

**Richmond Planning Commission Meeting**  
**Minutes of March 15, 2023**

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Alison Anand, Dan Mullen, Joy Reap, Lisa Miller, Mark Fausel
Members Absent:	Chris Cole, Chris Granda
Others Present:	MMCTV (Erin Wagg), Gary Bressor, Duncan Wardwell (Town Staff)

**#1.** Clarke called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone at 7:06 PM.

**#2.** There were no adjustments to the agenda.

**#3.** Fausel commented on a non-agenda item: the comment related to the Recreation Committee’s interest in using some of the ARPA funds to make improvements to Volunteer’s Green, and the fact that the location of the park in the floodway of the Winooski River makes it impossible to add any structures, as per Zoning Administrator Tyler Machia. Fausel suggested that the PC should review the floodplain regulations at some point to allow a bit more flexibility. He suggested that there might be benefit to the community to allowing more development of the park. Clarke agreed to put this on the list of topics for ongoing PC work. There were no further comments on non-agenda items.

**#4.** The March 1, 2023, meeting minutes were accepted into the record as written.

**#5.** Clarke opened the main topic of discussion for the meeting: a continuation of review of the Village Residential Neighborhoods North and South. She began by sharing the map that the PC approved for the Village R/C district, and pointed out a small lot next to the Goodwin Baker parcel which was mostly obscured by the “Millet St” label. She then showed the same lot (ML0111) on the map that CCRPC had developed for the PC’s Neighborhoods work, and said that she wasn’t sure whether we had meant this lot to be included also in the R/C district, since it clearly accessed Millet St next to the Goodwin Baker building. A second lot (TL0051) also accesses Millet St in addition to Tilden Ave. The Tilden Ave access is reflected in its “TL” designation.

Clarke related that neither of these properties is inhabited by its owner. TL0051 is owned by the Powers, who live on Snipe Ireland Rd, and could be contacted by email. ML0111 is owned by folks in Jeffersonville for whom we have no email address. Clarke felt that these owners should be contacted to see if they wanted these properties left in the Neighborhoods or placed in the R/C district because of the Millet St accesses. Fausel said he felt that the duplex on TL0051 definitely seemed like it was part of the Tilden Ave residential neighborhood, so he would recommend leaving it there. Reap questioned why just having a Millet St access was relevant to the lots’ designations, as other properties on Millet St, namely the Healy’s lot, and Harriet Riggs house, also access Millet St, but belong in the Neighborhoods.

Fausel said he had looked at the Goodwin Baker building as a stand-alone entity, suitable for inclusion in the R/C district, but that he had always felt that the other houses along Millet St, just like Tilden and Baker, belonged in the residential area. He reiterated his feeling that Goodwin Baker was unique, and needed the flexibility of both commercial and residential uses. Clarke mentioned that she didn’t remember exactly how the Millet St boundary was described, whether it just included the south side of the street – Fausel and Reap pointed out that all the buildings on Millet St were actually on the north side of the street. Reap stated that the Healys, whose lot crosses from Baker to Millet, were 100% against being included in the R/C district.

Clarke and other PC members confirmed that other properties along W. Main St. besides the Goodwin Baker lot had been correctly added to the R/C district – the Catholic Church, the doctor’s office, and the multifamily dwellings next to the corner lot. Clarke questioned whether TL0051 could be split in half, but didn’t know what

that would entail. Fausel said he was okay with contacting the owners of the two lots in question that have access to Millet St, by email or letter, but he definitely thought that the whole of TL0051 should remain with the Tilden St. neighborhood. Bressor added that he definitely agreed with Fausel, that the TL0051 duplex was oriented towards Tilden Ave and should remain in that neighborhood. Reap said that her property on Baker St backed up to the ML0111 lot, so she was very familiar with the property. Clarke said that the PC would make a final decision whether to move either of the lots in question from the Neighborhoods, where they currently appear to be, into the R/C, based on all factors, after the owners were contacted. The general sentiment was to keep the lots in the Neighborhoods North.

Clarke pointed to a second minor issue with the map CCRPC had drafted, which concerns the depiction of the houses at the end of Church St. CCRPC had included the whole area, but Clarke thought it was likely that these were footprint lots, and only the outlines of the duplexes should be in the yellow color of the Neighborhood North. Clarke will investigate this further so that these lots can be correctly depicted. Clarke also questioned the way HU0122 and HU0082 were depicted, but said she would get this straightened out. These lots were depicted correctly on the R/C map that we submitted to the SB.

The discussion then moved on to the proposed Village Residential Neighborhoods South, with an examination of the map. Proposed areas include Thompson Rd; Cochran Rd from the intersection to the edge of the W&S district; Bridge St on both sides from the intersection with Huntington/Cochran Rds north to the bridge, including the lots on Old Brooklyn Court. Bressor participated in the discussion, and is a property owner in this proposed district.

Questions on the Cochran Rd piece included: leave out St Mary's cemetery? Leave out the Nature Conservancy property? Leave out any part of the Preston Legacy conserved lands? All of these have no development potential, so Clarke thought it reasonable to leave them out of the Neighborhoods. Leave out the sliver owned by the Barretts? Bressor stated that this was a logging road up into the Barretts' property. Fausel thought the proximity of water and sewer might make this large lot a possible site for affordable housing with the higher density of the Neighborhoods district. Clarke said she would speak to the Barretts about their preferences. What about the unlabeled lot next to CO0110? Clarke said she would look up the ownership of this lot. Bressor stated that it belonged to the Spranos.

Questions about Thompson Rd included: Bressor and Fausel remembered that the neighbors had wanted the two lots next to the daycare center on the corner of Farr and Thompson Rds taken out of the R/C district and included in the Neighborhoods South. Fausel suggested we leave this up to the local neighbors, who had wanted this change. Bressor confirmed that his property included a low-lying piece along the Winooski that is mostly in the floodplain, so can't be developed. Bressor confirmed the location of the Sprano and Prince lots (unmarked and CO0105) along the north side of Cochran Rd., and the town wellhead lot (BR0431).

As there were no further comments about the Neighborhoods South, Clarke returned to the map of the Neighborhood North, and wondered why one of the two school lots was in the Neighborhoods and the other in the HDR. Clarke felt they should both be in the same district, but it didn't seem to matter which. PC members did not disagree that more research could be done to determine the best district for the schools. Clarke also suggested that at some point we should consider renaming the HDR district, as now other districts have a higher density. HDR density is currently 1 U per 2/3A with W&S and 1 U per 1 A w/out W&S. R/C is currently 1 U per 1/3 A going to 1/4 A as currently proposed.

Clarke then turned to review of the proposed text for the new districts. She suggested that the PC consider exactly what we want to call these two neighborhood districts: "Village Neighborhood" North and South or "Village Residential Neighborhood" North and South. Anand thought adding "Residential" added specificity.

Clarke stated that these were the documents from July 2021, and that she added text to make them parallel with our new R/C districts, and also included some of our newly considered ideas to see what the PC thought. The new text is in blue mark-up.

Discussion of things to think about in the South district include: include language protective of the Round Church? Do we want large home-based childcare and supported housing facility as conditional uses? (Already one supported housing here, i.e. Richmond Terrace). Continue with lot size and density language in square feet as we started for the R/C's? We did say we were gradually going to convert all districts to this newer planning language, and that residential density was a new concept we were planning to introduce in all districts also. Do we want to increase maximum lot coverage from 40% to 50% to allow more room for building? Mullen asked what was included in lot coverage, and Fausel suggested any impermeable surface, including pavement or gravel. Bressor thought 50% might be feasible.

Setbacks were discussed, including whether new setback statements would be needed if the concept of two principal structures on a lot was adopted in these districts. Do there need to be any more dimensional standards about two residential structures on a Lot? Bressor asked if each structure could have an ADU? Mullen wondered if state statute prohibited towns from not allowing ADUs. Clarke thought the legislature might be going even further in that direction due to the housing crisis.

The question of whether a section "District Specific Design Standards" should be added as with the R/C's – would we need these site or building standards in a residential only district? Bressor mentioned that even areas with historic preservation standards don't necessarily want every building to look like it was old, and standards may hinder creativity. Do we need to mention "Multifamily Housing Development Standards" when there is no multifamily housing allowed? Would Supported Housing need these standards if we were going to allow that? Bressor mentioned that PUD's don't seem to allow multifamilies if that use is not included in the use list for the district. He suggested we clarify this point in the PUD section.

Clarke said that in the North district, many of the issues were the same, but that we had allowed for a smaller minimum lot size (1/4 A or 10,000sf instead of 1/2 A or 20,000sf) with a maximum density of 8 U/A (1 U per 5,000sf instead of 10,000sf) – do we want this? Clarke offered that we could look at the maps with all the lot sizes shown, to get some idea of how many lots are already only 1/4 A or less, and that she could provide those maps. She also said that CCRPC now has capability to do some 3-D imaging to illustrate build-out if we want. The traffic Impact section was discussed. Anand reminded us that increased density would increase our traffic and parking problems.

In summing up this agenda item, Bressor said he thought that the South District represented a good compromise from what the neighbors want and trying to achieve more housing growth, and that he liked most of it. Clarke thanked him for coming and providing input. Anand said she felt she needed to walk around in the North Neighborhood to get to know the area better and see how the residents lived, so she could decide these issues. Clarke agreed that our Gateway field trip with the neighbors had been instructive. Miller said that she thought it would be useful to have something like a rendering of a "typical" layout. Bressor agreed that this would be useful, and especially for showing two residences on a lot, a proposal which might open up the number of units in the constrained village areas quite a bit. Clarke said we could ask CCRPC to make drawings if we asked for something specific.

**#6.** Clarke suggested the PC spend a few minutes with the topic of short term rentals, which is a new issue for us. She reviewed some of the reasons that people address this issue: partying; lack of contact information; removal of long term housing options etc. and suggested we clarify why we want to regulate this – do we even have a problem with this in Richmond? And do we want to do this by zoning or by a stand-alone ordinance? Statutory authority and state requirements were touched on as they currently exist, and also possible new

regulations currently being considered. Clarke noted that some ideas from other Vermont towns were listed in the meeting memo that we could think about. PC members said they were still interested in working on this topic. Fausel added that he thinks short term rentals definitely reduce our housing stock, and that our goal should be more folks able to live in the Town. He added that there would be some opposition, and wondered if people in Richmond were doing commercial rentals versus renting out a room in their house. He thought it would be a good conversation to have. Bressor added that a key issue was whether the owner lived in the rental. He felt that investment rentals were problematic, but not someone renting out a guest room. Clarke added that it may be all about the specifics of how the regulations are written. She thought it may be a good project to get our new town planner, Keith Osborne to work on after he starts on March 27.

#7. In other business, Clarke said she had sent the PC-approved airspace language on to BTV to see if it meets their needs. As it is a zoning amendment, it will also have to go through the Selectboard review at some point. She also mentioned that the SB had set a date of April 10<sup>th</sup> for their hearing on the R/C Districts.

Fausel moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 PM. This was seconded by Mullen and approved by all PC members present.

**Chat:**

00:49:41 MMCTV Erin: Could Gary come to guest mic please?

**Related Files**

- [a 3.15.23 meeting memo.pdf](#) 85 KB
- [e 3.15.23 Village Residential Neighborhood South ZD -- draft .pdf](#) 157 KB
- [ee 3.15.23 Village Residential Neighborhoods North ZD -- draft .pdf](#) 157 KB
- [f DraftZoningChanges 20230315 11X17.pdf](#) 2 MB

<https://www.richmondvt.gov/calendar/meeting/planning-commission-3-15-23>

Minutes submitted by Virginia Clarke