



Richmond Community Alliance  
Encouraging constructive community engagement and action

## **NEWSLETTER**

No. 12 March 3, 2024

### **Peaks**

#### ***Ethics Complaint Against Councilor Nassaney Dismissed***

On February 27, the R.I. Ethics Commission, after completing its investigation, dismissed the complaint against Town Council Vice President Rich Nassaney filed by former council President Nell Carpenter. The complaint alleged that Nassaney had a business relationship with Pasquale Farms and should have recused himself from discussion of Pasquale's complaint against former Electrical Inspector Jeffery Vaillancourt. The commission investigation determined that Nassaney's sole dealing with Pasquale was selling two cases of his hot sauce to them six months before he participated in discussion of Pasquale's complaint. Nassaney had been paid in full for his product and there was no expectation of future sales. Therefore the commission concluded that because there was no ongoing business relationship between Nassaney and Pasquale, Nassaney was not required to recuse from participating in the discussion of the complaint. This dismissal was with prejudice, meaning that this issue cannot be raised again.

#### ***Denise Poyer Shares Watershed Expertise***

On March 2, the Richmond Democratic Town Committee hosted a community conversation with Denise Poyer concerning the history and importance of rivers that flow through Richmond and their watershed receiving a National Wild and Scenic River designation. Less than 1% of the 3.6 million miles of streams in the U.S. have this designation. Denise is the former program director for the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association and currently serves as an alternative representative on the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council for the town of Richmond. The Wood-Pawcatuck watershed is 300 square miles and includes seven major rivers in 12 towns in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Denise spoke about the study process that was required to qualify for the designation, what the Wild and Scenic designation means, and the role of the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council, including providing grants to local communities for projects related to the rivers' watershed. Antonia Bryson, Richmond's representative on the Stewardship Council, was also in attendance. It was a very interesting and informative presentation. For more info, visit [www.wpwildrivers.org](http://www.wpwildrivers.org)

## **Valleys**

### ***Investigation of Ethics Complaints Against Councilor Colasante Continue***

The R.I. Ethics Commission also discussed in executive session a pending complaint against Councilor Michael Colasante at its February 27 meeting. The complaint filed by Council President Mark Trimmer (No. 2023-10) alleges that Colasante was required to recuse from discussions on June 6, August 29 and September 29 relating to the job performance of former Electrical Inspector Jeffrey Vaillancout because Vaillancout's company performed electrical work at Colasante's Buttonwoods Sawmill business. After the executive session discussion of the investigation, the commission announced in open session that it determined the record established that good cause existed to grant the prosecution's motion to enlarge time for investigation 60 days to May 11, 2024 to conclude the investigation, conduct a probable cause hearing and issue related findings. There is another complaint pending against Colasante (No. 2023-12) claiming that Colasante should have recused from voting to award paving contracts to D'Ambra Construction because D'Ambra and related companies were performing work at Colasante's sawmill business. That complaint is still in the initial period of investigation by the commission.

## **Other Items of Note**

### ***Chariho Public Budget Hearing March 5***

As part of the budget process required by the Chariho Act a public hearing will be conducted before the School Committee on Tuesday, March 5 at 7:30 pm in the middle school auditorium. To achieve a quorum for the meeting at least 25 registered voters from each town must be present. Only registered voters are permitted to participate in the meeting. We encourage registered voters to attend to become better informed and/or make their voice heard.

## **Opinion Corner**

### ***Investment in High Quality Public Education is Critical for Our Country's Future***

By Jim Palmisciano

There is debate across our country regarding funding for public education. Opponents of the public education system cite tax concerns, philosophical or ideological belief differences, perceived inefficiencies in our public system (promoting private or alternative educational models), and disagreement on curriculum or policy issues, to name a few. We have seen these issues raised by some in Chariho, including School Committee members. These are important topics to resolve, but the answer cannot be to destroy, dismantle, and defund public education. Our children deserve better.

And as we fight amongst ourselves and continue to chip away at our bedrock education system, we as a country are falling behind. In global rankings of primary education, the United States has been assessed in various ways, and its position has fluctuated over time. While it has a strong and well-established system of public education, the U.S. primary education system's performance has faced scrutiny in comparison to other countries. In international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the U.S. has often performed above average in some areas but has not consistently ranked at the very top.

All children having access to a quality free public education has been a significant differentiator for the development of the U.S. It has played a crucial role in developing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which has been vital for the country's economic growth and innovation. Free public education has provided opportunities for social mobility, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds to access education and pursue their aspirations, contributing to a more dynamic and adaptable society. Through developing talent and fostering creativity, our education system has been a cornerstone of the country's innovation and global competitiveness. It has also promoted civic engagement and a more informed citizenry, strengthening the foundations of democracy and civil society. Free public education has been a cornerstone of the United States' development.

If we want the U.S. to remain a hub for innovation and a global leader for democracy, we need to change the mindset in our culture about public education. This is an important issue for our national security. Every single child who attends public schools could be tomorrow's inventor, scientist, teacher, or President. When did we lose sight of ALL our children being our future? By empowering students (and teachers) in our public education system, we are going to drive economic growth for our community, state and country, and foster a vibrant and dynamic society.

## **Community Profile**

### ***Clark Memorial Library***

Most people know that libraries are places residents can go to borrow free physical books, movies and music. But there are so many other ways these local treasures enrich the community that people may not be aware of. Clark Memorial Library, Richmond's local branch of the Ocean State Library network, serves the residents by promoting life-long learning and literacy through resources, services and programs to meet the evolving cultural, educational, informational, recreational and research needs of all community members. Did you know that, in addition to physical books, you can check out a Kindle or Nook? You can also borrow ebooks for free using the Libby app, and staff members can assist members in learning how to take advantage of this

convenient resource. Clark offers use of computers with free internet access, as well as printing, copies, scanning – and even a 3D printer! There’s also a college planning group, a genealogy group, a fiber arts group, a book club and a recurring “community conversations” series on Saturday mornings featuring members of our community. Learn more and sign up for their newsletter at: [www.clarklib.org/](http://www.clarklib.org/)

## **Upcoming Meetings**

March 5 – Town Council Meeting – 5 pm at Town Hall

March 5 – Chariho Budget Public Hearing – 7:30 pm at Middle School Auditorium – 25 registered voters from each town required for a quorum

March 12 – Planning Board Meeting – 6:30 pm at Town Hall

March 12 – Chariho School Committee – 7:00 pm at CHS Library

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)

## **Community Calendar**

### ***Richmond Recreation Summer Camp 2024***

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

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

### ***United Way 211 Van – March 5 from 12–3 pm – Chariho Plaza***

The 211-Van is a rolling office filled with a wealth of information and knowledgeable staff to answer questions about housing, SNAP, Medicare, Medicaid, job training and much more! If you’re unable to stop by you can also dial 211 from your phone any time for information.

### ***St. Paddy’s Day Luncheon – March 16 at 11 am – Richmond Senior Center***

Richmond Senior Center will be serving corned beef sandwiches, potato salad, drinks and dessert on March 16 to celebrate St. Paddy’s Day. All are welcome \$5.00 per person. Must sign up by March 11 by contacting Dennis (401) 491-9404.

## **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.