

**RICHMOND SELECTBOARD
TOWN PLAN PUBLIC HEARING # 1
August 8, 2018 MINUTES**

Members Present: David Sander; Roger Brown; Christy Witters

Absent: Bard Hill; Steve Ackerman

Others Present: Geoffrey Urbanik, Town Manager; Jessica Draper, Town Planner; Terry Moultrou; John Rankin; Scott Nickerson; Steve Bower; Chris Granda; Jared Katz; Brian Tellstone; Alison Anand; Jon Kart; Lauck Parke; Jack Linn; and Ruth Miller was present from MMCTV Channel 15 to broadcast the meeting.

David Sander called the meeting to order at 7:18 PM.

1. Welcome and Public Hearing

Mr. Sander explained the nature of the meeting which was the first of two mandatory public hearings on the new Town Plan.

Mr. Brown offered a motion to open the public hearing and was seconded by Ms. Witters. The motion carried 3-0.

Town Planner Jessica Draper offered an overview of the revised Town Plan.

Chris Granda asked the Planner to explain how the Town Plan specifically related to zoning. Ms. Draper explained that the Town Plan formed the basis for implementation policy – which would be zoning regulations. Ideally, zoning regulations needed to support the goals of the Town Plan and must be in conformance.

Jon Kart asked if this was a special meeting of the voters, or a public hearing. The Manager said it was a public hearing on the Town Plan, there was no vote from the audience on this.

Jack Linn spoke of the beginning of the Town Plan rewrite, which was the outreach campaign started in 2014. The words that came out of that process and which were in the first draft included “encourage” but not prohibit, incentive, and others that he felt were more positive. In January, a group of people rewrote the Town Plan who were not planners [meaning on the Planning Commission] and he was upset that this happened. A section of the town history was taken out, which he read out loud. The new Town Plan did not encourage growth, but prohibited it.

Chris Granda said he was concerned about the process of the Town Plan, but his concerns about process were tempered by the understanding of the need to have a town plan. He was primarily focused on the energy section, but he felt the town plan overall was encouraging instead of prohibiting and mandating. He said he would like to have the goal about consideration of adopting the “Stretch Code” placed back in the plan.

John Rankin said that the Planning Commission removed the Stretch Code goal for new construction, renovations and additions. He doubted many people had read the Stretch Code, but he had. It is more stringent than the base energy efficiency code adopted by the State of Vermont for residential

1 construction. This would add to the expense of renovations. He feels that in the past, there were
2 efforts to stretch the floodplain [meaning the 100 foot buffer] and in the 2012 zoning regulation
3 rewrite that was a failure. The Planning Commission felt that the Stretch Code would threaten
4 passage of a new Town Plan, and it wasn't necessary to say consider it if no one has ever read the
5 code.

6
7 Jon Kart offered some comments on how the Planning Commission considered changes. They
8 covered lots of good ground and had a decent balance of encouragement and requirement.

9
10 Steve Bower said this was an imperfect process, too long work and had some issues but was pretty
11 good and thanked all who worked on it. He supported it in the current state.

12
13 Mr. Brown asked what was disappointing with the plan. Mr. Bower said that the stretch code should
14 remain in the plan.

15
16 Brian Tellstone said that the Planning Commission had written a letter to the Selectboard explaining
17 their reasoning behind some of the heavily discussed items, including the Stretch Code. Chris Granda
18 agreed with Mr. Tellstone, but spoke more about the process the commission took on finalizing the
19 plan and said that he felt the Stretch Code should have been left in.

20
21 Alison Anand said that just because the plan did not mention the Stretch Code doesn't mean that it
22 couldn't be discussed or implemented anyway. She talked about the rewrite, and said that it wasn't
23 done by amateurs, including someone with a master's degree in planning and people that had worked
24 on the previous plans for many years.

25
26 John Rankin said that he felt that South Burlington had adopted the Stretch Code as a deterrent to
27 development.

28
29 Mr. Granda offered to hold a seminar on the Stretch Code for those who wanted to know more, instead
30 of read the entire code.

31
32 Jack Linn wanted to address the amount of planning jargon in the Stretch Code and said it was too
33 difficult for non-planners to understand.

34
35 Mr. Sander said that the feedback on the plan has been positive, but the Stretch Code in the Energy
36 section is a significant issue. He noted that most people that have approached him have supported the
37 Stretch Code.

38
39 Jessica Draper spoke a little about substantial changes and scheduling. Substantial changes would
40 need an additional two hearings, which could still be completed under the current timeline. There was
41 discussion on what might or might not be a substantial change, but there was no firm definition and
42 was largely self-determined.

43
44 Ms. Witters said she was impressed with the work done on the plan. It was very vague and included
45 language of "encourage, explore, consider" and looked at possibilities for the town and guiding
46 direction. There were challenged ahead for many sections, and she supported the Stretch Code also.
47 She suggested some exceptions for elderly, lower income or others.

48

1 There was some additional discussion on these points. Lauck Parke said that the Planning
2 Commission voted 7-0 three different times to remove this language on the Stretch Code. This was a
3 surrogate for a third rail issue, and asked what was an appropriate amount of regulation for us.
4

5 Mr. Brown said that zoning is denying individual rights in favor of public ones, and saw this both
6 ways.
7

8 Mr. Sander asked outside of the energy code, were there any other issues to be discussed on this draft?
9

10 There were no other issues mentioned, but the Selectboard spent more time on procedural explanation
11 and planning. The discussion turned back to whether any amendments should be made.
12

13 Ms. Witters said she supported adding the Stretch Code language, and there was some objection.
14 Steve Bower urged to just move on with the plan.
15

16 Ms. Witters also noted that on page 26, goal 1 action 5, the word should be “explore” and not “create.”
17

18 There was significant discussion on this point, but no changes were offered.
19

20 Mr. Sander asked if there were any additional changes to be made.
21

22 Mr. Brown offered a motion to close the public hearing and was seconded by Ms. Witters, and the
23 motion carried 3-0.
24

25 Ms. Witters offered a motion to amend the Goals and Actions of the Energy Section, adding #7 to
26 “Consider adopting the Energy Stretch Code for new construction, renovations and additions.” Mr.
27 Brown seconded the motion.
28

29 Ms. Witters said it was unfortunate that this was a third rail issue. Mr. Sander agreed that it was
30 polarizing. Mr. Brown noted that most of the feedback was in favor of it. There was additional
31 discussion on the subject of the motion.
32

33 Ms. Witters read the wording of the motion a second time, and the vote was called and carried 3-0.
34

35 Mr. Sander asked for other changes but there were none.
36

37 Mr. Brown offered a motion to schedule the next public hearing for August 27th at 7:00 PM in the
38 Town Center meeting room, and the third public hearing for the regular Selectboard meeting of
39 September 4th, and was seconded by Ms. Witters. The motion carried 3-0.
40

41 **2. Adjourn**

42 Motion by Mr. Brown to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Witters. So voted.