

Chariho School Committee Special Meeting and Budget Workshop
January 24, 2023

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Catherine Giusti, Donna Chambers, Tyler Champlin, Kathryn Colasante, Clay Johnson, Polly Hopkins, Craig Louzon, Linda Lyall, Andrew McQuaide, Larry Phelps, Patricia Pouliot and Karen Reynolds.

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, Attorney Jon Anderson and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

I. Meeting Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Silent Meditation

Chair Giusti called the special meeting/budget workshop of the Chariho School Committee, held in the Chariho Middle School Auditorium, to order at 6:05 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silent meditation.

II. Authorize the Chariho Regional School Committee's Attorney to Bring a Quo Warranto Proceeding Before the Rhode Island Supreme Court in Regards to the Appointment by the Richmond Town Council of Clay Johnson to the Chariho Regional School Committee – Attorney Jon Anderson

explained to all that this item has become moot as yesterday Jessica Purcell filed a Petition in Equity and Memorandum of Law for Writ of Quo Warranto to the Rhode Island Supreme Court which means the School Committee does not need to file. The Supreme Court will decide the proper procedure was followed and who holds the seat on the School Committee. Polly questioned who has authority to file a Writ to which Jon noted that the Attorney General or attorney for any county or city of which the circuit court has jurisdiction, at his own instance or at the relation of any interested person, or any interested person. Polly asked Jon why he would take it upon himself to file this for the School Committee. Jon referenced advice he gave to the School Committee 14 years ago in the Felkner Case and anyone can look at the papers. Polly stated that she looked it up and the new ruling is only two can apply; the Attorney General or the injured party. Jon again reiterated that the School Committee doesn't need to file so this is not germane as we are not filing one. Polly stated, with all due respect, the Chariho School Committee could expend their resources illegally to which Jon responded "absolutely not". The School Committee could have filed an action if necessary. He again referred all to what he provided to the Supreme Court in 2008. The Supreme Court ruled five to nothing in favor of the School Committee. Polly insisted that was before the law changed. Kathryn Colasante stated she has a copy of the School Committee's Rules of Conduct and she received an email that did not make sense to her. She sent an email to Attorney Anderson and he did not answer her question. Her first comment is that the Richmond Town Council was the legitimate authority to proceed in filling the vacancy so how did Attorney Anderson get involved with the business of the Town Council. He noted that he does not provide legal opinions to any one individual so when can a member request a legal opinion? She read the Rules of Conduct and her question was not answered in the email. Jon clarified that he does not work for any one individual on the School Committee; he works for the Committee as a whole. Next he requested that Ms. Colasante look at the School Committee's Rules of Conduct. The Superintendent and Chair have jurisdiction over the Agenda. He gives opinions to the School District all day long but if a School Committee member wishes a legal opinion, this has to be approved by a majority of the Committee. When I see the Chariho Regional School District about to step in a pothole, it is my responsibility to notify school officials that there is a problem. I will not apologize for doing things with full transparency. Kathryn continued. You don't work for any one member. It was not too much to ask for this one request to be answered. Jon again stated that if the Chariho Regional School District is going to step into a pothole, I will speak up. Polly asked how the school district was about to step in a pothole to which Chair Giusti replied that the School Committee has been named in a lawsuit. Jon added that he was concerned this was going to happen. People come to the School Committee with requests. If somebody attends executive session who is not a member of the School Committee, we have to

open the meeting to the public so that privacy a family or individual might expect, is not there. We are not clear as to whether Mr. Johnson is a member of the School Committee. Polly accused Jon of trying to muddy the waters. We did not vote to have you proceed on this. You submitted this and you submitted a letter to Richmond. Jon again stated when he sees the Chariho Regional School District about to step in a pothole, he has an obligation to speak up. Polly felt Jon put them in the pothole to which Jon responded that it wasn't him who put the School Committee in the pothole, it was the Richmond Town Council. Andrew reminded all that the attorney has said this item is moot. It would have been an absolute dereliction of duty to not engage the full support of Attorney Anderson when we were put in this position by the actions of the Richmond Town Council. The matter is moot until such time as the Supreme Court rules. Chair Giusti noted that she will allow members of the audience to speak. She requested that they state their name, town of residence and keep their comments to around two minutes.

Joe Larisa, Attorney for Clay Johnson, stated that they have also filed a petition for Quo Warranto for Clay. He forwarded the position to Attorney Anderson at 4:00 PM but Attorney Anderson was probably already on his way to Chariho. There is no injunction by the Court against anyone so the Committee should proceed with its Budget Workshop. David Stall, from Hopkinton, stated he is here as a parent, taxpayer and Hopkinton Moderator. He has a procedural concern and wants to hear an answer. The legal opinion letter sent to Richmond Town Council – there was no meeting, no action, no motion. Catherine Giusti said the School Committee had heard about it, so Jon did the letter. He questions whether there was a rolling quorum. He feels the legal opinion was rendered on behalf of the entire School Committee without legal action. This is a violation of policy and OMA. Rules were broken intentionally and this calls for the immediate resignation of Jon Anderson and Catherine Giusti. He wants an answer. Jon replied that he has been completely transparent. Obviously, people think he should not be transparent. Loreli Stall, a Hopkinton resident and student, stated that the School Committee attorney should not be empowered to get involved with the Richmond Town Council. Don't spend money fighting legal issues, spend it on education. Charlestown resident Phyllis Penhallow, stated the issue here is that Richmond appointed someone to fill the vacancy. Let them battle it out. It is not the school district's business to go after towns. It is not appropriate to use district resources without the vote of the School Committee. An unnamed resident from Hopkinton felt the School Committee should be unbiased. Attorney Anderson is getting involved in Richmond's business and guiding the School Committee to unbiased views. He's pushing the agenda to get someone he wants. Mike Chambers, from Charlestown, noted that we do not live in an individual bubble. What one section of the Chariho Regional School District does affects other sections. Richmond put forth an individual that reflected the will of a small segment of the voters of Richmond. Most of the School Committee was elected by their towns and those appointed were done so under a process that is well understood in that town. This is not happening here. They are not representing the voters. This individual did not run in the election and did not care to run. It was a small group who pushed this. There are other options they could have followed. This is where the problem occurred. It is not totally Richmond's problem; it is a School Committee issue and schools will be affected. Hopkinton resident Jeremy Palmer stated his biggest concern is that he is not as informed as he would have liked to have been. The bickering back and forth – what is the reason – three people? We have a separated crowd. Put your egos aside. We are a community. Don't argue with each other. Richmond Town Council President Mark Trimmer informed all that the decision he made was to follow the Chariho Act. The School Committee is a part of Chariho so he hopes they would follow the Act. He then quoted from the Act, "In the event of any vacancy by death, resignation or incapacity to serve of any term of any member of said regional school district committee, the Town Council of the member town in which such vacancy occurs shall fill such vacancy by election by a majority vote of the Town Council of said town for the unexpired term of the member whose office is thus vacated." The Code of Conduct determines what is and isn't done by the Chariho School Committee and attorney. He would think all would be incensed that the Act is not being followed. That is wrong. Andrew McQuaide responded to these comments. Attorney Anderson told us this item is moot. The Richmond Town Council President's commented in regards to the Chariho Act. The Chariho Act and Richmond Town Charter are able to coexist with one another. To the extent

that you have a differing opinion, that's your prerogative and that's the prerogative that you exercised. That said, I stand firm in my belief that it's up to this committee to ensure the legality of all committees and, likewise, we need to ensure the legality of this School Committee. Craig Louzon questioned Attorney Anderson on the process that is followed when a Charter is revised. Jon noted that the Town approves it and it goes upstate to the General Assembly, The General Assembly ratifies it and then it becomes law. Craig stated the Chariho Act was established in 1958; the Richmond Town Charter in 2007. If the Supreme Court does not make a decision quickly, what do we have to do? Jon replied that every decision of the Chariho School Committee would be subject to challenge on the grounds that the Chariho School Committee was improperly constituted and, thus, every decision of the Chariho School Committee could be void. Shawn Purcell, a voting member of Richmond and husband to Jessica Purcell, apologized that his Town Council did not follow their own Charter. He is sorry the School Committee has to deal with all of this because three people decided this over some 1,400 voters. Scott Bill Hirst, Hopkinton Town Council President and Chariho graduate Class of 1971, noted that he is speaking solely for himself. He hopes that when all is settled, Clay will be seated. We will see how the process plays out. He thinks it is very important to realize that Clay Johnson is more experienced. Mrs. Purcell and her party were rejected nearly unanimously in the November 2022 election. If Mr. Johnson's victory is secured, there will be a stalemate on the School Committee. He wants the Committee to be more open-minded. Andrew McQuaide made a request of his fellow Committee members. By a show of hands, how many of you ran as a declared Democrat for the School Committee. No hands were raised. Andrew continued. He has voted for both Democrats and Republicans and when he serves the Chariho Regional School Committee, he serves the District. Not one single member on stage ran as a declared Democrat. Aimee Louzon from Charlestown noted that people are questioning why the School District is spending legal fees but the question to the Richmond Town Council should be, "Why hold elections if votes will be ignored." This is budget season and the focus should be on education. Richmond resident Louise Dinsmore questioned the sequence of events that empowered Mr. Anderson to render a legal opinion. You should all ask this. Rules of Conduct state legal opinions have to be voted on. Kristen Chambers, from Richmond, noted that not all the Richmond Town Council voted for Mr. Johnson's appointment; Samantha Wilcox and Rich Nassaney voted "no". It is Mark Trimmer, Michael Colasante and Helen Sheehan who got us into this mess by selecting someone else. They did not act in accord with the Richmond Town Charter. They cancelled her November vote for Jessica. They claim "there are not enough conservatives on the Committee." The School Committee is not supposed to have a political agenda. They work together for the students. Ryan Callahan, another Richmond resident, stated that he came in 4th in the election and he thanks God every day. It is a tough job irrespective of what side you are on. He asked Attorney Anderson to clarify, if Mr. Johnson's position is vacated, are all his votes void or only those if he is in a majority position? Attorney Anderson replied that the latter applies. The process of recording Mr. Johnson's votes he will clarify for the Clerk. Ryan then directed his comments to Mark Trimmer. He lost his temper at the Richmond meeting the other night and quoted from the Bible, apologizing to Mr. Trimmer. Tyler Champlin asked Jon if there was a time frame for a decision to which Jon stated that when this happened previously, it was about the same time frame when the case went to the Supreme Court and a decision was rendered the first week in April. He has not seen Mr. Johnson's papers. If there is a request for an expedited process, his expectation is they will try to speed it up. Tyler asked if April would be the expedited date to which Jon responded that the Court realizes this Board is in limbo because votes may not count. There are things that will come up that are entitled to be heard in executive session. He has already explained that if Mr. Johnson is found not to hold the seat, he is considered a member of the public and, therefore, anyone from the public should be allowed to sit in. Tyler asked Jon who made him aware of the issue on the Richmond Town Council Agenda. Jon at first stated that he did not remember but then noted that he believes it was the District Clerk, Donna Sieczkiewicz. District Clerk Sieczkiewicz asked if she would be allowed to speak. She was given the liberty to explain that she received an email from Erin Liese (Richmond Town Clerk) informing her that the School Committee vacancy would be filled by Jessica Purcell. This email was shared with the Superintendent and Jon Anderson. Ms. Sieczkiewicz then noted that while Ms. Purcell was meeting with the Superintendent, another email was received by her from Erin Liese

stating that things had changed. The second email was forwarded to Superintendent Picard and Attorney Anderson. Michael Colasante, from Richmond, stated that he does his due diligence when he makes his decisions. He looked at the Chariho Act (1958) and at Charlestown and Hopkinton for unexpired appointments and how they make the appointments. He did not take the decision lightly. Experience tells him that he thinks he made the right choice. When he looks at 6-6, that is very healthy – conservatives versus liberals. This gives voters the opportunity to see personal opinion. David Stall asked for two clarifications. Jon was asked the same question by Craig and Ryan pertaining to if all votes would be nullified. The first time he said “yes” they would and the second time he said “some of them would”. Jon responded that he did not give two different answers. They were different questions. He went back to what happened in 2009 when Mr. Felkner was on the School Committee and the Hopkinton Town Council at the same time. RI Supreme Court looked to see if Hopkinton had a provision in its Charter on filling vacancies. Richmond has this in their Charter. Mr. Stall then asked if the attorney is authorized to write legal opinions and send them to any entity on behalf of the School Committee. That is what happened here. Jon replied as he did previously to which Polly stated that Attorney Anderson sent her a copy of the letter that was sent to the Richmond Town Council on January 17th. There was no contact before that to which Jon responded “exactly”. In this letter I told you what my advice would be. Kathryn Colasante stated that she talked with other School Committee members and there are no instances where an attorney has rendered opinions without a majority vote of the Committee. She does not understand what he is saying. There should have been a majority vote. Steve from Hope Valley wanted to know, when this whole mess is sorted out, will anyone be held responsible. Jon stated that he anticipates that the Richmond Town Council will be held responsible. This is part of his retainer; there is no extra cost to Chariho but Richmond will incur a cost. Steve asked if Jon was legally bound by anything to reinforce this. Jon did not understand what he was asking so Steve rephrased it – won’t it cost money. Jon again replied “no”. He is on a retainer with the District. He did the same paperwork 15 years ago. The Chariho Act and the Richmond Town Charter can be read consistently. If not, the Town Charter is law as stated by the General Assembly. Chair Giusti noted, after this next speaker is done, she will be closing this portion of the meeting. Pat Ford who was in attendance filming the meeting, questioned how it is possible that the meeting is posted but not recorded. People who did not come tonight won’t be able to see what transpires here.

III. Budget Workshops

Gina informed all that the Governor’s preliminary budget was released and as of right now, Charlestown is expected to receive \$63,283 additional State Aid; Richmond – an additional \$552,571 and Hopkinton – an additional \$564,248. Again this is the preliminary budget. We probably won’t know for sure until June. She was asked by Chair Giusti to present a budget at what the cost is right now to educate students at the current levels which resulted in a 6.64% increase over last year. The School Committee has until March to make final adjustments. Tyler reiterated that was additional State Aid to which Gina explained that the budget already included State Aid at last year’s levels. These increase were given because our District is meeting success. Some of the other districts saw a decrease. Tyler asked how this factors into categorical aid (transportation) to which Gina replied that she believes we should see an increase in both State Aid and Transportation Categorical Aid because we met the criteria for success. We did receive a little more Special Education Funding over last year but it is not fully funded. Andrew asked if the Committee could take a 5-minute recess to rearrange the tables.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was
VOTED: To recess so that tables can be rearranged. In favor: Unanimous.

Chair Giusti reconvened the meeting at 7:28 PM. Tyler noted some confusion over what is listed already in the budget and what is additional funding. Chair Giusti, in order to alleviate some of the confusion, asked how much more money did we get this year over last year? Ned replied that there is \$500,000 more accounted for that was not in FY23. Gina stated that if they were going to reset, with State Aid (per the Governor’s preliminary budget), Hopkinton would see a 3.54% increase,

Richmond, a 2.89% increase and Charlestown – a 2.81% increase for a 3.1% overall increase. We want to get the towns under 4%. To do that, we need \$1.35 million in cuts. This will affect staff and programs. Gina explained that a cut of \$10,000 can be made to line 5234 (Strategic Planning) as the School Committee has already awarded the bid which came in lower than anticipated. Tyler stated that he would like to look at something that will require Ned's assistant. Going back, looking at budgeted versus actuals, he noticed about \$988,000 in the health care variance. This is a steep number; he believes there is money here to cut (section 4, page 14, line 1373). Ned noted that he cannot go back prior to his coming here but historically COVID did have an impact on this line item. He did note other line items that will have a change because of the audit. He does anticipate that healthcare will climb up over \$800,000 but some of this will come back to the District as revenue. Linda questioned if they could move money forward to which Ned explained that the District is self-insured so we are on the hook no matter what. We could change our premiums based on what we think, but he would not recommend it. We had savings because of COVID. This will show up in the audit as non-spendable. We need to keep about 4 months' worth in the fund balance as premiums or about \$2.8 million. We have to put some money against lag expenses (those that come in 2-3 months into the next fiscal year). Tyler requested the numbers be provided to the Committee; Ned will send them. Linda noted a concern she had. With the increase in State Aid that is anticipated, towns will be under 4%. Gina agreed but Chariho has never been in this situation of getting more State Aid than anticipated. Craig asked if the anticipated State Aid was "carved in stone" to which Ned responded it is not. They anticipate this could change. Same as with us getting full categorical aid. A formula to adjust may be requested. Craig stated that what concerns him is not this coming year, but the following year when ESSER and additional State Aid disappear. Karen asked when the proposed budget is expected to pass to which Gina replied in June. Andrew contemplated that there could be value in looking at multi-year budgets. It won't solve the problem for this budget but he does see the likely value of that activity. Ned noted that they are required to put forth a five-year plan. There is an opportunity to share the mechanics of what we are talking about. Clay asked if anticipated budget expenses could become available to which Ned responded that they can make them available. The towns are required to do a three-year budget projection. Chair Giusti asked all Committee members if there was an amount they feel comfortable with taking from healthcare. Ned explained that this can be discussed more on Thursday as this will be in the fund balance; not surplus. Gina added that the auditor from Markum will be present as well on Thursday night. Linda cautioned all to not rely on this "windfall"; they need to be prepared with more cuts. She likes the idea of a multiple year budget. The Committee has to look at cutting more. She would like to hear from the rest of the School Committee as she does not want to cut anything. Gina commented that members have to look at where they represent their constituents. Increase class size could affect achievement; parents will be concerned. We are not required to have Middle School or JV athletics but it is best to have these after school events. We recognize we have a responsibility to our students and our taxpayers. Gina again stated that \$10,000 can be cut from the Strategic Planning money; we can cut library books for a total of \$14,000; cut all furniture requests for a total of \$15,000 and a cut to catering of \$5,000. With the mental health grant we will be receiving, there is an opportunity to move some mental health staff. Andrew was in agreement with Linda. They are at the point where the rubber meets the road. Cuts are not the directions he wants to go in but this is inevitable. Members can also make individual cuts. Last year cuts were made that some of the public were unaware of. He suggested they update the FAQ to the community and share this information. He asked the Superintendent if she would be able to determine where cuts should be made to which Kathryn agreed. Chair Giusti noted the importance of the Committee starting to make these decisions. Clay stated that he is interested in knowing what classes have 15 or fewer students. Amanda asked what is the dollar amount between 0 and \$1.3 million that the School Committee wants. Do you want three to four big line items cut or a thousand littler cuts? She would like to hear what the School Committee wants. You have multiple opportunities to make your voices heard. Linda agreed with Amanda. Some will have to be drastic. She would rather see a balance between class size and extracurricular instead of a larger impact to just one of these. She questioned if administration had looked at closing a school? Gina noted that space would be a concern but if we receive level funding again this year, there will be a phase out plan with Hope Valley School and

depot bus stops for students. We have Stage I already completed so the School Committee will need to determine if they want to move forward to a Stage II application for a new elementary school in each town. Chair Giusti stated that she did not want to put any School Committee member on the spot but they need to decide as Chariho School Committee members what can each one of you advocate for. If you are going into the community advocating for a level-funded budget, we need to know that. What is your advocacy? Your first responsibility is to advocate for Chariho students. If it is a zero budget, a 2%, a 3% - have these conversations with yourself and your constituents. Tyler, in response to Amanda's comments and in agreement with Andrew and Linda, does not feel it will be one or the other; maybe one or two larger cuts and several smaller ones. He will be the first to say that not everyone is dumb to the fact that he advocated for a level-funded budget last year but he does not think they can do that this year. 6.64% is not going to do it but he is looking at a 3.5% to 4.0% increase. He can advocate for this. We need to get the three towns together and he will probably be drug over the coals tomorrow for stating this. He would like to go with a minimum of a two-year budget. He refuses to sit there and be ignored like he felt he was last year. Kathryn asked if direction could be provided. If they go to 3%, what are the cuts that will be needed? What will be needed if they go to 2%? Craig felt he could go lower than Tyler so the towns have a little more flexibility, although they did take advantage last year. He asked the public what direction they wanted to go. Sharon Davis from Hopkinton stated that they cannot afford 3.5-4.0%. They need 2%. She will lobby against spending money at CCRI. She presented a spreadsheet of cuts. The District can be at a 2% fund balance. She did not recommend anything that affects teachers. She is lobbying for Hopkinton. Michael Colasante noted that at the Omnibus Meeting, he mentioned mandates. Look at private schools. They don't have mandates. If the District gave 100 students the opportunity to go to a private school paid for by the District, that would result in the \$1.3 million in savings the first year alone. It would not take away any programs. Give parents the choice. They will be on the hook for transportation. That is why he was elected – he thinks outside the box. Andrew asked Mr. Colasante if he would answer some questions related to his proposal. Mr. Colasante refused. Andrew respectfully acknowledged that this is easier said than done. We had this issue with Charter Schools. Unless they target specific classes and remove all students from a class or program, this won't work. Even distribution amongst classrooms would not be a savings as you are not removing a teacher or program. If Mr. Colasante is willing to substantiate how that could be done, he would like to hear it. If the District targets certain classes or programs, that eliminates a parent's choice. Randy from Hopkinton noted there are several individual on the School Committee who represent him and advocated for level funding last year. It is the responsibility of those on the Committee to come up with cuts. He appreciates Tyler's honesty, but he wants to hear from Polly and Larry. They are cowardly pushing this back on the Superintendent. Kathryn stated she does not necessarily agree with this individual. They are the educational experts. This is not her full-time job. She is not passing the buck; she is not running the school district. Cop-out is the other way around. Clay stated that in 1997 there were 4,000 students; today we have 3,100. We have space. We need to consolidate to which Linda asked "Close a school?" Clay replied that buildings cost money. Nancy Pirnie stated she is a proud Richmond resident but then asked to take proud out of it. She is a proud Chariho employee. You all need to look at the budget. Hopkinton and Richmond need to look at economic development – it is not all the Chariho Regional School District. Look at Andrew's suggestion. She looks forward to hearing everyone's input. Jessica Purcell from Richmond stated that if she leaves the meeting a bit early, it is because she needs to get home to her children. She suggested they look at the 1:1 policy and maybe change that to 2:1 for young elementary students. Most are learning in stations. She will be in attendance Thursday night. Charlestown resident Frank Hopkins, a volunteer for Chariho, Community 2000 and the Rotary, stated that Chariho produces some amazing young people. This is a result of the investment we have made. Level-funding is short term but we have to invest in our youth. He agreed with Andrew's point – we have to look ahead. He suggested the Committee look at healthcare as maybe there is an opportunity to get additional insurance so you don't have to keep a large fund balance. Go back and look at United Healthcare and Blue Cross. Betsy Alvarez from Hopkinton commented that the Superintendent has already answered the questions on what to cut. She is talking as a parent, not as a teacher. If you plan to cut extracurricular and sports, you will see many people come out. Kathryn asked an "out of

the box” question. Do we offer karate or ballet? Gina replied that the District does not offer either but Richmond PTO offers a Karate Club. Kathryn stated that, as a parent, she paid for these for her kids. Dance too. If you find things in extracurricular activities that can be privately paid for by parents, that would save money. Andrew noted that legally they would not be able to do that to which Gina added pay-to-play is not allowed in Rhode Island. Andrew admitted that the general consensus is that in no way is anyone advocating for the Superintendent to come up with \$1.35 million in cuts but we do need to provide some direction. He agrees wholeheartedly with Chair Giusti. Every School Committee member needs to show their cards. If you are not going to support the budget, let us know. Be transparent. It is go time and critical that we move forward. Gina noted that she will give the School Committee options. Tyler thanked Betsy for coming and talking. The reality is the unknown. We want the public to know what is going on and we have had many conversations. What does a level-funded budget look like – people will fill these seats. Administration needs to provide information to the School Committee and public – maintenance of effort. He is not advocating for this but people have asked. Pat suggested the recommendations start from the top and go down. Tyler felt that was up to the Superintendent; he does not have the expertise to decide that. Pat piggybacked off Jessica Purcell’s suggestion to look at 1:1. Gina explained that we would need for all student to have Chromebooks if there is a shift from in-person to distance learning. As a School Committee, you would not be able to allow distance learning if we did not provide computers. We are, however, looking at phasing out MacBooks and going with Chromebooks for all students. Andrew stated his experience with Chromebooks is these are integrated in the 1st grade curriculum and assessments are done on computers. Karen also noted that the virtual plan online was approved by the State so the State would have to approve any adjustments that are made. Gina added that for distance learning you have to have three hours of live instruction for the day to count. It can’t be paper packets. Tyler asked if the District is required to have DL to which Gina replied “no”. Tyler noted that, as a parent, he would love to get rid of computers to which Karen responded that if the District did not have virtual days, kids will need to make up all missed days at the end of the year. Amanda Blau asked if the District had a policy in regards to bussing (i.e. certain distance kids can walk). Gina stated there is a policy that lists this. Ned added that the elementary level is close to door-to-door. Distance increases as the students’ grades/age increases. We are looking at expanding the radius and offering neighborhood depot stops. Buses that currently go through neighborhoods will no longer do this. Amanda asked if there is a law requiring this to which Ned noted that only K as we don’t have sidewalks. We have to be thoughtful of how to get kids to school and strike a balance between cost and safety. Louise Dinsmore stated that, based on what she has heard, 3.5-4% would be a hard sell for Richmond. Consider what Michael Colasante said about school choice and Clay about consolidation. We are dancing around this; think outside the box. Craig responded that he and Bill Day have advocated for years about consolidation. Hopkinton does not want to give up their two jewels. We are not going to pay for kids to go to parochial schools. Louise noted that her son goes to a parochial school to which Craig replied that it is not the District’s duty to do that and they might not legally be able to do it. Louise stated that 83% of the budget is teacher contracts; talk about concessions there. Craig noted that we are similar to other school districts. We have tried to get the three towns to talk about consolidation. Clay stated that Ned brought up an interesting point about bussing. Maybe provide an incentive for students to not ride. Andrew noted that they were going past 9:00 PM and that he felt it was time to adjourn.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To adjourn at 9:02 PM. In favor: Chambers, Colasante, Hopkins, Johnson, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Pouliot and Reynolds. Opposed: Champlin and Giusti. The motion carried by a vote of 10 in favor with 2 opposed.

Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk