

To whom it may concern,

We are coming before you to discuss our experience with regards to the process of amending town zoning.

Here is a timeline of the events to date:

Spring 2018

We began to explore the possibility of purchasing the 39 Bridge building with the current owners after watching it sit vacant for a year and a half. It quickly became apparent that one of the reasons that the building has been on the market for so long is that the upstairs had sat vacant for almost a decade, as there is little demand for commercial space in Richmond. We then began a conversation with the Zoning Administrator (ZA) to explore the possibility of installing residential apartments on the second floor. Upon finding out that the upstairs is zoned for only (1) unit in a 2400 square foot space we explored the possibility of amending zoning to allow for multiple apartment units, as this is what exists in every building that surrounds 39 Bridge Street. At this point we were told that no amendments could be made until the town plan had been approved. So we backed away and waited until that would hopefully happen in November.

Nov 2018– April 2019

Upon the passage of the town plan we picked up where we left off and came before the Planning Commission to ask how to amend zoning. They told us the different avenues to achieve this and told us to write a letter to the PC explaining what we were asking for and how it is in line with the town plan. To our surprise and happiness, we found that at every turn of the page the thing we were asking for was very much in line with what the town plan was seeking. Affordable housing, housing in the core of the village to promote density instead of sprawl, village vibrancy by way of reconditioning a building and breathing new life into it and creating upwards of 20 new employment positions. The commission seemed receptive and began the process of amendment.

Seeing as this was the first time that we had ever gone through this process we also came before the SB to make sure that we were following the correct process as the PC stated that the SB also has the power to amend zoning. We voiced our perception of a lack of clarity over the timeline as the PC meets twice a month for 2 hours and have other things before them in addition to our request. The SB told us to meet directly with Jessica Draper, Richmond's Town Planner, in an effort to create language around the proposed changes. We also met with a sub committee of the PC to help streamline this process. Jessica was very helpful and informative. She told us that from the time the PC votes to send an amendment to the SB it could take 70 days to complete this process. She explored the different ways to achieve the zoning changes and came up with a plan that could be presented to the PC. The PC began to

discuss the changes and told us that the actual process will take 6-12 months? This was a shock to us because it is a far different timeline than what we understood from our conversations with Jessica. That being said we accepted this and continued to show up at the PC meetings to see that our request was being furthered.

At some point in our process this winter another thing happened that added to the slowing of our timeline. Buttermilk LLC has been talking with the PC about finalizing the interim zoning that also could not be adopted until the town plan passed. In addition to adopting interim zoning they also began a conversation that evolved into a global conversation about the project as a whole. . As a result of the complexities that are involved in the Creamery parcel the PC decided to treat the two requests in front of them as separate votes, which makes sense as they are two very different projects. The thing that does not make sense to us is that we are now second in line behind a project that has taken years to bring to fruition...and could take years to bring to completion. We were also the first ones in line to amend zoning.

May - present 2019

The PC has the language before them that they could vote on amongst themselves to send a proposal to the SB. Despite the town voters having overwhelmingly supported the town plan and despite the fact that not one person showed up in the 6 months we have been working with the PC to object to what we were asking for, the PC at the behest of the Chairperson decided to warn a meeting to discuss the proposed changes. At that meeting a handful of people showed up to gain more clarity and a couple of people voiced concerns about the things that always come up...parking and traffic. As a result of this Jessica has revised the proposed density changes to affect ONLY the upper block of Bridge St where these densities already exist in EVERY building surrounding 39 Bridge St. In the first May meeting the PC stated that they had intended to vote upon both requests before them at the next meeting. At the second May meeting they stated that they would be voting upon the requests separately. They then spent the majority of the meeting discussing a something that had yet to enter the discussion (unit definition) and did not end up voting but rather set up a special 3rd meeting to finish the discussion and then vote. At the 3rd meeting they ended up spending the majority of the meeting discussing parking and again failed to vote on the Creamery and also stated that they would be voting on our request after that vote takes place. When asked about a clear timeline for when that vote would occur they said, "We don't have one".

The pace of the PC to affect change that they set forth in their town plan seems counter to a reasonable timeframe. Their lack of urgency in dealing with matters that are having a palpably negative effect on our village is frustrating. All of this is compounded by the fact that that we have a town plan, but there is still no clear end in sight for the requests being made.

Current assessment

We need to find a way to have a more professional approach as we work on implementing the town plan. The change we have proposed is very much in line with what we as a community have voted for and this very simple and innocuous proposal could drag out for over a year if it ever gets passed at all. My question to you all is this: If something this in line with the town plan takes this long to deal with what will happen as we continue to address some of the more out of date zoning codes? Change is happening all around us whether we approach it willingly or not. We have moved glacially as a town in adapting to the demands of present day society and are continuing down that road. We are behind in actively inviting vibrancy into our village.

We have two proposals for the SB....

The first is that we create timelines, for people coming before either you or the PC, so that people can plan their projects around them. The DRB has deadlines and they work well. You go before them, they either pass, deny or deliberate and in the longest case they have 45 days to decide and generally do so within several days.

The second thing we ask for is that the SB take the language that Jessica Draper has developed over the MANY months of conversation regarding the density of the upper Bridge St. block and act upon it without waiting for the PC to send it to you. It is what you will be seeing whether the PC sends it to you or Jessica sends it to you.

Thank you for hearing us out. This process seems flawed and we are seeing it first hand as we are walking through these gates. We hope that you take this information and use it to help usher in a new era of vibrancy into our fine village.

Thank you,

Gabe and Lars