

March 17, 2019

Dear Richmond Select Board:

Please consider my application for a seat on the Richmond Planning Commission (PC). I have previously served on the Richmond Select Board (2011 to 2015), as well as the Richmond Water & Sewer Commission, the Town Plan Committee and the Richmond Climate Action Committee. I am a Senior Researcher-Advocate with the Appliance Standards Awareness Project and I work with both federal and state regulations every day.

The last, failed attempt to pass a revised zoning ordinance in Richmond happened while I was on the Select Board. I have always wished that I had done more to help it succeed. My youngest child will be out of the house in the fall, which will enable me to bring my time and experience to the PC's next attempt.

There may be opposition to me serving on the PC due to my work with the Richmond Climate Action Committee on the Richmond town plan. Several years ago, the PC created an open public process for the town plan rewrite. The RCAC focused on the energy-related provisions of the plan. After the draft was complete, a small group of anti-regulation activists pressured the PC to delete our recommendation that Richmond *consider* adopting the "stretch" version of the VT residential energy code (RBES).

First of all, it is important for the select board to understand that the question of whether Richmond should eventually *adopt* the current RBES stretch code is no longer relevant. State law requires Richmond to comply with either the base or stretch versions of RBES. The RBES is scheduled for an upgrade in early 2020 before the PC will be able to rewrite the town zoning ordinance. The new base RBES will require levels of energy efficiency that are comparable to the current stretch RBES.

That said, this controversy motivated me to volunteer for the PC. Few of the anti-regulation activists even understood what the stretch RBES was, or how it was different from the base RBES. They were ideologically opposed to the town *considering* the adoption of the RBES stretch code. Rather than protecting their drafting process, or even defending the concept of open public discourse, the PC allowed these activists to push aside the work of the RCAC and dictate what would go into the town plan. The PC was willing to sacrifice its independence, undercut its own public drafting process, and allow special-interest activists to make politically-driven changes in town policy. This threatened the integrity of the town plan draft. I believe that the select board took appropriate corrective action.

The zoning rewrite will be controversial, but it can succeed if voters believe in the PC, and in the PC's process. Richmond's zoning is now very out-of-date which has negative impacts on economic development. I want to help the PC work with all citizens in Richmond to rewrite our zoning regulations and obtain voter approval.

Respectfully,

Chris Granda