

## **NEWSLETTER**

No. 2 October 8, 2023

### **Peaks**

#### ***Improvements for Residents***

Residents will be benefiting from several improvements around town. As a result of a combination of \$20,000 in capital funds and \$20,000 in ARPA funds allocated by the previous Town Council, there is new equipment at the Beaver River Playground and new wood chips around the play area. The current council has allocated \$30,000 for potential additional items/improvements. In addition to the playground at the park there are walking [trails](#) that lead to the Beaver River. The Richmond Conservation Commission is working to remove invasive plants from the area. More on that [here](#).



*New Playground Equipment*



*New Dog Park*



The new “official” Richmond Dog Park will be open for use on Tuesday Oct 10 and a Grand Opening is planned for November 4 from 11:00–2:00. The park is adjacent to the Heritage Trail, accessed via 3 Country Acres Road. The dog park committee has been working for more than 10 years to establish the dog park to replace the unofficial location next to the transfer station. Those efforts got a boost in 2021 when Samantha Wilcox joined the committee and, with help of town staff, a \$71,000 DEM grant was secured to fund the project. The committee, chaired by Jordan Gouveia, raised \$8,000 and Richmond DPW did much of the site work to provide the required grant match. The enclosed area for dogs is 30,000 square ft (approx. 3/4 acre) with benches, and a gazebo is planned for the future. This project is another great example of

committed volunteers, town leaders, and staff/workers coming together to achieve a benefit for residents.

Thanks to the voter authorization of bonding for road improvements, and an additional \$400,000 from the state, the Town has several projects being completed and more to come in the spring. Repaving of North Road in Shannock was recently completed. Work is nearing completion to improve the safety and drainage at the intersection of Hillsdale, Tug Hollow and Bell School House roads. Next, New London Turnpike at Dawley Park and all of Tug Hollow and all of Bell School House Road will be repaved. In 2024, work will commence on Punch Bowl Trail and the rest of New London Turnpike. Finally, there are plans for repaving in the Pinecrest neighborhood (near Clark Memorial Library), including Wendy Lane.

## **Valleys**

### ***Attempt to Bypass Open and Fair Bid Process***

At the October 3, 2023 Town Council meeting, the Town Administrator presented a recommendation resulting from bids that were received for a new generator at Town Hall. The current generator has been deemed insufficient in the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan. New specifications for the generator provided by the electrical inspector made it more expensive than the \$30,000 in ARPA money that was previously allocated. The Administrator reported that based upon the specifications posted, bids were received from several companies ranging from about \$99,000 to \$160,000. The Administrator requested that the Town Council accept the low bid and allocate the necessary additional money (\$69,000) from ARPA funds. RCA members at the meeting were shocked when Councilor Colasante stated that he had "talked to a few people" and without knowing the specifications they thought the price was "kinda high." Colasante suggested that he be allowed to give the specifications to these "people" to see if they could provide a cheaper price.

RCA's Chair, Mark Reynolds, spoke in opposition to Colasante's idea. Allowing a company to bid after all other companies have bid is not only unfair and unethical, it likely violates the law concerning the bid process that must be followed by the town. If these "people" wanted to submit a proposal, they should have done so as part of the open bid process. The process is there to create a level playing field for all bidders and to avoid elected officials from giving preferential treatment to their "people." Fortunately three members of the council rejected Colasante's idea and voted to allocate the additional funds (Councilor Sheehan voted "no" with Colasante). Efforts to save taxpayers money are of course appreciated, but only when it is done properly. Had Colasante gotten his way, it could have backfired and actually cost the town money to defend a lawsuit (again) that would have undoubtedly been brought by the original low bidder. It also would have discouraged companies from bidding in the future due the perception that cronyism would unfairly influence the process. We encourage town councilors to stay

apprised of current projects open to bid, and encourage businesses to submit proposals during the time allowed to submit bids.

## **Other News of Note**

### ***Planning Board Meeting: September 26 – Land Use Legislative Changes***

The Planning Board held a workshop on September 26 to discuss modifying the Zoning Ordinances to adhere to new state laws that go into effect January 1, 2024. There are many changes which may have a significant effect on Richmond. As a result

- 18 amended Zoning Ordinances have been drafted
- 2 new Zoning Ordinances have been created
- 14 Land Development and Subdivision Regulations articles will need to be amended

This is the most significant change since the zoning enabling legislation was enacted in 1991.

One of the more extensive changes is that the application process for minor land development projects (less than 10 units) and comprehensive permit applications has been expedited with less public oversight. The Town Planner will have more responsibility and influence on certain development applications. Therefore it is imperative that residents stay informed about these changes and insist on more transparency and reporting from the town with regard to pending applications.

Other changes are meant to allow adaptive reuse. This is the conversion of an existing structure from the use for which it was constructed to a new use by maintaining elements of the structure and adapting those elements to the new use. Examples could include an old school or mill building renovated for condos, mixed-use, or over 55 housing. Finally, the law provides greater flexibility to allow the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADU). These small residential structures (detached or attached) would be similar to an in-law apartment. ADU's could help alleviate the shortage of rental units for seniors or young adults.

The Planning Board will be devoting time at future meetings to recommend revisions to town ordinances to comply with the new state laws and make sure that they are implemented in a way that is consistent with Richmond's Comprehensive Plan. The RCA will keep residents apprised as this process unfolds.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

Chariho School Committee: Tuesday, October 10 at 7:00pm – watch [here](#)

Planning Board: Tuesday, October 10 at 6:30pm

Town Council: Tuesday, October 17 at 6:00pm

Agendas can be found at <https://clerkshq.com/richmond-ri>

## **Community Calendar**

October 14–15 from 10–4 Hop Arts Studio Trail – [Map](#)

October 15 from 10am–1pm Hope Valley Wyoming Fire Dept Open House, 996 Main Street, Hope Valley

October 17 from 4–7pm FREE flu vaccine clinic at Chariho Middle School

All community members ages 3 years and up are welcome. Register online at [schoolflu.com](http://schoolflu.com) to schedule an appointment. Online registration is required to guarantee the availability of the vaccine and walk-ins will be limited. Learn more at <https://health.ri.gov/flu/>.

## **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.