

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of January 12, 2022
Town Center Meeting Room and via Zoom**

Members Present: Josh Arneson, June Heston, Molly Dugan, Connie Bona, Rebecca Starks, Jay Furr, Linda Donovan, Jeff Forward, Ellen Kane

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Kendall Chamberlin

Call or Order: 4:00pm

Welcome by Arneson

Consideration of selecting a Committee Chair

Furr: I would volunteer June, but I would do it if she does not want to.

Dugan: We could look at co-chairs.

Furr: I would be happy to chair or co-chair.

Forward moved for Furr to become Chair. Seconded by Rebecca. Roll call vote: Heston, Arneson, Dugan, Bona, Starks, Donovan, Forward in favor. Furr Abstained. Motion passed.

Discussion of staffing needs

Heston: Katie Buckley has said that there are some consulting firms doing this type of work. CCRPC may also be able to help with this type of work.

Furr: I think that makes sense. VLCT will also be able to help us with looking at projects.

Dugan: Will the funding pay for staffing?

Heston: Yes. But the new ruling does make the reporting a bit easier, and we don't know what that reporting will look like, but it may not be as intensive as we first thought.

Discussion of final rule from Treasury

Furr: If we go with the revenue loss it would make it easier.

Heston: We would still have to document how projects fits into the criteria.

Furr: We do have to say we are opting for that choice but do not have to say what funding went for what.

Kane: We would still have to submit a final report on how it was spent?

Furr: Not necessarily.

Donovan: Amounts under \$1M can be spent without additional reporting.

Bona: No matter what we do we would want to track the spending, the invoices, and minutes from public meetings. This reporting does not seem to be very different than other federal reporting.

Forward: That category is replacement of lost revenue?

Furr: Yes. The \$1M referenced earlier is for capital expenditures. There are limitations on capital expenditures.

Heston: We can do certain things like HVAC in a building.

Furr: We should keep documentation but they may not ask to see it.

Kane: We don't even have that much lost revenue.

Furr: We don't have to have that much lost revenue.

Heston: In the interim ruling we would have had to do a calculation, but now we don't have to.

Furr: As long as we spend it on a governmental service it is okay. It cannot go to a rainy day fund or a reserve fund.

Forward: I am more interested in coming up with criteria on what would be appropriate projects. I think we need to go through the process of public engagement.

Furr: Even though we can just take the money as revenue I still want to go through the process and select projects so we can tell people where the money was spent.

Bona: The money is already separate in our accounting system. I would like to move the money from the checking account to the money market so it gains interest until we spend it. I can ask the Selectboard to move this money.

Kane: Can't we take the money as lost revenue but still follow the process.

Arneson: I like that idea.

Donovan: What about the Jericho survey?

Arneson: They put out their survey for about 2-3 months and received about 350 responses. They are currently trying to summarize the results as they had some open ended questions.

Kane: How long do we have to spend the money?

Heston: We have to decide on what to spend it on by the end of 2024 and spend it by 2026.

Furr: I want to be transparent about what we spend it on.

Arneson: We can claim it as revenue but still be thoughtful in the process to spend the money to be transparent with residents.

Starks: When does the \$1M threshold kick in?

Arneson: That is for one capital project.

Heston: Even if we claim it as lost revenue then we still have to do more reporting if we spend over \$1M on one project.

Bona: Is the \$1M threshold per project or a combined total of all capital projects?

Arneson: It is per project. Not combined.

Bona: Going with lost revenue opens more doors and it's less strict.

Furr: VLCT will be providing more guidance on the rule soon.

Forward: I think we should wait until there is more information.

Discussion of strategy for community outreach

Kane: I think the important thing is to figure out the right kind of survey for Richmond. Perhaps we could provide some information about the demographics of the Town along with the survey.

Forward: I would like to talk about criteria and provide some guidance.

Heston: I think we can navigate a way of asking for input that asks people to provide estimated costs for the project. Having a staff member to look at the ideas that come in and help narrow this down would be helpful.

Furr: In certain categories they stressed affected and disproportionately affected populations. In certain categories they provide specifics on the affected and disproportionately affected categories. It would be good to know this information about Richmond.

Dugan: That information would also help us determine the outreach we do. While we want people to come to the table with costs associated with their project, we also have to understand that not everyone can come with that information.

Kane: I wonder if we can say a certain percentage will go to specific needs of the Town, and a certain percentage will go to address affected populations, and then there could be an other to catch projects that don't fit into either of the first two categories.

Furr: I think that makes sense. But, I am concerned about getting public comment because certain groups could do more outreach on a specific project.

Heston: I think since we are making recommendations to the Selectboard will help with that.

Kane: Narrowing the categories a bit will help us so it is not so open ended and continue to reflect the nature of what the money is for.

Furr: We could give generic examples of what the money is for.

Heston: Having a sense of direction is helpful, but we need to stay away from people thinking we have our mind made up. I think give people access to the document so they can see it.

Kane: Do a summary along with access to the document.

Heston: I'm concerned about a summary of the 44 pages may have bias of the person who writes the summary.

Kane: Can we provide an index?

Furr: There is a table of contents.

Starks: I like the idea of laying out what is important for the town. For the survey we want to give people a few options to get an idea of how much interest there is in an idea, the open ended question helps gather feedback that we have not thought of. That may help us figure out a more tailored survey.

Furr: We could keep the survey fairly open ended, but then ask how projects would benefit each covered categories. That would help with scoring.

Starks: We could ask people to explain who their project benefits.

Heston: Hopefully CCRPC can help with this process.

Kane: I like the idea of asking people to explain who the project benefits.

Forward: I see this as a progression and we'll probably have to go out to the public more than once. We could explain the criteria in this document. We may even get far enough to offer guidance on what percentage of the money should be spent on certain categories. I think it is incumbent on us to reach out to people with ideas and to solicit their ideas on what they need. I think we still have an internal process to go through and we need to discuss this at the next meeting.

Furr: We are looking at claiming the money under revenue loss and also looking at the guidance from VLCT. I would rather work slowly and deliberately.

Forward: A task we could do between now and then would be to collect community data from CCRPC. I can email CCRPC to see if they can provide the data.

Bona: How are we going to know who is filling out the survey, for instance will we know if they fall in a specific category, otherwise we won't know who we still need to reach out to.

Furr: I think we should just outline the Richmond demographics at the top of the survey is enough.

Heston: I think knowing the demographic information from the respondents would be helpful.

Starks: The last Richmond survey did that.

Kane: A survey is only one kind of outreach. We could also do focus groups.

Forward: I like the idea of neighborhood listening sessions and we should start with the mobile home park.

Kane: Perhaps there is a video on the document so people can watch a video instead.

Donovan: I have a strong willed manager in the store and she often helps a lot of people in the park. I do have ways of reaching out to the park. We could put a survey at the store.

Kane: Could we hire a consultant for a focus group?

Furr: Yes but we should see what guidance we can get from VLCT first.

Arneson: Let's start by looking at the survey from Jericho.

Starks: How can we start to itemize the Town's needs.

Kane: Is there any assessment of the impact on local businesses?

Furr: We could call Western Slopes.

Forward: I can do that too. When I approach people I will do it in a manner to ask them how to get in touch with people to get their ideas.

Furr: We should also focus on non-profits to see what the impacts have been for them.