

Dear Select Board members and Town Manager,

It has come to our attention that the job advertisement for the hiring of a new Chief of Police has already been posted. We respectfully request that this be withdrawn, pending more discussion regarding town needs and priorities.

The request for a pause and discussion is necessitated by the persistent and inevitable issues regarding hiring and retention in Richmond's police department. Chief Muldoon did a notable and admirable job setting a new tone and implementing meaningful changes, but he is departing after 15 months on the job. Similar issues haunt our retention of officers. We recognize that Select Board members are acutely aware of the problems of turn-over and of the related and significant hiring, start-up and training costs. Further, we appreciate and understand that this presents a challenge to our Town Manager who has worked so thoughtfully on previous hires. We are also aware that much previous work has gone into addressing these issues and that there are many nuances to consider, including shift coverage, staffing assignments, and a range of quite complicated issues for the town and for the administration of public safety and policing in Richmond.

We are asking that the town of Richmond use this transition as an opportunity to do something *innovative* and to address longstanding problems of retention, staffing, and coordination. We suggest that this is also a means for thinking about the position in a frame that is broader. In a time of deep change, Richmond has the opportunity to be a *model for public safety* and to follow the path already laid out in previous work by Chief Muldoon, Select Board members, town staff, and citizens.

What if we envisioned an *innovative public safety coordinator role* to address, manage, and coordinate, not just policing, but mental health services, school outreach, and coordination with fire and rescue? As a town, we are investing in the Community Outreach Program, the School Resource Officer position, the Vermont Youth Project, and recently the healthy, connected community study. Individually, these programs each support an aspect of our community; but when coordinated with the Police Department and town staff, together they can bridge gaps, save resources, and foster innovative community solutions. This seems to be in line with expressed needs of the town and will support our police officers and other town employees by sharing workload and responsibilities in a responsive and responsible manner.

This is a way of responding to the national and state concerns raised by Black Lives Matter, but it is also a chance to enhance *public safety*, community health and human dignity for all people working, living in, and visiting our town. With all of this in mind, we ask that we pause and have a meaningful discussion about the following: A) what is the actual job for which we are hiring, and B) how we conduct that search.

Sincerely,

Sean A. Witters
Lee Diamond
Connie van Eeghen
Jay Furr
Madeleine Granda
Ann Greenan Naumann
Ashley Hanlon
Stefani Hartsfield
Alexis Lathem
Emily K. Mitchell
Susan Nussbaum
Brittany O'Brien
Brodie O'Brien
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