

## Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: December 13, 2023

Time Started: 5:30p

Time Ended: 6:57

Keith Osborne, Host, Town Planner

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

Guest: Tyler Machia (Zoning Administrator), Patty Brushett, Emily Mitchell, Alexis Lathem

Absent: none

Committee is approved at 5 members, 2 alternates (5/16/22); quorum is 3

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Approval of November 7, 2023 meeting minutes
  - a. Accepted as written
3. Adjustments to Agenda – none
4. Introductions
  - a. New Committee member Matt Parisi grew up in Richmond and has a background in computers and a side portfolio of housing rentals in Chittenden County over the past 8 years, mostly in Winooski where in-fill has been easier due to zoning changes. Has done some new builds and some renovations; is taking advantage of zoning changes to add to his home in Richmond. Sees housing as a challenge, especially at current prices. All other committee members and staff made brief introductions.
5. Active Discussions:
  - a. Jolina Court Density
    - i. Buttermilk responded to the report our Committee submitted to the Selectboard this past year
    - ii. They would like to increase density; they are currently at their maximum of 45 units
    - iii. Four phases (final buildout) proposed to include 125 units in 4 buildings, if carried out as originally described
    - iv. <sup>2nd</sup> phase is under discussion at Planning Commission
      1. Building #2: 31 units plus an additional 24 units on same footprints (55 units, smaller than originally units), would need changes in the zoning ordinances to support this change
      2. This would bring their built units up to 69 units
      3. Ground floor must be commercial; basement walkout and upper 2 floors can be residential, per current zoning ordinances; request is to reduce required commercial space
      4. Not sure of residential and commercial markets – future phases are hard to predict
    - v. Also interested in growing to 125 units over 15 years (2 additional buildings)
    - vi. Increase in units implies increase in traffic (in/out); this study has not been done yet; need Act 250 permit; need for emergency egress is also uncertain
    - vii. Discussion included
      1. Small steps are good
      2. Recent modest changes in village-based ordinances were resisted; start with what can be understood and managed now
      3. Affordable housing unit requirements: a non-starter for Buttermilk
        - a. How can we help make these units more affordable?
        - b. Buttermilk states that some of their units are under-market rate and small sizes are more affordable
        - c. Guaranteed affordable housing is not financially viable, but the plan is to make the units more affordable by increasing density. However, this may still not make them affordable for many people/families
      4. Patty B: other municipalities have passed ordinances requiring a percentage of affordable units, which has worked to increase affordable housing availability. How much of a profit is necessary to make a project feasible?
        - a. Virginia: Phase 1 negotiations included this concept, considering a “density bonus” (being able to add more units if those units are affordable) among other benefits to the Town, such as additional parking for the Town or additional senior housing units. This did not generate enough interest with Buttermilk to follow up.

- b. Matt: developers want to build units. Consider limiting certain aspects, like parking, it would force affordable units. Ask for a pro forma (as they do for their commercial lenders) to see their expected profit
    - c. Mark: ask the developers what they need to support affordable units
    - d. Keith: this is the start of this process; much more to come
    - e. Tyler: feel compelled to balance the requests made to developers with recognition that the developers benefit but also take the risk
    - f. Patty will look for additional information and send what she finds to Mark (area median income is at [housingdata.org](http://housingdata.org))
  - viii. Virginia and Keith will keep the Committee informed
    - 1. May need a recommendation from Housing Committee
- b. Browns Court Housing
  - i. Keith has been tasked with assessing whether housing can fit on the ballpark; he did a walk around earlier today and will provide an update to SB on Monday. SB wants a simple feasibility up or down assessment.
    - 1. 20 unit structure, with parking, storm water, and access
    - 2. If feasible, can consider whether a consultant might contribute and what the public has to say – this would be the SB’s decision
  - ii. Virginia: a feasibility study may be premature if we haven’t assessed desirability
  - iii. Matt: is there a right of way for this work? The “parcel viewer” does not indicate a right of way to provide legal access to the parcel. A title search costs about \$300
    - 1. Keith: this is a key requirement
  - iv. Mark: Brandy Saxton is no longer working in VT
  - v. Connie: Develop a process, including feasibility, titles, town resident engagement, pictures of what it might look like... and make the process clear and reliable before getting started
  - vi. Patty: work towards a community vote, a long way down the road. Consider getting developer assessment of what is possible as part of the process.
  - vii. Virginia: good to have a process that makes efficient use of town resources, such as starting with town perspectives
  - viii. Keith: has a directive from the SB : is this feasible and, if so, at what cost?
  - ix. Mark: the Housing Committee put together a report for the SB on ~half dozen projects on possible projects based on water/sewage, sidewalk... and other development requirements. Browns Court ballfield had many positive assets but not the support of the neighbors. Subsequent to that report, we’ve heard that other community voices have suggested that there might be a way to create a combined use of the land, including housing.
  - x. Virginia: there are several other possible projects; our committee has wanted to move forward on those with the highest potential for moving forward.
  - xi. Matt: his first house was a shared equity home, a great path to home ownership. Is there a potential for supporting first time home owners in Richmond? Instead of rental units, could they be purchased?
  - xii. Mark: our report found that there could be multiple ways to encourage increased housing, e.g. increased density.
  - xiii. Keith: will report back to SB on Monday; suggest holding this conversation until he gets feedback

6. Recruitment

- a. Hooray for Matt! IT experience is welcome...
- b. Still recruiting for additional members

7. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment

- a. Next meeting: Wed, Jan 24 @ 5:30p
- b. Proposed agenda to include: Jolina Court, plan for next year (include housing development on Perpetual Lane towards Jonesville – a home ownership model that is affordable), Browns Ct study update
- c. Agreed to adjourn at: 6:57