



## Economic Development Commission - Richmond, Rhode Island

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Meeting via Zoom  
(401) 539-9000x9 / edcrichmondri@gmail.com

### MINUTES

January 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 at 7:30 pm via zoom

Members in Attendance: William McIntosh, Joe Reddish, Bryan Lebeau, David Woodmansee

Guests in Attendance: Thomas Wallin, Councilperson Nell Carpenter, Councilperson Lauren Cacciola

**CALL TO ORDER** – 7:33PM by Bill McIntosh

### **MINUTES**

1. Approval of minutes from December 13, 2021

*[MOTION to approve the minutes from December 13, 2021 by Joe Reddish, second David Woodmansee, ALL AYE]*

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **1. Richmond Business Guide – determine next step and possible CHS involvement**

- a. Market and advertise local businesses online

-EDC has not yet reached out to CHS.

-WM wanted to put a package together and get pricing first for 200-is QR codes and also needed to know if we have website space to host it.

-JR indicated that it should be on the Town's website in the EDC section and QR codes should be free.

-WM will create a model for CHS to use

-JR feels we should tell them what to do, not how to do it

-DW questioned if each business needs a unique QR or if there would be 1 to get people to the guide and then use location services to put pin the user near the business they are in?

-WM is concerned that business will not want to put up a QR that might send the user to someone else's page/location.

-NC feels that it is a great idea to involve the HS.

#### **2. Update on Empty Buildings/Vacancies**

-WM opened the discussion talking about another business leaving town, Richmond Farms.

-JR clarified that the business is being sold as a turn-key entity and will be run by current owners until sold.

-DW spoke with John Wilson from Taco Republic. They had a variety of reasons for closing including a tough market to find employees, a back injury to a key employee, and a lack of business. They would like to lease the restaurant to someone who wants to give it a run as a taco shop or possibly a breakfast and lunch spot.

#### **3. How to do Business in Richmond Guide – tabled from last month**

-JR suggested that we start reaching out to Josh Comerford as he has started work on the "How-to" guide when he was on the EDC.

-JR made a case for setting up a special meeting and inviting Larry Casey to talk about his recent experiences with another location for Aqua Science that was opened in the Carolinas. It would be helpful to know what he has experienced in other states.

#### 4. Presentation for Council

##### a. Increase business tax base to shift burden from residents

- WM has identified all of the vacancies and is working with planning to determine other available lots
- JR the main thing that needs to be done is to give the planner and planning board a defined goal to increase the business tax base
- NC could not agree more. The newly amended comp plan will be headed to public hearing – there are very specific goals in the plan

##### b. Business Plan for EDC

- JR said that based on recommendation from Council, the presentation should be in the format of a SWOT analysis and presented a template for discussion.
- WM asked for the template to be moved to a cloud drive where he could access it and formulate a first draft for the group to pull apart and work on.
- JR feels there should be measurables for planning, zoning, EDC, etc. in the town charter

#### 5. Joint Meeting with Planning Board – set date?

- WM suggested early March due to travel plans
- JR thinks mid-March will be better
- WM will send a letter to Shaun Lacey to facilitate this meeting

#### 6. Comprehensive Plan Review

##### a. Better wording

- WM: need better wording relating to business relations
- JR: this whole discussion is a moot point if the proposed plan is approved
- [*MOTION to table this item indefinitely, unless the new plan is rejected by the State of Rhode Island made by Joe Reddish, second David Woodmansee, ALL AYE*]

##### b. Improve business relations

#### 7. Develop Plan to Clean Up Main Roads/138

##### a. Blight Housing

- WM acknowledged that it is not just housing, there is a gas station that is boarded up
- JR wondered what could be done legally. What are the existing policies?
- JR propose that the Town Council should have the Admin request state clean-up of 138.
- BL noted that other towns will fine or cite you for poor upkeep of your property
- WM reminded everyone that we need to be careful for elderly residents and poor residents who do not have the means to properly maintain their properties
- NC indicated that Richmond can do nothing
- JR would like to see if the zoning official could have a conversation with the owners in an attempt to motivate them
- WM knows that there are resources that can help, like the Boy Scouts or Habitat for Humanity
- JR would like the EDC to write a letter to Council and ask them to review what can be done going forward
- WM feels that it is more of a Zoning issue than EDC
- JR then suggested that we request Zoning to develop something that could be put into place, possibly an ordinance and agreed to write said letter.

##### b. Town Signage

##### c. Partner with local groups/CHS for Earth Day

- items b & c discussed together
- JR asked if it could be assigned to DPW to clean up the 4 areas containing the “Welcome to Richmond” signs.
- NC feels that is appropriate to ask DPW to do that
- WM would like to get sponsors and proposes that we focus on the back roads leading to and from the transfer station
- JR would like for us to speak with Jim Turek of the conservation commission
- WM asked JR to send Jim’s contact information to him

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Bringing Businesses to Richmond**

#### **a. Marketing currently vacant or underused lots**

-WM is compiling this list

#### **b. What is available in town for commercial growth**

-WM said the EDC should be marketing this list to realtors and the RIEDC

-JR explained that this responsibility is that of Town Council, the Town Planner, and the Town Administrator, and not the EDC

-JR is curious to know if the people listed above even know what/where the vacant commercial lots are located and feels the 2 councilmembers on this call should be requesting this info for council

-LC stated that the comp plan needs to be pushed out to interested parties

-WM reminded us that the plan needs to be approved first, including direction on future plans. What is it that zoning will approve in this space?

-LC said that businesses have a hard getting necessary approvals in town

-JR identified one of Richmond's challenges as having a 'reactive' planning philosophy as opposed to a 'proactive' approach to facilitate applications through the process – submissions are reviewed just before a meeting and planning uses the meeting to tell the applicant what needs to be addressed. The updated submissions are not reviewed for another 2-4 weeks, depending on meeting schedules/agendas.

-WM agreed, explaining that plans are sent to an engineer for review and it is the questions from the engineer that create the back-and-forth. There needs to be a way to streamline this.

#### **i. Opening new lots for commercial business**

-WM discussed how Richmond's most obvious expansion area is Route 3. This is based on traffic, highway access, and most importantly, the ability to incrementally make changes in town without affecting the rural character of the town.

-DW asked if this handcuff's current owner if the land is re-zoned and designated for specific purposes such as a medical building

-WM replied that there are a range of businesses within each designation that are available and that predetermined knowledge that a specific use will be approved will potentially make the property more attractive to developers; but the owners still need to be willing to sell

### **2. Identify Sponsors for Projects for Youth and Recreational Programs**

-WM wants to find sponsors to rehab or develop town fields and parks

-DW said that we should look to the Recreation Commission for guidance as they may already identified projects that need to be done and have plans in place that we could help facilitate.

-DW warned the EDC that it would need to be very careful of projects on school grounds as they are strongly viewed as the school district's concerns and not that of the town

-JR would like a legal opinion on ability to request and advertise sponsors for town facilities

-NC agreed that a legal opinion would be the best place to start

-NC announced that the Town Council is looking to push out \$2.2M in funds that are being received to our local non-profits and youth sports programs such as Little League, RICAN, Cowboys football

-LC offered that a sand volleyball court at Beaver River Playground would be nice addition, for example

## **PUBLIC FORUM**

-NONE

## **CALL TO ADJOURN**

*[MOTION to adjourn by Joe Reddish, second David Woodmansee, ALL AYE]*