

City planning panel may have second vacancy
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Jason Pearson

While the

Charlottesville City Council

is currently accepting applications for the

Planning Commission

vacancy left by

Bill Emory

, there is a possibility that current Chairman

Jason Pearson

may also depart.

Commissioners

Genevieve Keller

and

Michael Osteen

were reappointed to their seats by the City Council earlier this month, but Pearson's term ends Aug. 31 and the council has yet to take action on his seat.

"I recently stepped down as president and CEO of GreenBlue, and this has provided me an opportunity to explore some independent projects and new avenues for professional engagement and public service," wrote Pearson in an e-mail to

Charlottesville Tomorrow

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"As I explore these further, I am uncertain whether I will be able to dedicate sufficient time to the work of the commission," he said.

Pearson said he would continue to play a role in the ongoing revision of the city's steep slopes ordinance as well as a review of how the Cherry Avenue mixed corridor is being planned.

At this time, the council has chosen to simply not fill Pearson's seat when his term expires at the end of the month. According to Mayor

Dave Norris

, that will allow Pearson to continue serving. The commission's bylaws specify a term can be extended in this fashion.

"Jason is a very valuable member of the Planning Commission and if there's a way to keep him in the role, we'd like to see him continue," Norris said.

Meanwhile, the city is continuing to take applications for the seat vacated by Emory. He resigned in May for personal reasons.

The deadline for applications is Aug. 27, with interviews before the council tentatively scheduled for the last week of the month. Applications can be sent to the clerk of council. The new commissioner is expected to join in September.



Download planning commission application

"I hope that council will reflect on the mix of current commissioners and attempt to identify commissioners who can enhance and broaden the diversity of viewpoints and expertise already present on the commission," Pearson said.

The commission is currently made up of an architectural historian (Keller), two practicing architects (Osteen and

Kurt Keesecker

), two nonprofit leaders (

John Santoski

and

Dan Rosensweig

) and Pearson.

Norris said he would particularly like a candidate who has a vision for helping the city become more

pedestrian and bike friendly.

"I'd personally like to see someone who is going to ask the hard questions about how planning decisions are going to affect our neighborhoods," Norris said.

A new chair and vice chair will be appointed at the September meeting. Pearson has also said he is not sure if he will continue in a leadership position.

"I think we have some excellent candidates for chair among my colleagues, and I would welcome an opportunity to support any of them," Pearson said.

Planning commissioners receive \$2,900 a year for their service. The chair receives \$3,500.