

**MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**January 11, 2012**

The Harrisonburg Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday, January 11, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 409 South Main Street.

Members present: Charles Chenault, Judith Dilts, MuAwia Da'Mes, Alan Finks, Bill Jones and Henry Way.

Members absent: Deb Fitzgerald.

Also present: Stacy Turner, Director of Planning and Community Development; Adam Fletcher, City Planner; Alison Banks, Planner and Secretary.

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order and determined there was a quorum with six of seven members in attendance. He then asked if there were any corrections, comments or a motion regarding the minutes from the December 14, 2011 Planning Commission meeting.

Dr. Dilts moved to approve the minutes from the December 14<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting.

Mr. Finks seconded the motion.

All voted in favor of approving the minutes. (6-0)

**New Business**

***Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Parking Lot Landscaping Ordinance***

Chairman Jones read the agenda item and asked staff to review.

Mr. Fletcher said staff is proposing new parking lot landscaping regulations be inserted in Article G of the Zoning Ordinance. In addition to these regulations, staff is also proposing other related Zoning Ordinance amendments should the landscaping regulations be accepted. Associated with the proposed landscaping ordinance language, staff designed two CAD (Computer Aided Design) drawings demonstrating example scenarios for most of the proposed requirements. If the parking lot landscaping regulations are approved, these drawings (as mentioned in the proposed ordinance) would be inserted into the Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM), where appropriate. If you have questions during the presentation, please feel free to interrupt and ask your question.

The proposed language includes regulations that Planning staff, from time to time, has worked on for several years. It was not until after the 2011 Comprehensive Plan was adopted that staff worked to bring it forward for adoption. The concept of adopting landscaping requirements has been part of the City's Comprehensive Plan for many years. A strategy in achieving that concept is now listed on the Plan's Priority Implementation Strategies for the First Five Years: The 2011 – 2016 Action Plan; specifically, Strategy 8.4.5 stating "to consider adding street tree planting and other landscape requirements for new development and redevelopment in the City's land use codes."

The proposed ordinance has been reviewed by all relevant City departments; the Harrisonburg Electric Commission (HEC); the City's Downtown Landscape Committee (made up of a landscape architect, landscape designers, and others); and the Executive Officer of the Shenandoah Valley Builders Association (SVBA), who then made it available to SVBA members and its Board. Staff made changes to the proposed ordinance after considering the comments and suggestions offered by the above groups. One change in particular, included reducing the required landscaping island sizes from 162 square feet for single loaded parking bays and 324 square feet for double loaded parking

bays to 140 square feet and 280 square feet, respectively; a 15.7 percent reduction in size to what staff was originally proposing.

The proposed ordinance was written to build on the current regulations requiring landscaping of at least 15 percent of the area to be used for parking and maneuvering. The base requirement of 15 percent has not been increased but further provides requirements for ensuring that developments and properties are developing in a way that is consistent with the guidelines of the City's Comprehensive Plan. With the additional requirements, depending upon site characteristics, properties would most likely provide more than 15 percent landscaping areas. The main difference being the proposed regulations would require vegetation to be planted.

The proposed amendments would affect the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance: Certificate of Occupancy (10-3-11), Comprehensive Site Plan Review (10-3-17), Definitions (10-3-24), Off-Street Parking Regulations (10-3-25), Parking Lot Landscaping (proposed 10-3-30.1), B-1 Uses Permitted By Right (10-3-84), B-1 Uses Permitted By Special Use Permit (10-3-85), R-6 Uses Permitted By Right (10-3-56.3), R-7 Uses Permitted By Right (10-3-57.3), and MX-U Uses Permitted By Right (10-3-58.3).

With regard to the Certificate of Occupancy section, staff is proposing to add a new subsection stating: *Prior to submitting a request for a certificate of occupancy, the owner or developer shall have completed, or posted an approved surety for, all required improvements included on the approved comprehensive site plan, building permit, or revisions thereto.* This amendment would not only ensure that properties are developing in compliance with the proposed parking lot landscaping regulations, but it would apply to all required improvements as approved on comprehensive site plans and/or associated building permits and any of their revisions.

Chairman Jones asked if this was something we have had some difficulty with in the past? Because it seems to me this is like arm twisting.

Mrs. Turner said right now within zoning we do not have a whole lot of things that are required to be done that we would ever even imagine doing a bond for; but there have been times when zoning has had to go after a developer for not fulfilling all the proffers. This is more like a recognition that perhaps a business is getting ready to occupy a building in January and there is no way that all of the landscaping could be in place. We want to have some type of an assurance that we are not going to have to go to court over this at a later date.

Mr. Chenault said bonding is a rather standard practice for infrastructure within many communities.

Mr. Fletcher continued, the amendment within the Comprehensive Site Plan Review section would simply add the requirement to show all details for meeting the requirements of the parking lot landscaping ordinance among the list of all of the other items that must be illustrated on the engineered drawings.

Section 10-3-24 is the Definitions section of the Zoning Ordinance, to which staff is proposing to add 10 terms related to the parking lot landscaping ordinance. The terms include: caliper; deciduous shrub; deciduous tree, large; deciduous tree, small/ornamental; evergreen shrub; evergreen tree; landscaping; landscaping island; outdoor display area; and parking bay. Currently, the Zoning Ordinance does not define "landscaping." The proposed definition stipulates that landscaping must be living vegetation and that mulch and/or stone alone would not meet this definition.

Mr. Way asked if specifying what landscaping “is not” was a standard or typical definition of landscaping.

Mr. Fletcher replied that the landscaping definition was somewhat of a conglomeration of other definitions that we took under consideration. To be honest, I cannot remember if this language is exactly within one of those definitions or just something we added to be clear on the meaning.

Mr. Fletcher continued by saying other noteworthy definitions include: “caliper,” which describes where and how to measure different types of trees’ caliper, or diameter of a tree trunk in inches; and, “deciduous tree, large” and “deciduous tree, small/ornamental,” defining the size of such trees when planted.

The amendments within the Off-Street Parking Regulations (Section 10-3-25), which is the location of the current landscaping requirements, is to remove the existing regulations and to re-number the remaining subsections appropriately. In eliminating those regulations, the proposal is to add a new Section 10-3-30.1 titled, Parking Lot Landscaping.

As noted above, the proposed regulations build on the existing requirements maintaining that all parking lots shall include landscaping areas equal to at least 15 percent of the total area to be used for parking. In addition, this ordinance would retain counting only landscaping within the parking lot and/or within a 30-foot perimeter of the parking lot toward meeting the 15 percent requirement and would also not permit counting landscaping immediately adjacent (within five feet) to a principle building or the newly required landscaping border adjacent to public street right-of-ways (ROWs).

Although this ordinance is requiring a 10-foot landscaping border, separating all parking lots from public street ROWs is not an entirely new regulation for the City. Currently, the landscaping regulations state, “parking spaces shall be separated from all right-of-way lines and property lines by a landscaped border not less than ten (10) feet in width...” This section continues stating that landscaped borders may be substituted by “appropriate visual elements such as walls or fencing...” The proposed ordinance would now require the 10-foot landscaping border along public street ROWs, but it would retain the allowance to substitute the landscaping border alongside and rear property lines by a wall or fence, and although not currently specified, the new requirements would stipulate walls or fences to be at least three feet in height.

Mr. Chenault said after about a year or so, a fence is always falling down, or falling over, and not maintained; could we just confine this exception to a wall?

Mr. Fletcher replied I would be hesitant to remove fencing as an opportunity for development. I think it would be an additional cost to require only a wall and not allow a fence.

Mr. Way asked if it mentioned in the proposed language that you cannot use the required landscaping border towards the fifteen percent.

Mr. Fletcher said yes, you will find that language further within the ordinance. He then continued saying a new requirement includes tree planting within the required landscaping border. The required number of trees is determined by the type and size of tree they would like to plant. Large deciduous trees would be planted for every 40 linear feet of parking lot street frontage, or fraction thereof, and small/ornamental and evergreen trees would be planted for every 25 linear feet of frontage, or fraction thereof. Evergreen tree planting would be restricted to not exceed 50 percent of the number of trees planted within the border. Owners/developers would have the choice of tree

type and size along with the flexibility of choosing where (with some stipulations as noted below) to plant trees within the border.

Mr. Finks said let me bring up a scenario that I do not believe is covered in this proposed ordinance. When dealing with street trees, an example of which is along Evelyn Byrd Avenue, it is impossible, almost, in the summer months to pull out of the parking lot at the Verizon store onto Evelyn Byrd Avenue. The trees completely block any person trying to exit the parking lot.

Mr. Fletcher replied that this situation has been brought to the City's attention and the Public Works Department should be thinning out some of those limbs, perhaps they have already completed that task. What you are referring to is sight distance concerns, and that is mentioned in the proposed ordinance in two different locations.

Mr. Finks said there is another location I want to complain about too, that is at the apartments at the intersection of Blue Ridge Drive and Country Club Road (staff believes the correct intersection is Blue Ridge Drive and Old Furnace Road). There are trees planted to the west at this intersection, making it impossible to see.

Mr. Fletcher said your concerns are valid and it has been taken into consideration within the proposed ordinance. We have included language to ensure that street trees do not impede sight distance.

Mr. Fletcher continued saying another regulation within the proposed ordinance, again not an entirely new concept for the City, is the requirement to provide landscaping islands per a particular number of parking spaces. Currently the landscaping regulations within 10-3-25 (4), defining requirements specifically for landscaping for shopping center parking lots, specifies "until the fifteen (15) percent requirement is met, rows of parking spaces shall be divided at intervals of from eight (8) to twelve (12) parking spaces by a landscaped area at least five (5) feet in length." Most developments meet the current 15 percent requirement without having to install this internal landscaping. The proposed ordinance would require landscaping islands to be installed so that parking bays shall not have more than 12 parking spaces in a row without having a landscaped area. A new, but similar, regulation requires each terminus of a parking bay to supply a landscaping island. Each required landscaping island as described in this paragraph shall provide at least one tree and three shrubs. Owners/developers would have the choice of type, size, and location within the islands, but again would be restricted from planting more than 50 percent of required trees as evergreen.

Parking lots with more than one internal parking bay shall provide a landscaping island, stretching the entire length of every other parking bay at a minimum width of nine feet. Trees must be planted within these landscaping areas equivalent to the proportions and allowances for the required landscaping borders adjacent to public street ROWs.

With regard to parking garages, although they are a structure, the existing "parking lot" definition, also considers them to be a parking lot and thus would be required to meet the proposed parking lot landscaping requirements. Recognizing the difficulty and unrealistic expectations for a parking garage to meet all of the proposed requirements, staff prepared an exception specifically for parking garages. The exception states that all parking garages, except those constructed within the B-1, Central Business District, would have their own regulations. Rather than meeting a 15 percent landscaping requirement based upon the total area to be used for parking and maneuvering, parking garages would have to provide at least 15 percent landscaping based upon the total floor plate of the

structure—the horizontal land area occupied by the building. Parking garages would also be exempt from having to provide any landscaping islands and the associated tree and shrubbery planting. These structures would be required to plant trees adjacent to the public street ROW. Parcels with parking garages would proportion the required tree planting based upon the entire lot frontage rather than parking lot frontage along a public street ROW. The proposal excludes parking garages built within the B-1 zoning district because of that district’s unique characteristics of having no setback regulations. Among the other Zoning Ordinance changes as described herein, staff is proposing to eliminate parking garages as a by-right use in the B-1 zoning district and to place it into the special use permit category to not only allow for coordination of appropriate landscaping, but also to permit more input relative to their impact on downtown streets. Surface parking lots would remain a use permitted by-right.

Mr. Finks said are there any requirements on the height of a parking garage.

Mr. Fletcher replied that it would depend on the zoning district in which the garage is built. If you were to build in a B-1, Central Business District, you could build up to seventy-five feet in height, by right.

Mr. Way asked if it had been discussed about taking surface parking lots out of a by-right use in the B-1 district.

Mr. Fletcher said it has not been discussed; but, it could be something that staff could discuss. He then continued, saying that at the same time, staff is proposing to add parking garages to the R-6, R-7, and MX-U uses permitted by-right categories. Since those districts have mixed use opportunities, parking garages in those districts could be beneficial. As a plan of development is required with a rezoning application for these districts, impact on the public street can be reviewed at that time.

Other proposed regulations would include: owners/developers ensuring they are not impeding the sight distance standards of the DCSM, replacing dead or missing vegetation with like or similar vegetation within one calendar year, and abiding by the restriction that vehicle parking and/or the display of goods would be prohibited in landscaping islands and borders.

Recognizing that the required landscaping border separating parking lots from public street ROWs could overlap with general utility easements located in the same area, tree planting would still be required. Currently, planting within easements is not prohibited, but the City has the authority to remove any vegetation necessary to access, install, or maintain their infrastructure. Aside from replacing grass within these areas, the City is not responsible for replanting any other vegetation (i.e. trees, shrubbery, etc.).

The Public Utilities Department rarely uses general utility easements as water and sewer lines are typically located in the public street right-of-way and/or within public water and/or sewer easements exclusively for their infrastructure. These easements are typically granted/dedicated during site design and development when engineers are determining where water and sewer lines should be located. Often, water and sewer infrastructure is located under private pavement (i.e. streets, parking lots, etc.). Acknowledging, however, there could be times when public water and sewer lines could be located in required planting areas, whether they are overlapping required landscaping borders or required landscaping islands (as described below), the Public Utilities Department did not want to promote planting trees, and other deep rooted vegetation, within their easements. Thus, in coordination with the Public Utilities Department, staff included in the ordinance that required trees, and other deep rooted vegetation, shall not be planted within public water and/or sewer

easements. In particular circumstances where no other area within the required location can accommodate the required planting, property owners/developers may ask for a waiver from such requirements from the Zoning Administrator.

Dr. Dilts asked if this could still be used as part of the 15 percent.

Mr. Fletcher said yes; there is still landscaping, just no tree.

Mr. Chenault said general utility easements are used by cable, telephone, and other quasi-public entities that are not connected to the Public Utilities Department. Do we still want those plans to be reviewed by Public Utilities as well?

Mr. Fletcher said part of the Subdivision Ordinance requires that when a new lot is created, you must dedicate easements along the frontage of the public street, and on rear or side lot lines; therefore you are getting two general utility easements somewhere on the new lot. If a lot has a general utility easement, then the one tree that falls into that general utility easement area which is required to be landscaped and have a tree, that tree would be required to be planted. It would be coordinated at the time of site plan review with the Public Utilities Department should they have any concerns.

Mr. Chenault said as a practical matter, most of the City's utilities are either on a pole or within the street.

Mr. Fletcher continued, the Harrisonburg Electric Commission (HEC) did not have issue with required tree planting in areas that could overlap easements they utilize and noted they are in support of the proposed ordinance. Most of HEC's infrastructure is installed underground before landscaping is planted, and they typically do not have issues with root systems affecting their infrastructure. Staff also discussed the issue that landscaping could be required underneath overhead utility lines. HEC generally was not concerned with the potential conflict with overhead facilities as such issues could be flagged during the site plan review and tree planting locations within the required areas could be coordinated to remove or reduce conflicts.

The proposed ordinance was also sent out for general comments from Verizon, Columbia Gas, and Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative. None of which sent any comments back to staff. This information was also provided to Comcast and we have yet to hear back from them either.

Mr. Way asked, as a private citizen, if I wanted to plant a tree on the easement between the road and the sidewalk outside of my home, would that fall under this ordinance? Would I need to coordinate planting this tree with City staff?

Mrs. Turner replied the area in front of your house that you are speaking of is most likely City right-of-way and you cannot just plant in there. There is a method for planting in the right-of-way; you can request permission from the City and it is reviewed by Public Utilities, Public Works, HEC, and so forth. This landscaping requirement is for planting on private property, not within the City right-of-way; so for the most part where you find sidewalks, businesses would be planting on their side of the sidewalk and not the street side. (This proposed ordinance exempts single family detached and duplex dwellings.)

Mr. Fletcher continued, all infringements related to this ordinance would be handled the same way as existing zoning violations. After initial compliance is confirmed, subsequent violations will primarily be found by investigation upon complaint. If violations are found, staff would send

property owners a certified notification informing them they would have 30 days to correct their violation, and if necessary, property owners would be taken to court to rectify the issue.

With regard to issues of non-conformance, the proposed ordinance specifies that an existing landscaping parking lot that is non-conforming to the minimum standards of the new regulations may be enlarged, but would be required to provide landscaping proportionate to any enlargement of the parking lot. For example, if a shopping center added additional square footage to their building requiring 24 additional parking spaces, and the owner/developer arranges those parking spaces as one, double loaded parking bay, then the parking bay must have at minimum a 280 square foot landscaping island at the terminus of each end with the required plantings. If the landscaped area of the required islands does not add up to 15 percent of the additional area used for parking, then somewhere on the property additional landscaping would have to be installed to meet the minimum standard. In addition, if in this example the property had an existing landscaping border adjacent to the public street ROW that was at least five feet in width, then the property owner would have to install trees within this border for the entire parking lot street frontage. Such trees would have to be planted meeting the same requirements and allowances of newly constructed, required landscaping borders.

There is a change that was made after you received your packet. Within subsection (o) where it discusses use of existing trees the language now states “Existing healthy trees or wooded areas, where such trees are required, may be preserved in lieu of planting new...” What that means is that the trees must be located within the places specified for landscaping by the ordinance.

Mr. Chenault said looking back at what Mr. Way said earlier regarding removing surface parking lots from a use permitted by-right within the B-1, Central Business District. We do not want to encourage the removal of buildings to be replaced with parking lots in our downtown area. There is currently a situation where that may happen soon. Do we want to consider eliminating something like parking lots for profit or those that are not incidental to a business?

Mr. Way said I believe now is a potentially good opportunity to do this.

Mr. Fletcher said I do not want to speak generally for all staff, but that might be a good idea.

Mrs. Turner said perhaps we would, but by the same token, it is currently up to the City to provide parking for the downtown area.

Mr. Way suggested a special use permit.

Mrs. Turner said yes, a special use permit would be a better way rather than simply removing surface parking lots altogether.

Mr. Fletcher said I believe that is what was understood, that we would allow surface parking lots and parking garages by special use permit only. I question whether property owners or developers within the B-1 district would like that; we would be taking a by-right use away.

Mr. Way said if we saw an appropriate plan for a parking lot, we would have the authority to give it a thumbs-up as a special use permit. If we remove parking garages it just seems appropriate to go ahead with parking lots at this time too.

Mrs. Turner said this is something we would want to ask Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance’s (HDR) Board if they have an opinion on it.

Mr. Fletcher said I like the idea, but my recommendation is to not make an off-the-cuff decision on this tonight.

Mr. Chenault and Mr. Way both said it should be looked into. We are in a revitalization mode and we are trying to enhance our downtown area and this is working towards that goal. We do not want to see buildings taken down and replaced with surface parking lots.

Mr. Fletcher said we can discuss this with other departments and boards.

Mr. Chenault said it is an appropriate idea to run this by the HDR Board.

Mr. Way asked if Planning Commission was thinking of not moving forward on the proposed landscaping regulations until this is looked into, or would this be perhaps changed later.

Mr. Fletcher said I would recommend that Planning Commission move forward with this and if we want to come back and remove parking lots at a later date we will.

Mrs. Turner said at this point we would need to re-advertise the proposed ordinance if we wanted to make this change; it is a fairly significant restriction.

Planning Commission agreed that staff should follow-up on the idea of removing surface parking lots as a by-right use in the B-1, Central Business District.

Mr. Fletcher continued, approving the proposed parking lot landscaping ordinance will add cost to developing in the City. Large developments with large parking lots would probably be affected the most, not only in cost to install all of the required landscaping, but also in the cost to build as more property would be needed to construct the development. Recognizing the above, it is very difficult to quantify and characterize the negative impacts this ordinance could have on development in the City. Regardless of negative impacts, staff believes the positive impacts outweigh the negative.

Adopting the proposed parking lot landscaping ordinance would help achieve two of the Comprehensive Plan's land use goals and one of their associated objectives (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives, and Strategies Associated with Implementing New Parking Lot Landscaping Regulations**

Goal	Objective	Potential Implementing Strategy
Goal 1 – To improve the quality and compatibility of land use and development.	Objective 1.1 – To improve development and redevelopment that reinforces the City's unique character and sense of place.	Strategy 1.1.2 – To develop a set of design guidelines for new development and redevelopment based on these design elements. Such design guidelines might address such matters as: landscaping, preservation of green space, preservation of historic resources, placement of buildings and parking lots, building bulk and height, how buildings address the street, signage, and lighting.
Goal 8 – To preserve and	Objective 8.4 – To preserve and	Strategy 8.4.5 – To consider

enhance the City’s natural resources and encourage development that is compatible with nature.	expand green spaces and tree planting in the City.	adding street tree planting and other landscape requirements for new development and redevelopment in the City’s land use codes.
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Staff recommends amending the Zoning Ordinance by modifying Section 10-3-11 Certificate of Occupancy, Section 10-3-17 Comprehensive Site Plan Review, Section 10-3-24 Definitions, Section 10-3-25 Off-Street Parking Regulations, adding Section 10-3-30.1 Parking Lot Landscaping, modifying Section 10-3-84 Uses Permitted By Right of the B-1 district, modifying Section 10-3-85 Uses Permitted By Special Use Permit of the B-1 district, and modifying Sections 10-3-56.3, 57.3, and 58.3 Uses Permitted By Right sections of the R-6, R-7, and MX-U districts, respectively.

Mr. Way said on strategy 8.4.5, to consider adding street tree planting..., just remind me within the proposed ordinance, does it encourage or ensure that you are getting trees planted along the street and not just within the parking lot.

Mr. Fletcher replied that there is required tree planting adjacent to parking lots. It does not require street trees and it does not require that trees be planted along the entire frontage, unless the parcel has developed where the parking lot is the frontage of the lot. If for example, someone were to design a lot where the building is at the front of the parcel and the parking in the rear, they would not be required to do street tree planting because the parking lot is not adjacent to the public street. However, there is a hope and perhaps some common sense, that people are landscaping in that area between their building and the public street; you cannot build right up to the street. So to answer your question, there is not a requirement that says “street tree planting” is required.

Chairman Jones asked if there were any further questions for staff. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone desiring to speak in favor of the request. Hearing none, he asked if there was anyone desiring to speak in opposition of this request. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing and asked Planning Commission for a motion or further discussion.

Mr. Way said there was one change mentioned tonight about reducing the size of the landscape island square footage; is that a problem or is that a reasonable change?

Mr. Fletcher said that change came into play before you all even saw the draft of this ordinance. We sent the draft out to Shenandoah Valley Builders Association (SVBA) Executive Officer who made it available to all of their members and a comment came in from an engineer from that review. The comment was that they felt what was originally proposed was too big and he suggested a reduced area. We had conversations with the City Engineer and the numbers that we ended up with are what he felt was a good compromise; he took into consideration the design of internal parking lots and how the radius works and so forth.

Mr. Way said so these islands are large enough to accommodate a decently sized tree and two or three shrubs?

Mr. Fletcher said to the best of my knowledge, yes. This was reviewed by our Parks and Recreation Department in house staff, our tree gurus if you will, also there were some landscape architects and landscape designers reviewing it and there were no negative comments. Actually the most positive comment was that this was one of the most common sense approaches they have seen.

Mr. Way said thank you to staff for putting all this together. Hopefully, it will improve the fabric of the City over the long term.

Mrs. Turner said we would like to acknowledge that Mr. Fletcher did most all of the work on this.

Chairman Jones said I have heard Mr. Da'Mes speak on numerous occasions regarding landscaping within the City, so I would like to know if this ordinance is taking us in the direction that he was hoping for? Does it go far enough?

Mr. Da'Mes replied that the ordinance gives the considerations that we wanted while still giving flexibility to the developer. I am satisfied to a point; perhaps what I was looking for was more within the construction materials of a building and getting away from the concrete and cinder block buildings.

Dr. Dilts said I have a comment regarding wanting more porous surfaces, which is not really part of the landscaping.

Mr. Way said I would hope that this also is part of the future of wider street tree initiatives. To try and encourage the planting of more trees and to have more trees in urban areas and along streets, hopefully this is an early step in that direction. Street trees add value to a City and they help environmentally too.

Chairman Jones said we have a series of ordinance amendments that need to be acted on. Would we like to handle these in mass or individually?

Dr. Dilts moved to accept all the amendments as proposed by staff in this request.

Mr. Way seconded the motion.

Chairman Jones said we have a motion and a second, is there any further discussion. Hearing none, he called for a voice vote on the matter.

All voted in favor of the motion (6-0) to recommend approval of the Proposed Parking Lot Landscaping Ordinance and related ordinance amendments.

Chairman Jones said this item will move forward to City Council on February 14, 2012.

### **Unfinished Business**

None.

### **Public Input**

None.

### **Report of secretary and committees**

Mrs. Banks said proactive zoning inspectors visited the Wyndham Woods sector of the City in December where they found two violations. The violations consisted of discarded materials and inoperable vehicles. Next month zoning inspectors will be in the Northfield area.

### **Other Matters**

#### ***Zoning Regulations Regarding Telecommunications Facilities***

Mr. Fletcher said last month Planning Commission discussed telecommunications and advised staff to look into our existing regulations and whether we should do more research regarding telecommunications. Staff provided a report to the Commission within your packet this month;

therefore, the general question for Planning Commission is where would you like us to proceed next?

Mr. Chenault said perhaps we should look at other areas to see what regulations they may have.

Mr. Da'Mes said we continue to hear that G-force is coming to Harrisonburg; what does that mean for us? Faster speeds, higher usage, heavier equipment, and more? Are we keeping up with technology?

Mr. Fletcher asked if G-force was the same as 4G technology.

Chairman Jones replied yes.

Mrs. Turner said we can look at what other localities are doing. I do not know if we can tell you what 4G is going to mean as far as for the City of Harrisonburg specifically.

Mr. Fletcher said I believe we are currently running into the same questions as other localities. Is there something more than just looking at how other localities handle this?

Mrs. Turner said is there something specific that you feel is lacking within our ordinance and would like for us to find examples of in other ordinances.

Dr. Dilts said perhaps getting a sampling of what others are doing would provide us with some standards by which to review. It might be worth talking to some of the providers to see what is coming down the road that we should be aware of. Then perhaps we could be more proactive, rather than reactive.

Mr. Chenault said check with the Virginia Municipal League (VML).

Mr. Way suggested looking at language about encouraging co-location on existing structures.

Mrs. Turner questioned, do you mean like permitting more of it by-right, somehow? How are others encouraging it by-right or making it easier to co-locate rather than do something else?

Mr. Way replied yes, rather than putting up more and more towers.

Mr. Fletcher said we will begin looking into these ideas.

Mr. Da'Mes questioned what happens when cell technology is beyond the tower itself? When should they be removed or consolidated?

### ***Review of 2011 Annual Reports***

Mr. Fletcher said the last item on the agenda is the annual reports. One is the internal annual report from planning and zoning. This gives you an idea of other things that we are doing within our division. The second report is the Planning Commission Annual Report which needs to be forwarded on to City Council.

Mr. Chenault moved to forward the Planning Commission Annual Report, as presented, to City Council.

Mr. Finks seconded the motion.

All voted in favor of the motion (6-0).

Mrs. Turner said she has one item to discuss with Planning Commission. I received a call from a Mr. John Stentson, who is a blind pedestrian in the City of Harrisonburg, and he has an on-going

campaign to get the audible signals at crosswalks in as many places as possible within the City. Of course, that is quite an expense and I do not know how many of them we may have in place now.

Mr. Chenault said Mr. Stentson has been to City Council several times and I know that the Transportation Safety and Advisory Commission recently had addressed two of the corners he had complained about. They recommended installing the audible device at both intersections and were trying to come up with a way to get it into their budget, so that they could pay for it. It is rather piece meal at this point.

Mrs. Turner said it apparently costs several thousand dollars for each street, not even each intersection. Mr. Stentson said he had been working with the Police Department on a press release and asked that I forward it to you. It actually is part of an overall reminder to motorists of pedestrian safety.

Mr. Way reminded everyone that tomorrow evening, January 12<sup>th</sup>, there is a public meeting regarding park planning ideas for the municipal parking lot area. The meeting begins at 6:30 in Council Chambers.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

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Chairman William L. Jones, Jr.

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Secretary, Alison Banks