

## Town of Richmond Housing Committee Notes

Date: September 30, 2021

Time Started: 7:33

Time Ended: 9:12

Ravi Venkataraman (Host)

Present: Virginia Clarke, Mark Hall, Miranda Lescaze, Sarah Heim (Chair), Connie van Eeghen

Guest: Kristen Hayden-West

Absent: Mark Fausel (alt), Zachary Maia, Jackie Pichette (alt)

Quorum is 5; 5 votes to pass any motion

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
  - a. Welcome to Kristen Hayden-West, member of the public and candidate for committee membership
2. Approval of July 8, 2021 meeting minutes
  - a. Postpone to next meeting so members have a chance to review
3. Adjustments to Agenda
  - a. Introductions of Committee members to Kristen
4. Update on Zoning for Affordable Housing project
  - a. Since our last meeting, Brandy and Ravi have started preparing for interviews and focus groups
  - b. Needs help finding young people (35 and younger) to interview; all set with ages over 65 and employers; have reached out to people in housing development
    - i. Sarah will reach out to some of the younger people in her neighborhood
    - ii. Recruitment message: Ravi will send out blurbs he has been using
  - c. Planning Commission will have an update on the project at next week's meeting; Brandy will join then and on Oct 20. The focus is an overview and the technical memo. Please join if available, especially Oct 20 @ 7.
  - d. Brandy and Ravi have arranged a public meeting for Nov 18 at ~7p to summarize the project and recommendations; more details to come. There may be another public meeting plus final presentations to Planning Commission and Selectboard at the end of this project.
  - e. Virginia: Brandy's work focuses on the Town Center; her recommendations for zoning changes will be very specific. There will be a hearing procedures, including our Committee, the Planning Commission, public notification, and the Selectboard. A lot of listening and gathering responses. Our Committee could look at the current zoning is and what the proposed changes mean.
    - i. Mark: How should we proceed?
    - ii. Virginia: this Committee has not seen the proposed zoning language, either previous proposals or Brandy's recommendations. First step is to look at current language, then the proposed. Virginia is preparing a summary of changes, including principles underlying the changes.
    - iii. Ravi: After Brandy's recommendations are reviewed, if they are, the next step is zoning language.
    - iv. Sarah: the Housing Committee will have an opportunity to add its comments
    - v. Virginia: recommend looking at it together, for examples starting with the northern end of town. Brenda has applied a housing lens only to the districts in the village. We can also look at other districts for housing opportunities. Could probably do in a meeting.
    - vi. Ravi: zoning bylaws are dry and technical; they can take some getting used to. Focus on Article 3 and highlight parts related to residential housing. May need to review density together. A single family or two family structure is allowed on a single acre in some districts; three quarters of an acre in others (Southview).
    - vii. Miranda: meeting time spent on helping us understand the current zoning and the proposal would be worthwhile. Brandy's technical review memo provides a helpful overview of district zoning.
  - f. Virginia: Brandy's memo will also touch on discrimination and the need for multifamily housing. Our Committee may need to support these recommendations in the community.
    - i. Connie: to what degree does state law govern use of land?
      1. Miranda: local municipal has control over land use.
      2. Virginia: recent state law does not allow "protecting neighborhood character" as the sole reason for preventing changes to dwellings. Our zoning allows in house day care, group

homes, and accessory buildings cannot be prohibited. Similarly as to mobile home parks and farms. Brandy can tell us more about these issues.

- g. Virginia: how will the housing survey we did be put to use, and Miranda's and Mark's previous housing needs assessment?
    - i. Ravi: Brandy will focus only the zoning work, but will also provide a report that can incorporate the housing needs assessment. She is not planning to expand on the assessment of the previous work – but Ravi will check this out with her.
    - ii. Mark: we collected data and didn't have the expertise to analyze this.
      - 1. Ravi will ask Brandy about the use of this information and its impact.
5. Discussion on the potential expansion of the sewer line through the Gateway District
- a. Virginia: Planning Commission is discussing the extension of the sewer line in this direction in response to the Reaps. There's little development in the Village; the Gateway is an area that is close but has some emotional attachments.
    - i. It's a scenic entry to the Village
    - ii. The west side is flood plain and must be protected
    - iii. The east side is subject to changes/reduced demand for commercial property.
      - 1. Note: Jolina Ct was originally supposed to be commercial. In order to get the bank loans, the property had to be at least partially residential. The commercial space has not been filled.
    - iv. Could there be a mix of commercial and residential development? If we want that, we need not only sewer but water lines as well. Not a lot of space but it's not farmland or forest blocks or recreation and could support more buildings. Could still support a scenic view.
    - v. What do we need to know to promote multifamily housing and the sewer/water support.
  - b. Kristen: lives in the Gateway district. The septic facilities are poor and all families/businesses are affected. There are three proposals: just REAP, up to Mobil Station, up to Lucky Spot and mobile home park. There is plenty of space for more mobile homes in the park if there was more water/sewer. The decision is made/proposed by Water/Sewer Commission. This Committee can inform the W/S Commission if we think extending the W/S district may be helpful, perhaps starting as an approved concept before making plans to take action.
  - c. Ravi: expansion is about space and is determined by voting by current and future customers; extension is about infrastructure (extending a line) and requires money and customer hook ups.
    - i. Kristen: there is capacity in the W/S system for expansion/extension. And, including more homes/businesses would reduce the average cost for all.
  - d. Virginia: if we think this is a good idea, we need a good process to work on learning about what this means and how to move it forward, if we continue to think it is a good idea. There are considerations, such as increased housing would require the state to put in better bike/pedestrian pathways, possibly out to the mobile park. Roger Brown denies that water/sewer is needed at the mobile park but agrees that there is more land there to develop. The businesses have expressed interested, e.g. Mobil gas station.
    - i. Sarah: there are a lot of arguments in favor. What are the arguments against it.
    - ii. Virginia: Kendall feels expansion must come before, as this brings more state money to support it. Not sure why he doesn't promote this more. Reaps' could have their own private septic connection.
    - iii. Kristen: there are few people that get the distinction between extension and expansion. Some don't want further development in the district. Residents of mobile home park were concerned that rates would go up.
      - 1. The rent rate in that park is among the highest in VT. A concern is that connection to sewer/water might make the rents go higher. Conversations continue with Roger Brown.
      - 2. Selectboard meeting: interested in pursuing expansion and also develop a rigorous description of how any extension would be carried out, thereby both engaging the community and alleviating fears.
    - iv. Miranda: we should be careful not to declare our personal opinions but look to state policy which indicates that housing and development should occur in smart growth areas: water/sewage, public transportation, and access to goods and services. The Gateway is the closest match with space available for development and could be a "smart growth" location.

- v. Virginia: concerns about protecting the scenic view can be included in zoning language: landscaping, footprint max, curb cuts, placement of buildings... And placing housing there protects against the fear of car lots and a Dollar Store.
    - 1. Kristen: might end up with a traffic light if a good amount of housing were put in.
  - vi. Mark: do property owners in this area have an opinion?
    - 1. Kristen: it's more affordable housing, which will be more valuable with W/S access. Almost all residents in this district are supportive; may be concerned but may also have new opportunities.
    - 2. Virginia: it would be allowed to transform over time.
    - 3. Kristen: her family wanted to add an auxiliary dwelling on the property but because the property acts as drainage to the flood plain; they learned that there is limited development allowed. Half of her property is protected wetlands.
    - 4. Virginia: wetlands are their own emerging concern with climate change and current challenges already experienced.
  - e. Sarah: could a subcommittee look at the questions/issue to help us make recommendations?
    - i. Virginia: the W/S Commission might vote in favor of this issue, and we don't need to do more. At some point the zoning for the Gateway will come up and we'll need to grapple with it. Wait and see what happens on Monday's W/S Commission meeting?
    - ii. Ravi: note broad potential issues that can lead to sprawl, such as
      - 1. Separating water and sewer issues may affect the combined W/S district we currently have
      - 2. Floodplains exist in many areas in Richmond.
      - 3. With an expansion and extension, it only works if there are more connections/hook ups
      - 4. Brandy's work shows us we need to examine the number of houses supported by such a change
    - iii. Virginia: expansion does not obligate extension. When/if we consider an extension, then you figure out how many potential users there would be.
    - iv. Kristen: current residents/business do not have adequate W/S; this is an urgent issue.
  - f. Virginia and Connie to go to next Monday's W/S meeting; OK for Connie to express interest of Housing Committee in affordable housing and potential for Gateway District to support unmet housing needs.
6. Discussion on possible next projects for the Housing Committee - tabled
7. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
- a. Next meeting: October 14
  - b. Proposed agenda to include: review of current zoning language related to the Affordable Housing Project
    - i. Moved to adjourn: Virginia
    - ii. Seconded: Miranda
    - iii. Unanimously passed

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen