

Monthly Director Report

Town of Richmond Planning and Zoning

January 2024

The following report recaps the various responsibilities and duties carried out by the Town of Richmond Department of Planning and Zoning for the dates listed above. The Director staffs three committees (RPC, RTC, RHC) and supports other boards when needed (RCC, SB, etc.). The Zoning Administrator staffs the DRB, supports other boards and committees as needed and is the day-to-day public conduit for development, permitting, flood plain management and all items related to zoning. **Any opinions, perceived or not, are solely my own.**

General Report

Planning Commission (RPC)

- Meetings attended: **Jan. 3, Jan. 17**
- Please see Chair update on Richmond Planning Commissions homepage.
- Zoning Amendments for the Industrial Commercial (I/C) District and PUD Language:
 - **Public Hearing for Selectboard consideration can be expected in March for zoning revisions to both the IC District and PUD language.**
 - **Legal comment completed.**
 - The purpose is to reduce the regulatory barriers with regards to residential uses in the district for parcels that have a current residential use through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process.
 - **To clarify and strengthen the language associated with Planned Unit Development, specifically to the Master Development Plan requirements and the opaqueness of the section.**
- **Incorporation of Act 47 (S.100) in the RZR. The focus is heading towards the inclusion of Act 47 into the RZA as a “technical” revision.**
- **RPC 1/3 - Focus**
 - **Introduction of Critical Permit Conditions to replace the Master Development Plan.**
 - **Continued discussion on I/C District revisions. Reluctance by members of the public to strengthen and clarify the PUD process is a bit perplexing.**
 - **Buttermilk density request continued discussion.**
- **RPC 1/17**
 - **Buttermilk density request continued discussion. This appears to be reaching a point of inflection with regards to a decision on the request. Work will begin on promulgating revisions and entering into negotiations with Buttermilk on housing types, amenities, oversight, etc. Please see PC minutes and video for in-depth information.**
 - **The Buttermilk discussions are a priority for both my office and the PC, specifically the need for workforce housing and units that are affordable (80% AMI). I implore any and all members of the Selectboard and public to reach out to my office for clarity on our approach.**

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- **Village Residential District (VRN) language to be reviewed at the February meetings with the ultimate goal of moving RZR revision forward as soon as possible.**
- **Industrial Commercial District (I/C) revision reviewed by counsel and the table is set to begin the formal process to amend the RZR.**
- Please see past minutes for additional information

Transportation Committee (RTC)

- Meetings attended: **1/9, 1/23**
- **RTC 1/9:**
 - **In-progress project update:**
 - **WSP-Cochran Road Update. Scope of work completed.**
 - **THBC Intersection – Preferred alternatives to be forwarded to SB in late February.**
 - **General Updates:**
 - **Upper Bridge Street – Funding set and design work has commenced, and concepts can be expected sometime in April.**
 - **Lower Bridge Street - Status meeting on Jan. 9**
 - **Gateway Scoping – Final draft be presented at the second Feb. meeting.**
- **RTC 1/23 – No meeting due to lack of quorum**
- Please see past minutes for additional information.

Housing Committee (RHC)

- Meetings attended: **Jan. 24 (no quorum), Jan. 31**
- RHC 1/31
 - **Browns Court Housing and participation in Town Meeting Day**
- Please see past minutes for additional information

Zoning Administration and Development Review Board (DRB)

- Meetings attended by Tyler Machia: None
- Since 1/1/24:
 - 5 Zoning permits issued.
 - New Housing: 1 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's).
 - DRB applications (Subdivision, Conditional Use Review and Site Plan): None
- Enforcement Actions in progress: 0.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRCP)

- Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) attended: **Jan. 2**
- Planning Advisory Committee meeting attended: **Jan. 10**
- Official Map info, please see link below:
 - [Official Map \(vpic.info\)](http://vpic.info) (Press Ctrl and click mouse)

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Additional Comments

New Comments:

- **Jolina Court/Buttermilk Discussions:** As alluded, discussion have progressed to the point that there appears to be some “appetite” to increase the density for the district to assist with the housing crises. Any increase in density will be accompanied by discussions and negotiations that will benefit the town and not only the developer. The Planning Office is supportive of an increase in housing and in my opinion, there is an opportunity here to make substantive progress on the housing front, specifically workforce housing and housing that is relatively affordable. As in life, change can be threatening but doesn’t have to be.
- Other avenues to increase housing stock include infill development. Infill development includes accessory dwelling units, single family conversions to multi-family, and expansion of existing housing stock. Please note that there are consequences to this approach of which stormwater, quality of life and privacy are at the forefront.
- The Planning Commission is working on revisions to the RZR to promote additional housing and realizes that there are several avenues to take in this regard. Increased density (Act 47 took care of that), promoting the above-mentioned infill development, constituent education on what is allowed as well as approaches to Senior Housing and Age in Place retrofits.
- The Housing Committee appears to be stepping up the educational approach and should have a plan in place in the coming months on this front.
- Concerning the issue of Affordable Housing, it is my take that this is not an insurmountable task but one that requires the understanding that to make AH work, there has to be services and infrastructure in place for it to succeed. The town has multiple challenges on this front, not the least of which is property to place this type of development at scale.
- Finally on the Housing issue, the approach of promoting affordable ownership is beginning to take shape.
- **Recreation** - Consideration to establishing a recreational staff position to support the disparate committees (Recreation, Trails, ACF, VG/BC, etc.) and manage communications and town recreational infrastructure. *It should also be noted that most development activities of these committees fall under the RZR and require ZA review, something that appears to be a surprise to most.*

Past Comments (to be recycled and revised in time):

- The P&Z office is instituting systems to
- **Long term** – Please see entry under the Planning Commission for ACT 47. The zoning regulations are in need of updating with concern to a technical and housekeeping point of view. Technical fixes such as state statutes (see: Act 164 Cannabis, Act 179 Affordable Housing, Act 143 - Accessory On-Farm Businesses, Act 47 or S.100, etc.) are required and along with general housekeeping (typos, duplicate definitions, format, etc.) these issues can be addressed

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separately from zoning amendments. The process is the same for both amendments and technical fixes, but the subject matter is not.

- **Give me a “hallelujah” if you made it this far. Email is fine.**
- Embedded Link to TOR A-250 permit database [Link Here](#) (Press Ctrl and click mouse)

Abbreviations used in this report: ARPA = American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; CCRPC = Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; D&K = Dubois and King; GMT=Green Mountain Transit; PPL = Project Pipeline Document; RTC = Richmond Transportation Committee; RVC=Riverview Commons; SB = Selectboard; TAP=Transportation Alternatives Program; THBC = intersection of Thompson Rd, Huntington Rd, Bridge St, and Cochran Rd; UPWP = Unified Planning Work Program; VDH = VT Dept. of Health; VTRANS=Vermont Agency of Transportation;

Respectfully submitted by Keith Osborne, Director 2/1/2024