

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/ SEWER COMMISSIONERS
Richmond Town Hall and Zoom
December 13, 2023 6:00 PM

Present: Alan Hanson, Roger Manzolini, Neal Pilson, Danielle Fillio

1. Residential Exemption Presentation – Harold Scheid of RGB, our Assessing firm, gave an overview of the information and spreadsheets he had completed which showed how a residential tax exemption would work. He had used the prior years information as this was done over late summer/early fall. He explained that it is based on the median average of home values and showed what the breakeven point would be. Second homeowners would not qualify for the exemption and anyone with a home valued over the breakeven point would have to pay an increase. This could mean that some full-year residents will have to pay more in taxes.

The Board discussed if it made sense to adopt the exemption. It was noted that while it is the decision of the Select Board that perhaps a non-binding article should be put on the warrant to see what the townspeople think of the idea. No decision was made.

2. Tax Classification Hearing – Harold moved on to the classification hearing. He again requested that the town adopt a single tax rate as there are so few commercial properties. He gave an overview of the levy limit, the tax rate, and the average increase in properties. The Excess Levy capacity for this year is \$137,495.00. The tax rate is going down to 9.73 while average home valuations rose \$90,000. The average homeowner with property valued at \$641,400 would see a \$360.00 increase.

Roger made a motion in accordance with M.G.L. Ch. 40, Sec. 56, as amended, that relative to setting the Fiscal Year 2024 tax rate, the percentage of local tax levy which will be borne by each class of real and personal property, be set at the Residential Factor at 1.0 with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.0 pending approval of the town's annual tax recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Neal seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

3. Public Comment

Dick Stover – Wants all employees to park at the northern end of the parking lot and leave the remainder of the parking lot free to residents using the building.

Would like the tree litter removed all along East Road which was left by the electrical department. Neal said he had already contacted Ever Source.

Dick asked the status of the sale of the old Town Hall and if the Town had hired a realtor yet. Roger explained that a realtor is not how that works and explained the RFP process and where the Town currently is in that process.

Holly Stover – She stated that she felt the number of trees that were being pruned and taken down by the electric company has really changed the character of the roadway.

Holly expressed her concerns on the gravel roads and how and when they are graded.

Neal stated that he has traveled on multiple gravel roads in Richmond and other towns to see if there is, in fact, a major defect in the Town roads. He feels that there is not. He stated that he has full confidence in Peter Beckwith, his crew and all the Town Staff. He suggested that Holly ask for more money at the Town Meeting to hire more staff and buy more equipment to be able to maintain the roads to her standards.

Danielle addressed the concerns about the flat area on East Road that Holly was complaining about stating that the sides of the roadway are higher than the road so there is no way to get the water off the roadway which creates the run-off ditches. She stated that the Town is trying and continues to apply for grants to be able to do more work that needs to be done.

Holly stated that she felt the projects that were done were not done correctly, were too expensive, and was not needed in the locations that they were done.

Roger said he has asked other residents about the condition of East Road and other gravel roads and stated that not everyone has the same concerns that Holly does.

4. Town Administrator Updates – Danielle noted that the COA luncheon will be held on the 19th at the Town Hall Community Center and stated that children from Richmond Consolidated would be coming over to help serve.

Gave a quick overview of work in the new Town Hall and what still needs to be done.

5. Selectmen Matters

Neal – Gave a quick update on the Hollow Fields litigation stating that they have not settled the case.

Neal asked Danielle if there was any update with the Fire Department discussions. Danielle stated that she again requested financials and monthly expenses and was told they are still working on gathering the information.

Al – Had a concern on the pathway between the school and Town Hall and wanted to know what the plans are to maintain it and make sure it is ADA compliant. It was noted that that is on the list to be done in the spring.

Roger noted that the two stumps on the side of the driveway will be ground up and removed in the spring.

6. Adjournment – 7:26 PM