

Town of Richmond
Minutes of Australian Ballot Information Hearing February 1, 2022

Selectboard Members Present: Christine Werneke, Bard Hill, June Heston, Jay Furr

Selectboard Members Absent: David Sander

Staff Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kyle Kapitanski, Police Chief; Jerry Levesque, Asst. Fire Chief, Rebecca Mueller, Library Director, Pete Gosselin, Road Foreman; Connie Bona, Finance Director.

Others Present: The meeting was recorded by MMCTV, Judy Rosovsky, Kathy Gruber, Martha Nye, Jeff Forward, Ike Patch, Dave Thomas, Fran Thomas, Betsy Hardey, Lisa Miller, Bob Low,

Called to Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by: Werneke

Public Comment: Ike Patch asked who will be running again for Selectboard and who is not running.

Werneke: I am at the end of a two year term and I am not running again, because I am applying to a doctorate program and do not have time to balance that work with the Selectboard. Jay Furr took over mid-term in a three year seat, he was appointed at that time and is running for election to serve out this term. Bard Hill is running again since he is at the end of his three year term. June Heston and David Sander are both in terms that do not expire this year. Jeff Forward is running for the two year seat that I am vacating.

Werneke: Opened the public information hearing

Werneke:

In person Town Meeting has been suspended this year due to concerns related to the spread of COVID-19. All items have been moved to Australian Ballot. Ballots may be requested through Town Clerk Linda Parent. Residents are encouraged to vote early to reduce the number of people voting in person on March 1. In person voting will be held from 7am – 7pm on Tuesday, March 1 at the Town Center. Please note, voting will not take place at Camel’s Hump Middle School this year.

Tonight is the first of two informational hearings that will be held. The second informational hearing will be held on Monday, February 28 at 7pm. This hearing will also be held remotely, with no in person meeting place.

In addition to the two Articles that are being discussed at tonight’s hearing, school and Town officers are also on the ballot. Article 2 related to the FY23 budget and Article 3 related to the Conservation Fund will each be discussed tonight. There will be a presentation on each article. After each presentation there will be time for public comments and questions. Please hold your comments and questions until the presentations are complete.

All members of the public are asked to stay muted until it is their turn to speak. If you are joining by phone use star 6 to mute and unmute. If you would like to speak, please use the raise hand feature. If you are joining by phone you can raise your hand by pressing star 9. Once you are recognized by the Chair, please state your name prior to providing comments.

There are documents related to each article available at the town website, Richmondvt.gov. This meeting will be recorded and a link to that recording will be provided on the Town Meeting 2022 page of Richmondvt.gov

Review and discuss Article 2: Shall the voters of the Town of Richmond approve a budget for Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 of \$5,048,542 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town of Richmond?

Arneson:

I would like to thank you all for attending this evening's public information hearing. Before I begin my presentation I would like to thank the Selectboard for their work on this budget. The budgeting process begins with meetings in October and requires a lot of time and careful consideration by the Selectboard. I also want to thank the Department Heads for their careful attention to their budgets, advocating for what they need to continue to provide excellent service to the Town, and creative thinking in how to provide the best service to residents while continually being conscious of the cost to provide those services.

We have department heads joining the meeting tonight. As each is an expert in their department having them present to answer detailed questions about their department's budget is very helpful. Department Heads include we have Town Clerk Linda Parent, Police Chief Kyle Kapitanski, Asst. Fire Chief Jerry Levesque, Library Director Rebecca Mueller, Road Foreman Pete Gosselin, and Finance Director Connie Bona.

Tonight we will cover the following the FY23 Budget Overview, Municipal Operations, Review of Reserves and Unassigned & Restricted Funds, Debt Service, Review of Budget by Department and then move on to Questions.

Spending is up from FY22 by: \$809,968 or 19.11%. The General Fund is up \$313,201 or 12.57%. The Highway Fund is up \$496,767 or 28.43%

Non-tax revenues, unassigned fund, & reserve fund usage are also up by \$975,993. This results in a total decrease of \$166,113 in tax revenue. I want to state that again, because it is important, the amount of taxes being raised in FY23 is \$166,113 less than what was raised in FY22.

The municipal tax rate decreased from \$0.7486 to \$0.7090 for a total decrease of \$0.0397 per \$100 of property value. This is a 5.30% decrease in the tax rate from FY22.

The logical question to ask is how are taxes going down while spending is going up? We were able to accomplish this by using unassigned funds, restricted funds, and reserve funds.

The FY23 Budget includes a combined total use of \$1,209,180 of Unassigned, Restricted, and Reserve Funds. This breaks out to \$474,930 in Unassigned Funds, \$445,000 in Restricted Funds, and \$289,250 in Reserve Funds.

We will cover the details of fund usage a bit later in the presentation. Before we get to that we will review some details of the tax decrease.

This use of funds gets us to a proposed tax decrease of (\$0.0397) from \$0.7486 in FY22 to \$0.7090 in FY23. The decrease based on property value is as follows.

\$59.55 decrease per year for \$150,000 in property value
\$79.40 decrease per year for \$200,000 in property value
\$119.10 decrease per year for \$300,000 in property value
\$158.80 decrease per year for \$400,000 in property value

This next slide shows FY22 tax bills alongside FY23 tax bills.

\$150,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$1,123 to \$1,063
\$200,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$1,497 to \$1,418
\$300,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$2,246 to \$2,127
\$400,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$2,995 to \$2,836

Starting with the FY21 budget, the conservation fund is voted on each year by Australian Ballot. The question on the ballot is to approve funding the Conservation Reserve Fund by adding one cent to the municipal tax rate in FY23. This is estimated to be a total of \$48,128 based on an estimated grand list value of \$4,812,808. \$48,128 added to the budget will decrease the percentage tax rate decrease from FY22 to FY23 from -5.30% in the proposed budget to -3.97%.

If the Conservation Reserve Fund question passes it will add \$10 in taxes per year per \$100,000 in property value. If the Conservation Reserve Fund question passes the following will be the total decrease in taxes based on property value (includes budget as presented and Conservation Reserve Fund):

\$44.55 decrease per year for \$150,000 in property value
\$59.40 decrease per year for \$200,000 in property value
\$89.10 decrease per year for \$300,000 in property value
\$118.80 decrease per year for \$400,000 in property value

This next slide shows FY22 tax bills along side FY23 tax bills if the Conservation line is funded.

\$150,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$1,123 to \$1,078
\$200,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$1,497 to \$1,437
\$300,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$2,246 to \$2,157
\$400,000 in property decreases from a total tax bill of \$2,995 to \$2,876

This graphic serves as a reminder that the Town Tax Rate is only 30% of your total property tax bill. 70% of your property tax bill is education funding.

This graph shows the trend in total Town spending since 2011. You will note that there is a steep incline up to spending in FY23. But, as we discussed earlier, we are offsetting the total expenses in FY23 by use of funds on hand. Also, we have four large equipment purchases planned in FY23 which will largely be paid for with non-tax revenue and without loans. The full amount of each purchase is included in the FY23 budget and that has contributed to what looks like a large increase in spending. If loans were to be taken for these purchase, then only the down payments would be showing as an expense in FY23, and the total expenses for the year would be lower.

This is a visual look at spending by department and helps to illustrate the percentage of the total spending that is allocated to each department.

I will now provide an overview of municipal operations. I think it is helpful to have a high-level review of each department prior to looking at the details for the budget.

The Town Clerk, Administration, and Finance departments are under the Administrative segment of the budget. Staffing consists of one full time Town Manager, one full time Finance Director, one full time Town Clerk, one part time Assistant Town Clerk, and one full time, 30 hours per week, Assistant to the Town Manager. All staff operate very closely to manage revenue, payments, payroll, policies, and projects.

The Police Department consists of one full time Police Chief, one full time Sergeant, three full time officers, three per diem officers, and one part time administrative assistant. Both the Chief and Sergeant are also working shifts as officers. The 3 per diem officers work on average 2 – 4 shifts per month.

The Fire Department is comprised of one Chief, one Assistant Chief, three Captains, one Lieutenant, and twelve Firefighters. This is an All-volunteer department and they get paid for hours worked in trainings and on fire calls.

The Planning and Zoning department has one full time Planner and one full time Zoning Administrator. The main work consists of issuing permits, reviewing and re-writing Zoning Regulations, staffing the Planning Commission and Development Review Board. Staff and assisting other committees related to planning

The Highway/Recreation Department is staffed with one full time Road Foreman, one full time Assistant Foreman, and four full time drivers/operators. In the winter the department plows the highways, maintains equipment, and plans summer work. In the summer work consists of gravel road maintenance, maintaining equipment, highway drainage work, maintain recreational facilities, and larger sidewalk and storm water projects

The Richmond Free Library operates with one full time Director and one full time Assistant Director, each working 32 hours per week. Six part time staff members are employed to carry out the operations of the library. The Library is Governed by the Board of Trustees but the voters approve budget and the Library budget is included in the budget being voted on at Town Meeting.

The Water and Wastewater Department services approximately 300 customers mostly located in the village of Richmond. The department consists of a full time Superintendent and three full time staff members. The Water budget and Wastewater budget is not being

voted on with this ballot. The Water and Wastewater budget that is contained in the Town Report shows the FY22 Budgets that were approved at the Water and Sewer Annual Meeting on May 18, 2021. The 2022 Water and Sewer Annual Meeting will be held at a date to be determined in May. The FY23 Budgets will be discussed and considered for approval at that meeting. Again, the Water and Wastewater budgets are not included in the budget currently being voted on.

That concludes the overview of municipal operations. Next we will review reserve funds. As mentioned, the FY23 budget includes use of reserve funds to offset funding that needs to be raised by taxes.

Reserve Funds function like savings accounts. Funds can be added to the reserves yearly from tax revenue and that amount is decided by you, the voters. Reserves can also be funded with non-tax revenue. For instance the Town Center Maintenance Fund is funded by rent payments of tenants in the Town Center. The Reappraisal Fund is funded by the State's Act 60 reappraisal grant.

Use of reserves can be included in the budget or they can be spent outside of the budget with Selectboard approval at any time. Reserves are used mostly for large capital purchases and actual use of reserves fluctuates based on current yearly goals

There are a few different ways that Reserve Funds can be established.

When reserve funds are categorized as Assigned they are established by vote of the Selectboard and the Selectboard outlines the intended use of the resources. These funds should be used for the specified use, but they can be used for another use if the Selectboard votes to do so.

Other reserve funds are Committed by Voters. When established this way, constraints on the use of resources are imposed by formal action of the voters. These funds must be used for the specified use, but may be used for another use if the voters vote to do so.

Some reserve funds are Restricted. In these cases, constraints on the use of resources are either externally imposed by creditors, grantors or donors, or imposed by law through enabling legislation. These funds have to be used for the specified use and cannot be changed by the voters or the Selectboard.

A fourth type of reserve fund is a Private Purpose Trust Fund. These are funds that are tied to a legal document created by the donor. Use of these funds are bound to what the document related to each fund stipulates.

This chart shows the balances of reserve funds as of the end of fiscal year 2021. You can see that a few funds have the majority of the reserve money, and then there are a number of funds with much smaller balances.

This chart shows the total combined balance of reserve funds from 2012 through 2021. The total balance in reserves has grown from about \$750,000 in 2012 to just under \$2 Million by the end of FY21.

As we saw in the previous graph, 70% of all reserve funds are in just 6 Reserve Fund accounts

Town Center Maintenance at \$582,217
Conservation Reserve at \$346,181
Bridge & Culvert at \$307,926
Records Restoration at \$161,095
Reappraisal Reserve at \$155,860

In FY22 \$87,480 was budgeted to be used from the Reappraisal Reserve for the reappraisal. \$55,000 was budgeted to be used from the Highway Reserve for purchase of a pickup truck

The FY23 budget proposes use of \$200,000 from the Fire Department Reserve to purchase a brush truck. \$24,750 from the Police Reserve to pay for a police cruiser. \$64,500 from Reappraisal Reserve for reappraisal. Use of reserves for the equipment purchases in the Fire and Police departments allow for those purchases to be made without taking a loan, which allows for the town to avoid paying interest payments for years to come.

In addition to using Reserve Funds to reduce the year over year tax rate, the proposed budget also uses Unassigned and Restricted Funds to help achieve the tax rate reduction.

Unassigned and Restricted funds are a combination of underspending and good revenue. In the case of expenses, there are years when the Town does not fully expend all budgeted line items, but tax revenue continues to come in as budgeted. In this case the Town is left with excess money at the end of the fiscal year. Also, if there are non-tax revenue lines that produce more revenue than budgeted, the Town is also left with more money than budgeted at the end of the fiscal year.

These surplus funds are classified as Restricted and Unassigned.

Restricted funds are designated specifically to the Highway Department and may not be used for expenses in any other department. These are either savings on expenses that were budgeted for highway or increased revenue that was budgeted for highway. Per statute any money that was originally budgeted for Highway use, can only be used for Highway purposes in the future. Thus they are restricted to highway expenditures.

Unassigned funds may be used for any Town expense, including Highway expenses. These funds are the result of unexpended expense lines or increased revenue in any Town department except for Highway. These funds may be used for any town expense, including Highway. Thus they are unassigned to any specific department.

Following are some examples of how the Unassigned and Restricted fund balances can increase. The Town can receive reimbursements from FEMA that are received for expenses that were incurred in a prior fiscal year. Underspending on budgeted expenses such as when a department has vacancy savings due to being short staffed. Also, sometimes grants are received which reduce budgeted spending.

Unassigned and restricted fund balances can vary from municipality to municipality. We have checked with our auditors and they have said a combined Unassigned Fund and Restricted Fund balance of 15% to 25% of annual budget is healthy. This savings greatly helps during an unanticipated crisis and when cash flow is needed

This is a snapshot of where balances were at the end of the 2021 fiscal year.

Unassigned Funds stood at \$711,023. However, \$91,000 of Unassigned Funds Balance as stated above is committed to be used in the FY22 Budget. We will have more on this a bit later in the presentation.

Restricted Funds totaled \$661,185

The combined total was at \$1,372,208 and represented 32.37% of the \$4,238,574 FY22 Budget.

This graph shows the combined balance from 2012 through the end of FY21. In general these funds have increased from about \$400,000 in 2012 to just over \$1.3 million at the close of FY21.

This slide shows the combined balance as a percentage of the budget. We see growth from 15% of the budget to over 30% of the budget currently.

We will now look at projected expenditures of Unassigned and Restricted funds in FY22, which is the current fiscal year.

The FY22 budget contains the use of \$91,000 in Unassigned funds. This was included in the budget as a way to use some of the funds and keep the tax rate lower. Unbudgeted projected use of Unassigned funds in the current fiscal year include purchase of a police cruiser purchase which was budgeted for but not purchased in FY21. The Town decided to hire a company to conduct a compensation study to evaluate the pay scale for Town staff. The study will be paid for with unassigned funds. Later in the presentation we will discuss moving mowing of Town owned properties from an in house duty performed by the Highway staff to a service that is contracted for. There will be a cost in the current fiscal year to pay for the contracted costs of mowing and this will come from unassigned funds. We have increased the hours increase for Zoning Administrative Officer and this will also come from unassigned funds. In November the Selectboard approved bonuses for Town staff, and funds for these bonuses came from unassigned funds. In total we are projecting the use of \$211,500 in unassigned funds in FY22.

We are projecting the use of \$350,000 in Restricted Funds in FY22. This will include a repair of a culvert on Thompson Rd. that was damaged in the 2019 Halloween storm, and the purchase of a dump truck, in lieu of taking a loan. This is part of our plan to pay for capital equipment in cash rather than by taking loans.

In addition to projected expenses, there are projected gains in Unassigned and Restricted Funds in FY22.

We are anticipating gains of \$135,000 in Unassigned Funds due to vacancy savings.

Gains of \$335,830 in Restricted Funds are expected due to anticipated reimbursement from FEMA and vacancy savings.

For planning purposes we calculated projected balances for both funds at the end of FY22. Actual balances will vary depending on actual spending.

Unassigned Funds are projected to be \$634,523
Restricted Funds should have a balance of \$647,015
The projected combined total at the end of FY22 is \$1,281,538
The projected total is 25% of the \$5,048,542 FY23 Budget

Given the projected balance the Selectboard looked for ways to incorporate the use of these funds into the FY23 budget. They looked at some one-time expenses which are typically good uses for these types of funds because they do not require taxes to be raised in subsequent years to pay for an ongoing commitment. They also looked as how to use the funds to reduce the tax burden on residents during these unprecedented and challenging times. These funds were also used to go toward the purchase of capital equipment as part of a plan to move away from using loans for purchases of capital equipment.

In the FY23 budget there is planned use of \$474,930 in Unassigned Funds. \$300,000 is used as a direct offset to reduce revenue to be raised by taxes. The funds were also budgeted for a new computer server, a new phone system, a contribution to the Planning and Zoning Legal Reserve Fund, grounds maintenance, and a contribution toward Highway equipment. As we mentioned earlier the Town has hired a firm to conduct a compensation study. Funding has been allocated in the budget to be used for pay increases that may be necessary upon completion of the study. These pay increases are offset with unassigned funds.

The budget also plans the use of \$445,000 in Restricted Funds including use for a compensation contingency for Highway, which is similar to the contingency in the general fund. Restricted Funds will also go toward the purchase of an excavator, dump truck, and bucket loader.

After taking into account the budgeted uses in FY23, following are the projected FY23 year end balances

Unassigned Funds at \$159,593
Restricted Funds at \$202,015
A projected combined total of \$361,608
This projected combined total is 7% of the \$5,048,542 FY23 Budget

That concludes the look at Unassigned and Restricted Funds. Next is a review of current Town Debt.

The 2005 Fire Truck loan runs until 2026 and is in the amount of \$10,965/yr.
The 2018 Fire Truck also runs until 2026 and is paid at \$52,710/yr.
The 2019 Dump Truck loan goes until 2024 and is paid at \$27,429/yr.
The 2020 Dump Truck will be paid off in 2025 and has annual payments of \$27,985.
The 2017 Road Grader will be paid off in 2024 with annual payments of \$30,553
The loan for Jericho Road improvements runs until 2032 with payments of \$60,587/yr.
The loan for stormwater work on Millet St. goes until 2032 and is at \$7,046/yr.

Next we will look at significant changes by department. I am not covering all changes in this review, so if there is something that you have a question about that I do not cover, please ask at the end of the presentation.

The following changes affect multiple departments.

As mentioned earlier, we have included \$50,000 in the Administration budget for potential adjustments to staff pay rates. This money could apply to staff in any department except Highway and is offset by use of Unassigned Funds.

We went out to bid for property, casualty, liability and workers compensation insurance for the Town and obtained a decreased of \$48,032 for that coverage. This savings is spread across the insurance lines in several departments.

In the Administration budget, wages increased due to annual wage increases and due to the reclassification of Administrative Assistant to the Assistant to Town Manager.

\$10,000 was included for a new phone system and this will be offset with use of Unassigned Funds

There was a \$10,000 increase in Legal fees from \$10,000 in FY22 to \$20,000 in FY23 to bring this item more in line with what we are seeing for actual legal expenses.

There was a \$9,700 decrease in the Auditors line. In FY22 we budgeted for a single audit which we anticipated being necessary due to hitting a threshold of funds received from the Federal government.

As discussed earlier, \$50,180 is included for Contracted Grounds Maintenance and this is offset with the use of Unassigned Funds

\$10,000 is included for a new server and is also offset with use of Unassigned Funds

In the budget for Assessors the Reappraisal Services line was reduced by \$22,980. This line mistakenly included Listing Services in FY22. However, this line was offset by the Reappraisal Reserve Fund in FY22 and again in FY23 so there is no affect to taxes

The main changes in Planning and Zoning relate to staffing. Salaries increased by \$16,385 due to budgeted annual wage increases and to allow for the Zoning Administrative Officer hours to increase from 30 hours per week to 40 hours per week to meet increasing demands including management of zoning records, providing more leeway to hold more meetings with the public, and conduct more thorough inspections.

In addition to the staffing changes, we created a Planning and Zoning Legal Reserve Fund to allow for better budgeting of legal expenses which can fluctuate from year to year. This will allow for a flat amount to be contributed to the fund in each year and the fund will grow in years where there is less need for legal services and will be drawn on in years where more legal services are needed. \$4,000 of this line is offset by use of Unassigned Funds

The Town recently entered into a new agreement with the Police Union. This agreement calls for an increase in salaries for officers which leads to salaries increasing by \$16,287.

The agreement also calls for a 10% contribution by officers to health care premiums and therefor there is an \$11,474 decrease in Health Insurance.

There is also a \$15,750 decrease in Dispatch. This line was added to the FY22 budget in anticipation of the State implementing a charge for dispatch services that the Town has been receiving at no charge. This fee was not implemented in FY22 and currently it does not appear that a fee will be implemented in FY23.

Police Cruisers are now on a cycle where purchases alternate between one cruiser and two cruisers every other year. To flatten the cost impacts on the budget an estimated cost of 1.5 cruisers is raised each year in taxes. In years where one cruiser is purchased the additional revenue is put into a reserve. This reserve revenue is then used in the following year when two cruisers are purchased.

The Fire Department is scheduled to purchase a new brush truck in FY23. This will be accomplished through the use of \$200,000 from the Fire Department Reserve Fund, thus avoiding the need for a loan for this equipment.

The Recreation and Trails budget has \$5,000 budgeted for engineering in preparation to pave the Volunteers' Green parking lot.

The Highway department has a few exciting changes to discuss. Road Foreman Pete Gosselin proposed adjusting staffing levels to remove a part time position and remove grounds maintenance from duties of the department. The part time position was vacant and has been continually challenging to fill. Grounds maintenance consists mostly of mowing town owned land such as Volunteers' Green, Browns Court, the Town Center and Library Lawns, the town owned cemetery and more. This required the time of a full and part time staff member each summer. In FY23 the Town will contract with a local company for the mowing. This change will allow for the Highway department to complete larger projects such as sidewalks and stormwater resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings to the Town over the cost of hiring contractors for this work. There is a detail of this proposal along with the proposed sidewalk and stormwater projects on the Town Meeting page of the website.

As has been discussed there is \$30,000 for potential adjustments to staff pay rates in Highway and this is offset by the use of Restricted Funds.

There is a \$48,334 increase in Health Insurance due to an employee opting into health insurance and budgeting for coverage for a vacant position.

There is a \$7,250 decrease in Health Insurance Opt out.

Another big change in Highway, that we have touched on a few times in this presentation, is moving equipment purchases from loans to cash payments. The large balance of Unassigned and Restricted Funds, combined with the need to purchase three large pieces of Highway equipment presented us with an opportunity to use Unassigned and Restricted Funds, some Highway Reserve funds and some current year tax revenue to purchase a dump truck, bucket loader, and excavator without taking loans. The tax revenue budgeted in FY23 for these purchases is 10% – 15% of the purchase price, which is roughly equivalent to the deposit that would need to be paid if loans were taken.

As mentioned earlier, the FY22 budget had called for a loan to pay for the purchase of a new dump truck. As part of the effort to get away from taking loans this expense will be paid with Restricted funds in place of a loan.

We are working on a capital plan which will allocate tax revenue each year to the Highway Reserve Fund in an amount which will allow for future capital equipment to be purchased without loans. This will flatten the tax contribution to Highway capital purchases each year and avoid interest payments on loans.

That concludes the budget presentation. I will now turn the meeting back over to Christine and open up the floor for questions.

Werneke: Thank you. I hope that people heard the message that we are using fund balances to reduce the tax rate and make positive changes to how we purchase capital equipment.

Hill: We have spent a lot of time over the years looking at fund balances and I think we make decisions year to year based on many factors.

Hardy: I just want to say thank you to Josh and the Selectboard and everybody who puts so much time into this. Also, is the meeting on Feb. 28 just a repeat of tonight?

Werneke: Yes it is.

Fran Thomas: When you talk about paving Volunteers' Green I was always told you should not pave that parking lot because it would be undermined when it floods. Will the engineering deal with the chance of flooding in the future.

Werneke: What drove the discussion of paving was the ability to paint parking spots to add order to the parking. Also, part of that parking lot is the property of the business where Stone's Throw Pizza is located, so it would be a collaborative effort with the private owner to pave the entire lot.

Gosselin: Typically when water crosses a road the damage would be on the outlet end of the asphalt. For instance when the river floods the water has never undermined Bridge St. but we do see erosion on the down stream side. The increased use at Volunteers' Green makes paving necessary.

Review and discuss Article 3: Shall the Town of Richmond vote to approve funding the Conservation Reserve Fund by adding one cent to the municipal tax rate in the 2022-2023 fiscal year?

Rosovsky:

I am Judy Rosovsky the Chair of the Richmond Conservation Commission. We are asking people to vote to support the Conservation Reserve Fund. The fund was established in 2005 by the voters and the voters have renewed it each time it was on the ballot.

Reviewed the Article wording.

We have provided an information sheet on the Conservation Commission page of the Town Website. This includes information about the fund in general as well as a detailed list of projects that have been funded in the past. There is also a map that shows the

locations of the projects to show how geographically distributed the projects are throughout the town.

One of the projects which will be coming up again is the Gillet Pond Dam restoration.

We try to gear the fund toward supporting projects that tie back to the Town Plan. We provided funding for a steward at the Huntington Gorge and supported best management practices at the Andrews Community Forest. There are a large range of projects that we can use the funds for. I want to thank the tax payers for their support and remind people that any resident can propose a project for the funds.

Funding the fund only costs \$10 per \$100,000 of property value.

Often the money from the fund is used as a match for a grant which helps to increase the purchasing power of money used from the fund.

Arneson: Judy, please email me the presentation and I will make it available on the town website.

Werneke: Please remember that there is another informational session on Monday, Feb. 28.

Heston moved to adjourn. Hill seconded. Roll call vote Hill, Heston, Furr, and Werneke in favor. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.