

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR November 16, 2022

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Lisa Miller, Chris Cole, Chris Granda, Joy Reap
Members Absent:	Dan Mullen, Alison Anand, Mark Fausel
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), MMCTV, Jeff Forward, Matt Parisi, Melissa Wolaver, Ross Johnson, Amy Lord, Karl Goetze, Christy Witters, Allen Knowles, Morgan Wolaver, Melissa Wolaver, Connie Van Eeghen, Alexis Lathem, Betsy Hardy, Kara Wires, Tam Smith, Miranda Lescaze, Molly Dugan

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

2. Review of the agenda and adjustments to the agenda

Clarke reviewed the meeting agenda.

3. Public Comment for non-agenda items

None.

Clarke noticed the input from the chat and asked Ravi Venkataraman what was in the chat. Venkataraman said that Jeff Forward wrote that Venkataraman is leaving the Town of Richmond at the end of the year, and public wrote responses to that.

4. Approval of Minutes

The November 16, 2022 meeting minutes were accepted into the record as written.

5. Continuation of Public Hearings: Village Residential/Commercial District and Gateway Residential/Commercial District and the tangential elements for both

Clarke opened the floor for general comments from the public. Miranda Lescaze said that considering the housing shortage in Chittenden County, the town should consider increasing housing opportunities in the town; that Richmond Village is the place for housing because it has water and sewer infrastructure; and that the proposed zoning regulations are an important step for gradually increasing housing opportunities for those who work in the community and for the children of residents. Molly Dugan said that the changes to the zoning regulations to increase housing opportunities are long overdue; that because of the general history of housing discrimination in the United States, municipalities should reevaluate their zoning regulations to make sure the town is inclusive and accessible; that she is in support of the proposed changes to the regulations; and that municipalities have a lot of power in increasing housing opportunities through its zoning regulations. Melissa Wolaver expressed concerns about increased traffic, parking, and the

quality of life for the current residents.

Christy Witters expressed concerns about the possible increases to the cost of housing with upzoning and the creation of additional rental units, and asked about affordable housing in the Gateway area. Clarke said that the creation of housing and affordable housing will depend on town water and sewer service in the Gateway, and that the commission is concerned with lifting regulatory barriers to create new housing projects. Witters said that she had concerns about the town not doing enough through zoning to create affordable housing considering the cost of rent at The Creamery, and that upzoning could exacerbate inequality between the village and areas outside the village. Clarke deferred to Dugan and Lescaze regarding affordable housing because they are practitioners in the affordable housing field. Lescaze said that to enable affordable housing the town should look at methods to reduce costs to a project—such as allowing projects by-right instead of through the development review process, allowing for density bonuses, creating housing trust funds. Lescaze said that projects with high-end homes on larger lots outside the village are occurring because those are the only projects developers are financially able to build; that the proposed changes to the zoning would not affect the projects the public is seeing outside of the village due to the nature of the current market; and that housing in walkable areas with access to public transit makes housing more affordable. Clarke referred to the draft multifamily housing standards designed to curb potential negative impacts, and added that Lescaze has noted that these standards would add costs to housing.

Matt Parisi asked for clarification about the proposed allowances for multiple structures on a lot. Clarke reviewed the proposed allowances for multiple principal structures on a lot. Parisi cited the statistics on new housing units built in the last decade; and noted that because of the development patterns, a disproportionate amount of people have to drive through the village to access the highway, causing traffic issues in the village. Wolaver asked about parking standards with the allowances for multiple principal structures. Clarke and Venkataraman said that proposals for multiple principal structures on a lot would have to meet all the requirements in the zoning regulations, including the parking standards.

Clarke reviewed accessory dwelling allowances; and said that the commission decided that along with accessory dwelling allowances and duplexes on lots that are large enough, it should consider allowances for multiple single-family dwellings on lots that are large enough to sustain the density, which could improve housing ownership opportunities. Betsy Hardy asked about the dimensional requirements for accessory dwelling units. Clarke reviewed the allowances and standards for accessory dwelling units. Witters asked about subdivision rights for properties with accessory dwelling units or multiple single-family dwellings. Venkataraman said that subdivision would be allowed if both proposed lots meet the dimensional requirements and all other applicable zoning regulations. Hardy asked for clarification on frontage requirements. Clarke and Venkataraman explained frontage and access requirements. Parisi asked for clarification on if properties could host another single-family dwelling if a property already has a duplex or a multifamily dwelling. Venkataraman said that that would not be allowed under the proposed regulations, and that only multiple structures hosting single-family dwellings on one lot would be allowed. Parisi asked for the basis for not allowing multiple residential structures on a lot.

Karl Goetze stated concerns about the upzoning of the Jericho Road corridor, the proliferation of investment properties, and traffic. Clarke asked Goetze about the scope of his neighborhood. Goetze said that he considers both sides of Jericho Road between the Jericho Road/Route 2 intersection to School Street to be part of his neighborhood. Goetze said he was concerned about the addition of business properties taking away from the vibrancy of the village area, and the impacts of commercial uses on the walkability

of the neighborhood. Clarke said that a range of residential and commercial uses have to be considered to foster the creation of a walkable neighborhood. Wolaver said that she considers Goetze part of her neighborhood, that one of the properties on Jericho Road had a car parked on the sidewalk, and that she had concerns about short-term rentals on the walkability and standard of living.

Tam Smith said that the broader need of housing to bolster long-term sustainability needs to be prioritized, that she feels she has a responsibility as a community member to help foster a more inclusive community, and that the community gains by having a more diverse multigenerational community.

Witters suggested adjusting the proposed district map to not include the residential properties on Jericho Road. Witters requested to not allow powered vehicle and machinery service uses in the Village Residential/Commercial District. Clarke and Venkataraman reviewed the definition and use standards for powered vehicle and machinery service uses. Clarke added that the addition of the use was to allow for the creation of vehicle and machine repair for the benefit of the residents.

Chris Cole asked about the difference between list of uses in the current zoning versus the proposed zoning for Jericho Road. Venkataraman said that the commission has made changes to allow for new uses and to increase the quality and intensity of certain uses, such as removing the size restriction on business office uses. Venkataraman said that he would have to double check on the exact uses that have been added to the proposed zoning district.

Clarke overviewed the options the commission can do at this point regarding the public hearing (closing the hearing, continuing the hearing).

Jeff Forward asked about formula businesses. Clarke reviewed past conversations about formula businesses, the process of drafting regulations for formula businesses, and correspondences the commission has had with the Town Attorney on this subject. Clarke said that more work is needed on drafting regulations on formula businesses. Chris Granda said that the aesthetic considerations of formula businesses are important, reviewed the deleterious effects of formula businesses, and said that he was disappointed by the responses by the Town Attorney because of the lack of evidence in his responses.

Morgan Wolaver stated concerns about parking impacts, and powered vehicle and machinery service uses.

Lisa Miller suggested that the Town Attorney provide legalese to codify the character of the area. Cole said that he understands that the town cannot discriminate based on who owns a commercial establishment, that the commission does not seek to discriminate based on who owns the business, and that he looks forward to future discussions on proposed standards for retail uses.

Clarke said that hotel, grocery store, and pharmacy uses needs to be further discussed. Forward said that those discussions can be folded into discussions on formula businesses, and asked for clarification on the review process of the proposed amendments. Clarke said that changes to the proposals can be made after the hearing is closed and before they are forwarded to the Selectboard. Clarke added that the public hearings can be kept open to continue discussions on formula businesses. Forward said discussions on formula businesses and commercial use standards should be further discussed.

Clarke asked Venkataraman about the process alternatives. Venkataraman said that the commission could close the hearings, make edits to the formula businesses portion and forward the proposal to the

Selectboard accordingly; close the hearings, make edits to the formula businesses portion, warn a hearing on the formula businesses portion, open and close that hearing accordingly, and forward the entire package to the Selectboard; or continue the hearings to a specified date. Clarke asked the commission for a straw poll of the commissioners on if they would like continue the hearings. The commission agreed to continue the hearings.

Miller suggested closing the hearing to provide finality and a defined package of amendments for the Selectboard to review, adding that if another hearing is warranted based on the legal input, then the commission should warn another public hearing on that specific matter. Miller raised concerns about the large impact a formula business could have on the town.

Venkataraman said that the easiest fix to this issue is to require all buildings to be two floors within the districts the commission is concerned about, and that he is unsure at this point how the Town feels about such a requirement. Venkataraman said that the Town Attorney provided a variety of measures the town could do to address this issue, that these measures need to be explored and then discussed during an upcoming meeting.

Forward recommended that the commission review the zoning ordinance of Wilmington, Vermont as an example.

Motion by Cole, seconded by Granda, to continue the public hearings to the December 7, 2022 Planning Commission meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

Clarke said she hopes to wrap up this subject during the next meeting, and to cancel the December 21, 2022 meeting.

7. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Clarke said that Venkataraman will be leaving the Town of Richmond at the end of the year. Venkataraman said that it has been a pleasure working for the town, and that he looks forward to working with the commission next month. Cole thanked Venkataraman for his service.

Motion by Cole, seconded by Granda, to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner