



Richmond Community Alliance
Encouraging constructive community engagement and action

NEWSLETTER

No. 15 April 21, 2024

Chag Pesach Sameach! Wishing all that celebrate a joyous Passover!

Peaks

Civility

At the Town Council's March 19 meeting, during the discussion of appointments to the Chariho Building Committee, Vice President Rich Nassaney made comments about applicant Bill Day that, with a modern project, he was looking for someone with modern thoughts who would be familiar with modern processes. Day took exception to the implication that, because of his age, he could not understand or appreciate the technical aspects of the project or the modern facilities that would be under consideration. At the Town Council meeting on April 16, Nassaney publicly apologized for what he said and explained that he did not intend to demean Day. Day accepted the apology and told Nassaney that his age doesn't prevent him from having modern thought or understanding modern processes, citing his continued active service with the Hope Valley Wyoming Fire Dept. Day also reminded Nassaney that people his age have as much to offer our community as younger folks. It was nice to see two people civilly work out their differences in a public forum.

Federal Relief Available for Storm Damage

Any residents that have property damage from the storms in December and January should contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency for an evaluation of whether they are entitled to funds to repair damage. The damage does not need to be water related. Residents simply need to register by calling 800-621-3362 or going to <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/.../en/assessment/captcha>. A FEMA representative will come to the property to gather information to submit an application for relief. Several residents spoke at Tuesday's Town Council meeting about how easy it was to apply and that they received money for their damage very quickly. The deadline to register with FEMA is May 20.

Valleys

Incivility

Discussion on social media about the school bond has been marked by name calling, personal attacks, unfounded charges of corruption, and demeaning comments about our teachers and claims they are corrupt because they belong to a union. This weekend a Richmond resident posted on Facebook that he would be at Town Hall to call out teachers as they voted, and another person told him he didn't have to wait because early voting had started. Such threats and intimidation have no place in public discourse and are likely criminal. A person that uses any threat or employs any means of intimidation for the purpose of influencing a person to vote or withhold that person's vote for or against any candidate or candidates or proposition pending at an election, is guilty of a felony. Discussion and debate should focus on the merits and details of the bond and projects, not the people advocating for or opposing it.

Other Items of Note

Dispelling the Bond Myths

1. *"The schools are just fine/the schools have not been maintained"* – the main reason for building new as opposed to renovating is the age and sufficiency of the major utilities in the buildings – electrical and heating, not a lack of maintenance. The electrical systems are insufficient for modern learning and all the technology that is used in classrooms. Most classrooms have only two electrical outlets – which may have been fine 75 years ago, but not today. Boilers are old and heating in the buildings is very inconsistent. Classrooms have window AC units. A modern HVAC system would be far more effective and efficient. There are basement classrooms in Richmond that are subject to flooding during heavy rain – not a maintenance issue. The elementary alternative program is housed in trailers at Ashaway. We recognized years ago that trailers were not acceptable learning spaces at the secondary level, and they are even less acceptable at the elementary level. Another issue with renovating is there are unknown issues that may come up once the project begins and walls and ceilings are opened. Keep in mind that due to their age, these buildings may have lead paint, asbestos, and likely mold issues that would require remediation.
2. *"R.I. Department of Education will control the construction process"* – the building projects will be overseen by the Chariho Building Committee, which is made up of local residents, a majority of which are appointed by the Town Councils of the three towns. The Building Committee will ensure that the plans meet the needs of students, maximize efficiency and are cost effective. The Building Committee will also supervise construction to ensure the projects are built on time and on budget, and meet the requirements to receive the maximum reimbursement from the state.

3. *“The most reimbursement Chariho can get is 61% / It’s possible that the projects will get no reimbursement”* – the base reimbursement that Chariho receives on construction projects as a regional district is 61%. A few years ago the state introduced additional incentives that qualify for additional reimbursement. These additional incentives expire in June. The RI Dept of Education has confirmed that the preliminary plans for the schools will be reimbursed at least 76%, and possibly 81%. The final plans will include what is required to receive the extra incentives (see Building Committee above). There is a requirement that the construction be completed in five years, and only the work completed after the deadline is reimbursed at the base 61% rate. What is completed on time is reimbursed at the higher rate (76%-81%). In no case will Chariho be reimbursed less than 61%.

Town Budget

The Proposed Municipal Budget for FY 2024-2025 had the first of two public hearings on April 19. Info is available on the Richmond town website <https://www.richmondri.com/133/Finance> and printed material is available at Town Hall. Total expenditures are up 1.54%; there are two parts: municipal up 2.34% and school up 1.25% (before state aid) to be funded by taxes, state aid and fund balance. The budget brings the fund balance back to being within the recommended range at 16.3% (two full months of expenses). Last year the fund balance was reduced to 15%. The budget as currently proposed will result in a decrease in the tax rate per thousand of assessed value from \$14.76 to \$14.66. The final public hearing is May 8, after which the Town Council will adopt a budget to be voted on by residents at the all day financial town referendum on June 3.

Community Profile

Richmond Conservation Commission

The Richmond Conservation Commission was front and center this past weekend in their role as the organizer of Richmond’s Earth Day Cleanup. Thank you to Chair Jim Turek and all the members of the RCC, to the volunteers who collected the trash and to the DPW for collecting the bags of trash.

In addition to annual Earth Day cleanups the RCC works tirelessly to promote the values of environmental stewardship. Starting in 2013 the RCC began the conceptual trail design and layout for the Richmond Heritage Trail, helped to map wetlands, shepherded that plan through DEM permitting and installed a series of interpretive signs along the trail. More recently the RCC applied for and received a \$4,000 grant from the Wood Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council to remove invasive plants and to restore grasslands along the trail near the Beaver River behind the Beaver River Road Playground.

The RCC is a seven-member volunteer group appointed by the Town Council. They meet once a month and meetings are open to the public. Learn more about getting involved.

<https://richmondconservationcommission.wordpress.com/>

Upcoming Meetings

Now through May 6 – Early voting for Chariho Bond Referendum – 9 am-4pm Town Hall

April 22 - Zoning Board of Review – 7 pm at Town Hall

April 23 – Planning Board Meeting – 6:30 pm at Town Hall

May 7 – Chariho School Bond Referendum – 7 am – 8 pm at Town Hall

May 8 – Town Council – 6 pm at Town Hall

Town Council and Planning Board agendas: <https://clerkshq.com/richmond-ri>

School Committee agendas: https://www.chariho.k12.ri.us/school_committee/meeting_schedule

Community Calendar

Richmond Recreation Summer Camp 2023

Registration is now open! Camp runs from June 26 to July 28, 9 am – 3 pm and is open to Richmond and non-Richmond residents in K-7th grade. Sign up at:

<http://richmondri.com/166/Recreation>

Food Trucks Hop into Hopkinton

The newest local food truck series will be located centrally at Dow Field Complex in Hopkinton. Enjoy a dozen or more food trucks at each event (from a rotation of over 65 food trucks), live music and draft beer and wine from Trinity Brewhouse. This event is made possible with the partnership of the Chariho Athletic Association and Hope Valley Grange & Community Center.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/731749245793670/731749259127002>

For updates on the full list of all upcoming events series and the food trucks attending throughout the season visit <https://www.foodtrucksin.com/food-truck-events>

Future Ideas

We would like to spotlight local businesses, people, and points of interest in our area in future newsletters. If you have an idea for a person/place to feature, or an event to include on the community calendar, feel free to email us at rca4richmond@gmail.com. We also welcome any tips or items of concern that you wish to bring to our attention.