopes Commissioners will attend the October 21 and October 26 open houses.

For November, the Commission will meet on Thursday, November 12, rather than its typical second Wednesday, because Veterans Day is November 11, a City holiday when City offices are closed. I sent a poll by email, and it appeared that most people were available on November 12. The meeting will be at 6:00 p.m.

Review Summary of next month's applications Ms. Dang reviewed the items anticipated for the November 12 agenda:

1. Special Use Permit – 130 W Mosby Road (townhomes in R-8)
2. Special Use Permit – 757 Woodland Drive (short-term rental in R-3)
3. Rezoning – 2121 Lake Terrace Dr (R-3, Medium to R-3C, Medium Conditional)
4. Special Use Permit – 2121 Lake Terrace Dr (multifamily in R-3)
5. Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Land Use Requirements for businesses licensed by the Cannabis Control Authority
6. SO Variations & Exceptions – Walnut Lane (entrance width, entrance separation, curb radii)

Ms. Dang advised the Planning Commission that the Safe Streets Harrisonburg Project open house would be held on Tuesday, November 17, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Lucy F. Simms School, conflicting with the regularly scheduled Planning Commission work session. She noted that staff would not have completed its review of public comments on the Zoning Ordinance Update Project, whose comment period would remain open through November 15, and would not have draft text available for discussion.

Commissioners discussed whether to reschedule or cancel the November work session. Several members expressed support for attending the Safe Streets open house and waiting until December to allow staff adequate time to process comments. The Commission agreed to cancel the November 17 work session and not schedule a second meeting in November. Ms. Dang noted that a Planning Commission work session would be held in December and offered to reserve time at the end of the November 12 meeting for any initial reflections on the Zoning Ordinance Update.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

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Richard Baugh, Chair	Nyrma Soffel, Secretary