

## Town of Richmond Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: March 26, 2025

Time Started: 5:42p

Time Ended: 6:56p

Keith Osborne, Host, Town Planner

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

Guest: Melanie Needle , CCRPC (GIS/IT manager), Maya Balassa, CCRPC (Planner)

Absent: (none)

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

1. Welcome and troubleshooting (0:00:00)
  - a. Welcome to our new committee member, Mairead O'Reilly! Introductions all around...
2. Adjustments to Agenda – none (0:05:00)
3. Approval of the February 18, 2025 meeting minutes (0:06:00)
  - a. Accepted as written
4. CCRPC Visit: Maya Balassa: Future Land Use, Act 181 and Housing Targets (0:06:30)
  - a. Presentation
    - i. Act 181 Purpose – reformed Act 250 to maintain historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside: “smart growth”
      1. Modernize maps and public investments
      2. New regional plan requirements to accommodate a substantial majority of housing needed with attendance to environmental justice principles
      3. New categories: downtown center, village center, planned growth area, village area, transition , enterprise (like gravel pits and office parks), resource-based recreation (Cochran’s), and four rural areas
        - a. Richmond has a Village Center with a water and wastewater system utility
        - b. Tier 1b: Partial Exemption of 50 residential units/project or less in the first four categories (Downtown to Village Area) – housing only
        - c. Tier 1a: full exemption in those areas – all development projects
        - d. These designation replace previous designations
        - e. The decision to move an area into 1a or 1b made by Selectboard.
          - i. Developer would not have to get an Act 250 permit for such an area
          - ii. Would still need to comply with local zoning ordinances and state stormwater requirements
    4. Approval process:
      - a. Regional Plans and Future Land use Maps
      - b. State Land use Review Board approval
      - c. Opportunity for Tier 1a and 1b exemptions
    - ii. Interim Act 250 Exemptions
      1. All Richmond areas <= 50 units automatically included
      2. Tier 2: Status quo with addition of new Road Rule to reduce sprawl and fragmentation
      3. Tier 3: Expanded jurisdiction to be determined through rulemaking etc.
    - iii. Overview of Permanent Changes and Regional Plan Future Use
      1. S.100 Housing Targets intended to disaggregate regional housing targets or ranges by municipality to provide more flexibility. These targets (draft) will be released on Friday, March 28.
        - a. Not mandates
        - b. Extend to 2050 for some and 2035 for others
        - c. Compliance indicated by inclusion in Town plan, along with conditions that could be met, such as lot size and height standards that permit more dense housing
      2. Housing targets: 60% are assigned to more urban/dense municipalities
    - iv. Housing Maps

1. Richmond's draft regional future land use map indicated a color coded designation of the categories included in the categories defined at the start of the presentation
2. Richmond's current Zoning Maps

b. Discussion

- i. Mark: Does the Draft Regional Future Land use Map mirror what we currently have and the direction that our Planning Commission is already going?
  1. CCRPC: Yes. CCRPC is not dictating what to build but to understand what municipalities are planning to do or considering.
  2. CCRPC: "Planned Growth Areas" are available to use state supported benefits for development, if chosen

ii. Next steps

1. CCRP: Determine if the Selectboard is interested in Tier 1b?
  - a. Mark: Yes, likely interested, for identified areas

iii. Andrew: how fixed are the maps? Will there be a review at a later period?

1. CCRPC: Yes. ECOS plan will be updated every 8 years, once the plan is approved.
  - a. Likely to be adjustments before the 8 year deadline

2. Andrew: do the maps encourage expansion or does it reflect current status? Can the maps be used to highlight expansion opportunities.

- a. CCRPC: it's a balance between what the municipality wants for growth and the housing targets as a conversation targets. Targets will feel high, to help move our state towards its goals.
- b. Andrew: the concept of growth is costly; using the maps could help move folks in the right direction. We have challenges re: a flood zone and mountains; we need support to make the goal visual.

iv. Mark: We need to include this language in the Town Plan with conditions on how to meet targets. Will there be anything more specific to Richmond to demonstrate its progress?

1. CCRPC: We approve the town plan; we don't yet have guidance on how to make the plan operational. Acknowledge that the targets are recent and that progress can't be expected at this point. Maya will get back to us on this.

v. Mark: with Act 181, are there other suggestions on how to update our zoning to be in compliance?

1. CCRPC (Melanie): Act 181 is not saying municipality must update zoning for compliance. Compliance is assessed based on what the Town Plan says. CCRPC is still working this out.
  - a. After the Town Plan, then zoning might change to support the future land use map.
  - b. Richmond's last Land Use Map was in 2017-18. Likely needs to be looked at again.
  - c. Reference to engagement: <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/ecos-regional-plan/ecos-engagement/>
  - d. Reference to map: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/79128f74bcbd4be58f24fc6fe20b27fb?draft=true>
  - e. Please add comments where indicated

vi. For questions, please contact Maya Balassa at [mbalassa@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:mbalassa@ccrpcvt.org)

c. Post presentation

- i. Act 250 is a big hurdle; the exemptions provide new areas to concentrate on to facilitate housing development in Village Centers. Richmond has already been working on this.
  1. Virginia: this information has already been presented to the Planning Commission
    - a. The map drafting process is iterative, and collaborative, with an eventual draft that everyone can agree with
    - b. Agreement on Gateway and Riverside Commons as currently mapped; should they be included for exemptions, to increase the limit from 10 housing units to 50
    - c. Planning Commission has to decide if it is comfortable. Currently, by default we are Tier 1b until this document is finalized

- d. Jolina Court proposed zoning has gone to Selectboard, which if approved, allows action without Act 250 requirements
  - e. Does the Housing Committee support Tier 1b status (abiding by other Town zoning requirements, including density requirements, height allowances, etc.)?
  - f. Map re: Village has been studied, but not the residential areas. Transitional areas (Gateway) and Riverside Commons that is not yet developed, and possible other areas that could be transitional (Farr Farm) are also open for discussion.
2. Andrew: Town bylaws and zoning support housing but not dramatic changes in growth (like a 50 unit building); more likely to develop at the middle of the range, like ~20 units
    - a. Mark: supports Tier 1b for qualified areas
    - b. Andrew: Riverside Commons has additional Sewer/Water requirements that are difficult to achieve
      - i. Put the carrot out there and someone will grab it
    - c. Mark: Downtown, Village, and Planned Growth areas have access to water/sewer. Gateway is transitional and would need water/sewer support and should be referenced in our part of the Town Plan and Strategic Housing Plan
  - ii. Mairead: needs more information:
    1. Does the Planning Committee have capacity to do sufficient review if Act 250 review is removed?
      - a. Mark: We don't know but Keith and Virginia can help us with this.
5. Review Strategic Housing Plan Updates (1:00:00)
    - a. Please review the new section: Community Support & Outreach Plan
    - b. Water & Sewage section (Andrew's) is complete
      - i. Mark has some highlighted areas and comments to finalize
    - c. Zoning Recommendations (Virginia and Nick's) ready for review
    - d. Town Plan – will need to add Housing Targets to be released on Friday
      - i. Please review and add comments or Track Changes
    - e. Mark will make sure folder for RHCWorkingDocs is shared with all
  6. Other business, correspondence, and adjournment (1:11:00)
    - a. Next meeting: April 23, 2025 at 5:30p
    - b. Proposed agenda to include: Town Plan – comments and edits; Strategic Housing Plan comments and edits
    - c. Agreed to adjourn at: 6:56p

Recorded by Connie van Eeghen