

1 Richmond Planning Commission
2 Regular Meeting
3 Wednesday, November 2, 2016
4 Approved Minutes

5 **Members Present:** Sean Foley, Joy Reap, Brian Tellstone, Alex Brosam, Clare Rock (Staff)

6 **Absent:** Marc Hughes, Lauck Parke,

7 **Others Present:** Jack Linn, Bruce LaBounty, Jim Cochran, Callie Ewald, Ashely Farr, Brad Elliot,
8 Wright Preston, Judy Rosovsky, Jon Kart.

9
10 Foley opened the meeting at 7:05pm

11
12 Public Comment_– Jack Linn asked where the term “Bryant Hill” came from. Because no one refers
13 to this area as Bryant Hill, it sounds suspicious.

14
15 Administrative Items & Updates

- 16 - Approve meeting minutes – not ready for review and approval
- 17 - Staff Updates – Rock provided the following information:
 - 18 o The Town has issued the joint ZA employment opportunity with
 - 19 Hinesburg
 - 20 o The Town of Williston will be holding a public hearing on its Town Plan
 - 21 o The Conservation Commission will be submitting comment to CCRPC
 - 22 for the Nov 1 energy mapping deadline. Foley asked to requested updated
 - 23 maps from the CRPC based upon the recently issued requirements.
 - 24 o The VLT will be presenting the Selectboard with information about the
 - 25 Andrews Farm and asking if the Town wants to purchase the land. The
 - 26 VLT has identified some sources of funding which could be accessed to
 - 27 help pay for it.
 - 28 o The Vermont Planners Association (VPA) are planning to issue a
 - 29 response to Art Wolfs Burlington Free Press Editorials about the cost of
 - 30 housing in Vermont. The VPA believes Woolf is not presenting an
 - 31 accurate picture.
- 32 - Review Capital Budget – Rock shared the information from the town manager.
- 33 Rock also provided the manager with the updated demographic information. The
- 34 manager suggests a volunteer from the PC meet with the SB’s PC liaison to
- 35 discuss the items. No volunteers. Rock did receive a spreadsheet sent from the
- 36 manager but has not distributed it to PC. Foley would like a copy of the
- 37 spreadsheet.

38 Zoning Changes

- 39 - Approve draft changes to Accessory Dwellings (Section 5.9), review report and
- 40 set public hearing schedule.
 - 41 o PC reviewed the draft language, dated Nov 1 2016. Minor comments,
 - 42 including moving the comma.
 - 43 o Mark Fausel distributed copies of the draft PC report. Discussion
 - 44 followed. Foley would like more “evidence” included in the report, to
 - 45 provide more context and reasoning behind the changes. Discussion
 - 46 followed about the responsibilities of the person who makes the zoning
 - 47 change request. Foley will work on the draft report prepared by Fausel
 - 48 and include the additional information he’d like to see in this PC report,

1 so this could also provide a template/guide for future PC reports for
 2 zoning changes.

- 3 - Consideration of other zoning changes – Rock reported she has submitted a grant
 4 application to undertake some zoning revisions – see list included in the PC
 5 memo. We should find out about the grant in December. If we receive the grant
 6 the CCRPC will do the work. Reap volunteered to be on a subcommittee which
 7 will review the list of zoning changes and identify simple changes which would
 8 be worked on by a subcommittee, so these changes could happen sooner than
 9 potential work by the CCRPC.
- 10 - Process of receiving zoning change requests – continued discussion about how
 11 the PC receives zoning change requests. Foley would like more detailed
 12 information presented by a requestor. And the information include information
 13 similar to evidence presented in a judicial proceeding. Discussion followed and a
 14 comparison to presenting an application before the DRB. LaBounty added this
 15 level of work by a citizen is cumbersome. The PC would like a requestor to
 16 assume a greater level of responsibility, research and due diligence prior to bring
 17 a request to the PC. This will help increase the efficiency in which the PC’s
 18 reviews future requests.

19 **Town Plan**

- 20 - Natural & Working Lands – continued preliminary discussion
 21 Rock provided an overview of the statutory municipal plan requirements
 22 regarding natural resources. Brad Elliot added the need to be more specific in this
 23 section of the Town Plan due to the JAM Golf decision which indicated a local
 24 need for more specificity in land use regulations regarding protection of wildlife
 25 habitats and scenic views. Rock then presented a Natural and Working Lands
 26 inventory in Richmond and referred to a large scale map to point out the
 27 locations of referenced areas. The overview included the following information:

28 Natural and working lands in Richmond are comprised of a variety of natural resources. Natural
 29 resources can be broadly defined as elements found in nature which can benefit humans. These
 30 natural and working land areas contain:

- 31 • Aquifers
- 32 • Surface waters (rivers, streams and ponds)
- 33 • Floodplains, riparian areas, wetlands, and vernal pools
 - 34 ○ the Science to Action Report (STA) identifies 6 of the most significant wetlands in
 - 35 Richmond (see page 19 of Report)
- 36 • Primary agricultural soils [prime + statewide soils]
- 37 • Sand and gravel deposits
- 38 • Plant Communities and Wildlife Habitat:
 - 39 ○ Natural plant communities (including rare, threatened and endangered species) –
 - 40 the Science to Action Report identifies 13 areas which are considered to the most
 - 41 significant Upland Natural Communities in Richmond (see page 70 of STA
 - 42 Report)
 - 43 ○ Wildlife habitat – the Science to Action Report identifies 6 Critical Habitat Units
 - 44 within Richmond, and 5 Critical Habitat Units shared between Richmond and a
 - 45 neighboring town (see page 149 of STA report)

- 1 • Topographical Features (ridgelines, slopes) Conflict – beauty vs wind generation
2 • Geologic features (soil types, and unique features such as: Huntington River gorge- classic
3 conflict case - used for power, now conserved by land trust for public good/protection)

4 Together natural and working lands provide a matrix of benefits which include:

- 5 • Clean air and drinking water
6 • Flood water storage and attenuation
7 • Wildlife habitat (edge habitat and core forest habitat)
8 • Biological diversity
9 • Recreation (swimming, hiking, skiing, fishing..)
10 • Building and construction materials
11 • Heating and Energy Supply Supply (wood, biomass, solar gain)
12 • Food production (farm land) – 2012 report: 4 CSA’s, 2 dairy, 3 maple, 1 nursery, 1 berry
13 • Scenic landscapes
14 • Economic Opportunity (recreation, farming and forest products, tourism)
15 • Unique Vermont Heritage
16

17 Threats to the natural and working lands include:

- 18 • Climate Change (such as an increase in severe rain events and associated flooding)
19 • Soil Erosion and water contamination (clearing of land on steep slopes and along river
20 banks contributes to ..)
21 • Invasive Species infestations (such as Japanese knotweed and Emerald Ash Borer)
22 • Subdivision parcelization (the creation of a greater number of lots/owners, contributes to
23 greater variations of forest management techniques and can lead to forest fragmentation)
24 “Between 2002-2010, the Town of Richmond approved 33 subdivisions involving 1,452
25 acres and resulting in the creation of 103 lots (70 new lots in addition to the 33 pre-
26 subdivision parcels)... The average lot size of 33 pre-subdivision parcels was 44 acres.
27 After subdivision, the average lot size of the resulting 103 parcels was 14.1 acres. The
28 median lot size pre-subdivision was 21.8 acres and the post-subdivision was 2.4 acres.”
29 (Informing Land Use Planning and Forestland Conservation... pg 41)
30 • Forest Fragmentation (a result of parcelization, clearing of sections of the forest,
31 fragmenting core forest habitat) “Richmond exhibits a greater degree of fragmentation
32 than all 4 town inventory areas except Jericho,” (Science to Action pg 149)
33 • Lesser land availability for productive farm and forest industries (increased land values,
34 causing farm and forest land to be subdivided for housing or other uses)
35 • Decreased economic viability of farm and forest industries
36
37

38 Conserved Land:

39 Various types of conserved land – conservation easements for individual properties may have
40 varying restrictions, dependent on funding sources, the majority pay property taxes (rates vary).

1 Not all conserved land is open to the public. There are varying types of conserved land and
2 conservation easements. Conserved lands in Richmond: 26 parcels, none owned by the Town.
3 Three are tax exempt (2 VYCC properties and the 1 State-owned land.) Totals 3,398.4 acres +/-,
4 makes up approximately 15% of the land in Richmond. By comparison Bolton is over 50%
5 conserved, Hinesburg is 7.2% Conserved.

6
7 Current Use Enrollment:

8 The map shows the land enrolled in the State property tax program (administered by the State to
9 promote/incentive people maintaining large land parcels and keeping them in productive use.)
10 All the people in Vermont pay for the Current Use program, Richmond does not loose money
11 because of these enrolled properties. The State collects the tax money and then disperses it back
12 to the towns.

13
14 Town Plan Natural and Working Lands Goals are:

- 15 Goal I: Protecting the health of our rivers, streams, forests, floodplains, wildlife and habitat
- 16 Goal II: Maintaining public access to open spaces and nature
- 17 Goal III: Protecting our working and agricultural lands and soils
- 18 Goal IV: Maintaining the beauty of important vistas and scenic landscapes, such as town
19 gateways

20
21 The next step will be to talk more about which areas should be given priority considerations, and
22 what types of incentives can we provide landowners to meet the goals.

23
24
25 Next agenda

26 Accessory apartments, grouping zoning changes, David Sunshine’s zoning request.

27
28 Adjourn

29 Tellstone made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Reap, all in favor, so voted.

30
31 The meeting ending at 9:08pm

32 Respectfully submitted by Clare Rock, Town Planner