

1 Richmond Planning Commission

2 Regular Meeting

3 Wednesday, October 1, 2014

4 Approved Minutes

5 **Members Present:** Bruce LaBounty (Vice-Chair), Brian Tellstone, Mark Fausel (Chair), Ann
6 Cousins, Lauck Parke, Sean Foley

7 **Absent:** Marc Hughes

8 **Others Present:** Clare Rock (Town Planner/Staff to the DRB); see attached list

9
10 **7:03 PM Fausel opened the meeting**

11
12 **Public Comment:** n/a

13
14 **Gateway District Regulations**

15 Rock provided an overview presentation of the Gateway Commercial District which included:

- 16 a) Reviewing the Gateway Area description from the Future Land Use Element of the Town Plan;
17 b) Describing a map of current conditions (total acreage = 65.03, total number of parcels = 19, total
18 acreage of constrained land [floodplain, wetlands, steep slope, cemeteries, and to be conserved land]
19 = 39 acres, remaining developable land = 26.03 acres); c) Summary of current regulations; and d)
20 Examples of building sizes and approx. square footages.

21
22 Geoffrey Urbanik, Town Manager provided an overview of the recent released draft report titled
23 “Phase I Scoping Study, emergency Access Road with West Main Street Water and Sewer
24 Extensions for Town of Richmond” dated September 2014. The draft report explores the feasibility
25 of extending the sewer and water system to the Gateway commercial District from the school.
26 Challenges to extending the service includes distance. The schools are supportive of the expansion
27 as long as they don’t have to pay for any related upgrades. It would cost just under \$400,000 to get
28 water and sewer to the Reaps property in the Gateway District, but could be twice as much to get it
29 out further along to other properties. The Sewer and Water Commission has not had any discussion
30 about how much revenue the extension would produce. The Sewer and Water Commission will be
31 discussing the draft report at their next meeting on Monday October 6, 2014.

32
33 Urbanik further stated the other location where the sewer and water extension would be feasible
34 would be out to the Farr Farm, but owners have not expressed interest in exploring this. Growing
35 the system would ideally mean spreading the user costs over a greater number of people. If the
36 Reaps choose a development plan which relied on private water and sewer instead, then this would
37 effectively close off the possibility of extending sewer and water out to the Gateway in the future.

38
39 Rod West asked about the benefits of extending the water and sewer. Discussion followed about the
40 Creamery parcel. This site is different as the Creamery is currently “on” the system vs having to
41 construct new lines.

42
43 Paul Hauf, from the Economic Development committee, has investigated potential cost of
44 increasing the number of the users on a new sewer and water line. Urbanik suggested he share this
45 information with the Sewer and Water Commissioners.

46
47 Discussion followed about whether some properties in the Gateway has/are experiencing failing
48 sewer systems and that the high scenic value of the area will always remain because the views are
49 across the fields which are in the floodplain and won’t be developed.

50
51 Urbanik also noted the draft report also explored the feasibility of constructing an emergency access
52 from the school, through the Reaps property to Route 2. Currently the schools evacuation plan is to
53 have the kids walk down through the cemetery to busses.

1 Urbanik also field a question about whether the private developer would pay for the extension.
2 Urbanik mentioned that in other places the private developers paid for the extension. The Water and
3 Sewer Commissioners would have to explore the options.

4
5 Fausel started by asking the public the four questions which were identified:
6

- 7 1. *Is it acceptable for larger-scale buildings to be allowed in the Gateway Commercial Zoning*
8 *District?*
- 9 2. *If we allow for larger buildings, how big is too big: 15,000, 17,000, 20,000 square feet?*
- 10 3. *If larger-scale buildings are allowed should they be required to be set back further off the road*
11 *and screened with trees? Or should they be required to meet other design or screening*
12 *standards?*
- 13 4. *What types of businesses would be acceptable to allow in the Gateway Commercial District?*
 - 14 a. *Processing and distribution – an example of this type of use could be a food processing*
15 *facility for local producers?*
 - 16 b. *Offices and light manufacturing – for example of this type of use could be a cabinet and*
17 *furniture makers or space for high tech industry?*
 - 18 c. *Other auto service businesses – such as carwashes and auto repair (we already allow*
19 *for gas stations)*
 - 20 d. *Retail or restaurants that are larger than 5,000 square feet?*

21 Christy Witters responded by saying she thinks Reaps have a good development plan but thinks this
22 conversation should be explored at the comprehensive planning level, instead of trying to tinker
23 with the current regulations within the context of the outdated town plan. The Town should be
24 engaged in the future of the Gateway District at the planning level, thinking about the long term
25 future or the vision of the area before any zoning changes should take place.

26
27 Joy Reap stated they would like some zoning changes to happen sooner as they've had interest from
28 development partners who cannot wait for another planning process before any changes to the
29 zoning.

30
31 Cara LaBounty referenced that situation seems like a chicken and egg situation, she supports the
32 Reaps, yet cautions spot zoning and doesn't support the current 5,000 sf cap on some uses.

33
34 Marie Thomas, thinks the town plan is the vision document and feels like we have a commercial
35 district with no public utilities and that Richmond should extent the sewer and water plus, Thomas
36 also thinks the 5,000 sq per use is limiting.

37
38 Paul Hauf, provided some examples of development which be built under the existing regulations
39 (included something like Al's French Fries plus other examples) and feels that the design of new
40 development is important and that an architectural review board may be appropriate.

41
42 Heidi Boreman, added the state police was looking for a 20,000 sq building but Richmond couldn't
43 provide an adequate location, which was unfortunate.

44
45 Gary Bressor stated a lot of the issues come down to design and feels like the DRB needs better
46 design guidance. And added that the water and sewer extension would benefit the whole town, yet
47 the village people can not take any more financial burden.

1
2 Mark Fausel stated that the PC is thinking about having a greater setback for larger buildings.

3
4 Cara LaBounty asked the Reaps what aspects of the current zoning doesn't work? Reap listed:
5 10,000 sq to be expanded, (someone wanted a 15,000 sf building), expand the 5,000 sf max per use,
6 allowing a business yard, and allowing directory signs, and no pitched roof requirement. Cara
7 LaBounty added that it would be preferable to allow parking in the front of building, at least to
8 make buildings more accessible for handicap people and that no development has happened in the
9 Gateway in 20 years.

10
11 Heidi mentioned the Goodwin Baker building is an example of a big employer which isn't an
12 obviously large building and question whether the concern is about the design or about the specific
13 uses.

14
15 Marie Thomas added the types of businesses we are attracting, such as Rainforest Alliance, the
16 advertising firm, and others like Greensea, are great for Richmond and it would be great to attract
17 more high tech business and would be good to get rid of the 5,000 sf use restriction.

18
19 Marcy Harding, thinks the challenge is to entice good employers vs strip development. And
20 mentioned changes to Act 250 to help prevent strip development in Vermont. She mentioned the
21 mobile with the pitched roof and feels like it is important of that type of businesses and its more
22 than just the look of the building, it's the parking, lighting, and signage.

23
24 Eric Wood provided an example of a larger building, he is employed in a 17,000 sf building which
25 is an R&D facility that provides good paying jobs which is located in Waterbury Center.

26
27 Paul Hauf, wouldn't be against a bigger building, but feels design is key and if the building its set
28 back them even better.

29
30 Man in the back, stated we need more commercial development, as we've lost some land to
31 conservation and to housing development.

32
33 Discussion followed about what do we want vs what we don't want in Richmond.

34
35 Reap described the conceptual developments they are considering for their property. One includes
36 moving the barn back and constructing a bank in the front plus adding an after school program, and
37 a large scale building in the rear of the property. Reap encouraged people to attend the Water and
38 Sewer Commission meeting on Monday at 5:30 pm.

39
40 Kristen West added increasing the maximum building square footage to 15,000 sf would be
41 acceptable.

42
43 **Adjourn**

44
45 *Tellstone moved to adjourn, Foley seconded, so voted.*

46
47 The meeting ending at 9:05PM.

48
49 Respectfully submitted by Clare Rock, Town Planner/Staff to the DRB