



## **NEWSLETTER**

No. 3 October 22, 2023

### **Peaks**

#### ***Ms. Paige Leddy receives Milken Educator Award***

Chariho is a great school district filled with wonderful teachers and students. A testament to this – Richmond Elementary School’s own Ms. Paige Leddy recently received the prestigious Milken Educator Award. Ms. Leddy is a reading specialist. This is a \$25,000 grant following a national search for exceptional educators. This is a stellar accomplishment for classroom teachers. As stated on the Milken Educator Award Facebook page, “Paige Leddy is dedicated to infusing the knowledge and love of reading at Richmond Elementary School and beyond. ... After school, Paige is involved in Ready Set Shine, a club serving students in need. By connecting with students’ families and the community, Leddy helps cultivate higher involvement in parent nights, PTO projects, and literacy learning at home.” Further evidence of Ms. Leddy’s character – upon receiving the award, she thanked and credited all the great educators in Chariho that she has worked with and learned from since being a student teacher at Richmond. Congratulations!



#### ***Community Conversation with Scott Barber***

Saturday morning a group of residents listened to Scott Barber speak at Clark Memorial Library about his work as Chief of the Richmond-Carolina Fire Department and as Richmond’s Director of Public works. It was interesting to hear about the history of the fire service and highway department in Richmond. Scott also brought Jr. Lieutenant Ava Bridge with him to speak about the department’s growing junior firefighter program. Although Ava said she had never spoken in front of a group of people, the seventeen year old spoke with poise and confidence about the program and how it’s benefiting the youth in our community. Scott also reminded the group of the multiple responsibilities that fall under the Department of Public works including road repair, snow plowing, building and grounds maintenance of town properties, transfer station, tree trimming/removal, etc. We learned that the department reuses all of the material that it removes

in its work, including what is swept from our streets. The event was well attended; in addition to listening to Scott, it was nice to converse with fellow residents including Town Councilors Helen Sheehan and Samantha Wilcox.

### ***New ad hoc Business Development Group***

In a bi-partisan/unanimous vote, the Town Council created an ad hoc Business Development Group to assist in the economic growth of our community. The members will consist of one Town Councilor, one Planning Board member, and one Economic Development Commission member, along with town officials in an attempt to reinvigorate development. The RCA believes this is a step in the right direction. If the group is able to highlight development goals from the town's Comprehensive Community Plan, create new directives, or streamline the process for developers, it is a win for the town. Link to the Comprehensive Community Plan

[https://clerkshq.com/Content/Richmond-ri/CompPlan/Richmond\\_DRAFTCompPlan2021.pdf](https://clerkshq.com/Content/Richmond-ri/CompPlan/Richmond_DRAFTCompPlan2021.pdf)

## **Valleys**

### ***The Public Forum Episode***

The RCA supports the right of every member of the public to speak during public forum and have input on any topic that is on the Town Council agenda. However, the right to free speech has limits and no person should need to endure disparaging comments, especially from elected officials. Politics is an environment that requires a thick skin, patience, and the ability to work with those with whom you disagree. Unfortunately, Councilman Colasante did not conduct himself in this way on Tuesday. Read RCA's Facebook post with our take on this here

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550340674333>

Councilor Colasante's conduct is against the values of our organization, and we will continue to call attention to this behavior if it continues. The public's tolerance for this conduct is at an all-time low. As November of 2024 approaches, it will be more difficult for him to overcome these incidents and justify re-election to represent our community.

### ***Ongoing Ethics Concerns***

This week there were news reports about an ongoing Ethics Commission investigation involving Councilor Rich Nassaney, submitted by past Town Councilor Nell Carpenter. In summary, the ethics complaint states that Councilman Nassaney participated in Town Council business when he had a conflict of interest regarding his hot sauce business, "Rich's Sweet Heat" relationship with the Washington County Fair and Pasquale Farms. In the future, to prevent potential ethics complaints, it is in Mr. Nassaney's best interest to recuse from matters involving Richmond businesses to whom he could potentially sell his sauce and he should leave the dais when he recuses himself.

We learned from another Ethics Commission investigation that Councilman Colasante admits to having a business relationship with Electrical Inspector Jeff Vaillancourt, yet still participated in the Town Council discussions of Vaillancourt's job performance. It is unclear whether that business relationship existed when Colasante advocated for Vaillancourt's hiring by the town in March 2023. A Town Councilor acting on a matter concerning a business associate is a clear violation of the ethics laws. If this is true, Councilman Colasante should admit the violation and not cause the taxpayers to incur the cost of a full ethics commission investigation and hearing. In the future, we also believe that Councilman Colasante should recuse himself from any discussion regarding Mr. Vaillancourt or his business.

## **Other Items of Note**

### ***Question of the week***

On October 20, one of Councilor Colasante's supporters was on NBC-10 News (<https://turnto10.com/i-team/councilmans-sauce-key-ingredient-in-one-of-two-ethics-investigations-political-richmond-rhode-island-southern-new-england-october-20-2023#>) promoting her ethics complaint against Councilor Nassaney. The complaint by Nell Carpenter claims that Councilor Nassaney participated in a discussion that occurred in executive session. How could a person not on the Town Council learn about what occurred in the executive session?

### ***Open letter to Richmond Democratic Town Committee Chair, Joe Reddish***

For several months, Councilor Samantha Wilcox, the only Democrat on the Town Council, has been criticized and attacked by Councilor Michael Colasante and his operatives during Town Council meetings and on social media. Those complaints came to a head this week in Mr. Colasante's statement, read in public forum, that Ms. Wilcox is more concerned with filing open meetings complaints than helping the people of Richmond. On social media, Kathryn Colasante states that "Wilcox, blind to her own snarkiness, complained about contention on council even as she started her term taking pages of notes out to get her new colleagues on some infraction." The Richmond Community Alliance has spoken out against Councilor Colasante's behavior and these personal attacks. Mr. Reddish, as the chair of the Richmond Democrats, we would expect you to be more vocal in your defense of Councilor Wilcox. To date, your public commentary in her favor has been non-existent. Will you publicly state your support for Councilor Wilcox and condemn the outrageous accusation being made by Councilor Colasante? It is no secret that Colasante received \$3,000 in campaign contributions from people connected to The Preserve, your employer. Does that situation limit your ability to speak out on issues in Richmond? As the chair of the RDTC, you need to make your position crystal clear concerning support for Councilor Wilcox. If you are unwilling or unable to support the members of your party when attacked, perhaps it is time for the democratic town committee to replace you as Chair, or time for you to step down.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

October 23 – Zoning Board of Review Meeting – 7 pm at Town Hall

October 24 – Planning Board Meeting – 6:30 pm – Town Hall

October 24 - Chariho School Committee - 7:00 pm - Chariho High School Library

November 6 – Rural Preservation Land Trust Meeting – 5:30 pm at Town Hall

November 7 – Town Council Meeting – 6 pm at Town Hall

### **Community Calendar**

Through Oct 31 – Corn Maze at Spring Hill Sugar House, 522 Gardiner Road

Oct 22 at 4 pm – Fall Farm Nights at Pasquale Farms

November 4 at 11 am – Dog Park Grand Opening, 3 Country Acres Road