Richmond Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Unapproved Minutes

Members Present: Bruce LaBounty (Vice-Chair), Brian Tellstone, Mark Fausel (Chair), Lauck Parke, Marc Hughes, Sean Foley
Absent: Ann Cousins
Others Present: Clare Rock (Town Planner/Staff to the DRB); see attached list

7:03 PM Fausel opened the meeting

Gateway Public Hearing

Rock provided an overview of the Municipal Plan, Current Conditions of the Gateway Commercial District, the current zoning and the proposed zoning.

Town Manager, Geoffrey Urbanik provided and overview of the water and sewer extension feasibility which included general costs and looking to extend the infrastructure to Riverview Commons (the owner may cover the cost), the Town cost would still be substantial. The existing development doesn't need water and sewer but will be needed to add value to the existing properties for the redevelopment of the properties. To make it financially viable the zoning would also have to be amended to facilitate commercial development in the area.

The intent to is to have a vote at town meeting for approval for both the sewer and water extension and approval of the changes to the Gateway Commercial District. The Selectboard is expecting to host a public hearing on Dec 15. therefore future comments should be directed to Urbanik for the Selectboard.

Lauren Esserman stated we already have an overly burdened costly system and questioned why would the town take on this expansion and the proposed zoning has gotten away from the purpose of the plan.

Urbanik added that multiple commissions and committees such as the SB, PC and Economic Development committees have been working on some changes and currently the town is operating at less than 50% of sewer capacity. More than 50% of owners in the Gateway have expressed interest in extending the water and sewer (W&S). Question and discussion followed about the capacity of the cheese factory.

Fran Thomas asked why the town is hurrying and it seems like rushing the process.

Questions and discussion about the W&S rates and costs of the extension. Bard Hill announced the W&S meeting next week, Monday at 6pm, where further details and costs of the proposed expansion would be discussed.

Cathleen Gent questioned the tipping point between growth and W&S between Gateway development and Cheese Factory and other village properties and where the biggest benefit would be.

Meg Howard stated the Town should be or could be utilizing existing commercial space.

Cara LaBounty added full capacity of the extended W&S system will be maxed out at 80% and 20% of the system will be reserved for the expansion of existing users.

Fran Thomas question the seriousness of Riverview Commons and weather the Town can count on this expansion. Addition questions followed regarding the W&S Feasibility study.

Fausel requested further comments be directed at the proposed zoning changes.

Gary Bressor questioned the mixed use and the 50% regulation and asked for clarification on the intent of the proposed regulation.

Joy Reap stated concerns at the 50% regulation, as it would limit potential options for development of their property.

Chris Granda, which represents the SB and W&S stated the demand is focused on residential, and stated the regulations should provide the greatest amount of flexibility.

Fran Thomas, asked if a senior housing project would be proposed, would it need to be 50% commercial and this would not be positive. And added that Business Yard and Auto Repair and other changes are undoing some of the important aspects of the current zoning.

Tyler Merritt stated the proposed changes could be opening up the area to Motel 6 and Jiffy Lubes.

Man next to Cathleen – asked for clarification on 50% commercial requirement.

Christy Witters stated that mixed use is great, but with the 50% requirement this would not make this a reality.

Cathleen Yaggy questioned why the public is here as the PC chair stated that the changes would be followed to the SB regardless of the comments this evening.

Christy Witters stated the public has come to other meetings and the PC hasn't heard their comments.

Chris Perron, owner of a Gateway property would like to redevelop his property and the 50% requirement would not make this feasible.

Joy Reap asked to have the landscape buffer clarified and the current requirement is too much.

Terry Boyle commented about the buffer and the parking requirement.

Jon Kart stated he likes what the Reaps have proposed but the town needs to drop the SB timeline and have a substantive timeline. Kart added the W&S costs and associated information need to be better understood before proceeding and reiterated the need to let go of the timeline.

Padric Monks stated that proposed changes don't seem like tweaks, and are actually big changes, a first step should be revisiting the town plan.

Gary Bressor supports some of the things the PC are doing yet regarding the Gateway changes proposing the following recommendations 1) the need for a secondary service road – the town would need to design and engineer the road 2) due to interest in the bike path that should be laid out on the zoning map 3) should limit the Gateway boundaries should be contracted to take in only the land between the dog daycare and the cemeteries to contain the area 4) keep Verburg property and

other commercial property on the other side of the road out of the Gateway, but consider how the town could use town funds to purchase the properties for their loss of value.

Cathleen Gent read from the zoning to clarify the requirement regarding curb cuts.

Terry Boyle suggested the vision and the regulations for the Gateway should be bolder as the Gateway needs to be denser.

Questions and discussions about widening RT 2. Rod West added any curb cuts are regulated by VTrans and will require the necessary requirements, and Route 2 will be under construction next year.

Kathleen Lahiberte echoed the previous and stated it is disconcerting that the public comments will not be taken into consideration by the PC. And added the new parking location requirement doesn't make sense and doesn't see the necessity of relaxing the design standards.

Cara LaBounty asked the PC to reconsider the SB timeline.

Lauren Esserman stated the residential commercial mix requirement is a concern and it's not really workable and supports relaxing that requirement by lessening the %.

Lady behind Chris Granda – added that regarding the traffic any development in the gateway would indeed increase traffic as people who be traveling across town to the Gateway.

Cathleen Yaggy suggested clarifying the screening buffer requirement, and asked the PC to reconsider having a roof pitch requirement.

Guy Roberts from Eco Committee questioned why flat roofs are bad, as the buildings in downtown have flat roofs. It would be great to have businesses located in the Gateway to provide job opportunities for the youth. If only residential is built then this creates a higher residential tax burden. The Eco Committee was just was looking at vacant buildings and there isn't a lot available commercial space. We do need to think about economic growth.

Bruce LaBounty, responded to comments on the 50% regulation and the reason is because Richmond already has a lot of other space for residential but not a lot of space for commercial development.

Chris Perron suggested the ability to trade square footage between properties between to meet the 50% requirement.

Kathleen Lahiberte echo concerns about relaxing the design standards.

Alison Anand echoed "take your time it's always faster" and this should be a visioning process and should be a reactive process. We need to be careful.

Ed Wells stated that while we need to keep eye on economic development but also keep our "brand" and "character."

Elizabeth Wright echoed the need to take more time and we don't owe any potential business the rush. We need more spaces for park and ride parking and we need to do better at commuting.

Christy Witters stated the need for planning and referenced how the Gateway was highlighted within the Panning Commissioners Journal publications as being an example of good gateway regulations.

Joy Reap referenced Witters website, and felt like the post was not an accurate portrayal of the proposed zoning.

Discussion followed about different building material and different constructions techniques as there are some attractive building made of glass and steel.

Lady in back – asked what specific comments did the PC consider as part of the drafting processing?

Jim Monahan questioned why the process needs to rushed and feels the W&S didn't do the necessary due diligence.

Discussion about the charge by the SB chair and the need to coincide the changes with the W&S vote. Discussion about the value of extending the W&S and not making changes for the zoning.

Heidi Bormen stated she wants her property to stay in the Gateway.

Lady in the front (next to Bressor) – clarified that the majority of the uses would still need to go before the DRB so there is a level of review of potential projects.

JC Marsden stated there was a lot of deliberations given to allow for commercial development in this district and there is not a justification for the W&S and if asked to vote he would vote NO.

Jon Kart stated parking should be required to be in the back and would like to see the pitched roofs. Regarding the materials, the PC should come up with a list of better options instead of having than no options for the materials plus there should be a requirement for circulation between lots.

Cara LaBounty requested that handicapped parking be allowed in the front of buildings.

Lady in the back – requests having more time for the vision process.

Heidi Boremen thanked the PC for working with in the given timeframe.

Fausel thanked the audience.

LaBounty made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Parke, all in favor. So voted.

Discussion from the Board regard next steps. Discussion about the pitched roofs, the internal circulation.

Parke made a motion to advance the gateway zoning proposal as written to Selectboard, seconded by LaBounty, all in favor. So voted.

Other Business

LaBounty, made a motion to approve the draft FHOD regulations and schedule a public hearing for December 3, 2014, seconded by Parke, all in favor. So Voted.

Foley made a motion to approve the written warning and associated report, seconded by Parke, all in favor. So voted.

The next meeting will be December 3, 2014.

LaBounty made a motion to approve the November 5 minutes, seconded by Parke, all in favor. So voted.

Parke thanked Rock and appreciated her presentation for the gateway Hearing.

Adjourn

Tellstone made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Parke, all in favor. So voted.

The meeting ending at 9:33PM.

Respectfully submitted by Clare Rock, Town Planner/Staff to the DRB