

## Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, June 8, 2026

Time Started: 12:02p

Time Ended: 1:04p

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

Guest:

Absent: Nick Blanchet

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

AI Summary: The meeting focused on housing development in Richmond, Vermont, using CHIP or other funds. Connie discussed conversations with town leaders and experts, highlighting community support needed for redeveloping town properties for housing. Key issues included potential insurance rate increases due to building height, public perception of tax incentives, and the need for community engagement. Greg R suggested a charette of planning experts with other tools to assist (AI). Mariad proposed drafting a Housing Trust Fund ordinance, similar to Burlington's, to support affordable housing. The committee agreed to follow up with various town officials and agencies to address these issues and planned the next meeting for July 13 at noon.

1. Welcome and troubleshooting (0:00:00)
2. Adjustments to Agenda – none (0:00:01)
3. Approval of the April 16, 2026 meeting minutes
  - a. Accepted as written (0:00:01)
4. General Updates and Discussion – Committee
  - a. Potential CHIP project update (Connie; Virginia): Follow up with town leader conversations (0:00:02)
    - i. Josh A:
      1. Payment of new W/S work by new users is in the ordinance, not in the charter; could be changed by Selectboard
      2. Town property that could be redeveloped to include housing should include appropriate public opinion sessions and the Selectboard
      3. Remember that increasing the height of a building or the number of high buildings has some unknown red flag issues relative to fire risk (assigned codes that drive premiums; ladder truck in nearby town) that are related to homeowners' insurance premiums for all property owners in the town. It appears that local leaders have not been able to get estimates of this impact ahead of time.
    - ii. Greg R provided alternate perspectives that would need to be addressed in supporting public opinion forums: who is displaced, use of future tax revenues for other than municipal services
      1. Consider an architects' charette to identify what is possible; don't focus on one solution
      2. Help the Town create a mission and vision for what it wants to be in 10 years
    - iii. Adam W is in favor of a process to develop this idea; not linked to a particular product
      1. Interested in providing time at SB meetings to delve into elements of the Town Plan and its goals
    - iv. Bard H is supportive of the general idea of exploring ways to increase housing options in Richmond and echoed some concerns from above. Consider who might lose space if Town property/space were to be redesigned
      1. Past issue with Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) must be addressed first
    - v. Fran T was supportive of further work to investigate possibilities and provided background on CHT development from 1990s
    - vi. Jean and Gary B: the services in the Town Center are important and should stay there which wouldn't leave much room for housing
    - vii. Miranda Lescaze gave Mairead contact information for Cassie Bell about funds that were grants but not payback loans; CHT had a grant, not a loan. She can provide other contact information for housing related agencies in VT.
    - viii. ACTIONS:

1. Virginia will ask Keith for a list of town properties and Alex Weinhagen, former Town Planner at Hinesburg, for his experience with tall buildings/insurance companies
  2. Andrew will reach out to RPC
  3. Mairead will follow up with Cassie Bell on CHT history and other VT agencies on tall buildings
  4. Connie will ask Adam for other contacts re: tall buildings
- b. Housing Trust Fund plan (Mairead) Follow up (0:45:00)
- i. Talked with Williston Town Planner (Melinda Scott); former BTV Housing Trust Fund Administrator (Todd Rawlings) about housing trust funds; also spoke w CHT director of real estate developer (and former Richmond Housing Committee member, Miranda Lescaze) about HTFs and affordable housing in Richmond more broadly.
  - ii. Take aways:
    1. Most towns have an ordinance that creates a housing trust fund: traditional purpose of these funds is to help pay for pre- development costs that developers have trouble paying for; Increasingly towns are creating HTFs that also help current residents afford to stay in their existing homes/repair homes.
      - a. Miranda suggests a another mechanism to achieve the HTF traditional goal: CREATE A REGULATION THAT WAIVES PRE-DEVELOPMENT FEES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPERS. This is a signal to affordable housing developers that Richmond is a willing partner and wants so support this work. And it addresses some of the same costs covered by HTFs.
    2. HTFS: could be broadly or individually constructed, meaning they could help individuals or housing agencies. These aren't mutually exclusive goals though.
    3. The purpose of a HTF is to support affordable housing for lower income residents—either development projects or retention/rehabilitation in existing individual units.
    4. Administration and funding: many towns have a paid town staffer who helps with administration. Suggestion by Todd Rawlings: the fund could fund this staff time (in Burlington: 10-15% of the HTF supports staff time). Town housing committee would work with this staff member to review applications.
      - a. We need to understand what the feasible funding options are, e.g., Burlington's 1% tax on every \$100 of property value. Williston is considering this approach rather than a more ad hoc, year to year, strategy that must be revisited annually.
      - b. Could also consider a local options tax that several towns use. Lots of state level guidance for towns considering this. Discussion with business owners would be important.
      - c. Short term rental fees are another option, although this might not have much impact in Richmond given Andrew's assessment of how few there are in Richmond.
      - d. Impact fees
      - e. Fees related to inclusionary zoning (payment in Lieu), but we don't have inclusionary zoning in Richmond.
  - iii. Decisions committee needs to make regarding HTF:
    1. Who administers
    2. What kind of help should the fund provide (organizational or individual or both)
    3. Funding mechanism
    4. We would likely need to develop policy for internal guidance on administering program
  - iv. Virginia suggests that everyone reread Brandy's report about the conversation we would need to have to further affordable housing in Richmond— community needs to be pro-housing and have a positive outlook on affordable housing to make any of these ideas work
  - v. Mairead shared that creating a housing trust fund—especially one that helps Richmond residents repair their homes/repay arrearages to remain in their homes—can help generate support for the fund and more broadly for affordable housing initiatives. This helps Richmond folks who have been in the community remain here.
  - vi. Mairead asked about next steps she should take on this strategic plan item so that we can continue to make progress. Andrew suggests drafting ordinance but not deciding on a funding mechanism.

5. Recruitment (0:54:00)
  - a. Andrew's application to continue on the Committee – not submitted yet; he is considering other Boards in Richmond
  - b. Requirement to review [Code of Ethics](#) during June-August – everyone confirmed that they understand the requirement
    - i. All committee members to sign [acknowledgement](#) form
    - ii. All committee members to watch [video](#) by August 31 2026 if not watched in the past 3 years
6. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment (1:01:00)
  - a. Next meeting: Monday, July 13 from 12-1p
  - b. Proposed agenda to include: Recruitment, Potential CHIP Project Follow Up, Development of Housing Fund Trust plan
7. Adjournment: Agreed to adjourn at: 1:04

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen