

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR May 18, 2022

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

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

2. Review of the agenda and adjustments to the agenda

Clarke reviewed the meeting agenda.

3. Approval of Minutes

Lisa Miller said that with the line “Miller said that a master plan would be needed to manage the future development over time”, she recalled having said during the meeting that she did not know how the Town could do that via a master plan because there are multiple property owners in the area. Clarke asked for this clause to be added to the minutes.

Chris Granda said that with the paragraph regarding vehicle fueling station uses on page 5, the clarification should be added that the vehicle fueling station uses topic is relevant to the Gateway District because with the recent changes to the Zoning Regulations, vehicle fueling stations are not allowed in the Gateway District. Clarke added that the recent changes to the Zoning Regulations have not gone into effect yet, and will go into effect on Monday, May 21.

The minutes were accepted into the record as amended.

4. Discussion on the Gateway District

Clarke said that since the last Planning Commission meeting, she and Ravi Venkataraman have been working on edits to the Gateway document, and reorganization of the entire zoning document. Clarke said that the changes to the Gateway District will occur at the same time as changes to the structure of the entire zoning document. Clarke said that some of the more substantial changes will be to not have the DRB’s jurisdiction from many land development proposals, and to create two categories for review processes—one that is administratively reviewed, and one that is DRB reviewed. Clarke said that the DRB review permit process will integrate site plan review and conditional use review from the current zoning regulations. Clarke said that the commission should keep in mind that with the expansion of uses that can be administratively permitted, she and Venkataraman are creating more robust development review standards that the Zoning Administrator would be able to follow. Clarke added that the commission should keep in mind that the Zoning Administrator position is currently a 40-hour per week position who can be trained to review land development proposals per the development standards.

Clarke asked the commission their thoughts on changing the name of the district from “Gateway Commercial” to “Gateway Residential/Commercial”. Commission members said that they were ok with this change in the name.

Clarke reviewed the proposed area for the Gateway Residential/Commercial District, including possibly rezoning four lots on West Main Street that adjoin the Village to Village Residential/Commercial because of their semblance to lots in the village compared to lots in the Gateway. Alison Anand asked if the cemetery is proposed for the Gateway Residential/Commercial or the Village Residential/Commercial. Clarke said that it would probably go with the Village Residential/Commercial. Miller asked about the potential for commercial uses on the back side of the four subject properties, which would imply that access to those uses would be via residential streets. Clarke said that the four properties under discussion would probably remain oriented towards Route 2, due to wetlands and slopes. Mark Fausel asked why rezone the properties if the zoning districts will be similar and the cemetery properties are not likely to change. Clarke agreed that the zoning districts will be similar, and said that the four lots under discussion are not part of the scenic rural entrance the Gateway District is supposed to be. Clarke added that it wouldn’t matter which district the cemeteries would be located in.

Granda asked where the water and sewer lines end. Clarke said that Heidi Bormann’s property, under current consideration for rezoning, is served by town water and sewer, and asked Venkataraman for the location of the water and sewer lines. Venkataraman said that he was unsure and that he will have to check. Venkataraman said that based on his assumption of the location of the end of the water and sewer lines in the Route 2 right-of-way, the other parcels under consideration could be served. Clarke said that the water and sewer lines may actually not be within the Route 2 right-of-way.

Joy Reap that she considers the four properties under discussion to be part of the Gateway, and that water and sewer service to Bormann’s property is via Tilden Avenue. Clarke said that the properties under discussion have closer front-yard setbacks, akin to the properties in the village, which contrasts with properties in the Gateway. Clarke said that the commission will have to think about which district the cemetery properties belong.

Clarke reviewed the purpose statement, noting the distinctive larger front-yard setbacks in the Gateway. Clarke reviewed the list of features, explaining that the list of features is in other districts the commission have recently revised, and that the list of features is non-regulatory. Miller said she liked the language about the shared bicycle/pedestrian path, and suggested strengthening the language. Clarke said that the official map is the needed tool to give this language regulatory strength.

Granda asked if the regulations for any other zoning district requires municipal water and sewer connection if available, and said he has concerns about the zoning creating an obligation for the town to provide municipal water and sewer service. Clarke referred to language in the Town Plan regarding water and sewer service in the Gateway. Granda said that the Town Plan language does not read like a requirement, and questioned why to include the language if such language is already in the Town Plan. Venkataraman said that typically purpose statements in zoning does not have regulatory authority, but that statements in the purpose that specifically state a requirement can be exercised as a regulatory requirement. Venkataraman said that in this context, the statement would be read as a regulatory requirement, and that based on the discussions at the last Water/Sewer Commission meeting, he recommends inputting softer language or removing the statement altogether. Clarke said that at this

point, she would be open to removing the statement, and asked Venkataraman for clarification on discussions at the last Water/Sewer Commission meeting. Venkataraman said that the water and sewer extension project is on hold because of its cost. Granda said that that could change based on the availability of funds through the bipartisan infrastructure bill, and due to the uncertainty, the commission would be better served by removing the language. Fausel said he was open to removing the statement or softening the statement. Miller said that the reference to water and sewer service should be included in the regulations for lot size, and that the oblique reference would give the public a sense of the Town's goal of providing water and sewer service. Anand concurred that the commission should include an aspiration statement referencing water and sewer service.

Clarke reviewed the statements on reusing historic structures and multistory buildings. Anand said that the commission will need to make sure adequate parking will be available for multistory buildings.

Clarke opened discussion on the list of permitted uses. Fausel said he had concerns about 3-4 unit multifamily dwellings, banks, and state and community operated facilities. Venkataraman said that he and Clarke have had conversations since Friday—when the meeting materials were distributed—about the permitted and reviewed uses, and that they decided that some of the permitted uses should be moved to reviewed. Clarke said that state and community operated facilities, and religious facilities in the reviewed section. Fausel added that he had concerns about inn uses. Clarke said that inn uses and hotel uses will need to be better defined. Venkataraman said that the Zoning Regulations does not make much of a distinction between inn and hotel/motel uses, and that he recommends differentiating the uses based on size. Fausel said he had concerns about the size and appearance of small-scale inns, and that he would recommend putting inns, hotels and bed and breakfast uses as conditional uses. Venkataraman said that the Zoning Regulations define bed and breakfast uses well, compared to inn uses and hotel/motel uses. Clarke said that as long as the Zoning Regulations include clear-cut standards and conditions, the Zoning Administrator would be able to review the uses to the same effect as the DRB without the public hearing requirement.

Granda expressed concerns about allowing uses that will never be water and sewer customers, such as cemetery uses. Clarke said she had reservations about removing the cemetery use considering that the district has a cemetery. Granda suggested including cemetery uses as a conditional use, and said that there was good reason not to include cemetery uses considering the need to disperse costs for water and sewer service.

Granda asked if there was a definition for state or community operated facility. Clarke said that the use could include anything state or community operated. Granda asked if a sand shed would be considered a state or community operated facility. Venkataraman said yes. Granda referred to the sand shed in Huntington, noting its aesthetics and the fact that it does not have water and sewer service. Clarke said that state and community operated facilities is to be included in the reviewed list, and that the Town's ability to review the use is limited per state statute.

Miller suggested prohibiting the installation of elevators lessen potential impacts. Clarke said that elevators would be needed for multistory housing. Granda said that the inn use couldn't be ADA-compliant without an elevator and that the number of beds would be the standard way to regulate the use.

Fausel asked Clarke and Venkataraman for the uses that are to be included in the conditional use list from the permitted use list, and asked the commission about 3-4 unit multifamily dwellings. Clarke said

that the proposed development standards will include standards and conditions for multifamily dwellings that Brandy Saxton had proposed. Granda said he had no problem with 3-4 unit multifamily dwellings in the Gateway. Clarke reviewed the list of permitted uses in the packet and identified uses that would be moved to reviewed uses.

Clarke said that supported housing facility is open for discussion, and that with supported housing facilities, not many people want supported housing facilities in their neighborhood, there is a need for supportive housing facilities, and the likelihood for supportive housing facilities to fail through a public hearing process is high. Clarke said that some of the goals with this zoning revision process are to include enough development review standards to mitigate negative impacts to allow for administrative review of uses, including housing uses, and to help the town meets its housing needs. Fausel said that it was hard to gauge the impacts of uses without the definitions of the uses. Clarke said that draft definitions for hotel/motel uses and inn uses, state language referring to state and community owned facilities, and the potential development standards for 3-4 unit multifamily dwelling uses can be provided. Fausel asked for clarification for group home and supported housing facility. Clarke said that group home uses are protected by state statute. Miller noted the importance of the development standards. Clarke said the development standards could be further discussed during the next meeting.

5. Discussion on the Village Zoning revision

Clarke said that incorporating Brandy Saxton's recommendations to this portion of the village is much more straightforward, and noted the difference between Saxton's recommendations for rezoning and the commission's past draft rezoning maps.

Clarke reviewed the draft purpose statement, noting that the Village Residential/Commercial District is one of the key places to put more housing units in town and has mixed use properties. Fausel asked about mixed use building of up to four compatible uses within the permitted uses section, and how it contrasts with a variety of uses in different buildings on the same lot. Clarke said that currently the only way the town can allow multiple uses in multiple buildings on a lot is through the PUD process, but that allowing for multiple uses in multiple buildings on a lot through a more straightforward permitting process could be included in this district or with other districts. Fausel asked Reap how practical and advantageous it would be to allow for multiple commercial uses in multiple buildings on a single lot. Reap said that having multiple buildings on a lot would be helpful. Fausel asked Reap if there could be a downside to allow multiple commercial buildings on a single lot. Reap said she didn't think so. Clarke said that they had conversations with Saxton to allow multiple buildings on a lot, that Saxton recommended allowing multiple buildings on a lot in the village districts, and that Saxton mentioned downsides in terms of legal arrangements. Venkataraman said that the greater concern is for multiple buildings hosting residential uses, and that with commercial lots the lot is typically owned by a single landowner and spaces are rented out. Venkataraman said that issues arise when individual residential units are conveyed, and that sometimes with older residential units and accessory apartments, the utilities serving a unit could come via another residential unit instead of a direct connection to the line in the right-of-way. Clarke discussed the distinction between a duplex and a detached accessory apartment and the possible removal of requiring both units in a duplex to be housed in a single building. Miller said that having multiple units housed in multiple buildings could relieve parking issues within the lot.

Clarke reviewed the differences between the Village Residential/Commercial, and the Gateway Residential/Commercial, noting the differences with the front-yard setback and allowances for retail

uses. Clarke reviewed the dimensional requirements and additional standards for the Village Residential/Commercial District. Miller suggested removing “where feasible” to the reference to sidewalks and bike lanes, considering that the town should have sidewalks in the village. Clarke said that this feature is why the official map is needed. Clarke said that Saxton recommended that the town encourage the development of a diversity of housing types for different populations.

Granda said that solar readiness is a regulatory concept with history, and suggested talking to the commission in more detail about this concept at a later meeting. Clarke asked about passive solar, and asked Granda for recommendations for language to put into zoning.

6. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Clarke said that she will try to have a draft version of the development standards for the commission to review during its next meeting, and to update the Village Residential/Commercial District to include more of Saxton’s recommendations.

Venkataraman said that CCRPC is holding a training for Planning Commissioners and DRB members on May 31st at 7 pm online via Zoom, and that he expects the session to be one and a half hours.

Clarke said that she and Venkataraman are working on working with the DRB to get them acquainted with the reorganization process.

Clarke said that discussions are ongoing about the possible changes to the Jolina Court District, and that they could provide an update at an upcoming meeting.

Motion by Granda, seconded by Miller, to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner