

Richmond Planning Commission  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR June 16, 2021

Members Present: Chris Cole, Virginia Clarke, Chris Granda, Alison Anand, Lisa Miller

Members Absent: Mark Fausel, Joy Reap, Jake Kornfeld

Others Present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Ryan Ackley

### **1. Welcome and troubleshooting**

Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 7:16 pm.

### **2. Public Comment for non-agenda items**

None

### **3. Adjustments to the Agenda**

Chris Granda requested time to make an announcement regarding building energy codes.

### **4. Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Virginia Clarke, seconded by Alison Anand, to approve the May 19, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

### **5. Reorganization Meeting - Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Motion by Cole, seconded by Anand, to nominate Virginia Clarke as Chair of the Planning Commission. Clarke accepted the nomination. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

Motion by Clarke, seconded by Anand, to nominate Cole as Vice Chair of the Planning Commission. Cole accepted the nomination. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

### **6. Introduction to ArcGIS Richmond Setback Analysis tool**

Ravi Venkataraman overviewed the ArcGIS tool Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) prepared, the datasets and how to use the ArcGIS mapping tool. Planning Commission members were impressed with this tool. Cole asked about whether the tool showed acreage and proposed zoning. Venkataraman said that that data is not included in this tool and that if members are looking for acreage maps similar to the ones he produced on this map, he can have that data included in this tool. Venkataraman said that the setback data may be subject to human error because the data was based on measurements.

Venkataraman asked the commission if it found the tool useful. Cole said that this tool will be useful in future discussions about zoning with the public, when discussing how the commission arrived at particular setback numbers. Clarke said that she would need to get a sense of the tool more. Cole asked Venkataraman if he finds the tool useful. Venkataraman said that in this context, the setback limits do not matter for the most part, and only matter if redevelopment occurs. Venkataraman said that in this area, he is more concerned about property owners retaining their rights to maintain nonconforming structures. Venkataraman said that in this case, the tool is not helpful because of the

unlikely of new development on vacant properties or redevelopment, and that if the commission wants to retain the existing streetscape, it should consider setting setback requirements based on the average setbacks of the adjacent parcels. Lisa Miller asked about development allowances for nonconforming structures. Venkataraman said that future revisions should make sure that nonconforming structures can expand as long as the expansion doesn't create any new nonconformities and would be in conformance with the zoning in effect. Clarke said that this tool will be useful in discussions on new neighborhoods so that the public understands the built environment with particular setbacks in place. Anand found the tool fascinating and helpful. Miller asked about the role of the fire departments in discussions on setbacks. Venkataraman said that in his experience fire departments usually have input on the widths of roadways, vehicle access and circulation within lots, and that state fire codes would apply to all developments.

Venkataraman asked if the commission would like additional areas to be added to the study and additional data layers. Clarke said that she would need to test what it has currently, and asked what kinds of data could be added. Venkataraman said that depending on what the commission requests, he could add the data into the mapping tool. Cole said that Venkataraman should consider including additional data based on his needs and what he concludes that the commission would find helpful. Anand asked if this data analysis would be useful in areas south of the Winooski River. Venkataraman said that there is utility to use the existing analysis as an example to show the public how buildout based on particular setbacks looks like. Miller asked if other boards and staff might find the tool useful. Venkataraman said that the Zoning Administrator and the Housing Committee might find it useful.

## **7. Discussion on Residential/Commercial District and Village Residential Neighborhoods South District**

Clarke explained that the current discussions are to assist the housing consultant's work and to resolve already discussed issues. Clarke asked the commission if it wanted to include the Farr uplands into the Residential/Commercial District. Clarke overviewed the locations of the proposed Residential/Commercial Districts on maps. Granda asked if the Farr uplands area includes wetlands. Clarke said that a small portion of the property has wetlands. Cole suggested that the commission moves forward with the Residential/Commercial District and work on the Farr uplands as a side project. Anand concurred.

Miller asked if the commission can show future curb cuts. Clarke referenced subdivision standards. Venkataraman said that it may be possible by putting in place an official map or future roads on a zoning map.

Anand added by saying that additional time could help the Farris figure out aspects they would like included in future zoning. Clarke noted possible unintended consequences and how these conversations will overlap with future conversations about the Gateway District. Miller asked about the location of the potential limits of the district. Clarke noted the slopes, and how it is a natural end to the district.

Clarke overviewed the possible uses in the district, density allowances, and development standards. Miller asked about soliciting public opinion. Clarke said that the commission has already received public opinion. Anand noted how the commission will have to hold hybrid public meetings in the future. Clarke said that the Farr uplands area will be removed for the time being. Anand suggested aligning zoning with existing conditions. Granda said that the commission should put in place zoning that is forward-looking while keeping in mind existing conditions and that nonalignment is acceptable.

Miller asked if the commission has talked to the Farris. Clarke said that the Farris said they would like flexibility in future development. Cole said that the public had concerns about large-scale development in past meetings.

## **8. Discussion on State Permits and Nonconforming Lots**

Clarke reviewed the proposed regulations for nonconforming lots. Granda asked if the regulations need to include the suitability of septic systems if a lot cannot be connected to municipal water and sewer. Anand agreed. Venkataraman said that septic systems cannot be regulated through zoning. Miller asked about permitting processes. Venkataraman said that municipalities can regulate on-site water and wastewater systems with a separate ordinance, but not through zoning, and that one can receive a state water/wastewater permit at any time within the process as long as it is received prior to construction. Venkataraman clarified that these regulations only apply to vacant lots that have never been developed and that most small lots in town are already developed and therefore have water/wastewater service on-site or through a community system.

Clarke asked if this proposed amendments should be forwarded for a public hearing. Anand suggested having multiple amendments grouped together for a public hearing. Cole suggested forwarding this item independently for the sake of moving completed items forward. Venkataraman suggested that the commission look at the proposed amendment for state permit references within the packet and then make a decision.

Clarke overviewed the proposed amendments to the state permit references within the zoning regulations. Clarke clarified that local regulations cannot require the provision of a state permit to release any local permits. Clarke recommended including the requirements that developments comply with applicable building energy standards. Granda liked the inclusion of language about building energy standards. Venkataraman said that this is the first time he is seeing this language and that he is concerned that the town may be overstepping, even though technically, all development has to comply with the building energy standards. Venkataraman also suggested removing the certificate of occupancy requirement under building permits and adding it instead to the certificate of occupancy section of the regulations. Cole suggested revising "certificate of compliance" to "certification in adherence to the standards". Clarke said that she had included suggested language in the certificate of occupancy section.

Cole moved to warn a public hearing for July 21, 2021 on the amendments to the Richmond Zoning Regulations Sections 3.8.5, 4.6, 5.2.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.3, and 5.8, seconded by Miller. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried

## **9. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment**

Motion by Granda, seconded by Anand to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner

### **Chat Log**

00:22:00 MMCTV: Thanks for being our test run! We'll work on the projector/audio feedback issue.

01:40:17 MMCTV: Can folks mute themselves when not talking? I'm trying to isolate the feedback. Thx.

02:13:15 Chris Granda: I need to log off now.

02:14:39 chriscole: me too