

Richmond Volunteer Fire Department

October 7th, 2019

Richmond Select Board and members of the community,

The members of the Richmond Volunteer Fire Department (RFD) submit this letter to clarify our ability to provide protection for structures approaching the maximum allowed height of 35'. It has come to our attention that proposed zoning changes could allow for buildings that present as 4 floors and exceed the 35' maximum on one or more sides. This will severely impede our ability operate effectively with occupants trapped on upper floors.

RFD exists with the primary mission of protecting the lives of those living in or traveling through the town of Richmond. During structure fires where exits are inaccessible, we evacuate occupants with ladders up to 35' in length providing a maximum working height of approximately 32'. In order to ensure a timely rescue, every bedroom should have an egress window with the sill no greater than 32' above adjacent grade. We cannot guarantee rescue from any room that does not meet these criteria.

The secondary mission of RFD is to protect all property within the town. During a structure fire we do this by attacking fires aggressively while quickly establishing ventilation at the highest accessible point, providing an escape for heat and gasses. To provide ventilation we would need at least one location where the roof is 32' or less from grade in order to gain access with a 35' ladder.

We recommend that any future development be designed in accordance with all ISO standards with specific emphasis on building height, means of egress and construction type placards. Development should fit the ISO criteria for a fire district without an aerial ladder truck. Any structure not meeting the outlined requirements will pose an additional risk to occupants and fire personnel alike. As such we request that as a condition of issuance of any variance RFD be given explicit permission to conduct yearly onsite trainings and walkthroughs with the goal of minimizing the additional risk. Every building using engineered lumber should have appropriate placards where deemed necessary by ISO standards, usually the main entrance/egress.

This letter is submitted solely with the intent of creating and maintaining a safe community. We seek to clearly convey our capabilities and limitations while seeking ways better protect the community. While individual members may have varying opinions on town affairs, RFD does not take a stance unless a matter directly relates to our mission of protecting life and property.

Sincerely,

Members of the Richmond Volunteer Fire Department