

3.19.25 meeting minutes

This meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

Members present: Alison Anand, Ian Bender, Virginia Clarke, Mark Fausel, Chris Granda,
Bryton Moeller

Members absent: Rebecca Connell

Others present: Keith Osborne (Director of Planning and Zoning), Erin Wagg (MMCTV)

1. Welcome

Clarke opened the meeting at 7:03pm and welcomed PC members. There were no guests present.

2. Review and adjust agenda

Moeller proposed adding to the agenda a report on the meeting that they had with Connell regarding an event for the Town Plan 2026 (TP) work. Clarke added this to the beginning of #5c. Clarke added that we could also talk about the scope of work for the TP steering committee as several members of the public had expressed interest, as well as the letters that are going out to the “owners” of the “Action” items in the 2018 Plan’s implementation table. She also added to #5b a discussion of the PC’s “Rules of Procedure,” a document that was last adopted in 2013 and could be updated and re-adopted

3. Public comment on non-agenda items

There was none.

4. Review minutes of 3.5.25 meeting

The only addition offered to these minutes was Clarke’s disclosure that she had made a minor alteration to the document “Residential Density Bonus Scheme” that was approved for transmittal to the Selectboard (SB) at the 3.5.25 PC meeting; namely that based on Moeller’s research, the term “physical limitations” was replaced with the preferred term “physical disabilities.” Clarke had communicated this change to the other PC members via email, asking that if there were any objection to this to let her know. There were no objections, so the change was made without re-voting approval. She is disclosing it now in case it could be construed as discussion outside a meeting. There was no comment on this disclosure. There were no other comments on the 3.5.25 minutes, so they were adopted into the record as written.

5. Annual organizational meeting

a) Clarke began with opening the floor for nominations for chair. Bender nominated Clarke to continue in this role, with Anand seconding. As there were no other nominations, a vote was taken and Clarke was approved 5-0 as chair. Then nominations for vice-chair were opened. Granda declined to continue in this role, and Fausel nominated Bender, with Granda seconding. As there were no other nominations, a vote was taken and Bender was

approved 5-0. Clarke volunteered to continue writing the minutes, and there was no objections to this.

b) Osborne began the discussion about the Code of Ethics document by saying that the SB had just approved a new statement of the town ethics policy based on the state's ethics policy. He said that Duncan Wardwell will shortly be emailing all listed personnel with the new policy and a form for everyone to sign saying that the policy has been reviewed and agreed to. The signing, as well as a training module, will be required of all wishing to serve on any committee.

Osborne then screen-shared the document "PC Rules of Procedure" for the commissioners to review. Clarke said she didn't see too many necessary changes, but felt that the new technology of remote and hybrid meetings should be added somewhere. Granda concurred, so as not to have any of our meeting content invalidated by a technical omission. Osborne then suggested that in Rule 4 a date certain for the election of officers be added. The phrase "by the end of March" was added without objection, which would align with our annual organizational meeting. For Rule 9, Osborne said he posted agendas at the library, the Post Office and on the board outside the Town Manager's office. We agreed to add a note that agendas would also be posted on the PC webpage, in the Front Porch Forum and in to the Seven Days paper. The Commission reviewed that discussions between a number of commissioners less than a quorum did not need to be a warned meeting, and that video recordings of our meetings would be kept by MMCTV indefinitely. Moeller suggested that all personal pronouns in the document be replaced by gender-neutral ones, and Clarke agreed that this could be done. There was a short discussion about ejecting people from a meeting due to "unruliness," and Clarke said the decision to eject someone would likely be the job of the Presiding Officer. Osborne said he would prepare a redline with the changes.

c) Moeller led off the scope of work discussion with a report of his meeting with Connell. They said key audiences for new Town Plan outreach should be young families, the environmental justice communities, and farmers as "rural character" remains important to residents. Key contacts would be the SB, the Racial Equity committee, the mobile home park and the Farr family. Connell reported that she had access to funds through the More Perfect Union nonprofit group that she is associated with. Osborne said he would look into the appropriateness of that. Clarke suggested Moeller would be a good member of the Steering Committee that was being set up, and that their ideas about having an engagement event at a Farmer's Market or on a sports day were promising. Moeller agreed with the idea that a charette in May might be this kind of event. Clarke spoke further about the scope of work for the Steering Committee that she and Osborne are preparing.

Osborne said that CCRPC has also offered assistance with outreach activities in conjunction with their own work on the new regional Future Land Use (FLU) map and housing target development. Clarke suggested that the PC could be working towards targets of: a May charette event, a rough draft in the early summer, a more complete draft in the fall and a final document by the end of 2025. She said Adam Wood from the SB had

agreed to be on the Steering Committee, and that we had two interested members of the public. Moeller and Bender agreed to join this committee along with Osborne and Clarke. Anand expressed concern about future flooding, and Clarke agreed that the new Town Plan should definitely be addressing the new flooding reality, and discussing mitigation and resiliency and anything that we could do to address stormwater and flooding. She also mentioned that emails were being sent out to contacts for the various sections of the Plan for their “Goals” and “Actions.” Granda added that he agreed with Anand that resiliency and mitigation in the face of climate change should receive more attention in the new Plan, especially as the resulting increasing expense was burdening residents. Clarke added that the housing crisis also would need more focus in the new Plan, and that she and Osborne should have a draft of the scope of work for the steering Committee within a week.

In discussing the proposed PC work for the coming year in addition to the Town Plan, Granda suggested looking for ways to create regulations to lower the carbon footprint of Richmond buildings, such as increasing energy efficiency and electrification of new buildings and putting in EV charging equipment. He also concurred with discussions about the MDP in the subdivision regulations; a trails discussion, and continuing work on the village and/or commercial zoning districts. Anand recommended focusing on whatever would allow the walkable Richmond downtown to continue to flourish. Bender discussed affordability. Moeller supported focusing on the Agricultural/Residential district in order to keep “rural character” in mind. They suggested thinking about the viability of farming, and what kinds of economic development would support farms. Maintaining a balance between creating more housing and retaining farm and forest land was discussed, as well as efforts in this direction by regional and state initiatives. Osborne said he had sent commissioners new CCRPC work on resource -based areas which is along these same lines, and recommended looking carefully at the new proposed FLU map. He invited questions, and Clarke said she and Osborne would put together a plan for work topics.

6. Updates

Clarke reminded the PC that the SB would be holding their public hearing on the FHOD amendments on April 7, and also at that meeting they would likely be scheduling a hearing on the JC amendments. This will probably be in May. She reviewed that the Steering Committee and its scope of work will hopefully be ready by the next PC meeting on April 2nd. Bender suggested that the first meeting of the Steering Committee would be better in person, and Clarke agreed. As a subcommittee of the PC, the meetings of this group will have to be warned.

7. Adjourn

As there was no further discussion, Bender moved to adjourn, seconded by Anand. There was no objection to the motion, so the meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Clarke