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Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR Meeting
UNAPPROVED MINUTES FOR June 3, 2020 MEETING

Members Present: Chris Cole, Virginia Clarke, Mark Fausel, Scott Nickerson, Alison Anand,
Jake Kornfeld, Brian Tellstone, Joy Reap
Members Absent: Chris Granda
Others Present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Zachary Maia

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8 Chris Cole opened the meeting at 7:04 pm.
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10 **2. Adjustments to the Agenda**

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12 Virginia Clarke requested five minutes to talk about parklets during other business. Joy Reap requested
13 discussion on commercial uses and restrictions, in light of COVID-19.
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15 **3. Approval of Minutes**

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17 Motion by Virginia Clarke, second by Alison Anand to approve the minutes of May 20, 2020 Planning
18 Commission meeting. Voting: 5-0. (Mark Fausel, Joy Reap, Jake Kornfeld abstain) Motion carried.
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20 **4. Public Comment for non-agenda items**

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22 Chris Cole welcomes Jake Kornfeld to the Planning Commission. Jake Kornfeld introduced himself to
23 the Planning Commission.
24

25 **5. Public Hearing: Amendments to the Village Downtown Zoning District regulations**

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27 Brian Tellstone asked about the major changes between the current zoning regulations and the draft
28 regulations. Venkataraman and Clarke overviewed the main changes, stating that the main changes
29 were to the list of uses, the rounding rule, the compatibility section, and the traffic impacts section to
30 align the district regulations with the Jolina Court Zoning District regulations, as well as the inclusion of
31 two new parcels into the district.
32

33 Motion by Clarke, second by Anand to move to finalize the changes to Town Zoning Regulations
34 Sections 2.1, 3.10, 4.11.3c, 5.7.4, and 5.12.2 and direct staff to distribute copies of the amendment
35 proposal to the Selectboard. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.
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37 **6. Public Hearing: Addition of "Veterinary Clinic" and "Pub" uses to Zoning Regulations**

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39 Venkataraman overviewed the changes made to the draft regulations since May 6, 2020. Clarke
40 clarified that "Veterinary Clinic" uses were proposed to be added because such uses were removed
41 from the Jolina Court Zoning District Regulations.
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43 Motion by Mark Fausel, second by Scott Nickerson to move to finalize the changes to Town Zoning
44 Regulations Sections 3.1.2, 3.2.2, 3.3.2, 3.4.2, 3.5.2, 3.6.2, 3.7.2, 3.9.2, 3.10.2, and 7.2 and direct staff
45 to distribute copies of the amendment proposal to the Selectboard. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.
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47 **7. Discussion on creation of Housing Advisory Committee**

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49 Cole provided a summary of discussions from past meetings about affordable housing density bonus
50 regulations, and a housing advisory committee. Cole said that this committee should be significantly
51 represented by Planning Commission members. Clarke asked if the Selectboard had any questions
52 about the Planning Commission's work plan for this matter. Venkataraman said no questions were
53 raised about this during the last Selectboard meeting. Cole invited any questions on the draft purpose
54 statement provided. Anand said long-term goals listed are good. Cole asked the board if it had any
55 questions or concerns regarding short-term goals. Fausel asked if this committee would be an
56 affordable housing committee or a general residential housing committee. Cole said this committee
57 would be general housing committee with the task of taking on Affordable housing as specified by
58 Selectboard. Fausel said the short-term goals were too focused on affordability, and could address
59 energy efficiency and other aspects of housing. Clarke said that certain other aspects are addressed in
60 long-term goals. Cole said that this housing committee should be responsible for putting together long-
61 term goals, and that they should include how other elements intersect with the subject of housing, such
62 as housing and energy efficiency, and housing and short-term rentals. Cole suggested revising the long-
63 term goals as initial and stating that other goals will be listed in consultation with the Planning
64 Commission and Selectboard at a later date. Clarke said the Town Plan should be referenced. Anand
65 asked about connecting affordable housing and density bonus. Cole overviewed the incentive program
66 discussed in previous meetings to entice developers to create affordable housing units by building on
67 top of base density. Clarke said that the charge should include the possibility of mandatory affordable
68 housing regulations. Cole recommended revising the short-term goals to state "developing affordable
69 housing regulations with a possible inclusion of a density bonus" to allow for full policy analysis. Anand
70 agrees with this revision. Clarke voiced concerns about the workload the short-term goals places, and
71 suggested revisions to the second and third bullet point. Cole asked for recommendation on committee
72 membership. Fausel recommended a larger committee, with one member from Selectboard.
73 Venkataraman asked if the commission if residency should be a requirement. Cole said no, and would
74 welcome expertise from other communities. Anand asked about public at-large membership. Fausel
75 said that perspective is needed. Clarke suggested reaching out to Western Slopes Business Association.
76 Joy Reap asked for more clarification on the plan and the culling of members. Nickerson asked about
77 the rights of non-residents on boards, and their effect on voting and quorum. Venkataraman said that
78 non-residents can vote and contribute to the quorum. He added that the main thing nonresidents cannot
79 do is enact laws on behalf of residents. Fausel recommended that the board consists of nine members.
80 Cole suggested reaching out to other boards with stakeholder interest, such as the conservation
81 commission, and energy Committee. Clarke clarified that the Climate Action Committee not a town-
82 affiliated committee. Cole recommended that the housing advisory committee should consist of up to
83 nine members, with five citizens, two Planning Commission members, and possibly members of the
84 Conservation Committee or any other town committee. Fausel expressed interest in participating on the
85 committee. Venkataraman asked if he should provide a draft description on membership qualifications
86 and responsibilities. Clarke suggested that such a description need not to be too detailed. Cole stated
87 that the proposal will be refined and further discussion will occur during the next meeting.
88

89 **8. Discussion of timeline and logistics of public outreach**

90
91 Clarke discussed methods of distribution, including Front Porch Forum postings, hard copies at the
92 Town Office, and email distribution to community groups. Fausel said all were good ideas, and that
93 flyers at public places for the survey should be considered.
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95 **9. Discussion of Village Commercial Zoning District**

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97 Venkataraman provided an overview of the items enclosed in the packet. Clarke raised a number of
98 questions to the commission, including: incorporation of the Village Commercial District into
99 Residential/Commercial District, review of the Residential/Commercial District, upzoning the Village
100 Commercial District, and extending the Residential/Commercial District. Brian Tellstone asked about

101 the presence of septic and wells in the sewer service area. Clarke clarified that properties in the sewer
102 service area are not necessarily connected to town water and sewer. Clarke asked about combining
103 zoning districts into a Village Mixed Residential District, creating a Historic District, and increasing
104 allowable density. Anand asked about records for septic systems. Venkataraman said that septic
105 connections depend on the property, and that he would have to look at each property in the district to
106 determine if it has a septic system. Clarke suggested specifying density allowances based on
107 water/sewer connection. Cole asked about the density allowances for the High Density Residential
108 District. Clarke said that in that district, 1.3 units/acre is allowed. Cole asked about the impact of
109 upzoning on the character of the neighborhood. Clarke suggested upzoning E. Main St. from three units
110 per acre to six units per acre. Cole asked Venkataraman if he is able to display the impacts of density.
111 Venkataraman said he does not with the software he has at his disposal. Cole suggested asking the
112 regional planning commission. Cole said he likes linking density allowances to connections to town
113 water and sewer. Fausel said more work is necessary in order to consider combining districts. Fausel
114 said that the committee will need input from the landowners, and recommended that the housing
115 committee could research this issue further. Clarke laid out a variety of permutations to combine
116 districts. Cole asked the committee their view of the village 20 years from now, and where they envision
117 commercial sectors to be located. Clarke said she would like to provide a variety of options, including
118 options for mixed use. Cole said the committee should consider developing different maps to organize
119 different options. Fausel asked the committee was focused on the Village Commercial District and if any
120 property owners had requests. Cole said that the Village Commercial District revisions and revisions of
121 the Richmond Village zoning districts were driven by Clarke. Cole said he had received a request from
122 the Reaps on revising the Gateway District. Joy Reap said her request stems from COVID as tenants
123 were leaving her commercial property. Reap said she wants residential development to be an option as
124 she has difficulties finding commercial tenants. Reap said that having a sewer connection helps the
125 developability and marketability of her parcel. She said her parcel has no major traffic issues. Clarke
126 asked if Reap explored creating a PUD. Reap said her properties are within a PUD, but still are
127 restricted by the Gateway District Regulations. Reap said that the Planning Commission must address
128 that commercial development will be changed forever due to COVID. Cole agrees with Joy that COVID
129 has forever changed commercial real estate. Anand said that landowners may lose more if the Gateway
130 District has a higher density and leads to the widening of the road. Reap said the opportunity for growth
131 could outweigh the costs. Fausel said that widening the road could change the character of the district
132 Cole said that the town could take control of roadway within village. Clarke said that the commission
133 could put forth green space requirements. Cole said that the commission could put forth lot coverage
134 requirements. Reap said that her property is unique, and thus the regulations places unequal
135 restrictions on her property. Fausel said when the district was last reviewed in 2015, the commission at
136 the time was concerned about maintaining commercial properties and commercial growth for tax
137 reasons. Fausel said that COVID raises questions on how to gain alternative revenue sources. Cole
138 said he sees an overlap between Gateway and Village Commercial Districts topics. Cole suggested that
139 every committee members must develop goals ten-year and twenty-year goals, and reconvene to
140 discuss responses during the next meeting. Reap requested the Town Plan Committee survey
141 responses in the next meeting packet. Fausel requested maps of the south part of Richmond and the
142 entire Gateway District in the next meeting packet. Venkataraman recommended enclosing respective
143 member's goals in next meeting's packet. Cole said this zoning conversation will be included in the next
144 meeting agenda

145 146 **10. Other Business**

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148 Clarke reflected upon a webinar she watched on tactical urbanism standards held by Vermont
149 Department of Transportation. Venkataraman said that the town internally has had these conversations
150 for the past few weeks and interested businesses can apply for temporary outdoor seating via a right-of-
151 way permit.

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11 Adjournment

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155 Motion by Tellstone, seconded by Fausel to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

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The meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm.

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Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner