



TOWN OF RICHMOND VERMONT

Application Form for Town Commissions, Boards and Committees

Please submit your application to: Volunteer Search, P.O. Box 285, Richmond, VT 05477, by email to dwardwell@richmondvt.gov or by placing it in the drop box outside the Town Office by April 13, 2022. Water & Sewer Commission applications are due June 1, 2022. Development Review Board (DRB) applications are due by May 11, 2022.

Please supply the following information:

1) Review the scheduled meeting day/time of the Commission, Board, or Committee along with the length of the term of the position. Will you be able to regularly make the meetings? Y / N
Will you be able to serve for the term of the position? Y / N

2) Please introduce yourself to the Selectboard by providing a short cover letter detailing your background, training, and experience with the board/commission/committee you are applying for and/or resume.

Name of Applicant: Rachel (Wolcott) Lohia Date: 10/26/22

Phone Number: 802-777-7008 Email Address: rachellohia@gmail.com

Name of Commission/ Board/ Committee: ARPA

If you serve on another Commission/Board/ Committee, please indicate which one(s):

I do not at this time

Richmond Resident: Y / N (circle one) Borden Street ☺

For hard copies or accessibility accommodations please contact:
Duncan Wardwell at 802-336-2092 or dwardwell@richmondvt.gov

October 26, 2022

Greetings,

My name is Rachel Lohia. My background begins right here in Richmond. I grew up on Browns Court (where my mom still lives), went to first RES, then CHMS, and graduated from MMU in 2005. I went on to study music education with a concentration on oboe. I studied with a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra during my time at Gordon College in Wenham, MA, as well as auditioned for a Fulbright Scholarship to study oboe at the Paris Conservatory in 2009. After graduating, however, I felt called to serve students in the community of Lawrence, MA where I started my own music program from the ground up. I began with grades 1-4, then 3-8 and ended my three years there teaching middle school grades 5-8. I sought out grant money, scholarships and opportunities for my students from 97% Hispanic immigrant families to experience orchestral & instrumental music and come to love it the way that I did growing up. We were given grants for recorders, collected instruments and started a band, I directed a chorus, and I established a partnership with the Lexington Symphony (in Lexington, MA) which enabled us both to host some members of the orchestra for an "orchestra petting zoo" where kids were introduced to the various instruments many which they had never heard of), as well as the children were sponsored to attend their first live concert in Lexington.

Instead of returning to Lawrence for a fourth year, I took a leave of absence to teach music in North India, in a city called Dehradun. Here, instead of teaching children, I was teaching high school graduates through 40 year olds the basics of music theory, ear training, recorder, piano and chorus. It was such a joy to see an expanding program, and to feel like I had found the perfect fit as a teacher. I stayed on for four more years, earning the trust and reputation as not only a crazy American, but an amazing teacher. It was a joy to meet and marry my Indian husband Livingstone, as well as have both our children in India during my time there.

Upon moving back to the US in 2017, my experience with life in the US had shifted. No longer a member of the middle class, my husband and I struggled to complete immigration paperwork with two toddlers and a serious lack of housing. We waited nine months, living in my mother's spare room, for our own apartment through Champlain Housing Trust (CHT). After several job changes and a move to Massachusetts, we found ourselves at the bottom of the economic strata - just barely above the poverty level. Working full time, babysitting extra kids to cover costs, we felt very strained with a lack of resources, a lack of opportunities and a lack of housing that was available to us at the low income level. We started looking for something back in Vermont in 2019.

Then COVID. After two years of barely being able to visit my mom (remember at one point even state borders were closed?!), we decided that we should move back to Vermont. But the housing crunch was even worse than in 2017 when we moved here from India. We were on a wait list for housing in Richmond from 2019 and it wasn't until March of 2022 that we finally moved into our current apartment! We are so grateful that something opened up so that we can stay in the town that we wanted our kids to grow up in.

I feel like I have a unique perspective because my husband and I have two businesses that we started last year out of my mom's house when we couldn't find housing and were struggling to find jobs that fit our schedule and kids' needs. Richmond Chai is our tea selling arm, and American Lohias is our take out Indian cuisine. Both have turned out to be very successful start-ups and we're excited to branch out and see how far reaching they'll go! We're waiting for the housing market to open up so that we can buy a house and I can offer private lessons from home as well.

As a person who grew up in Richmond, it really saddens me that there is basically nothing available for those of us who want to move back. Everything is listed at \$300k+, going for more like \$400k - what are those of us who have been away supposed to do when we want to raise our families here? The wait list for the Richmond apartments through CHT is two to three YEARS! I would love to be able to weigh in on the discussions that the ARPA committee (and maybe in the future, the housing committee) have in order to brainstorm options for those of us Richmond kids who would like to return but are being out bid by wealthy people moving in from other parts of the country.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel (Wolcott) Lohia

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