

Draft Richmond Transportation Committee

Meeting Minutes – February 13, 2024

Committee members present: Chris Cole (Chair), Cathleen Gent (Vice Chair), Jon Kart, Keith Jennings, Susan Wells.

Others present: Keith Osborne (Town Planner), Amy Gifford, Robert Hintz, Andy Bessette

All attended remotely.

A quorum was reached, and the Chair convened the meeting at 5:35pm.

1. Welcome and Public Comments:

Discussion of the sidewalk proposed for the east side of Bridge Street. The current draft design eliminates parking in front of the 13 Jolina Court (the 'Blue Seal' Building and home to Richmond Community Kitchen). Amy Gifford (owner of Richmond Community Kitchen) and Robert Hintze (building owner) asked for clarification about the next steps in the design process and requested opportunities to provide input on project design. They said they were surprised to learn that the sidewalk project had proceeded until very recently without getting their input as affected businesses and landowner. They noted that the current design would significantly harm their businesses as the parcel has little onsite parking behind the building (~2 spaces); the neighboring property owner has not plowed and graded Jolina Court to maintain parking/walking surfaces safe for all users; and that Richmond's downtown core already severely limited parking. Gifford stated that without parking in front of the building she would have to move her business out the building. Hintze said he acquired the building in the past two years and that he only learned of the sidewalk project in the past two weeks.

Cole provided context for the Richmond Transportation Committee's role in helping Richmond address its transportation needs. As an advisory committee to the Selectboard, the Richmond Transportation Committee develops project concepts, but it is the Selectboard that approves and funds these project. He explained that parking spaces in front of this building—a configuration that is essentially an extended curb cut running the length of the property along Bridge Street—requires drivers to back out directly into the Bridge Street/Railroad Street intersection. The proposed sidewalk would have drivers backing out across the sidewalk and into the intersection. The state has advised that this is a potentially dangerous situation and is encouraging towns to make changes to avoid situations such as this. Transportation planners with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, and the project's consulting engineers also recommended removing the parking spaces in front of the building for public safety reasons.

Cole noted that the Committee's discussions of this project, and meetings with consultants were all posted in Front Porch Forum and that the public was invited to attend—mostly in 2021 a 2022.

Gifford asked if the parking spaces could be kept in front of the building but at an angle similar to the configuration on the west side of the Bender block of Bridge St. Hintze asked if the new sidewalk could be installed between the building and the parking spaces.

Jennings provided data from the VTrans' Public Crash Data Query Tool (<http://apps.vtrans.vermont.gov/crashpublicquerytool/>) that only one vehicle accident has been reported for this intersection since 2010.

Cole stated that because the project is not in the final design stage there is time to work with the project engineers to see if there are ways to preserve at least some of the parking in front of the building while still ensuring public safety. Osborne said that he would contact Hintze and Gifford to discuss this in the next few days. Other committee members offered their support for considering a sidewalk design that maintains parking in front of the building and the importance of parking for businesses to thrive.

2. Revisions to Agenda

The agenda was revised to include an update on the Cochran Rd “Share the Road” project.

3. Approve Minutes from January 9, 2024 meeting:

There were no corrections or additions offered for the January 9th RTC minutes. **Wells motioned to accept, Jennings seconded, passed unanimously.**

4. In-Progress Projects

- a. THBC Intersection – Pros and Cons Draft:** The committee reviewed the changes proposed by Gent and Kart that combined the previously separate pros/cons document and the estimated costs document. The committee made additional updates to correct and clarify elements and updated the document during the meeting. The committee completed the review of the pros and cons document. Kart will email the newly revised version to the Committee in advance of the next meeting. Cole requested that the committee review this document for final edits ahead of the 2/27/2024. Cole also requested that members review the additional cost estimates document prepared by Osborne (dated November 27, 2023), for discussion during the next meeting.

Bessette commented that he prefers Option 1 for a four-way stop.

5. General Updates

- a. Upper and Lower Bridge Street Bike/Ped project:** Osborne advised the Committee that outreach to affected landowners/businesses/residents about the upper and lower Bridge St. sidewalk projects has begun. He has also been in contact with VHB, the consulting engineer for the two projects.
- b. Cochran Road Traffic Calming:** discussion of this item was postponed due to lack of time.

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Wells, seconded by Kart. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.

Minutes taken by Jon Kart

Abbreviations used in RTC minutes: ARPA = American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; CCRPC = Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; D&K = Dubois and King; GMT=Green Mountain Transit; PPL = Project Pipeline Document; RCC=Richmond Conservation Committee; RHC=Richmond Housing Committee; RTC = Richmond Transportation Committee; RVC=Riverview Commons; SB = Selectboard; TAP=Transportation Alternatives Program; THBC = intersection of Thompson Rd, Huntington Rd, Bridge St, and Cochran Rd; UPWP = Unified Planning Work Program; VDH = VT Dept. of Health; VPSP2=Vermont Project Selection and Project Prioritization; VTRANS=Vermont Agency of Transportation.