## Richmond Planning Commission

Wednesday, March 21st, 2018

Unapproved Minutes

Members Present: Mark Fausel, Alison Anand, Scott Nickerson, Joy Reap, Brian Tellstone, Lauck Parke

Others Present: Jessica Draper, Town Planner; Geoff Urbanik, Town Manager; Virginia Clarke, Brad Elliot, Chris Granda, Jack Linn, Jon Kart

Called to Order: 7:06pm

Public Comment

 NA

Administrative Items & Updates

 Brian Tellstone made the motion to approve the minutes from 3/14. Seconded by Scott Nickerson. Alison Anand requested the removal of two commas, and Mark Fausel found a misspelled name. All in favor of approval with edits, motion passed. Lauck Parke abstained.

 Energy Plan Update: The subcommittee met on 3/19 with Melanie from CCRPC and Jeff Forward to discuss the status of the energy technical plan and what we need to do for energy compliance. Melanie is doing the heavy editing, but each PC member has a copy of the draft from Monday to review. It was decided in the subcommittee meeting to put the data in the almanac rather than the technical plan itself for brevity and clarity. Mark expressed that he is concerned about the nature of the almanac being a standalone document and whether we want to edit it continually or not, because it could be a large undertaking for the commission. Alison reiterated that in order to be compliant we need to take Melanie’s suggestions seriously and show that Richmond has intentions of being proactive about energy. She also mentioned that we need to keep in mind that energy goals can be achieved by a variety of methods and everyone can do something, big or small. Mark mentioned that the goals in the energy technical plan are boiled down to Richmond scale, and that we can either move forward and try to be certified compliant or choose not to take this path and risk not having standing in section 248 proceedings, which is a choice the planning commission has to make when we have a final draft. Jessica Draper mentioned that the drafts that are currently in hand will be significantly pared down for readability.

 Map Update: The subcommittee went through the existing maps from the December draft of the plan and came up with slightly different maps and titles to better suit the current draft. Community for All Ages will be broken down into other maps such as recreation. Vermont Conservation Design Data and Natural and Working Lands A-C will be covered by new Natural Resources layers. Affordability and Cost of Living will become a housing map and we will add senior housing to it. The Developable Areas map will be deleted. The Vibrant and Appealing Downtown map will become the Richmond Village Map, and we will also be adding a Jonesville map. Economic Opportunity will become the Utilities and Facilities map and will add cell coverage, VEC and GMP customers, existing renewables, fiber optic, high speed internet, 3-phase power, town facilities and grounds, medical facilities, and schools. The planning commission also decided to merge the utilities and facilities map with transportation. We will have a Historic Resources map that includes churches, some barns, the historic district, national register sites, and possibly state register sites if we can get a larger inset that can show them better. A closer look at barns that are included was requested. Social Cultural and Recreation map will become the recreation map and will include trails, playground/ballfields, public access areas, Cochran’s, canoe access, swimming, skating, town forest, mountain biking, etc. Brad Elliot and Alison said they would look into the unknown access areas and determine the actual access. Safe and Resilient map will become the Emergency Resilience map which will remove the houses and add in the railroad. Small Town Character will be broken down into other maps. It was also suggested that a zoomed-in village utilities map would be good to have as well. The planning commission wanted an example of a map without the underlying topographic shading. They also expressed a desire for a map of commercial businesses/enterprises in Richmond.

Town Plan

 Future Land Use & Natural Resources: Alison asked if the uses listed in the planning commission draft of the future land use section were too close to zoning regulation. Mark said he thinks it needs to have language like that in order to steer future zoning. Mark suggested that Virginia Clarke and Brad share their perspective and details about their proposed draft. They stated that the planning commission draft is confusing to understand the intention of the tables. They tried to pare it down to four simpler land use areas.

Mark mentioned that it might make sense to use the natural resource layers with the Future Land Use map, and that we need to better define the natural and working lands portions of the future land use map in accordance with Act 171. He proposed two levels of these lands being: primary- including contiguous habitat units/high importance forest blocks/habitat connectors, and secondary-including publicly or privately conserved lands/ag/forestry lands. Virginia mentioned that the science to action report maps are the most specific and accurate maps we have that reflect natural resources. Alison brought up the South Burlington map style of bleeding/blending colors for future land use areas. Mark mentioned that the proposed draft removed local character areas but that they have community value, and that maybe Faye’s Corner should be returned to the map. He also mentioned the addition of a commercial utility area that could include the area with 3-phase power, etc. Brian asked if the proposed version lines up with our Future Land Use map. Virginia explained that her section and a different map than ours would include 4 areas: villages, commercial/industrial/ rural/ and the gateway and would use the natural resource layers to determine what areas are developable. She said that her bigger general areas could then be later broken down in the zoning. Brian said he was concerned that Virginia’s proposal was not showing future uses, but more existing uses.

Joy Reap was concerned that people who are not on the planning commission or staff are submitting full rewrites of technical plans as opposed to commentary. Brian said that it is clear what point of view is being represented in these proposed plans, but we need to work together to move forward. Lauck said that we had 11 different perspectives incorporated into our draft, and agrees with Joy that we shouldn’t throw out all of that work, but we need to take others comments into consideration. Joy said that we should be receiving lists of comments and edits, not entirely new documents. Lauck expressed that he was against substitution of our drafts for others. Joy asked those present if they would be able to submit something in commentary form instead. Brad said that the current planning commission draft from December wasn’t supported because they did not believe it covered requirements of Act 171. He also said that the town attorney should review the plan to ensure legal compliance. Mark explained that we generally go by whether regional planning believes we cover all of the statutory requirements and don’t usually consult the town attorney for that.

Jon Kart asked for clarification about what the two documents are that everyone is referring to. It was clarified that the planning commission has a future land use technical plan, and a group of residents has submitted a proposed rewritten draft of the future land use section. He expressed that the planning commission needs a subcommittee to work with the public. Joy explained that we do and it has been effective thus far until these two sections. Virginia asked the planning commission members if they all had a hand in writing the December draft. Mark said it was a combination of Clare, Rebecca, and Jessica using the commission’s input, but we want to improve upon it. Virginia said she believes the commission’s document is hard to read, and she thinks that the tables suggest the wrong idea about uses.

Alison suggested that maybe the controversy is over the areas on the map itself and not the descriptions in the technical plan. She also said, to answer Brian’s question, no, the proposed map would not look like ours. She said we need a technically viable compromise that is usable and protective as well. Alison also said that she did not like the style of writing in the proposed technical plan and found it off putting. She said we need to appeal to all learning types when formatting this plan. Joy asked Jessica if she could feasibly combine the two drafts into one. Geoff Urbanik requested that if the planning commission asks Jessica to create further drafts, the instructions need to be specific and not a waste of time putting in changes that have not been approved. Jessica said she agrees with Geoff that, moving forward, edits should be approved by consensus of the board. She also said that she couldn’t easily meld the two drafts at this time, because they are so different in their current states. Joy asked Jessica if she could instead reformat the planning commission document and have Virginia and her group submit comments and proposed changes.

Mark mentioned that we need to look at natural resources and future land use separately. He said that the proposed natural resources section is more robust than ours and we need to go through it and point out what bothers us specifically, and take a closer look at the goals and actions than the narrative.

Lauck wanted to build on Geoff’s point that we need to not waste time. He said we were given the role and responsibility of creating this plan, and it isn’t up to Jessica to resolve public conflicts. He didn’t think there could be a true compromise, and that we cannot solve opposing philosophies with this plan. Lauck suggested we need to decide as the planning commission whether to go deep into that argument or move on with what we see as the best foot forward. He mentioned that agriculture and forestry are dying industries and we shouldn’t be focusing on them. He suggested we implement room for large parcel landowners to have flexibility in development in order to maintain ownership of their large parcels, such as solar, wind, cell towers etc. Lauck also mentioned that we need all 4000 residents to buy-in to this plan, not a handful of involved people.

Brian said that he likes including the language about Act 171, and that the best way forward is combination of both documents. He expressed to those present that he is disappointed about the language regarding water-sewer extension and wants to leave the door open for that opportunity down the road. Jon agreed with Brian about the way forward. Alison and Joy also agreed about progress being made. Lauck proposed we vote on April 18th to approve or deny whatever is formulated through editing. Joy asked how we should plan to move forward. Jon suggested that Lauck was preventing progress by bringing up his views on Ag and forestry. Joy argued that submitting rewrites of plan sections was also preventing progress. Virginia expressed that the goal was to encapsulate the points of view of those who were at the hearing. Joy agreed that we want feedback but in the form of comments. Brad suggested that we were wasting time bickering about process instead of going through what was submitted, and that what was submitted is the most comprehensive version of their commentary.

Mark stated that we all agree that collaboration is necessary, and that the proposed natural resources document is a better document. Mark then asked each commissioner whether they would rather use the commission’s document or the proposed document as a starting point moving forward. Scott Nickerson preferred to pare down the proposed document. Alison agreed with Scott. Lauck, Joy, and Brian preferred to use ours as a starting point and pull from the proposed. Lauck suggested everyone send a memo to Jess outlining their comments on the proposed draft of natural resources. Mark requested that everyone focus on the goals and actions when submitting. Mark then asked the commission whether they like the tables or the narrative format for future land use. Scott preferred better narrative in the tables and with the tables. Alison was also in favor of both. Lauck wanted the tables improved. Joy was okay with either if it reaches a reasonable result. Brian also wanted better narrative within and with the tables. Mark preferred narrative and wants to ensure that regardless of format the plan matches the eventual map.

Mark mentioned that we may need to have an extra meeting in April to work through these sections.

Adjourn

Brian Tellstone made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Alison Anand, all in favor, so moved.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50pm

Respectfully submitted, Jessica Draper, Town Planner