

Richmond Planning Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR September 21, 2022

Members Present:	Virginia Clarke, Lisa Miller, Mark Fausel, Joy Reap, Chris Granda, Alison Anand,
Members Absent:	Chris Cole, Dan Mullen
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Erin Wagg (MMCTV), Jay Furr

1. Welcome and troubleshooting

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:14pm.

2. Review of the agenda and adjustments to the agenda

Clarke reviewed the meeting agenda. Joy Reap asked if there would be a procedural issue since she is unable to vote on the Gateway Residential/Commercial District items. Venkataraman reviewed voting procedure, noting that a quorum of votes is needed for motions to pass.

Chris Granda suggested further discussion on how the commission is addressing the issues surrounding dollar stores. Clarke said that a solution is in the meeting materials and will be discussed later.

3. Public Comment for non-agenda items

None

4. Approval of Minutes

No comments. The minutes were accepted into the record as written.

5. Finalize and vote on the Village Residential/Commercial District and Gateway Residential/Commercial District; and finalize and vote on Tangential Amendments (Multifamily Dwelling Standards, Definitions, Site Plan Review, Multiple Uses on Single Lots, Parking, Powered Vehicle/Machinery Repair Use Standards, Non-Developable Portions)

Clarke overviewed why the commission is considering both districts simultaneously. Clarke reviewed the changes to the draft Village Residential/Commercial District map. Granda said he did not understand the rationale for the current changes to not rezone the parcels on the east side of Jericho Road between the road and I-89. Mark Fausel concurred.

Clarke said that to resolve the questions regarding dollar stores, the proposal includes two types of retail uses—"Retail, Large Scale" for retail uses greater than 5000 square feet and "Retail, Village Scale" for retail uses less than or equal to 5000 square feet. Granda said that these definitions do not completely remove dollar stores as a possibility to exist in the town. Clarke said that yes, per these definitions, a dollar

store could exist in town in locations that allow for large-scale retail uses, and the Richmond Market would be considered a large-scale retail use. Granda said that regulating dollar stores by size is generally not considered effective, and that the presence of dollar stores in general would have a deleterious effect on local businesses and local grocery stores. Granda suggested creating a definition for “program retailers”. Alison Anand concurred, and highlighted that considerations should be made for protecting local businesses. Granda noted that this is a concern the Selectboard would raise during public hearings. Clarke said that she thought the 5,000 square foot limit would deter dollar stores from establishing. Granda said that a 5,000 square foot limit may not be enough to limit dollar stores. Clarke said that this may need to be returned to at a later time, and that the commission will need to come up with a solution that is legal. Venkataraman said that the solution may be simpler than the commission is thinking, that the commission could create another use category for grocery stores in which 15 percent of the floor area is devoted to fresh produce, and that it could exclude the sales of foods for retail. Venkataraman added that from a practicality standpoint, the likelihood of a dollar store establishing in the village is unlikely because of the small lots and the amount of space needed for dollar stores. Lisa Miller asked if additional language is needed or would the definitions suffice. Venkataraman said that as long as the definitions are explicit and specific, it would be sufficient. Jay Furr said that based on his research the commission should allow for 15 percent of the floor space to be devoted to produce, dairy or meats, and discussed dispersal restrictions. Clarke asked Venkataraman if this grocery store use should be allowed in the Village Residential/Commercial District. Venkataraman said ideally yes it should be allowed. Clarke asked Furr about the dispersal restrictions. Furr said that the dispersal restrictions are applicable in large cities, and rather, in small towns, regulations specify that grocery stores sell X percent of floor space of produce, dairy and meats. Miller suggested making the small-scale limit smaller than 5,000 square feet. Fausel said that he wouldn’t want to further constrain retail uses, and that the commission should be concerned about scaling grocery stores within the village.

Clarke asked if the commission wanted to exclude food wholly from village-scale retail uses and pharmacy uses. Fausel said that pharmacies selling non-perishable foods as an accessory use is acceptable. Reap said that based on her experience, a pharmacy is not interested in siting a store in Richmond because of the existence of pharmacies in the nearby towns, and that having competition for grocery stores would be good for the local economy. Fausel suggested creating large-scale and village-scale grocery store categories, and removing sales of food from retail uses. Miller concurred with this suggestion.

Clarke said that based on the ongoing discussions, further discussions are needed before the commission can vote to hold a public hearing. Fausel recommended creating a use category for grocery stores, requiring grocery store uses to have 15 percent of the floor space for produce, dairy and meat, allowing village-scale grocery stores in the Village Residential/Commercial District, and specifying that food sales is not allowed for retail uses. Clarke said that definitions for grocery store uses will be formulated and presented at a later meeting.

Clarke reviewed the use standards for Powered Vehicle and/or Machinery Service uses, and said that the standards were created based on comments Venkataraman and she has received about the incompatibility of the use in the village. Clarke asked the commission if these standards are adequate or if the use should be removed from the Village Residential/Commercial District. Reap said the proposed standards are good. Granda asked if these standards would allow for car rental uses. Clarke said that that use would be automobile sales uses.

Clarke reviewed the draft Village Residential/Commercial District regulations.

Clarke reviewed the draft Gateway Residential/Commercial District regulations. Reap pointed out that based on past experiences and with the current draft of hotel or motel uses, a hotel may not be allowed to have a restaurant if the hotel is in the Gateway Residential/Commercial District. Clarke said the hotel or motel use definitions will be reviewed with the review of the new and revised definitions.

Clarke reviewed all the proposed definitions. Clarke suggested removing “as long as standard restaurant uses are allowed in the district” from the Hotel or Motel use definition. Clarke asked if commission members would like to include Hotel or Motel uses, compared to Inn uses, in the Village Residential/Commercial District. Fausel said that Hotel or Motel uses would not fit with the character of the village, compared to Inn uses. Clarke reviewed the definition of Light Manufacturing. Reap asked Venkataraman if Business Yard uses are allowed to be outside. Venkataraman said from his understanding, yes. Reap said that not allowing outdoor storage for her light manufacturing use would impede her operations. Reap suggested revising the definition to state that accessory uses must be screened. Clarke asked if the Business Yard use definition includes screening. Venkataraman said it does not, but that he expects the DRB to place screening requirements for such uses. Clarke asked about the nature of Reap’s outdoor storage. Reap noted the scrap metal bins, and, sometimes, products ready for shipment. Clarke said the new revision will state that customary accessory uses are fully screened from view.

Clarke reviewed the revision to Personal Service uses, the uses slated for removal, multifamily dwelling use standards. Reap suggested allowing landscaping to be used for the screening of trash bins. Fausel said that that sounded reasonable.

Granda left the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Clarke discussed the commission’s options for voting for a public hearing. Fausel suggested holding a special meeting to vote on the proposed amendments, finalizing the definitions, and then vote to hold a public meeting on November 2, 2022. Venkataraman said that the commission could meet on September 26, 2022, and he would be able to publish a hearing notice for the October 19, 2022 meeting. The commission decided to hold a meeting on Monday, September 26, 2022 at 7:30 pm.

6. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Motion by Reap, seconded by Fausel, to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner