

Richlands Planning Commission
March 4, 2021

Members Present

Rod Cury
Michelle Elswick
Richard Smith
Gaynelle Thompson

Staff and Town Officials

Present
Connie Allen
Adrienne Cordle
Nathan Keen
Tim Taylor

Guests

Rick Chitwood
Greg Widener
Rick Barton

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Richard Smith at 7:30 pm.
2. Michelle Elswick gave the invocation; Nathan Keen led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. The agenda was presented. There were no additions/deletions; Rod Cury made the motion to accept the agenda; Gaynelle Thompson seconded the motion. All members voted “aye” and the agenda was accepted.
4. The Minutes from the January 5, 2021 regular meeting were presented. Gaynelle Thompson made the motion to approve the minutes as written and Rod Cury seconded the motion. All members voted “aye”, and the minutes were approved.
5. New Business:
 - Welcome Rick Chitwood and Greg Widener with Thompson & Litton, Rick Barton and Connie Allen to our meeting, where our focus is the Clinch River Walking Trail.
 - Rod Cury gave the report on the Flood Remediation Task Force. He was unable to attend the last meeting. Lacy Thomason with the Army Corp of Engineers says a H & H study is needed and will take a couple of years to complete. We need to start looking for another route. Meetings of the Flood Task Force are the third Thursday of each month- the next one being 3/18/21.
 - i. Tim stated the Army Corp of Engineers has several jobs ahead of us. We need someone in tune with Hydrology and asked Rick Chitwood to speak on the subject.
 - ii. Rick spoke from memory about the Iron Street flooding issue. Iron Street would need a survey to look at other issues and create a letter report. The report alone was going to cost approximately \$38,000. We would need to work with a specialist because it must be right. One suggestion had a price tag of \$200,000. He says it would be best to work with the Army Corp of Engineers due to funding. Things like flood displacement are a very lengthy process. Thompson & Litton will do the study but they need to know everyone is on the same page about the costs.
 - Rick and Greg spoke on behalf of Thompson & Litton about the Clinch River Walking Trail.
 - i. The trail will start at the current trail ending at Critterville and extend 2.1 miles to Richlands Mall.
 - ii. 9600 ft of paved walkway
 - iii. 1500 ft wood boardwalk (5ft wide)
 - iv. Security Lighting

- v. Security Cameras
 - vi. 3 Public Parks-
 1. Front Street Park- Ampitheater
 2. Incubator Park- Picnic area and Fishing Pier
 3. Swinging Bridge Park- 7.3 acres, grass fields, dog park, playground, access point
 - vii. Cost of entire project- 1.5 years ago was \$6.2 million
 - viii. Broken down into 3 phases- about \$2 million each
 - ix. Time to start looking at funding- suggestions made by Thompson & Litton- DHCD, ARC, DCR, VDOT, VRA, VCEDA, CPROP, Friends of SWVA, Thompson Foundation, Shott Foundation, Town of Richlands (in house contribution- electric, security lighting, etc.)
 - x. Phase 1 needs to be a showpiece so Phase 2 and 3 happens. Highly recommend 12' paved walkways for Flood cleanup ease versus gravel or other surfaces. Security is very important!
 - xi. All property must be secured before we can get the funding. Either buy the property or get it donated. FEMA has money to help buy property with flooding issues.
 - xii. We need a letter of interest to present to property owners- consult with legal counsel to develop this.
- Phase 1 of the Clinch River Walking Trail will extend from Critterville to Front Street with two parks. Dr. Willis has verbally given us the land for the Front Street Park. Mr. Davis (owner of the Richlands Professional Building) owns the land where the Incubator Park will be. He has been very receptive to the idea of the walking trail.
 - i. VDOT requires an ending point for funding.
 - ii. The town owns a majority of the land for Phase 1. There is one small section owned by the railroad. We will need permission to cross the railroad property. If they cannot get the permission, they can go around and go up Veterans Drive. The current figures include "worst-case scenario."
 - iii. Rick Barton stated how important it was to have community buy-in. If the community is not part of the project, it could be the end of the project.
 1. Rick suggested that we create the ending destinations first and then create the path between. He suggested to check on DCR and the National Park Service. Also, Dominion's Regional Director, Jim Beamer, has a huge interest in the Clinch. In order to get TVA funding, we must have a 10-year land use.
 - iv. Adrienne stated IDA Walker said property values will likely increase with the trail and that could help homeowner's insurance go down in the long run.
 - v. Rick Chitwood stated that Critterville was packed. If the community sees the trail is first class, they will buy into it and want to be part of it.
 - Connie says we need to get started working with the railroad as soon as possible. We need to have a meeting with the Phase 1 land owners: Dr. Willis, Mr. Davis, Maxine Tatum (lives in North Carolina). Tim suggested we include Mary Ann Strong and Frazier Automotive owner.
 - i. Rick Barton suggested we look into the VOF- Virginia Outdoors Foundation. They are currently accepting applications and may even help with planning funds.
 - ii. Rick Chitwood said we need to update the estimates, work on securing multiple funding sources and get the official construction documents.

- iii. Tim reminded us that storm water/permitting on the Clinch is a huge deal.
- iv. Rick Chitwood also said that people donating the land would count towards the 20% we would need.
- Richard asked Connie to create a letter to invite land owners to a meeting. Rod said the Virginia Tech project had a letter we could use for a reference.
- Richard asked for someone to approach the railroad. Rick Barton said he had a connection and would contact them.
- Richard asked that there be a letter of intent available to land owners at the next meeting.
- Rick Barton expressed concerns about the land owners around the Richlands Tabernacle. He stated there were several land owners concerned in that area. It was stated that home ownership had changed some down there since we last spoke with them about it.
- Tim expressed that we need to get moving with this as soon as possible.
- Richard Smith will speak to the owner of Frazier Automotive about continuing Phase 1.
- Greg Widener stated there are ways around the land owners as a last result.
- There was discussion about extending Phase 1 past the original plan. Rick Chitwood could not give a number without updating the current figures. Richard made a motion to extend Phase 1 to the 2nd Street Bridge. Rod seconded it. Everyone voted “aye” and the motion carried. Thompson & Litton will update the numbers for today’s prices and the extension of Phase 1.

6. Old Business:

- Mixed Use Zoning
 - i. After rezoning was approved in the Brickyard, we need to visit the industrial zoning in that area. It is the consensus of the commission that a majority of that area needs to be moved from industrial to residential.
 - ii. Tim suggests we get in the budget cycle to hire an expert to help with the zoning. Ask Summit to give a quote for an analysis of mixed use to update the zoning issues. It can be added into the budget with a recommendation by the Planning Commission and Council approval. Richard asked who needs to make the request. Tim said a letter from the Planning Commission would be helpful. Adrienne stated it needed to be there by April 1 if possible, for ease of the budget.

7. Miscellaneous/Members’ Concerns:

- Although this was Tim’s last meeting as the Town Manager, after meeting with the new Town Manager, he is very much willing to help the Planning Commission as a private citizen. He has enjoyed working with the Planning Commission and hopes he can continue working with us.

8. With no other business, Rod made the motion to adjourn; it was seconded by Gaynelle and all members voted “aye”. Meeting was adjourned.

9. The next meeting for the Planning Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 7:30 pm.

Submitted by: Michelle Elswick, Secretary