

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of February 8, 2023
Town Center and Via Zoom**

Members Present: Josh Arneson, Jeff Forward, Rachel Lohia, Molly Dugan, Thomas Lyle, Jay Furr

Members Absent: Cara LaBounty, Mary Houle, Eric Svensson,

Others Present: Chris Cole

Call or Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by Furr

Review minutes of the 1/11/23 and 1/25/23 meetings

Forward moved to approve the 1/11/23 minutes. Seconded by Lyle. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, Forward, Lohia, Lyle approve. Dugan abstains. Motion carried.

Forward moved to approve the 1/25/23 minutes. Seconded by Dugan. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, Forward, Dugan, Lyle approve. Lohia abstains. Motion carried.

Review cost of transportation related items with the Transportation Committee

Cole: The Bridge St. project has been broken up into two pieces. This is the Complete Streets Project and then the Bridge St. east sidewalk. This was broken up for planning purposes. We submitted for a \$320K grant for the part of the project that is the east side sidewalk from Jolina Ct. to Esplanade. The Town is asking for \$256K and the town would match with \$64K for a total of \$320K. We have not yet applied for a grant for \$219,509 for the Bridge St. Complete Streets project. There was an additional \$35K added to the cost for municipal oversight for a total cost of \$254,509.

We also looked at a sidewalk from School St. to Valley View. The section from School St. to Southview is fairly straightforward, but the section from Southview to Valley View is fairly narrow and steep which could increase the cost. We are waiting on a report to estimate the cost from Southview to Valley View.

Lohia: How many people would the sidewalk serve?

Cole: Once you build it people will use it. If there are families in Valley View they will use it but I don't know how many families live there.

Dugan: It would also be a connector for older adults that live there.

Cole: Absolutely. The reason is you are extending the sidewalk.

Forward: The previous request was for the \$64K for the grant match. Now the ask is for the \$254K in addition to the \$64K.

Cole: Correct.

Forward: The total for Bridge St. sidewalks is the \$320K plus the \$254K. There is a grant application for 80% of the \$320K portion.

Cole: There is a grant that we applied for, for the lower Bridge St. sidewalk. There is not currently a grant for the upper portion. The municipal oversight would be a third party contractor as an owners representative.

Forward: We would have to hire a similar position for the \$320K project?

Cole: Yes, that is included in the \$320K.

Furr: The lower Bridge St. total cost is \$320K of which the Town would pay \$64K if we received the grant. The upper Bridge St. sidewalk is \$219K plus \$35K for municipal oversight.

Cole: If we don't get the grant we would have to fund the entire project if we still wanted to move forward. We should hear about the grant by May. The Valley View to School St. is the Jericho Rd. Sidewalk Project which has a cost broken into two alternatives. Alternative one is \$730K Alternative two is \$530K.

Forward: You are not asking for the Jericho Rd. Sidewalk Project?

Cole: Correct.

Forward: The other aspect is the Bridge St. projects are further along in engineering than the Jericho Rd. Sidewalk Project.

Cole: Correct. We only have a feasibility study for Jericho Rd. We submitted for the grant for the lower part of Bridge St. because the municipal buildings are on that side of the street and we wanted to provide safer access on that part of Bridge St.

Lyle: Is there a mockup of what a completed project would look like?

Cole: Yes, they did some of that in the Complete Streets Planning Study. This is on the Town Planning Page on the website.

Forward: There is an extensive bike and pedestrian plan.

Cole: It will dramatically improve the safety in our village for pedestrians and bicycles.

Furr: Pedestrian safety and Bridge St. improvements were popular suggestions. We do have to commit to spending the money by the end of 2024 and we would like to couple the ARPA money with a grant. The sidewalk may also increase revenue for businesses on Bridge St. It also matches a public health and safety criteria.

Lohia: How soon would you need to know that you have ARPA money to get it spent within the ARPA timeline.

Cole: We have some time but the sooner the better so we can arrange for a contractor to complete the project. If we get the grant in May and there is a decision soon for the upper part of Bridge St. to be funded the projects could be combined and there would be savings on construction.

Furr: We have not voted to accept the criteria but I think it is solid criteria. I think this would be a very good project.

Forward: Our reserve fund balance is \$40,000 for new sidewalks. There is another \$40,000 in the next budget. This could be used as the grant match.

Review Capital Plan

Furr: We are looking for what in the Capital Plan could be paid for with ARPA Funds.

Forward: In general a lot of the capital plan is equipment. The only two things that really fit ARPA is sidewalks and the Town Center Building.

Lyle: Why would we not talk about equipment, because it is not long enough lived?

Forward: It does not really fit the ARPA criteria and we are already budgeting for it.

Dugan: There was not a lot of public feedback to use the funds to buy equipment.

Forward: I want to address water and sewer. We have been discussing running water and sewer into the Gateway on Rt. 2. This would spur development in the Gateway but we don't know what type of development. The only way I can see using ARPA money is if someone committed to affordable housing.

Lohia: In one of the last housing meetings they talked about three locations where affordable housing could be placed including the Farr Farm, Jolina Ct. and Browns Court. Browns Court may have a restriction in the deed to be forever a greenspace. But, would there be a way to use ARPA to buy land with the specific intent on using it to develop affordable housing?

Furr: In conversations I've had with the Reaps they are looking to make a sustainable business with affordable housing. When we talked with Jolina Ct. they would only commit to affordable housing for 10 years. Erin Farr talked about development but not necessarily affordable housing. Browns Court does make sense if there is not a restriction in the deed, and we'd want to keep a decent amount of green space there even if it is developed. My vote is we should only use ARPA for Water and Sewer if there is a commitment to affordable housing.

Dugan: No developer is going to guarantee building housing until they have their funding in place. Affordable housing is usually funded where there is existing water and sewer. I do think extending water and sewer lines is reasonable but it is an issue of timing.

Forward: We should research what the deed says for Browns Court.

Furr: I don't support using ARPA to extend the water and sewer to the Mobil without a commitment for affordable housing. But, Browns Court makes sense because it is already on water and sewer.

Lyle: Is there anywhere else in the downtown core area that could be converted into affordable housing?

Forward: The Goodwin Baker Building is in the downtown core and the owner is interested in housing and he is waiting on a change in the zoning.

Lohia: I would go to bat for affordable housing at Browns Court.

Dugan: Me too.

Forward: I would like to hear from the Town Center Committee at the next meeting.

Lyle: What is next in terms of process?

Furr: As I see it we are getting close to a recommendation. We know the Transportation Committee ask. We have a list from the Recreation Committee.

Arneson: MMCTV would also like about \$10K for AV equipment for hybrid meetings.

Furr: I will put together a list of the general consensus from the Committee. This can still be changed but things are starting to gel. I think May is a good deadline which aligns with the TAP grant.

Forward moved to adjourn. Seconded by Lyle. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, Forward, Dugan, Lyle, Lohia approve. Motion carried.