

Richmond Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

April 4, 2012

Approved Minutes

Members Present: Gary Bressor (Chair), Lou Borie (Vice-Chair), Mark Fausel, Joe McHugh, Dan Renaud, Christy Witters

Members Absent: One vacancy

Others Present: Cathleen Gent (Town Planner), Alison Anand

7:05 PM Call to order by the Chair.

Public Comment – No public comment.

Mail - Gent reviewed the mail.

At 7:10 PM, Anand left the meeting.

Meeting Minutes & Town Planner Report

Meeting Minutes: For February 1, 2012

Motion by Renaud, seconded by Witters, to approve the minutes. Voting: in favor: 4 (Bressor, McHugh, Renaud, Witters); opposed: 0; abstentions: 2 (Borie and Fausel).

Meeting Minutes: For February 15, 2012

Motion by Fausel, seconded by Renaud, to approve the minutes. Voting: in favor: 5 (Bressor, Borie, Fausel, Renaud, Witters); opposed: 0; abstentions: 1 (McHugh).

Meeting Minutes: For March 7, 2012

Two edits were made on page 3. Motion by Fausel, seconded by Renaud, to approve the minutes. Voting: in favor: 5 (Bressor, Borie, Fausel, Renaud, Witters); opposed: 0; abstentions: 1 (McHugh).

Meeting Minutes: For March 21, 2012

One edit was made on page 1. Motion by McHugh, seconded by Renaud, to approve the minutes. Voting: in favor: 5 (Bressor, Borie, McHugh, Renaud, Witters); opposed: 0; abstentions: 1 (Fausel).

Town Planner Report

Gent provided brief updates to the March 29, 2012 town planner report. In addition, the Planning Commission indicated that the meeting with the owner of the creamery parcel will likely take place sometime in June. Gent and Bressor updated the Planning Commission regarding the Selectboard's discussion regarding comments from the Richmond Area Business Association on zoning enforcement.

2012 Richmond Town Plan Project

Discussion of 3/21 Public Session

The Planning Commission reviewed the minutes of the March 21st town plan public session and discussed public comments regarding energy policy.

- Witters said she likes the idea of encouraging southerly facing rooftops. However, Bressor and others pointed out that a density bonus for this and other energy efficiency measures was included in earlier drafts of the proposed zoning and subdivision regulations and that, during the public sessions, this idea was poorly received. It's also difficult to require a specific orientation for structures in certain types of topography (i.e., on north-facing slopes) or in a village setting with structures that are close to each other. The Planning Commission also discussed the issue of trees growing up alongside solar installations and whether the trees or solar installations would be protected. **The Planning Commission decided to add the following Implementation Step to the Energy Policy section of the Town Plan: The Town Planner and Planning Commission will research what has happened in other parts of the country where solar installations have been in place for some time in terms of case law regarding stand-alone and rooftop solar or wind alternative energy installation units vis-à-vis the protection of trees, buildings, or other structures.**

The Planning Commission reviewed written comments submitted by Rich First on March 23rd, during a meeting with Gent. The board discussed the idea of the Town of Richmond notifying all property

1 owners in the Town of Richmond regarding any propose net metered project. The Planning
 2 Commission noted the following: 1. any net metered project is exempt from town regulations; 2. the
 3 Town would have to absorb the cost of the notice which, in the case of the Burlington Free Press, is
 4 substantial. Assuming that the Public Service Board posts all the net metered projects and dockets on
 5 its web site, the Planning Commission agreed that some type of link could be added to the town web
 6 site. The Planning Commission said they are sympathetic to First’s concerns, but do not think the Town
 7 of Richmond is in a position to take on the public notifications for Public Service Board projects. **The
 8 Planning Commission decided to add the following Implementation Step to the Town Plan: The
 9 Town Planner and Planning Commission will explore ways to expand public notifications for net
 10 metered Public Service Board projects.**

11
 12 The Planning Commission agreed that the Planning and Zoning Staff should supply applicants who are
 13 constructing or expanding a principal structure with information regarding energy efficiency construction
 14 techniques. Gent will contact Efficiency Vermont to see what types of brochures might be available for
 15 that purpose.

16
 17 The Planning Commission then discussed larger installations of solar or wind projects in relation to
 18 prime ag soils. The commission noted that there were two distinct sets of opinion expressed at the
 19 March 21st public session. One perspective is that the installations are compatible with prime ag soils
 20 because they can be removed “like beach umbrellas.” The other perspective is that prime ag soils
 21 should be protected and such facilities would not be permitted there. The Planning Commission agreed
 22 that solar or wind facilities do not necessarily preclude use of ag soils in the future. Presently, such a
 23 facility can be compatible with a pasture use of land but not for crops planted in rows. In addition, there
 24 was agreement among commission members that, once a prime ag soil area is impacted, it’s not likely
 25 to return to agricultural use. Technology will evolve such that, in 20 years or so, there may not be large
 26 solar arrays.

27
 28 The Planning Commission then discussed scenic areas and ridgelines. The Commission discussed the
 29 concept of discouraging small commercial wind projects along ridgelines on a scenic resource basis,
 30 unless there is a significant benefit to the community of Richmond. **The Planning Commission
 31 decided to add the following implementation step to the Energy Policy section of the Town Plan:
 32 To complement step #8 in the Natural Resources section, the Town Planner and Planning
 33 Commission will conduct a scenic resource inventory in Richmond, including ridgelines and
 34 other areas of interest.** Gent will contact the Jericho town planner and get information about the
 35 scenic inventory that was recently conducted there.

36
 37 The Planning Commission then discussed a “no idling” ordinance. There was an agreement that it
 38 would be equally valuable for VTrans and the town to time the Route 2/Jericho Road intersection better.
 39 There was also agreement that vehicles do idle when going in and doing business at stores,
 40 businesses, and schools. There was no consensus about whether to add an implementation step to the
 41 Town Plan.

42
 43 The Planning Commission then discussed the bicycle paths in terms of energy policy. Renaud brought
 44 up the example of Scandinavia, where bicycles are ridden on a year-round basis, as an alternative to
 45 automobiles. The Planning Commission agreed people would likely ride year-round in Richmond if there
 46 were paths separated from the road. The Planning Commission advocated the installation of a multi-use
 47 path to the Exit 11 park and ride facility. It was pointed out that transportation by bus actually costs
 48 more than by car, at least based on current gasoline prices. Also, because there are not enough bus
 49 storage racks on the buses, bicyclists can’t be sure they can bring bicycles on the bus, which is a
 50 deterrent from using the commuter bus and riding bikes to and from the park and ride to home. For
 51 commuter buses to be more successful, there should be nice buses with low fares and places to store
 52 bicycles on the buses. The Planning Commission also recommends having a bicycle/multi-use path
 53 separated from the road on Cochran Road and Jericho Road.

54
 55 *Planning for the April 18th public session regarding tools to encourage local agriculture*
 56 The Planning Commission reviewed the draft agenda and reviewed the list of farmers and large
 57 property owners (over 50 acres) who will receive a mailing in advance of the April 18th session.
 58

1 The Planning Commission also discussed the schedule for meeting with consultant Sharon Murray in
2 completing the Municipal Planning Grant. Gent will talk with Murray about that schedule.

3
4
5 **Richmond Zoning & Subdivision Regulations**

6 *Review Comments*

7 The Planning Commission reviewed the following comments:

8 1) FEMA and VT Department of Environmental Conservation – The Planning Commission reviewed
9 Gent’s memo regarding the following:

- 10 a) \$500 threshold for exemption from zoning permit for repairs – agreed that it is worthwhile to
11 ask FEMA and DEC again to raise the exemption level to \$1,000. Gent will send a letter to DEC
12 with that request.
- 13 b) Historic structures exemption – agreed that the current language in our draft regulations is
14 adequate for making it clear that substantially damaged historic structures do not have to meet
15 the requirements for a substantial improvement. In addition, Gent will explore what other towns
16 have done with this provision and bring back any ideas to the Planning Commission.
- 17 c) Portion of a structure within the FEMA SFHA – Gent will prepare new language for Section
18 6.8.8 (section 2.14.8 in the proposed regulations) to make it clear that, when any portion of a
19 principal structure is within the FEMA SHFA, the entire structure is considered to be in that
20 zone.

21
22 At 9:05 PM, Anand joined the meeting again.

23
24 2. Comments from January 9, 2012 meeting

25 The Planning Commission asked Gent to report back in terms of whether, in the case where a
26 subdivision is approved, a lot merger would be required when affiliated owners own both lots. The
27 Planning Commission reviewed the other comments as follows:

- 28 - Page 1, line 54 - A Flood Hazard Overlay District map will be added to the appendix.
- 29 - Page 2, line 2 – Confirmed that there is a provision to remove the 100-foot area next to the FEMA
30 Special Flood Hazard Area after the new DFIRM are in effect, which may be late this fall.
- 31 - Page 2, line 9 – Confirmed that there will be one additional Planning Commission public session or
32 hearing regarding the draft zoning and subdivision regulations.
- 33 - Page 2, line 20 – The Planning Commission agreed to create a 2-3 page summary flyer for the public
34 before the next public session. Gent will begin preparing a draft flyer.
- 35 - Page 2, line 25 – By removing the trip end maximums for each zoning district, the Planning
36 Commission believes the parking issue for the village area is met.
- 37 - Page 3, line 26 – Per the use table (section 2.1.6) decided not to add an “F” (Forbidden) for each use
38 which is not allowed.

39
40 3. Comments from January 18, 2012 meeting

41 - Page 2, line 24 – In the use table (Section 2.1.6), added “C” to the R-10 zoning district for “Recreation,
42 Outdoor, Class 1”

43
44 During its May 2nd meeting. the Planning Commission will continue reviewing comments from January
45 18th, beginning with the concept of administrative created lots.

46
47
48 **Adjournment**

49 Fausel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Borie. So voted. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

50
51
52 Respectfully submitted by Cathleen Gent, Town Planner/Staff to the DRB