

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: May 12, 2025

Time Started: 7:36pm

Time Ended: 9:06pm

Present: Virginia Clarke, Mark Hall (Chair), Andrew Mannix, Mairead O'Reilly, Connie van Eeghen

Guest: (none)

Absent: Nick Blanchet

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

1. Welcome and troubleshooting (0:00:00)
2. Adjustments to Agenda - none
3. Approval of the April 30, 2025 meeting minutes
 - a. Accepted as written
4. Review of Future Land Use Map (Andrew) (0:01:00)
 - a. Comments to the CCRPC may be made by any member of the public
 - b. Overlays are challenging and opinions differ widely, so mapping the future is complicated
 - c. Using a 50 year window into the future
 - d. An extra 50 units in 30-40 years would require long term vision from public and private partners, such as a new vision for Main Street.
 - i. Tier 1B can apply to any overlay in eligible areas , for example the dense core of the Village, extended to the Farr farm, if supported by Water and Sewage or has soils supportive of an independent water/sewer system
 1. Could be seen as a benefit of land values for property owners
 2. Gateway not eligible for Tier 1B (Only Village Center or Planned Growth Area eligible)
 - ii. Jolina Court
 1. Interim 1B is out of the question; the developer would not be able to commence building that quickly (by July 2027)
 2. If Town opts-in to 1B , Buttermilk would most likely not have to amend existing Act 250 permit (under master development plan), for building 2
 3. Under Tier 1B, if developing less than 50 dwelling units , Buttermilk would not need an amendment, but if developing > 50 units they would need amendment (Tier 1B does not apply if over 50 units)
 - iii. FLU mapping
 1. Consider change to " rural general area":
 - a. Sadlar Meadows/Peet Farm
 - b. 360 Governor Peck near the GMP solar panels
 2. Consider change to "transition area":
 - a. Farr Farm
 - i. Served by water line; uncertain if served by sewer line
 - e. No one has requested a permit to develop between 10 and 50 units in the downtown village; but the Tier 1B designation plus vision and partnership might create the circumstances for the desired growth
 - f. Action: Send to Selectboard the recommendation to opt-in (Andrew / Virginia)
 - i. The PC may agree with our recommendation or not
 5. Tier 1B Designation and draft recommendation to PC (0:50:00)
 - a. The PC thinks that this issue is moot, as nothing will happen in 7-8 years (not enough undeveloped land)
 - i. There may be disagreement about where the borders of the Tier 1B overlay district should be , especially with limited space
 - ii. Tier 1B for Jolina Court is predicated on whether there will be 50 units there or more and whether the Town opts-in
 1. If 10 - 50 units, they would benefit from the Tier 1B designation
 - iii. There are natural constraints to making changes
 1. The PC may be drafting a letter to the SB to recommend not seeking the opt-in

- b. The overlay can apply to only Downtown or Village Centers , and Planned Growth Areas
- c. Action: Send letter to Selectboard to opt-in to Tier 1B – Virginia can share with Planning Commission (Andrew / Virginia)
- 6. Strategic Housing Plan updates and finalize (1:03:00)
 - a. Four main recommendations
 - i. **Allow housing in the Commercial and Village Commercial districts that are close to the village center:** This recommendation aims to integrate residential units within commercial areas, fostering mixed-use developments that enhance community vibrancy. By allowing housing in these districts, Richmond can leverage existing infrastructure and amenities, creating a seamless blend of commercial and residential spaces. This approach not only supports local businesses but also provides residents with convenient access to services and employment opportunities. This would work well with #iii.
 - ii. **Develop a town-wide density bonus that supports affordable housing:** Implementing a density bonus incentivizes developers to contribute to public policy goals, such as affordable housing or senior housing, in exchange for exceeding maximum development limits. This strategy encourages the creation of more affordable housing units, addressing the significant housing gap in Richmond. The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development indicates that Vermont needs to add 41,000 new rental and owner-occupied residences by 2030 to address its demographic challenge.
 - 1. Already proposed for Jolina Court
 - 2. Does not require an affordable housing development; can incentive some affordable units in a multi-family building (1 affordable unit for every 11 units can still be acceptable for financing)
 - iii. **Increase the maximum allowable height of buildings in Richmond by 1 story:** And additional allowable story will help support additional units on the same footprint. This recommendation aligns with Act 47, which permits developers to build one story higher if 20% or more units are designated as affordable (an “affordable housing development” per statute).
 - 1. Restrictions related to ladder fire trucks are not considered valid at this time.
 - 2. Building must meet all fire and safety regulations.
 - iv. **Streamline the development review and permitting process and develop clearer guidelines for approving new housing units.** This could be done through an engagement with an outside consultant to make specific recommendations. In the 2022 Richmond Housing Study nearly all developers, builders, housing providers, and employers identified Richmond’s development review and permitting process as a significant barrier to housing, citing uncertainty of outcome and cost. Concerns included lengthy processing times (12-24 months), multiple appearances before the Development Review Board (DRB), delays due to DRB turnover and lack of quorum, lack of coordination with state permitting processes, and unclear regulations. Streamlining the process will reduce reliance on conditional use, thus allowing more administrative approvals, and ensuring applications are processed within 60 days. Clear and specific requirements would reduce uncertainty for applicants.
 - 1. Should we pursue a more robust inclusionary zoning recommendation? We are supporting many changes in this list of recommendations – the Planning Commission did not feel ready to require this.
 - 2. Are we adding too many barriers to development in a town with many natural constraints to building/developing?
 - 3. Consider moving to inclusionary zoning in steps, as Richmond incorporates the above changes.
 - b. Outside reviewers: Miranda Lescaze, someone from Evernorth, Molly Dugan
- 7. Finalize Town Plan items for Housing Committee (1:28:00)
 - a. Town Plan Steering Committee is looking for an initial readout by June 10

- b. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
- c. Next meeting: May 28, 2025 at 5:30p
- d. Proposed agenda to include: draft letter to SB re: Future Land Use Map (Andrew / Virginia); draft letter to SB re: recommendation to apply for Tier 1B designation (Andrew / Virginia); Strategic Housing Plan update (Mark); Town plan items for Housing Committee (Mark); new meeting times (Mairead)
- e. Agreed to adjourn at: 9:06pm

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen