

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR February 17, 2021

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

Members Absent:

Others Present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Bradley Holt, Ashley Farr, Erin Farr, Gary Bressor, Jean Bressor, Catherine McIntyre, Tyler Merritt, Cathleen Gent, Chuck Senick, Katie Mather, Drew Donovan, Fran Huntoon, Fran Thomas, Holly Brelleroose, Jon Kart, Karen Yaggy, Laura Farrell, Todd Farr, Patti Rossi, Victor Rossi, Susan Wells, Ed Wells, Sara Volinsky, Nathanel Merrill, Gerald Feenan, Rose Feenan, Logan Hegg

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

3. Public Comment for non-agenda items

Bradley Holt brought to the Planning Commission's attention the proposed subdivision off Hillview Road, his concerns regarding the proposed subdivision, and concerns about the alignment of the zoning regulations for the Agricultural/Residential district and the current town plan. Cole and Ravi Venkataraman overviewed the Act 250 review process. Mark Fausel said that as an abutting property owner to this proposed subdivision, he will keep the commission informed.

4. Planning Commission Community Outreach: Southern portions of the village (Bridge Street south of the Winooski River, Thompson Road, Farr Road, the intersection of Cochran Road and Huntington Road)

Cole asked for all attendees to introduce themselves. Attendees introduced themselves. Virginia Clarke summarized the map (the proposed Residential/Commercial Districts, the Village Residential Neighborhoods District, and the Round Church Viewshed District), the discussion document, possible uses, and the discussion goals. Katie Mather asked as a neighbor to the possible R/C district the possible uses within the proposed R/C district, and about the potential for subdivision in the proposed R/C district south of Huntington Road. Clarke said that the borders for possible rezoning were based on the location along major corridors, and that generally people do not divide properties to the lowest possible lot size with the allowance. Cole said that housing could be developed through the PUD process currently, and that the proposal would allow for maintaining agricultural uses as the Farris would like it. Mather would like the commission to be aware of water quality impacts of development in open lands within the proposed areas. Clarke said that the intent was to allow for development outside floodplains. Gent said that not all the areas south of Huntington Road is outside the floodplain. Cole said that he was aware that there were parts south of Huntington Road within the floodplain. Venkataraman identified the areas within the floodplain. Gent asked for clarification that the floodplain regulations were not going to be changed. Cole confirmed that the floodplain regulations were not going to be changed. Todd Farr said that as the owner of 82 Huntington Road that he would appreciate flexibility for future development. Ashley Farr also said that he would appreciate opportunities to diversify the farm while keeping the agriculture operations. Fran

Huntoon asked about water and sewer service to Ashley Farr's property and about making the area south of the Winooski River walkable. Susan Wells said that the Thompson Road-Huntington Road intersection crossing is not accessible for pedestrians. Cole said that the Transportation Committee is working on bicycle/pedestrian projects to improve on-road and off-road facilities. Fran Thomas advocated for keeping the area around the Round Church as-is to protect the historical nature of the area. Gary Bressor said that Old Brooklyn Court, the Senick/Mather house, and the property he owns on the corner of Thompson and Cochran Roads should be included in the Round Church Viewshed District, that he recommended placing both sides of Thompson Road within the same Village Residential Neighborhoods District, that the PUD process should be available in all the districts, that he found the PUD process accessible, and that he is concerned about regulatory changes that would make residential units less available for ownership. Bressor added that from his experience, people want to own standalone houses on smaller lots. Karen Yaggy asked about when the latest housing studies were done for Chittenden County considering recent developments in Williston, and Colchester. Clarke said that the Housing Committee are studying this currently. Venkataraman said that the housing needs are based on data collected by Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, and based on the targets they set in 2018 for 2023, the county is well short of meeting those targets. Tyler Merritt asked about the Creamery development and its rental units. Cole said that the Creamery development has a commercial component and that he is not aware if the developers have returned to the DRB for the next phase of development. Merritt suggested allowing more units within the Creamery development based on existing conditions. Cole said that the project allowances are based on lengthy discussions with the Selectboard and Planning Commission. Merritt asked about protections against chain stores within zoning. Venkataraman said that based on the discussion documents, those types of developments would be subject to the development review criteria and the design standards, and at this stage, cannot say for certain if it could occur with the entire zoning regulations still under review. Cole asked if Venkataraman knew of any towns with regulations limiting chain store development. Venkataraman said he expected limits to be in the form of a square footage limit in order to prevent development per corporate specifications. Mather asked about specifying what rural character means in the zoning regulations. Clarke said that writing specific standards is tricky, and it's possible to put some specific standards. Venkataraman said that it is the Planning Commission's and the town's responsibility to translate the general, broad-stroke language of the Town Plan into specific standards in the zoning regulations, and that the commission and community members' responsibilities to make sure that the specifics in the zoning regulations are representative of the term "rural character" in the Town Plan. Cole said that the commission will need to investigate deeper to make sure that the zoning regulations are not only consistent with the town plan but also consistent with the values of the community. Victor Rossi recommended graywater, brownwater, fire hydrant, and sewage system plans with zoning changes. Jon Kart appreciated the commission's regard for form-based zoning, said he would appreciate a higher residential density within the Farr property to bring residents closer to the village, and said that he would not like to see chain stores regardless of if it fits aesthetic standards. Patti Rossi asked if stewardship of land is taken into consideration into the housing study. Clarke said that that isn't included within the scope of the housing study. Rossi asked if the older buildings in town could be torn down and converted into multiunit buildings. Clarke said that other than the adaptive use allowance, no other protections for older buildings are in place in zoning and that zoning encourages the use of property to its value. Gerald Feenan asked about how the commission decided upon lot sizes. Cole said that the reduction in lot size is driven by creating more affordable housing. Clarke said the reduction in lot size is to transition between the agricultural/residential district and the village downtown district.

5. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Clarke, seconded by Alison Anand, to approve the January 20, 2021 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

Motion by Anand, seconded by Littlefield, to approve the February 3, 2021 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Voting: 7-0 (Reap and Jake Kornfeld abstained). Motion carried.

6. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Reap asked if realistically the commission could do anything to address the Hillview subdivision concerns. Venkataraman said that the DRB reviewed a sketch plan application the previous week, that subdivision applications vest upon completion of the Preliminary Subdivision application, that he is unsure of when the applicant will submit a preliminary subdivision application, and that it is unlikely for new regulations to be in place before the applicant submits the application. Fausel suggested briefing the commission about the Hillview subdivision proposal during the commission's next meeting.

Littlefield requested a discussion about forest districts at a future meeting.

Clarke asked Cole for additional information about the water/sewer extension service. Cole said he had nothing to report, noting Venkataraman's report regarding the Richmond Mobil Station's proposal.

Motion by Reap, seconded by Tellstone to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner