

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of October 26, 2022
Via Zoom**

Members Present: Josh Arneson, Jay Furr, Thomas Lyle, Cara LaBounty, Jeff Forward, Molly Dugan

Members Absent:

Others Present: Rachel Lohia, Galaxy Tab A (2016), Duncan Wardwell, Chris Granda

Call or Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by Furr.

Public Comment: None

Review minutes of the 10-12-22 Meeting

Tabled. Minutes had not been reviewed by Committee members since last meeting.

Review of feedback collected

Furr: When the Selectboard created this committee we were not given a lot of direction, but they did give us two goals. 1) Collect feedback from Richmond residents in a fair, impartial and inclusive fashion. We did this through a form online, in person at public gatherings, via cards in drop boxes, and emails from residents. We have 550 responses. I am feeling good about the number of responses we have received and the methods of collection. 2) Evaluate the responses and score them. We want to understand interest, costs, and impact. We are also looking to see if we could partner with another neighboring town or if ARPA money could be used as a match for a grant.

We did send out a version with people's names attached. Cara pointed out that we had decided via consensus to conceal names while we review. Duncan has flagged feedback that came in without names attached.

People have volunteered to go through the feedback and categorize items. I would like to see us take the next several meetings to have a working group to assign items to categories. This will take some time but also allow for members of the community to attend the meetings and share their thoughts. I propose the next three meetings be dedicated to this work.

Lyle: Thank you to Duncan for creating the document. I like the idea of taking time to think through these items and discuss as a committee. But, I think a priority should be to decide which ideas won't make the cut and take them off the list right now. Items such as an ice rink or a pool which impose costs on the Town for years to come. This would help narrow the list down.

LaBounty: I like Tom's idea and we should all take time to identify what we think would fit into the "no" category. I'd like to add to this identifying items that may already be budget items.

Dugan: We have already started to identify some loose criteria and we should start to better define that criteria.

Furr: That is a good idea. It will help us explain why we said no on certain items.

LaBounty: We should start thinking of categories to group the recommendations into. Then recommendations can be sorted into these categories.

Furr: I agree on categories and I have some ideas that I do not want to share so other people have a chance to develop categories on their own.

Wardwell: There is room on the spreadsheet to include categories.

LaBounty: If people had multiple recommendations they can be broken into separate lines on the spreadsheet.

Forward: I would like to thank Duncan for putting this together. I would like to understand the spreadsheet a bit better. There are blank columns for categories, what are these for?

Wardwell: Those are to add categories in the future and can be added to at the top and then an X can be placed under that column for items that fit each category.

LaBounty: We have the ability to keep the primary tab as the raw data and then break apart items on separate tabs based on the categories.

Granda: I think looking at ongoing cost is a good idea, but how do we determine those costs per project?

Furr: Some of this work has been done in plans like the bike walk trails plan. Other items will be harder to estimate the cost of.

Granda: Those plans just look at build cost, not maintenance costs.

Forward: We do need to keep in mind items that will have an ongoing impact to the budget.

LaBounty: I think we should sort the data into categories first. The next step is then to look at criteria for a scoring system.

Arneson: This process sounds good to me so far.

Furr: June Heston is not running for re-election. I would like it very much if we could get the recommendations to the Selectboard before her departure in March.

Forward: The Selectboard will be working on the budget quite a bit between now and the end of December.

LaBounty: Can Duncan change the shading on these so they are all white and can Josh highlight anything that is already potentially in the budget?

Forward: I think that might be pre-mature. We are beyond the budget season for FY24.

LaBounty: What I mean is there may be items that are already being addressed in the FY24 budget.

Furr: It sounds like we have a reasonably good plan. Do we need a motion formalize what we talked about here?

Dugan: If the process is in the meeting minutes we can be reminded of what we are doing.

Forward: Between now and the next meeting we need to think of the categories and discuss what those categories should be and the criteria will be discussed at a future meeting.

Discussion of committee membership

Furr: You should all have applications to the ARPA Committee from Eric Svensson, Mary Houle, and Chris Granda. One of the things we had discussed is shrinking the committee. Let's discuss.

Forward: Do we want to hear from Chris since he is here?

Granda: With all due respect I think the question of the actual number of seats that are open should precede the discussion of the applicants.

Furr: I think with the applicants we have now we would not want to shrink the Committee.

Granda: I have been involved on Town committees in the past including the Selectboard and am currently on the Planning Commission. The ARPA Committee looks like a great committee to be a part of. For my job I keep track of other government incentives and this may be helpful when looking at how to leverage other funds.

Furr: I have know Chris to be very professional and offer good insight. I don't know Eric but his application looks like he would be a very good addition to the committee. I think Mary would be an excellent member of the committee as she brings a point of view that may be different from current members and that would be good to help avoid group think. Mary does have a tremendous amount of experience in Richmond.

Lohia: I was considering applying for a Committee seat but have not had a chance to do it yet. But, it sounds like you may not need any more committee members. I grew up in Richmond, then traveled for a while, but am not back in Richmond and currently produce takeout Indian food with my husband. If there is not a spot on the Committee I am happy to continue to attend and provide feedback.

Granda: The last thing I would want to do is stand in the way of someone who would like to get involved. If this is of interest to you I will stand aside.

Forward: Committee membership is less important than participation. Often times people who are not members of any particular committee offer valuable and powerful help to the committee. I would welcome everyone to participate in the committee as a member of the committee or a member of the public.

LaBounty: Thank you to Chris for that gracious offer.

Furr: I think the sense of the group is to recommend to the Selectboard that we would welcome Mary, Eric, and Rachel. Rachel, please send a letter of interest to Josh.

Forward: Is Chris formally withdrawing his application?

Granda: If Rachel is applying then yes.

Furr: We could have Eric fill the business seat on the Committee. But I think all four are good candidates. What do people think.

LaBounty: I think Chris has to decide.

Forward: We have applications in front of us. Often when I've been on the Selectboard we have had interested applicants meet with the Selectboard. Should we meet all applicants before making a decision.

LaBounty: People applying to a Committee do not have to be recommended by the Committee.

Lohia: I can make it easy by just attending and not being an official member of the committee. Then the three people who have applied can be accepted.

Dugan: I think if someone is qualified to be on the Committee then it is no say of mine if they should be on the Committee. I welcome anyone who wants to participate.

Lyle: I think the more the merrier.

Furr: We could ask to increase the size of the Committee to ten.

Dugan: I think we have three applications lets recommend them and Rachel can attend as a member of the public.

Granda: I think the Selectboard would appreciate it if there was a recommendation from the Committee. I always found it useful if the Committee would interview applicants. It would work better for me if Rachel were the voting member and I attend when I can. I would also encourage everyone to review the code of ethics regarding conflicts of interest. There was discussion of conflicts of interest at the last selectboard meeting that was not accurate. If you own a business that has a business relationship with the Town you have a conflict. But if you serve on a committee with a business partner in a business that does not have a relationship with the Town you are not in conflict. Family relationships could be an issue on committee membership and that is reviewed in the code of ethics.

LaBounty: I think it is important to realize it is not a conflict of interest just a conflict in having business partners on a committee. I felt it was a conflict of the optics to the public.

Granda: This is why there is a code of ethics so it is not made up as we go along.

Furr: I would entertain a motion to recommend Rachel, Mary, and Eric as the business seat and request all three attend the Selectboard meeting.

Forward moved to recommend Rachel Lohia, Eric Svensson, and Mary Houle to the Selectboard for membership on the ARPA Committee with Eric Svensson filling the business member seat. Lyle

seconded. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, Lyle, LaBounty, Forward, Dugan all in favor. No one opposed. Motion passed.

Dugan moved to adjourn. Forward seconded. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, Lyle, LaBounty, Forward, Dugan all in favor. No one opposed. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm.