

Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: November 14, 2024 @ 7p

Time Started: 7:04p

Time Ended: 8:29p

Keith Osborne, Host, Town Planner (absent)

Present: Nick Blanchet, Virginia Clarke, Mark Hall (Chair), Andrew Mannix, Connie van Eeghen

Guest: Eric Thomas (community member interested in housing)

Absent: Matt Parisi

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

1. Welcome and troubleshooting 0:00
2. Adjustments to Agenda – none 0:01 (minutes into the meeting)
3. Approval of the October 30, 2024 meeting minutes 0:02
 - a. Accepted as written
4. Findings from research on water and sewer district related to housing – Andrew 0:03
 - a. There are many factors, processes and systems
 - b. There is a very large allocation amount available at the sewage treatment plant, which is an asset: currently less than 60% capacity, sometimes 40%
 - c. Few barriers to expansion, except for geographic barriers and current method of financing water and sewer line extensions, which relies entirely on new customers (not current customers) paying the entire cost
 - d. No current discussions by the Water and Sewer District about the Gateway, and no developers have found reasonable options in multiple discussions over the last 10 years
 - i. Complicated process to apply for and expand to serve more properties.
 - ii. Decision is controlled by current users of the water district, e.g. expansion into Southview or Mary Drive; current users must approve before any further decision making is possible
 1. Any cost would be born by the new homes, which is a large amount (~150K/house)
 - e. Other districts don't put the decision solely in the hands of the users and don't require new homes to bear the full cost; more of a "common good" approach
 - i. Our system of financing would need significant changes
 - ii. Zoning laws could support a change by allowing greater residential density, spreading the cost out among more new customers
 - f. At 80% of septic system failures in an area, system is required to make a change, such as to a municipal system; currently at 40%
 - i. Would need a partner interested in taking on the risk for future return
 - g. Would it be possible to change the decision making rules governing the water and sewer system
 - i. May need an educational campaign and a town commitment to help make a change to the Water and Sewer District bylaws
 - ii. We need to prepare for a time when capital investment is needed
 - iii. Note that the Water and Sewer District expansion into the Gateway was approved by the voters; but the actual extension of the water and sewer lines was not due to high cost
 - iv. A private partner with land and capital might generate the number of units needed to provide a large enough base to share the costs of water/sewer system expansion
 - v. Summary:
 1. Bylaws don't make it easy to expand due to costs
 2. This is not currently on the radar for the Water and Sewer Commission
 3. Not sure what the capacity of the Town well is
 4. New reservoir tank on Jericho Rd north of the Interstate overpass has excess capacity to support water for fire pumper trucks
 5. An unresolved problem exists involving a private spur off the north end of the sewer system (at School Street) on the property of the School District, which is said to be leaking; not yet addressed by either the Town or the School District. This problem has hindered the potential extension of the sewer line to the Reap property in the Gateway.

- h. Septic systems outside of the Village
 - i. Starting 2006, ~25 fully permitted waste water systems, out of several thousand housing units (note that some systems are grandfathered outside of the permitting process)
 - ii. Housing stock in Richmond ~60 years old
 - 1. Many of these have aging or failing septic systems
 - 2. Owners not aware
 - 3. Increased rains worsen this problem
 - 4. If the problem gets bad enough in a particular area, feds will provide \$\$ for water/sewer system repair/replacement (6-7 homes in Southview also have dry well problems)
 - i. Town Plan can include this issue
 - i. Through the zoning ordinance : a residential bonus program could be developed, in which the ability to build more dwelling units than would otherwise be allowed could be given to a developer in exchange for payment into a fund for the extension of municipal water and sewer lines
 - ii. Past large minimum acre lot sizes are getting smaller to encourage more housing, potentially resulting in lots not large enough to include a well and a septic system, but allowing greater density which might require a municipal system
 - iii. Might take 30 years to bring water, sewer, and housing requirements together to improve Richmond's growth potential through the mechanism of expanding municipal water and sewer service
 - j. What recommendations that include the multiple parts of the housing/water/sewer system needs can we make, that includes the costs/benefits
 - i. Bylaws for Water/Sewer system – a change might not be needed, but could be helpful, especially if there will be large costs to maintain the current system in the future for the current relatively small number of customers
 - ii. Zoning related to density – a key factor
 - 1. Act 45: .2 minimum lot size
 - 2. Act 181: the minimum lot size must allow a duplex or 3-4 family unit building
 - iii. Relationships with owners as potential developers with a 30-year time horizon
 - iv. Focus on specific area (e.g. Gateway, with close access to Interstate and potential for connecting to other neighborhoods; or the Farr Farm's 30 acres on east side)
 - k. Next steps: Andrew will update the "Strategies" document, bottom of page 1 at:
 - i. https://richmondvt-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/koborne_richmondvt_gov/EZy7-HIYOWtFo_94MfoHmcEBS3Qm33KEI7tiMRO9MvhBLA?rtime=p8ooWKam3Eg&wdLOR=cCADC73A3-9090-4BF2-94D5-640D4A55B829
5. Review an update the housing charter for 2025 and update goals ([2024 Document](#)) – Mark 1:12
- a. Review of current document, found at:
 - i. https://richmondvt-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/koborne_richmondvt_gov/EfsfS0toZF5Mk9jpB7TUI3ABODjd6kcbfRMP5n-n0Oitog?rtime=oXHYwggF3Ug
 - b. New additions to short term goals:
 - i. Present strategy document to PC and/or SB
 - ii. Update housing inventory data
 - iii. Housing section of Town plan
 - c. Long term goals – no change needed
6. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment – Mark 1:22
- a. Next meeting: Thursday, December 12 @ 5:30p
 - b. Proposed agenda to include: Strategy document, Community Support and Outreach section; Town Plan as related to Housing
 - c. Agreed to adjourn at: 8:29 pm