Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR May 5, 2021

Members Present:	Chris Cole, Virginia Clarke, Chris Granda, Alison Anand, Caitlin Littlefield, Joy Reap, Jake Kornfeld
Members Absent:	Mark Fausel,
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Kendall Chamberlin, Lisa Miller, Rod West, Bard Hill, Bob Reap

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Clarke announced Chris Cole's return and Brian Tellstone's resignation. Caitlin Littlefield announced that she will not be returning to the Planning Commission after her term expires at the end of the month, that she has accepted a new job that will require travel, and that she intends to attend meetings in the future to help the commission.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

3. Public Comment for non-agenda items

None

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Littlefield, seconded by Jake Kornfeld to approve the April 7, 2021 meeting minutes.

Discussion: Cole said that abstentions count in the "yes" column for quorum purposes according to a recent court case in a town he used to live in. Chris Granda said that in the second sentence of the second paragraph of the energy standards discussion item, "requirements of the" should be included before "standards".

Voting: 6-0 (Joy Reap abstained). Motion carried.

Motion by Granda, seconded by Alison Anand to approve the April 21, 2021 meeting minutes.

Discussion: Granda highlighted that during the April 21, 2021 meeting, he had wanted the building energy standards to be a standing item at upcoming meetings and requested that the item be included in the next Planning Commission meeting. Clarke suggested adding "all new and substantially renovated" before "houses" in the fifth sentence from the top of page 9.

Voting: 6-0 (Kornfeld abstained). Motion carried.

5. Recommendations for Planning Commission appointments

Clarke said that there is one applicant and asked Ravi Venkataraman about which vacancy the applicant would assume. Venkataraman said that the applicant would take on the seat Littlefield is

vacating and that he will be advertising the vacancy left by Brian Tellstone later this week. Lisa Miller said she had no preference for the vacancy. Clarke asked Venkataraman for comment. Venkataraman said he had no comment and deferred to the commission. Clarke asked Miller to introduce herself. Miller discussed her past experiences on a planning commission and as a township supervisor in Pennsylvania and her recent move to Richmond. Granda welcomed Miller to the commission, and appreciated her experience and her willingness to serve as a newcomer. Miller said she will further study the town planning documents if the Selectboard appoints her. Clarke asked Venkataraman about procedure. Venkataraman said that in past practice, the Planning Commission voted to recommend appointees to be appointed by the Selectboard. Venkataraman added that the commission members have four-year terms, the term that was advertised is a four-year term beginning in June, and that Tellstone's term expires in June 2022.

Motion by Granda, seconded by Anand, to recommend to the Selectboard the appointment of Lisa Miller to a four-year term starting June 2021 on the Planning Commission. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

6. Discussion on Accessory Dwelling Units, State Permits, Nonconforming Lots

Clarke began discussions on the accessory dwelling units section. Clarke said that the proposal removes the owner occupancy requirement, and that Venkataraman confirmed that the removal of the requirement is legal per Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Cole asked if the owner could rent out both dwelling units if they do not need to live in either unit. Clarke affirmed. Clarke said she had concerns about incorporating the term "residential use" into the definition for "habitable floor area", and that the usage of "residential use" was not appropriate in this context. Clarke presented her own definition. Littlefield asked about decks and porches. Clarke said that she would not include decks and porches under habitable floor area and that she would only include indoor spaces.

Granda suggested regulating "conditioned floor area" instead of "finished floor area". Cole asked for clarification on conditioned. Granda said he referred to spaces in which internal temperatures could be manipulated. Reap said that with heat pumps, spaces need not be conditioned. Cole said that his mudroom was not conditioned. Cole asked about basements. Reap asked if the definition will be used in other parts of the zoning regulations. Venkataraman said that he would like to apply this definition to any aspect that requires portioning a residence for a particular use, like home occupations and cottage industries. Reap asked about zoning fees. Venkataraman affirmed that he would like this to apply for zoning fees to standardize the application of fees. Clarke said she thought one would not want to incorporate the square footage of accessory structures into habitable floor area. Cole suggested syntactical changes and asked about how one could determine if a garage was finished. Clarke suggested not including accessory structures in habitable floor area. Granda said that conditioning a space makes a space habitable in the Vermont context. Clarke asked Venkataraman about why accessory structures are included in the definition. Venkataraman said that it was to treat structures equally. Venkataraman said that the commission may be overthinking the issue, and that the discussions on conditioned spaces is veering more towards building standards instead of zoning standards. Reap asked if this item was an issue or a debate. Venkataraman said no, and that people should know what they are paying for when they apply for a zoning permit. Clarke asked the commission about their sentiments on accessory structures. Reap said that if an applicant pulls a permit to finish a space, that space is included in the habitable area. Cole said that if the space does not have a heating system, the space is not finished in Vermont. Reap suggested including language to reference spaces in which one could sleep within yearround. Clarke suggested including finished and conditioned spaces. Others concurred. Kornfeld asked about the purpose of defining habitable floor area if the intent is to allow more options for developing accessory dwelling units. Reap connected it to permit fees and taxes. Venkataraman said that zoning permits have no bearing on taxes due to differing definitions on spaces.

Anand asked if duplexes could host accessory dwelling units. Clarke said that in this iteration, that

aspect is not being considered. Anand asked for clarification on single-family dwellings with accessory dwellings and duplexes. Clarke clarified the difference between accessory dwellings and accessory structures and that accessory dwellings are not necessarily within accessory structures. Cole recommended removing the reference to accessory structures because it adds confusion, and suggested defining habitable floor area as the conditioned and finished floor area within residential dwellings. Others concurred. Clarke said that she will provide a revision for the next meeting.

7. Introduction to the Gateway District

Clarke introduced Bard Hill and Kendall Chamberlin. Hill overviewed the current water and sewer service area, and proposed extension area in the Gateway. Hill said that the plan is to extend sewer service along Route 2 all the way to the mobile home park in three phases. Hill said that to do so would require a vote among residents within the water/sewer service district and the expansion area, and a town-wide vote on a bond to fund expanding the water/sewer district. Hill said that the water/sewer commission would prefer to build parallel to Route 2 because the line would be more accessible for connections and maintenance, and that there is the option of expanding from the school directly to the Reaps' property across Richmond Land Trust land since they own easements. Clarke asked Hill if water service will be expanded, noting that Hill focused on sewer service. Hill said that the focus has been on sewer because both the Richmond Mobil station and the mobile home park are not interested in water service. Hill said that residents between the Reaps' property and the mobile home park may be interested in water service, and that water service is easier to manage than sewer service. Reap asked about the location of Resourceful Renovator. Hill clarified that there are properties within the boundaries of the district that are not served by town water and sewer. Cole asked about the likelihood that the lines would go along Route 2. Hill said that the Water/Sewer Commission is in favor of building the lines along Route 2, that building the infrastructure will depend on the bond vote, that ARPA funds may play a role, and that he has had conversations with VTrans about conjoining and coordinating the projects. Granda noted past issues of coordination with VTrans. Chamberlin discussed the installation of lines via boring, that installation would have minimal disruption, and that coordination with the Route 2 project is not vital. Clarke asked about sequencing changing the zoning in the Gateway. Hill said that the intent is to move forward with the project sooner rather than later based on the Reaps' and the Richmond Mobil timelines, and that he cannot say if and when the project would commence. Clarke said that the commission is aware of the Richmond Mobil project, and that the Richmond Mobil project team is slated to discuss revisions to their project at the next Planning Commission meeting. Hill said that with the project, the Water/Sewer Commission is looking towards next year's construction season. Granda asked about the financial impacts of the project. Hill referred to past Water/Sewer Commission meetings, that the current rate payers would not pay for the extension, that the expansion would benefit current rate payers, and that they have conducted analyses to determine future costs. Cole asked about requiring commercial property owners paying for the extensions. Hill said that in theory this is possible, and that it could be tapped into cover any funding gaps.

Clarke asked about extending the water and sewer lines to the Farr property. Hill said this conversation would be similar to the Gateway extension, and investigation into the costs, the uses, and who would take on the costs are necessary. Venkataraman said that for the Farr property, tying in would be feasible and that a cost-benefit analysis would be necessary. Hill noted that there are towns as a whole subsidize the water/sewer service because it provides an economic benefit as a whole, and that Richmond has one of the highest water/sewer rates in the state.

Granda asked for clarification on the plan and possible changes in use. Hill said that changes in use are not part of the Water/Sewer Commission's plan. Clarke asked Rod West for comment. West said that he has anticipated water/sewer expansion for decades, that the size of the properties in the Gateway curtail commercial development, that he would appreciate flexibility in allowances, that the Gateway would be the location to place traffic-intensive developments, that the Village is built out, and that housing is needed. Reap concurred

Hill said he can provide the Planning Commission regular updates on the project, and that he appreciates the time and effort the commission puts into the work. Hill left the meeting.

Clarke said that the commission should discuss the Route 2 repaving project for the next meeting, and asked Cole to provide an update. West said that the Selectboard is working on a letter to VTrans regarding the town's concerns. Venkataraman said that he, Josh Arneson, and Hill worked on that letter West referenced, that the conversations with VTrans are a work in progress, and that he and Hill should have an update for the commission in the coming weeks.

8. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Motion by Granda, seconded by Cole to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner

Chat Log

19:04:37 From Lisa Miller to Everyone : Lisa Miller is here
19:16:48 From Lisa Miller to Everyone : Hi! Can you hear me?
19:17:17 From Lisa Miller to Everyone : Not sure if my mic is on/working
19:17:29 From Caitlin Littlefield to Everyone : Lisa haven't heard you yet.
19:17:37 From Chris Granda to Everyone : I haven't heard you yet Lisa
19:17:38 From chriscole to Everyone : I couldn’t hear you.
19:17:50 From Lisa Miller to Everyone : Oh dear...
19:18:07 From Lisa Miller to Everyone : No I don't care which seat. Whateve