

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR April 6, 2022

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Lisa Miller, Dan Mullen, Joy Reap, Mark Fausel, Chris Cole,
Members Absent:	Alison Anand, Chris Granda,
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Erin Wagg (MMCTV), Gary Bressor, Rod West, Bob Reap

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

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

2. Review of the agenda and adjustments to the agenda

Clarke reviewed the meeting agenda.

3. Public Comment for non-agenda items

Mark Fausel brought to the attention of the commission the Fourth of July, and suggested setting up a booth during the event for community outreach. Clarke recommended Fausel's suggestion be added for other business.

4. Approval of Minutes

Lisa Miller asked about the reference to visualizations and if the commission will continue conversations about that subject. Clarke said that the commission will continue that conversation later today as part of the next steps for the Gateway.

The minutes are accepted into the record as written.

5. Discussion on the Gateway District

Clarke asked Joy Reap about updates from the Water and Sewer Commission. Reap said she does not have much of an update from the Water and Sewer Commission.

Clarke suggested adding an update on the proposed zoning amendments presented to the Selectboard on Monday to "Other Business".

Clarke reviewed the discussion documents and the commission's goals for the area. Miller asked for clarification on "scenic entrance" and establishing a better concept of "scenic entrance". Clarke said that the term is associated with rural character. Dan Mullen suggested tying in future residential and commercial development with scenic and historic considerations, and considering design standards.

Reap said that the goals listed are more so actions rather than goals in a broad sense, and suggested

establishing a general vision for the area. Cole concurred. Reap said that having a vision statement would help with providing a better basis for the actions and the goals the commission wants to achieve. Clarke welcomed ideas for a vision statement.

Miller noted the importance of allowing properties to redevelop and allowing the town to grow.

Clarke overviewed the options of creating a single zoning district or two distinct zoning districts. Fausel suggested that the committee receive requests from landowners in the Gateway and engage with them, similar to the commission's process for Jolina Court. Cole concurred, and suggested looking to the Town Plan. Clarke said that the list of goals is from the Town Plan, and alluded to past conversations with the public in which the public wanted more flexibility. Reap said that she would appreciate more flexibility, more allowed uses, and more lot coverage. Reap noted the financing challenges she's faced for redeveloping the barn. Reap added that the Gateway could aid with the town-wide housing issues. Reap said that she would love to do housing, and that she would need sewer service. Fausel asked Reap if she would be interested in building a 16-unit apartment building. Reap said that she is unsure, that she has had conversations with Venkataraman and the commission in the past about this, and that she would have to get a better understanding of developing multifamily housing. Fausel asked Reap what other uses she would like in the Gateway area other than what is already allowed currently. Reap pointed out the 50 percent commercial requirement, and input she received to build a car wash.

Clarke overviewed a possible proposal to amend the existing Gateway District regulations to allow for more uses and multifamily dwelling uses. Rod West asked about the proposal to create two separate districts, said that the 50 percent commercial requirement was impractical because of the size of the parcels, asked about the site visit, said that the main desire is to not have chain businesses in the Gateway area, and said that the having more commercial opportunities in the Gateway area would make sense. Clarke asked West about commercial strip development. West said that he doesn't mind the area looking like commercial strip development as long as there are no bright illuminated signs, that standards for development should be in place, and that he would encourage the development of local businesses. West said that he had suggested to the Water/Sewer Commission that it work on providing services to the Willis Farm area and that the remainder of the line could be undertaken by the property owners themselves.

Miller noted the slope of the Gateway area and the types of uses that could be developed depending on the slope, and the role the property owners should play to determine future uses. Miller suggested that the commission pursue amending the Gateway District regulations instead of creating two distinct districts, and establishing design and compatibility standards. West identified the 35-foot height limitation and how that limits the development of sloped roofs. Clarke said that keeping one district for the entire Gateway area could meet the commission's overall goals, and that the intent for creating two districts was to allow for more commercial uses on the Willis Farm property and less commercial uses on the other properties.

Clarke reviewed next steps in the Gateway planning process—including organizing a site visit for April 23rd. Dan Mullen asked Venkataraman if it would be easier to draft regulations that would apply for the entire district equally rather than on a lot-by-lot basis. Clarke reviewed the considerations for the lot containing the Fieldstone building and lots within the lower Gateway area. Gary Bressor suggested keeping both options available for the public to review and consider along with visualizations, and said that building housing may be difficult without establishing a neighborhood. Clarke asked Bressor about

the feasibility of a secondary road. Bressor noted the possible elimination of driveways along Route 2 and said that the presence of wetlands would be the main factor.

Mullen asked about the feasibility of installing traffic calming measures along Route 2. Cole said that it would be difficult, reviewed the VTrans process for installing traffic calming measures, and said that actual safety data would be needed. Mullen asked if increased residential development would be a factor. Cole said that he wouldn't expect VTrans to lower the speed more than they already have.

Clarke said that the next step would be to draft possible zoning standards and discuss.

Cole asked Venkataraman if he had a preferred approach to amending the zoning regulations. Venkataraman said that he does not have a preferred approach, and that the approach would depend on what the property owners and the town desires.

Clarke asked if members were available for a site visit on April 23rd. Commission members agreed to meet at 3 pm on April 23rd for the site visit.

Miller asked about the timetable for zoning amendments. Clarke said that the Water/Sewer Commission's timetable has been pushed back, and that a vote may be held in November for the bond. Clarke said that the housing study and the village districts will need to be reviewed, and that her goal is to have the Gateway and the village districts finished by the end of the summer.

6. Discussion on defining Affordable Housing terms

Venkataraman said that he provided the commission definitions from state statute and other zoning regulations to help clear up confusion from the previous Planning Commission meeting. Clarke suggested that the commission review the meeting materials to get an understanding before the item is discussed further. Mullen asked for additional information on median household income. Venkataraman said that he can provide more information to the commission. Clarke suggested the Housing Committee could lead discussions on this topic.

7. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Clarke asked Venkataraman about the amendments discussion during the last Selectboard meeting. Venkataraman said that the Selectboard voted to hold a public hearing on the proposed amendments to Vehicle Fueling Station, Nonconforming Uses and Structures, and Wetlands on April 25, 2022. Venkataraman said that the Selectboard raised questions about the EV charging requirement, which will need to be addressed during the public hearing.

Clarke asked Fausel about his proposal for a Fourth of July booth. Fausel asked for a list of members of all the town's boards and committees and pictures to provide information to the public on town boards and committees. Clarke said that for Fausel's idea, one would need to reach out to town board and committee members, create posters and ask for volunteers to staff the table. Miller volunteered to help Fausel. Fausel asked if Venkataraman had funds to help support this outreach work. Venkataraman said that he might have something small in the budget.

Clarke said that the commission may discuss the housing study and the draft regulations for the Gateway area during the next meeting.

Motion by Cole, seconded by Miller, to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner