

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR January 5, 2022

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Mark Fausel, Chris Granda, Joy Reap, Lisa Miller, Alison Anand, Chris Cole
Members Absent:	Dan Mullen,
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), MMCTV, Rod West

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

2. Public Comment for non-agenda items

None.

3. Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Ravi Venkataraman announced that Jake Kornfeld has stepped down from the Planning Commission. Chris Granda asked how many members are currently on the commission. Venkataraman said eight. Clarke said that five members are still required to meet quorum.

4. Approval of Minutes

Clarke noted that there are no minutes for the December 15, 2021 meeting because no quorum was present, that the planning intern Kayla Vaccaro presented on clustered housing to the members present and that she appreciated the summary of the state wetlands permitting process in the December 1, 2021 meeting minutes. The commission approved the minutes as written.

5. Preparation of draft regulations on wetlands, vehicle fueling station, and nonconforming structures and uses for Public Hearing

Clarke reviewed the contents of the packet for this discussion item. Cole asked if Clarke would like a motion for all the proposed draft changes. Clarke said that motions can be made for each set of draft regulations or for all the proposed regulations. Miller said that they may not be able to finish review of all the proposals tonight and suggested focusing on the draft wetlands regulations. Clarke said that considering all the past discussions on these items, the commission should be able to address all the draft regulations during the meeting.

Clarke suggested reviewing the draft wetlands regulations first. Granda asked if under Section 6.9.3.1 the permitted paths have to be permeable surfaces. Clarke referred to Section 6.9.3.1 and its requirement to allow for the free flowing of water, and that because the regulation is for walkways within the buffer, the

requirement for permeable surfaces was not necessary. Clarke noted the allowances for crossings to circumvent variance applications, the definition of “constructed”, the cross reference to nonconforming structures, and the vegetation requirement.

Motion by Cole, seconded by Reap, to warn a public hearing on February 2, 2022 on amendments to the Richmond Zoning Regulations Sections 6.9 and 7.

Discussion: Miller asked about regulating holding tanks. Chris Cole noted the allowances for replacing existing tanks. Clarke pointed to the regulations prohibiting new septic tanks.

Voting: 7-0 (Alison Anand abstained). Motion carried.

Clarke overviewed the nonconforming uses and structures draft regulations, highlighting Section 4.7.8 which would allow for the Mobil gas station property to redevelop and is based on conversations with Tina Heath and the Richmond Conservation Commission. Anand said she appreciated Section 4.7.8(c), and asked Joy Reap for her opinion on the draft regulations. Reap said she thinks the town had been too restrictive on wetlands in general, and that the commission needs to be flexible to allow for improvements to the site. Fausel said he appreciated the language involving the role of the Conservation Commission in the review process. Clarke asked about the inclusion of a definition of buffer, considering the proposed inclusion of a definition for wetland buffer, and added that the definitions for buffer and wetland buffer are different. Anand concurred that both definitions could be included in the regulations.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Fausel to warn a public hearing on February 2, 2022 on amendments to the Richmond Zoning Regulations Sections 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 7. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

Clarke overviewed the proposed changes to the vehicle fueling station use requirements, and changes to definitions. Granda said that the dispensing of electric vehicle charge is not terminology used by the industry, that he recommends changing the reference of “electric vehicle charge” to “electricity as a vehicle fuel”, and that he recommends changing the reference to “structure” under accessory electric vehicle charging station to “facility or device”. Clarke reviewed the definition of a structure and asked if a bollard-type charger would be considered a structure. Granda said yes, adding that the charger could be a device directly connected to the wall of a building and not necessarily a standalone structure. Clarke asked about including “a structure or device” in the definition. Granda agreed.

Miller asked about the limitation on accessory structure height. Venkataraman said that he was not sure how the six-foot limitation came into being, but that the limitation is customary in zoning for fences, demarcating what is considered a reasonable fence height and what is not.

Clarke asked the committee’s opinion on the limitation of fueling islands, and noted the need to provide a basis for their decision. Miller said that Clarke’s document outlining the commission’s rationale captures the commission’s thoughts on this question.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Granda, warn a public hearing on February 2, 2022 on amendments to the Richmond Zoning Regulations Section 4.14, 5.10, and 7. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

Clarke reviewed the proposed rezoning of the Mobil gas station to the Industrial/Commercial District, noting that the Park and Ride could be rezoned from Agricultural/Residential to Industrial/Commercial.

Cole said that rezoning the Mobil gas station was previously discussed and that rezoning the Park and Ride makes sense. Anand asked about the Verberg farm. Clarke said that those properties are in the Agricultural/Residential District and will not be changing districts. Clarke said that the Exit 11 area appears aesthetically different from the rest of the Gateway District. Cole asked for the difference between the Industrial/Commercial and Commercial Districts. Clarke noted the key difference is housing allowances in the Commercial District, compared to the Industrial/Commercial District, but suggested that the Planning Commission should have a longer conversation at some point to flesh out all the differences between these two districts.

Motion by Cole, seconded by Anand, warn a public hearing on February 2, 2022 on amending the Zoning Map to rezone Mobil gas station and Park and Ride parcels into the Industrial/Commercial District. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

6. Creation of plan and timeline for upcoming Gateway District zoning discussion and update

Clarke overviewed the discussion topic, noting that the vote to expand the water/sewer district to the Mobil gas station passed, that a decision on the bond vote is impending, that an amendment to the existing Act 250 permit for the water/sewer system is probably needed, and that planning for the Gateway District that can pass the Act 250 permit criteria is necessary. Clarke said that outreach to the property owners is needed, and that the commission will need to consider site layout and design elements. Clarke said that the planning and zoning process for the Gateway will need to be complete by the end of the summer, to align with the Water and Sewer Commission's timeline and to provide them clarity on the buildout potential of the Gateway District. Anand asked if the project would qualify for federal infrastructure funding. Clarke said that that is to be determined. Miller noted how large the project is, and said that the commission should consider putting together a few plans for the public so that the public can grasp the project and provide constructive feedback. Clarke said that outreach to the property owners must be done first, but concurred that a visual component will be helpful. Granda said that planning the way Miller outlined may not be feasible, as the Town can guide residents on how to develop properties but not dictate the manner of development. Fausel said that only a few properties in the Gateway District could accommodate an alternate road. Reap said that she will be talking with Venkataraman and Clarke outside of a meeting to clarify her needs for Willis Farm, that she may step aside for future conversations about the Gateway District out of conflict of interest, and that careful planning is needed to make sure properties are able to gain a return on investment. Cole pointed out that the town has a Conflict of Interest policy that all commission members have to abide by.

Rod West recommended that the commission be practical in its approach, keeping in mind the lot size and topography, and said he had concerns about the equity impacts of placing housing next to a major thoroughfare and a freeway.

Clarke said that outreach meetings for this project are forthcoming. Granda said that with the point on improving bike/ped access, public transit access should be prioritized too. Cole said that a vision for the corridor will need to be developed, and that based on the time the commission has, it should focus on implementing Act 250 9L requirements for properties under Act 250 jurisdiction. Cole noted the equity issue of the placement of housing and the need to engage with the Richmond Racial Equity Group.

Fausel suggested scheduling additional meetings for this project. Cole said that much of the work occurs outside of meetings and that an ad-hoc committee could help prepare meeting materials to move the

work forward.

7. Brief introduction to reorganization of Zoning Regulations

Clarke said that having a reorganized zoning regulations that is consistent and coherent is going to make forthcoming revisions easier, and that Venkataraman has been working on reorganizing the zoning regulations for the last year. Clarke reviewed the table of contents of the restructured zoning regulations. The commission agreed that the reorganization is needed and supported Clarke and Venkataraman's work.

8. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Motion by Granda, seconded by Reap to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner