

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR February 16, 2022

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Lisa Miller, Chris Granda, Alison Anand, Dan Mullen,
Members Absent:	Joy Reap, Chris Cole, Mark Fausel,
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Erin Wagg (MMCTV), Kristen Hayden-West, Jeff Forward, Rod West, Jon Kart, Katie Mather, Gary Bressor, Judy Bush, Francine Pomerantz, Patty Brushett, Jean Bressor, Alexis Lathem, Peter Mumford, Marian Mumford, Ellen Kraft

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

2. Public Comment for non-agenda items

None.

3. Adjustments to the Agenda

Clarke reviewed the meeting agenda. No adjustments to the agenda were made or suggested.

4. Approval of Minutes

No comments. The minutes are accepted into the record as written.

5. Public Input on the Gateway District

Clarke overviewed the topic under discussion, stating that the commission is looking into revising the zoning regulations for the village and are addressing possible changes to the Gateway District due to the potential extension of water and sewer services to the district. Clarke said that the commission will be taking public input during the March 2nd meeting as well. Clarke said that expansion of the Water and Sewer District has been approved by the current and proposed customers of the Water and Sewer District; that a water line extension in addition to a sewer line extension is still under consideration; that a bond vote has to be presented to the Selectboard, and that the Water and Sewer Commission is still determining the details of the bond vote. Clarke said that the sewer, and possibly water, extension project will require Act 250; that Act 250 requires that the proposed development would not promote strip commercial development, and that whether the town's current zoning would pass Act 250 is suspect. Clarke said that the Housing Committee has shown interest in allowing housing, and that the Gateway District is not very large, thus not much housing could be developed within the area. Clarke said that Act 250 could be denied, but that Willis Farm could get town water and sewer service on their own.

Clarke reviewed the Planning Commission's goals for the Gateway District. Clarke added that the commission is considering an amendment to rezone the property containing the Mobil gas station from

the Gateway Commercial District to the Industrial/Commercial District. Clarke opened the discussion for public comment.

Jeff Forward asked in the chat when the bond vote might happen. Clarke said that she is unsure of when the bond vote might happen, as the Water and Sewer Commission is still determining how much capacity is needed for the expansion area and resolving other issues. Katie Mather asked in the chat about the reasoning for the rezoning of the Mobil gas station property. Clarke said that the gas station use fits in better with the other uses surrounding the Exit 11 area compared to the uses in the Gateway Commercial District currently. Jon Kart asked in the chat what uses could be allowed in the Gateway District, such as a Dollar General store. Clarke reviewed the development standards under Act 250 Criteria 9(L). Ravi Venkataraman said that, specific to Kart's question, the commission could employ a number of methods to prevent the type of development Kart alludes to, such as limiting building footprint sizes, types of allowed uses, site placement, building coverage, lot coverage, as well as requiring multiple stories per building and residential uses. Venkataraman added that with the Criteria 9(L) requirements Clarke reviewed, achieving these requirements can be done in multiple ways and that input is needed on how the town would like to achieve these requirements. Rod West asked how the commission is taking into consideration the town plan and economic development. Clarke said that in the Gateway District, only the Reaps' property (Willis Farm) has adequate space for development and that the commission is taking into consideration the potential for commercial and residential development on that property. Clarke added that the potential for commercial development in general is currently uncertain, noting the past conversations about finances and commercial opportunities with the creamery project.

Gary Bressor noted the importance of a multi-use path between the village and the Park and Ride, and shared drawings of possible designs for the multi-use path. Bressor said that there is a path on the Richmond Land Trust property to the school. Bressor encouraged allowances for mixed use development on Willis Farm. Bressor overviewed a topographical map of the Gateway area, and a map depicting design and layout for a possible roadway running parallel to Route 2 along with possible lot layout. Bressor presented possible infill housing options that could be built within his proposed lot layout. Bressor suggested that the property west of the property hosting The Crate Escape be placed in the same district as the farmland south of Route 2 because of the aesthetics the hill provides for the Gateway area.

Kristen Hayden-West asked why a multi-use path between Route 2 and the Park and Ride has not been built out yet. Clarke deferred to Chris Cole, who is absent, and noted issues with Vtrans on building infrastructure. Venkataraman said that Vtrans is not willing to install separate bike/ped infrastructure within that corridor, and that the Town has looked into the feasibility of installing a mixed-use path in 2013/2014. Venkataraman summarized the options from the 2014 feasibility study, and noted the high cost of building out any of the options in the feasibility study. Venkataraman said that he and the Transportation Committee are looking into funding a study that would revisit the 2014 study and provide options that would not be cost-prohibitive. Clarke added that the option to connect the Gateway area to the village through the Richmond Land Trust property and the schools may be further investigated.

Forward said that he disagrees with West's comments regarding economic development, that allowing for further commercial development in the Gateway area would detract from the business and services the town already has, and that he would be in favor of expanding housing allowances. Mather said she was also in favor of more residential development based on past conversations on the creamery project, and that she is mindful of making sure businesses are able to continue to serve the town if they have the need for more space. Kart said that he would like to see more commercial opportunities in the Gateway,

that he has concerns about the possibilities of chain stories in the Gateway, and that he would be in favor of regulations that would support the development of local businesses.

Kart said that as a bicyclist, he wouldn't be inclined to bike up the hill from the Gateway area to the schools to access the village from the Park and Ride, that he encourages the committee to work with the Transportation Committee to support solutions to improve bicycle/pedestrian accessibility along the Gateway corridor, and that the influx of federal funding could be used to improve bicycle/pedestrian accessibility along the Gateway corridor. Granda highlighted the issues with developing a path per the recommendations in the 2014 study, adding that he does not expect much use of a multi-use path between the village and the Park and Ride in the winter months because of its length. Forward asked in the chat about interest to build a path within the I-89 right-of-way. Clarke said that the Transportation Committee had discussed that option; that it was understood that a path along the Route 2 right-of-way would be used more, and that a deeper investigation would be needed.

Patty Brushett said she does not have concerns about Stone Corral Brewery moving to the Gateway District and that she would have concerns about retail uses in the Gateway. Clarke said that the Reaps are developing Willis Farm with commercial and retail uses in mind depending on the zoning allowances for residential uses. Clarke suggested that car wash and self-storage uses could be potential options in the Gateway, considering the need for such uses, the lack of them in town, and the noise pollution impacts of I-89.

Alison Anand complemented Bressor's designs, and said she had concerns about the legality of acquiring lands for infrastructure. Clarke said that the current planning process is looking towards the future, with the understanding that the properties will eventually turn over and that the current property owners will want a sense of the future values of their respective properties. Anand said she had concerns about the noise pollution and asked Venkataraman if he had taken decibel levels of the area. Venkataraman said that he has not yet. Clarke said that she is aware that affordable housing tends to be placed in undesirable locations but that the town is facing a lack of housing in general. Venkataraman said that typically the effects of zoning changes tend to be seen four to five years after the zoning takes effect at the earliest, that in the Gateway context any changes to the built environment will be under the terms of the current property owners, and that the current discussions are planning for the long-term future of the area rather than the immediate future. Granda said that he expects property owners to take advantage of the zoning changes if housing allowances are expanded, because the land value would significantly increase. Lisa Miller said that if a property owner had the opportunity to sell half of their property, she said it would be an attractive offer.

Hayden-West said that from a practical standpoint the Gateway area needs water and sewer service sooner rather than later.

Forward said that the commission should take into consideration traffic concerns and the impact of curb cuts.

Erin Wagg suggested a trail along the railroad and that the commission look into methods to enable bicycle/pedestrian access along the railroad. Clarke said that the commission has not taken areas south of Route 2 into much consideration because most of this land is floodplain. Wagg asked about a recent development proposal south of Route 2. Clarke identified the areas south of Route 2 outside the floodplain, overviewed the subdivision proposal in the identified areas, and said that the subdivision

proposal has not moved forward in the process yet. Clarke added that there is a proposal to move the Richmond Market to a new space at the end of Railroad Street.

Clarke concluded the discussion item by suggesting that the commission members and the public reflect on the discussions this evening and reconsider ideas during the March 2nd meeting. Forward asked for Bressor's maps and designs to be posted on the website.

6. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Clarke reviewed the packet documents relating to the proposed zoning amendments, and all the proposed changes to the zoning regulations. Clarke said that regarding vehicle fueling station use requirements, the commission concluded that it would require a DC Fast Charger and limit the number of fuel pumping islands to four. Clarke added that to follow up past conversations on limiting the seating within the accessory convenience store, the commission concluded to limit seating to 20 percent of the floor area of the convenience store. Clarke said that based on the Town Attorney's comments, the draft regulations remove the role of the Development Review Board to make technical decisions regarding development within wetlands and wetland buffers, and that permit decisions will rely on determinations from state wetlands ecologists. Miller said that this would be consistent with the state's expectations.

Clarke said that per the Town Attorney's recommendations, rezoning the Park and Ride area is not being considered currently. Venkataraman said that redevelopment of the Park and Ride area would be an extensive process by Vtrans, that any redevelopment of the Park and Ride area would be subject to the regulations for the Agricultural/Residential District, and that the Park and Ride area is not on a standalone lot currently. Granda asked about the development potential for the Park and Ride. Venkataraman said that he would defer to Chris Cole on the development and redevelopment possibilities for the Park and Ride area, and that in past conversations, Cole had talked about the possibility of landscaping and screening in broad strokes. Granda recommended following up with Vtrans on this subject matter, expressing concern about the possibility of undesirable commercial development. Venkataraman said that locally, the Park and Ride would have to be subdivided from the Vtrans right-of-way, and that the commercial opportunities in the Agricultural/Residential District are limited. Dan Mullen said that based on prior agreements, the zoning district the Park and Ride area belongs to may not matter for redevelopment.

Miller asked about definitions of restaurants. Venkataraman said that the zoning regulations have two definitions for restaurants, one for sit-down restaurants and one for fast food restaurants. Miller said she was concerned that the commission may have missed a detail about restaurants. Clarke said that the definitions for restaurants may need to be reexamined when reviewing regulations for the Gateway District, but this discussion is not needed for the Vehicle Fueling Stations amendment that we are currently proposing, as we are not considering the convenience store sale of food and beverages a restaurant use.

Clarke asked the commission if it would like to take action on the proposed zoning amendments. The Commission elected to wait until its next meeting to approve these amendments for public hearing.

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

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner

Chat Log:

00:04:41 Kristen: Kristen Hayden-West
00:05:18 MMCTV Erin: Erin Wagg MMCTV Hi all!
00:05:41 bressor: Gary Bressor
00:11:58 Jeff Forward: Do we know when a bond vote might happen?
00:22:16 katiemather: Can you say more about why you see the mobil station fitting better there?
00:23:28 Jeff Forward: Are the current zoning regulations the ones that are dated 10/25/2021?
00:23:49 Richmond 2: Yes
00:25:17 jon.kart: I appreciate the PC's desire to prohibit "strip development." Can you describe what could be allowed and specifically not allowed in the gateway (for example Dollar store)?
00:26:17 Patty Brushett:What needs to be changed in the current zoning to stop strip development like Dollar General .
00:26:44 Jeff Forward: In addition to allowed uses are there also conditional uses?
00:31:20 bressor: I would like to speak when you can fit me in I cannot seem to find the raise your had icon.
00:34:37 alexis lathem: We don't need a car wash.
00:44:24 Jeff Forward: Can Gary submit these documents so they can be posted on the Town website for wider distribution?
00:49:53 Patty Brushett:I like that the folks in these possible affordable houses could walk/ bike into town. They would be connected.
00:50:33 Peter: We agree with Rods statements regarding the need for small businesses in the gateway district.
00:53:50 Peter: I pre sent our thoughts re agreeing with Rod.
00:54:00 FRANCINE POMERANTZ: I agree with Patty's comment. I like the idea of the development along the gate way into Richmond being residential but I think we do need to have it be walkable and bike-able and right now it's not.
00:56:32 Peter: The expansion to the gateway for small businesses will also create jobs for the community. Thank you Peter and Marian Mumford
00:59:44 Kristen: Let's swap. Stone corral can be next to the interstate and housing can move into the village.
01:02:05 Peter: Great point Kristen!!!!
01:04:05 Jeff Forward: I too liked Gary's presentation and would like to learn more about what the opportunities are and barriers are to his ideas.
01:05:58 Patty Brushett:Stone Corral could build a manufacturing plant in the Gateway. I think this is about They could keep th
01:06:05 Jeff Forward: My understanding is that it is very difficult to make the distinction legally between a Dunkin Donuts and restaurant, a Dollar General and a grocery store.
01:07:53 alexis lathem: We agree. It would be cruel to make cyclists go up that hill.
01:10:45 Jeff Forward: Could there be any opportunity to create a path from School St along the Interstate right of way?

01:13:31 bressor: When the land trust had discussions with the school years ago about the path going through the school property the school said they would not want a path through their property for security reasons.

01:14:49 Jeff Forward: The school district has changed a great deal over the past few years and could be more receptive now.

01:19:52 Peter: on the business side of things, it would be hard to imagine Stone Coral would want to have two locations, one for mfg. and one for retail....likely not a good business plan....

01:20:57 Jeff Forward: Burlington Beer Company just moved their retail operation out of Williston into Burlington and left their beer making operation in Williston in a warehouse.

01:31:42 Jeff Forward: Really difficult to deal with the railroad, but not impossible. The Creamery was able to overcome the barriers somehow in order to do that development.

01:34:18 katiemather: Thanks to the planning commission for all your continued hard word !

01:36:04 bressor: I am happy to share whatever I have.

01:36:21 FRANCINE POMERANTZ: Thanks everyone, Virginia, Gary... lots of good idea and things to think about.

01:36:47 Jeff Forward: Yes. Thanks to the PC for engaging in this discussion. I realize how difficult it is to have these kinds of discussions when folks have different opinions. But I also appreciate how we as a community can respectfully disagree

01:36:56 Patty Brushett:great job Virginia

01:37:01 alexis lathem: Why are we still separating residential and commnrcial tha;ts suburbia

01:37:02 jon.kart: Thank you

01:37:20 Kristen: thanks, everyone