

**Town of Richmond  
Special Meeting of the Selectboard  
Minutes of May 9, 2023**

**Members Present:** Bard Hill, David Sander, Jay Furr, Jeff Forward, Lisa Miller

**Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager; Benjamin Herrick, Interim Police Chief

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

**Call to Order:** 7:00pm

**Welcome by:** Furr

**Public Comment:**

Sander: I just want to thank Mary Houle for planting tulips out in front of the Town Center. It really looks nice.

**Additions or Deletions to Agenda:** None

**Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**

**Discussion of Richmond Police Department (possible executive sessions)**

Furr: Our reason for this Special Selectboard meeting is discussion of the Richmond Police Department. We have some topics that we can go over in public. There will be other things that we likely need to move into executive session. Josh, would you give us an update on the stuff we can talk about?

Arneson: The overall plan for Police Departments such as staffing needs is not a valid topic for executive session. By contrast, discussion about specific employees or Police Chief candidates is valid under executive session. A possible contract with Hinesburg including negotiations, rights or obligations under the existing contract can be a valid executive session topic, as well as discussion of the potential agreement with the union.

Furr: We have talked at times about reopening the concept of compensation to the Police Department. I've gotten some emails saying if we can't hire police at the wage, we're currently paying them then pay them more. That is a topic that the Selectboard is open to discuss. We understand that this is a competitive economy. Williston has lost four officers recently. Is there anything else about general Police issues that people would like to ask that doesn't touch on one of the executive sessions?

Arneson: I will also note that Officer Dengler has resigned, her last day will be May 19. That will leave us with the staff of our Interim Chief. Officer Wilson is on military assignment right now. We've checked in to see if he'd be willing to do any shifts, but his schedule is pretty intensive with the military.

Hill: Maybe briefly describe what the upcoming Listening Circle is

Arneson: We initially announced that last Monday. It was in response to the concerns that people brought up about the arrest five years ago of Police Chief candidate Dan Brunelle, but charges were dismissed. The Willison Community Justice Center came to us to have a listening session to talk to people that are concerned prior to proceeding to a public forum. We work with Crystalee from the Community Justice Center to put together but a little bit more information. There's going to be some hours at the Town Center between 10am to 6pm so people can call if they can't make or do not want to go to the listening session.

Furr: There was some question of whether members of the Selectboard and other officials should attend.

Arneson: Initially, Crystalee didn't want anybody who was in a position of power to be at that session. Some people wanted to be there. Her guidance is, if there's anybody from the Selectboard, or from the Hiring Committee that has concerns about hiring Dan Brunelle, then they are welcome to come to the session. She doesn't want somebody coming there just to listen to what other people have to say. She wants it to be for people to share concerns in a space where people are sharing the stories and not getting into any other sort of debate. Crystalee has committed to providing a report on the listening session that will be available. It'll be anonymous so no names will be identified.

Hill: The two others that I have is the Chief hiring process and Officer hiring.

Arneson: We'll see what the report contains and if there needs to be any changes. It's my intention to move forward with a public interview session with the candidate for Police Chief that allows the community to ask questions. For Officer recruitment, we've had the job posted for a while, we haven't really had too many applicants.

Herrick: I've got one that is viable for part time.

Arneson: The agreement with Hinesburg received a letter from the Union regarding unfair labor practice. We'll put that on pause. We have been discussing with the Union an agreement that we can continue to work with Hinesburg to have some shifts coverage and patrol coverage.

Forward: I notice that we have Bob Stafford who is the Chair of the Board for Williston Community Justice Center. Do you have anything more to say, to describe what the listening session is intended to do, and what its structure is going to be.

Stafford: The Town Manager described it pretty succinctly. There will be a listening session if people want to come in tomorrow at the Town Office. There's a phone number that's on Front Porch Forum, and on the Richmond Town website. There'll be a listening session at the Library from 6-8pm, there'll be other rooms available in case people want to talk with one of us who's trained to do this kind of stuff, in another room. That's for people that can't call in or come to see us during the daytime.

Furr: Our attorney has recommended that we go into separate executive sessions each time.

Arneson: Each motion is specific to a topic, and his recommendation is to keep it very clean. In executive session, you're discussing one topic then would come back out to find that premature knowledge for each topic is the reason to go into executive session. If you wanted to talk about a contract and wanted to ratify the contract, you would make that motion in public session.

*Miller moved to find that premature public knowledge about a personnel issue would cause the Town or person to suffer a substantial disadvantage. Sander seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Miller moved that we enter into executive session to discuss a personnel issue under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(3) and to invite Town Manager Josh Arneson into the executive session. Hill seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Hill moved to exit executive session. Sander seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Forward moved to find that premature public knowledge about the Police Chief Hiring process would cause the Town or person to suffer a substantial disadvantage. Miller seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Forward moved that we enter into executive session to discuss the police chief hiring process under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(3) and to invite Town Manager Josh Arneson into the executive session. Sander seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Hill moved to exit executive session. Sander seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Forward moved to find that premature public knowledge about negotiations with the New England PBA would cause the Town or person to suffer a substantial disadvantage. Sander seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Forward moved that we enter into executive session to discuss negotiations with New England PBA under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(b) and to invite Town Manager Josh Arneson into the executive session. Miller seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

*Furr moved to exit executive session. Hill seconded.  
Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

Furr: Welcome back members of the public, the Selectboard has emerged from the third executive session of tonight. If you put something in the chat, you can take yourself off mute at this time. I'm not seeing any, can we have a motion to adjourn?

## **Adjourn**

*Sander moved to adjourn. Miller seconded.*

*Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

**Meeting adjourned at: 9:00pm**

Chat file from Zoom:

00:18:35 Jenna Baker: Does anyone know if they will be answering questions through the chat?

00:19:38 Cara: Not during the executive session when they are off camera, but when they return they can

00:20:32 Jenna Baker: Thank you. I have asked a question before and they always seem to ignore it

02:03:53 Jenna Baker: Great, thank you so much.