



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

## **NEWSLETTER**

No. 5 November 19, 2023

### **Peaks**

#### ***Richmond Community Alliance is thankful for...***

- Richmond's hard-working town employees
- The positive feedback we have received from the community since our public launch – 191 Facebook followers, 134 newsletter signups, and innumerable kind words
- Board and commission volunteers
- The beautiful town we live in
- The generosity of community members that helped RCA collect 400 lbs of personal care and cleaning products for RICAN to make available to those in need

### **Other Items of Note**

#### ***Land Conservation in Richmond***

By Dan Madnick, Planning Board Vice Chair

Richmond is a rural community, but how rural is it? Did you know that Richmond covers an area of almost 25,000 acres? Wow, that's a lot of land, especially for a community that feels so small! Most people live here for the rural character of the community, which is supported by survey results reported in Richmond's Comprehensive Community Plan. In fact, the top two responses to the question "What do you think makes Richmond a great place to live?" were Rural Setting and Natural Beauty.

There has been a lot of discussion in Richmond about the need for increased economic development to help offset residential taxes and provide additional amenities and services to residents. How much land is available for development? The Comprehensive Community Plan provides data to assist in determining total land for economic development. The simplest method is to compare the total land designated as "Conservation and Open Space." Of the 25,000 acres in Richmond, ~13,250 is considered "developed," which leaves about 50% of the remaining land

available for development. Keep in mind that some of this land is not suitable for development or is conserved, but not all conserved land is considered “undeveloped” because it is land set aside within approved subdivisions. Additionally, over 1,000 acres of land is zoned for commercial and industrial development, so there is plenty of property that can be utilized for businesses to use or develop.

We have also seen and heard claims that Richmond has taken too much land off the tax rolls by placing it in conservation thus restricting the town’s ability to increase development and the tax base. But how much of the land in Richmond is “Conservation and Open Space” and who owns it? Here is a selection of data from Appendix C of the Comprehensive Community Plan:

- Property Owned by the Town of Richmond (> 10 acre parcels): 40.57 acres
- Property Owned by Richmond Rural Preservation Land Trust (RRPLT): 553.37 acres
- Property Owned by The Nature Conservancy: 442.03 acres
- Property Owned by The Audubon Society of Rhode Island: 104.19 acres
- Property Owned by Residents as Open Space in Residential Subdivisions: 656.16 acres
- Property Owned by State of RI DEM (>10 acre parcels): 5,855 acres

Grand Total: 7651 acres – so 77% of the conserved space is state owned and only 8% is town owned or controlled!

The grand total of conserved land presented here is ~31% of the total acreage available in Richmond and ~23% of the total land is owned by the state. Note that the Comprehensive Community Plan cites a total of 8,280 acres of protected lands. Only a small portion of the conserved land in Richmond is owned by the town, the RRPLT, private entities, or in open space conveyed to residents in cluster or conservation subdivisions. In most instances, the conserved land was donated.

So there is plenty of developable land in Richmond, and the town and RRPLT are not removing land from the tax rolls in a way that impacts the town’s ability to grow its tax base. The town has no control over the fact that state lands make up 77% of conserved land in Richmond (mainly Arcadia and Carolina Management Areas). So conserved land is not to blame for Richmond’s lack of a broad tax base.

Economic development is important for the vitality of our town and to reduce the tax burden on residents. However, uncontrolled growth and unplanned land use can strain local resources, including schools, water quality and supply, roadway maintenance and emergency services. Because Richmond is heavily dependent on residential property taxes, many residents would like the town to encourage diverse land development that increases the non-residential tax base while making minimal demands on services and minimal changes in the rural character of the town.

This can still happen, while continuing to support conservation and open space that gives Richmond its natural beauty and contributes to our rural community.

### ***Genesis of a bid***

There has been discussion in town about the award of a bid to replace the backup generator at Town Hall. The current generator has been deemed insufficient in the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan. Information provided by the electrical inspector indicated that the generator would be more expensive than the \$30,000 in ARPA money that was previously allocated. The process for purchasing items of this value is governed by Town Ordinances that follow the requirements of state law (RI General Laws 45-55-5). For purchases of \$5,000 or more the Town must use competitive sealed bidding as set forth in ordinance chapters 2.30.060 & 2.30.070. A solicitation for bids must be posted at least 14 days before the date for opening bids and include the specifications for the item to be purchased. The solicitation must be posted on the town's website which has a section dedicated to bids (<https://www.richmondri.com/Bids.aspx>).

Bids must be submitted in a clearly marked sealed envelope and are opened at a public meeting that is posted 48 hours in advance. Each bidder is notified of the date, time, and location of the bid opening. After the bids are opened a document must be prepared that lists the bidders and the amount of each bid. The award must be made to the lowest responsive bid by a qualified bidder. The purpose of this process is to ensure that all bidders are on an even playing field and that a bidder whose bid meets the criteria and is the lowest bid price shall be awarded the contract.

As a result of this process for the backup generator, the Town Administrator reported to the Town Council at the October 3 meeting that two bids were received, one for about \$160,000 and one for about \$99,000. She reported that the DPW Director determined that the low bid met the required specifications. Per the ordinance, she requested authorization to sign a contract with the low bidder. Councilor Colasante balked at that because he had "talked to a few people" and (without knowing the specifications) they thought the price was "kinda high." Councilman Colasante suggested that he be allowed to give the specifications to these "people" to see if they could provide a cheaper price. His request was rejected by three council members. Nevertheless, at the November 7 meeting, Councilor Colasante brought the issue up again to criticize Councilors Trimmer, Nassaney and Wilcox for opposing his request, and his supporters have continued that criticism on social media.

Clearly Councilor Colasante's request would violate the law. His proposal would discriminate against those who followed the process by submitting sealed bids in favor of Councilor Colasante's "people" who would benefit by knowing the amount of other bids, which would allow them to under bid for the contract. That is far from an even playing field and risks a suit against the Town. Councilor Colasante claims that his bidder would save the town about \$25,000. Nevertheless, that savings would be quickly eaten up by the legal fees from legitimate

bidders suing the town. If Councilor Colasante really wants to save the town money he should encourage companies to sign up to receive an email or text message when new solicitations of bids are added and to submit bids as part of the legal process. While we applaud mindfulness of public funds, the ends of saving money cannot justify the means of ignoring the legal bidding process.

## **Community Profile**

### ***Maggie's Pet Pantry***

Maggie's Pet Pantry is a not-for-profit supply shed at 52 Buttonwoods Road (next to DPW and transfer station), intended to help those having trouble caring for their pets during hard times. Maggie's aims to provide care for the animals of our community by collecting generous donations from community members, and making a wide variety of items available for pickup at the pantry to those in need. <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100021050712430>

## **Upcoming Meetings**

November 21 – Town Council Meeting – 6 pm at Town Hall  
November 27 – Zoning Board of Review – 7 pm at Town Hall  
November 28 – Planning Board Meeting – 6:30 pm at Town Hall  
Agendas can be found at <https://clerkshq.com/richmond-ri>

## **Community Calendar**

### ***Giving Events***

November 26 – Racers for RICAN Toy Drive – 12 pm–2 pm at RICAN  
Online Teens for Teens RI items bought from wish list delivered to RICAN  
[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3ET73WKZB1BXY?ref\\_=wl\\_share&fbclid=IwAR2O9qhZvDQY415uV0AJb5P9thMaTDQRQu3LHxXnNz030XgVxiCwRY7TdWM](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3ET73WKZB1BXY?ref_=wl_share&fbclid=IwAR2O9qhZvDQY415uV0AJb5P9thMaTDQRQu3LHxXnNz030XgVxiCwRY7TdWM)  
Ongoing Anchor of Hope Foundation supporting children affected by substance abuse  
(<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087011315893>) holiday gift collection box at Pasquale Farms, 421 Kingstown Rd, Richmond  
November 28 – Alaina's Ale House Giving Tuesday to benefit Arcadia YMCA – 4 pm–8 pm

### ***Community Events***

November 28 – FAFSA & Financial Aid Workshop, Arcadia YMCA Community Room – 6 pm–7 pm  
November 24–December 23 – Wawaloam Campground Festival of Lights  
<https://wawaloam.com/christmas.html>

November 28 – FAFSA & Financial Aid Workshop, Arcadia YMCA Community Room – 6 pm–7 pm

December 2 – Pasquale Farms Winterfest – 1 pm

<https://facebook.com/events/s/pasquale-farms-2nd-annual-wint/1778249999356687/>

December 2 – Hope Valley Wyoming Fire Holiday Bazaar, 996 Main St. – 10 am–3 pm

December 2 – Hope Valley Wyoming Fire Dept Santa parade, route TBA – after dark

## **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.