

Meeting of the Richmond and Hinesburg Police Governance Committee December 20, 2023

Members Present: Anthony Cambridge, Hinesburg Police Chief and Interim Richmond Police Chief; Josh Arneson, Richmond Town Manager; Jay Furr, Richmond Selectboard Chair; Bard Hill, Richmond Selectboard Member; Merrily Lovell, Hinesburg Selectboard Chair; Maggie Gordon Hinesburg Selectboard Member; Todd Odit, Hinesburg Town Manager,

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Meeting was recorded by MMCTV; Andy Squires, Richmond Constable; Anne Sullivan; Connie Van Eeghen.

Call to Order: 11 am

Welcome by: Furr. All those in attendance introduced themselves.

Public Comment: None

Additions or Deletions to Agenda: None

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Discussion of shared police services

Furr: Richmond is pleased with current police services from Hinesburg. We now want to pick up the discussion to see if we want to do more together. We'd like to hear about the Hinesburg Public Safety Study.

Odit: The study is not complete, but it will recommend working with Richmond.

Lovell: We are also pleased with the current arrangement, and it makes sense to share resources.

Furr: Richmond has limited space for a police department, and it may make sense to share space to not duplicate items like a sallyport. I'd like to hear how the workload is for Anthony.

Cambridge: It is a lot, but more staffing would help. Making the budgets more similar would help to create efficiency and this would reduce administrative time.

Furr: Richmond officer pay is more than Hinesburg.

Cambridge: That has been noticed but does not seem to have caused much discontent.

Odit: It could turn into an issue. We have instituted a stipend for now and that helps.

Furr: We are grateful to Anthony for increasing recruitment and we have a few candidates in the interview process now. We have four authorized positions, and we have

one currently employed and I can see that we could be fully staffed in a few months. The Chief has a lot to do with this.

Arneson: Anthony has also helped to focus on re-supplying the PD and selling cruisers.

Furr: Adding logos to the cars has helped with visibility of the PD.

Gordon: Visibility is a big plus.

Odit: If you had Richmond officers would they be able to provide service in Hinesburg? I see a next step as adding officers to Richmond, sharing a chief and having officers cover both Towns.

Arneson: We will add that to the discussions with the Union.

Cambridge: Hinesburg officers are covered by FOP, but they do not have a contract and the officers do not seem to want a contract at this time because Hinesburg is giving them what they want.

Furr: We are looking at ways to improve the current agreement with Hinesburg and see if that moves toward a Union Municipal District. There are a lot of details to work out with a UMD.

Odit: The Joint Survey Committee would work those details out.

Furr: Tell us more about the survey committee.

Odit: The two Towns form the survey committee and that committee does research and provides a recommendation on how to create the UMD.

Furr: It looks like we need to see how we can continue the current agreement and then move to a survey committee.

Odit: For our budget we are looking at providing some coverage to Richmond and sharing a chief. If Richmond needs less coverage we'd have to reconfigure the budget to pay for our staffing

Furr: Richmond has budgeted for a fully staffed PD but we are continually understaffed. We looked at several options for the PD budget this year and went with a fully staffed department of four people but still sharing a chief. Would it be an option to have a Hinesburg officer transfer to Richmond.

Odit: Yes, that would be helpful to our staffing levels.

Cambridge: Hinesburg officers have hinted at an interest in serving as a Richmond officer. Some officers would make more money in Richmond. They also are worried if the contract with Richmond goes away Hinesburg could lose a position and they don't want to lose a job. They also like working with Hinesburg and Cambridge as chief.

Furr: Trying to hire into a department with no Chief is challenging. Anthony provides leadership and stability. Do we want to look at adding to the contract?

Arneson: That is the next logical step to improve the contract and add to it.

Furr: Maybe we look at a five-year contract.

Gordon: If one town's budget gets voted down that could provide challenges.

Lovell: I'm excited to hear you talking about a five-year contract. It would relieve anxiety and make it easier to budget. We are also pleased with Anthony. I also think the UMD is more complicated than it needs to be at this point.

Furr: I agree. If we can do it with a contract that may be easier.

Discussion that Bolton may also be interested in joining or contracting for police coverage.

Gordon: Is the Chief involved in the hiring of officers?

Furr: Yes, he is very involved.

Odit: After you have your meeting tomorrow and get clarity on Richmond officers being able to cover Hinesburg, then I can meet with Josh and Anthony to draw up a draft contract.

Furr: I'm pleased to hear that Hinesburg is happy with the current arrangement. I was concerned that some Hinesburg residents would be upset that Hinesburg officers are in Richmond rather than Hinesburg.

Gordon: I only heard from one person with that concern.

Cambridge: I don't think that all Hinesburg residents know about the contract. It has more visibility in Richmond.

Odit: If they don't know about the contract then they may not be feeling any impact.

Furr: We do need to provide more administrative support to the Chief.

Cambridge: I used to have more administrative support and that went away. More administrative support would be helpful.

Arneson: We have a police admin who could help out. Josh, Anthony, and she should meet to discuss.

Furr: We need to find what Richmond brings to this relationship.

Arneson: We can provide more officers which helps for coverage in both Towns and improves the working environment for officers.

Cambridge: We try to always have more than one officer on shift and have officers on call and able to come in if necessary.

Furr: We have had many officers living far away. Has that been a challenge with Hinesburg?

Cambridge: I don't even consider someone who lives too far away. I am always scouting for officers and we don't have a training ground mentality. We try to create an environment where people want to stay for their career.

Furr: We have had a lot of people work in Richmond for only a couple of years.

Cambridge: In general officers stay for several years in Hinesburg.

Furr: Long term continuity helps with developing community policing. Next steps are talk to the union about joint patrolling. After we have had that meeting Josh, Todd, and Anthony review the contract and look at it as a five-year contract and make suggestions on what to add.

Squires: I've been very impressed with the Hinesburg PD as I work with them. I tend to favor a unified agency as that provides more stability where a contract has a term limit. Some officers left because there was a lack of assurance that there would be a department going forward. Some left because there was not upward mobility so a UMD would allow for more professional growth.

Hill: This all sounds good. The one thing I've thought of is including shared administrative support in the contract.

Furr: Formalizing this would be helpful for stability.

Cambridge: I am not complaining about administrative work, I just wanted it to be known that there is a lot of administrative and behind the scenes work that needs to happen.

Furr: I would like to fund an administrative position that each town shares in the cost of.

Cambridge: I don't want to lose sight of the point of this endeavor is to provide good coverage at a good price to both towns.

Furr: We do need to be careful not to increase staffing unnecessarily, but we need to staff appropriately.

Sullivan: Administrative work is very important, and I strongly support Chief Cambridge getting that assistance.

Furr: We have a path forward from here. Is there anything more we should discuss.

Lovell: I look forward to seeing details about how it will work when you hire Richmond officers. I was also happy to hear that Hinesburg's community policing model is something Richmond is interested in as well.

Furr: We very much want community policing.

Discussion that pay differential is on Hinesburg as Richmond currently has higher pay.