

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Minutes

Date: January 13, 2022

Time Started: 7:33p

Time Ended:

Ravi Venkataraman (Host)

Present: Virginia Clarke, Mark Hall, Sarah Heim (Chair), Connie van Eeghen, Kristen Hayden-West

Absent: Miranda Lescaze, Zachary Maia

Quorum is 4; 4 votes to pass any motion

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Approval of December 9, 2021 meeting minutes
 - a. Moved to accept: Kristen Hayden-West
 - b. Seconded: Sarah Heim
 - c. Unanimously passed
3. Adjustments to Agenda - none
4. Update on the Zoning for Affordable Housing study
 - a. Ravi has a meeting planned with Brandy tomorrow afternoon. Next steps are finishing interviews and reviewing zoning recommendations.
 - b. Ravi will send out an update email after his meeting tomorrow.
 - c. Brandy will come to our February meeting or another before the end of February.
5. Update on FY23 UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program) and Transportation Committee Meeting
 - a. Ravi: Last discussion in December ended with decision not to use a land use component in the Transportation plan. Will update the 2014 plan with bike path and access to access to I89. Ravi will summarize this plan in the next week.
 - b. Ravi: looking for next step in visualization of the Gateway District; grant application due next Monday to provide mock ups of Gateway District.
6. Discussion on Coordination with the Planning Commission and its upcoming work plan
 - a. Virginia: "pivot" as a new verb thanks to Covid, the Planning Commission is still planning to look at zoning for housing in the downtown district, it is also pivoting its current focus to the Gateway expansion. This expansion was approved up to the Mobil station, not up to Riverside Commons.
 - i. Next step: Town must have a bond vote which, at this moment, seems likely to pass. Afterwards, W&S District must have an Act 250 permit to support expansion. This requires addressing "anti-sprawl" and "strip development" gaps in current zoning as defined by 9L. In the next six months: new zoning relative to the Gateway that support 9L criteria to prevent strip development.
 - ii. Proposed timeline: (see packet: Gateway -- Initial Plan and Timeline 12.27.21). In addition to 9L criteria, also want to provide an attractive entrance and support more housing. Also interested in amenities: pathway to schools that goes behind Willis property and on Land Trust property; possibly also to businesses planned behind the Willis property.
 - iii. Tasks: meet with residents and learn, public outreach to non-Gateway residents, identification of elements needed in zoning to achieve these goals, create a visual reproduction of what the Gateway could look like, more public feedback, with an amendment by June/July. This work must be done before the Act 250 application.
 - b. Kristen: W&S learned on Monday that there are specific criteria the bond that may make it difficult. The customers of new changes pay for the changes, allocated based on use of the property at the time the bond is passed, not the future development of the property and use of the services.
 - i. Can ARPA funds be used to support this transition?
 1. Sarah submitted a general letter to ARPA on how we can be helpful; need to wait for rules about how the funding can be used. May need further research on this.
 2. Ravi: ARPA Committee is still in set up stage. The rules are not very clear. Infrastructure is clearly supported (pathways and sidewalks), as are funds to support a Housing Trust Fund and underserved areas. How to support housing, such as by putting in water lines, is not yet

clear; neither is the ability to target specific areas with specific needs, such as water lines for the Gateway.

- ii. Not sure if the bond vote will be part of Town Meeting Day meeting.
- iii. Not sure if vote can be determined by all Town members, rather than water district members.
- c. Ravi: this committee has a role in determining housing allowances in the changed Gateway: size of lots, relevance to other housing allowances in the Town, and opportunity for affordable housing units.
- d. Virginia: focus on the Gateway was accelerated by W&S extension vote; have been interested in the Gateway as an opportunity for expanding housing stock for a while.
- e. Ravi: equity is also an issue, with housing planned for a strip of land between I89 and Rte. 2.
 - i. Virginia: may not be the right place for affordable housing. May need to consider noise mitigation from the highway.
- f. Next steps
 - i. Virginia: Planning Commission is developing scenarios for meeting the goals. Housing Committee can review and evaluate: difficulties, red flags... after Planning Commission comes to consensus, perhaps as early as Jan 19.
 - 1. Planning Commission creates the plan, gets public feedback, revises zoning changes, submits to SB, who then has public hearing followed by either a SB (Selectboard) vote or a Town vote, depending on level of controversy.
 - 2. The goal is to resolve any controversies in the Planning Commission process before proceeding to SB.
 - 3. After SB vote, there is a 21 day waiting period during which a petition can call for a Town vote.
 - ii. Sarah: how can the Housing Committee support this process?
 - 1. Ravi: review of Planning Commission scenarios. Equity issues can be raised in Housing Committee conversations. Housing allowances can also be addressed by Housing Committee. Act 250 requires up to 4 units/acre; standard water/sewer recommendation is up to 8 units/acre – can use our research to date to help clarify these choices.
 - 2. Virginia: Climate action state wide process used tools that provide an equity lens to help evaluate proposals and scenarios.
 - 3. Ravi: historically, marginalized communities have been placed near highways and interstates, making the Gateway a specific focus for creating an equitable process that does not further exploit marginalized populations.
 - a. Virginia: the focus may have to be broad, allowing housing for a diverse population. May be able to add similar housing units as found in other parts of Richmond. The difference may be small in absolute numbers but helpful in terms of meeting long term growth goals.
 - b. Ravi: market forces, by themselves, perpetuate housing inequity, maintaining lower prices when placed near high traffic areas. Will require more research to understand what our housing needs actually are.
 - 4. Kristen: this Committee needs to understand how to sell Gateway development to the Town
 - a. Virginia: the area may have internal pathway/road to orient houses and walkers/bikers to. We may have to change what we expect for housing in a more crowded world.
 - b. We need a field trip, followed by tea at Kristen's house 😊
 - iii. Next steps for Housing Committee:
 - 1. Mark is available to do research if provided some guidance; Sarah is interested in the equity questions related to density
 - a. Virginia: other sources
 - i. Brandy looked at the regional estimate of Richmond's need for more housing
 - ii. What is the density for other downtown areas: Tilden and Baker streets, the residential commercial district where mixed use is approved – use as comparisons

- iii. Equity lens from climate action plan: specific questions, such as the populations we seek not to benefit, impact, who benefits
 - iv. Comparisons to other town zoning, e.g. Hinesburg? May not be that informative.
 - b. Ravi: the goal is continuing the historic, downtown center; this may be the place to start
 - i. Consider removal of density caps in the village, as there are already many requirements in place
 - c. Virginia: there are maps available that illustrate the current density of lots in the Gateway; we don't have capacity for Williston-style buildings but we have some capacity; what do we see as attractive and helpful housing in that area
 - d. Ravi: max building height is three stories; Gateway will be the same. The lowest window sill on the highest story cannot be more than 32 feet high.
 - i. Virginia: may need to consider multiple buildings on a one acre lot; current zoning does not allow this. Something like clusters of low buildings, covering more than 30% of the lot.
 - 2. ARPA research: Kristen is interested in these possibilities, paying attention to what the ARPA committee learns and shares, especially re: housing support.
 - 3. Virginia will provide an update on scenarios/proposals/maps from the Planning Commission, for review at next meeting.
7. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
- a. Next meeting: February 10 @ 7:30p. Ravi will follow up with Zachary on his ability to attend.
 - b. Proposed agenda to include: Brandy's update on Zoning for Affordable Housing, Virginia's update on Planning Commission, Mark & Sarah on density/equity, Kristen on ARPA
 - i. Moved to adjourn: Virginia Clarke
 - ii. Seconded: Connie van Eeghen
 - iii. Unanimously passed

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen