

Richmond Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, September 18, 2013

Approved Minutes

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

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Cathleen Gent (Town Planner/Staff to the DRB), Wright Preston, Jon Kart, Brian Shupe, Jens Hilke, Marshall Paulsen, Gretchen Paulsen

7:06 PM Fausel called the meeting to order.

Public Comments – None.

ECOS Science To Action Project

Jon Kart provided an introduction about the project, which involves the four towns of Bolton, Huntington, Hinesburg, and Richmond and focuses on mapping natural resources, reaching out to property owners with better information about how to conserve natural resources, and generating new regulatory and non-regulatory tools for the four towns. Jens Hilke from VT Fish and Wildlife presented a power point presentation which highlighted:

1) The specific components of the ECOS Science to Action Project (inventory, technical assistance, public engagement and education).

2) A range of options for conservation

3) Basic features already known: habitat blocks, forest blocks, physical features, rare species and significant natural communities

4) Arrowwood inventory – is spatially explicit and will provide more specific information that will be field verified

5) Maps – land cover, forest habitat blocks, Bio Finder hot spots – which show concentrations of components contributing to biological diversity. Richmond straddles hot spots of diversity and large habitat blocks to support different types of wildlife. There is important regional connectivity both north/south and east/west.

Brian Shupe from Vermont Natural Resources Council spoke next. He reviewed the Richmond Town Plan goals and natural resource policies and discussed a number of regulatory and non-regulatory options for taking action to protect natural resources. VNRC is available to provide technical assistance on the project, but it is up to the town to decide what approaches to take. Shupe provided examples in the Mad River Valley and Enosburg regarding actions those towns have taken to help protect natural resources.

Planning Commission members offered some comments. LaBounty stated that we need the inventory before we decide the next step and that there is only so much development that can take place in Richmond due to floodplains and steep slopes. Foley said he is concerned about property rights and takings. Shupe said that issue is addressed in a VNRC publication that the Planning Commission members will receive soon. Cousins said that overlay districts (like Richmond's for floodplains) are a tool that treats development differently because of some common feature, which might limit development in that area.

Shupe asked the Planning Commission to decide by early November the two-three questions or issues they would like VNRC to explore, so that the Planning Commission will have more information about how to move forward with either regulatory or non-regulatory tools. He noted that the VNRC and Arrowwood work must be completed by the end of December, per the grant agreements with CCRPC. Arrowwood plans to do a presentation of their results in December. Hilke said he can do follow up presentations for each town after that. Shupe said that the Conservation Commissions are expected to become experts about the data obtained through the inventory. Foley said that the Planning Commission is looking to the Conservation Commission to point to key areas in the town plan that they recommend working on in terms of zoning. Hilke distributed Conserving Vermont's Natural Heritage, which will help the Planning Commission take the next steps. He also briefly discussed the community values mapping exercise that was done in May. He will prepare a map for Richmond with the results.

Administrative Items

1 *Mail* – Gent reviewed the mail. She distributed a letter from FEMA regarding the revised FIRMs and
2 Base Flood Elevations along the Winooski River. The Planning Commission suggested that a public
3 meeting should be held within the next 30 days, under the auspices of the Selectboard. Gent will pursue
4 that with Geoff Urbanik.
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7 *Meeting Minutes: For August 21, 2013* – No edits were offered. Motion by LaBounty, seconded by
8 Parke, to approve the minutes. Voting: 6 in favor (Fausel, LaBounty, Cousins, Hughes, Parke,
9 Tellstone); 0 opposed; 1 abstention (Foley).

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11 *Meeting Minutes: For September 4, 2013* – No edits were offered. Motion by LaBounty, seconded by
12 Foley, to approve the minutes. Voting: 6 in favor (Fausel, LaBounty, Foley, Hughes, Parke, Tellstone); 0
13 opposed; 1 abstention (Cousins).

PSB Application for Wireless Communications Facility: 1002 Johnnie Brook Road

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16 The Planning Commission briefly reviewed the application materials. Gent mentioned that there will be
17 a balloon float on Saturday, which will be a good time for people to see where the tower can be seen
18 around town. The Planning Commission decided to take up the topic at the next meeting and suggested
19 it would be helpful for the applicant to come to the meeting.
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General Discussion

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23 Fausel noted that there is not enough time to take up all the topics, and the Planning Commission
24 decided to focus on the creamery parcel. Gent, Parke, and Fausel provided a summary of a meeting
25 held with town officials from Hinesburg about their experience in re-developing the former Saputo
26 property. Specifics for that re-development included: 15 acre parcel with a 90,000 square foot building;
27 no brownfields; they used interim zoning; the goal of their zoning and re-development was value-added
28 agriculture; a fire in the plant forced the layoff of over 100 employees; ad hoc committee of well-
29 connected business leaders; seller willing to sell at bargain basement price. In Richmond, the property
30 has been sitting there for years. The Planning Commission discussed moving forward with a residential-
31 commercial mix. Gretchen Paulsen said she thinks residential would be positive. There was a
32 discussion about CCRPC taking ownership for the brownfields clean up. Cousins suggested a theme
33 might be to encourage village development with walking, share cars, etc. The Planning Commission
34 seemed to agree that interim zoning might be a way to move things along quickly, but acknowledged
35 specific standards are needed in that document to be sure the development is in keeping with that we
36 want as a town. Gent pointed out that interim zoning does not get implemented unless there is a study
37 being done or bylaws are being developed at the same time. The Planning Commission members said
38 they would like to come up with the elements they recommend for the interim bylaws. Fausel said the
39 working group (Selectboard, Planning Commission, DRB and Economic Development Committee) is
40 the best way to bring interim zoning forward. Parke suggested it is important to bring developers into
41 the conversation, although having a vision from the town is key. The Planning Commission decided to
42 make a final decision about the next steps after the ad hoc committee meets again (in early October).
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45 Tellstone suggested that the Planning Commission focus on Section 6.8 during its next meeting and
46 consider having a special work session to make progress on that section of the bylaws.
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Adjournment

49 Parke made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Cousins. So voted. The meeting adjourned at 9:25PM.
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53 Respectfully submitted by Cathleen Gent, Town Planner/Staff to the DRB