

9.17.25 meeting minutes PC

This meeting was conducted remotely.

Members present: Alison Anand, Ian Bender, Virginia Clarke, Mark Fausel

Members absent: Rebecca Connell (*2 vacancies*)

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

1. Welcome

Clarke welcomed the PC members and others, and opened the meeting at 7 pm.

2. Review agenda and public comment on non-agenda items

As there were no changes to the agenda, the meeting continued as posted. There was no public comment.

3. Review minutes of 9.3.25 meeting

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

4. Nominate Dante DeNault as Acting Zoning Administrator

DeNault has been working with Osborne on zoning administrative issues, and Osborne reports that he is doing well. Fausel motioned to recommend De Nault to the Selectboard for the position of Acting Zoning Administrator. Anand seconded the motion. In discussing the motion, Osborne confirmed that DeNault would be able to act in this capacity under the direction of the Town Manager when he, Osborne, the official Zoning Administrator, was not available. Osborne is currently mentoring DeNault as he becomes familiar with the job. The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, so the motion passed unanimously, and Osborne said he would forward it to the SB for their next meeting.

5. Town Plan 2026

Clarke opened the discussion by saying that the next few months were crucial if the new Town Plan was to be voted on at Town Meeting 2026, and so the PC and the Steering Committee (TPSC) needed to devote all their time and energy to the project instead of other zoning work. The question currently at issue is the frequent appearance of the word “streamline” in the P & Z context throughout the proposed Plan sections. The streamline term has no universal and agreed-upon meaning, so Clarke said that she and Osborne had come up with a list of specific actions that would improve the zoning process, and would have obvious meanings. The new Economic Development and the Community Development sections were used as examples of the vague use of the word “streamline” in the goals/actions. The list that was generated and discussed was as follows:

Actions:

1. Strengthen the DRB’s Rules and Procedures with a focus on:
 - a. performing site plan visits and reviewing site plan portion of applications
 - b. staying current on new state statutes

- c. improving communication with Planning Commission and staff on newly adopted zoning regulations
 - d. reviewing conditional use application procedures to improve outcomes for applicants and the Town by allowing for broader use of administrative approval
2. Continue to revise the Planning and Zoning information on the Town's website to make it more user- friendly and clear
 3. Revise the Subdivision Regulations to allow for "major" and "minor" subdivisions and other changes
 4. Revise the Zoning Regulations to provide clear development standards for infill development (such as 3-4 unit multi-family projects) to allow for administrative approval
 5. Incorporate "internal planning policies" into initial instructions given to applicants to provide them with full information at the start of a project
 6. Provide applicants with a comprehensive list of the state permits that will be required for their particular project, and indicate when, in the municipal review process, each permit will be required
 7. Educate town residents that "character of the neighborhood" may not be used to appeal affordable housing projects
 8. Ensure that zoning regulations have adequate development standards for DRB review of applicable projects in the Tier 1b overlay district

Osborne discussed which entity would be responsible for these improvements – some the DRB, others the PC or the P & Z staff. He also described what would be involved with each item. Clarke said these would help both the applicant and the Town work towards better outcomes by improving the procedures, raising awareness and improving communication. Fausel said he thought these goals/actions were a good idea. Clarke suggested that the Community Development section Goal 6 "Efficient and Effective Town Government" would be a good place to list these improvements, and that all the other sections that wanted to talk about somehow making the P & Z process better could refer to that section.

Fausel questioned the Tier 1b overlay district which the SB had approved, and Clarke described the support which this idea had received from the Housing Committee, CCRPC and the public. Clarke said that this meant that the PC should make sure our zoning regulations were adequate to review projects of up to 50 units that were exempt from Act 250 review. Osborne reported that Buttermilk had received the exemption, and was working on adding a possible 7 units to their building 1. Clarke said we should keep track of this "pilot" Tier 1b case, to see what was working and what was not working for future instances of the exemption. In answer to Fausel's question about #7, Clarke said she would double-check that this was only applicable to affordable housing projects, and that this was passed by the legislature as one of several efforts to enable more affordable housing. She also said such buildings would have to meet our municipal multi-family housing standards.

Clarke then described some additional features in the new Plan sections. She requested that the PC's next meeting, scheduled for 10.1.25 be turned over to the TPSC instead, as we still had a lot of sections left to review. The PC would be welcome to attend, of course.

The PC's 10.15.25 meeting will hopefully be a PC review and approval of all the new sections that will be presented to the SB and the public on 11.4.25. Clarke said she would try to get the sections to the PC as soon they became ready, so everyone wouldn't have too much to read all at once. The sections will for the moment be only available digitally. The PC is encouraged to attend the SB's hearing. The TPSC will then have about one month to review the comments from that meeting before the SB votes to approve the Plan for Town Meeting in March. When the full initial public draft is ready, there will be some hard copies available, if anyone wants one. CCRPC will assist in making the maps., including the Tier 1b Overlay District consisting of the municipal water and sewer district, and the new FLU map.

Clarke also mentioned that there were several reasons to have amenities at the presentation that were simpler than Rebecca's BBQ. There was some uneasiness about an outside organization funding the food, and about the lack of knowing how many people might attend and the distraction of complex food. Childcare would also likely not be needed at that hour of the evening. Clarke suggested just desserts and coffee/tea catered locally in Richmond.

7, 8. Adjourn

As there were no further updates, other business or discussions, Bender motioned to adjourn and Fausel seconded. As there were no objections, Clarke adjourned the meeting at 8:20 pm.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Clarke