

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: March 9, 2023

Time Started: 7:33pm

Time Ended: 9:22pm

Duncan Wardwell (Host – not present)

Present: Virginia Clarke, Mark Hall (Chair), Connie van Eeghen

Guest: Jay Furr, Bard Hill, Gina Prader as potential Housing Committee member from Richmond, June Heston, and from Browns Court: Mary Claire Carroll, Donna Saks, Greg Tucker, Janet Morris, Caroline Marshall, Duane Marshall, Alan Oliver, Kristen Bednar

Absent: (none)

Quorum is 3; 3 votes to pass any motion (15 people in attendance)

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Approval of February 9, 2023 Minutes
 - a. Accepted as written
3. Adjustments to the Agenda
 - a. No changes
4. Potential Affordable Housing Sites in Richmond
 - a. Last meeting, we began to discuss potential locations in Richmond that might be suitable for additional or affordable or senior housing.
 - b. Mark and Virginia put together some slides to help us think about these opportunities
 - i. Willis Farm-Gateway on West Main St: 10 acre parcel, owners interested in the past; zoning plans support increased density; discussion already held
 1. Barriers: Water/Sewer access needed but current plans have stalled as developers don't want to underwrite this cost; may not be feasible; sidewalk connectivity to Village is limited (required by Cathedral Square and likely expensive); minimum of 24-30 units needed to make it feasible (per Champlain Housing Trust); Richmond Land Trust easement may not allow extension of water/sewer beyond Willis/REAP property
 2. Some barriers have potential solutions, such as sidewalks to the village via School Street, as VTrans has not been helpful with sidewalks along Rt 2; zoning changes re: density (# residential units/area) are potentially possible
 - a. Planning Commission proposal of residential density of 8 U/A currently set for review with Selectboard
 - b. For example, a 3 acre lot at Willis Farm could have 24 units
 3. Depends greatly on the interests of the owners, who may prefer to retain ownership, whereas affordable housing agencies mostly wish to own their own buildings
 - ii. Jolina Court/Buttermilk Development: 6 acre parcel, half in flood plain; 14 current units; current approved plans for additional 31 units; application incomplete, needs Act 250 permit; developers are interested in additional housing/less commercial; previous town planner thought up to 90 units could be possible (if allowed 15 units/acre on the entire 6A parcel – currently Buttermilk allowed 15 U/A only on the developable acres, so 15 U/A = 45 U); has the sewer/sidewalk/water infrastructure in place
 1. Barriers: developers have stated in past that they are not interested in affordable housing; some parts of the property have sensitive flora; current zoning requires some space reserved for commercial uses, but this potentially could be changed in zoning
 2. Opportunities to develop a plan that helps all parties, including a "density bonus" to achieve Town goals, will require assistance from Town Planner to pursue
 - iii. Farr Farm: 200+acre parcel, currently farmed, owners have not expressed interest in developing, at end of water/sewer line, contiguous to village, may be open to making the farm more financially viable
 1. Barriers: No immediate interest in development, farming and homes not always the best neighbors; open to thinking about it; large portion in floodplain

- iv. Browns Court: 4 acre parcel, town owned land, currently park/field that has water/sewer service; good connectivity with Village; larger building would be unobtrusive from main road
 - 1. Barriers: finding a developer, public may wish to retain open space in Village; zoning would need changes to allow greater density and multifamily housing here; need review of deed from 1913; currently used by elementary school, softball teams of all ages, walkers, and others; only one entrance/exit; environmental impact TBD
 - 2. Key topics include “what is allowable” as well as “what is desirable”
 - 3. Comparison: Borden street has 8 duplex units, or 16 units in total, but is not financially viable any more per Cathedral Square and Champlain Housing Trust; scale (number of units) is a topic to be understood early; nonprofit housing agencies likely would require ownership of building and minimum of 24-30 units
 - c. The Housing Committee appreciated this opportunity to organize the above thoughts and ideas.
 - i. We will wait for the new Town Planner to get started on March 27 and plan for further steps/conversations in exploring these different opportunities to increase housing
 - ii. Interest in expanding housing and integrating generations and diverse groups through “infill”(e.g. Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs which are now supported by additional grants) – but this may be hard for neighborhoods to accept
 - d. Brown’s Court neighbors weighed in with comments about how the property is currently used for girls’ softball, walking, parking and access issues etc. Selectboard members Bard Hill and Jay Furr added comments from their discussions with Champlain Housing Trust and Cathedral Square, and with Town Clerk Linda Parent about the deed for Brown’s Court Ball Field. Deed language is somewhat inconclusive And will have to be reviewed by an attorney if this idea progresses.
5. Planning Commission Update:
- a. Selectboard will hold public hearing on proposals approved by the Planning Commission for amendments to the Gateway Residential/Commercial and the Village Residential /Commercial Zoning Districts. These include measures to allow greater residential density, and reduce barriers to residential construction.
 - b. The Goodwin- Baker Building is included in Planning Commission’s approved Residential/Commercial district, so could have multifamily housing, which Sid Miller, the owner, is interested in
 - c. Developing regulations concerning short term rentals (like Airbnb) is a current focus on the Planning Commission. These impact housing by removing long-term rental opportunities.
 - d. PC also working on amending the village neighborhoods (north and south) zoning districts.
6. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment
- a. Next meeting: Thursday, April 13 @ 7:30
 - b. Proposed agenda to include:
 - i. Introduction to new Town Planner (staff to this committee)
 - ii. Review of Neighborhood Development Areas
 - iii. Update from the Planning Commission
 - c. Agreed to adjourn at: 9:22 pm

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen