

Minutes of the LRSWG Meeting on March 26, 2019, Richmond Town Hall

Present: Tom Matuszko, Coordinator, Amanda Hale, Dewey Wyatt, Lauren Broussal, Melissa Roler, Neal Pilson, Penny Saupe, Peter Cohen, Stevan Patterson, Ed Fechner, Julia Sabourin, Wendy Laurin.

Guest: Steve Erenberg

Coordinator Tom Matuszko called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

Wendy Laurin advised she was not ready to report for the Affordable Housing Committee at this time. She said her committee needed participation from an attorney and/or a contractor.

Peter Cohen, reporting for the Marketing Committee, said that he had looked at the Town Video again and felt that the video did not require any "refreshing" since it is normally viewed for the first time by new people looking for homes in Richmond. The committee agreed.

Steve Erenberg, a local real estate agent present at the meeting, said that he often shows the video to prospective clients and that it was an "effective" sales tool. Copies of the new Town Brochure were made available to committee members.

Nothing new from the Finance and Data Subcommittee. They are looking for enrollment data from the Richmond School.

Melissa Roler and Peter Cohen reported for the Library/Municipal Building committee. They advised that a plan under review for the private construction of a library/community center/town hall could not proceed under state regulations and they would now have to consider concepts for a new library/community center and drop inclusion of a new town hall due to cost issues. They suggested the town plan to keep the current town hall in use for the foreseeable future.

Neal Pilson reported for the Public Safety Committee and advised that the Ambulance Corps had added new members and its response rate for the past few months has improved dramatically. The Town is considering the purchase of a new ambulance to replace the current model which is 12 years old. Neal also advised that County Ambulance is no longer available as an option for the primary response unit for the Town given the demand on its services but will continue to perform as a back-up if Richmond is unable to respond on a call.

The committee also discussed the winter road situation. Pilson advised that the cost of paving our gravel roads was far more than the town could afford but said the Selectman were looking into the possibility of improving the gravel roads at the locations where the mud was particularly bad. A member suggested the town should have done a better job grading in the fall.

Pilson praised the work of the Highway Department given the number and extent of gravel roads in the town and the limited crew and equipment available.

Ed Fechner reported for the Cable Advisory Committee. He advised the town franchise agreement would expire in 2020 but his committee had not yet received, after several requests, a copy of a template agreement from Spectrum/TimeWarner. Ed advised that he and others had attended a meeting of the Five Town Cable Negotiating Committee but the Richmond committee may want to proceed on its own in discussions with the cable company. The committee is considering asking for a rate reduction for bundling cable and Internet (phone bundling is not available at this time) and grants for TV equipment at the school and town hall. But Ed pointed out the cost of any new equipment would be included in the rate structure. Wendy Laurin suggested we look into getting fiber distributed throughout the town rather than copper wire.

Pilson suggested that the committee consider the need for more extensive services available to our aging population based on a recent article in the Eagle. The committee agreed to put this issue on the agenda for the next meeting and Tom said he would make available the "age friendly Berkshires" study conducted by the BRPC.

Pilson also reported on the status of the shared Town Administrator discussions with West Stockbridge. He said both Town Boards had agreed to go forward but talks were suspended given the uncertainty regarding Richmond TA Mark Pruhenski who was under consideration to becoming the new TA in Gt. Barrington. Tom M. suggested that Richmond and West Stockbridge consider increasing their financial offer to Mark if he is offered the Gt. Barrington position because both towns would then have to hire separate TAs and the total cost to the towns, given the lack of qualified available candidates, could equal or exceed what they would have to pay Mark to keep him.

The consensus of the Committee was that Mark had done an outstanding job for Richmond and it would be very difficult to replace him with a similarly qualified TA.

Tom will ask Mark to conduct a doodle poll for the next meeting date in early June.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Pilson, temporary secretary.