

# Town of Richmond

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Charitable Appropriations January 2024

### **How did the system work in previous years?**

In previous years an organization interested in charitable appropriations would fill out an appropriation request document. The Selectboard would review requests and place requests into the proposed Town budget, usually at the amount requested. The appropriations were then finalized when the voters approved the budget at Town Meeting. Occasionally, there would be a motion from the floor to amend the amount of a specific appropriation.

### **Why is the process changing this year?**

The Selectboard sought guidance on how to evaluate appropriation requests to decide which should be included in the Town budget, informed by recent Vermont case law. The Board reached out to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) for advice. VLCT directed us to their [Model Social Services Appropriations Policy](#); this guidance included reference to statute which states in part:

- Under Vermont law, voters of a town may appropriate money for the support of social service programs and agencies that provide services to town residents (24 V.S.A. § 26910). Such programs include, but are not limited to, transportation, nutrition, childcare, medical care, and other rehabilitative services for persons with low incomes, senior citizens, children, disabled persons, persons with a substance use disorder, and persons requiring employment to eliminate their need for public assistance.

VLCT further advised that these appropriations be voted on by the Town voters as separate articles.

### **Not all appropriations have historically fallen into the social services category as defined in statute. How did you handle these requests?**

We reached out to the Town Attorneys for legal advice. The Town Attorneys advised that requests that do not fit into the statutory definition of a social service could be included in the budget if they can be categorized as something else such as recreation or police services.

The following appropriations requests were moved to other sections of the proposed Town budget:

- Requests that were considered by the Selectboard to be recreation related were moved to Recreation and Trails in the proposed Town budget:
  - Lake Iroquois Association
  - Richmond Community Band
  - Richmond Farmers Market
  - Camel's Hump Little League
  - Halloween on the Green
- Requests that were considered by the Selectboard to be Police related were moved to the Police Department in the proposed Town budget:
  - The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigation

- Requests that were not considered by the Selectboard to be donations, but instead have a contractual obligation, were moved to Contracted — Social Services in the proposed Town budget:
  - Special Services Transportation Agency
- Requests that were considered by the Selectboard to be health services were moved to Donations — Health Services in the proposed Town budget:
  - Richmond Rescue
  - UVM Home Health and Hospice
- Requests that were considered by the Selectboard to be related to the administration of the Town were moved to Town Administration in the proposed Town budget:
  - Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation
  - Mount Mansfield Community TV
- Requests that were considered ineligible for a Town appropriation by the Selectboard (a request for funding to purchase a trailer under the sponsoring organization, the Holy Rosary Church):
  - Boy Scout Troop 23

The following requests were considered by the Selectboard to be social service appropriations and have been moved to individual Articles for consideration at Town Meeting:

- VT Family Network
- Age Well
- VT Center for Independent Living
- COTS
- OCCCC
- Steps to End Domestic Violence
- Turning Point
- Hope Works

**Were the organizations requesting Town appropriations informed of the changes to the process including a vote at own Meeting?**

Yes.

**Why are the social services appropriations being voted on individually by voice vote at Town Meeting rather than by Australian ballot or with one voice vote to cover all social services appropriation requests?**

Richmond has not adopted the Australian ballot for public questions, so these appropriations must be considered and voted on from the floor during Town Meeting by voice vote. The Town Attorneys assisted in drafting these Articles, including guidance that each appropriation request be addressed in an independent Article for separate consideration by the Town voters.

**Can the amount of an appropriation be changed during Town Meeting?**

Yes. Just like any other Article that is voted on from the floor, the appropriation amount for an Article may be amended by the Town voters present to increase or decrease the amount of the appropriation.

**Can organizations not already included in an Article be funded by adding them to an existing Article from the floor?**

No. If an appropriation for an organization is not included as an Article on the Town Meeting Warning in advance, it cannot be added from the floor.

