

**Town of Richmond
Special Selectboard Meeting
Minutes of March 31, 2025**

Members Present: Jay Furr, David Sander, Adam Wood, Bard Hill

Absent: Caitlin Filkins, recused herself.

Staff Present: Town Manager Josh Arneson; Assistant to the Town Manager Duncan Wardwell; Admin Assistant Linn Caroleo; Town Clerk Linda Parent, Fire Chief Dennis Gile; Assistant Fire Chief Gerald Levesque.

Others Present: MMCTV Erin Wagg, Jamie Valyou, Doug Patey, Michael Parent, Ben Owens, Mike Cartor, Par Prachankhet, Prescott Nadeau Fire Chief in Hinesburg, Rod West, Brittany, 8023553391, Bittany Spence, Brendan Filkins, Dennis, Veronica Paquette, 8022822887.

MMCTV Video: Recorded by MMCTV by Erin Wagg
<https://youtu.be/qTP2JkC0OXU?si=XfgLJ62hWQFzKUG7>

Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.

Welcome by: Furr

Public Comment:

Filkins recused herself from the discussions because the study was done by her father.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

**Presentation of Rapid Assessment of the Richmond Fire Department;
Discussion of Rapid Assessment of the Richmond Fire Department;
Discussion of next steps**

Timestamp: 0:01

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/03/3a_Richmond_VT_Final_Report.pdf

People who participated in discussion: Furr, Patey, Wood, Hill, Parent, Levesque, Wood, Sander, Valyou, Arneson, Nadeau, Filkins

Patey did an assessment that he displayed of the Richmond Fire Department, he has a long history of being a fire department member in various states and a chief and he has done such assessments before (he provided his references in his report). He said that one benefit for the Richmond Fire Dept is that they do not respond to EMS calls. He

mentioned that there were far more volunteer members in our Fire Department years ago, so recruitment presently is an issue. There is a FEMA reporting system that is in place nationally, which Richmond FD does not do. He feels documentation is missing in terms of certain situations that arise, such as bloodborne pathogen exposures. He feels the facility should be improved in certain ways, for example, mounting the Blitzfire device, which is now at the bottom of a closet. Other efficiency issues involve LED lighting for better sight. He feels class A foam should be added to help put out fires more efficiently. Certain qualifications that are offered by the State of Vermont could be implemented and documented better. ICS and accountability needs to be improved to manage department volunteers and employees during fire calls. He also pointed out that as a Town there needs to be improved fire prevention and fire escapes for people from buildings such as the library, churches, the market, the Mausoleum and other buildings, where there are not appropriate egress ladders or active reduction of fire risks, such as dumpsters near flammable materials. Patey added that there are no female members in the Richmond Fire Department presently, thus he feels a more diverse membership needs to be attracted to the department.

Hill countered that the Selectboard alone won't become fire safety experts, but possibly helping with the budget and producing a plan to move forward would be doable. Furr noted that he has seen poor documentation of trainings and safety in other states where he has worked, and he wants to know how this can be improved in Richmond. The Fire dept's training officer concurred with the report that there are things that can be improved and additional trainings could be added for members of the FD, but he believes many members are well trained and capable of responding to fires appropriately and safely. He continued that getting certified as an Air Pac firefighter involves a 180-hour course per the state of Vermont, which is hard to get new members to commit to, so Richmond FD offers a 40-hour course to some of its new members, which is more achievable. He feels that the current driver safety training could be improved, but proper driver safety training involves time and money.

Furr mentioned the possibility of involving Bolton and other depts and getting some training courses brought to the area for several FD's to participate in simultaneously to mitigate cost. Levesque described that he is working on how to properly document the various trainings each member has completed and to keep those records securely. Furr countered by asking if hiring a temporary admin person would be useful. Wood added that the Selectboard could possibly add money to the budget or admin people to the Fire Dept as support staff, but the Selectboard is unable to add firefighters.

Parent said he has been in the Fire Dept for 49 years, and he read from a list (responding to the study's findings):

- the Fire Dept does not have MSDS forms
- some chemicals in the fire station are not labelled and there are too many of them
- writing grants, which is something he used to do, is hard to complete, and he was never successful
- the Department's trucks are well equipped, and all the trucks have more than enough lights
- he concurs that accountability could get better
- training of new officers could improve, which is hard to complete in the State of Vermont
- he feels the criticism of the "Mausoleum building" in town, with respect to fire safety was incorrect, because the renters in that building recently got a

4' line put in so they could add sprinklers, but they don't have the water supply to run those sprinklers.

Hill pointed out that it's because the waterline is private, and the Town will not replace private water lines. Patey feels the propane tanks behind the (Mausoleum) building is a serious fire hazard and needs to be taken care of expediently.

Sander feels outreach needs to be better about fire safety and prevention. Hill feels the lack of a dispatch hinders response times, and he wonders if combining with Bolton or Jericho to get a fulltime dispatch. Wood stated consolidating with other departments for things like administrative services should be considered.

Valyou is the Fire Chief for Charlotte and said he too has been in discussions with neighboring Towns regarding consolidation of services, he was present at the meeting representing himself as a resident of Richmond, and said the discussions were helpful to him. He thinks it's difficult to compare a volunteer fire department with a full-time fully staffed department, but he thinks hiring someone for administrative issues is a good idea. The training officer hopes having an admin person would help with recruitment. Arneson agreed that planning a budget for hiring an admin person would be helpful, he continued suggesting that having more frequent meetings with some of the Fire Dept members regarding goals and ways to reach those goals might help get things moving and to make a priority list. Attracting new members to volunteer for the department is critical. Filkins suggested posting on FPF to engage the community to find a grant writer or social media outreach person.

Furr said these issues need to be posted on FPF regarding the Department's needs and getting a social media person would be helpful. Hill asked if Hinesburg Fire Dept was similar, which Nadeau replied that he is the sole full-time position as Fire Chief and he has two part-time people working 42.5 hours per week. Nadeau says there is a strong working relationship between Hinesburg and Richmond Fire Departments, and he uses social media to attract people. Valyou said open house events has attracted people in the past for Charlotte FD. Arneson said recruitment is important.

Hill mentioned that increasing the Fire Dept budget will have to be voted on by the Town's residents because it will increase taxes. Parent added that the old Fire Dept truck needs to be fixed or sold, because it's just sitting there. A Fire Dept. member asked what the reason behind the assessment was, which Sander responded it was designed to discuss the recruitment problem and to start a conversation about issues in the Dept. Hill said deferred maintenance, inventory issues and old turnout gear were complaints that showed a need for such an assessment. Furr said knowing what resources were needed and improvements that could be made was an impetus for such an assessment. Wood added that the assessment shows improvements that can be made and if those improvements are too expensive, what is the backup plan to turn the ship around? Hill thinks there is good support from residents in favor of the Fire Department in Richmond. He also feels shared training with other Towns should be considered. Adding the Fire Dept to a future Selectboard agenda is important.

Adjourn

Sander moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Furr abstain. Hill, Miller, Sander, Furr, Wood in favor. Motion approved.

150 **Meeting adjourned at:** 9:00 p.m.

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152 **Chat file from Zoom:** None

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