

2 Richmond Planning Commission
3 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR October 21, 2020
4

Members Present: Chris Cole, Virginia Clarke, Chris Granda, Alison Anand, Mark Fausel,
Brian Tellstone, Jake Kornfeld
Members Absent: Joy Reap
Others Present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Christy Whitters, Marshall
5 Paulsen, Caitlin Littlefield

6 **1. Welcome and troubleshooting**
7

8 Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.
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10 **2. Adjustments to the Agenda**
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12 Ravi Venkataraman informed the Planning Commission that Zoning Administrator Suzanne
13 Mantegna will be leaving the position next month. Venkataraman said that Mantegna will be
14 sorely missed but wishes her all the best. Venkataraman let the commission know that he will
15 be taking on some or all of her duties while the town finds her replacement. Venkataraman
16 informed the commission that the Selectboard approved the amendments regarding 24 V.S.A.
17 4413 to the Zoning Regulations during its October 19, 2020 meeting, and that those
18 amendments will go into effect on November 10, 2020.
19

20 **3. Public Comment for non-agenda items**
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22 None
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24 **4. Approval of Minutes**
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26 Motion by Mark Fausel to approve the October 7, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting minutes,
27 seconded by Alison Anand. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.
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29 **5. Discussion on Outreach Schedule**
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31 Virginia Clarke overviewed the draft outreach schedule, village-related Town Plan goals, and
32 methods to implement listed goals. Cole said the village-related Town Plan goals provide good
33 context for the public, that the outreach schedule would be the commission's work plan for the
34 upcoming winter months, and that the commission would be drafting regulations in the spring.
35 Cole asked Clarke if the commission should discuss the list of Town Plan goals. Venkataraman
36 said that both the list of village-specific town plan goals Clarke prepared and the all the Town
37 Plan goals for the Planning Commission is included in the packet. Cole said that it was
38 important for the commission to link its work back to the town plan and appreciated Clarke's
39 condensed version. Venkataraman said that he will insert a link to the Town Plan in the
40 outreach schedule. Anand said the schedule looks good, and that the schedule can be revised
41 based on the pace of the Planning Commission. Venkataraman said he'd be inputting the
42 Zoom meeting information for each meeting in the outreach schedule. Clarke said that the
43 commission could hold a second round of outreach work. Caitlin Littlefield and Marshall

44 Paulsen said they had issues accessing tonight's meeting. Venkataraman apologized and said
45 he will make sure the correct meeting information is circulated in future postings.
46

47 **6. Discussion on Town Plan goals regarding Richmond Village**

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49 Clarke asked about compiling a list of questions to ask residents during the future meetings. Cole
50 concurred about having a list of questions. Anand agreed, and suggested providing an option for people
51 to pose questions. Venkataraman suggested including the questions in the meeting packet. Cole
52 agreed. Clarke suggested posting the questions with the meeting materials prior to the meeting. Cole
53 recommended asking residents how they envision their neighborhood and how it coincides with the
54 Town Plan goals. Cole said that discussions on density should include discussions on how the higher
55 density should look. Granda said that the commission is more likely to get constructive answers with
56 concrete proposals for feedback from the public. Granda added that this would orient the public on the
57 role and powers of zoning. Anand asked if the commission would like to put together questions during
58 this meeting. Cole concurred with Granda, and suggested including links to the "Zoning For Great
59 Neighborhoods" booklet in the outreach plan. Cole suggested a subcommittee to work on the questions
60 prior to the next meeting. Anand, Jake Kornfeld, Clarke, and Granda volunteered to help create
61 questions. Venkataraman said he will send out the outreach plan over the next week, and encouraged
62 the commission members to reach out to their respective neighbors to join the meeting. Paulsen
63 suggested having neighborhood captains per neighborhood to encourage public participation and
64 volunteered to be a neighborhood captain for Pleasant Street. Cole said it was a great idea. Christy
65 Whitters volunteered to be a neighborhood captain for the Tilden-Baker-Milet Street neighborhoods.
66 Cole suggested recruiting other neighborhood captains. Whitters said she could look into having people
67 participate. Paulsen asked for clarification on the areas under consideration. Cole said that all of the
68 village is under consideration, but each part of the village have different aspects and elements to
69 consider.
70

71 **7. Discussion on "Zoning for Great Neighborhoods"**

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73 Cole asked if the Planning Commission had the opportunity to read the "Zoning for Great
74 Neighborhoods" document, and overviewed how the document is straightforward in its suggestions for
75 increasing density in communities. Anand asked if the "Zoning For Great Neighborhoods" document
76 was related to the form-based code elements document in the packet. Venkataraman said yes, that he
77 borrowed a number of graphics from the "Zoning for Great Neighborhoods" document, and that "Zoning
78 for Great Neighborhoods" is more so arguing for Smart Growth rather than form-based zoning as a
79 whole. Cole said he liked the "cottage court" type development and methods for accessory dwelling
80 units on properties. Anand said that the "cottage court" type development could be a way to do
81 affordable housing. Venkataraman said it could be one way to develop affordable housing based on the
82 costs of creating affordable housing. Clarke said she liked the methodology section of the document,
83 and suggested methods from the list for the commission to consider. Cole noted that in the document
84 Venkataraman compiled that Shelburne has a form-based overlay district, and asked if those
85 regulations are in line with the commission's considerations. Venkataraman said that Shelburne's form-
86 based code is an optional code one could develop according to, that currently it has no allowances to
87 utilize existing buildings and take advantage of the form-based code, and that he found it unwieldy at
88 times. Cole asked about the geographic extent and the purpose of the form-based code. Venkataraman
89 said it covered the Shelburne Road corridor in order to revitalize the corridor. Clarke said she liked the
90 document because it discussed implementing the elements of form-based code, and would want to
91 integrate form-based code elements into the regulations instead of entirely new form-based code.
92 Venkataraman agreed because a full form-based code can become unwieldy, and said that he
93 recommends that the commission could draft a "form-based code light" into the existing regulations.
94

95 **8. Notice from Town of Hinesburg on Town Plan update**

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98 Venkataraman overviewed the Town of Hinesburg's proposed energy section of their Town Plan, calling
99 it a robust document listing renewable energy goals and ideals for solar siting. Cole asked if Granda
100 reviewed the document. Granda said he had not, intends to review the document, and provide further
101 guidance to the commission on meeting energy goals and stretch code. Clarke said that the Town Plan
102 already has an extensive energy section, and that revisions may be required in the zoning regulations.
103 Granda said that there are two issues at hand regarding energy: (1) renewable energy siting, and (2)
104 building standards for energy efficiency. Cole asked how the building standards would implemented if
105 the planning and zoning office doesn't regulate building codes. Venkataraman said that stretch code can
106 be adopted and enforced via zoning, and only South Burlington has adopted stretch code. Granda said
107 that Hinesburg stipulated that new construction must participate in Efficiency Vermont's program, and
108 that this would be possible for Richmond to incorporate. Venkataraman said that Granda may be
109 suggesting a middle ground between adopting the stretch code and current practices by validating
110 compliance with the state energy codes, because under current practices, the town requires all
111 Certificate of Occupancy applications to include a building energy standards certificate per statute, but
112 Planning and Zoning couldn't tell if the certificate form is completed correctly. Granda said
113 Venkataraman pointed out the flaws in the current system of self-validation, and that Efficiency Vermont
114 would be able to ensure compliance. Clarke suggested density bonuses for energy efficiency, and the
115 consideration of the results of the Global Warming Solutions Act.

116 117 **9. Notice from Town of Williston on amendments to the Unified Development Bylaw**

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119 Venkataraman overviewed the changes to the parking requirements and development allowances within
120 the watershed protection buffer in the Town of Williston Unified Development Bylaw.

121 122 **10. Update on recent legislative changes**

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124 Venkataraman reviewed Town of Hinesburg Director of Planning and Vermont Planners Association's
125 Legislative Liaison Alex Weinhagen's email on legislative changes in the past year. Cole asked for
126 clarification on the changes to accessory dwelling unit allowances. Venkataraman said that the changes
127 to state statute increase allowances for accessory dwelling units, and clarifications on regulating short-
128 term rentals. Clarke asked for an itemized list the commission will need to consider. Venkataraman said
129 that with the recent housing bill, he does not expect the need to make any major changes to the
130 regulations. Cole said that there are points in this list the commission will need to consider, including the
131 lifting of the character of the area review criteria for certain multifamily dwelling uses. Venkataraman
132 said that this exception would need to be made explicit in the zoning regulations, but that it is bad
133 practice to deny permits for uses based on the character of the area if the use is listed as a permitted or
134 conditional use for the district the area is located within. Cole asked if the commission needed to
135 consider other bills. Venkataraman overviewed the retail cannabis bill, and specified that cannabis is not
136 regulated as an agricultural product and that cannabis cultivation isn't subject to "opting in", and thus the
137 commission should discuss regulating cannabis cultivation, testing, warehousing, and distribution. Cole
138 asked about state permits for cannabis cultivation. Venkataraman said yes and that that requirement
139 has been in place for a while now. Cole agreed that the commission should discuss regulations for
140 cannabis cultivation, testing, warehousing, and distribution, and that the commission should talk to the
141 Selectboard on this matter. Clarke suggested looking into what other towns are doing, and thanks
142 Venkataraman for sharing the correspondence. Venkataraman said that he will keep the commission
143 updated, and that nearby municipalities haven't had much discussion on cannabis yet.

144 145 **11. Other Business**

146
147 Cole asked Caitlin Littlefield if she was interested in serving on the Planning Commission. Littlefield said
148 that she found the meeting interesting and will be submitting a letter of interest. Venkataraman said that
149 the next meeting agenda will include reviewing letters of interest from applicants to serve on the
150 Planning Commission.

151

152 Clarke said that the Housing Committee will be meeting next week. Cole suggested that Clarke provide
153 an update on the Housing Committee work during the next Planning Commission meeting. Mark Fausel
154 suggested touching base with all the other town boards and committees. Cole suggested that the
155 commission should think about serving as liaisons with the other town boards and committees. Cole
156 asked Granda to discuss energy planning and renewable energy siting in a future meeting. Granda
157 accepted, and said he will look into having a discussion prepared for an upcoming meeting.

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159 12. Adjournment

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161 Motion by Granda, seconded by Tellstone to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion
162 carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

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164 Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner