

6.4.25 meeting minutes PC

This meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

Members present: Alison Anand, Ian Bender, Virginia Clarke, Rebecca Connell, Mark Fausel, Chris Granda

Members absent: Bryton Moeller

Others present: Keith Osborne (Director of Planning and Zoning), Tom Astle (MMCTV)

1. Welcome

Clarke opened the meeting at 7:01 PM and welcomed commissioners and others.

2. Review agenda

As there were no changes to the agenda, the meeting continued with the posted agenda.

3. Public comment on non-agenda items

There was none.

4. Review minutes of 5.21.25 meeting

As there were no corrections or additions to the minutes, they were accepted into the record as written.

5. Review Selectboard (SB) hearing of 6.2.25 on Jolina Court (JC) Zoning District and associated amendments

Osborne began the discussion by mentioning that commissioners Bender, Granda and Clarke were at the SB hearing, along with a number of guests. He said that the SB had closed the public hearing, and provided the following instructions to the PC for revising the amendment proposal. He read the following motion approved by SB members:

The PC should amend Section 3.9 to increase the base residential density to 24 units per developable acre, and to increase the maximum total residential density to 30 units per developable acre if all residential bonuses are used. Section 6.15 should be revised to exclude the parking bonus option, and Section 5.12 should be revised to allow all but the 20% of the area of the ground floor nearest to Bridge St in Jolina Court buildings to be used for dwelling units. Section 6.16 should continue to be added as written.

Osborne reported that a second motion was made to set a date for a new public hearing on these revisions for August 4th, 2025. Bender asked how it came about that the parking bonus was removed from the residential bonus program. Clarke replied that there wasn't much discussion about it, but that it was suggested that the bonus program should only offer housing as bonuses since the point of the program was to provide more housing.

Clarke then read over the shared document that she had prepared to incorporate the changes that the SB had requested:

- In Section 3.9, the base residential density is changed to 24 U/A (developable) from 15 U/A (dev), and the Total Maximum Residential Density is changed to 30 U/A (dev) from 24 U/A (dev) if all density bonuses are utilized.
- In Section 5.12.2, subsection (b) was revised to allow for Residential PUD's in the Jolina Court (JC) district, and subsection (g) restricts the "commercial only" regulation to the 20% of the ground floor of any building directly fronting onto Bridge Street. This then would only apply to the Creamery's building 1 and to any other building in this district directly facing onto Bridge St. (i.e. the Richmond Community Kitchen building). The PC agreed in principle with this concept at our last meeting.
- In the new Section 6.15 the public parking option was removed throughout the section, leaving two options – affordable housing and accessible/adaptable housing as the two types of bonus options available.

In answer to a question from Bender, Osborne related that Josi Kytle of Buttermilk was "not unhappy" with the SB's decisions. Granda concurred, and added that Buttermilk likely would not be able to start on building 2 while interest rates were so high anyway, and that it was natural for developers to want the fewest possible encumbrances to the financing of their projects. He also said a priority for Buttermilk was to get the ground floor residential allowance for building 1.

Clarke then reviewed the next steps in the process: the PC approves these documents, that we feel have carried out the SB's instructions correctly; the bylaw amendment report and full redline of the Richmond Zoning Regulations (RZR) are developed and this is all sent back to the SB for a new public hearing, scheduled for 8/4/25. Osborne added that notifications to abutting towns, CCRPC and the state will also need to be done.

Granda and Clarke reviewed the sources for the definitions in Section 6.15, including the VHFA chart (for affordable housing) and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards and the Vermont Access Board guidelines (for accessible/adaptable housing). Granda summarized that these standards are unique to this document, but based upon other accepted standards, including ones recommended by AARP. Clarke said that the SB did not include anything about changing these standards in their instructions to us, but could always request more information if needed.

Granda then moved to approve the documents presented to the PC on 6/4/25, containing revisions to Section 3.9 and 5.12, and adding new sections 6.15 and 6.16 to the Richmond Zoning Regulations; and that these documents would then be transmitted back to the Selectboard for their public hearing process on 8/4/25. The motion was seconded by Anand, and approved 5-0-1, with Fausel abstaining as he felt that a positive vote was endorsing the SB's revisions which he was not in favor of. Granda reminded the PC that, statutorily, the SB makes the final decision on zoning amendments, and the PC is just saying that we feel we have carried out the SB's instructions. Clarke concurred with this statement, and also with Bender, who said the SB hearings are the place to make the case

for a different proposal. Clarke also said that the Tier 1B issue came up briefly at the SB's meeting, but that the board postponed a full discussion of that until their 6/16/25 meeting.

6. Update on Town Plan 2026 Steering Committee work and sign-up of staffing for TP26 outreach events

Granda signed up and recommended others signing up for events on the sign-up sheet that Bender had prepared. Clarke described the events: Farmers Market tabling on 6/13 and 6/27; July 4th tabling and two days of workshops at the library on 7/10 and 7/12. The materials are being worked up by the Steering Committee (TPSC), and staff are needed to hand out materials, run the activities and talk to people about the Plan. Anand suggested an event at her pool, which Clarke said might happen in August or September. Anand said she might be able to help with the Farmers Markets. Fausel said he could help on 7/12 in the AM, after he returned from a 1 month vacation. Connell said she'd sign up. Bender is managing the sign-up sheet and has volunteered for shifts.

7. Other business and review FYI documents in meeting materials packet

Clarke briefly mentioned the documents that can be reviewed in the packet:

- Tier 1B recommendation to opt-in by Housing Committee;
- Tier 1B recommendation (revised) not to opt-in by the PC.

Osborne said that staff time and attorney review would be an expense if opting-in, and said that work would have to be put into our RZR to allow us to properly consider Act 250-type features if we are to do the review, and that we would have to review the actual state permits that would still be required even with an opt-in. Clarke said that we don't have adequate standards for expanded DRB review in our ordinance, and we'd have to develop those standards, and that even identifying where the gaps in our ordinance are would take a fair amount of work. Fausel suggested that hiring a consultant might be required to do this work. Osborne said he would send information on the 10 Act 250 criteria to the commissioners so they could better understand what the Town would need to do if we opted-in. In answer to a question from Connell, Clarke said the theoretical benefit to the town would be more housing, but this is somewhat limited by our currently mostly built-out downtown area.

- Future Land Use map recommendation from Housing Committee for CCRPC, including a suggestion to put the upland Farr Farm piece on Huntington Rd and a parcel on Gov Peck Rd into a more developable category such as Transitional;
- FLU map recommendation from a Working Group of Natural Resource people including Judy Rosovsky, Brad Elliot, Bob Low, Wright Preston from various town committees, and myself (Clarke), which suggested that more general areas be moved into the Rural Conservation category.

These letters were sent directly to CCRPC and the groups are awaiting a response and a look at the proposed draft map when it is ready.

Clarke also mentioned that there would not be time and bandwidth to take up new zoning issues for the next few months as Osborne will be working full-time as the Zoning Administrator, and others on the PC (Clarke, Bender, Moeller +/- Connell) will be working on

the Town Plan. The remaining members would have to do the prep work for any new zoning projects that we might take up. Clarke suggested that we just all work on making the Town Plan effort successful. Osborne said he will be away for 12 days in August as well. Connell volunteered to help, and Bender invited her to the next Steering Committee meeting on 6/11/25 in the small conference room on the first floor of the Town Center or by Zoom. Clarke said the information about the meeting and the topics to be discussed can be found on the Steering Committee webpage on the Town website. Connell said she would try to attend, which Clarke said would be helpful.

8. Adjourn

As there was no further discussion, Bender motioned to adjourn, seconded by Fausel. Hearing no objection Clarke closed the meeting at 8:25 PM. The next PC meeting will be on 7/2/25.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Clarke