

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: April 11, 2023

Time Started: 7:33p

Time Ended: 8:58p

Keith Osborne, Host, Town Planner

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

Guest: Gina Prader as potential Housing Committee member from Richmond from E Main Street, and from Browns

Court: Laura Bianci, Carolyn Marshall, Lane Marshall, Jim Glover, Greg Tucker, Marianne Barnes, Martha Nye

Absent: none

Quorum is 3; 3 votes to pass any motion

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Approval of March 9, 2023 meeting minutes
 - a. Accepted as written
3. Adjustments to Agenda
4. Introduction to new Town Planner (staff to this committee)
 - a. Previous administrator to Richmond from a few years ago; went to Charlotte and is now back!
5. Review of Neighborhood Development Areas/S.100 progress (currently under debate in Senate and House)
 - a. Neighborhood Development Area is a potential designation to help the Town develop housing
 - b. Keith: NDA is a state program. We already have a “downtown” (“Village Center”) designation; NDA adds a quarter mile around the downtown that can be developed. Positives:
 - i. Town is pretty developed and has a lot of slope
 - ii. NDA exempts from Act 250
 - iii. Fee reductions, esp with Act 250, and onsite waste water (not germane)
 - iv. Exemption from Land Use Gain tax, good for landowners of raw land
 - v. Eligible for pilot funding for grants
 - vi. Negatives: a lot of hurdles to get the designation
 - vii. S.100 will shape how we move into the future; watch for more
 - c. Virginia: purchasing land for housing use – the director of the program (Jacob Hemmerick) is a helpful person to talk to
 - i. The developer of new subdivisions has to include infrastructure (sidewalks) – we don’t have many parcels that would be applicable, for example Jolina Ct, so more research is needed
 - ii. S.100: Planning Commission has already incorporated some of the S.100 changes for Residential and Commercial districts (comingles residences and commercial lots, just outside the downtown area)
 1. April 18: public hearing on those areas (proposed Residential/Commercial districts)
 2. Have not started developing plans for Browns Ct Recreation Committee recommends keeping open
 3. Allows 3-4 multi-family units with mixed commercial and residential buildings to support filling in town spaces to support more housing
 - d. Keith: once S.100 passes, we will be required to adjust our Planning/Zoning ordinances
 - i. Virginia: the goal is to keep a balance
 - ii. Keith: S.100 allows 4 unit houses with less requirement for parking to increase units on parcels
 - iii. Virginia: allows an additional story above the current height limit on residential buildings (in Richmond: 35 feet, based on the size of our ladder truck; Williston has larger equipment)
 1. Jolina Court developers may have an interest in further development but the new standards, that provide the tax benefits, need to be researched, including requirements for affordable housing. These developers have plans in multiple phases; these may involve investigating these regulations over time.
 - e. Greg Tucker: last meeting, discussion of Jolina Ct indicated that the developer does not have interest in affordable housing. Is the ultimate direction of this conversation to be focused on Browns Ct? Are we going to have 3-story buildings in our ballpark? Why affordable housing in the Richmond Village, which is all about small homes and little streets.

- i. Keith: there is a need for affordable housing in the Town with an interest in finding opportunities. These are early steps; we don't know where to support development; this is exploration.
 - ii. Virginia: Selectboard created this Housing Committee to investigate the potential for affordable housing in Richmond. We hired a consultant to help us think about where such housing could go. The regional planning commission has allocated housing goals for each community. Our housing consultant learned from interviews and focus groups that senior housing is broadly wanted. We don't have many amenities to support truly affordable housing (transit, walkability) but we have to write a report on what we can do, including the feedback from community members. We do have to consider all the options.
 - iii. Lane Marshall: What determines the requirements for housing? Are we trying to be like Williston?
 - 1. Virginia: No, Richmond wants to be like Richmond, but we do want to take on our share of the housing goals. The State is behind these goals, and these goals will help Richmond improve its housing stock and lower its housing costs.
 - 2. Won't these changes require other costs: fire trucks, fire houses, school infrastructure, etc. Richmond doesn't need to be like Williston/Milton/Shelburne.
 - 3. Keith: young adults are moving out of VT to find affordable housing. Housing for the elderly and middle tier adults is challenging too.
 - 4. Marshall: Affordable housing will create more demand for affordable housing, which will increase our population and increase our expenses.
 - 5. Virginia: right now, we have a drop in student population and customers for water and sewer services. Richmond could use more students, paid on a per pupil basis.
 - iv. Marianne: green space concerns with global warming; Volunteer Green might not be viable in the future (flood plain). We should protect the ball park and other green spaces.
 - 1. Keith and Virginia: this will be a long process to explore these issues and understand our best choices.
 - v. Gina: the focus group indicated that there was not an interest in affordable housing, but rather senior housing. Why not focus on senior housing?
 - 1. Virginia: the focus on affordable housing came from the Selectboard. Also, we have an emerging equity goal in Vermont; it is not OK for a whole segment of the population to have an inadequate standard of living. We will look at senior housing in due time, which can also be related to affordability but have different models to choose from. Note that Borden Street (affordable housing development with 2-story duplexes) residents are very glad to have access to housing.
 - 2. Martha Nye: Borden Street houses elderly and others; can it be further developed, e.g. with extra stories?
 - a. Virginia: owned by a housing trust: Champlain Housing, which manages the land and the finances (a complex set of requirements). Not within Richmond's control. The current number of units (16) is barely financially supportable, couldn't be financed today. We can certainly talk with them. Affordable housing groups want to be in control, from planning to management, with larger number of units .
 - f. Laura Bianci: Mobile station neighboring land is in flood plains? Virginia: Yes.
 - g. Gina: where does the Residential/Commercial proposed boundary end? Virginia: from traffic light to fire station on both sides of East Main Street, along Bridge St, up the Jericho Rd, and part way along W Main St.. Also area near Round Church Corner Complex.
6. Discuss committee next steps on affordable housing sites in Richmond
- a. Virginia: our report will include four areas to be possible for development that includes access to the Town Center and within the infrastructure:
 - i. Jolina Court
 - ii. Farr Farm (30 acres not in flood plain)
 - iii. Willis Farm/REAP-Gateway
 - iv. Browns Ct: neighbors not in support; Recreation Committee not in support
 - b. Connie: ARPA opportunity?

- i. Mark: Jay Furr indicated that the ARPA is coming up to a recommendation. We never created a recommendation. May be too late. No further action.
 - c. Mark: development of recommendation to Planning Commission
 - i. An outline came out of our last committee meeting
 - ii. Keith will help us put this together for discussion at the next meeting; Virginia feels dialog will be needed between Housing and Recreation committees about the Browns Court property
- 7. Update from the Planning Commission
 - a. Virginia: PC has finished work on R/C districts (2) and the public hearings. Selectboard has public hearing on April 18.
 - i. Does not affect the Browns Ct neighborhood, except for corner houses on Browns Trace
 - ii. Draft proposals for each district
 - iii. Waiting to see what happens with S.100
 - iv. Working on whether “short-term rentals ” ordinances are of value; need more research
 - v. Hoping Selectboard adopts the R/C district amendments; please come to hearing
 - vi. Drafts of recommendations for Neighborhood districts exist and will go through the same process next.
 - b. Mark: if S.100 passes, will we have to update our zoning regulations? What will that process look like.
 - i. Virginia: will work on as additional zoning amendments, consistent with Town Plan of 2018.
 - ii. Keith: there are many technical issues that will need to be addressed; will also need a new Town Plan soon (2026) ; ongoing process
 - c. Mark: we need to revisit our charter/mission as a Housing Committee
 - i. Virginia: The Town Plan of 2018 produced many committee goals. This Committee does not have its own goals in the 2018 Plan because it did not exist then. Goals were established in the mission statement when Housing Comm was set up by Selectboard but could be further developed, especially in coordination with other committees (e.g. Rec Committee). Existing and possible goals include:
 - 1. Annually updated metrics
 - 2. Update the housing assessment
 - 3. How do we meet the “30/30” land conservation goal of the state of VT
 - 4. Is there an area outside the Town Center that could serve for affordable housing?
 - 5. How to best support Jonesville and the needs of those residents and housing opportunities?
- 8. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
 - a. Next meeting: May 11, 2023 @ 7:30p on Zoom
 - b. Proposed agenda to include: letter finalizing our analysis of four affordable housing sites to Selectboard; review committee charter: what have we accomplished and what are our new goals; how to market committee membership; progress on dialog with Recreation Committee about Browns Ct Ball Field
 - c. Agreed to adjourn at: 8:58

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen, edited by Virginia Clarke