



Richmond Community Alliance
Encouraging constructive community engagement and action

NEWSLETTER

No. 8 January 7, 2024

Peaks

Kudos to the Chair

Chariho School Committee Chair Catherine Giusti did an outstanding job leading the special meeting on Jan 3 concerning member Polly Hopkins (details below). The meeting was conducted in a fair and professional manner, and all interested persons were given an opportunity to speak.

Richmond Community Alliance Friend-raising Event

On January 25, RCA is hosting a public meet & greet from 6:30–8:30pm at the Richmond-Carolina Fire Department (208 Richmond Townhouse Road). Stop by to learn more about Richmond Community Alliance, meet the steering committee, and share your thoughts on living in Richmond. Light refreshments will be served. Every attendee will be entered in a raffle to win one of four gift cards to local businesses.

Our New Year's Resolution

This year we hope to see – and help foster – a town of Richmond that works together toward positive change. What are your resolutions? Feel free to share with us in person at the January 25 event!

Valleys

Chariho School Committee Censures Hopkinton School Committee Member Polly Hopkins

On January 3, at a special meeting held by the Chariho School Committee, member Polly Hopkins of Hopkinton was formally censured by the committee by a 7–4 vote (one member was absent) for her violation of Chariho's Code of Basic Management Principles and Ethical Standards for School Committee members. The censure was a result of Hopkins November 7 post in her Facebook group that criticized Chariho teacher Sandra Laub, who is an active member of the Jewish community.

 [2024-01-03 School Committee Meeting](#)

< Polly's post ...

Chariho Community, Fight Critical Race Theory in our Schools
 Admin Polly Hopkins · 1d · 📷

Someone should check on Sandra Laub...after her notorious role playing Golda Meir, she leapt onto the Anti-rascist bandwagon and whole-bodily supported the ARTF at Chariho. She must be splitting in 2 between support of Isreal and Hamas.
 comrades should support comrades
 *snort

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send

Andrew McQuaide requested the agenda item and made the motion to formally censure Hopkins for her post concerning Laub. Each committee member was allowed to discuss the motion and put forth their opinion on the matter, and Hopkins was also allowed to explain her behavior. After initial comments by the School Committee, the public was also allowed to comment, including Laub. Then there were final comments by the School Committee and Hopkins. At no time during the discussion did Hopkins explain her social media post or apologize to Laub. Instead, Hopkins spent her time defending her First Amendment rights, deflecting from the issue at hand, and criticizing other members of the community. The two points of the code that Hopkins was found to have violated included “Avoid criticizing employees publicly” and “Strive to promote harmonious working relations with all School Committee members and school staff that are based on mutual

respect, fairness and openness.”

Hopkins has a history of posting inflammatory remarks towards other members of the community, especially those who devote their time to volunteering or serving their community as elected officials. Within the same time frame, Hopkins posted a comment in the Forgotten Taxpayers Facebook Group calling District Representative Megan Cotter a communist and anyone that supports Cotter a communist. Incidentally enough, comment by current Hopkinton Town Councilor Scott Hirst recommended being mindful about comments posted on social media. Unfortunately, Hopkins did not heed his advice.

The basic principle being discussed was if Hopkins’ social media post directly naming an employee at Chariho violated the Code of Basic Management Principles and Ethical Standards. A censure does not prohibit someone’s speech, but is an act of severe

← Louise's post 🔍

Be careful with your comments on social media you may be quoted. Just state their voting records and affiliations. Memberships.

3 wks Like Reply 1

Polly Hopkins
 commies do as commies do...

communists never tell you who they are, they lie. And if you think I'm sounding hyperbolic calling them commies, I'm not, just accept this and life will be easier and the things they do will make more sense.

Megan is a communist...and those that associate themselves with her and garner support from her are not being honest about their intentions. period.

3 wks Like Reply 1

Scott Bill Hirst
 Vote for Justin. The Price is right!

Rules

📷 Write an answer... 🧠 🗨️ 😊

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formal disapproval. In other words, it is a method for a body to hold one of its members accountable for their actions and find that the action was not appropriate.

It was also unfortunate that in addition to Hopkins refusing to take ownership of her actions, her conduct was supported by some members of the school committee, two of which are elected officials from Richmond, Patricia Pouliot and Kathryn Colasante. Both voted against censure and defended Hopkins' actions. Colasante said she did not believe that the post was an attack on a teacher and did not find the post to be antisemitic. Pouliot said she didn't believe that there was not enough evidence or context to determine if Hopkins violated the code.

Fortunately, Richmond's other two school committee members, Jessica Purcell and Karen Reynolds, saw that Hopkins' Facebook post had no purpose other than to attack a Chariho teacher, and did so based upon her religion. Reynolds pointed out the post clearly violated the standard of ethical conduct that School Committee members strive to promote harmonious working relations with school staff based upon mutual respect, fairness and openness. She went on to state, "this post was not kind, helpful, inspiring, truthful or necessary. ... We, as school committee members, are here to support our students, our schools and our community. This post did none of these things, but what we do here today will support our students and our community because we will show them that social media posts have consequences, that we stand up to hatred and divisiveness, and that we support our staff." Purcell noted that this teacher was not the first person to be targeted by Hopkins on Facebook, and that because the teacher felt targeted to such an extent that she went to her union leadership to lodge a complaint, the committee must acknowledge that the comment was improper and censure Hopkins.

Not only is this conduct reprehensible, Hopkins' behavior conflicts with one of the stated values of the Richmond Community Alliance, that elected officials take "ownership and accountability" for their actions. While Hopkins did not have the courage to apologize for her remarks, we applaud the School Committee for having the courage to censure Hopkins for violating the code of ethical behavior. The First Amendment protects the right of US citizens to speak freely, however, it does not mean that inappropriate and hateful speech will not have consequences.

Other Items of Note

Town Solicitor

The deadline for applications for the position of Town Solicitor has been extended until January 19. To apply, visit: <http://www.richmondri.com/Jobs.aspx>

Community Profile

Maddie Potts Foundation

The Maddie Potts Foundation was established in November of 2017, less than two months after Maddie's sudden death on the soccer field of an asymptomatic brain aneurysm. This 501(c)(3) foundation was founded in order to carry on Maddie's legacy of kindness, compassion, hard work, inclusive leadership and perseverance, "Maddie Mentality." In addition to funding the construction of a field house on the Chariho campus, The Maddie Potts Foundation gives back to the community each year with scholarships, assistance to families suffering the loss of a child or the illness of a child, supporting programs for individuals with disabilities.

maddiepottsfoundation.org

Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, January 9 – Planning Board meeting – 6:30 pm at Town Hall

January 16 – Town Council meeting – 6:00 pm at Town Hall

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

Chariho Budget and School Bond Important Dates

Necessity for School Construction Subcommittee

Monday, January 8 – 4:00 pm at Chariho High School library

Community Vision Meeting with SLAM Architecture Firm

Monday, January 8 – 6:00 pm at Chariho High School library

School Committee Meeting + Intro of FY25 Budget

Tuesday, January 9 – 7:00 pm at Chariho High School library

School Committee Budget Workshop

Thursday, January 11 – 6:00 pm at Chariho High School library

Agendas can be found at https://www.chariho.k12.ri.us/school_committee/meeting_schedule

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.