
Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR December 2, 2020

Members Present: Chris Cole, Virginia Clarke, Chris Granda, Alison Anand, Brian Tellstone, Jake Kornfeld, Mark Fausel, Joy Reap

Members Absent:

Others Present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Matt Thompson, Christy Witters, Lisa Lavoie, Brodie O'Brien, Trish Healy, Allen Knowles, Betsy Hardy, Darcie Rankin, Jennifer Poehlmann, Connie Van Eeghen, Laura Silverstein, Scott Silverstein

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. The Planning Commission members introduced themselves to the public.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

3. Public Comment for non-agenda items

None

4. Planning Commission Community Outreach: W. Main St; Jericho Rd; Depot St; Railroad St

All participants introduced themselves. Cole provided background on the Richmond Town Plan, recently enacted rezoning efforts, and the Planning Commission's current work plan. Virginia Clarke provided an overview of the Residential/Commercial District, the overview of the draft zoning map, and the goals of the Planning Commission's current work plan. Cole suggested to Clarke to discuss uses. Clarke discussed permitting pathways. Chris Granda suggested asking the public for questions. Brodie O'Brien asked about which uses are allowable in existing commercially classified lots, like the Goodwin Baker building, and if one could convert the Goodwin Baker building into multifamily housing. Venkataraman said that he would have to double check if it is possible currently, and if it is possible, developing multifamily housing would go through the Planned Unit Development process, which is rigorous and the same permitting process for subdivisions. O'Brien said that he would support the development of a mix of commercial and residential uses. Venkataraman explained the concept of Planned Unit Developments. Cole added that the Planned Unit Development process is geared toward subdivisions, not tri-plexes or four-plexes, and that the Planning Commission is looking into providing landowners more flexibility to add density instead of through a rigorous permitting process. Jennifer Poehlmann said that she is glad that the Planning Commission has not discussed restaurants and retail uses, that she chose to live in her home because it was in a neighborhood, that her neighborhood is closely knit, and that she appreciates the Conditional Use Review process to consider impacts. Poehlmann asked if the commission had any rush for pursuing the zoning changes. Christy Witters asked the commission to adjust the scope area to not include properties north of West Main Street in between Millet and Baker Streets. Betsy Hardy discussed expansions of accessory dwelling allowances. Clarke discussed making accessory dwelling units open to non-family members. Mark Fausel clarified the residency requirements for accessory dwellings. Venkataraman said that per statute, either the accessory dwelling or the single-family dwelling has to be owner-occupied or owner-related occupied. Matt Thompson asked about parking and setbacks by adding dwellings. Cole said that these discussions aim to figure out the fine line of increasing density by maintaining the feel of the existing neighborhoods. O'Brien asked about regulations for short-term rentals. Cole said that the Planning Commission aims to address short term rentals in the near future. Venkataraman reviewed the diagrams of 58 Depot Street he created to better

explain lot coverage and the impacts of lot coverage limitations. Alison Anand asked how many lots would benefit from an increase in density allowances. Venkataraman said that he did not have a specific number, but that there were not many in the village based on lot coverage. Laura Silverstein suggested creating a map showing which properties may be impacted with expansions to density allowances. Cole asked if the property owner could create a Planned Unit Development to maximize density. Venkataraman said no and that the lot is too small. Anand said that if only a small number of properties can gain benefits, it will force certain property owners to develop units. Venkataraman said that the type of change that could occur with these zoning changes would be incremental, from two to three units instead of two to sixteen units. Venkataraman said that the determining factor for future development is going to be parking because any consideration of expanding the number of units is going to necessitate an expansion of parking areas per the zoning regulations. Clarke said that the Planning Commission will need to look into open space requirements, and landscaping and screening requirements. Lisa Lavoie expressed concern about West Main Street becoming more commercial. Trish Healy said that the neighborhood she currently lives in and holds rental property in is a family-friendly neighborhood and expressed concern about expanding accessory dwelling unit allowances. Cole said that the Commission will have to consider the changing landscape of commercial spaces, that viable properties in the village is necessary for neighborhoods and the town as a whole, and that the Commission will need to look into which properties would benefit from a density expansion. Darcie Rankin said that different socioeconomic situations and housing equity need to be recognized in discussions. Cole concurred and appreciated Rankin's comment. Granda said that previous discussions recognized the fact that the children of Richmond residents are unable to live in the community. Clarke recalled previous discussions of residents transitioning from renting to home ownership in Richmond. Scott Silverstein asked about the dimensional requirements in the Residential/Commercial District. Fausel said that the dimensional requirements are the same, but the lot size are different. Venkataraman said that the density allowances in the Residential/Commercial District is higher, and that it's hard to say if the density allowances will remain the same with the current discussions. Clarke cited example properties in town in which there are higher densities while being in character with its surroundings. Venkataraman said that the core concept guiding the Planning Commission's discussion is "gentle infill"--of increasing density in historic village centers that retain the character of the historic village centers while protecting natural resources surrounding the village centers. Cole suggested looking into which particular lots are impacted by increasing density allowances. O'Brien suggested repurposing underused commercial spaces into residential spaces. Anand and Granda concurred. Clarke said that public gathering places in businesses need to be maintained.

5. Adjournment

Motion by Tellstone, seconded by Granda to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner