

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of November 30, 2022
Town Center and Via Zoom**

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

Members Absent:

Others Present: Chris Granda

Call or Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by Furr

Review minutes of the 10/12/22, 10/26/22 and 11/9/22 Meetings

LaBounty moved to approve the 10/12/22 minutes. Seconded by Houle. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, LaBounty, Lyle, Svensson approve. Lohia, Dugan, and Houle abstained. Motion carried.

LaBounty moved to approve the 10/26/22 minutes. Seconded by Dugan. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, LaBounty, Lyle, Svensson, Dugan, Lohia, approve. Houle abstained. Motion carried.

LaBounty moved to approve the 11/9/22 minutes. Seconded by Houle. Vote is below.

Lyle: On page three there was an exchange about if the money should be available for non-profits. Was there a decision?

LaBounty: Yes. I said we should recommend an amount of the ARPA money to go to non-profits and the Selectboard should use their process to vet the non-profits. I feel this should be for expansion of services by non-profits.

Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, LaBounty, Lyle, Svensson, Dugan, Lohia, Forward approve. Dugan abstained. Motion carried.

Status update from chairman

Furr: The Selectboard had a discussion about spending ARPA money for infrastructure and noted that this may have a long timeframe. Bard and June would like to consider if we can move forward on infrastructure ahead of other projects.

Forward: I would say the Selectboard is not that far. They are just concerned about running out of time and want to be sure the process is on track to still allow for infrastructure to be funded.

Furr: I broke out the suggestions into individual projects and totaled the suggestions for each project. There are some that have many suggestions. We can ask the Recreation and Transportation Committees for feedback. We should also consider providing support for people affected by COVID and that may be done through non-profits. Also, items like digitizing land records seems to be a good use of these funds. What do we think we should consider doing even if they may cost a bit?

LaBounty: We were going to look to see if any of the projects were potentially on the list for FY24. For instance, the sidewalk is already in the budget. I don't want to reach out to the other committees until we have made some decisions ourselves.

Arneson: I have a start on this.

LaBounty: That information is part of my decision-making process. Already FY24 is seeing a tax increase. Part of the feedback is asking for help to not have the tax rate go up. I am looking to look at capital improvements that would allow us to not have costs for years to come. We could buy a fire truck.

Forward: I think the place to look is the capital budget. We put money into capital reserves each year for equipment purchases. It would be worthwhile to see what the budget would look like if that were funded by ARPA funds instead of taxes.

LaBounty: I don't mind hearing from the Recreation and Transportation Committee but I think it is premature.

Mahar: It is clear there is a lot of support for transportation and recreation. So, I would like to hear from those committees to see what is on their list of priorities and it could be in an email.

LaBounty: I want to go back to identifying what are the no-gos and what the public is interested in.

Mahar: I think it makes sense to add feedback from the committees to the process.

Furr: We should send out list to the Transportation and Recreation Committee and ask for their thoughts on the list and their thoughts on their priorities.

Forward: The transportation Committee has a 50 page plan. But I don't think many of their projects would fall within our timeline. It's more about them seeing how our list fits with their priorities.

Review and discussion of summary spreadsheet

Furr: I created this spreadsheet to help look at frequency of suggestions. I also added notes on items that are not feasible. Two flags were "fails the no future costs" test or it is just too expensive.

LaBounty: Can we pull out the no-gos?

Furr: Sure, and we will also keep a full list so we have it on file. Volunteers' Green is only so big and we can't fit too many things there.

LaBounty: There is room at Brown's Court. We should make the recommendations based on the feedback and then see where they can fit. If we also filter out Transportation and Recreation what does that leave us with?

Furr: I just took those topics out so we can look at the list without them. One topic left is more meeting rooms and that ties into the Town Center project.

Forward: The Town Center project could use all of the ARPA money and more.

LaBounty: How much is left in the Town Center Reserve Fund?

Forward: About \$300,000.

LaBounty: You could use some ARPA money on the Town Center between now and the end of 2026 and save the current reserve funds for future projects. I want to be cautious of the Town Center Committee not having made a decision yet keeping us from allocating funds to the Town Center. The ARPA Committee could allocate funds to the Town Center.

Furr: I don't know how much solar panels would cost, but there is a savings from energy efficiency.

Houle: I am tired of planning and no acting. There have been many studies for items that have not been constructed.

Furr: I created an energy category and flagged lighting as a category where we a lot of areas could use more lighting.

LaBounty: There are a lot of plans that go into lighting. Are there any lighting plans to improve exterior lighting?

Forward: We are talking about adding a light pole by the Richmond Community Kitchen intersection.

Furr: I also flagged energy efficiency because it can save money in the long run. One other that jumps out at me is a generator at CHMS for use as a disaster shelter.

LaBounty: The school has their own money and I question allocating money to the school.

Forward: CHMS is set up to be able to accept a generator in an emergency and that is a school cost.

Furr: We should verify if CHMS is set up for a generator.

Lohia: A few friends were recently talking about taxes going up each year. Is there anything energy wise that would help lower their taxes or expenses?

Furr: Last year we lowered taxes. This year is different and there will be a raise in taxes. If we save money on energy for the Town then we need to raise less money for energy.

Granda: A community solar array is a suggestion on the spreadsheet. Residents can subscribe to community solar array to save money.

Furr: The Town is in a solar array and this lowers the Town's expenses.

Forward: There are items on the list to help homeowners. I don't know how we can do that but it is worth looking into.

LaBounty: I don't think Rachel's point was limited to energy but increases in taxes in general. My feeling is the more we can save money in general it benefits the tax payers. Our focus should be on using the funds on items that have continued costs down the road.

Lohia: I would like to think about how can we save people money, like purchasing a fire truck to save on the budget. On the list there were items to improve the playgrounds at the school or at the park. The school is going forward on an improved playground so we don't necessarily need a new playground at the park.

Forward: The Town Center Committee will have recommendations on energy efficiency in the Town Center. Street lighting is more complicated than it would seem as neighbors will have input on lighting design.

Furr: Landscaping is on the list. What can we do to add to the landscaping at town owned properties?

LaBounty: I consider this a beautification to include welcoming signs and a fence around the cemetery before they put the sidewalk in. These would be one-time projects that don't cost a lot or have future costs. These are a few small things that would show we care.

Furr: I created a category for beautification. There are a few places where it would not cost a lot like at the bandshell.

Forward: The Selectboard will be looking for an update and I can work with Jay so we can give them an idea of where we stand right now.

LaBounty: Let's look at the budget items at next meeting.

Furr: I will put this report up on Google Sheets so we can all look at it and provide feedback. I added a thoughts column for people to add in their thoughts.

Svensson: I agree with the need for more beautification.

Consensus is to skip the Dec. 28 meeting.

Furr: Let's think about how you would evaluate the items on the list.

Houle, move to adjourn. Lyle Seconded. Roll Call Vote: Arneson, Furr, LaBounty, Lyle, Svensson, Dugan, Lohia, Forward, Dugan approve. Motion carried.

Adjourned at 8:05pm

Chat

01:09:18 Rachel Lohia (she/her): Suggestion: if you upload this to a google spreadsheet, then we could all look at & edit

01:09:28 Jay Furr: right

01:09:38 Rachel Lohia (she/her): and it would track edits

01:09:43 Jay Furr: yrp

01:09:45 Jay Furr: yep

01:09:49 Jay Furr: I will get it up tomorrow

01:09:53 Jay Furr: and will share the link

01:09:58 Rachel Lohia (she/her): thank you :)