

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Notes

Date: April 15, 2021

Time Started: 7:35

Time Ended: 9:20

Ravi Venkataraman (Host)

Present: **Virginia Clarke, Carole Furr, Mark Hall, Sarah Heim (Chair), Zachary Maia, Connie van Eeghen**

Guest: **Brandy Saxton**, consultant

Absent: Miranda Lescaze, Jackie Pichette

Quorum is 5; 5 votes to pass any motion

Recorded by Zoom

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Adjustments to Agenda
3. Approval of March 18, 2021 meeting minutes
 - a. Moved to accept: Zachary Maia
 - b. Seconded: Mark Hall
 - c. Unanimously passed
4. Discussion on VT Community Development Loan Program – postpone to future meeting; goal is to understand purpose and benefits of this program
5. Municipal Planning Grant update
 - a. Welcome to Brandy Saxton, our MPG consultant, with introductions. Brandy has done land use planning for 20 years, with a consulting business for 15. Helped Richmond with planning ~10 years ago.
 - b. Review of scope of work and schedule – of which we are on budget and on schedule at start up 😊
 - c. Will work with interest groups and focus groups at first, then study zoning with technical review and recommendations.
 - d. Survey draft:
 - i. May need one for Richmond residents (electronic and paper (usually a small percentage of responses)) and one for those not in Richmond
 - ii. Resident survey drafted by Brandy:
 1. On Survey Monkey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=uTAX_2F6FatejEx8Ua2fF8cPNMDtmG4LX0S08kD_2BifXuD75W6w1hgBPK8z_2B_2BS_2Fbxv0
 2. Gather perceptions about new housing
 3. Create a needs assessment to compare the supply of housing with demand
 - a. Brandy did a long term view of Underhill's future need for housing that contradicted popular assumptions about planned changes; there was much less interest in moving to other housing than anticipated
 - b. Recent conversations with the Planning Commission have suggested that elderly would like to downsize and younger families are not able to move here; these are also assumptions; at the same time, everyone wants things "just the way they are"
 - c. Employers have experienced employees living outside the community; the FPF demonstrates constant interest in available housing
 - d. Consider surveying the members of the Senior Center, among other groups
 - e. Evaluate "NIMBY"-ism when adding affordable housing or any housing, or the distinction between high and low quality housing
 - f. Could include "photo preference" items as visual examples of what people might find acceptable in the village, or not; possibly as a second survey or part of community meetings
 - g. Sample size target: online surveys are now quite popular with increased response rates over the past five years. 5% used to be great responses rates; 20% is now more typical, with 4 – 6 weeks to get the word out.
 - h. Ten minute time burden or less.

- i. Would like to capture renters in Richmond looking for ownership.
 - j. Important to engage community in this work, understand their issues, and respond to them
 - 4. Feedback/questions on current draft: would like to complete comment period in next week for revision and review at next Committee meeting: Virginia, Connie, Sarah
 - iii. Nonresident survey under development by Brandy, based on Committee's previous work
 - 1. Draft to all Committee members for review but no discussion; individual feedback to Brandy
 - 2. Will discuss how to distribute at next meeting, such as non-local PPFs, Richmond business association
- 6. Update from the Planning Commission
 - a. Virginia reported on housing specific topics. Have completed several neighborhood outreach Zoom meetings, north and south parts of the Village, commercial areas, and mixed areas that combine multi-family housing with flexible (commercial) uses.
 - i. Overall: not interested in greater density; OK with single and duplex homes and accessory buildings but not multi-family buildings. OK with smaller lots to increase total number of buildings
 - ii. Rental properties are accepted.
 - iii. Planning outreach to Gateway (May)
 - 1. Many different views on what the Gateway area should include. This is not a great place to put families.
 - iv. The Farr Farm is the most accessible space to build more housing.
 - v. Leaning towards mixed residential districts to promote more kinds of housing and commercial opportunities. No resistance noted yet.
 - b. The "village" is a colloquially defined area generally determined by housing development; there is no legal separation between the village and the town. This is a common understanding that may need definition in the survey.
 - c. Jonesville is a secondary village that has resisted efforts for development for some time, especially since it lost its post office.
 - d. Opportunities for growth in Richmond are generally scarce. Housing that could be converted to higher density dwellings are possibly those on East Main Street.
 - e. The next Planning Commission meeting on the 21st will include an update on the Housing Committee and Brandy's plans. Survey is consistent with current PC plans and not duplicative of the PC's previous work. Her plans to interview realtors and construction industry will also add to the PC's work.
 - f. Virginia will follow up with Brandy on the failure of the Town zoning regulations in 2012. Ravi noted that this is not unique to Richmond.
- 7. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
 - a. New committee members: Andrew Mannix has resigned, leaving two vacancies. Ravi will ask alternate committee members if they would be interested in serving as regular members and advertise.
 - i. Applications come to this committee and make a recommendation to the Select Board.
 - ii. There are existing criteria which we could use to make those reviews.
 - iii. Andrew is willing to contribute on an ad hoc basis.
 - b. Zachary's work is changing; please use his Gmail account.
 - c. Next meeting: Thursday, May 13, 7:30 – 8:30
 - i. Continue with schedule for 3rd Thursdays of each month
 - d. Proposed agenda to include:
 - i. Discussion on VT Community Development Loan Program (if available)
 - ii. Municipal Planning Grant update
 - iii. Update from Planning Commission (Virginia)
 - e. Moved to adjourn: Connie van Eeghen
 - f. Seconded: Sarah Heim
 - g. Unanimously passed

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen