

To the Richmond Select board –

Sadly I am not being able to attend tonight's meeting. In the last hearing on Jolina Court, many of us were clearly frustrated and / or confused. So I felt its necessary to clarify my understanding of the current task at hand and request your support in achieving the economic development that we all believe is possible.

The proposal you are reviewing and voting on is the product of 7 months of collaboration with the Planning Commission and ourselves to sculpt zoning that achieved both the Town Plan and implement the approved Interim Zoning for Jolina Court ( which paved the way to all of this ). The proposal was vetted through countless meetings, public hearing and unanimously approved.

A quick recap of our goal and plan for Jolina Court. Just over 1 year ago, the Creamery was a brownfield that had sat derelict and undevelopable for 17 years. No developer would touch it. But I had seen a great potential unique and challenging opportunity when I checked out the site in 2012... with both the passing of the Interim Zoning in 2014 and the tax incentive in 2015 – it made the project viable. Of course, there were risks but the partnership with the Town, the State, the EPA, HUD and many others, we felt it was possible. This effort took 2 years ..... The clean up took longer, cost almost double (due to finding additional contaminates) but today we now have a clean property to actualize the newly approved Town Plan. It was fraught with challenges, let us not lose true perspective.

Our development plan is to have 4 net zero buildings while bringing commercial and residential options to this community. We believe and know that this project will help create excitement and vibrancy in Richmond. Our forecast is that there will be nearly 40,000 sq feet of commercial space - more than the Creamery provided. The plan resonates and aligns with the town plan voted through by the entire community . Housing has proven to be a vital factor for commercial real estate businesses choosing a new place to call home.

We are committed to making this project net zero and have already built it to be the highest level of environmental build. ( Building wrapped in insulation and super insulated walls, led lighting, efficient heating and cooling systems ) We need to execute building 2 for us to make the massive solar investment viable, and continue on our path to Net zero. With out it, it will not happen. Our current solar permit will sunset this fall and thus approaching having to pull the plug on the solar initiative. With large deposits already made, this will be a terrible option.

Currently I manage and own over 45,000 square feet of commercial space in other towns in Vermont and have learned through experience what makes successful equation. The market realities of commercial real estate are humbling right now. There is a significant oversupply and banks are very wary of funding any projects without lease agreements ( thus we do not build on spec , though we did on building 1 with much on the line financially ). On the reverse, the housing crisis is painfully obvious in Richmond and beyond. These market conditions – hopefully – will not always be our reality and so our current plan is to ensure success today AND in the future. I welcome in both, I own both ..... it is only smart to always be diverse in that facet. I truly love Richmond as a commercial site , though I get so much blow back from the commercial realtors of Chittenden county cause I think they are so Jaded of current conditions. Richmond though is unique, it is the **Brooklyn of Burlington** ! Potentially such a vibrant site. But I have to promote and sell the story to realtors , constantly defend it , sell the bucolic nature of it – But I know we can make this happen !

Post last meeting in the spirit of collaboration I looked at doing the ground floor commercial on the second level of building 2 verses the ground floor, sunny walk out south side. We could actually make this work with much sound attenuation between floors. We looked at the building architecturally as a full office building ( commercial) or residential building. They both look the same so I do not see a negative or positive difference from either. In summary if really required or desired we could make the second level commercial option work. But I would propose let a tenant dictate the future for both lower level or second level commercial. They each have their advantages in building 2 . Why limit it ? The tenant we had on line prior to the banks shutting down building 2 due to lack of leases, preferred the lower level south side.... I would keep the option open ..... why not ?

Reducing total commercial build out % from 60% to 50% will not make or break anything economically or socially in town. Building 2 will tell the whole story of the future of all successes and any challenges ( economy , traffic, vibrancy in general ) . Completing Building 2 we can all see our way to vibrant creamery sight , once a blight , a danger, liability and contaminated site , that every one ran from, to a small town economic engine that can stay for generations.

I hope we can see through small concessions to achieve this commercial discovery vehicle for the Richmond Creamery site.

Respectfully – Brendan O'Reilly