



**Richmond Community Alliance**  
Encouraging constructive community engagement and action

## **NEWSLETTER**

No. 21 August 12, 2024

### **Special Edition: Meet the Candidates**

As mentioned in our last newsletter, Richmond Community Alliance sent a questionnaire to all local candidates who have declared for Town Council or School Committee. The questionnaire was intended to gather information to provide to the public from all candidates, regardless of party.

We asked the candidates to respond to the following prompts:

- Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less.
- State your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member, in a 5 sentence response.
- Set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why, in a 5 sentence response.
- State any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why, in a 5 sentence response.
- What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?
- What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?
- What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?
- What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?

We did not receive responses from Town Council candidates Nell Carpenter, Michael Colasante, Jeffrey Dinsmore, Roger St. Onge, or Thomas Marron, or from School Committee candidates Louise Dinsmore and Clay Johnson.

See the responses below from Town Council candidates Dan Madnick, Jim Palmisciano, Mark Reynolds, Mark Trimmer, and Samantha Wilcox, and from School Committee candidates Jessica Purcell and Karen Reynolds. *Note: candidates are in alphabetical order by office, their responses are unedited, and appear as each candidate submitted via Google form.*

### **Daniel Madnick – Town Council**

#### ***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

I have several goals while in office. First, I hope to contribute to a collaborative environment through transparency, integrity, and trust. I believe that local government works most effectively when elected officials are cooperative and proactive. Next, I hope to repair the relationship between the town council and town staff. This facilitates a cohesive town government to improve our town and reduce waste. As a member of the Planning Board, I have first-hand knowledge of how vital this function is. My background as a supervisor for employees of various skills and backgrounds, makes it important to me that we work to improve morale, value the expertise, and recognize the hard work of our town staff. As a Town Council member, it is imperative that we facilitate town improvement and development, focusing our efforts on the re-development of Wyoming. This is a goal of mine since I became a member of the Planning Board. We cannot force development, but we can help it along by guiding developers along the process in line with the Comprehensive Community Plan. Growth, in moderation with proper planning, is good for everyone. Development and keeping the rural character of Richmond do not have to be mutually exclusive and can happen in concert to the benefit of all Richmond residents. We need to ensure the future prosperity for our town by enticing people to participate in building the foundation today. Richmond has amazing natural resources that must be protected and promoted to enhance our community.

#### ***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

First and foremost, listening to residents and seeking input is important to me. Over the years, I have heard numerous concerns regarding land use and development decisions, the property tax burden, lack of local access to healthcare, and a desire for additional recreation options for our children and adults. As a Town Council member, I will work to address these concerns to improve our town. In my professional career, I am guided by the tenet that effective leadership requires leading by example and understanding that everyone has something to offer, along with a self-awareness to know what you don't know and seek the advice of subject matter experts. It is also imperative that we create a mechanism or environment in which the residents have direct input to policy and growth.

#### ***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

One of the simplest changes that can be implemented on the outset of a new Town Council term is improving the behavior and discourse between council members. Over the last few Town Council terms I have witnessed dysfunction, disrespect, and lack of constructive input during discussion regarding policy decisions. In my opinion, this has prevented the Council from fulfilling their maximum potential and working productively along with the respective boards

and commissions to move our town forward, make decisions in the best interest of the town, and implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Community Plan. Additionally, from my perspective, Town Council members should be more proactive championing certain issues, running them to ground, and presenting their work to the Council and town.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

At this time, I am supportive of the effort to form a Municipal Court body for the consistent enforcement of regulations, ordinances, and conditions within planning and zoning board decisions. I have personal and direct experience with the impact to residents when the town is not able to act quickly enough and enforce the regulations already in place. In most cases, staff are already overwhelmed and overburdened with their day-to-day work to handle situations that require oversight and legal intervention. When intervention is required, it is costly to the taxpayers to bring a suit to Superior Court. At this time, the Municipal Court body has not been established and I support a review of the court after a year of implementation.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?***

The people, natural resources, and rural character. Richmond is filled with kind, generous, and caring people that are happy to call Richmond home. Richmond's abundant conserved lands and quiet surroundings make it a joy to live here and raise children.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

Richmond needs a proactive approach to governance and assisting residents. Common concerns around Richmond include the relatively high property taxes, lack of public services such as water/sewer/gas/trash pick-up, and an increase in recreation activities beyond those currently available. There is also a lack of sufficient urgent care facilities in the center of Richmond which requires residents to drive 20 minutes or more to seek urgent healthcare needs.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

Richmond has enormous potential for sustainable and controlled economic growth while highlighting the rural character and natural resources of the town. The town has abundant conserved areas to hike and enjoy, along with a variety of golf courses, and water access to enjoy fishing and boating. There are various organized sports leagues for children along with Scouting, 4-H programs, YMCA, a dog park, and more. One area of need in Richmond is a larger variety of sports fields and playgrounds. Promoting and protecting these natural resources is important to many residents and a primary reason why many call Richmond home. Prioritizing redevelopment of Wyoming, Richmond Commons, and adaptive reuse at Charbert Mill in Alton would add considerable commercial, residential, and recreational amenities to the town, along with a sizeable increase in commercial tax revenue to reduce the burden on homeowners.

***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

Climate hazards such as extreme drought, flooding, and windstorms have hit Richmond particularly hard over the last 5 years which has caused undue hardship on the residents. The town's Hazard Mitigation Plan has short-, medium-, and long-term actions that were meant to protect the town and residents from undue hardship. Revisiting this plan and assessing the completion of these goals is important to understand what work is left to do and act upon. A Town Council that does not engage in productive and open dialogue is a threat to the future growth of Richmond.

***Jim Palmisciano – Town Council***

***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

As a candidate for Richmond town council, my campaign platform focuses on smart economic growth, responsible governance, & collaborative leadership. Smart Economic Growth: We have an opportunity to rebrand Richmond and attract business given our strategic location as the gateway to southern Rhode Island. We need to execute on a strategic vision, working together as a council to mobilize available town, state and federal resources. Let's elect people who put people before party and get the job done in an above-board, professional, and effective manner. Let's target the development zones already highlighted in our comprehensive community plan to spur business growth, jobs, and drive commercial tax revenue. Responsible Governance: Simply put, the ethical, transparent, and accountable management of public affairs and resources by those in positions of authority. It involves making decisions and taking actions that consider the long-term well-being of the community and all its members. It requires open and clear communication with the public, fostering a culture of transparency. Collaborative Leadership: My style of leadership is one that emphasizes the importance of working together, sharing responsibility, and leveraging the diverse skills and perspectives of team members to achieve common goals. I am proud to be running with 3 other individuals who have a proven track record of volunteerism and expertise in serving this town. With 20+ years' experience working for a Fortune 500 company, I ask for your support to allow me to put this to use for our community.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

The primary role of a town council member is to represent the interests of the community and make decisions that affect the well-being and development of the town. Council members are responsible for setting policies, enacting local laws, and partnering with the town administrator in overseeing the town. They should be available to their constituents for comment and feedback. They are responsible for providing input on the proposed town budget and authorizing it to be sent to the voters. In my opinion, town council members play a key role in improving the quality of life for residents, promoting community well-being, and contributing to the overall development and governance of the town.

***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

I would like to initiate a semi-annual open meeting workshop focused on economic development opportunities for the town. This would involve the council, finance director, town administrator, members of the planning and zoning boards, members of Economic Development Committee, State Representative and State Senator, and a representative from the RI Secretary of Commerce office. Short- and long-term goals could include assessments of available green field and gray field sites for business development in Richmond, creation of a 5-year economic development strategic plan, State investment for local small businesses, developing business incubator opportunities, and setting metrics for success of the workshop. This forum could be used to identify key barriers to success and work collaboratively to remove them. Two members of council would be nominated and appointed by the council to spearhead this effort, working with all parties to ensure progress is made and actions are taken.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

I believe it is extremely important to keep the appointments to all boards and commissions based on available applicants and their qualifications to perform the role. Any consideration of political affiliation as a criterion for a successful appointment would be from mistake and disservice to the people of Richmond. Boards and commissions function as an important supporting role to the council and town administration and should not be considered politically linked to any ideology that one or more council members may themselves hold. The diversity of thought and experiences on our boards and commissions is what makes them successful, and any attempt to change this make up would only discourage citizens from stepping forward to volunteer their time in the future.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?***

Rural beauty, small town charm, CHARIHO, its proximity to Route 95 with Rt. 138 serving as the main artery to southern Rhode Island, and numerous outdoor opportunities (hiking, fishing, camping).

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

Lack of recreation facilities (soccer fields, local programs, etc.), small commercial tax base, & limited in-town options for grocery & retail.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

Revitalize the 138 corridor, attracting business and investment, rebranding Richmond as a destination, all while maintaining our rural character and creating a commercial tax base to off-set the tax burden on residents.

***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

Partisan political gridlock, decline of CHARIHO due to lack of investment, increasing taxes without smart economic growth.

**Mark Reynolds – Town Council**

***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

I value integrity and will work to benefit all residents of Richmond. As a councilor I will ensure that the Town Charter and Comprehensive Community Plan are followed. I will strive to make the council a collaborative group that works together for the good of the town. I will look for ways to encourage revitalization of properties along Main St in Wyoming and explore opportunities to improve the infrastructure through state/federal dollars and grants. I will also look for ways to assist the private development planned in Shannock. Richmond needs to better publicize its proximity to many outdoor recreational opportunities. That will bring people to town who will patronize local businesses. I will also work to maintain a high quality of life for residents of our town. This includes finding ways to increase the amount of housing that is affordable for young residents who are just beginning independent living, and for older residents who are retired and looking to downsize. I will work to protect historic, rural/forested, and agriculture areas from intensive development and commercial solar installations. I will support Chariho's effort to improve educational facilities and programs for our students. Chariho is one of our community's greatest assets. Achieving these goals will help keep taxes stable and lessen the burden on residential tax payers. I will insist upon ethical behavior and transparent decision making. I will work to find solutions to issues with the input of residents, volunteer board members and staff. I will value their contributions.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

The focus of the Town Council should be on policy and developing a responsible budget to present to residents. Councilors should not be involved in the day to day operations of the town or attempt to exert influence on town employees. Town Councilors are ambassadors for Richmond. Town Councilors can be a conduit to assist residents by helping them access the town department/services that they need.

***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

To be part of a council that collaborates and communicates in a constructive way rather than bickering. Resist efforts to give special deals to a few at the expense of the many. Value Chariho as a partner and community asset, rather than an enemy.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

This year the Town Council passed an Aquifer Protection ordinance (APOD) that expanded the type of business uses that are allowed in commercial areas while requiring steps to be taken to protect the underground aquifer that residents rely on for their well water. The ordinance was developed by the Planning Board and Town Council with input from multiple stakeholders, including businesses such as The Preserve. Maintaining this ordinance in its current form will be crucial to encouraging future development. Also, recently the Council decided to establish a Municipal Court on a trial basis after studying courts in neighboring towns and getting input from the Building/Zoning office and Police department. The trial should be allowed to play out to see whether the anticipated benefits are realized. It makes no sense to abolish the Municipal Court before it starts, as the Republicans have stated they will do.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?***

It's location and natural resources/beauty. Good schools. Community spirit.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

Lack of commercial/business development. Unattractive Chariho Plaza. Limited public water & lack of sewer

***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

Wyoming revitalization. Shannock development. Eco-tourism.

***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

Divisive rhetoric. Efforts to undermine public education/Chariho. Severe weather event that causes widespread damage to infrastructure.

**Mark Trimmer – Town Council**

***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

Political Independence - I believe that political partisanship has taken center stage in politics. This removes the focus on what we can do together to improve our town and made it a negative focus on an individual or tribe pushing political extremes. I vow to vote on the individual issue and I will work to create an environment where all reasonable voices are heard.

Public Service - Anyone who chooses to lead must serve. I have served 3 terms on the Richmond Town Council. I have served as a councilor, council vice president and council president. I believe that as a town councilor, we serve the residents and the town's dedicated employees who work hard to serve all of us.

Fiscal Responsibility - Every decision made must be made with consideration to our already overburdened taxpayers. At the same time, we must not defer maintenance on our roadways and schools. We must be responsible stewards of the towns collective finances.

Public Trust - I believe that all elected and appointed public servants must be ethically above reproach and morally courageous. This doesn't mean that mistakes are not made however our conduct must reflect the respect that we have for all the residents of our town.

Appropriate Commercial Development - All of us live in Richmond because it is not Cranston or Warwick. We are a rural town and any development we pursue should fit with the character of the town.

Political Behavior - There are destructive forces at work that look to drastically change the character of our town. They pit neighbor against neighbor. They demonize any idea not their own. For the last two years, I have referred to this as "Operation Disruption". The result has cost us several great town employees and caused the town public embarrassment. We must elect public servants - people without the desire for personal gain, that do not want to erode the progress that we have made over the last several years.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

I touched on this in my comments above - Moral Courage, Fiscal Responsibility, Ethics that are pure, the ability to work well with others and serve the public.

***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

I remember when I was first elected to Town Council as a Republican in 2016. Regardless of political party, we all got along, we all worked together and we got things done. We were neighbors with a common goal - The last 4 years, the town council has been marred with bad public behavior by a few individuals... It only takes one! I'd like to bring things back to the way they were, with neighbors working with neighbors towards a common goal.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

We MUST preserve the recently approved Municipal Court - there are candidates that want it cancelled because it might impede their personal aspirations. We MUST preserve our town's modest Human Services department - the candidates who advocate for its elimination do not know the needs nor empathize for those who have urgent needs. It reminds me of the pre-epiphany Mr. Scrooge. "Are there no workhouses?" We as the town of Richmond CAN AND WILL DO BETTER!

***What are Richmond/Charlton's strengths?***



Our dedicated public employees are our town's major strength - we do not want to see any further personnel move on. Our towns rural character and the only remaining agricultural fair are notable strengths

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

Division - We can disagree without doxing, personal attacks, social media attacks and public disruption. any potential business investor in Richmond is painfully aware of these issues.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

We have the opportunity to bring businesses that are a good fit to the rural character of the town. We have an opportunity to keep Richmond rural! I see an opportunity where ecological land use can be a boost to our towns economy. The federal money is available and we must pull out all the stops to get this done.

***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

The current political extremes and disruption are a major threat to Richmond and CHARIHO

**Samantha Wilcox – Town Council**

***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

My platform includes teamwork, transparency, integrity and fact-based decision making. I'm a Democrat and have always been one. Prior to 2022, I was a member of two non-partisan town boards. Currently, I am the only Democrat on a Republican-controlled council. Our bipartisan teamwork is responsible for steps towards revitalizing Main Street, receipt of a state funded educational opportunity, and continuing work on the roads that need improvement. I advocated for transparency and public input. I started a blog to keep all residents informed of my thoughts and actions, shared surveys, hosted open office hours and pushed for public comment during council meetings. Positive initiatives such as these encouraged me to seek a second term. Being an elected official is not always easy. We deal with a lot of situations in which not everyone agrees or sometimes the solution isn't perfect. I've maintained civil and respectful behavior during disagreements while being a strong voice against unethical, distracting or disruptive behavior. Throughout my term, we witnessed my colleagues violate the Charter, hire business partners, hold secret meetings as elected officials in a "tri-town collaboration", advocate for Town Councilors to have the right to speak at public forum, and advocate for tax breaks for vacation homes. These are not priorities of mine. My focus has remained and will remain on sustainable growth, protecting our environment, ensuring our tax dollars are invested wisely and increasing transparency and civic engagement.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

Town Council's primary role is to oversee the high-level strategic path the town should take, using policy changes or amendments to enable the residents, investors and town staff to execute that approach. Council should not be fixated on one issue but instead be a small contributor to many projects. We accomplish this by listening to the advice and needs of the town staff, our board members and residents. During my time on council, I checked in with boards frequently and asked staff questions. While we may not always agree with their advice or opinions, we can work towards compromise to do what's best for the community as a whole.

***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

I would like to see the creation of a Code of Conduct for Town Council Members. Unlike the Chariho School Committee, we don't have this and it could give some a more clear understanding of the decorum expected by council members. It may be good to revisit the recording of some boards/commissions as an effort to promote transparency with appointed government officials, and increased engagement and participation from residents. Lastly, our community has made it clear that they are in support of a new senior/community center as the current location is not handicapped accessible and cannot support a wide variety of events. There are many reasons why this is taking time, however, a council open to the creation of one is necessary in order to plan the same.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

I believe it's important we start and maintain our Municipal Court. While I understand this will not be popular with all residents, it was approved by voters in 2022 and has not been given a chance by opponents. Council should consistently keep Public Forum at the beginning of the meeting. My Council started our term by placing public forum earlier on the agenda as a way to prioritize the voice of the people. However, there were multiple examples of this not being a priority and I advocated for fair and consistent public comment.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?***

Richmond's strengths are its outdoor recreation and conserved lands. Many moved to Richmond for its rural character and it's important to maintain this.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

Richmond's weakness is housing. There are not many "starter homes" or options for downsizing for seniors. Residents who are looking to move out of their parent's homes or stay in the community as they age are sometimes unable to remain in Richmond. Another weakness is our high tax rate. During my term on council we have taken steps to bring in additional commercial revenue to relieve the burden to the residents. I championed a small business grant to support the

businesses we have and passed the Aquifer Protection Overlay District which added 23 new commercial use codes while protecting our water supply.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

Richmond has an opportunity to tap into the state's ecotourism. Rhode Island is known for its beaches, but as a landlocked town, we can promote our rivers and hiking trails. Tourists should see the other side of Rhode Island.

***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

Over-development can take away what we love about the town. It needs to be balanced.

**Jessica Purcell – School Committee**

***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

As a mother, it's my responsibility to build a shared future with my children, the next generation. As my kids have grown, I've contributed to our community through volunteerism and public service.

As a School Committee Member, I'm in a position of partnership and communication between the schools and our community. My goals are to prioritize students, value teachers and staff, collaborate with the community, and protect public education – to keep Chariho schools strong and always improving.

I'm a vocal advocate for career tech education, hands-on learning, student-led initiatives, mental health awareness, and athletic/extracurricular opportunities, in addition to comprehensive foundational education. I work to address the real and dynamic challenges of our schools, students, and staff. Alongside Karen Reynolds, I put students first to make decisions about policies, curriculum, and resources that will move Chariho forward.

I'm committed to the next stages of the Chariho Capital Improvement Plan, which is necessary to meet legal requirements and to address aging infrastructure. In Richmond, the bond for new school construction failed by just a few votes. We still need to develop a plan for repairs and improvements at the elementary schools. I continue to support a slow phase-out of Hope Valley Elementary, which addresses the decline in enrollment over the last 20 years, improves fiscal efficiency regarding maintenance and operation.

I will continue to engage and empower residents with accurate information, including information about the \$15M bond question on the November ballot that would fund Capital Improvements at the Main Campus.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

I am committed to honest and respectful discussion as we evaluate, amend, and create policy as needed, setting and protecting important guidelines for the operation of our schools.

The annual budget process is a vital obligation of the School Committee, and I work to ensure that residents are empowered to participate, guided by valid and reliable information. This process allows us to consider our priorities each winter before we vote on the budget as a tri-town community in the spring. Most schools relegate this duty to town or city councils but in Chariho, the power is with the people to engage in the process and then vote accordingly. The average increase for the local share of the Chariho budget over the past five years is 1.19%, and I do not support further cuts or austerity that would endanger the quality of our local investment.

***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

One of the current discussions I'm leading on the School Committee is about adding a Student Representative and Liaison position. Students deserve a seat at the table where decisions are being made that will affect them. This would be a non-voting role for a junior-year student who would provide important feedback to the School Committee and share important information with their classmates. I'd also like to develop a timeline exhibit that displays the history of our unique Regional School District. I have requested public discussion about phone-free school days at the Middle School because I feel that smartphones can increase distraction, intensify bullying, and decrease mental well-being for adolescent children.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

It is important to follow the Code of Basic Management Principles and Ethical Standards for School Committee Members. These principles will ensure that Members pursue an agenda that aligns with the true needs of Chariho, and delivers upon their responsibilities to all stakeholders.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?***

Chariho connects us. By partnering with Hopkinton and Charlestown, Richmond is able to provide a wider diversity of educational and extracurricular opportunities to a varied student body. The regional aspect of the Chariho School District is our greatest asset and strength.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

While regionality has many benefits, it also has challenges. The tensions and differences between our three towns can be a deterrent to a true collaborative relationship. I have also felt some of the negativity of some Town Councilors because the Chariho Act delineates some powers away from them and to the School Committee.

### ***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

Every election is an opportunity to declare our values. The choice is clear when it comes to School Committee candidates this year. support for our public schools by voting for candidates that will put students first.

I'd love to see the three Chariho towns collaborate more, and present that collaboration as a benefit to economic development that will benefit residents with tax revenue and services. I think that developers see us as three towns that each have a population of 8k but if they saw us as a region with a population of 24k, we may have more opportunities. As communities with deep agricultural ties, and many residents who continue to take care of land and animals, a farm supply store would be an opportunity for mutually beneficial development.

### ***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

Hyper-partisan rhetoric and behavior poses a threat to how our community works together, and how our local government functions. Cynicism and pessimism makes people believe that everything is broken, and division makes it harder for us to address challenges together.

In Chariho, we've seen negative and false information spread about our educators and administration. This can result in diminished trust and support of our schools, especially when paired with emotional manipulation of cultural and generational concerns.

I fear that the end goal is to divert public funds to private schools. This would mirror legislation currently being enacted in multiple states, and detailed in Project 2025, which also proposes cutting federal funding to public schools.

As a district that already pays more than \$1.7M annually for school choice through Charter School tuition, and transportation for private school students, more funds leaving the district is a threat to Chariho schools.

### ***Karen Reynolds – School Committee***

#### ***Describe your campaign platform in 250 words or less (longer responses will be edited)***

I believe strong public schools build strong communities. I was appointed to the School Committee in November 2021. Jessica Purcell and I applied for the vacancy. I was appointed by town council members representing a mix of political ideologies. My focus is first and foremost students. This has been my professional focus for the past 30 years as a public school educator. I am also the parent of two Chariho graduates and one at the middle school. I will continue to be a positive voice for students and taxpayers. I will ensure that public education funds stay in public schools. Taxpayers are entitled to have their tax dollars stay in our community. I am committed to continuing to present fiscally responsible budgets to our community that ensure students are

provided with excellent learning opportunities. The aging elementary schools are a serious concern and I will continue to seek ways to modernize them and address ongoing issues. Our youngest learners deserve to be educated in 21st century learning environments. I will support and advocate for ways to improve standardized test scores, but I know that a single test is not a complete picture of a student's ability. As a teacher I see first hand the issues students face, so maintaining our student support system is important. I understand the importance of having a teachable class size and will advocate to maintain that for all students. Extra-curricular activities are important and I will work hard to keep them in place.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state your view as the PRIMARY ROLE/FOCUS of a Town Council/School Committee member.***

The primary focus of a School Committee member is to improve the educational opportunities for all of our students. Advocating for programs, classes and curriculum that benefits all of our students to become fully independent lifelong learners and be able to positively contribute to their community. Review, revise and approve a responsible district budget that balances the needs of students with the burden on taxpayers.

***In a FIVE sentence response, set forth any important CHANGE you wish to make as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

Moving forward I would like to work on a cell phone policy, and increasing awareness of the long term effects bullying can have on individuals. I will continue to advocate for curriculum and teaching practices that will improve outcomes for all students. It is important to look for ways to improve Chariho's graduation rate so that students have the most opportunities as they move the next phase of their life.

***In a FIVE sentence response, state any policy/ordinance/rule you feel is important to MAINTAIN as an elected Town Council/School Committee member and why.***

I believe it's important to show up and do the work of a committee member. That means showing up to every meeting prepared and invested to listen to others, ask questions and make decisions. In the time I have been on the committee I haven't missed a single meeting, I'm prepared, I ask questions, I listen to others and I vote based on the information presented. I follow the Code of Basic Management Principles and Ethical Standards for School Committee Members and the CHARIHO School Committee Rules of Conduct.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's strengths?***

Chariho as a community is strong. We have seen our community come together under the most difficult circumstances and support one another in times of need. I would like to see positive support on a more continuous basis rather than just during a time of crisis. We can do great things when we work together. Our students and our community deserve this.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's weaknesses?***

Negative attacks from town officials on the school district are divisive. Richmond's approach to Chariho should not be us against them. Our schools should be seen as a shining beacon within our community, something we can all be proud of. We can work together to find positive solutions that benefit our district and our community. Richmond's lack of commercial development places a larger burden on the property owners to fund the school district.

***What are Richmond/Chariho's opportunities?***

I would like to increase opportunities for all of our students to reach their full potential. A focus should be made to modernize our facilities. Despite the failure of the bond there are still opportunities to improve our educational spaces to best meet the needs of our students.

***What are threats to Richmond/Chariho?***

Outside organizations that want to usurp true parental rights. All parents deserve the right to advocate on behalf of their child(ren). No outside organization should be attempting to speak on behalf of parents within our community. Outside organizations should not be interfering with educational practices under the guise of parental rights. I encourage all parents to be involved in the education of their child(ren).

**Upcoming Meetings**

August 20 – School Committee – 7 pm at Chariho High School Library

August 20 – Town Council Special Meeting/Executive Session – 5 pm at Town Hall

August 27 – Planning Board – 6:30 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](https://www.chariho.k12.ri.us/school_committee/meeting_schedule)

**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](mailto:rca4richmond@gmail.com). We also welcome any tips or items of concern that you wish to bring to our attention.