

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of January 11, 2023
Town Center and Via Zoom**

Members Present: Josh Arneson, Jay Furr, Mary Houle, Cara LaBounty, Thomas Lyle, Jeff Forward, Eric Svensson,

Members Absent: Rachel Lohia, Molly Dugan,

Others Present: Kathryn Kreider and Sheri Lynn from the Recreation Committee. Chris Cole and Cathleen Gent from the Transportation Committee

Call or Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by Furr

Agreement that Forward will chair the meeting on January 25 as Furr will be unavailable.

Review minutes of the 12/14/22 Meeting

Houle moved to approve the 12/12/22 minutes. Seconded by LaBounty. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, Houle, LaBounty, Forward, Svensson approve. Motion carried

Discussion with Transportation Committee

Furr: Chris and Cathleen are here from the Transportation Committee to review their priorities for use of ARPA money. Their priorities include Bridge St. improvements, sidewalk on East Main St., better pedestrian and bike access on roads, a sidewalk on Jericho Rd. from School St. Reviewed written comments from Transportation Committee on transportation projects proposed in the ARPA feedback.

Cole: We have already put in a grant application for the Bridge St. sidewalk from the Railroad Intersection to the bridge. If we were to get ARPA funding and win this grant this would allow us to do the whole project. If we get ARPA money the State may look more favorably at our grant application.

Forward: Can you clarify.

Cole: We have a Bridge St. plan for a sidewalk from Main St. to Esplanade on the east side. We applied for an 80/20 grant for the portion from the Railroad to Esplanade. This is approximately \$300K. We would like to use ARPA funds to pay for the second half. The second option is if you wanted to fund the whole project with ARPA funds we would welcome that.

Furr: We would like to wait to see if we get the State grant.

Forward: Though we will not make a decision tonight, one criteria we discussed is leveraging ARPA money with other funding.

Furr: It would cost the Town about \$60K in match for the match of the grant and about \$300K for the second half?

Cole: I would prefer to confirm those numbers later.

Forward: On the leg from the Railroad up to Main St. are we planning on applying for a grant for that?

Cole: If we get the first grant it will be a number of years before we would get another grant.

Forward: We need to commit the ARPA money by the end of 2024 and spend it by the end of 2026.

Cole: The project is scoped from end to end.

LaBounty: Is the TAP grant money part of the State ARPA money and if not what is the State doing with their ARPA money?

Cole: The TAP grant is not ARPA money. I don't know what the state is using their ARPA money for.

LaBounty: Could the Transportation Committee look into what the State is doing with their ARPA money because that may help us.

Cole: The next priority is the sidewalk on Jericho Rd. from School St. to Valley View Rd.

Houle: How many people will that serve?

Cole: It will serve the residents in that area but I don't have a number.

Forward: It would include Valley View, Southview, and Hidden Pines. This idea has been around for a while and one barrier is getting it under the interstate.

Cole: This project would need some more engineering.

LaBounty: Do you have an estimated cost?

Cole: I can get you the number for the estimate but there is engineering which will need to be done for this project. We are concerned about the slopes for this project.

Furr: I have heard that if a child lives in Southview the bus takes an hour from their home to the school.

Forward: I suggest talking with Aaron Little from MMU about transportation and bussing. I also understand that this sidewalk is unlikely to be eligible for money because of the location of the sidewalk.

Cole: The State used to have funding for sidewalks to schools. While this has gone away you still get points for having a sidewalk to a school. We will not apply for a grant until we get the first project completed.

Forward: This project came up under capital planning, and the plan was to do this in 2036 and it may cost \$1M in 2036 and we were told it was unlikely we would get grant funding for that so we would have to pay for it ourselves and in order to pay for it ourselves we should be putting significant money aside

in our capital reserve, about \$80K per year now to plan for a project in 2036, that may or may not happen.

Furr: I would like to see a sidewalk there, but unless we find significant money it won't happen.

Forward: That is the background and we took it out of the capital plan, it would have been \$80K this year, with the tacit agreement that if we are going to spend \$1M on a sidewalk that before we start putting money away we should probably ask the voters. Rather than try to build up a reserve fund.

Cole: The third item is the projects that come out of the planning and I don't know if it lines up with ARPA. The Transportation Committee is working on a corridor plan which will also have some scoping in the two residential sections on either end of Cochran Rd. This will include some construction estimates.

LaBounty: Is this already scheduled for the 2024 budget?

Cole: The planning is in the budget and it will be done by June of 2024 and there may be construction projects that could be funded by ARPA. The scoping is for potential traffic calming improvements.

Forward: This may not be in the timeline for ARPA.

Lyle: Could we be general on the spending for ARPA?

Furr: We have to be specific.

Forward: We are trying to be complete with this committee by Town Meeting and have the ARPA money committed by the end of this year.

LaBounty: It sounds like you could spend a lot of this money on the first project.

Furr: We would like to get numbers of estimated users on the Jericho Rd. project. The Cochran Rd. projects may not be ready in time.

Forward: The only project that meets the timeline are the sidewalk on Bridge St.

LaBounty: Does the upper section of the sidewalk create any parking issues or eliminate any parking?

Cole: No. There is no loss or gain of parking spaces.

Furr: Thank you for this feedback Chris. I appreciate the work of the Transportation Committee.

Forward: I would echo that.

Discussion with the Recreation Committee

Kate Kreider and Sheri Lynn are co-Chairs of the Recreation Committee and introduced themselves.

Furr: I will summarize the feedback from the Recreation Committee on the ARPA suggestions. They provided a price breakdown of suggested projects. This document shows items that the Recreation Committee has been focused on for Volunteers green including benches, tables, a playground, better

signage, parking lot direction and barriers, trash receptacles, mats installation, bandshell repairs, landscaping, more restrooms, gaga ball pit.

Kreider: There are a lot of great ideas from the ARPA feedback. We have been focusing on Volunteers' Green for a few years and applied for a VOREC grant and were turned down in 2021.

Lynn: The grant would have covered most of the work that Jay just summarized. The playground would be a replacement of the current playground.

LaBounty: Could we keep this one and do another one?

Lynn: In the VOREC grant the idea was to use the same space and replace it with a more modern structure.

Kreider: The current playground is about 40 years old and needs a lot of repairs.

LaBounty: I don't think that equipment is that old.

Kreider: I could be wrong on the age of the equipment.

Lynn: I like the ARPA timeline because we have the ideas in place and it would mean we could get vendors to move quickly on options.

LaBounty: I have a UVM Graduate student who offered to provide a full park design and I will send them your way. Do you currently have trash receptacles now that just need to be replaced?

Lynn: The issue is we need more trash receptacles.

LaBounty: Who empties the trash?

Arneson: Highway does.

LaBounty: Do you do much work on Browns Court?

Lynn: We have done a little work there but not as much as Volunteers' Green.

LaBounty: Would the picnic tables and benches be out all season and what about maintenance?

Lynn: We only focused on Volunteers' Green.

Kreider: These would be to replace the benches at Volunteers' Green.

Houle: These other benches are not in the purview of the Recreation Committee.

LaBounty: Have you considered a basketball court that could be a skating rink in the winter?

Kreider: No, we have not looked into that. There may also be restrictions in the flood plane.

LaBounty: I have also heard that people want pickleball courts in Browns Court. These would be good for seniors.

Lynn: We have not talked about pickle ball. We conducted a survey a few years ago. From that survey we honed in on Volunteers' Green and that has been our focus.

Furr: I hear a lot of demand for tennis courts.

Lynn: The process we followed was to look at the ARPA list and aligned it with our priorities from the last two years. This omitted items that were on the ARPA list but were not on our area of focus.

Forward: Does the Recreation Committee have an annual budget?

Lynn: No.

Forward: You should think of it because a lot of items on the list will be used up and are not really investments.

Lyle: The playground may be a long term investment.

LaBounty: I like that some items are beautification. Having things look fresh and new and welcoming goes a long way. We can put larger items like a sign into the capital plan.

Kreider: We have discussed asking for a budget but we are still fairly new and developing.

LaBounty: You have to be clear that the committee is made up of members from other towns.

Furr: One of the items for the money is to increase the health of people. All items at Volunteers' Green including beautification can help people get exercise at Volunteers' Green. Also the band shell is in terrible shape. The cost of all items without the playground is \$49K out of \$1.2M. I would like to see what the cost is of a convertible basketball court to hockey rink. The Burlington rec path has fitness sections. Have you ever looked into a fitness trail?

Lynn: We had a presentation but it was on a stationary fitness center which had some grant funding.

Furr: A stationary center could work. Vermont is a state of people who do go out for exercise so I think it would be utilized. One thing I have been asked about is a picnic pavilion in Volunteers' Green but is it even legal to put up on Volunteers' Green?

LaBounty: Yes, because it flows through. We may want to consider turning the bandshell into more of a pavilion style situation. \$150K - \$200K is reasonable for a new play structure. But, please look into expanding the size of the current structure.

Lynn: We were trying to do that so it would be accessible.

Furr: We will get some better numbers on basketball court and pavilion. All the ideas can improve the quality of life of people in Town.

Kreider: We would like to get an inspection of the current playground to see if it is feasible to keep it.

Svensson: There is an older pavilion in Burlington that may be able to be re-used.

Forward: A lot of items on the list look like budget items rather than capital investments. The Recreation Committee should approach for line items on the budget. Perhaps neighboring Towns will want to contribute to the cost as well.

Lyle: Is this a time to also think about community gardens?

Furr: Mary and many others have talked about this.

Houle: There is a community garden behind Gary Bressor's property. In general community gardens are usually very well used. The VYCC is another location that could be good for a community garden.

LaBounty: Would Volunteers' Green be a good idea for a community garden and could the Recreation Committee look into management of a community garden?

Lynn: I don't think we have the volunteer hours to add that in.

Furr: The community gardens I have seen are very popular.

LaBounty: Perhaps a community garden committee could be formed.

Furr: This has been a good discussion this evening. I like the idea of using ARPA money to improve Volunteers' Green.

Review criteria for evaluating feedback on ARPA fund usage

Furr: We could quickly summarize criteria and then discuss it at the next meeting. We have talked about ongoing expenses. What is the overall purpose. Is it just to spend money or is it in pursuit of an ARPA goal, health, wellbeing, economic opportunity etc.

Forward: We also talked about leveraging money and grants.

Furr: Gant money could be a tiebreaker.

LaBounty: I would like to see all the ARPA goals listed out.

Forward: Another one might be long lasting capital projects.

LaBounty: Beautification can have a major impact and has not been done for many years and we may be able to do them with this money.

Furr: I would be in favor of placing more welcome signs on the roads.

LaBounty: Feeling welcome and included can tie back to the ARPA goals. I think that we could spend some money on capital projects and some on beautification.

Forward: Not all projects have to meet all criteria.

Furr: I think beautification is a criteria.

Lyle: I would like to add use the ARPA fund for a major down payment that pays dividends over the long term. A big capital investment that reduces the Town's expenses over the life of the project.

Forward: Something that Bard has suggested is that we identify how ongoing expenses are paid for in the future.

Furr: I will mail out this list and we can try to come up with a master list at the next meeting?

LaBounty: Would Volunteers' Green meet these criteria?

Forward: It meets health, wellbeing and beautification.

Furr: At the next meeting we will work on a list of criteria and continue to review the suggestions and could start to apply the criteria to the feedback.

Houle moved to adjourn. Seconded by Lyle. Roll Call Vote Arneson, Furr, Houle, LaBounty, Lyle, Forward Svensson approve. Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned.