

# Richmond Planning Commission

## Regular Meeting

Thursday, July 11, 2013

### ***Approved Minutes***

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**Members Present:** Mark Fausel (Chair), Ann Cousins, Bruce LaBounty, Lauck Parke, Brian Tellstone

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Cathleen Gent (Town Planner/Staff to the DRB), Mary Houle, Jon Kart, Chris Granda, Marc Hughes, Barry Cousins

**7:05 PM** Call to order by the Chair.

#### **Public Hearing – Proposed Changes to Richmond Zoning Regulations**

A motion was made by Parke, seconded by Tellstone, to open the public hearing to take comments regarding proposed changes to the Richmond Zoning Regulations, Section 3.5.5 (Village Commercial zoning district, parking requirements), Section 5.7 (Signs) and Section 7.2 (Definitions). So voted. Jon Kart asked whether the changes were proposed previously. Fausel replied that these changes were proposed in the proposed zoning bylaws that were defeated in November and that the Economic Development Committee requested that those move forward. Kart then asked if the language had changed from the earlier version. Gent said that the earlier version was different, in that the elimination of the parking requirement for new uses applied to the entire zoning district where upper Bridge Street is located, namely the Village Business-1 district. Cousins added that the Economic Development Committee, on which she serves, supports this amendment. Since there were no other public comments, Parke made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Tellstone. So voted.

Gent noted that she sent a letter to all the property owners who would be affected by these proposed zoning changes. No one has contacted her with any comments.

There was a discussion about possible minor changes to the proposed language for Section 3.5.5 and to Section 5.7. Parke made a motion, seconded by LaBounty, to forward the proposed bylaw changes as presented in the public hearing to the Selectboard. The Planning Commission also decided to recommend to the Selectboard that the Selectboard hold its public hearing and adopt the bylaws directly without taking this to a town-wide vote because these changes are relatively minor and straight-forward. Granda said he always appreciates the recommendations and advice of the Planning Commission. Voting: 5 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstained.

#### **Public Comment**

Kart said that, at the last Selectboard meeting, Planning Commission Chair Mark Fausel discussed the sentiments of the Planning Commission about taking another look at the floodplain bylaws, specifically looking at moving toward the bare minimum FEMA requirements. Fausel said that the Planning Commission will have further discussion about that section of the bylaws and that the Planning Commission will get public feedback as part of that process. Kart said he is surprised the town would make changes that would encourage people to develop in the floodplain. He added that Act 16 is a new state law that will require towns to adopt a flood resilience component to zoning and that he doesn't see the benefit of going to the minimum FEMA regulations.

Granda thanked former and current Planning Commission members who have served the town and that the Selectboard looks forward to working with the Planning Commission. He then brought forward an idea of creating energy efficiency building codes in Richmond. Granda discussed that some towns are experimenting with local building codes for energy efficiency. He said there is a body of evidence that best building practices for energy efficiency don't add much to the cost of a new home. He discussed the state Residential Building Energy Codes and the Commercial Building Energy Codes and discussed the value of the Energy Star program. Granda also discussed how a local building code would complement the new PACE program. Parke said there is no building code bureaucracy in Richmond and that there would be compliance and enforcement issues. Granda said that, for energy star homes, Efficiency Vermont does two site visits. Our bylaws could be based on the requirement that Efficiency Vermont administers the program anyway. LaBounty pointed out that there are no building inspectors in Richmond. Mary Houle said that the bylaws could include a requirement that no certificate of occupancy be issued without an energy star rating. LaBounty said he would support a voluntary program, but not a requirement because some people can't afford the up-front cost for the Energy Star program, even if they save money in the long run. He said that offering a density bonus for zoning

1 acreage might be an option. The Planning Commission agreed to look at an energy efficiency code for  
2 the town, including concrete cost-benefit information as part of the analysis.  
3

4 **Welcome to New Planning Commission Members**

5 Gent reviewed the Vermont Planners Information Center “welcome” document for new board members.  
6 She also handed out the web site link for the plannersweb.com web site and said she will send out an  
7 invitation to the new board members to join. The cost to the town for the subscription is about \$40 a  
8 year. Gent discussed the general meeting schedule, rules of procedure, staff support for the  
9 commission and general duties of the Planning Commission. Gent also provided an overview about  
10 how the Planning Commission has the statutory authority to participate in Act 250 and Act 248  
11 proceedings. She also provided a brief introduction to how certain state statutes provide oversight and  
12 specific authority for the Planning Commission’s work, most notably Chapter 117.  
13

14 **Mail** – Gent reviewed the mail.  
15

16 **Meeting Minutes**

17 For June 19, 2013 – Motion to approve with no changes made by LaBounty, seconded by Parke.  
18 Voting: 4 in favor (Fausel, LaBounty, Parke, Tellstone); 0 opposed; 1 abstention (Cousins).  
19

20 **Staff Report** – Fausel asked if the staff report could be revised to include a summary of zoning  
21 violations, not specific parcel or owner information, so that the Planning Commission can see what  
22 trends exist with types of zoning issues. Gent said she will talk with zoning administrator Neal Leitner  
23 about how to do that type of summary report.  
24

25 **Organizational Meeting**

26 - Planning Commission Rules of Procedure

27 Motion by LaBounty, seconded by Parke, to adopt the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure no  
28 changes. Gent will bring the town code of ethics document to the Planning Commission for its review..  
29

30 - Election of Officers

31 Motion by Parke, seconded by LaBounty, to nominate Fausel as chair. Voting: 5 in favor; 0 opposed; 0  
32 abstention.  
33

34 Motion by LaBounty to nominate Parke as vice-chair. Parke declined to put his name forward due to  
35 work commitments. Motion by Cousins, seconded by Parke, to nominate LaBounty as vice-chair.  
36 Voting: 5 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstentions.  
37

38 Motion by LaBounty, seconded by Tellstone, to nominate Gent as secretary. Voting: 5 in favor; 0  
39 opposed; 0 abstentions.  
40

41 **General Discussion**

42 The Planning Commission had a general discussion about the current and recently proposed zoning  
43 and subdivision regulations. Gent provided a recent history of zoning changes, starting with the 1996  
44 zoning changes, the 2009 zoning changes, and the 2012 unified bylaws (which were defeated by voters  
45 in November). Gent distributed a copy of the 2009 PlaceSense Consulting report, which provided a set  
46 of tools for updating the zoning and subdivision regulations.  
47

48 The Planning Commission had a general discussion about the town plan. Gent distributed a 2012 report  
49 by Front Porch Community Planning for a special project with the Planning Commission regarding three  
50 content areas for updating the town plan. Those areas include agriculture, natural resources, & energy.  
51

52 The Planning Commission decided to focus on the annual work plan during the next meeting and not  
53 take up the floodplain discussion at that meeting. Fausel asked that the planner report also provide  
54 information about topics the Selectboard is discussing.  
55

56 **Adjournment**

57 Parke made a motion to adjourn, seconded by LaBounty. So voted. The meeting adjourned at 9:10  
58 PM.  
59

Respectfully submitted by Cathleen Gent, Town Planner/Staff to the DRB