**Proposed 2018 Richmond Town Plan** - **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Town Plan Draft Date: 9/17/18**

**Town Plan Information:** [**http://www.richmondvt.gov/documents/2018-town-plan-draft-information/**](http://www.richmondvt.gov/documents/2018-town-plan-draft-information/)

1. **Is this the Planning Commission’s final draft of the new Town Plan?**

Yes! This will be the version voted on this Election Day (November 6th) for adoption. It will be effective immediately upon passage (if it passes). The town plan provides the foundation for numerous town endeavors, including zoning, grants, capital planning, energy development, etc.

1. **What are the consequences of not having a Town Plan?**

Without an adopted town plan we as the town cannot apply for certain grants; participate in State Designation Programs (our Village Center Designation was lost); amend or adopt new zoning, subdivision regulations or other bylaws; or adopt a new capital budget/capital program. Without a plan adopted we also would not have standing in Act 250 or Section 248 applications. State agency plans adopted under 3 VSA Chapter 67 must be compatible with the municipality’s approved plan, but an expired plan will not have standing.

1. **What is stretch code and why is there concern over the language surrounding stretch code in the draft Town Plan Draft?**

Goal 2 of the draft Town Plan states: “ Dramatically decrease the amount of fossil fuels used for heating and cooling buildings through weatherization, efficiency, and renewable energy sourcing (e.g. heat pumps and wood heat). Action 7 of that goal refers to the consideration of adopting stretch code during the zoning regulation process. Stretch code is a higher standard energy code for residential and commercial buildings that is set by the state. The “base code” formally known as Residential Building Energy Standard (RBES) and Commercial Building Energy Standard (CBES) is currently mandated by the State of Vermont. Stretch code is currently required for projects under Act 250. Stretch code is an option for town’s to adopt beyond RBES and CBES.

The planning commission sought out enhanced energy planning through the regional planning commission which included an overhaul of the Energy technical plan within the town plan. One of the suggested actions was to “Consider adopting the State’s Energy Stretch Code in the town’s zoning regulations for new construction, renovations, and additions.” The planning commission removed this action from their May 2018 draft that was submitted to the selectboard based on feedback they received at their April informational meeting.

At the close of the initial selectboard hearing on August 8th 2018, the three selectboard members in attendance voted unanimously to put the action back into the draft due to feedback they had received in favor of the language. The language was then modified at a second selectboard hearing on 8/27 date to say *“Consider adopting all or parts of the State’s Energy Stretch Code in the town’s zoning regulations for new construction, renovations, and/or additions.”* This less directive language is included in the proposed draft Town Plan.

This statement provides a basis for the planning commission to consider inclusion of the code when altering the existing zoning regulations to be consistent with the Town Plan. This language at the town plan level does not create or enforce a regulation. It does not mandate adoption or require the planning commission to adopt it. The concern about the code itself, is that if the code were to be adopted, it could increase the cost of construction or renovations. The planning commission does intend to have a public discussion about this in the future in order to consider it.

1. **It seems like there are a lot of “Action” Items in the Implementation table – how will we deal with all these?**

Many of the “Action” Items are things that we are already doing; activities that are already contributing to our good quality of life and to the smooth running of our town. They are mentioned in the relevant sections and the implementation summary to recognize their importance and to encourage us to keep doing them! They are mostly listed with an “ongoing” designation. Priority tasks are labelled “short term” and will be initiated by the “Primary Party” listed in the table. The planning commission will give each town board, commission or group a list of the tasks assigned to them, and their job will be to prioritize them and develop a more specific timeline for accomplishing them. Obviously, some will be easier to do than others! Some will require public input as they are developed. The Planning Commission will need to periodically assess the progress that is being made, likely on an annual basis. The Selectboard and the Town Administrator will need to work together to prioritize tasks that are assigned to them jointly. Richmond residents who are interested in some area of this work will be encouraged to volunteer their ideas and/or time.

1. **How is the Town Plan related to the Zoning Ordinance?**

The Town Plan by itself cannot change or reverse any existing development or zoning permits. The Town Plan provides the underlying intent for the land use regulations which specify how and where development can occur within the town boundaries. The Zoning Ordinance is our main land use regulation, and very specific, legally-binding, parameters for development are clearly laid out. The zoning document must be “in conformance with the Town Plan” according to the enabling statute (Title 24 S. 4411). The Future Land Use map in our proposed 2018Town Plan was designed with purposely inexact boundaries in order to provide general guidance, yet allow some flexibility, in the development of the Zoning Ordinance. This technique has been used by other towns and meets the approval of the CCRPC.

1. **Does CCRPC approve of this plan?**

Yes, CCRPC staff and the Planning Advisory Committee have reviewed this plan and have recommended it for approval by the CCRPC board.