

Town of Richmond
Rapid Fire Planning Night
Topics: Natural and Working Landscape; History and Traditions
Joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Town Plan Steering Committee
January 20, 2015
5:30 – 8pm

Present: 31 total

Planning Commission: Lauck Parke, Brain Tellstone, Bruce LaBounty, Mark Fausel, Joy Reap

Steering Committee: Marshall Paulston, Jeff Forward, Ian Bender, Heidi L. Bormann, Katie Loesel, Wright Preston, Brad Elliot

Conservation Commission:

Public: Alette Powel, Bob Low, Judy Rosovsky, Daniel Schmidt, Fran Thomas, Karen Yaggy, Gretchen Paulsen, Bruce Hennessey, Beth Whiting, Christa Kemp, Rick Barrett, John Hamerslough, Lauren Esserman, Elizabeth Wright, Amy Powers, Richard Salzman

Staff: Clare Rock, Geoff Urbanik

Clare Rock, Town Planner, welcomed people and provided an overview of the planning process, project timeline and the expectation of re-writing the zoning following adoption of the new town plan.

Topic Presentations by Clare Rock, Town Planner. Summary of Key Observations from Presentation and Discussion:

History and Traditions

Rock provided an overview of Richmond history and traditions which included: archeological site discovered in Jonesville, proof of Abenaki Indians from 1400AD. Permanent settlers after the Revolutionary War, early commerce was agriculture and trading. In late 1880's Richmond was the 2nd largest shipper of butter and cheese in the state. Other industry included sawmills, furniture factory, paper mill, spool factory, woolen mill, cider mill, several grist mills. Local businesses provided goods and services. Round Church built in 1812-13, significant for rare design and well-preserved detail. Richmond has a strong history of agriculture based economy coupled with production of value added products from farm and forest. Population declined after great Depression. Rose dramatically between 1960-2000, most dramatic in 1960-1970's.

Today Richmond has many historically significant buildings, many inventoried on the Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey. Being on the list doesn't restrict the owner. No local regulations on historic buildings either.

The Barn Census provided information on local barns and is offered as a service to towns to learn more about the agricultural heritage. Richmond reuses old buildings such as the old school (now Town Center), the church (now library), and monitors barns for the VYCC. Richmond Historical Society serves the community and oversees the Old Round Church.

Traditional areas of settlement and commerce have been primary in the village in the area of Jonesville. A portion of the village is a state designated village, a designation program dedicated to revitalizing Vermont traditional villages. The designation provides commercial property owners with eligible tax credits for building improvements.

Currently the town hosts a number of traditions, such as the 4th of July and the annual pilgrimage at the Round Church.

Natural and Working Lands

Rock provided an overview of the topic which included the following information: Drainage Basin (in the Winooski watershed), surface waters (major ones are Winooski River and Huntington River), riparian areas (areas along the river, sometimes wet), floodplains (primarily protected by standards higher than FEMA minimum, Richmond does not allow any new primary structures to be built in floodplain), water quality (CC does monitoring), wetlands and vernal pools (class 1 and 2 state regulated, others are not), groundwater, soils (ag soils are also beneficial for development), steep slopes, scenic views (would be good to identify significant scenic views to help Town have a seat at the table during PSB discussions), working farms and forest, sand and gravel deposits, air quality, natural communities, RTE's – rare, threatened and endangered species, wildlife habitat.

We now have good data on the locations of many of these items, much of this information is contained within the Science to Action Report. We also have a list of potential strategies from the 2012 Resources, Food, and Energy Report. Local active groups working in this field include the Conservation Commission and the Richmond Land Trust. We also have the municipal conservation fund which helps fund conservation projects. One observation is landscape fragmentation due to the 1 acre minimum lot size in most of the town.

Bob Low, Conservation Commission member added the following: the CC had been working on updating the natural resource information and has made a copy of this draft available for review on the CC webpage of the town website. The Town Planner and PC member attended a CC meeting in July 2015 to discuss the work of the CC. From that time the CC review the current plan, looked at other plans from surrounding towns, review the statutory requirements (as in Title 24), review the vision outcomes, referred to Richmond Tomorrow Report (2009), Resources, Food, and Energy Report (2012), ANR biofinder mapping tool, Science to Action Report (2013). The outcomes include the current draft along with some additional maps which are posted on the CC webpage. The CC recognizes the next step will be identify strategies and implementation actions, which shall be a focus of tonight's meeting.

Participants then divided into 2 groups. Each group had the list of key observations, topic poster (including vision statement and what achieving our mission means), map, impact/feasibility chart, color codes post-it notes.

Each group was charged with reviewing the list of topic goals (aka “what achieving our mission means” from topic posters) and each group then brainstormed action items for each goal and posted (with sticky notes) on the topic posters.

Each group then prioritized the ideas by organizing the action items on the Impact/Feasibility Chart. Below is a listing of the action items followed by how they fell on the Impact/Feasibility Chart.

Impact/Feasibility Key:

HI/HF = High Impact / High Feasibility

HI/LF = High Impact / Low Feasibility

HF /LI = High Feasibility / Low Impact

LF/LI = Low Feasibility / Low Impact

History and Traditions

Richmond’s Vision is to enhance our **history and traditions**, celebrating our agricultural heritage, treasured community events, and unique historic sites and architecture;

- Growing and continuing our celebrations and community events, such as the 4th of July (Blue)
 - Have high school update and improve Richmond (town?) website **HI/HF**
 - Social calendar portal on town website **HI/HF**
 - Round church event during 4th of July **HI/HF**
 - Do a place based workshop (walter polemon?) **HI/HF**
 - Through school do Concerts at round church **HI/HF**
 - Recreation committee / director **HI/HF**
 - Annual chili cook off / floatapalooza/ Decemeber holiday market / October fest / first night / block parties (pleasant street) / **HI/HF**
 - Support Richmond Band **HF /LI**
- Preserving and restoring historic buildings and architecture (yellow)
 - Expand website to include resources on grant opportunities **HI/HF**
 - Provide information and help prepare barn grants **HI/HF**
 - Homeowner seminars on historic preservation funds (grants, federal tax credits) etc / coordinate with economic development **HI/HF**
 - ----- funds for town center **HI/HF**
 - Identify historic buildings **HI/HF**
 - Look for tenants for 3rd floor of town center building **middle chart**
- Supporting the historic society, library, places of worship and other cultural institutions (Orange)
 - Organize end of year fundraiser for historic society and public buildings **HI/HF**
 - Town \$ for historic society **HI/LF**
 - Need more volunteers for historic society **HI/LF**
 - Marketing coordinator **HI/LF**

- Story corps for Richmond History **HF /LI**
- Protecting our unique historic sites and cultural landmarks, such as the Round Church (Teal)
 - Have a joint meeting with the cemetery, conservation commission and historical society **HI/HF**
 - Encourage and thank property owners **HF /LI**
- Honoring our agricultural past and preserving our rural community (Purple)
 - Educate property owners on resources for protecting barns **HI/HF**
 - Table or booth for farmers at 4th of July **HI/LF**
 - Thank a farmer day **HI/LF**
 - Organize farm tours **HI/LF**
- Add new goal or incorporate into one above: preserving our oral history and historical records
 - Digitize photos and documents for future generations **HI/HF**

Natural and Working Lands

Richmond's Vision is to wisely steward our **natural and working lands**, ensuring the beauty and health of our landscapes, waterways, open spaces, wildlife and agricultural resources.

- Protecting the health of our rivers, streams, forests, floodplains, wildlife and habitat (Blue)
 - Town wide culvert assessment **HI/HF**
 - Create and maintain fish passage with right sized culverts **HI/HF**
 - Continue to fund and support the conservation reserve fund **HI/HF**
 - Make sure wildlife and their habitat have strong advocates in town plan decision making. These advocates need to be heard. **HI/HF**
 - Compensate farmers for taking stripes of stream bank out of cultivation to create riparian buffers **HI/HF**
 - Develop a best practices documents/information to help landowners with suggestions **HI/HF**
 - Conserve or establish long term stewardship of connective corridors between large habitat blocks **HI/HF**
 - Change Regulations to (zoning): **HI/HF**
 - To protect surface waters regulate run off and erosion
 - Give science a seat at the DRB table – understand incremental degradation of our resources
 - Increased protection of wildlife habitat
 - Promote compact development, discourage sprawl
 - Change zoning to better protect, restore and enhance natural resources within 3 years. The plan should include outreach and public involvement
 - Evidence- and science-based decision making in land use planning
 - Protect large contiguous blocks of forest thru large acre zoning and keeping construction close to roads

- Fix zoning – one-acre zoning is awful
 - Ditch 1 acre zoning
 - Ensure zoning matches the plan
 - Encourage clustering of development to prevent forest fragmentation
 - Promulgate regulations that promote effective interfaces between human activities and natural resources
 - Ensure zoning protects Richmond rural character
 - Change zoning from 1 acre zoning to density based 1 per 10 acre and 1 per 5 acre zoning
 - Zoning changes that encourage a modest increase in village development such as reduction in minimum lot sizes
 - Create 75-100 ft minimum buffer from rivers, streams, and wetlands
 - Change zoning to protect from further parceling valuable natural areas
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- Conserve land in all elevation zones, and protect ridgelines for wildlife movement, soil stability and views **HI/LF**
 - Develop and adopt a policy of invasive species prevention and control for public lands **HI/LF**
 - Require use of native plants in landscaping when reviewing development **HI/LF**
 - Education: **HF /LI**
 - Forums and workshops to educate on threats to natural resources
 - Use the arts for education that raises awareness
 - Help landowners understand the values and opportunities of land conservation i.e. easements and protection from development
 - Regulations: **HF /LI**
 - Wildlife overlay district
 - Priority to protecting beech, oak and other mast stands
 - Protect diversity
 - Figure out why we continue to subdivide when the population is decreasing **HF /LI**
 - Prioritize natural resources for protection **HF /LI**
 - Design steps to minimize impacts of climate change **HF /LI**
 - Develop an open space plan **HF /LI**
- Maintaining public access to open spaces and nature (Yellow)
 - Identify lands that could serve as valuable recreation lands for a variety of activities that will not harm natural resources (xc skiing, swimming, walking, and protect lands thru easements, purchase or other ways **HI/HF**
 - Collaborate with land owners and other groups for common interests on large parcels **HI/HF**
 - Maintain and mark the existing trails **HI/HF**
 - Use identification markers on trails i.e. trees **HI/HF**
 - Use VYCC crews to build and maintain local trails network **HI/HF**
 - Trails committee to publicize maps and share info on how to gain access to open spaces **HI/HF**

- Connect existing trails / create a trail around Richmond **HI/HF**
- Create designated trails with landowner permission **HI/HF**
- Maintain funding for local conservation fund **HI/HF**
- Create a town forest in priority habitat blocks **HI/LF**
- Talk to farmers to generate “wish list” of best soils, work with RLT and VLT to increase available lands **HI/LF**
- Open space plan **HF /LI**
- Work with local medical community to organize walking groups to hike on local preserves **HF /LI**
- Education: **HF /LI**
 - Educate landowners about natural river and stream bank erosion measures
 - Produce fun looking educational materials on the values of natural resources with a “what’s in it for me” approach
- Provide landowner protection for people who want to allow public access to private property **LF/LI**
- Protecting our working and agricultural lands and soils (orange)
 - Strictly limit any more development in good agricultural land **HI/HF**
 - Continue to support conservation easements purchases, in partnership with very affordable housing for working lands workers **HI/HF**
 - Evaluation of storm water run off **HI/HF**
 - Require cover cropping and other soil saving measures on ag land **HI/LF**
 - Educate residents on the importance of maintaining farm land especially in the floodplain and floodways **HF /LI**
 - Promote real estate planning for forest and farm owners **HF /LI**
 - Promote enrollment in VT UVA program and management plans that address wildlife habitat and ESTA’s **HF /LI**
 - Increase town support of appreciation for our towns working lands and their respective farms **HF /LI**
 - Make farming more affordable i.e tax breaks **LF/LI**
- Maintaining the beauty of important vistas and scenic landscapes, such as town gateways (Teal)
 - Limit light pollution within the village and in the rural and undeveloped areas **HI/HF**
 - Limit commercial development in the “gateway” from the interstate, ensure development within the village **HI/HF**
 - Zoning regulations that restrict destruction of vistas, ridgelines **HI/HF**
 - Catalog/document and prioritize significant scenic areas **HI/HF**
 - Protection for town wide scenic areas, particularly around solar and cell towers **HI/HF**
 - Send copies of open space and resource protect plans to the PC, DRB and CC and educate on contents **HF /LI**
- Other
 - Create conserved and connected wildlife friendly corridors between the large conserved state lands on either side of Winooski river
 - Make a map of developable land in the town overlaid by hot topic resource

- concerns as both a developer and conserver tool
- Encourage and support schools/educators in sharing local natural and working landscapes so that next generation is on board
- School curriculum include our lands with public access i.e. Willis Hill, Gillett Pond, Safford Preserve, Bakin preserve

Each group then reported back to whole group on the work of their respective groups.

Parting comments from participants included the need to keep the town affordable so that people who worked on local farmers could afford to live in Richmond. Also to consider regulations which allowed for, or supported agriculture based businesses, so the retail farm stands do not have to meet the same standards of regular retail establishments.

Clare Rock thanked everyone for coming and reminded people of the next Planning Night on February 3, 2016. After all the planning nights we will be hosting a mapping workshop which will use information from each planning night and map out a future land use map for Richmond.

