

Meeting of the Richmond and Hinesburg Police Governance Committee September 21, 2022

Members Present: Anthony Cambridge, Hinesburg Police Chief; Bard Hill, Richmond Selectboard Member; Benjamin Herrick, Richmond Interim Police Chief; Josh Arneson, Richmond Town Manager; June Heston, Richmond Selectboard Chair; Merrily Lovell, Hinesburg Selectboard Chair; Phil Pouech, Hinesburg Selectboard Member; Todd Odit, Hinesburg Town Manager

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Duncan Wardwell, Richmond Assistant to the Town Manager

Others Present: Meeting was recorded by MMCTV; Jennifer Decker; Trevor Whipple, VLCT Law Enforcement Consultant

Call to Order: 2 pm

Welcome by: Heston

Public Comment:

Merrily: There was an opinion piece in VTDigger praising Richmond and Hinesburg about making a decision. I wrote a letter to the editor to say that is not correct, we have not made a decision yet.

Additions or Deletions to Agenda: None

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Discussion of creating a long-term shared governance model for policing

Heston: At our last meeting we had a presentation of our options. We are back here today to explore a direction we might move for a shared governance model.

Pouech: Generally, the Hinesburg Selectboard was in favor of moving forward. A couple of people have approached me in favor. I have not heard any concerns.

Heston: Do you mean putting together the Joint Municipal Survey Committee to explore that option?

Pouech: Yes, I think we should form that Committee to explore that option.

Lovell: I don't think we have gotten far enough for people to understand the details.

Heston: I think the Richmond Selectboard is also looking at forming a Joint Municipal Survey Committee to explore options for a Union Municipal District.

Whipple: I was an employee when South Burlington and the core Chittenden County dispatch group formed. I would have to review the statutes to see how many members of

each community should be a part of that group. Step one of the process is forming the Joint Municipal Survey Committee.

Heston: This would be the group that prepares an agreement to form the Municipal District. We need to figure out who needs to be on that Committee.

Whipple: Aaron Frank out of Colchester was involved.

Arneson: Is this group the Joint Survey committee? We have all the components and good representation

Heston: We could also hire consultants and facilitators. I think we need to hire someone in helping us bring it all together.

Whipple: The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission played an integral part. All the documents are listed on their website. Maybe Charlie Baker with CCRPC might be helpful.

Pouech: They could potentially be a facilitator.

Hill: I sit on the CCPRC and had a conversation about this. They are not currently in a position to provide this staff support. They are interested as it could be the wave of the future. They are not available for leadership.

Odit: I think the first step is to draft a MOU agreement for both Selectboards to agree on the composition of the Joint Survey Committee, whether there would be a budget, and how much each Selectboard would contribute to that budget. Then you would appoint members to the Joint Survey Committee which there needs to be equal representation from each Town. They can then wrestle with the questions of who will help us, how much will it cost, and dealing with consultants.

Heston: Is there a plan or document which illustrates which should be in that agreement.

Odit: We should look at the regional dispatch agreement and consult with our Town attorneys.

Hill: I wrestle with how we will work to provide a group with a budget.

Heston: Who do we ask to build the foundation? I know Charlie Baker sent us from information.

Hill: He felt the Town Managers played a large role in the regional dispatch committee. I think we need a process map to get to the Joint Survey Committee. I feel like we need a project manager.

Whipple: The Central Vermont Public Safety Authority and Paco Armand helped with dispatch issues around Montpelier and Barre.

Heston: I am willing to do some research around the details of how to form the Joint Municipal Survey Committee.

Odit: The Selectboards' MOU would be an agreement to form the Joint Survey Committee. Once that Survey Committee is formed, they have their own authority.

Pouech: That Joint Survey Committee would come back to the Selectboards with a plan. We should draft an MOU for the Selectboards to approve.

Odit: I think Josh and I can come up with a plan.

Hill: I struggle with the budget and appropriation system for both Towns. Whenever they need money, do they need to go to each Town's Selectboard? I am not aware of handing off a budget to an entity like this.

Arneson: We could put forward a budget of \$10,000 or something like that. It would be similar to when we approve a Recreation budget of \$1,000. Both Selectboards have to sign off on the warrants anyways.

Heston: Ok, we will let Odit and Arneson start the process.

Decker: It is important to not further institutionalize a broken system. We should have diverse voices and people on the Joint Survey Committee. Many members of our community are very concerned about the high costs of policing. There are diversity issues. It is important for the Joint Survey Committee to include a variety of groups who have historically been targeted by police. I would like to see a broad representation on that Committee.

Hill: The MOU should include the process for which we appoint the Joint Survey Committee. Do we have elected members or are they appointed by the respective Selectboard members?

Heston: We do not know yet who will be required to be on this committee.

Pouech: Who can and should be on this Committee is an important question. Would this committee decide on standards of community policing? Does it decide the size of the Department? The MOU should determine the boundaries of the Committee.

Lovell: There is no evidence of discrimination of groups dealing the Hinesburg Police. People like the attitude of our Hinesburg Police Department and they don't want to lose that.

Heston: Our Racial Equity Group asks our Police Department to develop a mission statement. The Joint Survey Committee might use a mission statement to begin a process. When do we ask these questions about appointing a Chief or opening it up as a new position. It is only fair to our current police officers to have some of that information before we sign an MOU.

Odit: That needs to be in the plan from the Joint Survey Committee. Each Selectboard appoints those individuals as long as there is equal membership from both Towns. How

do you determine how many Selectboard members, Town Managers, and representatives from other groups.

Heston: The Richmond Racial Equity group has expressed strong interest in having a voice in that process.

Odit: The tough part for the Selectboard is developing the MOU that documents the composition of the Joint Survey Committee. You might not have an agreement on the composition of the Committee. The Town of Hinesburg will soon be issuing an RFP to have a Public Safety Strategic Plan done. Over the next year, Hinesburg will have information to share.

Heston: It would be good to have both Town do a similar process. Should we put a timeframe for an MOU to present to the Selectboards? The Selectboard members are going to want input.

Odit: I think 3-4 weeks.

Lovell: Tod and Josh will put some ideas together and then present it back to this group before proceeding to each respective Selectboard.

Discussion of creating a short-term solution for shared policing resources

Odit: We have learned that any shared service is possible if there is a need in either community. In other words, is there a need that can be filled by working together? We need to look at the scope of services and expectations.

Cambridge: I think it would be a good step to recognize that we do work together. Why delve into a huge process if we cannot make it work on the small scale. Something would be good.

Heston: We need to have a conversation about what our needs are like parking on Cochran Rd. We are short-handed in Richmond. What are the services that our residents are not receiving but feel they are paying for?

Arneson: How do we hire more staff and provide more coverage until we come to a long-term solution? We need to come up with a time frame for the cooperation.

Pouech: It seems like we can have one person on call overnight.

Arneson: Or making sure we have two officers on at the same time.

Hill: We need to ask “What are we trying to solve?” before we look at medium to long term solutions.

Lovell: I feel like we have had these conversations in Hinesburg. When the budget didn't pass, we then had conversations about that actual type of coverage we need. I believe the State Police do overnight coverage, but Anthony needs to screen the calls to find out if it is a life-or-death situation.

Heston: We need to sit down with our current staff to find out some of this information.

Hill: We have not reached a final plan about citizen requests around coverage. Our voters did not want to eliminate the Police Department when presented the question at Town Meeting 4-5 years ago.

Odit: While Josh and I work on the outline of the MOU, Richmond could have some of those discussions with their Police Department.

Hill: I recollect that our public comment shows no consensus on what the public wants.

Heston: It is important to give them a voice.

Cambridge: We are close to having full staff and able to cover both Departments if understaffed. There is consistency of officers and culture. We can tailor your department to what the stats show. Both Departments should map out what we are going to do in the short-term.

Heston: We haven't been focused on the short term. If we can figure out the long term, then we determine the short-term options.

Odit: You are probably looking at a three-year time period between now and when we might be able to vote on a shared municipal district.

Decker: If there is short term cooperation then we need to consider the quality of roads and enforcement between the two communities. If there is a short-term plan, then there should also be an accountability piece around social-equity and bias-training.

Lovell: Do we share a Chief like we are able to share Richmond Rescue? It is an easy experiment.

Hill: If we are sharing a Chief then who is buying and who is selling? It might not be Chief services. It might be shift services.

Heston: Correct, we still need to hear voice and perspectives from our Police Department and Community.

Pouech: We want to explore a short-term contracting for some needs. The Chiefs and the Town Managers could come up with some needs that might be satisfied together.

Heston: Could we have a draft plan a month or so out?

Hill: We at least have some money from vacancy savings from not staffing the Police Department.

Heston: We will come back in a month or so to try another meeting to finalize the details on both of these options.

Adjournment

Hill moved to adjourn. Lovell seconded

Roll Call Vote: Cambridge, Hill, Herrick, Arneson, Heston, Lovell, Pouech, Odit

Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05

Chat file from Zoom:

00:10:54 Duncan Wardwell: Committee Members should introduce themselves.

00:34:38 jennifer decker: Do members of this committee endorse the idea of including people most impacted by police brutality and misconduct on the committee in order that we don't re invent a broken system?

01:11:53 jennifer decker: Thank you