

Village of Richmond

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Village President Toni Wardanian called the June 5, 2025 Board Meeting to order at 7:00 PM, 5600 Hunter Drive, Richmond, Illinois.

Everyone in attendance rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Village President Toni Wardanian, Trustees: Lauri Cook, Robert Elliott, Frank Peiler, Jason Weiler and Linda Weiss.

ABSENT: Trustee Adam Metz.

OTHERS PRESENT: Village Administrator/Police Chief Ciro Cetrangolo, Attorney Brandy Quance and Village Clerk Karla L. Thomas.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS: President Wardanian made the following announcement: "I want to be super, super clear that the Village of Richmond is deeply committed to honoring our veterans; that's never been a question. The proposal before us tonight is not about removing or hiding the current tribute, it's about elevating it. It's about creating a *true memorial*, one that honors *all* who served, past, present, and future, not just the members of one organization.

The tribute stones have sat respectfully in the park for many years, placed there after the Legion no longer had a permanent home. Since then, the park has changed. Richmond has changed. The park now serves hundreds of residents and visitors, and it deserves the space and function of a true community park, just as our veterans deserve a *dedicated, intentional, dignified* space designed for reflection and honor.

Moving this tribute to the front lawn of Village hall, landscaped, accessible, and visible, is not erasing history. It's enshrining it. It's a permanent and public statement that Richmond does not forget our veterans and never will."

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Bob Stevens, speaking on behalf of the Legion, read the following statement "We are here tonight to object to your agenda item seeking motion to approve the Village of Richmond concept design, construction and relocating of the Richmond's Veterans Memorial to the front lawn of the Richmond Village Hall. This honor site is not only Richmond, it represents veterans from Richmond and Burton Townships. In the past you did a survey of opinion on this subject. The survey did not represent a big part of the citizens of the Village, (59) responses. The mayor stated that she needs to listen to the citizens of Richmond and she does. On this matter we need to listen to the concerns of the veterans, the citizens of both Richmond and Burton Townships, as this is who this honors. The last Veterans Day, students walked up to the site from the Middle School and did a service. A lot of you probably didn't know that as they were there before us. I talked to them and that in the future they need to coordinate with the Legion Service and they were open to this. If the site gets moved to the Village Hall there is no way for the students to get there safely, as there are no sidewalks. This should be a great time to start a tradition of having the students attend. There is no doubt that the honor site as it sits does not present the best and yes, your new design is very nice. A few meetings ago I asked if we could meet at the site as a community to come up with some ideas to improve the appearance. The Mayor requested that we wait for nicer weather. I apologize for not pushing this forward because I travel a lot. The site sits on 480 sf. I was there today and took measurements on how it could be changed. I think if we take at it with an open mind we could come up with a better layout. Move some of the stones, repurpose some to make better use of them, and gain room to make it a site more welcoming. We could make it work on a slightly larger footprint. I have been in contact with Congressman Brad Schneider office and they are checking in to see if this is in fact legal without an ordinance and if this is in the best interest of all parties involved. With this being said we request that this motion be struck from the agenda and we work on a solution that works for everyone."

Craig Kunz read a statement as follows: "The issue of the American Legion Post 253 is becoming, and is an emotional item, between the Village Board and the Legion. The Board appears to be adamant that the monuments be moved onto the front lawn of the Village Hall and the Legion is just as adamant, as you just heard, to keep the monuments where they are at and to honor the agreement that was made between the parties i.e. the Legion and the Village Board at the that time, which is approximately May 2008. They want that agreement made at that time to be continued to be honored. To the best of my knowledge, the review of 8a lacks transparency. The Board is being asked to vote on the Village concept design, with no current design being given to the Legion or public as to what the concept entails. Yes, the design was handed out about 2 or 3 months ago, but tonight is that design the same as it was before? Also the Board is being asked to vote on the construction of the new design, but with no cost being provided to the Legion or the public; therefore, the Board has or may have the numbers but the public doesn't have it. As we know from the survey, some people were saying what it is going to cost to make this move? Lastly, if this 8a is approved by the Board and the monuments are moved to the Village Hall as of today that would be without permission of the monument owner i.e. the American Legion Post 253. In September of '24 under Trustee Comments the Board was debating the move of the monuments, the question was asked about the reason for the move. The response that was given was some of the local businesses don't like the look of the layout, young children have been seen playing on them, and that is believed to be very disrespectful, animals, particularly dogs were seen urinating on the monuments. It is my personal opinion, and I believe with the Legion Members and Village Residents, that they feel the above reasons do not constitute a compelling reason to move. Further, moving the monuments from the center of the Village which is visited, which we just heard from the President by hundreds of people each week and moving them to the Village Hall would greatly reduce exposure of the monuments being seen by the public. Early this year, the Village did conduct a survey as we heard. The survey results gave me a clear indication that the majority of both groups are opposed to moving them to the Village Hall. Both the majority of

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these groups, residents and non-residents were opposed to that. Why then is the Board seeking to do accomplish something that the majority of people they polled are opposed to? I have a few other questions. Why hasn't the Board been meeting and having dialog with the Legion and the Board and try to find a mutual agreement on this matter? Why hasn't that happened? And I would like to know what the line item is in the current budget to cover the construction of the cost and moving of the monuments? I am making that request. In closing, I am asking the Board to table this matter until such time that all costs data can be compiled and disseminated to both the Legion and Richmond residents. Also, secure a letter of understanding signed by both parties, i.e. the Village Board and the Legion to give future Boards and Legionnaires a point of reference and to possibly to avoid any litigation."

To answer a couple of questions, President Wardanian noted that the survey questions aren't exactly how you interrupted them, because a majority of the residents who answered it-cost was a question, but a majority of the residents that answered it were in favor of it. And the second part, for a line item, if we were to create a line item and actually put it in the budget don't you think that people would be saying you're not being transparent? Every step of this process has been as transparent as much as it can be. It has been on the agenda, nothing can be done in the dark, so if we were to create a line item in this year's budget that was passed people would be accusing us of doing things behind the scenes. We are doing this right now, so we can budget for it next year. This isn't going to happen tomorrow if it passes, it wouldn't be happening tomorrow or happening next month. It would still take a ton of planning, a ton of design, would love to have the Legion's input. This is saying if it passes for a new location. I heard at a different meeting that there not the Village's stones and we can't have them. We're not counting on using their property. We would love to have it and incorporate and honor this post, but that is not the intention, the intention here is to have a permanent and dignified memorial for every veteran not just one post and it is not to minimize anyone's service in that post. That not what it is for and I would love to have it in the grand memorial and there are pictures of it and we have displayed and talked about and had at a CDC meeting and which was just as well attended. We have put the design out there and I even talked to members of the Legion that said that it looked pretty nice. So nothing has been done in the dark and it isn't going to be a line item until it gets voted, so we can start working towards that. So I hope that answers some of your questions.

Mr. Kunz replied "not really". President Wardanian then stated that if it was a line item in this budget that just passed, you don't think for a second that we wouldn't be accused of doing things in the dark? Because nothing has been done in the dark for this. Nothing. Mr. Kunz wanted to go back to President Wardanian's comments on the survey. Mr. Kunz responded that she stated the majority of the people are in favor, President Wardanian clarified-the residents. Mr. Kunz then stated that he has the results of the survey that were handed out and there are (39) items under resident comments. He then read an example of a comment from residents: Love the concept proposal and by the way, I don't think anyone in this room would say that the concept proposal is not attractive, yes it is, it's very attractive and I think it makes a lot of sense and actually I would recommend that concept at Stevens Park, but going down this list of items: Love the concept proposal. I think it should stay where it is, so that's even. President Wardanian responded that we could cherry pick all the comments we want so there are other positive comments. Mr. Kunz stated that (20) out of (36) are not in favor of the making the move. Trustee Elliott then responded that we all read the results and know the points you are trying to make, we all know what the pros and the cons are, right, I don't think we should go through everything. Mr. Kunz stated that he wasn't going too. Trustee Elliott said it sounded like Mr. Kunz was going to review all the responses from the survey. Mr. Kunz stated no, maybe that's what Trustee Elliott heard. Mr. Kunz stated that he heard that the majority of the people were in favor of making the move. Mr. Kunz then stated that on this document right here, Resident Comments (20) of (39) are not in favor. On the non-residents comments, anyone can look at this, take a gander at it, (14) or (19) are opposed to moving the monuments. President Wardanian noted that the important word there is "non-resident", so are there any other public comments.

Mr. Stevens just wanted to make a correct in President Wardanian's narrative that the memorial is not just the post, it is everyone from the Richmond and Burton area that served in the military. They were not necessarily in the post. We tried to honor everybody. Mr. Stevens noted that through this he learned that there are a lot of people we missed and I am trying to get the names. He stated that they don't have the veterans from the Civil War, I have many hours of research, and we are missing over 200. I would really like to meet before any vote on this and go over what we think could be done. There is 480 sf. you know what, we could make a beautiful with less than 500 just by moving things around. There's a few big stones that could be removed and repurposed. We are going into this with an open mind. President Wardanian responded Thank you. Mr. Kunz then asked to make one last comment. Mr. Kunz then read the motion before the Board and stated that what he heard we haven't finished are design yet, yet the Board is going to vote on a design that hasn't been finished. The construction and relocation, you're going to vote on that and approve it, possibly, but we don't know what it is going to cost. How can you vote on that? President Wardanian again responded that if it was already in the budget we would be accused of doing things behind the scenes, which I never want that to be a point of conversation.

President Wardanian asked if there were any other public comments.

Bob Stevens inquired into what was happening with the old Richmond Motor Sales and Corey's aka old Foley's Garage building downtown, other than weeds growing. President Wardanian reported that these property were privately owned and she doesn't know the owners intention for them. Mr. Stevens asked if the Code Enforcement Official could contact them to clean up the properties. President Wardanian reported that property maintenance is already being dealt with and because it is private property the Village cannot tell them what to do with it. So hopefully sooner rather than later something happens over there, that's her hope.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

CONSENT AGENDA: The Board reviewed the items on the consent agenda.

- a. Motion to approve the Regular Board Minutes for May 15, 2025
- b. Proclamation announcing the Village of Richmond Pollinator Week, June 15-22, 2025

Trustee Peiler moved, seconded by Trustee Elliott to approve the consent agenda items 7a and 7b as presented. ROLL CALL: AYES: COOK, ELLIOTT, PEILER, WEILER and WEISS. NAYS: NONE. ABSENT: METZ. ABSTAIN: NONE. The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS: President Wardanian presented a motion to approve the Village of Richmond concept design, construction and relocating of the Richmond's Veterans Memorial to the front lawn of the Richmond Village Hall. Attorney Quance clarified that this is a motion for a concept design and construction, it is not motion to approve any costs for anything, and it is concept.

Trustee Elliott moved, seconded by Trustee Peiler to approve the concept design, construction and relocating of the Richmond's Veterans Memorial to the front lawn of the Richmond Village Hall as presented. ROLL CALL: AYES: ELLIOTT, PEILER, WEILER, WEISS, and COOK. NAYS: NONE. ABSENT: METZ. ABSTAIN: NONE. The motion carried.

President Wardanian presented a motion to approve An Ordinance Authorizing Disposal of Surplus Property.

Trustee Weiss moved, seconded by Trustee Weiler to approve An Ordinance Authorizing Disposal of Surplus Property as presented. ROLL CALL: AYES: PEILER, WEILER, WEISS, COOK, and ELLIOTT. NAYS: NONE. ABSENT: METZ. ABSTAIN: NONE. The motion carried.

COMMITTEE/DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Trustee Elliott noted that last week was the Memorial Day event and wished to thank the following: Kristen Murphy, Trustee Weiss, volunteer Bettina Mueller, Village Clerk Karla Thomas, Richmond Café (Eric & Beth, Savannah & Chris) Legion Member Dick Arsenaue, Public Works, Grayson Gonzalez, Aaron Gress and President Toni Wardanian for her speech.

ADMINISTRATION/POLICE: Village Administrator/Police Chief Cetrangolo reported the following:

- The owners of Angelo's Fresh Market have redesign the gaming area per Board suggestions.

Trustee Cook inquired into having the stop sign re-installed coming out of Angelo's Fresh Market onto May Ave. Administrator/Chief Cetrangolo will talk with the owner to address the matter.

PUBLIC WORKS: President Wardanian reported that the Public Works Department continues to work hard on projects throughout the Village.

VILLAGE CLERK: Clerk Thomas reported that the McConnell Park Pocket Refuge Pollinator Garden has been completed and encouraged everyone to visit it. She thanked Jack and Judy Speer of Small Waters Education, Cindy Skrukud and all the planting volunteers, as well as the Public Works Department for their assistance in creating this special garden. Clerk Thomas also reported that Principal Margaret Carey, from Landmark Elementary School in McHenry, donated their pollinator garden bench to the Village's new garden. She expressed her thanks to Principal Carey for the donation.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: President Wardanian announced that the bat boxes will be installed this coming Saturday at McConnell Park.

President Wardanian also announced that tomorrow she along with individuals from MCCD, Openlands, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and The Conservation Fund will be touring the Refuge with Senator Dick Durbin. She has been invited to make a brief speech.

TRUSTEE COMMENTS: Trustee Peiler commented that he looked at Stevens Park from different directions and how it was setup. The bottom line is that the park is too small for those huge monuments. We wanted to come up with something that included additional things, like the flags for all the different military branches. The concept design was just his ideas, it is all it was. There could be many concept ideas. It's just a start.

Trustee Elliott remarked that the Veterans Memorial should be for all veterans that served in wars going back to 1775 to 2025. He also noted that tomorrow was the 75th anniversary of World War II D-Day.

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Trustee Weiler commented that the size is already an issue and Mr. Stevens mentioned that we are already missing quite a few names and that will result in it getting even bigger, it only makes sense to give those individuals the same amount of room to honor them. It needs to be relocated. He additionally stated that he supports all veterans, as he had several friends serve and fortunately they came home.

Trustee Cook reported that until she became a Trustee, she didn't know the Veterans Memorial was even located at Stevens Park. It is too small. Having the monument at the Village Hall will provide adequate parking, people will see it from Route 12 and students/residents can cut through the Village's property behind Angelo's Fresh Market as they currently do.

President Wardanian noted that relocating the Veterans Memorial to the Village Hall next year works well and coincides with the 250th Anniversary of America.

CLOSED SESSION: Clerk Thomas reported that the Board needed to go into Closed Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21)) Approval/Semi-Annual Review of Closed Session Minutes.

Trustee Weiss moved, seconded by Trustee Cook to convene into Closed Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 12/2(c)(21)) Approval/Semi-Annual Review of Closed Session Minutes. ROLL CALL: AYES: COOK, ELLIOTT, PEILER, WEILER and WEISS. NAYS: NONE. ABSENT: METZ. ABSTAIN: NONE. The motion carried.

The Board went into Closed Session at 7:30 PM.

Upon returning from Closed Session, roll call was then taken. Present were President Wardanian, Trustees: Cook, Elliott, Peiler, Weiler and Weiss, Administrator/Chief Cetrangolo, Attorney Quance and Clerk Thomas. Trustee Metz was absent.

The Board reconvened at 7:40 PM.

ACTION RESULTING FROM CLOSED SESSION: Clerk Thomas announced that she would prepare a Resolution to approve Closed Session Minutes for December 5, 2024, March 20, 2025, May 1, 2025 and release of the December 5, 2024 and March 20, 2025, which will be on the next Board Agenda.

Trustee Peiler moved, seconded by Trustee Weiss to approve the Closed Session Minutes of December 5, 2024, March 20, 2025, and May 1, 2025 and releasing the December 5, 2024 and March 20, 2025 Minutes as presented. ROLL CALL: AYES: COOK, ELLIOTT, PEILER, WEILER and WEISS. NAYS: NONE. ABSENT: METZ. ABSTAIN: NONE. The motion carried.

With no further business, Trustee Weiss moved to adjourn the June 5, 2025 Regular Board Meeting, seconded by Trustee Elliott. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Karla L. Thomas, Village Clerk