

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN / SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday May 24, 2023 – 6:00 PM – Hybrid

**PRESENT:** Roger Manzolini, Chair; Neal Pilson, Selectman; Alan Hanson, Selectman; Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator; Steve Traver, Fire Chief; Jay Phelps, Resident; Robert Czerwinski, Fire Chief, Ret., Volunteer Fire Fighters for the town of Richmond and Volunteer firefighters for the town of West Stockbridge

**Approval and Vote for Facilities / Highway Job Description and Ad Posting:** Roger moved to approve the job description and ad posting. He was seconded by Al and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

**Fire Department Safety Concerns:** Jay Phelps brought forward some alleged safety concerns he had about the testing and maintenance of hydrants and fire trucks. Roger began the discussion with the status of the fire hydrants in town. He asked questions that included the number and type of hydrants in Richmond, their locations, conditions, and schedule of testing. Chief Traver submitted a written report that answered all those questions.

A discussion followed that included a history of the maintenance of the hydrants, reasons for a hydrant being out of service and the various kinds of connections that exist on the different hydrants. Roger asked the Chief if Richmond has a problem with access to water. Steve replied that it does not and noted that in addition, all the surrounding towns will answer a fire alarm with their Tankers. Roger asked the Chief if he could produce a written plan that would keep Richmond in a good place with respect to access to water and maintainability. The Chief agreed to do that. Roger asked the Volunteer firefighters in the audience whether they feel there is any validity to the concerns raised about the maintenance of the fire hydrants and should the Board take any action. The volunteers responded that they had no issue with the current maintenance of the fire hydrants. Jay Phelps said that the NFPA has specific requirements for testing of hydrants. Mr. Robert Czerwinski, retired Fire Chief and currently a volunteer for Richmond, noted that NFPA is not a law-making body, they simply provide suggestions for best practices.

Jay Phelps continued the discussion by raising the issue of hydrant fittings, which have been improved over the years. The consensus from the discussion was to remain with what is currently in place and working well.

Jay raised additional issues which Roger suggested he provide to the Chief as a written list and have the Chief respond accordingly.

Next issue for discussion was the fire hoses. The Chief felt there was no problem with the hoses or their maintenance. There was an explanation of why fire hoses are tested regularly and the competence of the company doing the testing for Richmond. Jay objected that past records don't reflect that all hoses were tested or that they were tested to a specific standard. He

maintained that the Chief is using four-year-old standards. Roger asked the Chief and the volunteer firemen in the audience if they had any concerns at all about the condition or maintenance of the fire hoses. They replied that they did not.

**Fire Trucks:** In response to Jay's claim that the trucks are not tested regularly, Chief Traver noted that there is a full report provided after each testing session, which is kept at the Fire Station. Roger asked the Chief and the volunteers if they had any concerns as to whether the trucks are adequately maintained and periodically tested. The volunteers all expressed their satisfaction with the maintenance and testing of the trucks. Roger said he felt much better after this in-depth discussion about the concerns that had been raised.

Neal noted that he has a great deal of confidence in the Richmond Fire Department, which he felt is an effective, hardworking group that is the heart of the community. Al noted that he felt it disheartening to listen to the unproven allegations of lack of maintenance of the fire department equipment. Roger explained that he felt an obligation to address the alleged concerns and thanked Jay for bringing them to the Board's attention, thereby ensuring that there are no safety concerns to worry about.

**EverSource Project – Tree Cutting Concerns:** Neal noted that at the last meeting, an EverSource representative sought the approval of the Board to install additional poles on East Road, where it happens, he lives. Given the reasonable explanation for the need to add these new poles, the Board voted to approve the addition of new, taller poles and the replacement of existing poles with new, taller ones. Recently, Neal received a notice from EverSource advising that they wanted to take down 24 trees on his property and would need his signed permission to do so. Neal walked the entire length of East Road and identified over 90 trees marked for removal, some of which were already dead. East Road is a popular walking place and he anticipates chaos if all those live shade trees are removed. He believes that many of those trees could be trimmed instead and he has spoken to the EverSource representative and suggested a compromise with them that will preserve the old growth trees on East Road. The purpose of his coming to the Board today in the role of a resident, rather than as a selectman, was to alert the public about what is happening and to caution residents to be proactive in protecting Richmond's way of life.

A discussion ensued that identified the loss of live trees on Summit, Lenox and Swamp Roads in other projects and ideas of how to proceed with EverSource or any other company proposing to clear cut old growth trees from a street.

**Memorial Day Plans:** Danielle announced that Joy Mullen, the Richmond School Music Teacher, has advised her that the band will march and has provided the names of the students who will raise the flag and do the Pledge of Allegiance. She outlined the order of events as follows:

Rabbi Caine – Invocation; Song; Flag Raising; Pledge of Allegiance; National Anthem; Third Grade Class Song; Al Hanson, Speech; Laying of the Wreath with a Veteran.

**Town Administrator Updates:** Blighted Property Update – not complete, will be on the next agenda. Danielle is awaiting a response from Beth Goodman, Town Counsel, on the issue.

Bulky Waste Day – the new textile bins have arrived. They will accept clothing of all kinds (children, women’s, men’s) blankets, towels, curtains, shoes, sneakers, purses, backpacks, gloves, belts, jewelry, hats, and socks. The Town will be paid \$0.07 per pound collected.

**Selectmen’s Matters:** Roger said it was time for him to step down and pass the Chairmanship to Alan. Neal and Al both expressed their sincere appreciation for the excellent job Roger has done in the past years and especially in this very difficult year. Neal moved to name Alan Hanson the next Chair of the Board of Selectmen. Roger seconded the motion, which was passed by unanimous vote.

There was a discussion of the length of time each of the board members has served and the idea was raised that it is time to begin looking for replacements and create a Succession Plan.

There being no further business before the Board, Roger moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM. He was seconded by Neal and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

Signed:

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Roger Manzolini, Chair