



Richmond Community Alliance
Encouraging constructive community engagement and action

NEWSLETTER

No. 6 December 2, 2023

Peaks

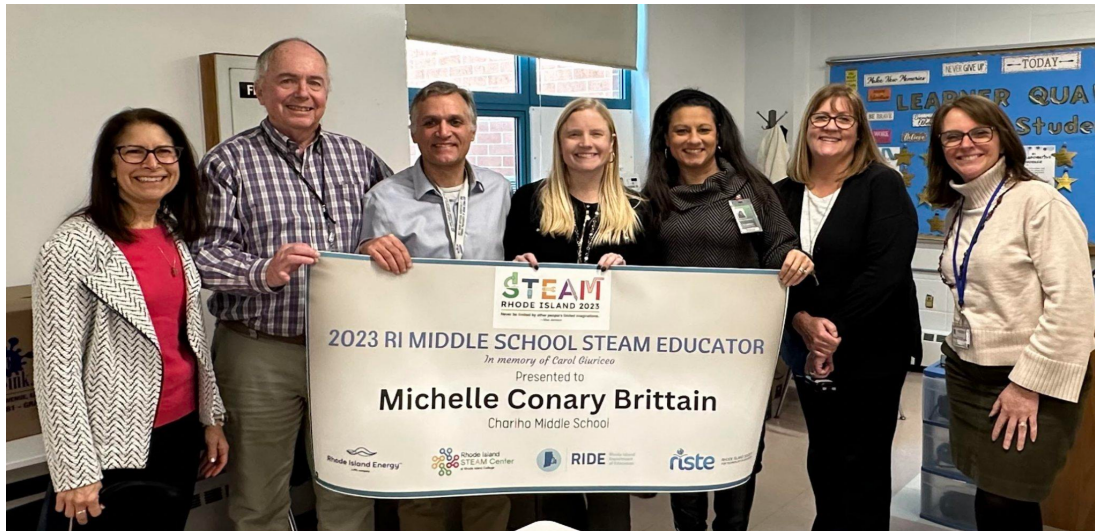
More Chariho educators honored

Adrienne Buckley, a special educator at Chariho Alternative Learning Academy (CALA), was awarded the RI Environmental Education Association's 2023 Teacher of the Year. She was recognized for her engaging, innovative, and effective teaching methods, which help her students learn about the environment and engage in outdoor activities. Adrienne teaches a multi-grade classroom where science has always been a priority. She is a creative teacher who seeks to enable all of her students to explore and make sense of the world through firsthand experience. Last school year, Adrienne established a partnership with Maisy's Tree Farm. She and her students visited Maisy's Tree Farm one day each month for the entire 2022–2023 school year. At the farm, students were engaged in immersive, place-based learning that not only incorporated science but all aspects of the elementary curriculum. Congratulations, Adrienne!



Michelle Conary Brittain, a computer science teacher at Chariho Middle School, was honored with the RI Middle School STEAM Educator Award from the RI Department of Education the RI STEAM (Science, Technology, Arts+design, Engineering, and Mathematics) Center at Rhode Island College. According to the press release, Michelle is being recognized for her outstanding contributions to advancing computer science education in RI. It notes that “her dedication to inspiring young minds in the rapidly-evolving field of technology has had a profound impact on her students at Chariho Middle School. Michelle has played an integral role in leading implementation of RIDE and CS4RI STEAM initiatives, with expertise in specialized robotics, computer literacy, and game design instruction, as well as program development, curriculum development, and standard development. Colleagues describe her classroom as an ‘open and

inviting place' where she is 'respected and loved by her students and held in the highest regard by her peers.'" Michelle is a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. Congratulations, Michelle!



L to R: RI STEAM Center Dir. Dr. Lisa Bain, CS Teacher & Content Leader for Unified Arts Bryan Lucas, Principal Gregory Zenion, Michelle Conary Brittain, STEM Specialist Susie Scanapieco, AP Mary Beth Florenz, RIDE STEM Specialist Carolyn Higgins

Opinion Corner

Political Repression Has No Place in Richmond

By Jim Palmisciano

At the November 21 Town Council meeting, Councilor Helen Sheehan read a prepared statement opposing the reappointment of Mark Reynolds to the Tax Assessment Board of Review. She included these five points summarized below:

1. In January 2023 Reynolds filed an Open Meetings Act complaint against Councilors Sheehan, Michael Colasante & Mark Trimmer. Sheehan cited the resulting cost to the taxpayers for this complaint.
2. Sheehan stated that she presumed that Reynolds would be running for Town Council in 2024 and she claimed that the OMA complaint and the contested appointment of Clay Johnson to School Committee were being used to cast an ethics shadow on Sheehan, Colasante & Trimmer.
3. Sheehan remarked that Reynolds had opposed the Tri Town Committee proposed by Colasante and supported by Sheehan.

4. Sheehan alleged that Reynolds had a personal bias against The Preserve, and that his “decisions on the Tax Assessment Board of Review might be influenced by his emotional bias against The Preserve.”
5. Sheehan expressed concerns that Reynolds’ ability to work with the entire Council would be influenced by his position as the chair of the Richmond Community Alliance (RCA), a group often critical of the actions of Sheehan and Colasante.

This weekend Sheehan followed that up with a letter to the editor of The Westerly Sun. She states without any evidence or example “that Mark Reynolds is not so worried about the effect of ever-rising taxes as I am, so his perspective about what is good for the town is different from mine.”

Of the 8,000 plus residents of Richmond, I am in a unique position to speak to this unfortunate turn of events. I have had the chance to get to know both Helen Sheehan and Mark Reynolds on a personal level. Helen has been a kind and pleasant neighbor for several years. I have enjoyed conversations with her, sometimes agreeing to disagree, but never being disagreeable. Through activities with my son in Scouts BSA, I have had the pleasure of knowing Mark Reynolds for the last 8 years. In all my years I have never known a family who gives back more to their community than Mark’s. So as the nexus between these two individuals, let me offer my thoughts on the opposition to Mark’s reappointment and a call to action.

Points # 1, 2, 3, & 5 carry the same theme – Mark Reynolds is an opposition political figure who represents a significant threat to the current council make up in 2024. Do a quick Google search for “political repression,” and you will find this definition on Wikipedia:

***Political repression** is the act of a state entity controlling a citizenry by force for political reasons, particularly for the purpose of restricting or preventing the citizenry’s ability to take part in the political life of a society, thereby reducing their standing among their fellow citizens.*

Let me just pull out the words “for the purpose of restricting or preventing the citizenry’s ability to take part in the political life of a society, thereby reducing their standing among their fellow citizens.” If I didn’t want Mark Reynolds to compete for a Council seat next year, what better way than to remove him from any official town capacity. This trend that has been repeated by some councilors is chilling, and it reverberates far beyond the single reappointment in question. Ask yourself what the benchmark criterion would have been on hiring town employees should some council members have achieved their goal of making town positions political appointments?

Point # 4 and the letter accuses Mark of personal bias (conjecture) to The Preserve as a member of the tax assessment board of review and attempts to paint his actions as “not in the best interest

of the taxpayers". Now I could go on and on about how Mark served the town (and taxpayers) with distinction on the Tax Assessment Board of Review, but I recommend that you just watch Mark's rebuttal to these allegations at the last council meeting at 26:20 of the video

<https://www.youtube.com/live/kNb7GhWDCoo?si=OUA8XlqFem58PCv&t=1576>

And just as a reminder, the Tax Assessment Board of Review serves the best interests of the people of Richmond, and not any one entity coming before them. As taxpayers, let us not forget this important fact.

A government that restricts participation based on an individual's viewpoints or political ideologies is leaning dangerously in the totalitarian direction. This is not the Helen Sheehan that I know, and I do not believe that she penned these outlandish points of opposition on her own. There are many open positions currently for boards and commissions. What would happen if I was to go before Council in the hopes of an appointment?

- I too am on the steering committee for the Richmond Community Alliance.
- Not only was I a former Council member, but I will run for elected office again in 2024.
- I have been vocal in my opposition to the appointment of Clay Johnson to the School Committee, a decision ultimately made by three council members who sought their own external legal opinion on the matter.
- I support any citizen's right to file an OMA complaint if they have concerns.

If I put my name in as a candidate for an open seat on a board or commission, would I be denied the right of public participation in local government that is enshrined in the Constitution? I would hope not...

We need to reign in the political antics ever-present in Richmond and restore the trust that our elected officials will carry out the will of the people, and not the tenets of any political ideology. Where to start?

Call to Action:

Helen Sheehan is a conscious conservative who represents the views of many in our community, and I believe she wants to serve her town. Mark Reynolds is a person who embodies trust, integrity, and honesty, and lives a true service mindset. He has given so much time and effort to help others in his personal and professional life and would be an amazing steward of the town as a Council member in 2024.

Helen – instead of hurling accusations without evidence, I ask you to join me and Mark for a coffee so that each of you may learn a little more about the other and find common ground and understanding. This can only benefit our town in moving forward as we are all part of this community. Trust starts with building relationships.

Community Profile

Local Christmas Tree Farms

Pinecrest Farm, 1 Pinecrest Road, Richmond 401-932-2639

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066913563709>

Beaver River Tree Farm, 2 Link Lane, West Kingston

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064084536238>

Riverside Christmas Tree Farm, 80 Burdickville Rd, Charlestown 401-364-TREE

<https://www.riversidetreefarm.com/>

Evergreen Acres, Liberty Lane, West Kingston

The Farmer's Daughter, pre-cut Route 138; cut your own 1650 Broad Rock Rd, S. Kingstown

<https://www.thefarmersdaughterri.com/>

Upcoming Meetings

December 5 – Town Council Meeting – 6 pm at Town Hall

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

December 12 – Chariho School Committee – 7 pm Chariho High School Library

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

Community Calendar

Giving Events

December 5 – Alaina's Ale House Giving Tuesday to benefit Chariho Middle School PTO
4 pm – 8 pm

December 8 – The Graham Family hosts "YOU Have Enough Stuff" to benefit RICAN Holiday Drive – Legion Bowl, Cranston – 7 pm – 10 pm

<https://www.facebook.com/events/341220698491225>

December 9 – Stuff an RPD Cruiser to benefit Matthew's Wish 10 am – 1:30 pm – Chariho Plaza

December 9 – Matthew's Wish Toy Parade – 1:45 pm – 2 pm – Chariho Plaza to RICAN (follows route 138 to 112)

December 16 – Stuff an Ambulance to benefit Mathew's Wish 10 am - 1 pm – Chariho Plaza

Community Events

December 8 – Richmond Tree Lighting, Richmond Town Hall – 5 pm

<https://fb.me/e/vxuFYj9Vk>

December 9 – Ashaway Elementary School Holiday Bazaar – 9 am – 3 pm

December 9 – Holiday Stroll in Villages of Hopkinton, including Hop Arts Holiday Hop – 9am–4pm & Fireworks 7 pm at Crandall Field <https://www.hoparts.org/holiday-sale/>

December 10 – Westerly Light Parade – 6 pm

<https://www.oceanchamber.org/events/details/westerly-light-parade-2023>

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. We also welcome any tips or items of concern that you wish to bring to our attention.