

Meeting of the Richmond and Hinesburg Police Governance Committee December 1, 2022

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

Members Absent: Phil Pouech, Hinesburg Selectboard; Benjamin Herrick, Richmond Interim Police Chief;

Others Present: Meeting was recorded by MMCTV, Bob Stafford,

Call to Order: 10 am

Welcome by: Heston

Public Comment: None

Additions or Deletions to Agenda: None

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Discussion of creating a memorandum of understanding for the creation of a joint survey committee

Arneson: Should we start with the bullet points that Tod put together?

Heston: Sure.

Hill: Is our purpose today to agree on the outline?

Heston: I think so. When we left our last meeting we agreed we should have a draft MOU to establish a joint survey committee. Who would draft the MOU and what is the timeframe and what do we budget for?

Arneson: Our attorney can turn this around in a few days.

Heston: We need to talk about the number of members and the makeup of the committee.

Odit: Next week, the Hinesburg Selectboard will probably approve a proposal to study police.

Heston: We had talked about that before and thought Richmond may want to look at that as well, so that we are all working on the same page.

Odit: This makes me cautious to dive into a joint survey committee before we complete the study. It will take 6 – 8 months to be completed, most likely by mid-summer. Regionalizing would be something that would be looked at as part of this plan.

Hill: Richmond can do something similar or we can wait for the Hinesburg study to be complete. Did you do an RFP for this?

Odit: Yes.

Lovell: We have done a lot of work in Hinesburg on exploring the police since our police budget did not pass a couple of years ago. People are really interested and engaged.

Odit: We will want to let the consultant know we have had these initial discussions with Richmond.

Heston: Perhaps Richmond needs to look at doing the same process as it may make sense to do this at the same time.

Hill: It seems premature to move forward with a joint survey committee at this point.

Heston: This leaves us with a question of what to do in the meantime in Richmond. We will need to engage the Selectboard on this topic.

Hill: Richmond did something similar a few years ago.

Odit: I can share the proposals as well as the RFP for this process.

Heston: That would be helpful for Richmond to consider a similar process.

Stafford: It would seem to me if Richmond and Hinesburg are looking to partner then why not do the study together?

Heston: That would make sense, but we still have to go through the RFP process. But it does not make sense to use two separate consultants because it takes us down two different roads. Right now we should determine if there is a good chance for a partnership.

Hill: If we were going to do this together then the RFP would have been done to include a scope of work for both Towns. It would be hard to incorporate this with both Towns now that Hinesburg is through the RFP process.

Heston: We could still potentially collaborate on a study.

Odit: We don't want to delay our process.

Lovell: Maybe the consultants could explore if a partnership is a good idea. Could that be included in the consultants current work?

Odit: Looking at options to regionalize is part of the process. The RFP was asking how to staff the department, what services we should provide, and what should we do over the next 10 years in general

Lovell: We are striving to include everybody in the process. The diversity and inclusion process are important.

Hill: We can take cautionary notes from the experience in Burlington.

Odit: The proposals were between \$70,000 to \$80,000.

Heston: Have you put into the RFP the idea of a merger?

Odit: It was not that specific, but it will be on the table as an option.

Lovell: We started working on this last spring, before we started discussions with Richmond.

Heston: We could be significantly behind so the Richmond Selectboard has a lot to consider.

Hill: This is a fork in the road that takes us away from the Joint Survey Committee.

Heston: We would need to figure out if this is a process that we can budget for. There are a lot of unanswered questions.

Odit: The Hinesburg study should provide some useful information to Richmond. They will most likely communicate with officials in Richmond. We can follow up with the consultant to let them know where we are in discussions with Richmond.

Hill: There are different sets of dynamics between the towns for policing services. For instance, we deal with parking quite a bit.

Lovell: There are many different issues between the towns

Hill: We would want to be sure we adequately address these differences in any discussions.

Heston: We are at a standstill until we decide if we want to move forward with a study so we better understand the needs that need to be met on both sides.

Lovell: Diversity and inclusion is very important to both towns.

Hill: Our community is very involved in diversity and inclusion. We can talk about this at the next selectboard meeting as a decision to move forward with a parallel process.

Stafford: It would be good for the communities to work together. You will probably find that policing in both communities have more in common than you initially thought. You need community members to work on this together. But the only way to do it is if you are in the same room as the community you want to partner with. I would want to talk to the group that Hinesburg partners with to get their perspective on a partnership between the towns. But, how do you get Richmond involved in the process? Both communities use Williston Community Justice Center.

Heston: Hinesburg is ready to go, so we need to see if there is a desire to collaborate but we need to have two separate processes.

Stafford: Richmond should talk to the consultant to see if they have an idea of how to involve Richmond sooner rather than later.

Heston: We also need buy in from both Boards to see if they are interested I this process. We can have the conversation with the consultant to see if they would be able to add Richmond in to see the feasibility.

Hill: We should also find if it is feasible to do the work with two different contractors. The proper time to have collaborated would probably have been in the RFP process.

Heston: We need to see if we need to do the same in depth process that Hinesburg is doing.

Hill: We need to look at scope to see if this would include the Fire Department.

Heston: Fire is something we need to really look at in Richmond. We need to ask the Hinesburg contractor to see if they could include Richmond and if so could they catch us up in time? I also want to know if both Hinesburg and Richmond are interested.

Lovell: Our focus is on Hinesburg.

Heston: I am hearing Hinesburg is too far along to include Richmond.

Odit: Hinesburg should proceed with their process and figure out if further exploration with Richmond is desirable then look into it in more detail. Then you would for a joint survey committee and they would do the more detailed work. I don't want to divert what we are looking at and miss opportunities to explore other options.

Heston: We can talk again after each Selectboard meets. We would like feedback from Hinesburg on if there is desire for a parallel process.

Hill: Because it sounds like the RFP and contract is not specific to Richmond.

Odit: Correct, it is not specific to Richmond.

Heston: We would like to know if there is desire to collaborate at particular points to determine if a merger is the right path for both communities. But if the decision now by Hinesburg is that they want to do this on their own then Richmond needs to consider if a study is right for Richmond.

Lovell: This study came up last spring and then in the fall everyone was in favor of exploring a merger with Richmond.

Odit: We can contact the firm to ask them how they may incorporate the discussions with Richmond into their study.

Heston: And, could they envision working with another contractor or incorporating Richmond into their study.

Stafford: Why not wait for Hinesburg to complete the planning to see if that study recommends a merger with Richmond. Then Richmond could react to that perhaps with a study to see what next steps would be.

Hill: That is a good idea, that maybe we don't do a parallel study.

Stafford: We should wait for an answer from Hinesburg to see if they want to form a collaborative police department.

Hill: It pushes the timeframe out further, but it may be a better result.

Odit: We are only looking at 6 – 7 months for our study to be complete.

Lovell: I want to reiterate we are all fans of collaboration.

Hill: If we are paused we should discuss how to stay engaged with Hinesburg over the next few months.

Odit: As part of the consultant's work I envision Richmond would be engaged.

Heston: Perhaps we could come together for an update every few months to Richmond can stay abreast of the developments in Hinesburg.

Discussion of short-term solutions for shared policing resources

Heston: We have talked about this a bit, but we need to refine our ideas for what we absolutely need. We may need to look at hiring a chief with the understanding that there is a delay.

Arneson: I would agree.

Hill: Hiring someone while saying the future is uncertain is not the ideal situation for recruitment.

Herrick: You may be able to find someone who is interested in a short term position but it would be someone willing to accept the risk or someone who is near retirement.

Arneson: It is kind of unfair to Ben to keep him as interim for an undefined amount of time.

Herrick: I am willing to server as interim chief as long as you need.

Stafford: A hiring process would take as long as the Hinesburg study. Work with Ben to make him the full time chief and work with him to attract officers.

Odit: It is important for Hinesburg to go through the process to see if the community would want a merger.

Lovell: My hope is in the future both towns have their own departments but find ways to collaborate.

Hill: The key decision for the Richmond Selectboard is to understand the Hinesburg process and timeline. To also understand that part of this scope is to see if Hinesburg wants to collaborate after going through this process. I appreciate Bob's input on how we work with the current interim chief to maintain stability in the Richmond PD for the next couple of years.

Odit: We plan to begin work in January and have it complete by early to mid-summer.

Heston: Is it possible for us to meet three months into the study to check in on the direction of the study?

Odit and Lovell: Yes.

Odit: I can keep Josh informed.

Hill: Then Josh can update the Selectboard.

Heston: If it looks like we are moving to a green light then the group should come back together.

Hill moved to adjourn. Lovell seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11am.