

## Town of Richmond Housing Committee Notes

Date: March 18, 2021

Time Started: 7:34

Time Ended: 9:25

**Ravi Venkataraman (Host)**

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

Guest: (none)

Absent: Andrew Mannix, Jackie Pichette

Quorum is 5; 5 votes to pass any motion

Recorded by MMCTV

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Adjustments to Agenda
3. Approval of February 11, 2021 meeting minutes
  - a. Moved to accept: Miranda Lescaze
  - b. Seconded: Sarah Heim
  - c. Unanimously passed
4. Housing Needs Assessment update
  - a. Zach: Taylor Newton provided suggestions; more updates are recommended but not large or time consuming (*e.g.* how to manipulate the data)
  - b. Miranda: who takes the next step with it? Committee agreed to pass on to consultant for next steps.
  - c. Zach will continue to update prior to the consultant comes on board
  - d. Committee will also hand the draft survey of Richmond residents on to the consultant for review
5. Municipal Planning Grant update
  - a. There are questions we need to follow up with the candidates for the consultant engagement. Goal this meeting: make a recommendation to the Selectboard for action.
  - b. Both candidates are highly qualified and have strongly supportive references with strong proposals
    - i. CCRPC (Taylor Newton and Regina Mahony) has experience with South Burlington and others; well known
      1. Taylor has been an interim DRB coordinator for Richmond, ending February 2021. The work for DRBs can be high in the wintertime; less so this year. Also assisted with zoning issues with Ravi, who is reorganizing the entire zoning system.
      2. Regina has also assisted Richmond on inclusionary zoning based on work with S. Burlington (a recent project focused on tech support, not community outreach).
      3. Does past experience help in this work? Yes and no: there's a lot of change potentially in the works which may or may not be executed, as Ravi sees his workplan. They will still be around after the contract is over to help with implementation.
      4. Funding for this grant flows from State to Richmond. We pay an amount every year that goes to RPCs for their support. Regional planning commissions often support municipal planning grants; it allows them to focus more attention on their towns – it's not paying twice for the same thing.
    - ii. PlaceSense (Brandy Saxton): this is her wheelhouse; she has a distinctive approach that is polished and strong. Currently working on a project with Berlin, which is receiving pushback from ACCD and is working with the legislature to keep moving it forward. Did a good job bringing volunteers to an understanding of zoning in the Berlin project on neighborhood development + affordable housing. She is persistent. Her recent work in Underhill is very similar to what Richmond is facing (she has completed the final report). May be able to get the community much more involved in the process, which would be helpful in gaining community support. Presents as a go-getter, who delivers with personal commitment to outcomes. Ravi is not sure if PlaceSense was involved in Richmond's 2012 zoning regulation project (which the town did not pass – can ask Cathleen Gent, who lives in town and was Town Planner at that

time: if Brandy was involved, what was the nature of her work and contribution – we decided not to do this). Would work closely with our committee for contacts, survey development, etc.

- c. Motion to put to vote: Mark Hall; seconded by Virginia Clarke
  - i. PlaceSense: 7
  - ii. CCRPC: 0
  - iii. Abstain: 0
  - iv. Decision: offer contract to PlaceSense; Ravi will move this forward.
6. Overview of zoning processes and strategies
  - a. Virginia Clarke provided an outline of background of Planning Commission's work
  - b. Assumptions:
    - i. More housing is needed in Richmond (stories, FPF posts, county-wide crisis, affordability is an issue for low income and average income populations, Buttermilk's statements during Jolina Court development)
    - ii. Long standing goal for "smart growth" by increasing density in village and leave rural areas less dense: preserves agricultural and forest lands; efficiencies in service, public transit easier, vibrant downtown, not limiting growth in outlying areas but promoting clustering of housing near roadways
  - c. History
    - i. Single family housing is the common pattern of settlement with some secondary apartments or conversions to multifamily
    - ii. Constraints: floodplain, RR tracks, steep slopes, road arrangement in village, lack of developable land in village
    - iii. Village residents (from current outreach process): like the current density, home ownership rather than rentals, against multifamily buildings, against more parking and traffic
  - d. Tools available
    - i. Allowing or easing permitting of multifamily housing
    - ii. Allowing/less restrictive ADU's (accessory dwelling units)
    - iii. Reducing parking requirements per dwelling
    - iv. Allowing conversions of single family dwelling or commercial structures to multifamily or multiuse structures
    - v. "Adaptive re-use" of historic structures
    - vi. Allowing great lot coverage by structures
    - vii. More than one structure per lot or reducing minimum lot size
    - viii. Allowing more than one use per lot (multi-use buildings)
    - ix. "Affordable housing" usually with density bonus (inclusionary zoning – voluntary or required)
    - x. More housing allowed in commercial areas; "mixed use"
  - e. Current work
    - i. Focused on village so far
    - ii. Current village ZD's: R/C (residential/commercial), HDR (high density residential), VC (village commercial), C (commercial), A/R (agricultural/residential)
    - iii. Proposed village ZD's: JC (Jolina Court), VD R/C (village district residential/commercial), VRN (X1 or 2) (village neighborhoods), RCV (residential district south of the river, near the Round Church)
    - iv. Have had outreach sessions, well attended, sentiment in favor of status quo
  - f. Concerns with intersection of Housing Committee and Planning Commission work
    - i. Possible reluctance of neighbors to engage with second outreach project
    - ii. How to combine processes with PC; utilize already obtained feedback and prior PC work; coordinate with PC proposed timeline for zoning amendments
    - iii. Need to focus, perhaps, on unexplored zoning territory (Gateway ("welcome to Richmond" to exit 11), MHP (mobile home park), A/R (agricultural/residential), PRD process (planned residential development process)) rather than village
  - g. Coordination between Planning Commission and Housing Committee: how is that done?
    - i. It's a stated goal but no process is in place or systematic communication
    - ii. Consultant may require development of such a process

- iii. Consultant first has to talk with Ravi about what's been done and how to move forward, setting the scope for data collection needed and use of PC data
  - 1. Consultant will put together a scope for review and approval by Housing Committee
- iv. PC has a schedule to bring zoning amendments to Selectboard; may need to slow down to accommodate this work?
  - 1. PC still needs to work out how it works with Housing Committee, which it commissioned
  - 2. Its next step will include more public meetings about zoning regulations
  - 3. Haven't had enough input from renters
  - 4. Is it feasible to require inclusionary housing? This was the recommendation to Underhill
- v. Goal is a single, cohesive plan that supports the Town's goals
- h. How are changes decided and implemented?
  - i. Any zoning changes in Richmond follows two steps: Planning Commission posts notice warning public and votes; forwards to Selectboard which posts notice warning public; public hearing and vote. Once voted and approved, 21 days to adoption. Or will send back to Planning Commission to redo and repeat the process. A simple amendment takes about 3 months to complete adoption. If more complex (like Jolina Court), can take years.
  - ii. The 2012 Zoning Plan was 250 pages long and the Selectboard chose to send to public for vote, which was turned down. Now working on making changes one manageable chunk at a time. This seems to be working for the Selectboard.
  - iii. During the 21 days, a petition with 5% of the voters (150 signatures), can force the decision to a town vote to create a wider consensus.
- i. Past work of the Planning Commission was focused on transportation, and connecting the Gateway to the Town
  - i. There is a Transportation Committee that works under the PC, which is connected to housing
  - ii. This is another area that is complex, with many items that interconnect
  - iii. Come to the public meeting on bike path on Wednesday, March xx at 6:30
  - iv. Unified Planning Work program funded by federal highways
  - v. Two/three projects
    - 1. Bicycle pedestrian master plan, on and off roads, to connect Richmond residents by bike and foot. Started in November with community outreach; now midway through. Will present possible pathways for master plan, limited to Winooski River at this time; may be extended to full plan by June 2022. Goal: make a requirement for any developer working on these areas.
    - 2. Sidewalk plan along Jericho Road past schools to Southview; Johnybrook to Huntington Rd, TD Bank to ??? Goal: more robust bike/ped plan
    - 3. Bridge Street study update: looking into how to improve traffic flow for Bridge Street/ Cochran Rd/ Huntington Road. Presentation on Thursday, April 8 at 7p.
  - vi. Planning Commission: sidewalks are necessary when building up density; as is public transit, even on a small scale
    - 1. Climate Action committee is also working on a bus system combined with the school bus system
    - 2. Might be worth to look into Sustainable Montpelier's Microtransit
    - 3. Requires buy-in and use
    - 4. Route 2 is also a priority, e.g. bike lanes
- 7. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
  - a. Use this as a standing item to update on work of related committees
  - b. Next meeting: move to third Thursdays, if OK with Andrew, starting April 15 at 7:30, until further notice
  - c. Proposed agenda to include:
    - i. Selectboard recently considered an extension to a VT Community Development loan program for Borden Street project – would they be interested in additional information about the program, which has aspects of grants/subgrants with limited applicants. Invite Paul Connor or Amy Demetrowitz to assist. This project is in a flood plan, as is the Church Street project.
    - ii. Update on MPG consultant: status or plan

- iii. Update from Planning Commission
- d. Moved to adjourn: Miranda Lescaze
- e. Seconded: Mark Hall
- f. Unanimously passed

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen