

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: April 16, 2026

Time Started: 11:59n

Time Ended:

Present: Virginia Clarke, Andrew Mannix (Chair), 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

AI Summary: The meeting discussed the approval of previous minutes and updates on the Water and Sewer Commission. Key points included the Commission's interest in CHIP funding for infrastructure upgrades and the challenges of expanding sewer districts due to high costs relative to water expansion. The 1992 allocation ordinance requires future users to bear expansion costs. The committee explored potential projects like the town center and the Gateway, considering CHIP funds to improve housing and infrastructure. They also discussed the need for stakeholder engagement and the possibility of a housing trust fund, with plans to consult with local experts and gather community feedback.

1. Welcome and troubleshooting (0:00:00)
2. Adjustments to Agenda (0:00:01)
3. Approval of the March 17, 2026 meeting minutes (0:00:02)
 - a. Accepted as written
4. General Updates and Discussion – Committee (0:00:10)
 - a. Updates on Water Sewer Commission (0:00:11)
 - i. W&S meeting on Mon, April 6 at 5:30p (report from Andrew)
 1. Lots of talk about the Gateway, including the 10 year history
 2. Mutual interest: CHIP funding
 - a. Expansion of sewer district is more challenging and costly than water
 - b. Expansion of water can be done separately
 3. W&S Commission structure is almost unique (Plainfield similar)
 - a. Most commission members are from the Selectboard
 - b. Political drivers are relevant as well as economic and technical
 - c. District is very focused on operating/technical issues
 - d. Structure is based on charter, which requires five levels of approval, including the State Legislature as the last level
 - i. As a result, the way the costs are allocated for any W/S upgrade would appear to require a change to the charter
 - ii. Review of 1992 ordinance related to W/S financing (report from Mairead)
 1. Typically, selectboards run W&S systems in VT
 2. Guidance comes from a 1992 ordinance that future users bear the cost of any expansion, not codified anywhere else; ordinances can be changed, and may not require charter change
 - a. Petition – could be by the Selectboard, development of an alternative
 - b. Public hearing
 - c. Selectboard decides
 - d. Public can petition to disagree with ordinance and can then vote
 3. Might be an uncomplicated process but depends on a specific project with a specific goal and process
 - a. Big ticket items (like bonds) go to the public for a vote
 - b. Some expenditures can be determined by W&S vote, on behalf of the public
 - iii. Discussion: What are possible plans for funding a new project, and what might that project be

1. We need to start with the project, and then work through the steps to accomplish this, potentially including rationale for any change
 2. W&S is very interested in our overall interests and plans; a quarterly update (Housing Comm to attend W&S meeting) would be good – Return in July with some questions sent out ahead of time
 - a. Should they be aware of resident water issues? They would be open to petitions from neighborhoods in need. Example: Southview neighborhood – bringing water and sewer lines would add more users and improve quality of housing infrastructure and reducing costs.
 - b. Andrew will follow up with W&S commission; possible questions for July:
 - i. Oversight of plumbing plans in new developments
 - ii. Consideration of affordable housing incentives by reducing fees, which could be approved by the Selectboard
 - b. CHIP webinars (Connie; Virginia): Follow up from Bonnie Waninger (VLCT); Goal: how to craft persuasive engagement (0:29:00)
 - i. Per Bonnie, we could use CHIP funds for any project for any town supported housing development project, based on some requirements, even if in a flood plain; could include housing in Town Center building with flood-proofing upgrades
 - ii. People to talk to gather more information about Town Center space: Connie to follow up with Josh & Greg R; Virginia will talk to Gary Bresser. General questions:
 1. Penny on tax rate approved to support Town Center shows interest in developing ways to fund Town Center upgrade
 2. General goal: how would public feel about adding housing to Town Center building?
 - c. Housing Trust Fund plan (Mairead) (0:44:00)
 - i. Initial work started; has investigated what other towns have done
 - ii. Update when information gathered
 - d. Review priority of strategic plan items: what do we most want to focus on? [Planning Doc for Housing SP](#) (0:49:00) consensus to continue with current work/priorities
5. Recruitment (0:53:00)
 - a. Review/approve Mairead’s application to continue on the Committee
 - i. Fully supported
6. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment (0:54:00)
 - a. Next meeting: Thursday, May 21, noon – 1:00p
 - b. Proposed agenda to include: Potential CHIP project update (Connie/Virginia); Housing Trust Fund options (Mairead)
7. Adjournment: Agreed to adjourn at: 12:55

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen