

1.7.26 meeting minutes PC

This meeting was held remotely.

Members present: Ian Bender, Chelsye Brooks, Virginia Clarke, Mark Fausel

Members absent: Alison Anand, Rebecca Connell (*one vacancy*)

Others present: Keith Oborne (Director of Planning and Zoning), Tom Astle (MMCTV),
Marcy Harding, Trevor Brooks

1. Welcome

Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM, and welcomed members and guests.

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

As there were no changes to the agenda and no public comments at this time, the meeting proceeded with the posted agenda.

3. Review minutes of 12.17.25 meeting

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

4. and 5. Debrief of 1.5.26 Selectboard Public Hearing and review of “Final Draft” of Town Plan 2026

Clarke began by reporting that the SB had approved the Second Draft and the amendments presented, saying that these will be consolidated into a Third Draft which will be reviewed at the SB's 1.21.26 Public Hearing. If this is approved, the Plan will be put on the ballot for a town-wide vote at Town Meeting. The final step is a vote of approval by CCRPC after the Plan is approved by the voters. As the preliminary vote by the CCRPC Planning Committee (PAC) was positive, this is likely to be approved by the full board if it survives the Town-wide vote.

Responding to a question from Bender about public opposition, Clarke, Oborne and Brooks reported that Mary Houle had expressed concerns about her property being in the Rural Conservation area, and that this might prevent her from utilizing her land as she might wish. Clarke reiterated that the FLU map is not a zoning map, but a map that shows where the natural resources are in Richmond, and that development in these areas should be done carefully to protect those resources.

Marcy Harding then said that while the FLU map is not a zoning map, the zoning map should ultimately match the Town Plan language, and that the municipal plan is, in fact, regulatory by way of the Act 250 process. Because of this, Harding faulted Judy Rosovsky, Chair of the Conservation Commission, for saying that the FLU map is not regulatory. Harding also said that the language around protecting the natural resources was going to be interpreted in a definitive and strict sense, which might not allow for some types of development in areas with natural resources. Clarke said that the definition of the word

“compatible” has not been fully established, but we could imagine some development being compatible with natural resources. Oborne concurred that the Town FLU map is not locally regulatory, but does have a regional effect through Act 250 for revisions

Clarke said there will be more discussion and revision of the FLU map, and that the Plan has allowed for this both in the narrative and Action items. Amendments are possible at any time; they may be due to parcel boundary changes, regional revisions, new tax maps and other factors. She said compromises will likely have to be made, as the state has become more interested in preserving our natural resources, and this may come up against what people want to do with their land, and about how to prioritize the demands that we make on our environment. There is also a lot of overlap in the definitions of the different “rural” areas, so there will be lots of discussion about these labels.

Oborne and Clarke said the new Third Draft will be ready soon and will be linked to the PC and the TPSC webpages. Oborne said a bit more “scrubbing” and formatting should be completed within a few days, but that the document is in good shape.

6. Other business

Clarke said that recruitment to fill the vacancies on the PC and the Housing Committee were high on her to-do list. Harding declined a seat on the PC, while Fausel acknowledged her previous contributions to planning. Current lack of engagement and its possible causes was discussed, with complexity of the issues, political distractions, glacial pace of change, lack of solutions and finances, and social media among other reasons suggested for disengagement. Oborne said regional planners were reporting the same problem from around the county. Other issues that the PC needs to work on include:

- Updating the subdivision regulations to match the changes the PC made to the zoning ordinance regarding replacing the “master development plan” with “critical permit condition” language;
- Updating Village Commercial (VC) and Village Residential/Commercial (V R/C) districts to meet the requirements of Acts 47/181 in terms of density etc. Allowing residential uses (likely mixed use PUD’s) should be considered in the commercial districts as well;
- Adding the Round Church Corners Complex area to the Village Commercial district;
- Possibly increasing the town-wide building height limitation by one story to allow for more residential units;
- Discussing and defining “trail” vs “recreation path” so that it is clear what is being talked about, and what regulations might be needed, with Brooks suggesting researching statutory definition for the words, and also a look at what neighboring towns might be doing regarding this issue;
- Researching short-term rentals.

use also suggested that we develop a list of technical changes in the ordinances that need cleaning up, and also that we get our new ZA, Dante DeNault, involved in providing feedback from the DRB. Fausel also suggested that stormwater management and short-term rentals would be good things to tackle. Bender wondered how much time would be available for doing these new tasks. Oborne said he wanted to make sure DeNault was completely up to speed on the zoning work before getting him too involved on the planning side.

Oborne also lent support to the idea of working on stormwater issues, since those problems will only worsen as we allow more housing density and impervious surfaces. Oborne said that all we have now is an internal policy regarding erosion and sedimentation, and that stormwater issues are really important. He mentioned that this might be a good use for some of our \$10,000 planning funds, as we may need engineering help with this. Oborne also reported that our application for a traffic study at the Bridge St / Jolina Court intersection in reference to full build-out was approved by CCRPC for the summer/fall of 2026. This study will likely be funded by our dues already paid to regional planning. Bender suggested rolling a driveway study into that project.

Brooks suggested that having a predetermined zoning project would be helpful for recruitment, and she thought that stormwater management was a good place to start. Oborne concurred that stormwater is a priority for the Town. Brooks also expressed interest in cleaning up inconsistencies in our various documents. Clarke suggested keeping a running list of inconsistencies that we come across. Fausel concurred with the idea of cleaning up the details of the documents, and suggested that everyone's list of "errata" or "minutia" be shared at the Feb 4th PC meeting.

For recruitment, Brooks suggest trails as a second item after stormwater, as some of the management practices we might recommend might overlap with the two topics, and interest in trails has already been shown. She said that maybe the Housing Committee could be involved in looking into whether short-term rentals were a problem in Richmond. The PC settled on stormwater and trails for upcoming work.

7. Adjourn

As there was no further discussion, Fausel motioned to adjourn, seconded by Bender. Clarke then suggested that PC members attend the SB's Town Plan hearing on Jan 21st, instead of a PC meeting that will not be scheduled. In further discussion, Brooks suggested that the PC might want to keep an eye on state wastewater permit applications from Richmond by way of the Environmental Notice Bulletin (NB), which would give us an understanding of what folks are planning and allow us to comment if necessary before town permits are issued. Clarke suggested that the PC might want to have an in-person meeting at some point. As there was no objection to adjournment, Clarke thanked the attendees and closed the meeting at 8:33 PM.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Clarke