

Richmond Planning Commission  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR October 19, 2022

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Lisa Miller, Mark Fausel, Chris Cole, Chris Granda, Joy Reap, Alison Anand,
Members Absent:	Dan Mullen,
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), MMCTV, Christy Witters, Matt Parisi, Jeff Forward, Molly Dugan, Allen Knowles, Trish Healy, Jay Furr, Mark Hall, Connie Van Eeghen, Jennifer Poehlmann, June Heston, Patty Brushett, Blair Knowles, Bob Reap, Bonny Steuer, Denise Noble, Bruce Bailey, Amy Lord, Gretchen Paulsen, Sid Miller, Ann Naumann, Karl Goertze

**1. Welcome and troubleshooting**

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

**2. Review of the agenda and adjustments to the agenda**

Clarke reviewed the meeting agenda, and noted that the commission may refer to the meeting materials for the November 2, 2022 meeting.

**3. Public Comment for non-agenda items**

None.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

The October 5, 2022 meeting minutes were accepted into the record as written.

**5. Public Hearing: Village Residential/Commercial District and its tangential elements**

Motion by Chris Cole, seconded by Alison Anand, to open the public hearing. Voting: unanimous.  
Motion carried.

Clarke introduced the topics under discussion, and reviewed the proposed zoning map. Amy Lord asked for clarification regarding the lots along Jericho Road. Clarke said that those lots along Jericho Road are proposed to be changed from the High-Density Residential District to the Village Residential/Commercial District. Clarke reviewed the initial rationale for establishing the Residential/Commercial District along East Main Street, and the current need for more housing in Town. Jeff Forward asked why the hardware store and the residential area at the end of Railroad Street was not proposed to be included in the Village Residential/District. Cole said that the hardware store is in a commercial district, and the commission is interested in enabling a mixed-use district at the moment. Forward asked if the residential area at the end of Railroad Street is considered a commercial use. Venkataraman said that the name of the district has no bearing on the use of properties, that the name of

the district is more so a generalization of the character of the district, that to determine the allowed uses in a district one has to look at the list of allowed uses within the district, that housing is currently not allowed in the Village Commercial District, and that the residential area may have been in a district that allowed housing when the residences were initially developed. Forward suggested that the commission should consider rezoning the residential area at the end of Railroad Street.

Bruce Bailey asked about uses and whether residents would have a say on which uses would be allowed. Clarke said that she and the commission will review the list of allowable uses and receive comments.

Clarke noted that even though all of the lots are proposed to be included in the district, not all the lots would be considered developable based on the zoning regulations. Venkataraman said that the regulations outline the development rights property owners have and no development would occur without the property owner's consent.

Ann Naumann asked why the houses south of the bridge on Bridge Street were not included in the proposed district. Clarke said that based on the outreach they had done in 2020 and 2021, residents in that area wanted more protection of the existing neighborhoods.

Clarke reviewed the purpose of the district, and the changes to the list of allowable uses, including allowing three- and four-unit dwelling uses as permitted uses. Bailey said that he doesn't think the village needs more people, and that the village is crowded already. Christy Witters asked why cross-references were crossed out. Venkataraman said that these were redundancies, and that any proposed use has to be in compliance with the entire zoning regulations document.

Karl Goertze asked about Airbnbs. Cole said that the current regulations do not address Airbnbs and that it needs to be addressed.

Naumann asked about storage spaces and standards for multi-family dwellings, and expressed concerns about increasing density in the village. Clarke said that housing will be addressed in time throughout the town on a district-by-district basis, that the placement of housing in the village is more viable because it has water and sewer service. Clarke said that the commission is proposing a set of multi-family housing standards that will be further discussed during the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

Allen Knowles spoke in support of housing to spread the tax burden, and because his family needs decent places to live. Molly Dugan spoke in support of additional housing in the village for the environmental considerations and for improvements to the vibrancy of the village.

Witters asked about affordable housing. Venkataraman said that the economics of developing affordable housing is complicated; that in order to allow for affordable housing developments to be built, the town has to allow for the scale to allow the economics of it to work; and that the scale in which affordable housing developments would work is significantly higher than what is currently proposed. Clarke added that if more housing is built in general, more options are created for those in need of housing, and that increasing the supply of housing could lower the cost of housing.

Matt Parisi highlighted the dimensional requirements for the Village Residential/Commercial District, that the proposed regulations would not enable all lots to have four-unit dwellings because of the existing small lot sizes, that the proposed density would be less than typical urban areas, and that the increase in

density would stabilize the water bills. Parisi said that these changes are necessary to make the town affordable.

Trish Healy expressed concerns about the possible further urbanization of the village, and said she is interested in the commission's response to housing allowances outside of the village.

Mark Hall said that the Richmond Housing Committee has been discussing these issues and methods to address the housing shortage, and that he is in favor of the proposed changes. Hall overviewed the Richmond Housing Study, adding that the proposed regulations are in line with the recommendations in the Richmond Housing Study. Hall quoted a comment he received from Nick Neverisky in response to a Front Porch Forum post Hall made in favor of increasing the density in the village, stating that Neverisky is in favor of increasing housing options in town.

Blair Knowles said that as an owner of a real estate firm looking at recent transactions, first-time homebuyers have been priced out of the market, that increased density would increase opportunities for first-time homebuyers, and that she would prefer increased density in village areas in order to preserve the outlying areas and prevent sprawl.

Jennifer Poehlmann said she would like more data on the proposed regulations and the measurable outcomes (increased housing opportunities, lower water rates, etc).

Jay Furr explained that more housing is being proposed in the village because of the limited area of water and sewer services, the water and sewer commission is looking into expanding water and sewer services to the Gateway area, that developers are not likely to develop high-density projects if no water and sewer service is provided. Furr added that the town is looking into the provision of a shuttle to connect the Riverview Commons neighborhood and the village which will have a cost but it may be pursued if the town is interested and if it's in the town's best interest.

Witters said that the powered vehicle and machinery service use is not a compatible use for this district.

Cole said to refute comments on how the village is taking on the burden of adding housing, the only major housing projects in the village are the Buttermilk project and the apartments above the Big Spruce, and that in comparison to areas outside the village, the village does not have nearly as much housing developments. Cole said that encouraging development within the village would improve the environment and the water quality. Cole said that housing is not affordable in Richmond, that he has had to save during his lifetime to be able to afford to live in Richmond, and that increases to the housing supply is needed to make housing more affordable. Cole said that the development and redevelopment would not occur overnight and would only occur if the property owner is interested in development.

Lord asked if changing parts of the High-Density Residential District to the Village Residential/Commercial District would result in less residential uses. Clarke said that in the current market and the availability of commercial rental space in town, that seems unlikely. Venkataraman said that currently, towns are facing underutilized commercial spaces and are trying to figure out how to add residential uses to improve the utilization of previously commercial areas, and that the objective with this area is to create a walkable built environment with services readily accessible to residents. Lord expressed concerns about traffic and more people backing out onto Jericho Road, and also noting that Jericho Road had been a more affordable area of town. Venkataraman said that regarding traffic,

commercial uses typically have the largest traffic impact, and based on the modeling he's seen, small-scale residential uses would have little to no impact on nearby roadways.

Clarke reviewed the allowable uses, the dimensional requirements, and the district standards. Parisi asked for clarification if additional units had to be attached to the existing principal structure. Venkataraman said that the permitting process would depend on the size of the lot, the size of the proposed unit, the location of the unit and the number of units on the lot already. Clarke said that the commission considered allowing multiple principal structures on a lot but decided not to at this point. Parisi said that the current size limitations of accessory apartments would not allow for a family to live in it.

Anand asked how many units could be fitted into existing large houses, and if the road infrastructure can handle increased traffic. Bruce Bailey said that there are traffic issues along Jericho Road when school is in session. Venkataraman said that widening roads is never a good option, and that the best way to mitigate traffic is to create new roads to distribute the network.

Clarke reviewed the proposed definitions for retail uses.

Healy said that the powered vehicle and machinery service use isn't compatible in the Goodwin-Baker Building. Sid Miller said that a garage would not be included in the Goodwin-Baker Building anytime soon because he does not find it to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and that he would be interested in options for housing. Healy said that she likes the building the way it is, and admitted that she wouldn't be able to stand in the way for housing based on the community's needs.

Clarke said that the next meeting will focus on the changes to the Gateway area, and that the November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting will be an open forum for additional input.

Erin Wagg recommended requiring two parking spaces per unit, based on her experiences in the condominium development next to Stone Corral Brewery because of the shared usage of her parking lot.

Motion by Chris Granda, seconded by Cole, to continue the public hearing to November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Voting unanimous. Motion carried.

## **6. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment**

Motion by Fausel, seconded by Granda, to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner