

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: August 28, 2024

Time Started: 5:42

Time Ended: 7:03p

Keith Osborne, Host, Town Planner

Present: Virginia Clarke, Mark Hall (Chair), Connie van Eeghen

Guest: (none)

Absent: Nick Blanchet, Andrew Mannix, Matt Parisi (now also on DRB)

Committee is approved at 5 members, 2 alternates (5/16/22); quorum is 3

1. Welcome and troubleshooting
2. Adjustments to Agenda – add an update from the Planning Commission
3. Approval of the July 24, 2024 meeting minutes
 - a. Accepted with the following additions to the summary of what we learned from the Hinesburg Affordable Housing Committee
 - i. Develop a realistic process, with the DRB committee, zoning regulations, related committees – where there is support for community input and the regulations and process are aligned
 - ii. Create a plan for slow, continuing growth, using a structured process that ensures that rentals or equity program provide value to the residents and continued low barriers to housing for the community, in the context of the current market.
 - iii. Streamline fee schedules for additional inclusionary housing (does this work for Richmond projects?)
 - iv. Make the process as easy as possible; some towns are challenging
4. General Updates and discussion – Committee
 - a. Following up on the July 24 meeting suggestions:
 - i. Our committee can benefit from deciding if we have focus on more affordable housing, or more housing of all kinds. Hinesburg has a champion for affordable housing and has made that commitment for many years in order to make a difference in that community.
 - ii. We are in the beginning of this process. Perhaps we can start on “more housing” (workforce housing; subsidized housing) and work towards “more affordable housing.”
 - iii. For example, Gary Bressor’s recommendation is to support small houses, or we can support multi-family housing or senior housing.
 - iv. What are the opportunities for expanding the water/sewer system up Jericho Rd; to be continued with Andrew Mannix.
 - b. Planning Commission update – Virginia
 - i. Jolina Court development:
 1. Is this an opportunity for inclusionary zoning, in which there are a required number of units statutorily affordable (based on tenant actual incomes)? The Planning Commission does not have a model for this for Richmond, and the developer is not interested, and believes they cannot get financing for restricted rental income.
 2. PC considered increasing the density from 15 units/acre (45 units max) to a higher density. Other PC members proposed alternatives, such as more parking (5 more parking spaces for each additional unit).
 3. Current compromise: allow more density if certain requirements are met, e.g. for every Affordable Housing unit, increased density by 4 market rate units. The developer could choose to create bigger units for more rent income, and stay with 31 units in Building 2. There is a mix of opinions about whether more units (more density) is desirable.
 - a. Bonnie is in favor of inclusionary zoning but the developer so far is not willing
 - b. Alex, Town Planner in Hinesburg, recommends including inclusionary zoning in the Town Plan to make this work. It took Hinesburg several years to figure this out: a particular circumstance in which the growth area of the town doubled and in which the public took an interest.
 4. The PC has to decide on its priorities
 5. Act 47: any development in the water and sewer service area over whatever number of units that the town decides is the minimum size, if 20% of those units are “affordable”

(would be 12 units out of 60 units for the Buttermilk project), then greater density and an additional story is allowed. The PC is trying to figure out how to make an optional version of this idea (aka a “density bonus”) attractive enough for the developer to act on in order to increase housing and affordable housing.

6. Building 1 was built to a different standard and may need to be revisited regarding the requirement for commercial space. Commercial space will still be required for any building directly facing Bridge St in the current proposed zoning.
 7. Next PC committee: determine what the offer will be to the developer and finalize. The developer will then take the lead on what they are willing to do in the number of housing units and additional amenities for the space.
 - a. The Housing Committee will wait until after the next PC meeting to determine how best to provide support based on its committee goals/mission of more housing in Richmond that is more affordable
 - ii. Village Residential Neighborhood zoning: introducing multi-family housing in Village neighborhoods (e.g. Tilden Ave). Per state law (Act 47), we must raise density to 5 units/acre (the minimum required), most likely supported by in-fill. Neighborhood residents appear to be OK with this; ready to go to Selectboard for public hearing. Housing Committee can support this as a way to promote more housing and comply with state law. The SB will hear about this at their next meeting, on Tues, Sept 3.
 1. The State would like to remove any maximum density limits in the future; this has not been planned for Richmond.
 2. Could consider changing building height limits above 35’, although there are issues related to sunlight exposure, “urban-ness”, and others. One additional story may be doable, especially if 20% of those units are affordable (as per state law).
 - iii. Town Plan needs to be renewed in 2026. Housing Committee could work on the housing requirements, based on new State requirements, e.g. a plan for affordable housing. We will need outreach and educational work to build voter support for this new plan. Each section will need to be reviewed with respect to new state laws. Issues: housing, energy, conserving agricultural and forest land. Housing section could be in purview of Housing Committee.
 - iv. Flood hazard zoning regulations: how they affect existing structures in the flood plain, e.g. moving the play structure, and installing a handicap accessible bathroom, to the space near the band structure on top of the grass covered knoll.
 1. The band shell must stay a band shell, but could be relocated, re-oriented or made smaller.
 2. Esplanade owners in the flood plain must still be able to work on their properties.
 - c. Committee priorities and focus through 2024 - Refine
 - i. Our future priorities and focus will be influenced by the activities discussed at the Planning Commission.
 - ii. This work will need to be based on our ability to help “affordable housing entities” invest in projects and to learn what is enticing to developers.
 - iii. We need to set the environment/pathway for subsidized housing in Richmond
 - d. Continue building out Chair Hall’s doc.
 - i. https://richmondvt-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/koborne_richmondvt_gov/EZy7-HIYOWtFo_94MfoHmcEBS3Qm33KEI7tiMRO9MvhBLA?rttime=fJtpju7F3Eg
 - ii. Andrew to talk with Bard Hill about past efforts to expand W/S systems
 - iii. Mark added to subsidized housing assistance programs (see above SharePoint document)
5. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment
- a. Next meeting: September 26 at 5:30p – 7:00p
 - b. Proposed agenda to include: update on Jolina Court, update on Village Residential Neighborhood public hearing and how to support, strategy document development. Future agenda: Town Plan, Housing Section review (we will need to do some homework ahead of time)
 - c. Agreed to adjourn at: 7:03p